

Vernal Pool “Hands-On” Event

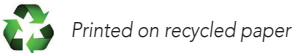
Vernal pools serve as a critical resource for several species including wood frogs and salamanders. Their lives literally depend upon these mysterious short-lived bodies of water that form each year and disappear in the summer. Come witness one of these special places, learn about the lifecycle of the species that reproduce there, and see for yourself the species that use these unusual habitats.

With the assistance of environmentalist Dr. Bob Douglas, people will have the opportunity to catch and observe the vernal pond inhabitants. The Harvard Conservation Trust will provide the nets.

This event is suitable for elementary school-aged children and older. An adult must accompany children under the age of 12. The event will be May 11 at 11:00am and will be held rain or shine. Participation will be limited to protect the vernal pool. So to reserve a spot, please register for this event at tinyurl.com/HCT-RSVP or email doutman@harvardconservationtrust.org at least 3 days before the event.



Harvard Conservation Trust
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www.harvardconservationtrust.org



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HARVARD CONSERVATION TRUST
LEGACY REVIEW

Spring 2019—Celebrating 43 years

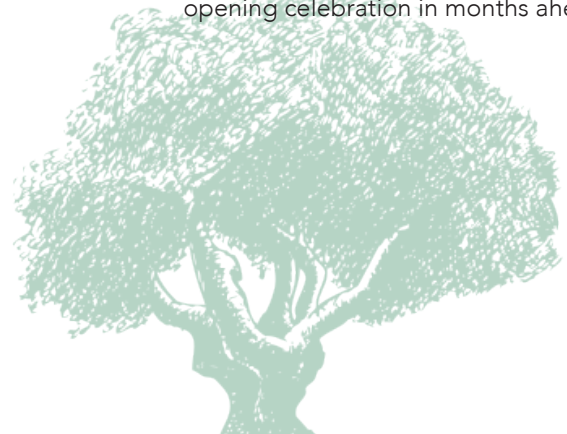
Stewardship of John’s Field Begins

In December, HCT completed the purchase of a seven-acre field on Slough Road known as John’s Field. This was the culmination of years of conversations with the former owner, John Grady, and an outpouring of generous community support. However, the completion of the property purchase is not the end of the road. In fact, it marks the beginning of HCT’s commitment to stewarding this land in a manner that protects and promotes the land’s conservation values. What are conservation values? Simply put, these are the features and elements of open space that we all benefit from, such as: scenic views, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, outdoor recreational opportunities, and important natural resources like farm soils and water.



Stewardship of conservation land requires understanding a property’s particular conservation values, how these features and elements fit with the surrounding landscape, and what threats exist for loss or degradation to these values. With this information, a course of action can be set for managing the property appropriately. For conservation lands long under the care of mother nature, very little, if any, active land management may be required. But for properties like John’s Field, where there has been regular use of the land, some degree of continued active management is often required. Should the land continue to be farmed? If so, who will farm it? What type of farming fits with other conservation values? If not farmed, should it be mowed to keep it open; or let natural succession occur? If mowing, who will mow—volunteer, paid contractor? If mowing, should the schedule favor the potential for grassland birds or hay production? What are the recreational opportunities—cross country running, snowmobiling, trail walking, horse jumping, star gazing? How do these recreational opportunities fit with farming interests and other natural resource management practices? These are the types of issues that must be considered and resolved in managing a conservation property like John’s Field. While a degree of forethought and planning for stewardship is done in advance of acquiring the property, the details and true work of land management can only begin after the purchase is complete.

A draft management plan has been created for John’s Field and work is beginning. However, good land stewardship requires constant assessment and adaptation, and ideas and feedback are always welcome. As we settle in to stewardship of John’s Field, we look forward to sharing our plans and a public opening celebration in months ahead—stay tuned!



Swida anomum—Silky Dogwood 2019 Tree-For-All

A medium-sized shrub of the understory, silky dogwood can grow to be 6–10 feet tall, with a rounded crown. Young dogwood twigs have reddish stems that turn brownish-gray as the shrub matures. Small hairs grown on the newer twigs and buds. Its tiny yellowish-white flowers in flat-topped clusters usually bloom in late spring to early summer. Flowers give way to attractive berry-like fruit that turn a porcelain-like blue as they mature in late summer. Several bird species are attracted to them. While silky dogwood prefers to grow in moist, partially shaded situations, it is quite adaptable and can grow well in naturalized landscapes and gardens, even in sunny areas with less than optimal moisture.

