



Dudley Conservation Land Trust Newsletter Spring 2020

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President's Message Winter 2019

Welcome all. During these trying times I thought we would do something different for the DCLT Spring Newsletter. I asked all our board members to write a short essay of their choosing or they could also have a family member's story of their experience. This gives you the opportunity to learn a little bit about each one of us.

COVID-19 has placed a damper on all of us. However, there are some positive aspects, especially to our environment. I am glad that DCLT sanctuaries usage is up. More families seem to be using our trails. More people have used Wieloch Woods in the last few months than the time since it became available. Is there less traffic in your neighborhood, is the grass greener this year, did the spring flowers last longer, are the birds chirping louder and earlier, is the wildlife less threatened and does the air feel cleaner when you breathe? You now have more time to observe nature than you did prior to the shelter in place regulation. I know I am hearing the birds singing at 4:30am each morning. Did they always do that?

I know that there are a lot of people who are suffering with unemployment, illness and even death through this period of time. As hard as it is, through this adversity, there is the chance to become a stronger, wiser and more genuine human being. Let nature support us through this time and give us pause to reflect on our lives and where we may be go from here.

Paul Wieloch, President DCLT



Left: Apple blossoms at Tufts Branch Wildlife Sanctuary. Thanks to Nicole Gajewski for the photo

Right: Dave's grandfather in his Victory garden

"Victory Garden" submitted by Dave Harrigan

When I was a child I would help my Grandfather in his garden. It was a large with many varieties of vegetables. He grew tomatoes, peppers, carrots and many others. It was something that always seemed very important to him. He would work very hard day after day to grow this beautiful garden. I could also see how much joy, pride and satisfaction it brought him.

Many years later when we bought our house I had this need to start a garden like my Grandfathers. At the same time a TV show started on channel 2 called "Victory Garden". Every week the gardeners would show me exactly what I needed to do to grow a garden like my Grandfather's. I never missed a show. I was curious why it was called "Victory Garden" so I did some research. The garden was started during World War II. The vegetables that normally filled the shelves in the market were being used to support the military. The victory garden program was started so families could grow their own produce. It now made sense to me why his garden was so important.

We are now at war against the Covid-19 virus. We are seeing the shelves in markets empty. This war will last many months or longer so now is a great time to start a "Victory Garden". It only takes a small plot of land or some containers, some seeds or plants. a little water and of course some tender loving care. Parents and children can grow a wonderful garden and find the joy I had working with my Grandfather.



Pandemic Pandemonium!

In this time of social distress, here are some observations from someone with only two old, very high-maintenance, unwell dogs and a new (first ever for me) kitten for company!!!! (He is such a joy...soooooo unlike dogs!)

Had a short but welcome and lucrative vacation in early March, then came home to almost total isolation!

The first week was not bad, the second, stir craziness threatened, til I told myself to get outside, walk and on nice days, get a head start on my yard and garden work! My Springtime "to do" list is the longest of the year, and I have NEVER been this far ahead! Even the pebbles have been removed from the wood chips and the wood chips from the pebbles in my garden walkway- that is always a mid May event! Tomorrow is May 1st, and I am running out of things to do outside...finding myself with only little things left to do, having to pace myself to spread them out on nice days(not that there have been that many this April!).

My kayaks are out, my geriatric speedboat- "Serenity"- is in the water and ready to go! The beach and deck chairs are socially distanced and have been for weeks now! (FYI: Friends are welcome to come sit and sip!! House 'rules' are: pee before you leave your house, BYO beverage and drinking vessel—they go home with you—and NO food! (But I just bought a supply of individual sized bags of chips, Doritos, Fritos etc. for company who comes to sit and chill for a bit!))

Rainy days, I have successfully IGNORED the dust on my furniture and the dirt on the floors.....this is a strange sensation as I am usually a neat freak, but I just don't seem to care!!!! Rather I have settled into a daily pattern that hopefully will not be hard to break once we are "free again at last"! Watching a lot of old reruns "Monk" "Diagnosis Murder" and the original "Magnum PI" along with re-watching many of the Patriots Super Bowl victories!!!! (Bummed about Brady and Gronkowski!).

Haven't yet started reading much as I tend to not sit much during the day.....only in the sun on the beach! Enjoying my glass of wine late afternoon, and an occasional Manhattan in the evening!

Never FaceTimed or Zoom'd before in my life – do it all the time now...keeps me face to face with friends, family and my sanity!

Stay Safe, Stay Well and wear those darn masks!!!!

