

# The NRT Report

Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield Newsletter

## Town celebrates Great Woods Completion

It was almost 30 years ago that the Great Woods Study Committee was formed, by Town Meeting vote, to establish a land use plan for the Great Woods portion of Mansfield. The founders of the NRT pushed for this committee in hopes of saving the Great Woods from development.

The committee has long been dissolved, but their plan has finally been completed.

On June 9, 2001, the NRT and the Mansfield Conservation Commission celebrated the completion of the Great Woods Conservation Area acquisition.

Guided tours were led by NRT members, Charles Meszoely, Colin Cauldwell, and Lou Andrews.

A contest was held for children, who answered nature related questions, to enter a drawing. Nature books, stuffed animals, and tee shirts were awarded.



NRT's Dr. Charles Meszoely provides information to the Luth family of Fruit Street

### Special Notice:

Walk in the woods with Colin and Harry.

Come with us on a walk through the southern section of the Mansfield Great Woods.

page 3 for details

October 6th, 2001, 10:30AM  
Oak Street Entrance

## Great Woods Trails Marked

**At last!** With hammer in hand, and markers of red, orange, green, and white, volunteers from the NRT, fought off mosquitoes, bees, and other assorted bugs to mark the Great Woods trails.

The three major trails are finally marked. The "Schoolmaster Bridle Trail," marked in red, is 0.77 miles and runs from the Oak Street entrance to the Great Brook. This trail was named for the schoolmasters who used it as a shortcut from Elm Street to South Main Street, in the 1800s.

The "Scott/Goyea Trail," marked in orange, is a 0.93 mile loop trail which starts at the Oak Street parking lot, meanders through the Scott/Goyea conservation area, and returns, via the red marked, trail to the Oak Street entrance. The "Coddling Farm Trail," marked in green, is 1.33 miles. This trail branches off from the red trail, and ends at the railroad tracks. The Coddling Farm site can be accessed from this trail.



Trail marking crew: Lou Andrews, Colin Cauldwell, Leonard Flynn, and Harry Chase.

A less-traveled trail is the "Chase Trail" (white), which runs from the green trail to the Great Brook.

Yet to be marked is the "Cobbler's Trail" which is in the northern portion of the woods, and can be accessed from Judy's Lane. This trail runs past "Cobbler's Corner" and on to "Taylor's Hill."

Maps are available on the NRT and Town of Mansfield ([www.mansfieldma.com](http://www.mansfieldma.com)) web sites.

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## A message from the NRT President

**T**he Canoe River Green Belt project is moving along. Two important parcels of land have been acquired in Norton -- Johnson Acres, 54 acres at the intersection of North Washington Street and Newcomb Street, and the Subon property, 43 acres to the rear of East Main Street.

A third parcel, the 70-acre Lincoln property along King Phillip Road and Lake Winnecunnet, is now under agreement. The Norton Conservation Commission, with the support of the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, and a town meeting vote, acquired these properties. The Canoe River Aquifer Advisory Committee (CRAAC), LPS of Norton, and the NRT of Mansfield assisted in these acquisitions.

The Trust For Public Land (TPL), a national land trust, has agreed to assist CRAAC in the acquisition of the green belt through the towns of Sharon, Foxboro, Mansfield, Norton and Easton. TPL based in San Francisco, and with an office in Boston, has assisted communities and small land trusts in acquiring 1.2 million acres in 45 States. Badge Blackett and Christie Anderberg will be working with CRAAC on the project. Badge was the Project Manager on the Scott/ Goyea farm acquisition.

We finally have the GIS mapping software for the Canoe River up and

running. The GIS Map identifies and locates every parcel of land in the aquifer, and will be an important planning tool for setting the priorities for the green belt acquisition. CRAAC developed this software with a grant from EOE, but because Mansfield and Norton have not yet implemented a GIS system we couldn't use it. Lou Andrews came to the rescue and got the software running on our computer.

The NRT's purpose is to acquire land for wildlife and wetland protection, and passive recreation, but lately we have had to devote too much of our energy and resources protecting land already conserved from proposed illegal uses on abutting properties.

The Mansfield Music And Arts Society has requested a variance or special permit for an amusement use on Tweeter property (a.k.a. DLC Corp. & Don Law Corp.) from the Zoning Board of Appeals. The DLC land is adjacent to the Great Woods conservation area.

