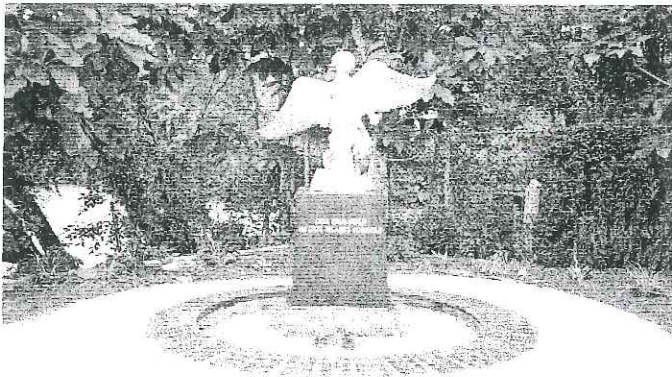


# The Pascommuck Post

September 2001

*The Newsletter of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust  
Preserving our past . . . Protecting our future  
P.O. Box 806, Easthampton Mass.*

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## A Little Angel in John Bator Park

There's a new kid in town, folks -- dresses in flowing garments, has wings, and is remarkably well-behaved: you guessed it, the kid's an angel! A Christmas Box Angel Sculpture, to be exact.

Early this year the local chapter of the nation-wide "Compassionate Friends" approached us regarding the possibility of erecting an angel monument on one of our parcels. The organization is comprised of parents who lost children, and have been active in placing special angel sculptures throughout the country as a memorial to their deceased loved ones. Up until then, they had been unsuccessful in finding a suitable spot; it seemed nobody would risk accepting an angel -- too politically incorrect! Robert and Nancy Mac Donald, as representatives for the group, were just about at the end of their rope, and we were close to being their last resort. When we gave the okay, they quickly found a perfect spot -- at John Bator Park.

The first order of business came in April, when the group starting digging out some of the plants in order to make room for the monument. Mid summer came, and the group spread

two truck loads of crushed stone over our pathways and parking lot. Next came the cement foundation for the monument base and the purchase of perennials for a new flower bed next to the monument. Of course, the old bed had to be expanded and roto-tilled first. In August the black marble base with lettering arrived, and soon after the bronze angel sculpture descended onto the base almost as if by magic! Also, a truckload of mulch was spread around all the flower beds. Three new English garden benches were bought (a bench purchased by the Kendrew family made it a foursome); they then rebuilt three of our oldest relics, adding sturdy backs and arm rests, and stained all the benches and the picnic table -- simply amazing!

But there was more. Black marble bricks bearing the names of deceased sons and daughters had to be cemented in around the monument base, by far the toughest task yet. The crew worked from 8:00 AM - 8:00 PM, with dogged determination. As a final touch, the angel people bought and planted a batch of mums around the monument, the benches, and the gazebo. With the unveiling ceremony a week away, these guys and gals had pulled off a miracle in the nick of time!

Ceremony? Oh, yes, I'd better explain. As you read this, the unveiling ceremony will have taken place on Sunday, September 9th. A crowd of visitors would be expected to attend a full afternoon of activities, including stories, poetry, songs, a bagpipe player, releasing of doves and butterflies, and of course, the actual unveiling by some shoemaker by the name of John Bator.

Our hats off to the "Compassionate Friends" ( the angel people ), who transformed John Bator Park into a magical, mystical haven, a place where treasured memories are kept alive and hope and beauty prevail. And let us not forget the mastermind behind it all, the little rascal who had it planned right from the start, even before the park was thought of - our Little Angel.

-- John Bator

## FACTS ABOUT THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT

On November 6, the voters of Easthampton will decide whether to pass the Community Preservation Act (CPA). At the request of Mayor Mike Tautznik, our City Council approved this question for the ballot so that the voters could decide this issue for themselves.

