

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.



JOURNAL FALL 2020

The Invention of the Western Greenway

Marc Rudnick, WLT Co-founder and Roger Wrubel, WLT Advisory Board member and former sanctuary director of Mass Audubon's Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary in Belmont

During the 1990s, the re-use plans for the old Metropolitan State Hospital (Met State) on Trapelo Road drew the community's attention to a large expanse of green properties stretching across the boundaries of Waltham, Lexington, and Belmont. It also brought together conservationists from the three towns with concerns about the various changes coming at McLean Hospital, the Fernald School, and other institutional properties in the area.

This expanse of green space had escaped over-development, thanks to long term ownership by wealthy local families and the establishment of many state institutions seeking pastoral campuses for their operations. From the Atkins family compound in Belmont (now Mass Audubon's Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary) to the Robert Treat Paine estate in Waltham (now part of the city's Storer Conservation Lands), a natural area of some 1300 acres remained in the midst of this densely populated area of Massachusetts.

During this period, independent actions by area residents began to highlight this green space, its value as a wildlife corridor, and the opportunities for passive recreation and nature study. In Belmont, Roger Wrubel engaged residents with a new map of the connected lands, while John Dieckmann expounded on the possible rail trail connections to Belmont. Waltham historian Marie Daly worked with others to preserve the

woodlands and honor the history surrounding the Met State. Lexington conservationist Keith Ohmart and mountain bike activist Mike Tabaczynski took time off from their Lexington trail work to start advocating for this "new" trail locus along their southern border. And Marc Rudnick, founder of the Hardy Pond Association in Waltham, began exploring the hidden trail possibilities along Chester Brook, Hardy Pond's outlet stream that flows in a narrow strip of undeveloped space traversing Waltham.

In 1999, the Waltham Land Trust (WLT) was formed and quickly adopted protecting this green space as one of its top priorities. In 2000, Roger Wrubel became sanctuary director of Habitat Sanctuary and began leading walks through the "greenway." The Belmont Citizens Forum was founded, giving added direction to John Dieckmann's efforts. Within a year of being exposed to each other's parallel efforts, representatives of the WLT, the Citizens of Lexington for Conservation, Mass Audubon, and the



The Western Greenway Trail travels over Beaver Brook.

Belmont Citizens Forum joined together to name this amazing green space and to create an umbrella organization, Friends of the Western Greenway (FoWG), to work on trail building and preservation.

But what does calling someplace a greenway mean? As WLT founder, Marie Daly, said, "The greenway designation doesn't create legal restrictions. It's a planning tool the communities can use to draw attention to these vital areas." (Globe NorthWest, March 27, 2003). The Western Greenway is made up of many properties: some publicly owned, some private, some protected from development, others not. Without any official designation, the Western Greenway would

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Meadow in Progress

Alessio Baggio, WLT member and steward

Hello, my name is Alessio Baggio and I'm a WHS senior and a Life Scout with Troop 250, Waltham. I am currently working on my Eagle Scout Service Project to benefit DCR and hopefully the community as a whole. For those who are not familiar with Eagle Projects, they are intended to demonstrate a scout's ability to lead and coordinate others while executing a project for the benefit of the community. This particular project took nine months of advanced planning and legwork to obtain all the necessary approvals and ensure the full support of the various local environmental communities.

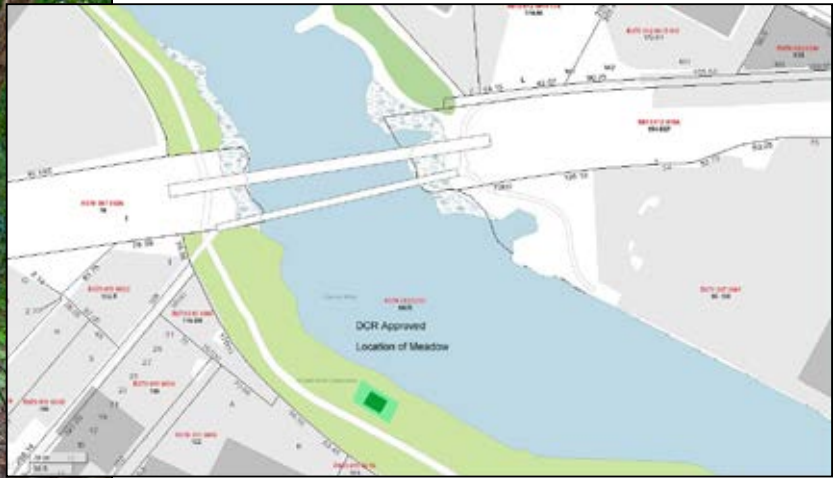


For my project, I decided to create a native plant meadow on DCR land close to the Mary T. Early Footbridge in Waltham. I chose this location because I spend a lot of time at this site magnet fishing with my friends. Over the past few years we have removed hundreds of pounds of debris from this section of the Charles River. Besides magnet fishing, thanks to a local educational environmental youth program called Meadows for Biodiversity, I became very interested in the role native plants have in saving declining pollinator populations and restoring important biodiversity to our environment. This

