

Waltham Land Trust

is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving our community's natural resources for the future through education, open space acquisition and protection.

WALTHAM



JOURNAL WINTER 2007

Trail marking on the Western Greenway has begun!

Luba Zhaurova

On December 2nd, one of the only cold winter days that month, spirits were high as members of the Waltham Land Trust and the intercommunity Friends of the Western Greenway began marking the Western Greenway trail.

Volunteers from three communities — Waltham, Lexington and Belmont — installed the first Western Greenway markers on the eastern end of the trail. Beginning at Mass Audubon's Habitat Sanctuary, they posted the markers along the trail at Habitat, Rock Meadow Conservation Area in Belmont, and Beaver Brook North Reservation in Waltham (formerly part of the Met State campus).

Since its founding in 1999, the Waltham Land Trust has been working to make the Western Greenway a reality. The trail marking is a tangible step in raising awareness about the Western Greenway and building support for continuing the trail west and south to link it to more green spaces in Lexington and Waltham. To learn more about the Western Greenway and greenways



ROGER WRUBEL

The new Western Greenway trail marker.

in general, go to www.walthamlandtrust.org/land.

Friends of the Western Greenway is a coalition of land conservation and advocacy groups located in but not limited to the Greenway communities of Belmont, **continued on page 4**

Save the Date! Waltham Earth Day Celebration, Sunday April 22, 2007

Planning is well underway for this year's Earth Day 2007 Celebration that will take place at the "Green Heart" of the City – the UMass Field Station and Cedar Hill Girl Scout Activity Center on Beaver St. Our Earth Day 2007 Celebration will focus on the many ways that Waltham residents, businesses and city departments are protecting our environment. It will include your ideas and practices for using our natural resources in a sustainable way. *If you have something you'd like to share at Earth Day (such as innovative home energy conservation methods or green building techniques), please contact us at info@walthamlandtrust.org or call 781-893-3355 to reserve a table or display space, free to WLT members.* We also need volunteers to help plan and make Earth Day happen. Please let us know if you can help.

The cooperation of the city through the departments that care for and plan for our lands and waters will

be a key to our success. We are grateful to Mayor McCarthy for having endorsed our draft program and promised the city's assistance. In addition, ten like-minded organizations have joined with WLT, the City and the Patriots Trail Girl Scout Council to make Earth Day 2007 truly home grown. We hope that this new direction will become a tradition in the city.

The Earth Day 2007 Cooperating Organizations are the Charles River Watershed Association, Community Farms Outreach, Waltham Farmers' Market, Friends of Stonehurst, Gore Place, Green Rows of Waltham, Hardy Pond Association, Historic New England/Lyman Estate, Patriots Trail Girl Scout Council, Prospect Hill Park Advocacy Group, Waltham Garden Club, and the Waltham Land Trust. The contact person is Inge Uhler, Earth Day Coordinator. She can be reached at 781-893-3355, 781-899-2844 or via email at info@walthamlandtrust.org.

Duck Tales

by Jenn Dean (*Homo sapiens*)

Editor's note, Jenn Dean, former Waltham Land Trust Board member and active volunteer, wrote this article last winter (2005/2006) before she moved west to Washington. Unfortunately we did not have space for this wonderful article last winter, so we're running it now, in anticipation of our March Duck watching event. We have not checked to see whether the ducks she describes are there this year – hopefully they are and we will see some of them at our March 11th event (see calendar).

Far north of here in Canada, as the temperatures plummet, and the rivers and ponds ice over, fantastical waterfowl (Family Anatidae) wing their way south. Driven by the lack of food, they come to New England and places where open water still abounds in winter. Seeking fish, snails, aquatic insects, mollusks and plants, they descend on Waltham's waterways. Look close, or you'll miss them, dismissing those blobs on the water as mere run-of-the-mill Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*).

Head towards the Shaw's parking lot on River Street, and park in the back of the lot down by the river, next to the site of the old bleachery dam. After crossing the pedestrian bridge over the river, turn right on the pathway and head towards Newton Street. Almost immediately on your right you'll find a bench and a sandy clearing, and a large gathering of mallards. But look closer, and on the outer fringes you'll see a small pod of ringneck ducks. Ringnecks (*Aythya collaris*) are in the subfamily called diving ducks, and that's what they do. Named after their chestnut colored neck ring, which is rarely visible against their purple black head and neck plumage; they should be called the ring-billed duck, as their bill is a bluish color, outlined in white, with a bright white ring around the tip. They also have a canoe shaped whitish gray mark on their flanks.