The CPA will create a Community Preservation Fund financed primarily by a three-percent surcharge on property taxes. The Easthampton CPA would include a \$100,000.00 exemption, which means that the first \$100,000.00 of property value will not be subject to the surcharge. With this exemption, the average increase for a residential tax bill is estimated to be \$19.10 a year. This will provide the City with over \$110,000.00 annually prior to receiving matching funds from the State.

The State of Massachusetts is establishing a Community Preservation Trust Fund to provide matching funds to communities that pass the CPA. The Fund is expected to be worth approximately \$26,000,000.00 annually. Communities that do not pass the CPA will not be eligible to receive any matching funds, thereby increasing the amount of money available to communities that do approve the CPA.

It is important to note that this is not purely an open space issue. The revenue collected from the CPA must be used for three specific purposes: open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing. Funds may be used for initiatives such as protection of Mt. Tom and the Barnes Aquifer, our sole source of drinking water. CPA money may also be used for preserving and renovating historic buildings such as our beautiful Town Hall and our old unused mills. In addition, funds may be used to improve affordable housing, such as the Town Lodge on Oliver Street. The State of Massachusetts is mandating that communities increase spending on affordable housing. The CPA can be an important method of funding this mandate.

The Community Preservation Act will:

- Increase funds for open space to protect Mt. Tom, protect our drinking water, and fight sprawl.
- Increase funds for historic preservation.
- Help to renovate our old unused mill buildings.
- Help the city meet the state's mandate for increased spending on affordable housing.
- Provide Easthampton with substantial matching funds from the State that will otherwise be forfeited to other communities.
- Cost the average Easthampton household less than \$20.00 a year.

— Steve Donnelly

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

What kind of stew did we brew since our last newsletter back in February 9? Plenty! Here's an outline of the major happenings. Try not to fall asleep, now ...

1. Annual Meeting in February - Bob Schwobe slide show on Mt. Tom Range (excellent!); voted for changes to our bylaws

2. Spring plant/bake sale - most successful yet!

3. Some members active in helping to block the rezoning in the Plains section from R-40 to R-15 (aquifer issue here)

4. Co-sponsored "Summit On The Range" meeting at the Log Cabin - huge turnout; sub-committees formed to deal with various aspects of saving the Mt. Tom/Mt. Holyoke Ranges

5. Work parties at Sparko Farm (new acquisition) to eliminate invasive species

6. Conservation award by Trust to graduating Easthampton High School student Neil Olinski

7. Work party at Brickyard Brook Conservation Area to repair erosion problems after torrential rain storms

8. Worked on a priorities list for grants and future projects

9. Letters sent to White Brook Plains Conservation Area abutters, explaining our goals and policies there

10. Received a citation from the Board of Health to clean up debris at our Manhan River Conservation Area - People have been dumping there again! - Big project!

11. Fundraiser letter sent to city residents, asking to help save the Schmidt/Prajzner property in Southampton (sits over our aquifer)

12. Brickyard Brook Conservation Area entrance sign and boulder/plaque project has progressed, but not quite complete

13. John Bator Park - new sign erected; Christmas Box Angel monument installed, along with tremendous improvements made to the park by the "Compassionate Friends" group volunteers

14. Community Preservation Act vote in November - some Trust members active in campaigning for its passage (special tax for funding open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing)

15. Fall Festival Plant Sale preparation

16. Mt. Tom/Mt. Holyoke Ranges Advisory Committee being formed; Board Member Peter Ogulewicz will be our representative.

Hey, wake up; it's the end of the list! And I bet you can't wait for the next newsletter to dazzle you with yet more interesting news ...

— John Bator



*John Bator fighting off the dreaded Autumn Olive at the Spierka Refuge*

## "HELP -- IT'S A SWALLOW-WORT!" BATTLING THE GREEN ALIENS

Tree-huggers with chainsaws? Eco-freaks with herbicides? What on earth could cause mild-mannered environmentalists to see red and take up these reviled tools?!