program made me aware of how few native plants are present along the Charles River and how our green spaces have been taken over by invasive plants from various parts of the world. In the end, after considering a number of possible projects, I decided that a native plant meadow rehabilitation project at this location was the best fit for me and would have the greatest overall beneficial impact to the community.

In addition to creating the meadow, I will install an information kiosk in order to educate visitors about the important role native plants play in healing the environment.

If you would like to learn more about my project, follow the evolution of the meadow, volunteer to help out with the project, or donate a native plant please visit the website <http://better-with-meadows.webnode.com>



Member Spotlight

In each Fall Journal, we highlight a member of the Waltham Land Trust who goes above and beyond the call of duty volunteering their time and energy to further our mission. Emily Szczypek, a WLT member since 2010, attends nearly every event we offer, often with her husband Bob Gaffney and always sporting a large camera around her neck. Emily is very friendly and outgoing, easily chatting up fellow program attendees as well as folks she meets along the Charles River, where she regularly stewards and frequently captures gorgeous photos of songbirds, waterfowl, birds of prey, and other wildlife. Indeed, many of the photos on the WLT's flicker page on our website are from Emily! We asked her to take time out of her busy schedule to answer a few questions.

WLT: What is your first memory of enjoying open space and nature?

ES: I grew up in the city. I do remember clearly catching grasshoppers & then releasing them. I also remember catching what we called "fairies" which are the seeds

from milkweed pods that float through the air. Little did I know the significance of milkweed being necessity as Monarch caterpillar's food source. I remember there were sunflowers in a small open area. They remain such a cheery blossom.

WLT: We know you are a very active steward, particularly along the Charles River. Thank you! What is the oddest and/or most beautiful thing you've encountered while stewarding?

ES: What I love is that every day is so different it is like a surprise package being opened every day. I do citizen science reporting birds to e-bird part of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. There are many times when I will repeatedly list like twenty nine different species of birds I have seen along the Charles River. I love seeing adults and children being interested in birds, turtles, dragonflies and the natural wonders right in the city of Waltham.

WLT: Why should someone consider becoming a volunteer steward with the WLT?

ES: We are touching the future by taking care of the city's natural resources today. Extinct is forever and we have lost many species in plant animal and insect species. We have a comradery with a common goal. It adds to our own enjoyment in the present moment. It is an immediate reward to see what a difference a person can make.



WLT: What advice do you have for those looking to experience Waltham's trails and open spaces?

ES: Enter Waltham's open spaces with an open mind, open eyes and open ears. I do listening as well as looking. Sometimes I will hear a Downy Woodpecker pecking on a tree or making its call. One time I thought a Blue Jay or Squirrel was making some rustling noise and it turned out to be a Pileated Woodpecker which wasn't at all bothered by my tramping through the fallen leaves making a rustling noise myself. That was not along the river but it paid to investigate. It is like a computer game with live elements. I love the flowers, trees, turtles and other natural phenomena that we have in Waltham.

WLT: Do you have a favorite natural place in Waltham that you can share with our readers?

ES: My favorite place is the Charles River in Waltham. I have walked Prospect Hill with my husband and it is nice for a change of scenery but the river always beckons me back. Not only is there an abundance of nature but I find the flow of the river soothing as well.

WLT: Why do you support the Waltham Land Trust?

ES: Taking care of our environment is of utmost importance to me. It is helpful to be around other folks who have the same interest in preserving our open spaces for us to enjoy in the present moment as well as preserving it for the future.

Waltham's Open Space inventory

Diana Young, WLT Board member

The Waltham Land Trust came into existence in 1999. In the following year, the City Council set up an Ad Hoc Open Space Committee that included some Land Trust founders to focus on the open space in the city. As a part of that process, the Land Trust began its earliest project to inventory the open space in the city and to assign values to each property in excess of four acres. The inventory also classified how much risk there was that each property would be developed. Properties received scores for qualities such as their ecological value, geologic features, historical and cultural significance, recreational and educational use and connectivity to other open space.

