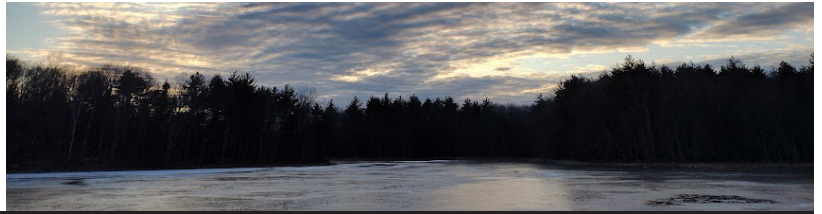


# BROAD BROOK COALITION



[www.broadbrookcoalition.org](http://www.broadbrookcoalition.org)

Volume 37, Issue #1, Spring 2025

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## ABOUT US

Broad Brook Coalition (BBC) is a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization incorporated in 1988 with the mission of preserving open space and promoting affordable housing. Under a memorandum of understanding with the Northampton Conservation Commission, BBC is responsible for the day-to-day management of the 936-acre Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. BBC's goals are to maintain and enhance the diversity and integrity of wildlife species and habitat at FLCA, promote outreach and education, and provide public access for passive recreation that is compatible with habitat protection.

Our work in trail maintenance, stewardship, education, and land preservation to expand FLCA is funded by the generous support of our members and occasional grants.

## From The Board

### A Step Back

This last year has seen the passing of two long-time members of Broad Brook Coalition, who together played a vital role in the founding and development of the organization. Carmen Ahearn joined BBC at its founding in 1988 and is remembered especially for her role in establishing the earliest trails to be built in the conservation area. Bob Zimmermann joined the BBC Board in 2002 and assumed the presidency in 2011. At the time of his death last May, Bob had become the longest-serving President in the organization's history. In the wake of their passing, and considering that many of BBC's newer members may have only a general idea of Broad Brook Coalition's history, we thought it was time to step back and remind our membership of how this organization came to be and how its mission has been shaped over the years.



**Why "Coalition"?** If you haven't dug into BBC's history you may be wondering what Coalition is doing in our name. Why not Friends of Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, as with many other similar organizations? While the nucleus of the conservation area—the lake and its surrounding land—was acquired by Northampton in 1977, BBC wasn't formed until 1988, when a group of neighbors living near the growing conservation area became concerned about a planned development of luxury homes in the area known as Cooke's Pasture. Calling themselves Broad Brook Coalition, after the brook that was dammed to form Fitzgerald Lake, they saw their mission as two-fold: to preserve open space for conservation purposes, and to support affordable housing in areas more appropriate to development. Although BBC's opposition was not the main reason the luxury homes were never built, it did give the organization a strong sense of civic purpose to go with its conservation ethic, and BBC continues to donate a portion of our annual dues to affordable housing.

**Partnership with the City of Northampton** The following years saw new parcels added to the conservation area on a regular basis. Some of the land was donated, but most parcels were purchased by the City, and in those cases BBC helped out with funds from its membership or from fundraising activities. The largest of these

## From the Board, continued

parcels was the 161-acre Cooke's Pasture property—the site of the proposed development that led to the formation of Broad Brook Coalition to begin with. BBC mounted a fundraising campaign in 1994 to help with this purchase, which connected the original lake property to recent acquisitions such as the Marian St. parcel to the east. Altogether, BBC has contributed more than \$150,000 to the acquisition of lands in the conservation area, which has now grown to almost a thousand acres.

During the 1990s BBC formalized its relationship with the City, beginning with a Memorandum of Understanding that specified the respective roles of BBC and the City in the management of Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. And in cooperation with the Northampton Conservation Commission, BBC drew up a comprehensive management plan in 1996 to clarify the overall goals for FLCA, including the integration of conservation, recreational, and educational activities. These documents provide a solid basis for cooperation between the all-volunteer BBC and the City of Northampton through its Department of Planning and Sustainability and the Conservation Commission.

**Development** As outlined in the original Memorandum of Understanding, the goals for managing Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area include both preservation of natural habitat and availability to the public for passive recreation. BBC and the City have sought to balance these two goals in various ways. A network of trails was established soon after the lake property was acquired and has been expanded as needed in view of later land purchases. However, since 2000 the policy has been that no new trails will be created on existing land, and will be built on new parcels only after approval by the BBC Board and the Conservation Commission. A sizeable portion of FLCA, especially to the north and east of the lake, has no trails and is expected to remain that way.

