

Volunteer Leaders Clear the Way for Better Trails

Two new Trail Committee Co-chairs Look to Encourage Volunteers to “Adopt-a-Trail”

By Sue Christensen

Chris Mullin and Robert Shine grew up enjoying the outdoors. Chris backpacked with his dad as a teenager and, when he moved to Quincy, started taking his kids to the Blue Hills to hike. Robert grew up in Taunton and spent time with his family in the Reservation.

“When I moved to Quincy for graduate school,” Robert explained, “I began spending more time on the trails.”

The two met each other on the trails in the Reservation, became neighbors and adopted some of their favorite trails, including the AMC Footpath near Buck

Hill, through the Friends of the Blue Hills Adopt-A-Trail program. When the chairmanship opened they agreed to work together to lead the program.

Chris explains that he liked the Adopt-A-Trail program because it “allows people to choose their favorite trail to help maintain.” A trail adopter’s responsibilities are to make at least two visits to his or her trails - ideally with friends - to cut brush and branches and clean the trail ditches that help prevent erosion. Ideally, the adopter also checks the trails after large storms to clean up downed trees and branches.



New co-chairs of the Adopt-a-Trail program, Chris Mullin and Robert Shine of Quincy.

Attending one of the monthly trail maintenance events is a great way to learn how to maintain the trails and decide whether you’d like to adopt a trail. See calendar for upcoming trail events.

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Quincy Photo Contest Winner Finds Inspiration in the Blue Hills

Julia Himmel tied for first place in the Seasons of the Blue Hills photo contest with the photo entitled “Melting Snow.” Julia does not just have a casual interest in photography. She graduates from Fontbonne Academy in Milton this year, and is currently deciding among her acceptances which college she will be attending, but knows that it will be a college of art, where she will major in photography. The Blue Hills helped inspire



Quincy City Councilors Brian Palmucci (left) and Margaret LaForest (right) recognize photo contest winners Diana McNamara of Dedham and Julia Himmel of Quincy.

her love of nature photography.

Julia’s parents, John and Maryclare Himmel, explained “she entered the contest out of a sense of gratefulness for the many hours she has spent enjoying the Blue Hills.” When she was young, Julia remembers visiting the Trailside Museum on Saturdays and Sundays with her dad, becoming well-acquainted with the animals outside and with the creatures featured in the

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(Trails, continued from page 1)

“I encourage anyone who’s interested in Adopt-A-Trail to come to a couple of the FBH monthly trail maintenance events starting in April for on-the-job training,” according to Robert. “After you’ve had training, come to our meeting in the Fall.” At the meeting, volunteers formalize their application, and get any last questions answered.

Currently there are 38 adopters who are maintaining far more trails than their numbers. “We had three new people join the program last year and are hoping to have five more sign on this year,” noted Robert.

“We’re quite flexible in allowing people to choose which unadopted trail to maintain, and we can help anyone who is interested in adoption to choose one that’s right for them. Some people prefer a trail with easy access from a road, or one in a less hilly section of the park. There are even seasonal preferences — people who want to work during winter and spring only are encouraged to adopt a trail in one of the eastern sections, due to seasonal work restrictions,” said Chris.

Do you have a favorite place in the Blue Hills? Do you feel like you want to do more to keep that special place in shape and accessible? Consider becoming an adopter yourself or with your church, friends or family. Chris and Robert would love to hear from you and get you headed down the trail of stewardship. They can be contacted at trailwork@FriendsOfTheBlueHills.org.

The Friends of the Blue Hills newsletter is produced four times a year.

Editors: Sue Christensen, Judy Jacobs,

Layout: Owen Hartford

Visit us on the web at www.FriendsoftheBlueHills.org or call 781-828-1805 for membership, maps and schedule information.
PO Box 416, Milton, MA 02186

Enjoying Ponkapoag Bog Led to Winning Photo

Linda Young from Taunton was one of the winners of the Seasons of the Blue Hills Photo Contest with her photo, “Ponkapoag Boardwalk Bog Trail.” Linda, who has been visiting the Blue Hills for about 12 years, shares some of her experiences below.

What do you like to do best in the Blue Hills?

Most often I hike the Skyline loop, but my favorite hike is the end to end on the Skyline trails. Hiking is my favorite fall and winter sport, and the Blue Hills are close to home. You get many of the same benefits that you would in New Hampshire without the long drive.

Can you describe what you were doing or thinking when you took the photo?

I was out for a little hike with two friends on a really cold winter day. It was the first time that I had been on the bog walk, and found it to be really beautiful. It reminded me of being down South near Savannah. I was thinking of how much of the

Blue Hills that I haven’t explored yet.