If this variance were to be granted, it would set a precedent, and DLC could use it for any amusement use they wanted. It would also open every zone in town to these temporary amusement uses -- carnivals, flea markets, auctions, and festivals, etc.

Leonard Flynn 

## Did You Know?

- ? Since 1945, **1.3 million acres** of farmland have been lost.
- ? Between 1985 and 1996, **13,000 acres** were converted from agriculture or open space to residential use.
- ? Between 1950 and 1990,
  - ? Massachusetts population grew **28%**.
  - ? the amount of developed land increased by **188%** (6 times the population growth) .
  - ? population in every city in the Commonwealth **decreased**.
- ? Since 1950, the Boston metropolitan area has lost almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  its open space.
- ? Most land parcels of over **25 acres** belong to people over age 60. This land is frequently broken up to pass on to children and often subsequently sold for development.
- ? Unplanned development costs more in services than the tax revenue it provides.
- ? Every year, **200,000 acres** are lost to development, causing:
  - ? increased water pollution
  - ? increased air pollution
  - ? fewer recreational opportunities
  - ? loss of historic character
  - ? overburdening of infrastructure and public services
  - ? loss of personal privacy
  - ? loss of native wildlife
- ? Reducing sprawl by protecting open space and public land, protecting historic buildings and sites, and providing affordable housing preserves the fabric of our communities.

*(From The Trust for Public Land web site. Statistics gathered from sources including The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Law Foundation, Blue Ribbon Panel on Land Protection [EOEA], American Farmland Trust)* 

## Birding trip - May 19, 2001



NRT guides Colin Cauldwell and Harry Chase led a group of local birders, from the Village at Willow Crossings, on a birding trip in the Great Woods Conservation Area off Oak Street.

Pictured left to right are Harry Chase, Sue Beetham, Colin Cauldwell, Bill Beetham, Jayne Watson, Mary Claire Adams, Roy Watson, and Caroline Courts. Absent from picture is Leonard Flynn, who caught up with the group later.

The birds preferred to remain unseen that morning, but everyone thoroughly enjoyed the history of the area, so aptly related by Harry and Colin, as well as the natural beauty of our Great Woods.

*(Photo and text submitted by Pegge Flannery)* 

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

### When The Great Woods became a Great Woodlot

The Great Woods, when I began hiking them in the 1930s, looked different than today. They were greater, but that's not what I mean. It was the acres of brushlands that made the difference.

During the Depression, when farmers were broke, they cut and sold cordwood for home heating. This left hundreds of acres denuded except for bushes and stumps. The effect was startling. Heading south from Willow Street, you'd break through a fringe of tall pines into an area where you could see a half mile over the clear-cuts. Here and there an untouched woodlot stood like a tall ship in this sea of brush--"tree islands," I called them.

Commercial woodcutting in the Great Woods goes back over two centuries. In the 1790s a single white oak from Norton made the keel of the U.S.S. Constitution. Fifty years later the heaviest first-growth white oak went to New Bedford to build whaling ships. Wood was used for locomotive fuel, railroad ties, baskets, charcoal, cedar posts, house timbers. Many older Mansfield homes have door frames, floors and interior trim of Great Woods chestnut, an exquisite light smoky-brown wood.

After 1900, portable steam sawmills were moved in and sheared off the chestnut trees for utility poles, leaving mountains of sawdust visible for years. The owner of the present

"Chase Conservation Land" brought three heavy ox-drawn sleds from Bridgewater, loaded them with cordwood and hauled them back over the snowy roads.

Some woodchoppers were tricky. They'd deliberately cut the pines on an adjoining lot. If the owner noticed, they apologized for their "honest mistake" and sent him payment. Hired choppers were known to build a cord of wood over a stump. One timber cruiser bought an elderly lady's woodlot for peanuts after convincing her she owned five acres. He made a tidy sum cutting off her 35 acres.

The last old-fashioned logging took place on the present golf course site. In 1950 I saw a team of heavy work horses snaking pine trunks out to Mansfield Avenue. After that, most cutting stopped and the woods grew back.

But even today, deep in the woods, you'll find ruined wagon bridges over the brooks, or a broken stove marking the site of a wood-chopper's cabin. Except for developments, however, big-scale cutting in the Great Woods is history.



