

MANCHESTER-ESSEX Conservation Trust

PRESERVING NATURAL BEAUTY, WILDLIFE, AND RESOURCES AT THE GATEWAY TO CAPE ANN

AUTUMN 2014

Coyote Expert Chris Schadler to Address Annual Meeting Bylaw Changes Require Members' Votes

Once long gone from Massachusetts, coyotes are now fellow residents in our towns. If you have ever wondered how these animals came to live on Cape Ann, where they roam, eat, and sleep, and how we humans and our pets can get along with these denizens of the wild, come to MECT's Annual Meeting at 4:00 PM on November 2. The meeting will be held at the Community Center in Manchester.

Wolf recovery was the focus of our guest speaker, Chris Schadler's early academic work, but her attention shifted to the eastern coyote when she moved to New England. She chose a farm with known coyote problems to raise sheep and train her border collies. Using sound livestock management and common sense, she has avoided any predation for over two decades.

Chris is the New Hampshire and Vermont representative for Project Coyote, a national group promoting coexistence with coyotes.

This fascinating talk will begin after refreshments and a short meeting to report on the year's activities, elect officers and trustees, and vote on three proposed



PHOTO: RICH BARD

Trickster came to visit – and stayed. Eastern Coyote fact, fiction, and lessons for coexisting are the subject of this year's Annual Meeting lecture.

bylaw changes – posted at www.mect.org.

Prior to the meeting, join us for a guided walk through Essex woodlands. Park along Andrews Street near the entrance to the Old Manchester Essex Road and follow the balloons leading you to the starting point. The walk begins at 2:00 PM.

We urge you to attend the Annual Meeting to learn more about the Trust's activities, help guide its initiatives, and possibly discover a project to which you would like to lend your skills.



PHOTO: ALIDA BRYANT

Wilderness Conservation Area Gateway Ribbon Cutting

MECT Trustees, staff and Manchester town officials gathered last May to break ground on the project to enhance protection of Cedar Swamp as well as to provide attractive and orderly parking and access for visitors to the Manchester-Essex Woods. Months of hard work sustained by the expertise and dedication of many individuals are bringing this ambitious project to a close and it is time to celebrate!

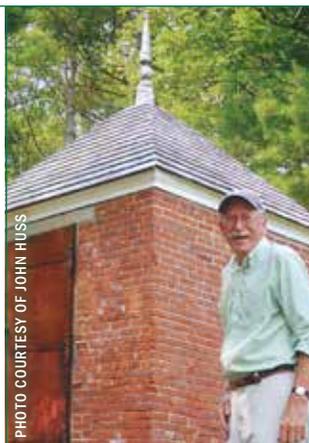
October 4, 11:00 AM | Rain date: October 5, 2:00 PM

Explore Powder House Hill's Natural Beauty and History

On Sunday, September 21, MECT will join with the Manchester Historical Museum and the Manchester Conservation Commission in sponsoring an exploration of the Reservation. Everyone is invited to join in. Cars can park along Pine Street near Newport Park. The two-hour walk will get underway at 2:00 PM.

The reservation is forty acres of quiet woodlands set on a hill overlooking downtown Manchester and its harbor. Steep enough to be off the beaten track, and large enough for a sense of privacy, the Powder House Hill Reservation has a long and proud history in community life.

John Huss, curator of the Manchester Historical Museum, will explain the significance of the 1810 Powder House and the town's role in the War of 1812. With war in the offing, a state law had required each town to construct a powder house in a location that



John Huss will explain the significance of the Powder House.

would minimize damage if an explosion occurred. The structure was restored in 2007 through private gifts.

MECT trustee, Francie Caudill will answer questions regarding the Reservation's vegetation and participants can learn about how the town acquired the rest of the site and its dedication as a public park.

Conservation/recreation acquisitions began in 1912 (12.3 acres) and 1936 (21.3 acres). In the latter year the sacrifice of a few acres along Pine Street for

the Newport Park elderly housing complex was very controversial, accepted only upon a commitment for replacement. In the same year MECT added a 9-acre former pasture in the northwest corner of the area.

Management of the Reservation was put under the Conservation Commission in 1979, as the Hill's protected status was confirmed. Re-affirmation of the Reservation's conservation value came in 2014 when citizens opposed plans to construct a new communications tower.

Young Woman Sets in Motion 136 Years of Conservation ... and still counting

by Albert M. Creighton, Jr.



The project to protect the Cedar Swamp wetland, off upper School Street, and provide more orderly and pleasant access to the Manchester-Essex Woods is nearing completion. It represents collaboration and cooperation at its best, fulfilling a need and a vision.

