



LAND PRESERVATION SOCIETY of NORTON

Norton's Land Trust - Norton, Massachusetts - www.nortonlandpreservation.org

Spotlight: The Crane Farm



The Crane Farm was settled by Captain John Crane in 1765. The Crane Farm and the homestead has been continuously occupied by seven generations of descendants.

LPS has worked in partnership with the Town of Norton and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to conserve part of this ecologically important large parcel of land. TNC served as the lead negotiator with the Reilly Family while LPS will own and manage the property subject to a Conservation Restriction (CR) held by the Conservation Commission. This arrangement provides a double layer of protection for this important land.

The Town of Norton (through the diligent efforts of Jenn Carlino, Conservation Agent) recently received a \$259,200 LAND grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs to help purchase 31.6 acres of land on Crane St. LAND grants (Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity) provide reimbursement to conservation commissions to acquire land or conservation restrictions for natural resource protection and passive outdoor recreation. TNC raised the matching funds for the project and attracted support from other foundations. The Reilly family

has also generously agreed to donate another ten acres of land for conservation.

The conserved parcels are within the Three-Mile River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC.) The Three-Mile River is a tributary to the Taunton River which gained federal Wild & Scenic status in March 2009. The land sits entirely within BioMap Core Habitat as identified by the MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP.) The site includes habitat for wood turtles, extensive floodplain areas, sandy forested upland, and existing equestrian trails..

The new Crane Farm Preserve will provide a link between 150 acres of the Woodward Forest and 101.5 acres of conservation lands on the eastern town boundary. It will be open to the public for hiking, biking, walking, fishing, and nature study. A new access area is to be developed allowing canoe and kayak access to the Three-Mile River.

As part of the larger Crane Farm Project, more land may be preserved through another program. The Nature Conservancy has also been instrumental in seeking an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) on an additional 40 acres of the active farm land. The land contains Agricultural Soils of Statewide Importance that the Reilly family currently leases to Adam Tedeschi who runs a successful Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program called Second Nature. See more at: www.secondnaturefarm.com.

LPS Annual Joint Meeting with Norton Historical Society

Sunday, May 18 at 2 pm at the Norton Historical Society, 18 W. Main St.

Topic: *The Crane Farm: Past, Present and Future*

Guest Speakers: Jennifer Carlino, Norton Conservation Agent and Adam Tedeschi of the Second Nature Farm. Refreshments served \$3.00 donation requested.



A Spring Visit to Woodward Forest

Woodward Forest on Gateway Lane, just off Old Taunton Avenue is a great place to start your exploration of Land Preservation Society properties. Purchased in 1979, it has well developed trails through stands of white pine, mixed hardwood forest, along two rivers and past a large vernal pool.

We headed off for a spring walk in early April. The vernal pools were full and some of the intermittent streams were flowing briskly. It is always a good idea to wear good waterproof shoes, long pants and a hat. Tick repellent also comes in handy!

Our goal for this walk was to evaluate the paths for winter storm damage, and assess where clean up and path widening was necessary in preparation for a Boy Scout Troop 12 Service Day on April 12th. We were also excited about walking a new path, developed by Board Member Jon Rowe, which leads down to the Wading River.

The main path enters the woods and in a short distance comes to a T. We turned left and headed along the orange trail until it met up with the blue and white trail. Thanks to helpful volunteers, all the trails are well marked. Maps are available on the LPS web site and in a box near the entrance to the trail. This is mostly white pine forest (5 leaves to a bundle on white pines). You can estimate the age of young white pine trees by counting the layers of branches. At a spot marked 11 on the blue and white trail we headed off onto the new blue trail toward the river. This becomes a typical New England mixed forest with evergreens and hardwood trees.

Not many spring plants were out but we did see some spotted pipsissewa or spotted wintergreen leaves (*Chimaphila maculata*) poking out from under the leaf litter. Soon others will appear. You may see Wood Anemones (*Anemone quinquefolia*), Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*), and Pink Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*). Several varieties of club mosses grow in

these woods as well as a variety of ferns. Bring along your flower guide and your non-flowering plant guide and see what you can find.

This land used to be farmland. You will encounter stone walls and cart paths as you walk along. Here and there you can see a "wolf tree" or field form tree that began its life in a field that eventually became woodland. Field form trees have wide horizontal branches, a very different shape from trees that have grown up in woodlands and have lost many of their lower branches (self pruning). Note the canopy (tall trees), the under canopy (shorter trees) and the shrub level. Most of the trees here have grown up since the devastation of the hurricane of 1938.



Boy Scout Troop 12 recently worked very hard to improve the trails in Woodward Forest. Thanks for a Great Job!

When we reached the Wading River we were all delighted! It is such a pretty river and the sound of water is so soothing. The water was high and flowing along to its meeting with the Rumford River to form the Three-Mile River. This is the only cleared path to a river on the Woodward land and it is a beautiful walk.

Our return trip took us back to a shortcut to the orange path at marker 12 on the map. There we found the large vernal pool – source of the loud quacking sounds of the wood frogs during their mating season. We didn't stop to hunt for spotted salamanders, but we know they have been seen here.

Owen Galvin has provided trail guides and a nature walk as part of his Eagle Project on this land. Handouts are available in a box near the entrance. There is also a letterboxing challenge in Woodward Forest developed by a local Girl Scout, Chelsea Robinson (<http://www.letterboxing.org> - look for HoppinHappy). Both of these activities can add to the enjoyment of a day outdoors.