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



Harry Chase

## Canoe River Awareness Day

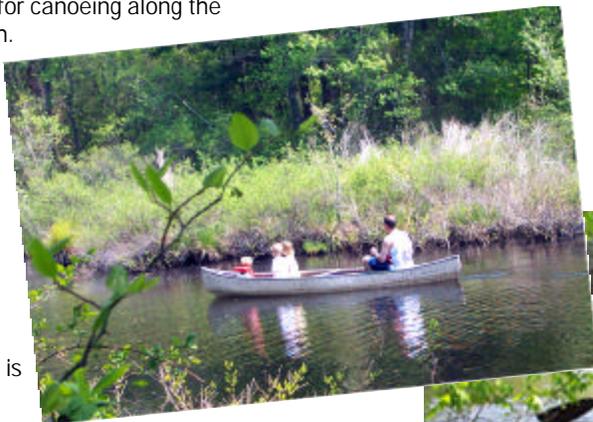
The weather was perfect for canoeing along the Canoe River last May 5th.

The Canoe River Aquifer Advisory Committee sponsored Canoe River Awareness Day. The committee provided refreshments at the Mansfield Rod and Gun Club. The Town of Easton water department supplied the canoes and safety gear.

Canoe River Awareness Day is held every year. Portage is adjacent to the town garage, at the Mansfield Rod and Gun Club.

The public is encouraged to join us next year. Watch for our notices.

Helping to protect the Canoe River Aquifer is the next major project for the NRT.





Colin Cauldwell marking trails

## A Fall Walk in the Great Woods by Colin Cauldwell

The Great Woods of Mansfield has been described as undistinguished, monotonous or just plain uninteresting. To be sure, the woods don't offer up anything that could be considered spectacular. There are no cascading waterfalls or spectacular vistas to engage the visitor's senses. But, it is this ordinariness that I find most engaging about the woods. In order to truly appreciate the forest you have to delve beneath its rather pedestrian surface.

Having said this, I must admit that there are some truly beautiful things about the woods, especially in the fall. The first is of course, the fall color.

Commencing in late September, and lasting until early November, the woods turn from unrelieved green to the most amazing palette of reds, oranges, and browns. A bonus for anyone who enters the woods in the fall, is the almost complete absence of annoying insects

Other changes more subtle also occur in the fall. Falling temperatures and lower humidity change the feel of the woods. The dry brittle piney scent of summer gives way to a more hummus, organic smell. Ripening wild grapes add their pleasantly pungent odor. The strong barnyard smell of deer in the rut may also be experienced by the lucky visitor.

Birds also change during this period. Summer residents have left, or will soon depart. New arrivals such as Kinglets, Juncos, White Throated Sparrows, and Northern Robins will soon be arriving to spend the winter. The fall migration also brings interesting species passing through, such as the Blue Throated Warbler and the Pectoral Sandpiper. Birds seem to be particularly abundant this time of year, as they busy themselves, fueling up for the long winter ahead. A disadvantage is that many birds, such as Warblers, are not in their breeding plumage and may be hard to identify.

One of my most interesting birding experiences happened last fall. While walking in

the woods, near the proposed water park site, I noticed what I thought was a small flock of grackles, heading south across a meadow. That small flock turned into thousands of birds. I sat down and watched them for perhaps 15 minutes. There were so many birds that a great many feathers dropped. I had never seen so many birds in a woodland setting. It reminded me of what migration must have looked like 300 years ago, when the sky would be black with migrating birds.

Wild flowers also abound in the woods during fall. Asters, Goldenrod and Joe-Pye Weed grow in great drifts, especially along the power lines and the edges of fields.

The last flower of the season can be seen in November and December when Witch Hazel blooms.

So grab a guidebook or two, your binoculars, your sweater, and get away from it all this fall, in the Great Woods.

Remember to bring your patience, and what you discover about the woods may surprise you.



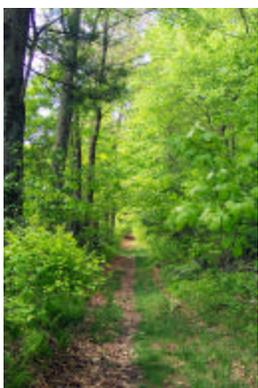
### Join us for a Guided Tour of the Great Woods

On October 6th, Colin will lead a tour of the southern portion of the Mansfield Great Woods.



Everyone is invited to join us at the Oak Street parking lot at 10:30 A. M.

Children are invited. The walk is about 2 miles. Small children may have to be carried. Wheeled carriages, etc. are not recommended.



Great Woods—Red Trail

## BioMap available from EOEa

The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) has published its BioMap, "Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts."