The bark of several dogwood species is rich in tannins, and may have been used in traditional medicine as a tonic. It has been reported that during the American civil war, soldiers would make a tea from the bark to treat pain and fevers. Dogwood bark was an ingredient of an herbal smoking mixture called “Kinnikinnick” used by Native Americans: a mixture of tobacco and wood scrapings from dogwoods. It’s possible that the Native Americans used the bark for making a dark dye, and the roots for a scarlet-colored dye.

Harvard Conservation Trust members will distribute seedlings at the Transfer Station Saturday, April 27, from 8:00 am to noon, and on the Common across Mass Ave from the General Store Sunday, April 28, from 9:30 am-noon. The seedlings are a Harvard Conservation Trust membership benefit and are also available to non-members for \$5.00 each while supplies last. Please stop by the Transfer Station or Town Center to let us say thank you for your support.

This article was compiled by Michèle Girard from the following sources:

- Book of Swamp and Bog by John Eastman,1995
- Manual of Woody Landscape Plants—Michael A. Dirr, 1998
- Wild Seed Project—wildseedproject.net/
- Go Botany website, New England Wild Flower Society—gobotany.newenglandwild.org/
- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia—en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornus



Photo courtesy of Roland “Boot” Boutwell, Winchester, MA



2019
HCT UPCOMING EVENTS

MUNICIPAL VULNERABILITY PREPAREDNESS WORKSHOPS—
April 11th and 25th from 6-9 pm at Town Hall

TREE FOR ALL—April 27th 8 am—12 pm at the Transfer Station,
and April 28th 12—2 pm on the Harvard Common across from the
General Store

VERNAL POOL EXPLORATION WITH DR. BOB DOUGLAS—
May 11th at 11 am—register online at tinyurl.com/HCT-RSVP

GEOLOGY WALK WITH DR. BRITT ARGOW—date and location
TBD; please watch for upcoming announcement

BIOBLITZ DISCOVERY DAYS—May 4th, May 18th, and June 1st—
for details visit www.svtweb.org/be-part-bioblitz



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Audrey Ball

This is a publication of the
Harvard Conservation Trust

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DESIGN

Gioiosa Design, www.gioiosadesign.com

Membership is open to all. To join
the Trust, send your tax-deductible
check for dues to PO Box 31,
Harvard, MA or renew or join online
at www.HarvardConservationTrust.org

Notes from the Executive Director

With time's leap forward in March, it's now dark when I wake. Each morning, eyes blinking open, I search for a sliver of dawn at the edge of drawn curtains. Then with a slow stretch and yawn, I'm reanimated and reminded of the countless seeds and insects that are also coming to life in the spring soil. Waking! To regain agency and purpose after a period of dormancy is an amazing event when you stop to think of it; yet so easy to take for granted. I hope this edition of the Legacy Review serves as a reminder for all of us to get outdoors and appreciate Nature's grand awakening. Discover myriad critters in a vernal pool; look closely at an emerging leaf bud; plant a seedling. These simple acts are good for body and mind, and can help keep us grounded in what some have called today's "vuca" world (acronym for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous). Look closely at these pages too and one may find a wake-up call among the notes and stories of: the ongoing challenge of being good land stewards; the topics of interest to the next generation of scientists; efforts to keep just a fraction of our natural lands intact; and vulnerability preparedness planning. Each of these small writings stacks one on top of the next, looking us in the eye to say—we cannot take for granted the land and nature of our community, and there is much to do. In this season of reawakening, please take action to conserve and care for the land and natural resources of Harvard.

