

Nashoba Conservation Trust Fall 2019 News

Conservation Corner

Ken Hartlage

In 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Although dozens of other definitions have appeared since, this one-liner from the UN has endured, probably due to the simple elegance of its warning – take the future into account when we make decisions today, or there may be no future to take account of.

When we apply the UN’s definition at the community level some of the touch points are obvious: A clean and plentiful drinking water supply; air that is safe to breathe; and rivers and streams that are safe for swimming and fishing, to name a few. I am sure many would agree these things are not only important to Pepperell but are a basic right. Let’s add to that an adequate and healthful food supply, housing for our diverse demographic, space for recreational and cultural activities and equitable access to all these resources. The emerging mosaic is not just that of a sustainable community, but a vibrant and resilient one as well.



However, that idyllic vision is at serious risk. For centuries we believed that all these things and more could be had with little or no impact to the environment, to our natural resources, and to our well-being. It’s as if we thought the planet was an all-you-can-eat buffet with mother earth providing the never-ending bounty. But as we are witnessing first-hand with climate change and its impacts, the bill is coming due, and it’s huge. If we want to leave this place better off for our kids and future generations, significant changes are required, some of which are about the choices we make individually and as a community.

For fifty years, NCT has been at the forefront of creating a resilient and sustainable Pepperell through its land conservation and environmental education activities. As we look ahead to the next fifty years, NCT will continue this core mission while also providing leadership on a range of local sustainability issues that affect our community including land use, agriculture, water, economic development and, of course, climate change. If you are interested in contributing to these efforts with your expertise or passion, please reach out to us at contact@nashobatrust.org.

Gentians

Janet MacFarland

Bryant describes one of our most beautiful fall blooms in his poem. A color of blossom Thoreau described as “surpassing that of a male bluebird’s back”. The glorious blue Fringed Gentian (*Gentianopsis crinita*) is a rare treat to find in September and October and not common enough to be found easily. It has been described as one of the top ten most beautiful wildflowers on the continent. A biennial, it produces a rosette of leaves the first year and a flower stem up to two feet tall the second year. The seeds scatter when ripe by wind, or water, so plants tend to move to new locations - making their discovery a new challenge every year. Moist sunny meadows are the preferred habitat for these glories. I shall collect seeds this year and attempt to propagate some in order to hopefully introduce them to the new NCT pollinator meadow in the near future.

Thou waitest late, and com'st alone
When woods are bare and birds have flown,
And frosts and shortening days portend
The aged year is near its end.
Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye
Look through its fringes to the sky,-
Blue - blue - as if that sky let fall
A flower from its cerulean wall.

William Cullen Bryant 1794 - 1878



The Fringed Gentian (*Gentianopsis crinita*)



Closed bottle gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*)

Our other native northeastern gentian is the Closed (or Closed bottle) Gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*) named for Henry C. Andrews, a noted English painter of wildflowers. It is a perennial and a bit more common than the Fringed Gentian but still needs to be sought out along riverbanks or moist forest areas to be found. It is less showy than the Fringed but a lovely shade of blue or violet and has an interesting fused blossom that never opens. And yet it is able to attract pollinators with its sweetness. The bottled Gentian has one of the highest sugar content (40%) in its nectar of all flowers. Fall being the last hurrah for bees to store up sugar supplies, makes this plant attractive for its sweet nectar. However, it takes a strong bee to force its way into the corolla of the blossom. The four fused petals have extra pleats in them to expand without ripping as the bee climbs inside.

Continued on page 4...

NCT Acquires Land Along the Nashua River

Paula Terrasi

We are thrilled to announce the acquisition of 18 acres of land along the Nashua River in Pepperell. The parcel will be named the Marion Stoddart Conservation Area, honoring Marion's vision and commitment to create a protected greenway along the Nashua and its tributaries.



NCT Board members with Marion Stoddart (center, front) at the conservation parcel named in her honor.

