



Dudley Conservation Land Trust Newsletter Fall/Winter 2020/21

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President's Message

The World Beneath Our Feet

Stepping on the lawn, working in your garden or walking in the forest, you are now above an amazing system of communication between plants and fungi. It's easy to observe what is happening from the ground upward, and not be aware of the intricacy of the "Mycorrhizal Network."

When we think of fungi, we think of mushrooms sprouting out of the ground. In fact, the subterranean layer of the fungal organism (mushroom) is the beginning of the interwoven mycelium or threads that interacts with soil and all plant roots. All these connections make up the underground "Mycorrhizal Network." This network connects individual plants together to transfer water, nitrogen and other minerals. German forester, Peter Wohlleben, dubbed this network the "woodwide web." It is through the mycelium that trees "communicate."

What binds the whole network are hub trees or also referred to as mother trees. These are older, more seasoned trees and they have the most fungal connections. Water and nutrients are absorbed by these more mature trees and passed on to younger saplings. These saplings in shady areas do not receive enough sunlight to perform photosynthesis, so their survival depends on the mother trees. The mother trees also recognize ill health and insect invasions of their neighbors and will provide them with needed assistance.

Next time you wander into the forest, your yard or garden take a moment to think about the complex changes beneath your feet. Perhaps you have already been in contact with the mycelium in your yard when lifting soil you have seen these threadlike structures. Best not to be disturbed, as they function for your benefit. Healthy plants in your garden (including grass), as well as in the forest, sequester more carbon to help us battle climate change.

This message was inspired by a blog written by Britt Holewinski of The National Forest Foundation

Paul Wieloch, President DCLT



DCLT Annual Meeting was held outside and socially distant on Dudley Hill, September 12th



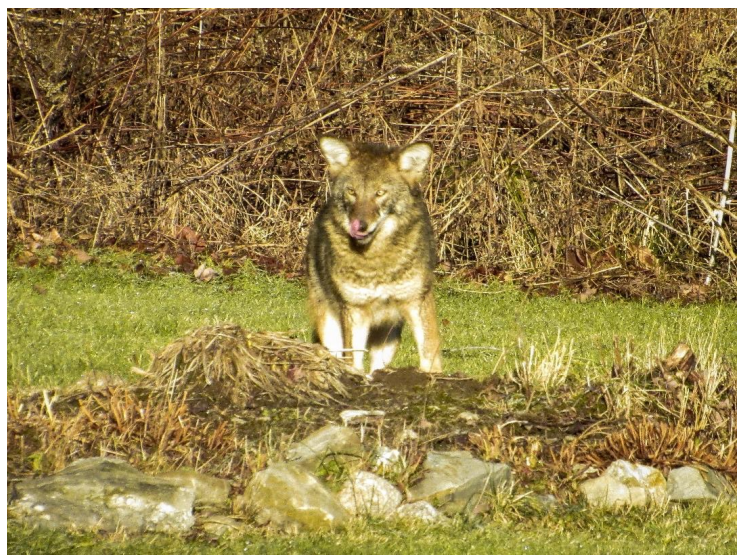
How well do you know our sanctuaries?
Do you know where these falls are located?

THE EASTERN COYOTE

(*Canis latrans*)

The eastern coyote has been portrayed as the “wily trickster” in many native American folktales like its smaller cousin the red fox. It is part of the canid family that also includes wolves and dogs that inhabit North America. They are highly adaptable and intelligent animals, and can live in a variety of habitats, such as open fields, woodlands, and even suburban areas. On Dec. 14, 2020 at 8:30 AM, this coyote strolled into my backyard looking for food. Coyotes are carnivores (that means they eat meat). Their diet consists of voles, squirrels, birds, fish, deer, and even carrion. They usually form packs like their larger cousins, the wolves, and at night, you can hear their loud eerie howls. Members of the pack help take care of and raise the pups. Coyotes communicate with each other through a series of yelps, barks, whines, and also body language. The coyotes that live in the west are much smaller than the ones that live here in the east. They measure about 32-40 inches long, and weigh over 30-40 lbs in Massachusetts. Here are some of the pictures I took of a coyote in my backyard. It was hunting, and then eating voles burrowed in our gardens. It was there for over a half hour.