In 1993 a wheelchair-accessible paved path was built from the North Farms Road parking lot to connect to the boardwalk and canoe launch, which is also handicap accessible. In 1997 a bridge was built over the brook near the North Farms Rd.

entrance (and rebuilt in 2017), and in 2000 a wildlife viewing blind was constructed off the Marian St. trail, overlooking the marsh downstream from the earthen dam at the east end of the lake. No other structures have been built in the conservation area except for bog bridges over muddy patches of trail.

### Going Forward

Broad Brook Coalition has an impressive record of accomplishments, and an important role to play in managing the FLCA in partnership with the City. With resolve to lead BBC into the future, the Board is thinking about where the organization should be headed. The current Board is in the process of assessing our challenges, strengths, and opportunities as we chart our path forward.

**Input from the City** The Board's first step in planning BBC's future was to invite a representative of the City to meet with us to learn more about how the City views BBC's role in the conservation of FLCA. Sarah LaValley, Assistant Director of Northampton's Office of Planning and Sustainability, recently spent an evening with the Board to discuss how BBC can best work with the City to complement and strengthen the City's efforts to conserve and manage the FLCA. Sarah explained that the City does not have the staff or funding to meet all the needs of the FLCA, and so views BBC as the City's "boots on the ground" by maintaining trails, fighting invasive species, and making the public's experience of FLCA as safe

and rewarding as possible. In balancing the use and conservation of FLCA, the City relies upon BBC to be the public's voice. The City's long-term conservation priorities for FLCA include managing it as a climate-resilient forest, maintaining its carbon-sequestration function, providing wildlife habitat, and acquiring adjacent land to provide for a more defensible and contiguous conservation area. Finally, the City welcomes opportunities to participate in BBC's planning efforts.

**Future Priorities** The BBC Board is now faced with the challenge of setting priorities for 2025 and beyond. Many BBC priorities, including trail maintenance and control of invasive species, are likely to remain unchanged from the past. Other priorities may include strategies for growing our membership and leadership, updating signage, maps, and brochures, updating BBC's bylaws, and renewing BBC's Memorandum of Understanding with the City. The BBC Board looks forward to hearing members' input on BBC priorities, and sharing our decisions in future communications.

Who Broad Brook Coalition is now is who we've been for thirty-seven years. We hope you've enjoyed this look back at our history and our thoughts for the future, and we'd be delighted if you—members and friends—continue to join us on our educational walks, pitch in for our work days, and say hi to us on the trails as we start up another year.

—Rich Baker, Dave Pritchard, Co-Presidents



## Wildfire Comes To Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area

It seems like wildfire has become the “new normal” in the U.S. in recent years. On November 1, 2024, Northampton residents were surprised to learn that firefighters were fighting a groundfire in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. While the national media has taught us a great deal about the frequency and intensity of wildfires in the Western U.S., we’ve heard very little about wildfire in New England. The wildfire in our backyard was unprecedented and concerning.

**Historic Context** Wildfire has had a periodic presence in New England’s Mixed Hardwood Forests ever since the continental glaciers receded from our area over 12,000 years ago. Accounts of human-caused fires prior to the arrival of Europeans indicate that the Indigenous people of our area used relatively small fires to influence, for example, where nut trees grew and where wildlife congregated. Unlike in the Western U.S, however, large (many-thousand-acre) wildfires have not been common in New England’s forests.

**Geographic Context** The huge and catastrophic wildfires that have recently burned in California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and elsewhere are the product of a combination of a warmer climate that creates conditions ripe for large fires and the past suppression of fires that has led to the accumulation of fuels (flammable materials on the forest floor, standing dead trees, etc.) that wildfires need. Importantly, these western forests also support tree species that are adapted to be highly resistant to fire, have seeds that have evolved to germinate after a fire, and require periodic fire to renew their growth. Indeed, frequent wildfire can be normal and beneficial for fire-adapted types of forests.

In contrast, New England’s forests have not been subjected to these same evolutionary pressures. While many of our oak species, for example, can resist the effects of low-intensity fires, and acorns may actually germinate more readily after a low-intensity fire, our oak trees do not need fire to be successful in reproducing and growing old.