Ringnecks tend to like smaller, often wooded ponds, but will seek rivers in winter. They eat snails and aquatic insects, and their bill has a serrated edge, which they use to pull the seeds off aquatic plants. Since someone has been feeding the mallards regularly, these beautiful ringnecks have become habituated to humans. They no longer act wild, and come right over when someone appears at the bench. (A cautionary word on feeding wild ducks at the end of this article).

Along with the ringnecks, a pair of wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*), what I call the paint-by-numbers-duck, with its spectacular burnt orange, green, and blue plumage

outlined in white, are often seen near the mallards. Its Latin name translates to "waterbird in bridal dress," besides the flashy colors, it looks as if it's wearing a veil over its head. Also with the mallards, look for a single American Coot (*Fulica americana*) a diminutive black bird with a triangular white bill, actually in the Rallidae family (it's related to Rails and Gallinules). The Coot often zips in and out of the bigger ducks, unbothered by their noisy territorial presence. That's because American Coots are aggressive, and have even been known to steal food from people at campsites. (The next time you go camping, you may want to sleep holding onto your Fig Newtons...).

Continue walking towards the Newton Street Bridge, keeping your eye towards the middle of the river and on the far bank. Common Mergansers (*Mergus merganser*) float in this area, disappearing regularly under the water as they forage. There is nothing common about a Common Merganser, with its stunning white body and metallic green head, and thin red bill with a serrated edge for gripping its prey. Look carefully, too, for a single Common Goldeneye, with its green and white stripes and white cheek patch on a green head. And behold its burning eye like a tiny sun. This Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*—say that three times fast) often fishes in the middle of the river on the opposite side away from the pedestrian walkway. When looking for Common Mergansers, and the Goldeneye, look for white flanks; seen from a distance, they stand out.

But the piece de resistance of the river, in my opinion, is the Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*). I call them parrots of the river: sporting gorgeous chestnut, black, and white plumage, they have a giant white hood on the tops of their heads that they can raise and lower. This white hood is outlined in black, and since the duck is so small (18 inches), it's the white hood that you often see from a distance in order to identify it. The female appears



Two male Hooded Mergansers

brown, with a punk haircut. I've seen between one and six of these creatures at a time since Thanksgiving weekend. A word of warning: secretive, they love to hide in the reeds on the other side of the river, so look carefully with your binoculars. Also, they can raise and lower their hoods, altering their appearance.

Don't worry if you don't spot all these species at once. Regular drop by visits will yield sightings, and the ducks don't leave until March. So try your luck on this stretch of the Riverwalk between the Shaw's and Newton Street.

One final word on ducks that I learned from the friendly wildlife rehabilitators at a pelican and wild bird rescue and rehabilitation sanctuary that I periodically

work at in Florida. Feeding wild birds like ducks can actually contribute to their death, because most people like to feed these birds bread. In a bird's stomach, bread (*Whitius Wonderus breadius*) expands, making the bird feel full, but giving it absolutely no nutritional value. And because it feels full, it stops foraging. Since birds live on the edge, they need optimal food sources in order to survive sub-zero weather.

Besides discouraging them from foraging for foods that are better for their bodies, feeding wild ducks encourages them to form unnaturally large flocks (*Bothersomus Noisius*) and sets up competition with other species that wouldn't normally occur. Habituating them to humans sets them up for potential harm from not-so-friendly humans. It also discourages them from migrating, and large unnatural flocks of mallards and geese can foul their own water sources. (I should mention that feeding birds like great blue herons is illegal). Happy birding!