Over time, that inventory has been updated to account for properties that have been acquired for open space and those that have been lost to development. To see the current inventory, go the Waltham Land Trust website under Projects.

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from p. 1 Western Greenway

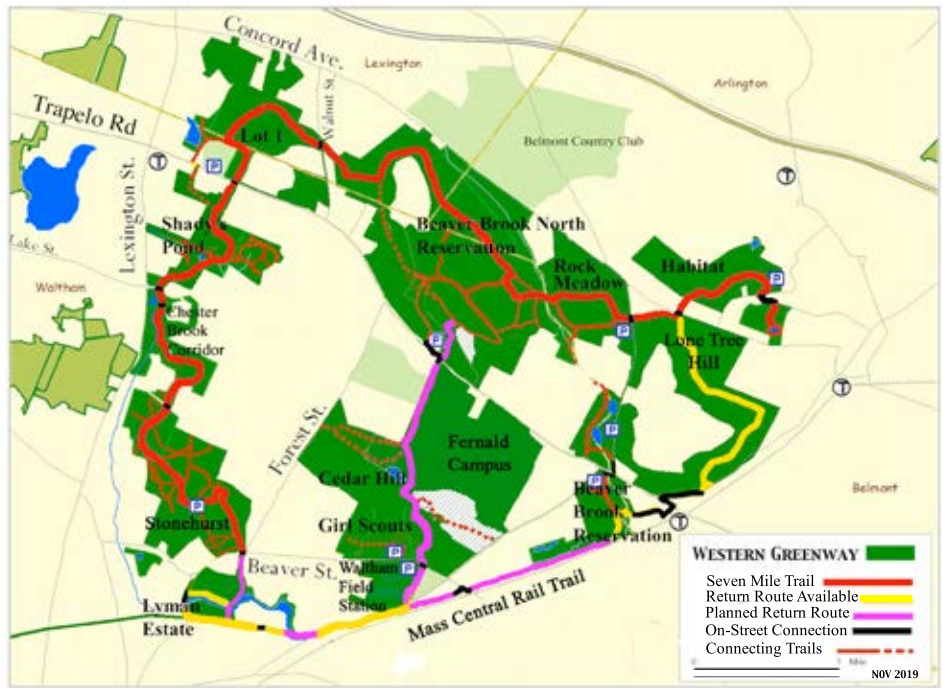
exist if people thought and acted as if it were a real thing.

To accomplish this, FoWG needed to get more people out using the greenway and thinking about it not as separate parcels but as a connected greenspace. As a start, WLT provided grant funding received from the Greenways Grant Program of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management to publish a brochure entitled *The Western Greenway: An Opportunity to Link the Lands*. That brochure named and described the greenway with a map and proposed trail. At the same time, FoWG began to blaze the existing trails and make plans for what was needed to make the proposed greenway trail a reality.

The first evidence of political success in getting recognition for the Western Greenway came at a Lexington Planning Board meeting in 2005. A developer had bought, at an auction of surplus state property, six acres of the former Middlesex County Hospital spanning the Waltham/Lexington border. Greenway advocates showed the Planning Board that a section of the greenway trail went through that property and wanted the developer to do something to maintain trail access. The Planning Board acknowledged the greenway as a valuable regional amenity and included in its approval a requirement that the developer provide access between two of the house lots to the Western Greenway Trail.

Greenway advocates had been alerted to this development in 2004 when the state legislature, at the urging of the Romney administration, slipped a provision into the state budget allowing for “fast-track” disposal of surplus state property. Several large abandoned hospitals were quickly auctioned off for development. The Middlesex County Hospital parcel, discussed in the previous paragraph, was one example. The state then scheduled an auction for “Lot 1” -- the remaining 47 acres of Middlesex County Hospital property, all a part of the Western Greenway.

FoWG and its parent organizations became influential opponents to the “fast-track” disposal law. Over two years, they held many meetings with state representatives, ran a letter-writing campaign to the legislative leadership, certified five vernal pools in Lot 1, and organized media outreach. This effort led to the Lot 1 auction being canceled and the eventual



sunsetting of the fast-track surplus property disposal law in 2006. In 2008, Lot 1 was transferred to the state’s Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and joined to the Beaver Brook North Reservation.