**The FLCA Wildfire** The November 2024 wildfire in FLCA burned just over 50 acres. The

fire itself burned over the land at a relatively low intensity. Blackened trees in the burned area indicate that flames did not reach more than a few feet in height, and as a result, no trees were incinerated by the fire. Ours was a “groundfire” that worked its way relatively slowly through the forest, burning leaves, twigs, woody material lying on the ground, and some shrubs.

We are very fortunate that the Northampton Fire Department acted quickly to fight the FLCA wildfire, and did so very effectively. (See accompanying article from the Fire Department.) Had the fire not been extinguished so quickly and thoroughly, it is certainly possible that the fire could have grown much larger, and structures could have been destroyed. We are all grateful to our Fire Department for their rapid response.

What is the future of wildfire in FLCA? Of course, nobody knows the answer to this question, but the effects of climate change are predicted to increase the frequency of fires throughout temperate areas of the world like ours. Yet, with the 2024 fire being the first in many years within FLCA, it is not likely that we will see frequent wildfires within FLCA in the near future. (Here’s to hoping we never have to “eat” those words!)

If you are interested in reducing the risk of wildfire impacting your property, there are plenty of preventative steps that you can take. Search the internet for the “Firewise USA” website, where you can learn more about how to reduce your own wildfire risk.

—Rich Baker



## Fighting the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area Fire



Portable water storage tank at site of FLCA brush fire

On November 1, 2024, Northampton Fire Rescue personnel responded to a reported large brush fire in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. Over the course of the following eight days, firefighters from Northampton and multiple fire departments throughout western Massachusetts fought to contain and extinguish a very stubborn wildland fire. Personnel from the MA Air National Guard, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation firefighters, Massachusetts State Police Air Wing, and the Department of Fire Services assisted the local crews at the scene. Homeowners along both Marian St. and Coles Meadow Rd. provided access via driveways and backyards so that firefighters could cross the difficult terrain and bring resources in to help extinguish the blaze. In all, 52 acres of conservation land burned, and the fire was declared out on November 9.

The fire was for the most part a ground fire. Very dry forest leaf litter and fallen branches allowed the fire, driven by wind and terrain, to move through the area. Fire can get moved by wind and also moves more easily uphill. A ground fire in a dry season can follow tree roots into the ground and remain hidden there and can continue burning. Fire in fallen logs and old stumps can burn and smolder for days until the fuel burns off or gets soaked. These are some of the reasons that the fire took several days to control, along with some hard to reach terrain. A low ground fire in these conditions won’t burn up live trees very far and didn’t reach the crowns of trees which leads to rapid fire spread, as we have seen in news from the western U.S.

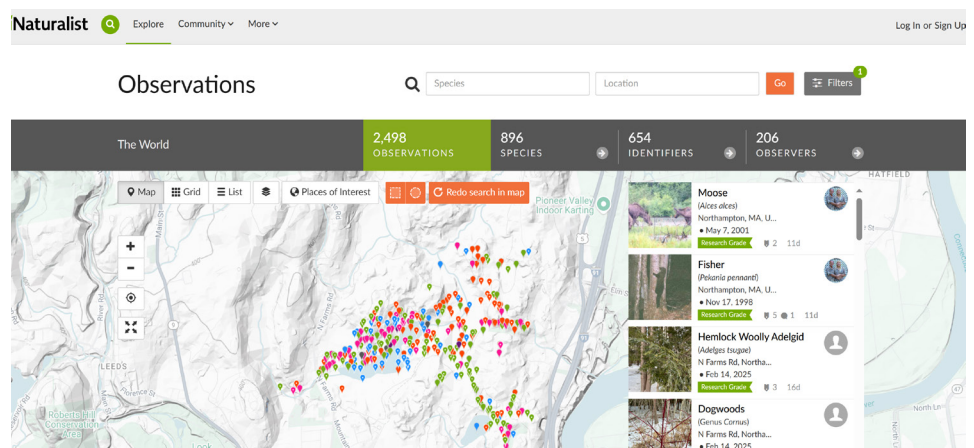
We would like to thank our mutual aid partners, outside agencies, and the citizens of Northampton for their assistance. We would also like to thank the many businesses that donated food and water during the weeklong incident, including Wal-Mart, Turf Care Supply, Quality Restoration, NoHo Nutrition, LashCo Tree Service, Tandem Bagel Company, Stop and Shop, Big Y Supermarket, and River Valley Co-op. We would also like to thank the Spagnoli family for the refreshments they provided to our crews on scene.