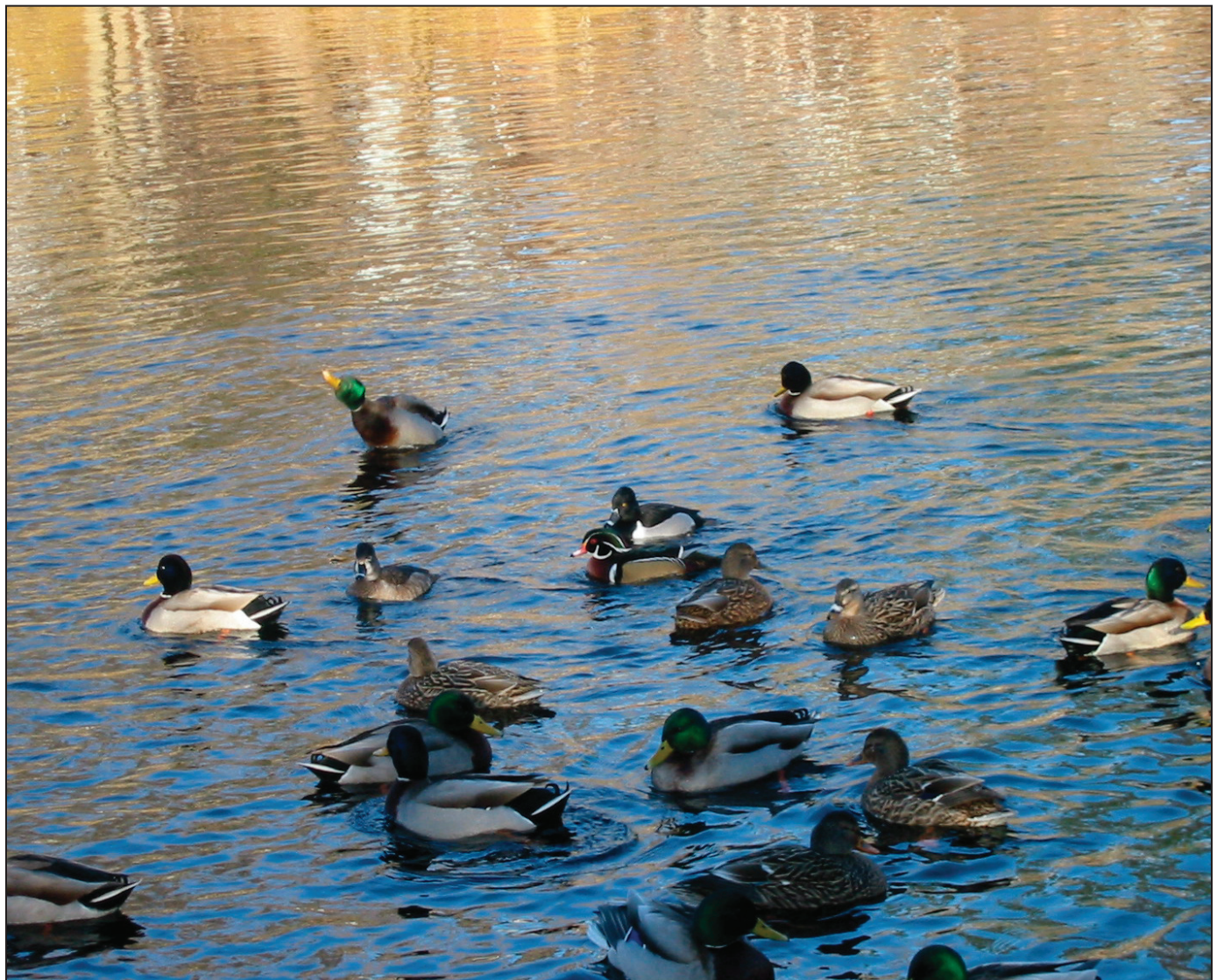
Mallards, ringneck ducks, wood ducks

NEW BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED

At our seventh Annual Meeting on October 25th, 2006, the Waltham Land Trust welcomed three new outstanding Board Members:

Susannah King is an environmental analyst for the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission in Lowell and a project manager for the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program. Susannah grew up in Waltham and got her start in environmental protection with the Environmental Club at Waltham High School and as an environmental management intern for the City of Waltham.

Mike Squillante is a long time member of the WLT and a strong advocate for preserving Waltham's open space and grassroots democracy. A former Waltham City Councillor, Mike was one of the original members of the Hardy Pond Association. He is currently a Vice President of Research at RMD, Inc. in Watertown.