In 2001, there were trails on some of the properties including Habitat, Lone Tree Hill, Rock Meadow, Met State (now the Beaver Brook North Reservation), and the Paine Estate. But there were many gaps to fill in the proposed Western Greenway Trail. FoWG spent the next 13 years obtaining agreements and easements for new trails crossing the properties of the Waltham School Department, the Waltham YMCA, the Bishops Forest Condominium Associations, DCR, and the City of Waltham, most of them negotiated by a team led by WLT founder, Marc Rudnick. Conservation commission approvals had to be obtained for each bridge and boardwalk constructed. Grants were written to pay for the building materials.

All new trails, boardwalks, and bridges were built by volunteers. Lexington’s Mike Tabaczynski, a well-known New England trail builder, laid out the new trails, designed the boardwalks, and got other New England Mountain Bike Association members to join in. Pizza-loving local volunteers spent many a summer day getting dirty, sweaty, and very tired building Western Greenway trails. An entire summer of work days was spent building a 500-foot boardwalk across the marsh on the west side of the former Met State property. Several summers were spent building the Chester Brook Corridor, the part of the trail that parallels Lexington Street in Waltham between Lot 1 and the Paine Estate.

Filling in these gaps created the current seven-mile Western Greenway Trail that runs from Habitat on the northeast to the Paine Estate on the southwest. You can now even find the Western Greenway Trail on Google Maps!

FoWG continues to work maintaining the trail, with the largest effort coming from WLT’s Trail Stewards, a trained band of volunteers with the energy and tools to keep the trails clear and safe for hikers and bikers. FoWG is also planning to fill in the next trail gap soon. In 2018, WLT negotiated a trail easement with Bentley University to cross a short section of woods on their campus that ends at the Lyman Estate. That trail segment will be built once an agreement is reached with Historic New England, owner of the Lyman Estate.

Discussions with Historic New England include an exciting idea—building a bridge across Beaver Brook, which separates the Lyman Estate from the soon-to-be-constructed Mass Central Rail Trail. One can now walk the abandoned railroad tracks from Lyman nearly to Route 128, thanks to clearing work led by FoWG activist, Laurel Carpenter.

After a generation, Western Greenway advocates have learned that persistence is required and pays off. Indeed, FoWG has successfully invented the Western Greenway,

taking it from an idea in a few residents’ heads to a well-established trail network, community asset and wildlife resource. There is no better time than now for creating a network of off-road trails that offer an alternative for recreation, commuting, and shopping, away from the ever-present automobile. The Western Greenway is a part of a local trail network including the aforementioned Mass Central Rail Trail, ACROSS-Lexington trails, and Waltham’s Charles River Blue Heron Trail. Regionally, it’s connected to the well-used Minuteman Commuter Trail, the Bay Circuit Trail from Plum Island to Duxbury, MA, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail from Lowell to Framingham, and the Watertown-Fresh Pond Bikeway.

Adapted, with permission, from a Belmont Citizens Forum (belmontcitizensforum.org) article by Roger Wrubel, former sanctuary director of Mass Audubon’s Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary. Marc Rudnick is a founder, and current Treasurer, of the Waltham Land Trust.

WESTERN GREENWAY MILESTONES

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| <p>1990s Met State Hospital Reuse planning reveals potential greenway</p> <p>1999 Waltham Land Trust founded</p> <p>2000 Roger Wrubel, ED of Mass Audubon Habitat, leads first Western Greenway Walk</p> <p>2001 Friends of the Western Greenway committee formed</p> <p>City of Waltham acquires Chester Brook Woods parcel</p> <p>2002 Waltham Land Trust gets DEM Grant to develop Greenway brochure</p> <p>Greenway trail laid out from Habitat to Mill Street in Belmont</p> <p>2003 First Greenway brochure published</p> <p>Beaver Brook North Reservation is established at former Met State Hospital</p> <p>Beaver Brook North Reservation & Rock Meadow trail blazed</p> <p>2004 City of Waltham acquires Shady’s Pond parcel</p> <p>Lot 6 of Middlesex County Hospital land auctioned by state for development</p> <p>2006 State “fast-track” auction law sunsets, thanks to local opposition</p> <p>2007 Shady’s Pond trail planned and cleanup begin</p> <p>2008 Lot 1 of Middlesex County Hospital in Lexington transferred to DCR care</p> | <p>2008 Belmont/Waltham bridge over Beaver Brook rebuilt</p> <p>2009 Lot 1 of Middlesex County Hospital in Waltham acquired by City</p> <p>Waltham High School trails & bridges built</p> <p>Long Boardwalk built at Beaver Brook North Reservation</p> <p>2010 Shady’s Pond trail & bridges built</p> <p>2011 Lot 1 to BeaverBrook North connector trail built</p> <p>Lot 3 trail built connecting Lot 1 to Trapelo Rd</p> <p>2012 Waltham YMCA easement secured, boardwalk trail completed</p> <p>Greenway route across Chesterbrook Woods & Storer lands blazed</p> <p>Waltham Land Trust establishes and trains first Greenway Stewards</p> <p>2013 Greenway “missing link” at Bishops Forest secured and trail completed</p> <p>2014 City of Waltham acquires 200-acre campus of former Fernald School</p> <p>2017 Western Greenway trail route at Fernald approved by Waltham City Council</p> <p>2018 Western Greenway extension trail at Bentley University approved</p> <p>2019 Mass Central Rail Trail design completed</p> |
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Over the past 20 years, working with our neighbors in Belmont & Lexington, the Waltham Land Trust has designated a 1300-acre greenway and with scores of volunteers, has created a 7-mile long hiking and biking trail for public use. Here’s a breakdown of highlights.

