

Protecting Blue Hills Wetlands

Thanks to support from our members, we are working with the community to protect Fowl Meadow.

If you've ever walked through the part of the Blue Hills called Fowl Meadow, you know how special it is. Visitors of all ages love the broad path that starts on Brush Hill Road in Milton and leads through the Fowl Meadow wetlands,



Photo by
Chris Riley of Milton.

giving them the opportunity to see unique birds, butterflies and plants. As it happens, the Commonwealth agrees with visitors on how special this land is. Fowl Meadow is considered an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern"

because of the special habitat it provides that can support threatened and endangered species. In fact, the Commonwealth acknowledges all the land around Fowl Meadow as 'critical,' since wetland species need the surrounding uplands for food and habitat. Plus the higher land filters the water that runs down to the wetlands and the Neponset River.

Despite its popularity among visitors and its designation as a critical habitat by the Commonwealth, the wetlands are not protected. Fowl Meadow is threatened by a proposal to build 276 housing units within feet of the wetlands. The proposal would bulldoze the forest to build five-story buildings and level the land to create parking. Not only would the construction disturb the wetlands, but the structures would destroy essential uplands habitat, fragment existing forest, and prevent water from filtering through to the wetlands below.

With your support, we are working with the community to protect Fowl Meadow's sensitive habitat from development.

What You Can Do

Rep. Walter Timilty has introduced legislation (H.818, H.819 and H.820) to help protect this sensitive habitat. Both H.818 and H.819 would prohibit development within 1,000 feet of Fowl Meadow. The third bill, H.820, would improve the ability of the Commonwealth to protect and preserve areas of critical concern, specifically those that may be unalterably and negatively impacted by proposed development. Please contact your legislators to let them know you care about Fowl Meadow and support these bills.

Visit www.FriendsoftheBlueHills.org/protect-wetlands for a link to updates on this issue and a sample letter.

Who needs Switzerland?!

Why not visit St. Moritz right here in the Blue Hills!

By Barbara Kirby

Generations have enjoyed a wide array of winter activities in the Blue Hills, but perhaps one of the most famous of all was the St. Moritz Winter Carnival! Why not explore the site during the summer?

In January 1929, the Blue Hills hosted its first ever winter extravaganza: the St. Moritz Winter Carnival! The event included a 100-foot ski jump, a 500-foot double lane toboggan slide, speed skating events, barrel jumping, hockey, and figure skating exhibi-



Ice skating champ, 1930's

tions and competitions. Local Olympians of the day, such as Maribel Vinson, Roger Turner, and Nathaniel Miles, were celebrated participants. Eddie Rowe successfully cleared four barrels as a champion barrel jumper, and hometown favorite Russell Bates competed in speed skating. On the ski jump, Matthew DeLuca and Henning Almquist proudly represented Quincy. Everyone had someone and something to cheer for, and certainly one of the highlights

Continued on page 3)

Marathon Monday in the Blue Hills

By Daniel Byrnes

Most people remember exactly where they were when they heard about the Marathon bombing. Daniel Byrnes of Braintree was hiking in the Blue Hills when he first heard the tragic news.

I was just stepping onto the Blue Trail behind Houghton's Pond when we first heard the news about the bombing. It was an impossibly beautiful Marathon Monday. For once, the unofficial start of spring in Boston actually felt like spring. With the day off, some of my friends and I decided we should spend it hiking up to Buck Hill. Like most of you, I carry the modern world in my pocket wherever I go. Phones of debatable intelligence buzz and chirp and tweet and carry the sorry word of sorrow from every corner of the world. It was no different on the afternoon of April 15th, except it was different. This new tragedy, this further obliteration of innocence had happened here in Boston, in my home town.

The news stopped us in our tracks. Should we go on with our hike, or should we get to a TV and try to make sense out of the frantic bits of information coming in? Where do you go when there is a tragedy and there is nothing you can do? I know something about that; I was a sophomore at NYU eleven and a half years ago. I remember watching rubble covered fire trucks screaming up 3rd Avenue as I watched in mute,

impotent horror. It felt like the years between those two days had collapsed as I looked at the trail head. Finally I made the call, "Let's go on the hike, we'll have the rest of our lives to know about the bombing." So we went up the trail. We didn't talk much, and we hiked faster than we usually do. The sounds of sirens began to withdraw as we went deeper into the woods. The woods were so lovely, the branches a green haze of budding leaves giving a constant confirmation of the rebirth of spring, even as we stole glances at our news feeds as we hiked.