—Matthew Lemberg, Asst. Chief, Northampton Fire Rescue, and Bevan Quinn, firefighting instructor

## iNaturalist at Fitzgerald Lake

iNaturalist is a free smartphone app that can be used by anyone to help identify plants and animals based on photos they take and submit. By uploading a photo(s) and the location where you took it, the iNaturalist app provides you reliable suggestions for the plant or animal you are trying to identify. Observations can be submitted via the app and are freely accessible to the scientific community which uses them for a wide variety of purposes. These data are valuable to better map the current distribution of a species, to track the flowering and/or leaf-out time of specific plants, and much more.

The Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area (FLCA) has an iNaturalist “project.” This project automatically aggregates, in real time, all iNaturalist observations that have been submitted to date within the geographic area that FLCA covers. As of the writing of this article there have been 900 combined plant and



animal species documented in the FLCA project, aggregated from more than 2,500 observations from over 200 unique iNaturalist users! You can regularly check in on how these numbers are growing and what plants and animals users have recently documented at FLCA by going to our BBC website at

[www.broadbrookcoalition.org](http://www.broadbrookcoalition.org). Toward the bottom of the homepage you will see a link that will take you to the FLCA iNaturalist project page. We urge anyone enjoying the nature in FLCA to submit photos of anything you find interesting or are curious about. Help us grow this valuable citizen science database!

—Brad Timm

## Tribute to a Trail Master: Carmen Ahearn (1931-2025)

When Carmen Ahearn was interviewed for a profile in BBC’s Fall 2008 newsletter, she said that one of the best parts of volunteering with BBC was finding “many friends and like-minded people.” I’m honored to have become one of those friends. I remember Carmen not only as my hiking and camping companion and my mentor in all things outdoors, but as a pillar of Broad Brook Coalition from the time of its founding. As BBC took on a role as partner to the Northampton Conservation Commission in maintaining and enlarging the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, Carmen stepped up to coordinate the improvement and maintenance of FLCA’s trails. She had lived much of her adult life in and near New York City and had spent lots of time hiking in the Adirondacks, where she studied the techniques of trail design and maintenance. After moving to Northampton, she attended an FLCA work day, and noticed that the trails, while well designed, had had little maintenance since their construction.

In Spring 1995, BBC set out to repair and upgrade the entire trail system of FLCA, and Carmen led that effort. She did everything from planning volunteer work days, to serving as the contact person for prospective volunteers (even publishing her phone number in the newsletter and

taking the calls), to rounding up other local service organizations to help, to reporting progress in the newsletter, to wielding a shovel herself—in addition to serving on the BBC Board between 1991 and 2000. Her specialty was installing stepping stones to make muddy trail sections passable. Under her direction, BBC’s “rock group”—called the “Rolling Stones,” naturally—used crowbars to pry up boulders and human muscle power to roll them into place. One of her favorite stories was about a group from a community organization who had volunteered to help build bog bridges, but couldn’t grasp the idea of carrying the timbers into the woods—one member insisted the timbers would have to be brought in by helicopter.

Finally, in 2002, Carmen reported in the newsletter that the trail project was complete, and that only routine maintenance would be needed in the future. But as FLCA continued to grow, new trails came under its management, and BBC initiated new projects, such as the wildlife blind, to add to the area’s recreational value, so its volunteers have stayed busy!

In 2008, Carmen, along with Bob Rundquist, her successor as trails coordinator, received a special version of BBC’s Annual Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service, the “20th

Anniversary Happy Trails Award,” at the Annual Meeting. To get these two stalwart but modest volunteers to the meeting without spoiling the surprise, we asked Carmen to present Bob’s award to him, and asked Bob to present Carmen’s to her.

With BBC having celebrated its 35th anniversary, it’s not surprising that many of its founding and leading members are no longer with us. But their legacy remains with all of us. If you’ve walked FLCA’s trails, you’ve seen Carmen’s work. And if you’re helping to care for our beloved sanctuary today, you’re leaving a legacy and an inspiration for those who come after you, just as Carmen did.

Carmen’s family hopes to have a memorial service for her later in the spring; please watch the local newspaper for an announcement.