Learning about Owls and Ways We Impact Them

Diana Young, WLT Board member, Program Committee Chair

On February 20, 2020, seven majestic birds of prey were brought to Waltham as part of the Waltham Land Trust's February school vacation activity. One hundred participants of all ages were thrilled to welcome Mark and Marcia Wilson and their crew to The First Parish of Waltham for an educational and entertaining *Eyes on Owls of the World* program. The group was introduced to an Eastern screech owl, a Saw whet owl, an American kestrel, a barred owl, a barn owl, a Great Horned owl, and an Eurasian Eagle owl. Many thanks to the Waltham Cultural Council for partially funding the event.

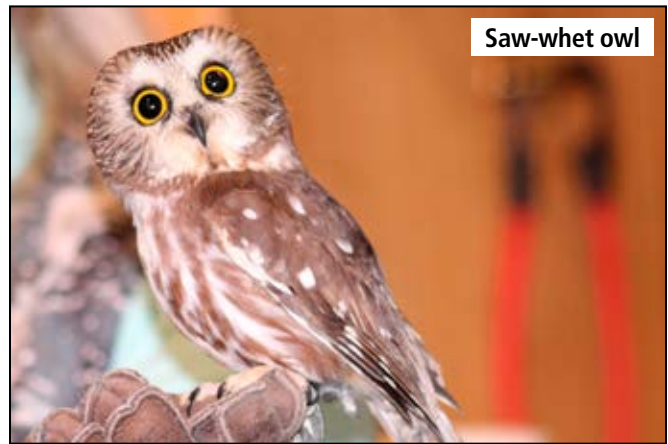
Many of the owls shown at the program had a similar reason for being in captivity. They had been poisoned. The Wilsons pointed out how useful owls are in helping to control rodent populations, but said that our attempts to do the same thing are killing or seriously injuring owls and other rodent-eating animals. Many people use poison to kill mice living in homes and those poisons compel the mice to rush outdoors in search of water. The owls often eat these mice and are also poisoned and often killed.

from page 3 *Open space inventory*

<https://walthamlandtrust.org/open-space-inventory/>. The inventory was used to support Waltham's acquisition of open space. Check out our successes in the chart below!

Not everything on the original list resulted in preserved open space as Indian Ridge was lost to the apartment complex called The Ridge and so were some smaller parcels.

There's still plenty of work to do to both acquire and protect open space. Our main concern now is to have permanent protections put in place for each parcel of



If you have rodent problem, use the old-fashioned mouse traps baited with peanut butter, or any other trap that captures the mouse and keeps it in your home. This way, we and the owls can work together to control the mouse population.



open space in the city. So, no conservation restrictions are in place, but we're negotiating with the city on two and will keep advocating for more. Stay tuned – there is plenty more to do!

Land Acquisitions

*Fernald School	140 acres	*Jericho Hill Summit	6.0 acres
Trapelo Lawns	51.5 acres	Edgewater Drive	4.0 acres
*Shady's Pond	34.0 acres	*Arrigo Farm	4.0 acres
*Sanderson Heights	26.3 acres	*Grove Street Green Space	2.0 acres
*Chester Brooks Woods	26.0 acres	385 Trapelo Road	1.0 acres
*Berry Farm	20 acres	Chemistry Station Park	.08 acres
Smith Street Wetlands	16.3 acres	*Smith Point	.02 acres
Wellington Crossing Woods	9.0 acres	Arcadia Avenue	.01 acres
Mackerel Hill	7.3 acres	Waltham Field Station*	25 acres
*Bow Street	6.4 acres	Total Acquired	379 acres

* WLT Campaigns

Upcoming Events with the Waltham Land Trust

Charles River Bird Walk

Saturday, October 17, 1-3 p.m.