INGE UHLIR



Mike Tabaczynski of Lexington and his daughter Jenny, Marc Rudnick (hammer in hand) and Bower Himes of Waltham, Keith Ohmart of Lexington and Lesya Struz of Waltham joined in to post the 1st trail marker on the Western Greenway.

continued from page 1

Waltham, and Lexington. The Coalition is dedicated to preserving, protecting and enhancing the Western Greenway.

We hope you'll start taking the advantage of this newly marked part of the trail soon!

continued from page 3

Nadene Stein is the Principal of the Northeast Elementary School in Waltham. Nadene has been teaching elementary and special needs children since 1986. She also has been involved in Healthy Waltham's successful Waltham Walks! Program for the past two years, and she has instituted a successful Walk to School Program at Northeast Elementary School. In addition, Nadene helped establish a Walk and Talk with Elected Officials program to give constituents one on one time with various elected officials.

During the meeting, two current Board members were also reelected:

Daniel Melnechuk, a Waltham resident since 1991, joined the WLT Board in 2000 with the hope that he could help increase Waltham's harmony of living with nature by trying to preserve the remaining open

Community Preservation Update

by Karen Patterson

In November 2005 Waltham voters narrowly approved the Community Preservation Act (CPA). As a result of the adoption of the CPA, the City Council established the Community Preservation Committee through General Ordinance #30452 in June 2006 to "study the needs, possibilities, and resources of the city regarding community preservation." The ordinance further states that "The committee shall consult with the Mayor, the City Council, the Planning Director, the Housing Director, the Conservation Commission, the Waltham Historical Commission, the Board of Survey and Planning, the Parks-Recreation Board, the Waltham Housing Authority, the Waltham Housing Partnership Committee, and any persons acting in those capacities or performing like duties, in conducting such studies." The Committee itself was established in the fall of 2006 with the following five members representing the various interests covered by the CPA: Joseph Maguire, Chair (Conservation Commission), Scott Hovsepian (Waltham Housing Authority), Richard Pizzi (Board of Survey and Planning), Joseph Salvo (Parks-Recreation Board), and Carl Zinnell (Waltham Historical Commission). Each committee member is appointed for a one year term.

The Community Preservation Committee will hold its first public hearing to seek input on the needs of the community on Tuesday, February 27th in the City Council Chambers. At the time of this publication, it was not known yet how many public meetings there would be and whether there might be a public meeting

continued on next page

space. Dan is also active in the Massachusetts Green-Rainbow Party and Waltham Alliance to Create Housing (WATCH). On behalf of the WLT, Dan successfully took on the job of campaign manager for the 2005 drive to get the Community Preservation Act (CPA) adopted in Waltham. In 2006, Dan moved the WLT to a new web site system.

Lesya Struz, native of Boston, has a degree in Environmental Planning and Landscape Design from the Conway School of Landscape Design. She has worked with Pacific Crest Trail Association, Mass Audubon, and more. Lesya consults on design with native plants and is passionate about backpacking. Serving on the WLT's Land Committee, Lesya has worked on GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping of Waltham's open space and is working to integrate the City's Forest Street Park into the Western Greenway.

for each of the areas (housing, open space, historic preservation and recreation) covered by the CPA. We will alert Land Trust members via email and our web

calendar when we know further details about the public meetings. Stay tuned!

The Waltham Land Trust gratefully acknowledges gifts made in honor of the following people:

Mrs. Kit Burstein

Elsie MacLean

Stephen Rourke

And in memory of the following people:

Anna Melnechuk

Barbara and Joseph Robinshaw

Lt. Donald P. Roche

Alvin Rose

Bill Saulnier

Calendar of Events

Please check www.walthamlandtrust.org for changes to event dates and times. For more information, contact Karen Patterson at kpatters@walthamlandtrust.org or 781.893.3355

Saturday, March 3rd, 6 PM. Margarita's Full Moon Madness Benefit. Margarita's Mexican Restaurant, 227 Moody St in Waltham will hold a benefit for the Waltham Land Trust. The Full Moon Margarita Madness program benefits different local charities each month through the donation of 5% of its gross lounge receipts on the night of the Full Moon (note this does not include dinner receipts). Please bring your friends and enjoy an evening out and support the Waltham Land Trust at the same time!