Nanc

Submitted by Nancy Vajcovec

Woody and Rocky

Hiking is one of my favorite things to do. There are days when the quietness of being alone with my dog is very enjoyable. Other times we would like some company, but there isn't anyone available to join us. So today I asked a rock to join us.

The rock didn't say yes or no, so I assumed he wanted to come. I mean really, how many adventures could he have had in his life so far? So off the three of us went.

I don't know why I thought my new friend was male, but he felt tough and durable, like a man would. He didn't say much either. But he was a good listener, so maybe he was a she, but at this point it didn't matter. Since he wasn't able to communicate his name, I called him Woody. (Rocky would have been too trivial).

I held Woody in my hand for a while and massaged his hard little body. He was small and bumpy and gray. He was probably a lot older than he looked. After a little bit, I put him in my pocket, but left it unzipped so he could enjoy the trees, sun and beautiful day.

As we hiked, I told Woody that we were going to be in the woods about 3 hours and would end up at a really pretty lake. He probably had not seen a lake before and I promised to show it to him.

If he was excited, he didn't display it. However, I had a feeling that he was beside himself because all his friends were still back at start of the trail, on the ground, in the dirt. They were probably be stepped on by other hikers, dogs and horses. Meanwhile Woody was safe in my shirt pocket.

We made it to the lake, and after we looked at the water and sat for a spell, we headed back. I thanked Woody for joining me and I placed him on top of a big rock near the place we started. I thought he might like a different perspective on things happening in the forest.

The next day, we hiked at a different location. I decided to invite a stick on this adventure. I picked up a small stick and named him Rocky.

The story played out the same as with Woody, except at the end of the walk, I placed Rocky near a living tree because I thought the live tree would explain to him how sometimes trees die and branches break off, and they become sticks. Then their lives change as they become part of the earth again.

So is the cycle of life.

Submitted by Deborah Thibaudeau, DCLT Treasurer

Food For Thought

The 2019-2020 Australian fire season was one of the most terrifying on record. Beginning in June 2019, the final fire was not extinguished till early 2020. Approximately 18,636,079 hectares (46,050,750 acres) were burned, and over 9000 buildings were lost. 34 deaths have been directly attributed to this fire season, including 3 American fire fighters. Over 400 others passed from related issues such as smoke inhalation. While it's impossible to know for sure, experts estimate 1 billion animal deaths related to these fires. While NSW was one of the worst hit areas, the entire country was affected, directly and indirectly. Causes range from lightning strikes, lack of backburning and accidental ignition.

From Peter Fox

Unscheduled Staycation

This year would have been DCLT's 12th Annual Plant Sale. It was already in the early planning stages. Our initial complete committee meeting in March was canceled due to COVID-19 as well as making the decision to cancel the DCLT Plant Sale as major seeding for vegetables especially the tomatoes were to get underway. Elaine Martin has grown approximately 300 tomatoes for this major fund raiser. We did not want so much intensive work to get started and then make the decision to cancel. It had to be done prior to beginning all this work.

Someone said to me that I must feel like I am on vacation since the Plant Sale will not be held this year. Actually she was correct. Year after year you just get into a schedule. You just know what to do and when to do it. Once I complete all the initial seeding for annuals (usually begins the end of January) and all is germinated (you hope), you tend your plants by observation, movement, watering, day after day with eventual transplanting and pricing. Even though this year I did plant a few annuals, prior to the decision to cancel, the amount of plants are minimal compared to last year's amount in the greenhouse at this time. My busiest time is always the 2 weeks leading up to the Plant Sale. Trips to our vendors occur. A group of us handle the care of the hanging baskets, however, I transplant all geraniums to larger pots, I put together all the cemetery containers, make up a raffle flower pot, make extra flower containers to sell. I also plant seeds for the vegetables (except for the tomatoes) and transplant all of them into 4" pots to sell. Paul & I also dig up a lot of our perennials, pot and price them for sale as well.

So now you may agree with my friend that I must feel like I am on vacation. I have felt so free. Less incumbent to do something or nothing at all. No pressure or deadlines (except this writing of course). I read the actual newspaper each day and the funnies are always included in this repertoire. I have restarted a novel I stopped reading 2 years ago. A few small projects that have been hanging around to be completed got done. I think I would feel free as a bird if I didn't worry about my children, my friends and neighbors who I try to call regularly and it's especially thrilling to receive a call from them. Rick Steves Europe Travel Leader Extraordinaire of PBS fame was interviewed recently about his business situation with the COVID-19 presence and asked what he is doing during this period of no work. He said something like, ...you don't have to be productive to be happy... I agree. Sometimes you just have to be.