The parcel, situated at 116 River Road opposite the Town Forest and behind a new housing development, consists of riparian habitat, field and woodlands, and offers visitors spectacular views of the Nashua River. The land is nestled between the Town of Pepperell's newly restored canoe/kayak launch site to the north and DCR land to the south. Although there has long been a conservation easement on this property as part of the 1.5-mile long Westside Trail, the land adjacent to it was in private ownership. Now, 18 acres of that adjoining land is permanently protected.

NCT worked with local developer Al Patenaude, who owned the land, to secure and protect it in accordance with Pepperell's Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) Bylaw. Pepperell's OSRD Bylaw requires all major subdivisions (those creating five or more lots or residential units) and multi-family special permit developments, allocate 40% of the subdivision property as protected open space. "This project highlights the community benefits of the OSRD Bylaw", said NCT President Ken Hartlage. "It enables developers and conservation groups to work together to protect critical habitat, provide passive recreational opportunities to the public and safeguard Pepperell's rural character."

continued on Page 4...

Upcoming Events

Gentians *continued from page 2...*

Janet MacFarland

The petals are also specially marked to let bees know when a flower has already been visited and drained of its sweets. The tips of the petals will change from white to purple once the nectar been extracted saving bees the needed energy to force their way inside the blossom.

The Gentiana were named after Gentius, a king of Illyria of the Balkan Peninsula. The roots of the yellow gentian (*Gentiana lutea*) had healing qualities used for his troops infected with malaria. All gentians contain in their roots a bitter substance that stimulates gastric secretions, and has been used to treat stomach ailments and improve digestion. Angostura Bitters used to flavor cocktails contains gentian.

NCT Acquires Land Along the Nashua River

Paula Terrasi

The naming of this newly conserved land honors Marion Stoddart's more than fifty-years of leadership to protect the health of our local rivers and streams. Marion long recognized that protecting the land adjacent to our waterbodies is critical to ensuring ecosystem viability. "It's an honor to be associated with the conservation of this beautiful stretch of land", Marion stated. "It exemplifies what can be achieved when a community recognizes the importance of protecting its waterways and brings us one step closer to establishing a greenway along all the watershed's riverfronts."

With the addition of the new canoe/kayak launch site on River Road, access to the Westside Trail is now easier than ever. From Town Hall, drive east on Main Street. At the traffic circle take the first exit onto River Road/Rte. 111. Shortly after the Pepperell Veterinary Hospital look for a small Canoe/Kayak Launch Area sign on the left side of the road. Turn left onto the gravel road and follow the signs to the parking area.

NCT will update its trail guide to include this new parcel and directions in the near future.

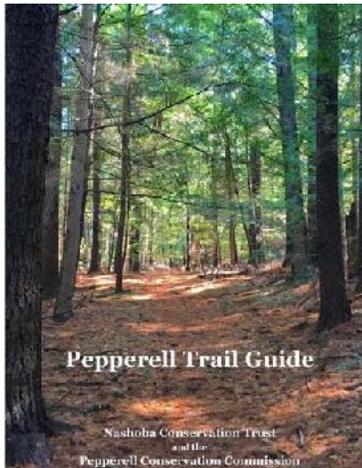
Call for Articles

As you can see from the articles in this edition, we have some excellent writing talent out there in our NCT member base. If you have anything you are interested in or passionate about, from a conservation perspective please use the link below to let us know. 100 – 300 words is about average. We are always looking for volunteers to lend a fresh perspective to our newsletters.

Newsletter@nashobatrust.org

Pepperell Trail Guide

The Pepperell Trail Guide describes sixteen conservation area and almost 20 miles of trails, some of which pass through or alongside some of Pepperell's most stunning natural areas, including the Nashua and Nissitissit Rivers, Heald Pond and Gulf Brook Ravine. Visit the NCT website at



www.nashobatrust.org to download a copy.

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All memberships include subscription to the NCT Quarterly Newsletter. Visit the website at nashobatrust.org to donate or mail your check to:

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PO Box 188
Pepperell, MA 01463

NCT Gear

Our new website makes it easier than ever to order NCT tshirts and window decals. Visit the NCT website at nashobatrust.org and get an NCT tshirt or window decal delivered right to your mailbox!