Sunday, March 11th, 11 AM – 12 PM - Waltham Land Trust Duck Walk. Spring isn't the only time to see birds — from November to March, a variety of northern

dwelling ducks come south, from Canada, to winter on our waterways. We'll hope to see Common and Hooded Mergansers, Ringnecks, Mallards, Wigeons and Wood ducks. Meet behind the Shaw's supermarket, 130 River Street, next to the foot bridge that goes over the Charles River. Bring binoculars if you have them. Dress warmly and please note participants must be able to be quiet and observant.

Sunday, April 22nd 10 AM – 4 PM – Waltham Earth Day Celebration! The Waltham Land Trust, Patriot's Path Girl Scout Council and the City of Waltham invite you to celebrate Earth Day at the "Green Heart" of the City – the UMass Field Station at 240 Beaver St and the Cedar Hill Girl Scout Activity Center at 265 Beaver St. There will be hands-activities, demonstrations, healthful food, and educational presentations and entertainment. Parking will be limited so please use alternative transportation if possible. Call 781-893-3355 for more information on public transportation and parking options that day or to volunteer.

Waltham Land Trust Membership Application

W07

Yes! I want to help preserve open space in Waltham and create a network of trails and greenspace for recreation and wildlife protection!

I wish to ☐ join ☐ renew as a member

- ☐ Basic: \$25 for one year
- ☐ Contributing: \$50 for two years
- ☐ Sustaining: \$100 for four years
- ☐ Lifetime: \$1,000 for your lifetime
- ☐ Living Lightly (student, senior, other): \$15 one year
- ☐ I wish to make an additional donation of \$_____
- ☐ I am interested in volunteering for:
 - ☐ trail stewardship ☐ fundraising ☐ newsletter
 - ☐ events & publicity ☐ website ☐ other
- ☐ I have skills in:

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Visit www.walthamlandtrust.org to learn more!

Please mail your check and form to:

Waltham Land Trust
PO Box 541120
Waltham MA 02454-1120



Waltham Land Trust Journal

is published by Waltham Land Trust, Inc.

PO Box 541120

Waltham MA 02454-1120.

© 2006 Waltham Land Trust

Waltham Land Trust, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable corporation, and is a member of the Land Trust Alliance and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

An electronic file (pdf) of this newsletter is available on our web site, <www.walthamlandtrust.org>.

Officers: Katherine Buttolph (President), David Kehs (Vice Pres.), Marie Daly (Clerk), Diana Young (Treasurer)

Directors: George Darcy III, Susannah King, Daniel Melnechuk, Joris Naiman, Stephen Rourke, Marc Rudnick, Mike Squillante, Nadene Stein, Lesya Struz, Inge Uhler.

Waltham Land Trust's Mission

We are a group of Waltham citizens who want to save open space in our city. Our mission is to acquire, preserve or restore land in a way that

- ♦ balances conservation and access,
- ♦ maximizes the natural value of land,
- ♦ reduces habitat fragmentation, and
- ♦ permanently protects and conserves natural resources;

So that

- ♦ public appreciation of natural resources grows,
- ♦ native habitat is preserved and restored, environmental quality of life is improved (air, water, noise and light pollution are reduced),
- ♦ biodiversity is increased, and
- ♦ a legacy of conservation is perpetuated in Waltham.

Please send any comments to the return address below, or email to <memberlink@walthamlandtrust.org>.

Waltham Land Trust
PO Box 541120
Waltham MA 02454-1120

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON MA
PERMIT NO. 56470

If you're not already a WLT member and have received this complimentary copy, please consider joining today!

Green Space Blues Jam Postponed

Due to the big Earth Day celebration we are planning for April 22nd, we have postponed our Green Space Blues Jam to the fall. Look for more information about the event at Earth Day and in our spring newsletter. Meanwhile, if you have ideas about how to make the event even more fun and successful, please contact Karen Patterson at kpatters@walthamlandtrust.org or 781.893.3355.

Please renew or join

To renew or join please use the enclosed membership application and return to:

Waltham Land Trust
PO Box 541120
Waltham MA 02454-1220

 Printed on recycled paper.