Soon we reached the crest of Buck Hill. The pace we set had worked up a sweat, and our muscles were sore. When we reached the top of the hill, a cool breeze moved through the scrub brush. It was so clear up there on the hill, the horizon stretched in every direction for miles. It took my breath away. I've seen that view countless times before but it felt like I was seeing it for the first time. I could see the whole state of Massachu-

setts stretched out before me. On the distant western horizon, I could see the peak of Mount Greylock; the long black snake of the Mass Pike winding across the state; and I could see Boston, my



Daniel Byrnes of Braintree was hiking in the Blue Hills when he heard about the Marathon bombings.

city, and it was still standing. I could see the whole state from that spot on Buck Hill on that terrible day, and I was struck by how beautiful my home is. From this quiet spot in the Blue Hills, I found the strength to go back down the hill and face the world.

Daniel Byrnes has been a lover of the Blue Hills for his entire life. When the woods call, he has always answered.

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: \$ _____

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Please make checks payable to Friends of the Blue Hills, and mail to:

P.O. Box 416, Milton, MA 02186

You may also donate through our secure server at FriendsOfTheBlueHills.org.

Thank you for your generous support!

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

Editors: Anne Comber, Judy Jacobs, Contributing Editor: Barbara Kirby

Layout: Owen Hartford

Visit us on the web at www.FriendsoftheBlueHills.org or call 781-828-1805

for membership, maps and schedule information.

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!

Summer 2013

▲ FBH sponsored event

Friends of the Blue Hills Trail Work

July 13, Aug. 3, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Join the Friends of the 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

June 16, June 29, July 14, July 20, July 28, August 3, August 11, August 17, August 25, 1 p.m.

Join the DCR on walks of various lengths and difficulty throughout the Blue Hills. Walks will be led by a Ranger or a Walking Club volunteer leader. The Rangers recommend wearing hiking boots and bringing water on all hikes. For details, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr/events/seWalk.pdf or call 617-698-1802.

Cool Summer Fest

Saturday, July 27
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

The heat is on at Houghton's Pond this summer but we will stay cool with wacky water games, make and take kid crafts, music, dance, live wildlife, pond exploration, free fishing fun and more! (Free equipment loans for fishing or bring your own rod and reel!) Join DCR and Friends of the Blue Hills at this great summertime event! Sponsored by Blue Hills Bank. Email summerfest@FriendsoftheBlueHills.org for more information. ▲

Boots and Brews

Saturday, August 24
10:00 a.m.

Join the Friends of the Blue Hills for the third hike in our on-going "Hiking Boots and Brews" series! The group is designed for young adults who would like to explore the Blue Hills Reservation, meet other members and sample some delicious beers! After a 2-3 hour hike along popular Blue Hills trails, hikers who are 21 years and older will have the opportunity to visit nearby Blue Hills Brewery for a private beer sampling and tour of the facility. Cost is \$5. RSVP to christine.miller@joslin.harvard.edu. Group will meet in Houghton's Pond parking lot at 10:00 a.m. Group size limited to 25. Heavy rain cancels. Please bring plenty of water for the hike! ▲

(St. Moritz *continued from page 1*)

of the event was the crowning of the Carnival Queen! In its inaugural year, Dorothy Curry of the Curry Hardware family in West Quincy was the recipient of that royal honor.

The total cost of creating the facilities—two 7-acre skating ponds (one of which was named St. Moritz after the 1928 Winter Olympics host city in Switzerland), the ski jump, toboggan runs, and warming house—was \$854, a significant sum at the time but still well below the appropriation of \$1500 from the Metropolitan District Commission. It's a measure of the huge success of the planning and organizing for the Carnival that the project came in under budget and attracted 15,000 people that first year and as many as 50,000 in

subsequent years. The Winter Carnival was held annually until the advent of World War II.

Today, you can relive a bit of the history and excitement of the Winter Carnival by hiking trails that are near to where the Carnival took place. Squamaugh Trail, for example, was once the Carnival's cross country ski run, and the intersection of Murphy Path and the Pipe Line is close to where the ski jump and toboggan runs were located. If you look carefully, you might still see remnants of their foundations. The two skating ponds still exist but are considerably overgrown. Yet with a little imagination, you may be able to envision the beauty, glory and excitement of this long forgotten winter tradition!



Ski jump, 1930's

Barbara Kirby is an 18-year resident of Milton and bikes often through the Blue Hills. A former competitive figure skater, she fondly remembers the names and accomplishments of some of those early participants in the Winter Carnival.

A Look through the Binoculars of a Birder: What Will You Find in the Blue Hills?

By Evan Lipton

We're all attuned to different sounds and sights when we visit the Blue Hills. In this article, you'll walk with experienced birder, Evan Lipton, to explore the birds that are hidden in the Blue Hills. Follow Evan through the quiet trails of the Blue Hills on a hot summer day to enjoy the bird songs, baby birds and natural migratory transitions.