What would you like people to see or feel when they look at your photo?

I think the serenity and the simple beauty is what I love about that picture. It is a hidden gem that many people don’t know about.



Photo by Linda Young, Taunton

YES! I want to protect the Blue Hills Reservation!

I want to become a Friends of the Blue Hills member

(Please choose one of the following:)

Personal: Individual \$25 Family \$45 Senior \$20

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I would like to make an additional donation of:

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$500 Other: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please make checks payable to Friends of the Blue Hills, and mail to:
P.O. Box 416, Milton, MA 02186

Calendar of Events

Pull and post this section of the Friends of the Blue Hills Newsletter and join us for some exciting events in the Blue Hills Reservation!

Spring 2013

▲ FBH sponsored event

Friends of the Blue Hills Trail Work

Apr. 20, May. 18, Jun. 1, Jul. 13,
Aug. 3, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Join the Friends of Blue Hills trail crew in sprucing up the trails. Includes a hike to the work sites. Wear long pants and gloves. Tools, water, snacks and lunch provided. Email trailwork@Friendsofthebluehills.org for registration and meeting place. ▲

DCR Adult Walking Club

Saturday, April 6
1:00 pm

Moderate walk, some hilly terrain, 4 miles. Walk from St. Moritz Pond to Sawcut Notch, return on Indian Camp Path. Meet at the Shea Rink parking lot at 651 Willard St. in Quincy. For details, contact 617-698-1802.

DCR Adult Walking Club

Sunday, April 14
1:00 pm

Moderate walk, hilly terrain, 3.5 miles. Wolcott Path to Breakneck Ledge to Chestnut Run and Border Path, return via Wildcat Notch and Coon Hollow. Meet at the Houghton's Pond main parking lot at 840 Hillside St. in Milton. For details, contact 617-698-1802.

Park Serve

Saturday, April 20
9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Join the DCR Blue Hills staff and the Friends of the Blue Hills to help maintain the trails or lend a hand in our park clean-up. Garden projects at Brookwood Community Farm as well. Email Tom.Bender@state.ma.us to register. ▲

Rockin' in the Park

Saturday, April 27
1:00 pm

Join a DCR ranger and Les Tyralla, a registered geologist, on this co-sponsored walk with the Friends of the Blue Hills as we explore the bedrock and glacial features of Great Blue Hill. Learn the secrets of stone on this moderately strenuous hike over rocky terrain. Sturdy footgear required. Space is limited. For ages 12 and up. 1.5 hours. Email Raymond.F.McKinnon@state.ma.us for registration and meeting place. ▲

DCR Adult Walking Club

Sunday, April 28
1:00 pm

Moderate walk, with some hills, 2+ miles. Walk around Tucker Hill on the green dot trail. Meet at the Houghton's Pond main parking lot at 840 Hillside St. in Milton. For details, contact 617-698-1802.

DCR Adult Walking Club

Saturday, May 11
1:00 pm

Moderate walk, hilly terrain, 3 miles. Headquarters Path to Doe Hollow Path and return via Bugbee Path. Meet at the Houghton's Pond main parking lot on 840 Hillside St. in Milton. For details, contact 617-698-1802.

*(Photo Contest,
continued from page 1)*

special indoor programs. "I remember visiting Blue Hills as a time for my dad and I to have time together." Julia remembers. "He would make up stories about the imaginary people who lived in the woods as we drove up Chickatawbut and around the Reservoir. In every season, it was a beautiful place."



"As she got older, our family has enjoyed many, many hikes and trips to Big Blue and it has been the source of inspiration and countless subjects of her photos. We are so lucky to have this phenomenal resource right in our backyards," her parents said.

"Melting Snow" by Julia Himmel of Quincy.

Julia tied for first prize in the Seasons of the Blue Hills photo contest.

Why the Blue Hills is One of the Best Spots for Birding

Many of the birds that breed on Blue Hills hilltops are uncommon anywhere else in the area. Experienced birder, Evan Lipton, shares some Blue Hills' stories and tips for new birders.

By Evan Lipton

On a trip to Buck Hill last May, I was lucky enough to locate a Prairie Warbler nest: a small cup no more than four inches across of tightly woven thin sticks. It was located near the top of a very short scrub oak, but still hidden from view by a few leaves. It proved somewhat difficult to relocate though it was just a few feet from a spot I usually stake out to photograph the Prairie Warblers.

