



In the Weeds

Fresh Pond Reservation
Volunteer Stewards Update

V.4

December 2010

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Asian Longhorned Beetle Monitoring Workshop

Next Monday, December 13th from 2-4pm. Although it hasn't been found in Cambridge, street trees, backyard trees, and parks are still at risk and we need your help to protect them. In this workshop and tree survey, we'll learn how to identify the ALB, recognize the signs of tree damage, understand the extent and history of this beetle in Massachusetts, and find out what's being done to eradicate it. We'll then head outside to begin surveying trees at Fresh Pond Reservation looking for signs of ALB. Training is provided by the Department of Agricultural Resources in collaboration with the Cambridge Water Department and the Friends group. Please contact me to register: 617-349-6489 or fpr@cambridgema.gov.

Volunteer Appreciation Potluck

We had a tasty end of the year volunteer potluck yesterday (squash soup, pumpkin pie...), although many of you were missed. Hopefully we can organize another potluck/movie night sometime in January or February (film suggestions?). We raffled off field guides and also honored the folks who gave a notable portion of their spare time to Reservation stewardship this year: Richard, Rebecca, Suzanna, Betsy, and Elizabeth. I've included below a summary of this year's many volunteer accomplishments, along with a list of less strenuous ways of helping out while the ground freezes up. If you didn't make it to the potluck, *please let me know if you'd like to participate in any of these projects.*

2010 Accomplishments

This year's volunteer stewardship work began with weeding near the community gardens at Neville Place and in the Woodland Restoration Project followed by a very wet garlic mustard weed-out on Fresh Pond Day. After several more sessions weeding out Garlic Mustard, volunteers started removing black swallowwort, dame's rocket, and mugwort. Summer brought extreme heat, very little rain, mosquitoes and yellow jackets, beautiful summer flowers in the gardens, bioswales, woods, and meadows, endlessly rewarding us for our efforts. Fall brought sudden darkness to our evening sessions, but also many new avian visitors and sunsets on Fresh Pond. Working alongside woolly bears and stinkbugs, canvasbacks and ring-necked ducks, red-tailed and cooper's hawks, cormorants and goldfinches, nuthatches and woodpeckers, we ended this year's steward sessions with the evening flight of a bat over Lusitania Meadow.

In and around Lusitania Meadow, volunteer stewards spent over 100 hours weeding out a whole lot of mugwort, along with ragweed, thistle, cocklebur, burdock, wild lettuce, buckthorn, and cottonwood trees. We ended the season tossing milkweed, woolgrass, lance-leaved goldenrod, tall goldenrod, and blue vervain seeds around the meadow. We harvested these seeds from Kingsley bioswale and also spread echinacea seeds from the Butterfly Meadow.

Once again the Friends of Fresh Pond adopted the Kingsley Park Bioswale, weeding on Wednesday afternoons. By the end of the summer, after clearing out the burdock, mugwort, and bindweeds, the asters, goldenrods, vervains, and wild senna celebrated with purple, pink, white, and yellow abandon.

At the top of Glacken Slope volunteers weeded smartweed out of the rain garden and pulled hundreds of black locust seedlings, pokeweed, black swallowwort, black nightshade, and lamb's quarters. Although we found much spontaneous growth, we tried to make space for the many native plants and shrubs that miraculously survived planting prior to a very dry summer.

Volunteers worked in and around the Butterfly Meadow weeding out mugwort, bittersweet vines, spotted knapweed, cottonwoods, and buckthorn, while also dispersing vervain and aster seeds harvested from the Kingsley Park Bioswale.

Taking a look at specific invasive plants, spring garlic mustard weeding focused on the Weir Meadow area, the bottom of Glacken slope, and Kingsley bioswale. We spent several days working like elephants pulling out, hauling out, and piling up buckthorn trunks underneath the old beeches next to and along the edge of the Butterfly Meadow. Next spring we hope to plant wildflowers and understory shrubs in place of the buckthorn. We removed a whole lot of mugwort during at least 30 sessions this year, with the bulk of it coming out of Lusitania Meadow. Since various individuals contributed their efforts, it's hard to estimate exactly how much work was put into pulling burdock, though volunteers found a lot of it at Kingsley Park Bioswale, at Lusitania Meadow, and along the path in between. And as black swallowwort pods taunted us along the fence, we devoted 15 weeding sessions to filling trash bags full of pods, mostly from the perimeter fence.

The Woodland Restoration Project weeding, planting, and watering began in early April on Tuesdays. In addition to help from Vinny, Milton, and Jose; Suzanna, Elizabeth, and Betsy made it through the dry summer heat by dragging in jugs of water from the community garden. While battling the voracious bunny with wire cages and fencing, they labeled most of the 110 native species in the garden for the Woodland Garden Visit, and gave visitors a printed species list. By late fall huge piles of buckthorn were harvested from the perimeter of the garden.

Nesting boxes around the Reservation are a joint effort of the Friends of Fresh Pond and the Water Department. This year, in addition to chickadee, tree swallow, and wood duck boxes, 4 screech owl boxes were added. According to Elizabeth, in the tree swallow boxes there were 12 successful tree swallow broods and 1 chickadee brood. Of the chickadee boxes, 2 were occupied by house wrens, and of the screech owl boxes, one housed an owl, and 2 more may have had owls in them.

Year 5 of the Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Project is going strong with the beetle release in the spring and monitoring in the spring and fall. This fall, with both an afternoon and an evening inventory, 12 volunteers participated in data collection. Data and results from the study will be made available as soon as they are ready.

Volunteers working with Chief Ranger Jean Rogers, both in groups and individually, refurbished the Huron Ave switchback, installed water bars, dug up burdock and pokeweed at Kingsley Park and along the Perimeter Road, weeded at the Weir Meadow, in the wildflower garden behind Neville and next to Maher Park parking lot, applied woodchips to woodland trails, and raked leaves on the Kingsley Park hill.

Volunteers also helped spray and monitor poison ivy test plots to measure the effectiveness of vinegar, salt, and dish detergent on the leaves. Due to the success of the two test plots, the solution will be used along the entire perimeter fence starting next spring to hopefully eliminate much more of the pesky native. Other valuable volunteer contributions include picking up trash, bringing snacks to share, saving a reclining tree using large rocks, repairing a broken shovel, bringing in seeds to disperse around the Reservation, taking over weeding sessions during the time between Emily's departure and my arrival and also in my absence, and delivering extra tools needed for large volunteer events.

In 2010, 30 volunteer stewards worked more hours, 760, and had more work sessions, 93, than ever before. Along with the 378 volunteer hours contributed by Pond Partners working with Jean, volunteers at Fresh Pond Reservation worked over 1100 hours in 2010. *Many thanks to the fantastic volunteers who helped sustain Fresh Pond Reservation's habitats for all visitors and especially for those who live here.*

Winter Projects

Please call 617-349-6489 or email Deb at fpr@cambridgema.gov to participate in any one of these initiatives:

1. Gather information to help us learn how to build a floating island on Little Fresh Pond
2. Help enter and evaluate data collected from the Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Project
3. Organize or lead monthly monitoring of host trees for Asian Longhorn Beetle using GPS units
4. Design a planting plan replacing the buckthorn under the big beeches next to the butterfly garden
5. Help us figure out how to recruit more volunteers
6. Help us design a tracking system to more effectively evaluate the effectiveness of our work
7. Work with the City of Cambridge to organize a City-wide B.S. Patrol/Black Swallow-Wort (*Cynanchum louiseae*) Wipe Out, setting up information and weigh stations throughout the city (including here at Fresh Pond)