The publication, which consists of a booklet and a map, is a blueprint of biodiversity "hotspots" in the Commonwealth. It was designed as a planning tool to help conservation planners set priorities to insure the protection of biodiversity.

The information was compiled from Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program data.

Over 7,000 site-specific records of rare plants, rare animals, and natural communities, collected over the past 22 years, were used. The map identifies the core habitat areas and the supporting natural landscapes.

Copies may be obtained from the EOEa, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Route 123, Westborough, MA 01581, Tel. 508-792-7270 ext 200.

For more information visit their web site at: [www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp](http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp)

## Community Preservation Act

The NRT will be distributing petitions for signatures to put the Community Preservation Act (CPA) on the 2002 Annual Meeting warrant.

The Community Preservation Act allows communities to establish a municipal Community Preservation Fund by local referendum. Money collected for this fund are from a surcharge of up to 3% on local property taxes. The state will offer matching grants from the Community

**Almost no residential development can pay for the services it requires.**

Preservation Trust Fund. Money in the Community Preservation Fund may only be spent on open space, historic preservation, and community housing.

Write us for copy of the Mansfield CPA brochure.

FOR A COPY OF OUR PRESENTATION VISIT:  
[www.geocities.com/nrtma](http://www.geocities.com/nrtma)

## Conservation History

November 1977

Selectman "Chico" Collela, Great Woods Study Committee member Lou Andrews, Conservation Commissioner Fred Rys, and Great Woods Study Committee member Marydee Flynn were on hand for the dedication of the Taylor's Hill (Hallett) property.



*Taylor's Hill Dedicated*

This area can be accessed from Judy's Lane.

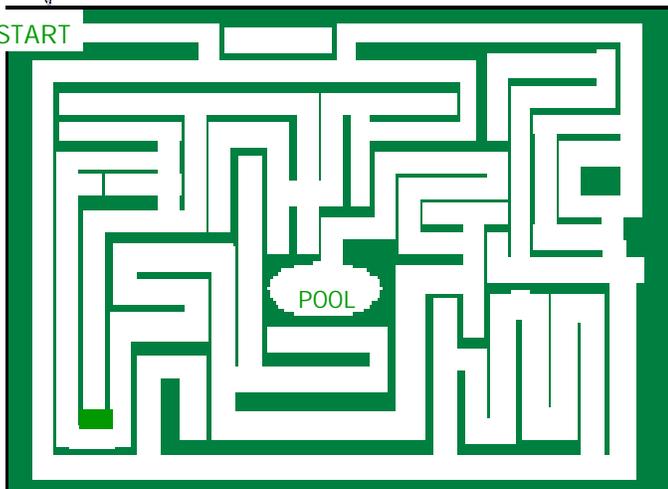


## Kid's Stuff



Find your way to the vernal pool.

START



What the heck is a vernal pool anyway; and why are they so important?

Learn more about vernal pools and wetlands at these web sites:

- ? [www.vernalpool.org](http://www.vernalpool.org)
- ? [www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands](http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands)
- ? [earth.simmons.edu/vernal/pool/proj\\_1.htm](http://earth.simmons.edu/vernal/pool/proj_1.htm)
- ? [arboretum.harvard.edu/csc/audubon/index.htm](http://arboretum.harvard.edu/csc/audubon/index.htm)
- ? [www.ssnsc.org/old%20news/vernal.htm](http://www.ssnsc.org/old%20news/vernal.htm)
- ? [www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/nhenviro.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/nhenviro.htm)

Codding Farm boundary marker





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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)**

A color version of this newsletter  
is available on our web site.



**W**e welcome your suggestions. We accept articles for publication that meet our goals and objectives to inform the public about conservation. Send them to NRT, 255 Fruit Street, Mansfield, MA 02048, or via e-mail to [nrtma@yahoo.com](mailto:nrtma@yahoo.com). We reserve the right to determine which articles to publish.

## 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; or visit our web site for an application.

E-mail us for a free brochure or call Lou Andrews at 508-339-4155.

Your comments are welcome.

Please e-mail them to [nrtma@yahoo.com](mailto:nrtma@yahoo.com).

The NRT newsletter is published three times a year. All opinions and comments are those of the authors.

Lou Andrews—editor

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.

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## Contributions

The NRT welcomes donations to our land acquisition fund. These funds are dedicated to acquire and protect conservation land in Mansfield.

Please send your tax-deductible contribution to:  
NRT, 255 Fruit Street, Mansfield, MA 02048.