The answer is: 'invasive non-native species'. That mouthful describes a problem which is hard to swallow for those who treasure the intricate web of a region's rightful plant, animal, and insect residents. Increasingly, with global transportation of goods, and the disruption of natural habitats, these invaders are elbowing aside our diverse treasury of native species.

Sometimes these newcomers are introduced intentionally, like the Autumn Olives planted in the 60's and 70's to provide food for birds, or the Multiflora Rose and Purple Loosestrife which were favored ornamentals, or the non-native ladybugs who swarm in our windows in the winter (one of the more benign strangers!). Often, they are hitch-hikers who travel on other plants, in wooden shipping crates, or on the shoes of hikers, like the Dutch Elm disease and Chestnut Blight, which ravaged two of the noble trees of the American landscape. Some of the problem species are deceptively attractive -- until one realizes what their arrival can mean for our environment.

However they arrive, if one of these intruders finds conditions to their liking -- a favorable habitat, no predators or diseases (often left behind in their travels from another continent), the effects can be devastating. Who hasn't heard of the Africanized Honeybee or the Fire Ant, whose presence makes outdoor life in the Southeast and Southwest difficult or even dangerous? Or the Kudzu vine, which has buried large parts of the South in waves of unstoppable, overwhelming, and monochromatic green?

In the Northeast, for the moment, the chief problems for conservation land managers -- and for gardeners, groundskeepers, farmers, and professional and amateur botanists -- are invasive plant species. There are a host of plants -- both on land and in the water -- which have taken to our environment with a vengeance. Some are found mostly in already disturbed areas, such as backyards, gardens, and especially, roadsides (a favorite route for invasions). However, they often continue marching on into the precious habitats set aside for and so important to the survival of embattled native species. It is not just native plants which are threatened: our natural environment is woven out of relationships between soils, plants, insects, and animals. The loss of one wildflower species, for example, may spell doom for the butterfly adapted for feeding on that one plant.

It is in the hopes of at least controlling these unwelcome plants -- which crowd others out with rapid germination, strangling root systems, and impenetrable shade -- to ensure that natives can endure, that land stewards are resorting to once-distasteful measures. Removing some of these problem species can require repeated and sometimes drastic action, from continual hand-pulling, to cutting and removing every trace of a root, to the careful application of herbicides. Some are being battled with the introduction of their native insect enemies, although this can cause its own problems. The costs of dealing with these invasions, in time, energy, money, and ecology, can be enormous.

What's the lesson for all of us? It's a fairly simple one, although following it can take careful consideration and -- especially for gardeners and landscapers! -- some self-restraint. First, consider seeking out and using native species: you can immediately become part of the plant conservation solution, rather than adding to the invasives problem (but be sure you are buying plants which are cultivated and not collected from the wild!).

Otherwise, you should always ask your plant supplier about the ornamentals you intend to buy, or check them against lists of problem plants. Unfortunately, there are many invasive plants still commonly used: Winged Euonymus, Norway Maple, Goutweed, and others including newly popular bamboos and ornamental grasses. You might want to reconsider a plant described as 'vigorous' or 'never fails', as there's a good chance it will start by taking over your garden. These plants are reliable, but the reason they are is that often they will survive almost anywhere -- including in the midst of and eventually, on top of, native plant communities.

There is a comprehensive list of problem species available on the internet at '[www.nps.gov/plants/alien/common.htm](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/common.htm)'. If you are not on the web, you can give us a call at 585-8513 for a copy of the current list. For further information about the threat a particular species poses, and how land managers are attempting to control them, look at the website at '[tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs.html](http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs.html)'.  
-- Gerrit Stover

## FIGHTING THE INVASION OF THE BLACK SWALLOW-WORT

Thanks to a generous financial grant from the Hampshire Conservation District; the Pascommuck Conservation Trust is collaborating with the "Barnyard Buddies" 4-H Club to both learn to identify and to take steps to try to control the spread of this tenacious plant.