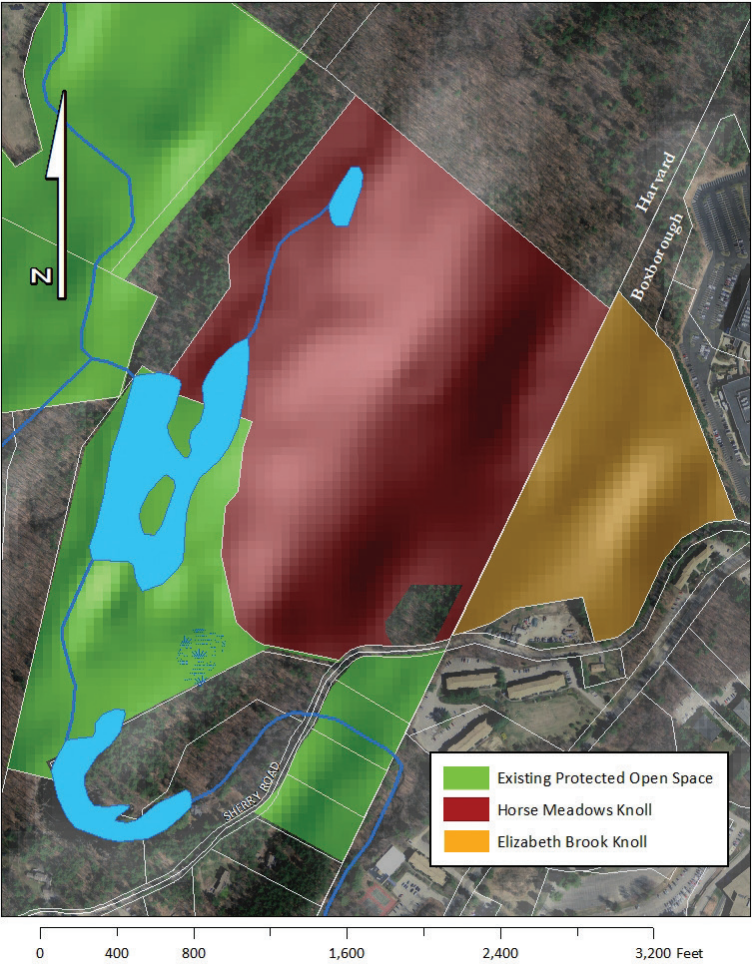


Harvard Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Planning

Climate change and the volatile, extreme weather it can cause, poses a real and immediate threat to Harvard's culture, ecology, and economy. The question is, what should we do about it? This is the heart of the matter for the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness planning effort currently in progress. The second of the two community workshops will take place on Thursday April 26th from 6-9 pm at Town Hall. This workshop will devise strategies for addressing the vulnerabilities and hazards previously identified, determine goals and actions, discuss priorities, and identify potential funding sources for these actions.



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Acreage Added to Black Pond
and Horse Meadows Knoll

The completion of two recent land acquisition projects in Boxborough and Littleton expands upon conservation land parcels in Harvard. The first, called Elizabeth Brook Knoll, on the Harvard/Boxborough line is a 15-acre property that is adjacent to Horse Meadows Knoll on Sherry Road. This beautiful parcel contains critical wildlife habitat and offers the opportunity to extend the existing trail system.

The gorgeous Black Pond conservation land off of Littleton County Road has now been expanded by about 61 acres through the acquisition of the so-called "Smith land" with portions of the land in both Harvard and Littleton.

The Harvard Conservation Commission purchased 12+ acres of land in Harvard, and the Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) acquired the 48+ acres in Littleton. This addition will allow for extended trails and a parking area just over the Littleton town line. We are excited to see more permanently protected land abutting two of Harvard's prime conservation lands. For more details, please visit: www.svtweb.org/land-protection/projects/smith-property

A Critical Link—We Need Your Vote!

Among the Trust's highest land protection priorities are parcels that provide connections to existing permanently protected lands. A 23-acre parcel in Still River is for sale, and the Trust and the Town are actively working at creating strategies to protect a portion of this land. If a portion of this land can be protected, then we would have the opportunity to connect the trail system north of Willard Land (Clapp/Scorgie/Tufts) to the Sprague trail complex off of West Bare Hill Road. This link would serve those who seek longer walks and also continue to act as a wildlife corridor.

