

The NRT Report

Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield Newsletter

Special Notice: NRT Annual Meeting.

April 6, 2001 7:30PM

Mansfield Public Library

Hope Street

Special guest speaker

To be announced

EVERYONE IS INVITED

Great Waves - ends up just a ripple.

After almost four years of controversy, the developer of the Great Waves Water Park has called it quits.

On January 4th, the developer, Blackstone Entertainment faxed a letter to the Mansfield Board of Selectmen stating "We are writing to inform you that Great Waves Limited Partnership has decided to withdraw its proposal to develop the Great Waves Water Park in Mansfield."

"What a cause for celebration!" said Leonard Flynn, NRT president, when he heard the news.

He went on to say, "This case demonstrates that our system of town government works and allows every citizen to participate in important decisions that will impact their lives. The rich and powerful must play the game by the same rules as the rest of us. They should not be allowed to short circuit the normal permitting process required to develop land. All decisions and discussions, of this type, should be held in public session as required by law and not behind closed doors."

The NRT has been fighting the development of the water park since its inception in 1997. Members have spent countless hours and thousands



Photograph from Water Country in Portsmouth, New Hampshire photo from Boston Herald

of dollars in an attempt to stop the project. Realizing to stop the project on environmental grounds would be costly, the NRT decided to focus on zoning violation issues. The Mansfield Zoning Board of Appeals agreed that the project did not conform to zoning by-laws, and on a 5-0 vote overturned the Building Inspector's decision and revoked the building permit.

Ripple, continued on page 4

Thanks to contributors!

By Lou Andrews

The exact reason why Great Waves decided to withdraw may never be known. But what is known is that the ZBA, Karl Clemmey, and the NRT had a strong legal case that the development did not meet our zoning by-laws.

Our success would not have been realized without the support of hundreds of contributors. The NRT received many small donations, that when added to a large contribution from the NRT, was enough to pay the over \$30,000 in legal fees.

Our thanks to the many Mansfield residents, and residents from other towns, who helped with financial contributions and with moral support.

Let's hope we can now work to have this property developed in a way that is beneficial to all.



(see related article on Contributions on page 4)

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A message from the President

Although Great Waves was a large distraction and a huge expense to the NRT, we continued to pursue our purpose of acquiring conservation land, and to work with other organizations having similar purposes. The following is a list of the land we protected while the litigation proceeded with Blackstone Entertainment .

Gifts of land to the NRT

- ? 25 acres from Dorothy York in the Canoe River aquifer.
- ? 29 acres from Arthur Freeman of Norton in The Great Woods.
- ? 3.42 acres abutting the Plymouth Street conservation area from the Udall family.
- ? 8 acres in The Great Woods from Eric Delong, President of Acorn Manufacturing.
- ? 23.77 acres in the Canoe River aquifer from the Flint family.
- ? 60.6 acres in The Great Woods from FleetBoston Bank.
- ? 3.5 acre conservation restriction in The Great Woods from FleetBoston Bank.

Recent purchases

Nine parcels containing 101 acres in The Great Woods by the Conservation Commission, with the assistance of the NRT, and grants from the Department of Conservation Services of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

54-acre Johnson family farm by the Norton Conservation Commission. This was a cooperative effort by the Norton Conservation Commission, CRACC, the Norton Land Preservation Society, the NRT, and a Federal land and water grant. Congressman Barney Frank was responsible for our receipt of this grant.

Just think of how much more we might have done if we didn't have to expend our limited money and energy on a misguided development like Great Waves.

Leonard Flynn



Birding in The Great Woods

By Colin Cauldwell

The Great Woods offers great birding opportunities for those interested in our feathered friends.

Although birds live in the woods year round, the best opportunities for seeing a variety of species are spring and fall.

Returning spring migrants start arriving in late winter and continue until late May or early June. Early May is probably the best time for birding in the woods because most of the foliage has yet to leaf out, affording better opportunities for observation. And, the bugs are not as intense as they are later in the season.

The best place to view the greatest variety of birds is along the margins of the inner fields on the former Scott/Goyea parcel.

Birds you are likely to see here include towhees, a variety of warblers and thrushes, fly-

catchers, creepers, hawks and vireos along with the more common woodpeckers, titmice, cardinals and chickadees.

A plus for spring birding is that all birds are in breeding plumage which can make the identification of birds, especially warblers, much easier.

The fall is another prime time for birding although the leaf cover and fading plumages make it more challenging. But the patient birder will be rewarded with transient migrants which may be seen only at this time of year.

So get your binoculars, bug spray and guide books, and give birding in The Great Woods a try.

Editors note:
A great reference book for birds and other New England flora and fauna is The National Audubon Society Field Guide to New England by Alden and Cassie.

Kid's stuff

Can you match the following pictures of birds with their names? All these creatures can be found in The Great Woods, along the Canoe River, and some, in your back yard.



(answers on page 4)

Write your answers here.

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Nuthatch _____ | 4. Wood Thrush _____ |
| 2. Blue Jay _____ | 5. Screech Owl _____ |
| 3. Downy Woodpecker _____ | 6. Cardinal _____ |
| | 7. Robin _____ |

Bird pictures from The National Audubon Society Field Guide to New England by Alden and Cassie.

Harry's Notebook by Harry B. Chase, Jr.*

THE GREAT WOODS CHARCOAL BURNER

A hundred years ago, around the first of May when whippoorwills were calling, the evening air over the Great Woods was pungent with the smoky odor of burning charcoal.

"Charcoal pits," the sites were called, but they weren't pits, they were mounds.