This 4-H Club under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Tryon have had some amazing success in caring for such areas as the banks of the Nashawannuck Pond.

In a recent meeting with the leaders; parents and the 4-Hers; suggestions were made to have this group of young conservationists gather the swelling seed pods of the Black Swallow-wort. Another suggestion made by one of the parents attending this meeting; was that since this 4-H Club will be participating in the annual Chamber of Commerce Fall Festival; that this Club would have a stand from which the Club would have various size Black Swallow-wort plants so that visitors could recognize this plant in their immediate neighborhood. Brochures containing drawings of this plant and the seed pod would also be distributed to those interested in learning more about the Black Swallow-wort.

Frozen packets of the seed pods would also be on display for all to see. Any member of the Trust that might have an unusual plant in their backyard; plan to visit the 4-H booth that will be located on Daley Field to learn more about this Black Swallow-wort.

-- Stella Wiernasz

## BRICKYARD BROOK MEMORIAL BOULDER

The Brickyard Brook Conservation Area memorial boulder project is progressing. A bronze plaque has been completed and the rock is being prepared for the plaque to be attached.

I took a piece of the rock to the Amherst College Geology Department. The Geology Department was very receptive to helping the Pascommuck Conservation Trust learn about the rock, which is from private property at the foot of Mt. Tom. A geology professor said that the rock is glacial granite moved from the north, possibly from as far away as Canada.

For history buffs; the Brickyard Brook got its name from Martin Rich's brick yard; which was established in 1864. According to the Gazetteer of Hampshire County 1887; "when in full operation Mr. Rich employs 30 hands here".

When the plaque and boulder are ready for installation, we hope to hold a small but very thankful ceremony honoring those who contributed to protection of the beautiful Brickyard Brook Conservation Area, and the equally beautiful (but much better tasting) Ol' Turtle Farm.

-- Sue Walz

## THE TRUST AT THE FALL FESTIVAL



John Bator and Shirley Smith amid last year's plant offerings

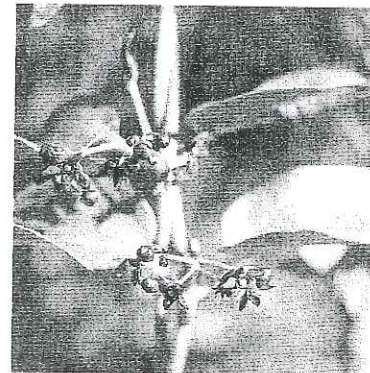
Visit the Pascommuck Conservation Trust mega-plant sale at the Easthampton Fall Festival and Trade Show. This annual event will be held at Easthampton High School on Saturday and Sunday; September 29th and 30th.

The plant sale is our most successful fundraising event because of the huge selection of quality plants that we offer. If you are looking for a way to spruce up your yard or garden with an unusual plant at a reasonable price; the Pascommuck tent at the Fall Festival is the place you want to be. We will also be offering bluebird houses and other items for sale. All proceeds will benefit our volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to fighting sprawl and preserving open space in Easthampton.

We'll also be holding a raffle. This year the theme is the Southwest, with the grand prize being a magnificent cactus, a gift certificate for a meal for two courtesy of Northampton's La Cazuela, two compact discs of great Mexican music, and last but not least, a colorful gift from Box Turtle Mexican Imports right here in Easthampton.

While you're visiting us; you can learn about our efforts to preserve Mt. Tom; see maps of our trail systems along the Manhan River and Brickyard Brook; and find out where the new wildlife refuge is we've established adjacent to Arcadia. Please drop by and support our efforts to make our hometown a better place to live and work.

-- Steve Donnelly



Black Swallow-wort: NOT for sale at Fall Festival!



*Early spring. Back field of Pond property, with Mount Tom in the background*

## 41 ACRES SAVED NEAR ARCADIA

In November we saved the 19-acre Sparko property. In May we protected the 41 acre Pond farm. Hm. Is there a pattern here? Well, yes: Pascommuck Conservation Trust is playing a major part in the efforts to keep intact the land in and around the Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary.