Two young Hairy Woodpeckers cling to a dead branch side by side. They're still at the learning stage, the wide-eyed 'why is that giant beast staring at me' stage. One of their parents flies down and feeds them. It's rare to see a Hairy Woodpecker so close. Their smaller cousin, the Downy, is usually the trusting one. They land a few feet from you and peeking out from behind a branch wonder how they suddenly got so close to you, as if it wasn't their own wings that propelled them.

Even though the sun is out, it is dark in the woods. It's finally summer, the leaves are thick and green, the sun is high in the sky. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird buzzes by through the treetops, looking like an overgrown insect. The eerie fluting of a Wood Thrush drifts through the trees. It's early July. The birds have

finally settled down. Their migration is over here for the time being, and the ones that stayed are busy raising families. Some raise one, some two, some even three. They seem so predictable now after the rush of migration, nothing unexpected is expected.

It isn't quite evident here in the woods, but as the songbirds are settled in, the shorebirds are already on their way south. Many come through in August and some even in early July. Earlier in the day, I was watching a family of Spotted Sandpipers at the Blue Hills Reservoir. The young are fully grown and foraging in the mud on their own. They probably bred here. Most shorebirds however go far north to breed. Along with the Spotted Sandpipers was a Least Sandpiper which breeds on the tundra and can be found in most any open wet area inland or near the coast during migration. The smallest sandpiper in the world, they are about the size of a sparrow.

I walked from the reservoir to Buck Hill, following the Skyline Trail, and then winding my way towards Houghton's Pond, I took to some smaller paths. I watch the Hairy Woodpeckers until they fly off. I walk quickly now from the pond to the top of Great Blue Hill. I've tallied over 40 species so far on my hike,



Evan Lipton of Milton spots a Least Sandpiper, a rare sight in the Blue Hills.

the majority of them breeding birds. Great-crested Flycatchers, Red-eyed Vireos, Ovenbirds, Pine Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, and Baltimore Orioles are just a few of the birds that call the woods their home this time of year.

It's getting hot by now as I climb Great Blue. I reach the top and tally my last few species, Eastern Bluebirds and a House Wren. Both nest in the boxes on the scrubby top next to the weather station. The House Wren flies from perch to perch singing its exuberant song. A few Tree Swallows fly high above the ground, dipping and diving acrobatically catching unseen insects.

Evan Lipton is a 17-year old Milton resident. See more of his photos at www.flickr.com/evanlipton and more of his writing at avianobsession.weebly.com.

Survey Says...Hiking is your favorite activity in the Blue Hills!

Nearly three fourths of those responding to our recent online survey chose "hiking" as their favorite activity in the Blue Hills. Mountain biking and trail running came in a distant second and third at 19% and 16% respectively. FYI, horseback riding and orienteering (navigating by compass only) received the most write-in votes!

Hiking	74%
Mountain Biking	19%
Trail Running	16%
Birding	8%
Skiing	3%
Fishing	3%
Picnics	2%
Swimming	2%
Using Sports Fields	1%
Skating	0%
Other	18%

Help us Plan our 35th Birthday Party!

Friends of the Blue Hills was founded in 1979, so we are celebrating our 35th year in 2014! Please help us plan a very special annual meeting this fall to kick off this milestone. If you are able to help, please email Anne@FriendsoftheBlueHills.org. And keep an eye out for your invitation to this special birthday bash!

Engaging the Community



Stephanie Radner of Dedham helps pull invasive weeds at the Green Up event.



Billy Hartshorn of Billerica incorporates garlic mustard into his craft at Green Up.

Many Thanks to all who improve the reservation

Volunteers with the Friends of the Blue Hills were hard at work the first weekend of June. Over 30 volunteers pitched in to improve the trails near Buck Hill for National Trails Day on June 1. Nearly a hundred people showed up the next day for our annual Green Up at the Ponkapoag AMC Cabins. Volunteers helped protect the forests by pulling up invasive weeds, while kids enjoyed crafts and face-painting. Special thanks to Randolph Savings Bank and the Milton Garden Club, the sponsors of Green Up, and to everyone who worked so hard to make the weekend such a success.



Kimiko Domoto-Reilly of Brookline was one of 30 people who helped maintain the trails during National Trails Day. Thanks to REI for sponsoring the event.



Steven Harrington, Eric Provenzano, Chris Zoppo and Max Montalto of Westwood Boy Scout Troop 3 pull garlic mustard up in preparation for Max's Eagle Scout project.

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Photo by David Gouthro



Save the Date!
Friends of the Blue Hills Annual Meeting & Celebration
Thursday, October 10
Hors D'oeuvres, live music, special speaker, silent auction and more!
 Visit www.FriendsoftheBlueHills.org for details.



Friends of the Blue Hills.
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