Farmers cut "trash" wood--swamp maple, birch, "popple"--in four-foot lengths and leaned it around a chimney formed of poles. When they'd built a wigwam-shaped pile 15 or more feet in diameter and eight feet high they covered it with sod, punched with vent holes to provide air. A farmer might build a dozen such "pits" in his woods. The charcoal burner could be the farmer or a hired pro like one Skinner,

a "fat old fellow" who traveled from pit to pit in a horse-drawn wheeled cabin. Which ever, the burner's first duty was to have a kid scramble atop the mound to light some brush and stuff it down the chimney hole.

Now came the hard part! Once the pile was ignited the burner had to live with it day and night for up to two weeks while the wood smoldered. If a wind rose and the pile began to burn hot he'd stuff the vents with sod to smother the draft, otherwise the mound would go up like a house afire, losing all the wood and work. If it threatened to go out, he unplugged the vents. Either way, he got little slumber.

After 10 or 15 days the mound collapsed. The burner, by now as black as his charcoal, let the carbonized wood cool, then raked it into a latticed metal basket,

heaved it aboard a wide-topped wagon and started his horse toward the Attleboro jewelry factories, which used charcoal for its intense heat. Or he might head for Boston (city wives burned charcoal as oven fuel), one horse pulling the wagon, another walking alongside as reserve when the first one tired.

No charcoal has been burned in the Great Woods for a century. But still you can find sterile treeless circles where the pits were. An 1848 deed to the "Chase Conservation Land" describes charcoal bins and a cabin; and a 30-foot-diameter mound of pure black powder remains to remind us of this forgotten woodland industry. 

**Harry has camped, hunted, surveyed, mapped and observed plant and animal life in The Great Woods for over 50 years.*

Mansfield Conservation History

The largest purchase of conservation land in Mansfield's history (in 1975) was the acquisition of over 100 acres of land in The Great Woods from Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Moreau of Norton.

The purchase was negotiated by The Great Woods Study Committee as a part of a five year plan to acquire The Great Woods Conservation Area.

This was the first purchase of Great Woods conservation land.



Robert Jones, Conservation Commission chairman; Lou Andrews (chairman) and Marydee Flynn (clerk), Great Woods Study Committee; Brad Johnson, attorney representing the Town; and seated Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Moreau.

March 1975

*"Largest
Conservation
Acquisition in
the town's
history"*

NRT gets two more conservation land acquisitions

By Leonard Flynn

The Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield has received two gifts of land along Hodges Brook in the Great Woods area of Mansfield. The first parcel of 3.2 acres was given by Conley Eagan and Augusta Turinese of ABC Realty Trust and is located between Carol Road and the west side of Hodges Brook. Allen Brown of M.D. Development donated the second parcel of 3.96 acres, along the easterly side of Hodges Brook south of

Oak Street.

Hodges Brook flows through the westerly side of the Great Woods conservation area and terminates in the Wading River in Norton. Protection of the Brook and the acquisition of conservation land in the Great Woods has been a high priority project for the Mansfield Conservation Commission and the NRT for thirty years.

The NRT appreciates the gift of this land from the Eagan, Turinese, and Brown families, all of whom have contributed to Mansfield town and civic affairs for many years.

This land, like all the land owned by the NRT, is for passive recreation, wetland and wildlife protection, and is open to the public. This gift adds to the over 1,250 acres of protected land owned by the conservation commissions and land trusts in the Great Woods of Mansfield and Norton.

The NRT's general policy on the public use of its land is "Take only pictures leave only cares and footprints." 



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Non-Profit Org.
Permit No. 19
MANSFIELD, MA

Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield

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"To acquire and preserve natural resources
for the use and enjoyment of present and
future generations"

**WE'RE ON THE WEB:
[WWW.GEOCITIES.COM/
NRTMA](http://WWW.GEOCITIES.COM/NRTMA)**

Ripple - from page 1

" We had just finished answering the interrogatories and were waiting for a land court date when we heard the news. It was unbelievable." said Lou Andrews, NRT vice president.

Great Waves had sued the Zoning Board of Appeals, NRT, and Karl Clemmey (an abutter who was also fighting the project) in land court, in an effort to overturn the ZBA decision.

In a final statement Mr. Flynn went on to say, "The NRT does not covet the industrial zoned land on South Main Street. We support its development for uses allowed by the Mansfield Zoning By-Law, as long as it is compatible with the neighborhood and the abutting conservation land. The NRT is willing to cooperate in its development for the benefit of the owners and the community."



A Special Thanks, for their support, goes to the Wave Goodbye group. Especially—Bob Goldman, Cindy Ostrowski, Chris Flass, and Dave Hammond, who stuck it out until the end.

Membership

The NRT welcomes new members!

Our dues are \$25.00 per year.

Dues can be sent to :
NRT
255 Fruit Street
Mansfield, MA 02048.

Please include your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and your specific conservation interests.



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Your comments are welcome.

Please e-mail them to nrtma@yahoo.com.

The NRT newsletter is published quarterly. All opinions and comments are those of the authors.

The Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to acquiring and preserving natural resources for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations; and other conservation related activities.

E-mail us for a free brochure.

Contributions

The NRT spent over \$11,000 of its funds, originally slated for land acquisitions, to fight Great Waves. We need your help to replenish our land acquisition fund. Please send your tax deductible contribution to:
NRT, 255 Fruit Street, Mansfield, MA 02048.

Kid's stuff answers: 1B, 2D, 3C, 4E, 5F, 6 none, 7A