Park/meet in Shaw's lot, 130 River Street

Join us for an easy walk along the paved pathways of the Charles River downstream to the Blue Heron suspension bridge in Watertown and back. We'll be looking for migrating birds and admiring Eagle Scout Alessio Baggio's native plant meadow he is creating across the river from Shaw's. Registration and masks required. Sign-up at walthamlandtrust.org or by calling the WLT office at 781-893-3355. Space is limited.

BISTRO 781 Give Back Events

Wednesday, October 21, 5 p.m. - 10 p.m. and Thursday,

October 22, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Bistro 781, 336 Moody Street

Thank Bistro 781 for supporting local causes like the Land Trust by eating dinner on-site (indoor and two outdoor patio seating options!) or ordering take out on Wednesday evening or during the day on Thursday before 5 p.m. The WLT gets 15% of all food sales with included certificate, available at walthamlandtrust.org. Register for a spot at the WLT outside tables at walthamlandtrust.org.

Guided Fungi Foray

Saturday, November 7, time and location t.b.d.

Mark your calendar now for a guided walk with mushroom expert Lawrence Millman, who will educate us about these fascinating plants as we hunt for them in a Waltham open space. Registration and masks required. Sign-up at walthamlandtrust.org or by calling the WLT office at 781-893-3355. Space is limited. Thanks to the Waltham Community Foundation for providing partial funding for this program.

Chicken of the Woods, an edible native fungus

Waltham Land Trust 21th Annual Meeting

Tuesday, November 17, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Online via Zoom

Help celebrate our 21th anniversary by attending our virtual annual meeting! Learn about the GANN Academy's project to recognize people buried at the MetFern Cemetery in Beaver Brook North Reservation. We'll also provide updates on all the projects we're tackling, celebrate our *Inge Uhlir Environmentalist of the Year*, and vote on new and returning WLT Directors.

#GIVING TUESDAY

Tuesday, December 1, all day at walthamlandtrust.org

Reclaim the true meaning of "the giving season" by joining people worldwide donating online the local charities like the WLT on the Tuesday after Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Give through our website: walthamlandtrust.org.

Hike Through Beaver Brook North Reservation

Saturday, December 5, 1 - 3 p.m.

Park/meet at McLaughlin Building by City Dog Ranch, Metropolitan Parkway North on the way to Avalon Lexington State Hospital

Celebrate the last WLT event of 2020 with a 3-mile hike through Waltham, Lexington and Belmont. We will loop around the Western Greenway, heading over to Rock Meadow and return on the carriage trail to the MetFern Cemetery. At the Cemetery we will have a brief discussion about the work Gann Academy students have done to recognize the people buried there. The path at times has some varied terrain and might be slippery and wet with mud, rocks, and tree roots. Registration and masks required. Sign-up at walthamlandtrust.org or by calling the WLT office at 781-893-3355 closer to the date. Space is limited.



WALTHAM



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

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*Published material represents the views of the authors and not neces-
sarily those of the Waltham Land Trust. Interested in submitting an
article, photo, or poem? Please send to WLT at P. O. Box 541120,
Waltham MA 02454 or to info@walthamlandtrust.org*

Waltham Land Trust's Mission

To create a legacy of land conservation in Waltham
by promoting, protecting, restoring, and acquiring
open space.

We envision growth in public appreciation of
natural resources, preservation and restoration of
native habitat, and increased biodiversity to foster a
healthier environment.

• SPECIAL GIFT MEMBERSHIP •

Have a friend, neighbor, or relative you think would
enjoy being part of the Waltham Land Trust? Why
not give them a gift membership? **We are offering a
special promotion for a limited time: 6 months for only
\$10!** (The normal price of an individual membership
is 12 months for \$25). **Support open space for a birth-
day or special occasion!**

To renew or join, visit our web site:
walthamlandtrust.org
or call 781-893-3355

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Please send any comments to the
return address, or email to
info@walthamlandtrust.org.

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

Printed on recycled paper.



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**Wednesday, October 21, 2020, 5 p.m. – 10 p.m. and
Thursday, October 22, 2020, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.**

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