Residential and recreational development has long threatened to isolate this crown jewel of Massachusetts Audubon Society's Western Massachusetts preserves from the Mount Tom Range, and from the Connecticut and Manhan Rivers. Without connections to these wildlife corridors and reservoirs, the Sanctuary would become a lonely island of green in a sea of asphalt and lawns. Furthermore, when wildlife and plant populations can't travel and mix, they tend to become stagnant, often decline in health, and sometimes, even disappear.

Pascommuck, Mass. Audubon, and the City of Northampton have been working hard to prevent this isolation and fragmentation. Arcadia recently purchased 57 acres of wetland and farmland in the heart of the Sanctuary, which will be added to its grassland bird habitat restoration project. This successful effort is recreating the conditions needed by bird species such as the Eastern Meadowlark and Boblinks, which declined with the loss of the hayfields and pasture that accompanied suburbanization and re-forestation.

Pascommuck's role, with the help of a very generous anonymous donor (we need more of those to keep this up!), has been to protect land neighboring the Sanctuary, and the

links between it and the Manhan River floodplain. With the purchase of the high-quality farm fields which make up the Pond property along Clapp Street -- just months away from being sold as 10 frontage houselots -- there is now a secure corridor from Arcadia's western edge to the Easthampton Water Department's wellfield land along the Manhan.

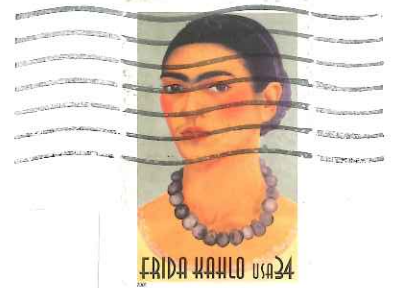
Once the Department of Food and Agriculture has purchased the development rights from us, permanently restricting the Pond property to agricultural use, it will be resold at cost to the Pomeroy's of Westfield. Their family has been farming in this area for a long time: perhaps you've heard of Pomeroy Mountain! The Pond fields will then serve as a transition to the back pastureland and ponds of the old Sparko farm off Lovefield Street.

Pascommuck will keep the latter 19 acres open, so its grasses and swales can continue to welcome wildlife from otters to dragonflies and ducks. However, we will first be removing invasive plants such as Autumn Olive and Multiflora Rose. This hard work, turning back the tide of plants which form dense thickets preventing native plants from re-establishing themselves, will be followed by biennial mowing.

That's the pattern: working together to sustain and even restore the classic New England quilt -- river, wetland, woods, farm field, and ponds -- which serves as a home and breadbasket not just for our people and wildlife, but for our culture as well.

-- Gerrit Stover

Pascommuck Conservation Trust  
P.O. Box 806  
Easthampton, Massachusetts 01027



-- please detach section below and mail with your new membership dues to Pascommuck Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 806, Easthampton, 01027 --

## PLEASE BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!

*Help preserve our past... Protect our future*

Please check appropriate membership level and level of support:

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Income ..... | \$ 6.00    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual .....     | \$ 10.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family .....         | \$ 18.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor .....    | \$ 25.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron .....         | \$ 60.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate .....      | \$ 100.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor .....        | \$ 150.00  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member .....    | \$ 1000.00 |

- I would like to help the Trust even more
  - Monitoring a Trust property in my neighborhood
  - Helping with outreach events (plant sales, information booths)
  - Volunteering professional or other services (landscaping, legal, painting, etc.)
  - Helping with fundraising
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

(NAME) \_\_\_\_\_

(STREET OR P.O. BOX) \_\_\_\_\_

(TOWN) \_\_\_\_\_ (ZIP CODE) \_\_\_\_\_

(PHONE) \_\_\_\_\_ (E-MAIL) \_\_\_\_\_