Submitted by Visha Wiewloch

The DCLT is most grateful to Debi Thibadeau for designing our beautiful new website.

Check it out: www.dudleyclt.org. **Thank you Debi!**

Just the other morning I was so thrilled to see goldfinch at my feeder that I came up with a poem while walking Toby.

Spring Yellow - Sharlene Martin

Yellow is for Spring.
Easter chicks and ducklings.
Forsythia and Daffodils,
Offset by orange tulips,
And the purple muscardi.
Goldfinch don their summer plumage.
And Toby his bright yellow raincoat.
While we hop over puddles,
And enjoy the show.



"Holy Writhing Wrigglers" submitted by Liza Moran

One lovely spring day last year, I was playing with my dogs out back in the woods. I happened to notice that the usual trails where they ran were no longer visible. There was little to no leaf cover, which I thought odd. I filed these observations away for a rainy day, brought the boys inside, and headed out with my shovel and gloves for a day of work in the garden.

Over the course of the season, it became apparent that the changes I had noted were far more extensive than originally understood. Every time I sank a shovel into the ground.... or even a trowel... I unearthed a writhing mass of large, active worms. I dug up some turf to be placed in a more welcome location. When I went to plant the turf, I found it had been eaten. I noticed that the soil in areas of my garden was having trouble holding plants because it was so loose. In short.... I had a problem. My garden has become host to the non-native Asian jumping worm, *Amyntas agrestis*.

Now what? Here is a quick primer on this relatively new threat to New England soil:

As most gardeners know, earthworms are not native to most of North America. They were eradicated when our landscape was formed by glaciers scraping the surface of the earth all those millennia ago. Most earthworms in our landscape today were introduced from Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Over that time, our native plants have learned how to coexist with them. The first sighting in Massachusetts was in Hampshire County in 1974.

(See next page)

Worms alter the soil structure by consuming the critical layer of organic matter that supplies vital nutrients for plants and provides food, protection and habitat for wildlife. According to the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service, “Asian exotics devour organic matter more rapidly than their European counterparts, stripping the forest of the layer critical for seedlings and wildflowers. Jumping worms grow twice as fast, reproduce more quickly and can infest soils at high densities. In areas of heavy infestation, native plants, soil invertebrates, salamanders, birds and other animals may decline. Jumping worms can severely damage roots of plants in nurseries, gardens, forests and turf. They, along with other invasive worms, can also help spread invasive plant species by disturbing the soil.”

The jumping worm is one of three invasive species, *Amyntas agrestis*, *Amyntas tokioensis*, and *Metaphire hilgendorfi*, all of which look alike:

- They are smooth, glossy gray or brown; 1.5 to 8 inches long.
- They jump wildly when handled, moving like a threatened snake. They can also shed their tails in defense.
- These worms may be found in the top 2-3 inches of soil
- The clitellum (the narrow band around their body) is gray and smooth to the body, unlike most other species which have a raised and pink colored clitellum.
- Jumping worms leave distinctive grainy soil full of worm castings. The soil becomes granular and looks like dried coffee grounds.
- Worms die over the winter, leaving tiny cocoons about the size of a mustard seed which hatch in the spring. The mature worms can be seen in the garden beginning in early to mid summer.

So now what do we do? Some of us need to manage our problem and avoid sharing them. The rest of us would like to avoid these pests altogether. There are no easy answers, but here are a few suggestions:

- Beware of plant sales and swaps. Avoid sharing plants if you have these worms. Be wary of what you might receive if you don't have them. If you just can't help yourself, wash all the soil off the roots of the plants wherever possible before planting / sharing.
- Clean soil and debris assiduously from your tools when you move from place to place. That way, we don't move the worm's cocoons around.
- Do not share or import compost or mulch from other locations unless you are sure they are clean of worms.
- Avoid purchasing this species for fishing or vermicomposting.

Good luck and do not despair if you find these critters on your turf. You have plenty of company. You will find (and share with fellow sufferers) creative ways to manage them. Worm stomping may even be therapeutic!

Here are some additional references if you would like to learn more.

<http://ccetompkins.org/resources/jumping-worm-fact-sheet>

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/fact/jumpingworm/index.htm>

<http://www.uvm.edu/~entlab/Greenhouse%20IPM/Workshops/2014/InvasiveEarthworms.pdf>

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