But did you know that the first serious attempt to preserve the Wilderness Conservation Area in the Manchester and Essex Woods goes back to 1878, or earlier? Hundreds of people have been involved in preserving this special place including a remarkable young woman who set an example and a precedent for the future of this area.

Alice North Towne, a 24-year-old summer resident in Manchester, and many others loved the Manchester

and Essex woods and enjoyed frequent carriage rides throughout the area. It was a quiet and beautiful forest, with enormous oak and other trees. They began to worry about the future, for the new roads and buildings were coming.

Alice decided to act. In 1878 she persuaded T. Jefferson Coolidge of

Boston and Manchester, and Henry Lee of Boston and Beverly Farms, to act as trustees in purchasing parcels of land in the woods and along the main road to Essex. Alice herself negotiated directly with several landowners. Thus, Manchester's Woodland Park Trust, and Essex's Coolidge Trust were born.

Manchester's Town Meeting accepted the first gifts in 1880. Additional parcels were accepted in 1883, 1895, 1901, 1905, and later. In 1879 a bronze plaque was attached to an enormous boulder in an area called the Cathedral Pines with the words "To the glory of God, and for the benefit of man, these woods are preserved forever."

136 Years of Conservation, continues on page 4

First Signs of Turkey Season

by William Robinson

I am reminded that autumn is upon us, not because Thanksgiving will be coming up all too quickly, but by the behavior of the wild turkeys that consider my yard as part of their three to four square mile home range. Over the last 15 or more years, this flock has contained from 10 to 22 birds, but the numbers vary quite significantly even from season to season. Turkeys from throughout the home range are aggregating once again, and will form a “winter flock” by the end of November at the latest. While courtship may begin in late February depending upon the severity of the winter, courtship and mating activities peak in April to early May around here. This is the time when the adult males, “toms” or “gobblers”, display their tail feathers in a colorful fan, strut, arch their wings, and cluck and gobble. Toms are easily distinguished from hens by their larger size (9-14 inches longer and 7-10 lbs. greater in weight), more iridescent feathers, a large red wattle hanging from their necks that gets brighter red during the breeding season, and their “beard”, a tuft of horny filaments up to 12 inches long in old toms that hangs from their breasts. Although a small percentage of hens, around about 10%, have slightly red wattles and very thin beards, hens are more drab colored, and, when compared side-by-side, it is obvious which are the males. Hens make clucking and clicking sounds, but do not gobble.

After the breeding season, the winter flock breaks up. Each hen slips away to find an isolated spot to lay her clutch of 8-12 nicely camouflaged eggs (tan with reddish dots) in a simple depression in the ground with a bit of dead leaf litter. She spends the next 25-29 days incubating the eggs. At ground level, eggs and the newly hatched “poults” are the most vulnerable to predators such as snakes, crows, raccoons, skunks, red foxes, coyotes, fishers, great horned owls and hawks. Greatest poult mortality occurs during their first 14 days of life. In their very first day, poults follow after their mothers, having imprinted on them for life. Poults feed on bugs and other invertebrates in order to get the protein needed for rapid growth. Adult turkeys are mostly herbivorous.

William Robinson is a Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and a former MECT board member.



In 1991, 18 wild turkeys (1 male and 17 females) were re-introduced to the Bradley Palmer State Park in Topsfield. This introduction was clearly a success!

During the first 8-10 days post-hatch, poults cannot fly, so the hens roost with them on the ground. Once they learn to fly, they roost as all turkeys do, huddled together on branches high up in trees. While turkeys prefer to roost in relatively open hardwood forests, they seem to take readily to roosting in the tall pine trees in my yard. I’ve watched a flock of 20 turkeys walk, single file, up the hill beside my house to the top of a granite outcrop opposite my kitchen window, and then propel themselves off the rock to my roof. It is not a pretty sight! Some of the youngsters don’t quite clear the eaves. Some of them need two or three tries to make it! Once on the roof, they launch themselves into the lower parts of the pine trees, crashing into the branches as they land. They then fly up, ungracefully, hopping from one tree to another in order to end up near the top of one of the tallest pines. Turkeys are clearly more adept at walking than flying, since their longest flights are less than one-eighth of a mile!

By summer, you often see separate groups of two to three hens and their offspring, and small groups of juvenile males (jakes), maybe an independent tom, and mixed groups of toms, jakes and young females (jennies). But as fall arrives, these groups start to merge, pecking orders are established, and the flock prepares itself, as I am trying to do, for the winter ahead. Turkey season, indeed.