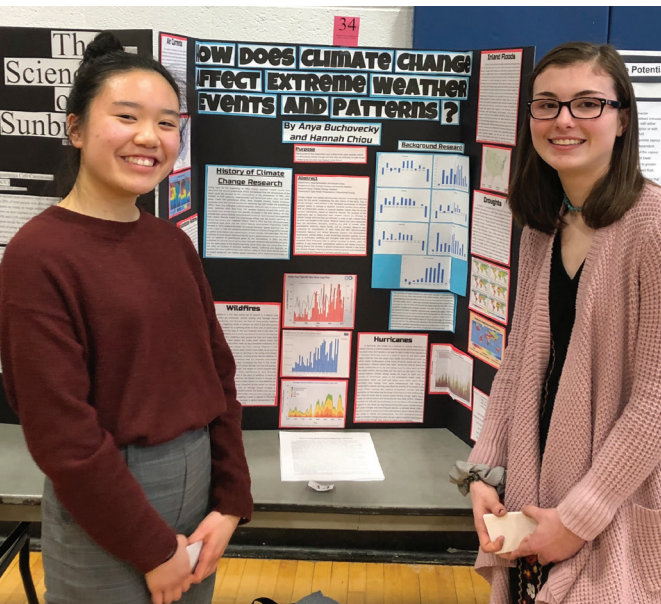
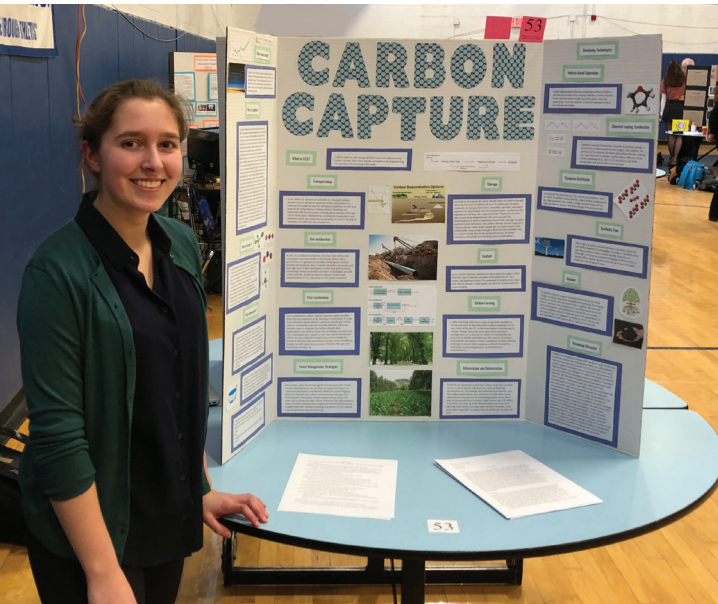
This opportunity is complicated, with a lot of players and moving parts. It is far from a sure bet, but it is a highly strategic piece of land to secure. Without the town's contribution, we can't make this happen, so please consider attending Town Meeting in May and vote to support Article 17 [Capital Planning and Investment Recommended Expenditures, of the May 4, 2019 ATM] to partially fund this land purchase!

WELCOME
New Members

Kathleen Finnegan
Mark Finnegan
Michael Finnegan
Marianne Fleckner
Guy Hermann and Jo-Anne Crystoff
Dan Kagan and Emily Harris
Gina Marksteiner
Emily Marsick
Jeff and Jean Schkeryantz
Hugh and Laura Silk
Eve Wittenberg and Cathleen Corning
Laura Yochum

2019 Bromfield Science Fair Award Winners

HCT congratulates the winners of the Trust's awards to Liza Toll and and Rachel Shriver for their project: Carbon Capture, and to Anya Buchovecky and Hannah Chiou for The Effect Of Climate Change on Weather Patterns. We chose to highlight the work of these young women because their research was extensive and they spoke eloquently about their findings. The topics they chose seem to offer a path forward as we deal with climate change: on the one hand, Anya and Hannah explained the current and future devastation brought about by the effect of climate change on weather patterns, and on the other hand, Rachel and Liza looked at the marvelously creative ways engineers are working towards capturing the large amounts of carbon already in the atmosphere. The Science Fair winners made it obvious that the health of our environment depends on this combination of clear-eyed scientific research and human ingenuity.



Thoreau Book Review

"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see". So wrote Henry David Thoreau, who dedicated his life to the practice of paying attention.

Much of the time, Thoreau's eye was trained on trees. This was partly professional; he paid the bills as a surveyor, delineating properties using "boundary trees" as border markers. Mostly, though, Thoreau was able to see trees because his vision was sharpened by enormous affection, both for trees-in-general, but also, poignantly, surprisingly, for trees-as-individuals. Thoreau may have known the trees of Concord as well as he knew its people, and, possibly, with less complication.

Thoreau's love of trees is chronicled, beautifully, by Richard Higgins in his book Thoreau and the Language of Trees (2017, University of California Press). In this book, Higgins serves

as a guide to Thoreau's writing on trees, using photographs of his own from their shared hometown.

The result is an invitation to see trees like Thoreau did: as fellow travelers, as embodiments of Creativity, and as pillars of the natural community. Higgins reminds us, too, that Thoreau's love for trees was heightened by anxiety: in his day, the forests of southern New England were at a low ebb. Thoreau worried that he was chronicling the beauty of trees for a future without them.

This is a hopeful book. In our own age of anxiety, the trees are with us still, and we have an opportunity now, to do what Thoreau radically proposed: "Each town should have a park, or rather a primitive forest, of five hundred or a thousand acres, where a stick should never be cut for fuel, a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation..."