I looked at the nest for a moment, and quickly peeked inside. Five tiny eggs were clustered together off to the side, probably about a half inch in width each. They were cream colored, with dark brown spots. I noticed a male Prairie Warbler making its way toward me through the scrub oaks, and then I saw the female lower down. They were calmly inquisitive, issuing no alarm calls. They simply advanced toward me, staying low in the oaks. I backed away slowly and found a large rock to sit about twenty feet from the nest. The warblers had probably been foraging nearby and the female now resumed her place on the nest. The male, who I had been keeping track of for a while now, was a good candidate for photography, and I knew all of his favorite singing perches. He was tame enough to let me advance cautiously to within fifteen feet while he was singing, and would predictably land in a certain spot if I waited long enough.

The female Prairie Warbler is similar to the male (pictured below) though with the greenish color of the back in place of the black streaks on the face and chest.

Ten days later I made it back to the Prairie Warbler nest and found it empty. Either something ate the eggs or young, or they hatched and fledged in the ten days between my visits. I do not know how long the eggs had been there when I first found them, so they could



Photo by Evan Lipton, Milton

have hatched the day after I found the nest, and fledged the day before I returned. It's unlikely but possible.

Where to Look for Birds and Fledgelings

Many of the birds that breed on Blue Hills hilltops are uncommon anywhere else in the area. I've found Buck Hill to be the most active of the scrub land areas in the hills. Most of the other hilltops that have these areas host the same species: Prairie Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Brown Thrasher, Field Sparrow; but not in such numbers or concentration as Buck Hill.

Fledgelings in general tend to stay close to the ground, as they haven't yet acquired their full flight power.

They are also usually quite trusting as they've probably never seen a human before. The easiest ways to find young birds are by following parent birds that are collecting food for the young one, and by listening for very loud, insistent noises of begging young. It is best to always give young birds and their hard-working parents distance. Never continue to approach a fledgeling if you see the parent bird nearby with food in its beak. Some adult birds will physically attack you if you get too close to their young, but you can't always count on that. Most birds will simply scold you loudly, and some will just sit nearby quietly waiting for their chance to feed their young. By getting too close to a fledgeling you can easily interrupt its vital food source from its parents without you even knowing it.

When viewing any bird be aware of how the bird is acting. Birds singing on territory can be relatively easy to observe. If the bird stops singing, perks up its head to get a better view of you and jumps back into the undergrowth then you are too close. Many birds will give you warning by leaning down and forward as if they are about to fly or jump. If you notice this behavior quickly enough you can slowly back away and they may resume what they were doing. Once you've developed an idea of how far away a certain bird feels comfortable with your presence, it is easy to keep that distance as you watch it. But remember, every bird is different, even within species.

Seventeen-year-old Milton resident, Evan Lipton, is a photographer and naturalist who loves exploring the Blue Hills.

Blue Hills Winter Fest

Over 150 people from dozens of towns gathered at the Friends of the Blue Hills' Winter Fest. While participants enjoyed Irish music performed by Songs For Ceilidh, downhill skiing and a night hike, local restaurants and cooks vied for the coveted title of Best Chili Chef. Event attendees tasted five delicious chili made by G.H. Bent Co. (Milton), The Halfway Cafe (Canton), Cooking in the Great Outdoors (greatoutdoorscooking.net) and Queen Anne's Catering (Canton).



Photo captures winning chili chef, Rick Sampson from Queen Anne's Catering in Canton.



Mike Caplinger from Weymouth returned to the Winter Fest again this year, bringing his six-year-old daughter Abigale and his two-year-old son, Nolan. Families like the Caplingers enjoyed crafts, dancing and just hanging out and listening to the Irish tunes.



Two chili judges, Rep Bruce Ayers (left) and Rep Walter Timilty stand with FBH Executive Director Judy Jacobs, FBH President Hilary Blocker and FBH Board member Maryanne Hutchinson.



While the judges are more known for their love and support of the Blue Hills than their culinary gifts, they nevertheless heartily enjoyed the weighty task of choosing their favorite flavor. The chili judges, above, debating their choices are Canton Police Chief Kenneth Berkowitz, historian and Canton resident George Comeau and Milton Selectman Robert Sweeney. Not shown in the photos but also a judge who happily opined on the chili was Randolph Town Council President Paul Meoni.

Green Up the Blue Hills

Sunday, June 2, 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm
Ponkapoag AMC Cabins
Music, face painting, crafts and weeding
www.FriendsoftheBlueHills.org

Staff: Executive Director: Judy Lehrer Jacobs;
Membership Coordinator: Ken Jones

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Thacher Montessori School



Join us for Green Up the Blue Hills,
Sunday, June 2, 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm at the Ponkapoag AMC
Cabins. Free t-shirts, snacks, crafts, music and an opportunity to
protect the forest. Visit www.FriendsoftheBlueHills.org for details.



Friends of the Blue Hills.
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