Explore the Trails of Cape Ann: Fall Hikes in Manchester-Essex and Beyond

H

iking on Cape Ann is a favorite autumn tradition as the temperatures cool, biting insects wane and the foliage passes through its picturesque decline. MECT volunteers and partner organizations maintain an impressive network of woodland trails that cover a variety of terrain and beautiful landscapes.

This fall, MECT is expanding the series of guided hikes that was so well received last April. In addition to six hikes in the Manchester-Essex Woods, we've scheduled a trip to a coastal conservation property, and an outing to one of Gloucester's scenic wilderness areas. Our volunteer guides are eager to help you become comfortable and knowledgeable so you'll want to return on your own.

On consecutive Saturday mornings, hikes will begin promptly at 9:00 AM, end at 11:00 AM, and will take place rain or shine. We keep a moderate pace of about 2.0-2.5 MPH. Please note that these hikes welcome all humans, but no dogs. When you return to the woods on your own, you may bring your leashed dog.

Dress appropriately for the weather, wear suitable shoes for light hiking, and bring a bottle of water. Insect repellent may be welcome on a warm and/or wet day.

Hikes are free of charge, and pre-registration is not required, but to help us get an idea of the group's size, we'd love to know if you're planning to join us. You can email us at conserve@mect.org to let us know, or if you

have questions. Anyone who becomes a new member of MECT will receive a trail map. Others can purchase a map for \$5.00.

We hope you'll come and experience the Manchester-Essex Woods and neighboring conservation sites in their fall splendor!

Fall Hikes

September

27 Dexter Pond, Manchester (2.0+ miles) – Park on Colburn Road (off Forest Street)

October

4 Wilderness Conservation Area/Millstone Hill, Manchester (3.5-4.0 miles) – Park at Wilderness Conservation Area Gateway (upper School Street)

11 Essex Woods, Essex (3.5 miles) – Park along Andrews Street about one-half mile from Southern Avenue

18 Wilderness Conservation Area/Cheever Commons, Manchester (3.5 miles) – Roadside parking on Pipeline Road (upper Pine Street, north of Route 128, exit 16)

25 Red Rocks and Haskell Pond, Gloucester (3.5 miles) – Park on Route 133 (Essex Avenue), off Route 128, exit 14

November

1 Essex Woods, Essex (3.5 miles) – Park along Andrews Street about one-half mile from Southern Avenue

8 Coolidge Reservation, Manchester (1.5 miles) – Park at Magnolia Park on Magnolia Avenue, Gloucester

15 Wyman & Great Hill, Manchester (2.5+ miles) – Parking TBD

For Google Map parking locations, go to www.mect.org/events

136 Years of Conservation, continued from page 2

The Manchester Conservation Trust was established in 1963 to preserve land in the Wilderness Conservation Area, and other land in the town. Many people in Essex were interested in preserving the woods and some gave or sold land to the Trust. The name was therefore changed to the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust in 1999.

Efforts continue to preserve more of the Wilderness Conservation Area for the benefit of this and future generations. Both the Trustees of Reservations and Essex County Greenbelt have been very supportive in land preservation efforts. The Nature Conservancy gave

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preserved forever.”*

a conservation award to MECT and has helped in many ways.

Just like protecting the Wilderness Conservation Area, the gateway project showcases the power of dedicated individuals working together. Manchester's Community Preservation Act funds, the Friends of Manchester Trees' donation, hours of assistance and consultation by

local boards, commissions and employees, and generous professionals and volunteers are making this possible.

Alice's foresight and tenacity not only created a legacy of protected open space but set in motion a tradition of conservation and cooperation that continues to this day.



Search Out Forest Mushrooms

Once again, popular naturalist-guide, **Erika Sonder** will help participants discover and identify fall mushrooms and other fungi. Erika has chosen to explore along the Spruce Swamp and Ancient Line trails in the Wilderness Conservation Area in Manchester, an area with diverse topography and vegetation. Come join Erika and discover a fascinating woodland microcosm. The program is free and open to the public but limited to 15 people so that all participants can share discoveries and Erika's expertise. **Pre-registration is required.** Email conserve@mect.org or call 978-890-7153.

September 28, 2:00-4:00 PM | Wilderness Conservation Area

MEET AT TRAIL HEAD OFF PIPELINE ROAD/UPPER PINE STREET (OFF ROUTE 128, EXIT 16)

A Job Well Done

A note of thanks from Charlie Kellogg, President

MECT has plenty of reasons to thank **Ned Jeffries**, outgoing Treasurer, for his sage and expert management of our fiscal operations during the last seven years.