By **Matthew R. Kirkland**



MAGIC FRIDAYS A Poem by Board Member Debi Thibaudeau

The light sneaks in like a little slice of orange paint glowing on the bedside mirror.
His weight shifts as the first sign that he feels it too. I hear him stretch and sigh.
He leans on my back a little more heavily.
I am still and try not to move.
If I make believe I am asleep maybe I can relish this moment.
The workweek is behind me.
The four days of beginning the day in the dark while the world sleeps is behind me.
I dream a little while longer.
I feel his tongue in my ear and on my face.
I open my eyes. He is so close. His breath is warm. He is so beautiful.
I can't say no.
I get up and he is my shadow.
He is studying me making sure I know he is ready for me. His eyes don't move.
I am ready.
I grab the leash and he dances.
Magic and me.
Our Friday adventure awaits.

The Dudley Conservation Land Trust extends its heartfelt gratitude to Ruth Perry of Graphics Unlimited for donating this commemorative plaque dedicated to Ken Butkiewicz. The plaque will be installed on the foot bridge over the French River along the Rail Trail. Thank you Ruth for your thoughtful generosity.



Notice: Change in DCLT Membership Chair

Visha Wieloch is now the DCLT Membership Chair. You will be receiving yearly renewal of DCLT membership and acknowledgements from her.

Many thanks to Mark Smith who has donated many hours volunteering his time to this position over the years. He also developed the protocols we use to maintain the membership as well as the DCLT Newsletter.

Hats off to Mark!

Paul Wieloch, DCLT President



DCLT collaborated with the Dudley Selectman, the Black Tavern, the Thompson RailTrail group, and the French River Connection to hold a memorial gathering at the Quinebaug Rail Trail head to honor Ken Butkiewicz.



Are there bears in Tufts Branch Valley? This photo is from the boardwalk in 2019.



Annual meadow mowing at the knoll at TBVWS to control invasive plants and provide edge habitat for a variety of species.

Tufts Branch Valley Wildlife Sanctuary Fills Valuable Need During The Pandemic

There has been a significant increase in activity over the last few months at Tufts Branch Valley Wildlife Sanctuary. These days, it is not at all uncommon to see the parking lot full, and the trails populated with enthusiastic children. With indoor activities risky and discouraged, and families having abundant unstructured time, many people are turning to walks in nature.

It is gratifying to observe the value which the sanctuary provides to the community. One day, I heard a child gleefully exclaim "Lets go get lost again."

We've managed to keep the trails mostly open in spite of some challenging winter storms. Thanks to all visitors who are sensitive to leash laws. And many thanks to our members whose donations help support the necessary stewardship of all our sanctuaries.

Mark Smith, TBVWS Steward

Addendum:

Shortly after I wrote the above passage I walked through the parking area for TBVWS and was disheartened to find unseemly human debris and a huge pile of feces. Thankfully, experiences like these are not the norm, but sometimes our stewardship efforts seem unappreciated, futile and not for the faint of heart.

Again, I am so grateful for our patrons who use our properties respectfully and take care of what we have worked so hard to make possible.



Twice this fall, DCLT held work days at Slater Woods. New signs have been posted and the trails were cleared of downed trees. Thanks to steward Keith Kirkland and all the volunteers for their good work.

Above left: from left Anita Bugan, Liza Moran, Debi Thibaudeau, Sandra Peterson, Paul Wieloch, Keith Kirkland and Dave Harrigan.



Below left: from left Sandra Peterson, Waclaw Korpak, Liza Moran and Keith Kirkland

Other volunteers not pictured are: Roseann Cushing, Gail and John Williams, Jerold Jeffrey, Mark Smith



Above: A volunteers helps clear SinaVaSpunk trail after Halloween snow

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