The Woodward Forest calls for a visit during each season. It is a storybook site for learning about New England forests. The walk took about two hours, but we weren't walking quickly and we stopped often to look at things.

-LK



Norton Nature Notes

How do you know when Spring is here? For some it is the arrival of Red-Winged Blackbirds, for others the first crocus or snowdrop. But everyone knows Spring is really truly here when they start to hear the Wood Frogs and Spring Peepers! Some time in mid-March it is rainy enough and warm enough to prompt the first breeding activity of the spring amphibians. Wood Frogs, Spring Peepers, and Spotted Salamanders are among the first to venture out, heading toward vernal pools and other water sources to mate and lay eggs.



Wood Frogs (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) hibernate in soil and leaf litter and produce their own “antifreeze” from glucose and urea so they can survive freezing temperatures

(to a point!). If you are walking in the woods and think you hear hundreds of ducks quacking – those are the small brown wood frogs. Some breed only once in their life, so it is important to protect areas that harbor their larvae and tadpoles for future generations.

Spring Peepers, or just Peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) are tiny – one to one and a half inches in length, and are hard to see unless you catch them mating. The



males have large vocal sacs, which allow them to attract mates with a high-pitched peeping sound that can be heard for miles. These tiny frogs can lay almost 1000 eggs per egg cluster near the edge of water.

Spotted Salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*) are large, sometimes reaching nine inches in length. While they spend much of their time underground, they do go to vernal pools or ponds to mate. As larvae they eat insect larvae, water fleas and other small water fauna – or each other if food is scarce!

They are prey for lots of aquatic organisms, fish, turtles, birds, frogs, etc.



Adults find a nice dark damp place on land where they eat all sorts of small land fauna – insects, spiders, slugs, snails etc. while watching out for small mammals and snakes! -LK

Winthrop Dahl Preserve Update

LPS recently agreed to an avigation easement with the Mansfield Airport Commission. This allows the airport to remove or top selected trees that have grown so tall they may interfere with a pilot’s view of the airport upon landing. The agreement was arranged in order to enable the airport to meet FAA regulations.

The agreement provides some funding to LPS for improvements to the preserve. Plans are being made to develop a small parking space for 2-3 cars, a trail through a portion of the preserve, a bench and a kiosk that will provide space for information about the various habitats that can be visited at the preserve. The airport staff will also mow the open fields once each year which will help to keep the forest from expanding into valuable open space. Fields are important for many birds and other animals who live and breed in that type of habitat which is rapidly disappearing in Massachusetts.

LPS Receives Technology Grant

The Norton Cable Access Committee awarded a \$7,200 grant to LPS “for the purpose of the betterment of the technology at the Land Preservation Society of Norton, Inc. for use by the citizens and community of Norton.” The grant supports purchase of a computer and other equipment for administrative work and creation of program content, a laptop to facilitate meetings and presentations and equipment to help with photos, data collection and GPS tracking on our trails. LPS board members extend a big Thank You to the NCAC and congratulates them on the new Norton Media Center!

Tricentennial Park Update

Commemorative bricks have been installed in memory of deceased members of LPS. Those honored include Founding Members A. Llewellyn Jennings and Marjorie McBride and Directors Susan and Bryan Mims. Plans include a tree to be dedicated to Past President Robert G. Burkhart.



Membership and Dues Information

LPS is a registered 501(c)(3) exempt non-profit organization. Dues and other donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Join us if you can!

To all members: if you are able, please consider making an additional donation to help support the mission of LPS.

If you haven't already filled out this form, please do so now and return it so that we can update our records.

Also, please consider receiving our newsletters via email to help reduce printing and mailing costs.

Note: We now accept dues payments and donations via PayPal, at our web site www.nortonlandpreservation.org. If you decide to use that payment method, we would appreciate your filling out the form below and mailing it to us so that we may update our records and learn if you want to receive our newsletter by email in the future.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

*** IMPORTANT:**

I prefer to receive the newsletter by email: ___Yes ___No

Please check any of the following selections:

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$5	<input type="checkbox"/> Life \$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$10	<input type="checkbox"/> I'm already a Life Member
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Donation: \$_____

Please return this form with your check payable to Land Preservation Society of Norton (or LPS) and mail to:
LPS of Norton,
PO Box 204,
Norton, MA 02766

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

If you have a little time and would like to help in some way with our various projects, please contact us at LPSofNorton@comcast.net. We can use help with trail maintenance, educational programs, nature writing, maintaining the Tricentennial Park, etc

LPS Mission

The Land Preservation Society of Norton, Inc. was founded in 1970 "to protect natural resources, to preserve natural areas and historic sites, and provide open space for the benefit of the general public; to educate the public about the wise use of natural resources; and to work with other organizations having similar purposes."

We are a registered non-profit 501(c)3 organization and all contributions of money and land are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

We have formally subscribed to the Standards and Practices set out by the Land Trust Alliance to assure that land trusts act ethically and abide by the best rules of governance.

Officers

- President: Kathleen Ebert-Zawasky
- Vice President: Daniel Murray
- Secretary: Linda Kollett
- Treasurer: Jonathan Rowe
- Past Presidents: Frances Shirley and Ann Sears

How to Make a Land Donation

LPS will accept open uncontaminated land.

- Donations are tax deductible at the full assessment of the land at the time of the donation, as allowed by law.
- LPS will pay the expenses associated with drawing up a new deed.
- If the donation is significant, the donor may have the option of naming the property.