The adage to look for a busy person to help an organization accomplish its goals perfectly applies to Ned. In addition to an active career and other volunteer activities, Ned is a competitive runner (marathons, race to the top of Mt. Washington, and local events), alpine skier and sailor. You might ask why he accepted the task of supervising MECT's finances: just to fill a few hours?

Not at all! He dived into the role ardently, not only ensuring that we meet our fiscal obligations as a non-profit organization and carrying out the routine obligations like signing checks and authorizing invoices, but also guiding the development of new methodologies to help MECT budget and track finances efficiently and accurately.

Ned also led MECT's effort to form a committee to oversee our investment policies. Ned's expertise enabled MECT to evaluate several investment management strategies, and his thoughtful leadership helped us to adopt a solid and cost-saving process.

Ned, we are very grateful for your contributions to MECT and wish you well with all your many activities.

Help Wanted

MECT is Seeking a new Treasurer. If you would like to discuss volunteering some time and expertise to help MECT maintain a solid fiscal base, please contact Charlie Kellogg or another Trustee, or call the MECT office at 978-890-7153.

Annual Appeal

Protecting land, conserving biodiversity and natural resources, and nurturing young naturalists are three of MECT's most fundamental activities. Your donation to the 2014 Annual Fund is a contribution to the quality of life MECT helps provide in our beautiful communities. You can donate on line at www.mect.org, or by check in the return envelope enclosed.

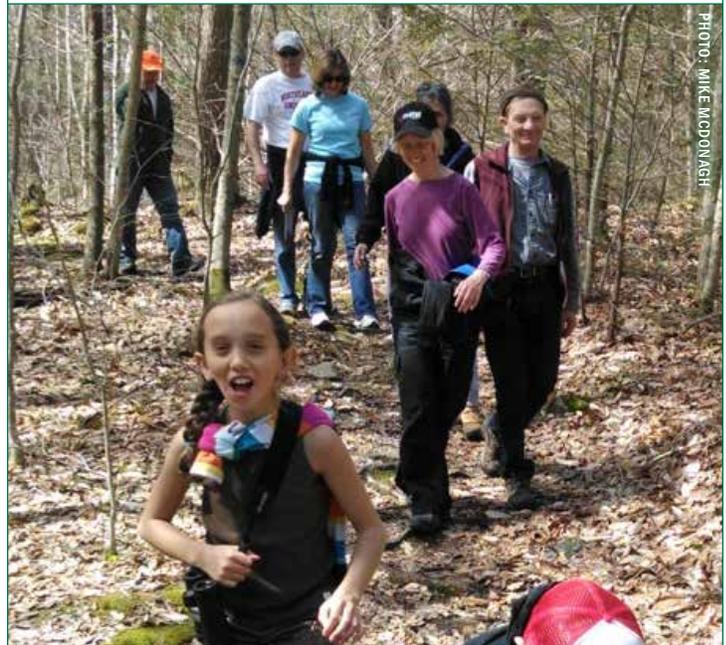


PHOTO: MIKE MCPONAGH

Wear It for the Woods!

Our new online store features items with the MECT logo, including T-shirts, ball caps, tote bags and of course, coffee mugs. Additional items will soon be added including a larger selection of caps. A small portion of each sale will help MECT continue to protect the woodlands you love. Before you take your next walk in the woods, go shopping first at www.mect.org and click on "support".



MANCHESTER-ESSEX CONSERVATION TRUST

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Mark Your Calendar!

Sunday, September 21: Explore Powder House Hill in Manchester – Meet at 2:00 PM – Park on Pine Street near Newport Park

Saturdays, September 27 to November 15: Guided Trail Hikes – 9:00-11:00 AM – See page 4 for detailed information

Sunday, September 28: Look for Mushrooms in the Woods – Meet at 2:00 PM – Park on Pipeline Road/Upper Pine Street, Manchester – Pre-registration required

Saturday, October 4: Wilderness Conservation Area Gateway Ribbon Cutting Celebration – 11:00 AM at the Wilderness Conservation Area Gateway, Upper School Street, Manchester – Rain date October 5, 2:00 PM

Saturday, October 25: Work on Trail Upkeep – Meet at 8:30 AM at the Wilderness Conservation Area Gateway, Upper School Street, Manchester – Rain date October 26

Saturday, November 1: A Second Trail Work Day – Meet at 8:30 AM – Park on Pipeline Road/Upper Pine Street, Manchester – Rain date November 2

Sunday, November 2: Annual Meeting Trail Walk – Meet at 2:00 PM on Andrews Street, Essex

Sunday, November 2: Annual Meeting & Coyote Lecture – 4:00 PM at Manchester Community Center, Harbor Point

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