—Norma Roche



Carmen Ahearn and Bob Rundquist making trail

## New BBC Board Members: Ceci Flinn and Holly Mitchell

### Ceci Flinn

Ceci comes originally from California where she studied and worked in landscape architecture. One of her grad degrees was called "The Conservation of Landscapes, Parks & Gardens," so she has a long history of interest in the outdoors and conservation. Before moving to Northampton a bit over a year ago she lived in the Boston area for 20 years and the UK for 15 years. In both places she led walking tours, so has well over 30 years of public-facing experience. Ceci has served on a few boards of directors and has extensive volunteer experience (doing and managing). Recreationally she is a retired elite rower and current avid mountain biker and geocacher. Around the conservation area she is interested in protecting space for wildlife while preserving access for various uses. Ceci has a PhD in history, works remotely for an educational website, and lives adjacent to the FLCA.



### Holly Mitchell

I'm a resident of the Lathrop retirement community. The FLCA borders our land to the west and the north, and it provides us with incalculable blessings. For some of us, a walk in the woods is an essential daily ritual; for others, those woods are a mysterious, unvisited presence, out of which creatures—big bears, elegant bobcats and foxes and coyotes, beautiful raptors and songbirds—step or swoop into our backyards. We are grateful for these blessings!

A particular obligation that a number of us feel, and try to act on, is to limit the spread of invasive plants from Lathrop land into the FLCA. Especially in the portions of our property that are under a conservation restriction, and along our edges that abut the FLCA, we do what we can ourselves to control invasives, and we hire professionals with funds that we raise. It often seems a losing battle; an issue for both Lathrop and the FLCA is how to make efficient use of limited resources.

My husband and I moved to Northampton from Cambridge six years ago, after his retirement from running the Publications Office at UMassBoston. We're now halfway between our Boston son and Albany daughter. I'm a hiking and birdwatching enthusiast. While not expert in botany or zoology or forest management—I studied ancient Greek in college and afterward worked as a copyeditor—I have come to know and love the terrains and seasons and moods of the FLCA. I hope to contribute what I can to its stewardship.



### Book Pick: *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us* - Ed Yong (2022)

What if you tasted your food with your feet? What if your ears were on your knees, or your abdomen? What if, on a moonless cloudy night, you could guide your journey by seeing Earth's magnetic field? In his exploration of the wondrous variety of the sensory worlds of other species, Ed Yong joins scientists in their labs and in the field to bring us illustrations of a concept named in the early twentieth century by a German zoologist: the *Umwelt*, the specific perceptual world that surrounds each animal.

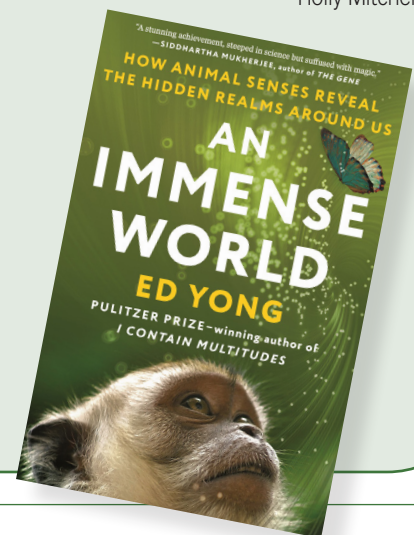
Yong entertains and teaches us with examples of the diversity, among and within animal species, in the physiologies of smell and taste and pheromone signaling, of vision and hearing (and hearing's cousin, communication via non-airborne surface vibrations), of touch and heat and pain, and of three that are tough to wrap our heads around—echolocation, electrotouch, and magnetoreception.

Birders will enjoy the chapter on color vision (birds see lots more colors than we do); the chapter on sound, which opens with owls—specifically, their capacity to detect and locate the faintest of noises—and goes on to birdsong, whose fine structures and encoded messages continue to elude us; and the chapter on magnetoreception, the capacity to perceive Earth's magnetic field, a crucial aid to migrators. My own favorite chapter, though—because bats are so cool—is the one on echolocation. The speed with which a bat adjusts its sonar pulses, within a hunting episode just seconds long! Also amazing is the discussion that follows, about sonar as used by dolphins and other cetaceans. Did you know that, because sound waves in water can penetrate flesh, a dolphin can peer inside the body of its prey to discover and avoid an unwanted fishhook?

Yong ends with a plea to humans to do what we can to limit the ravages of sensory

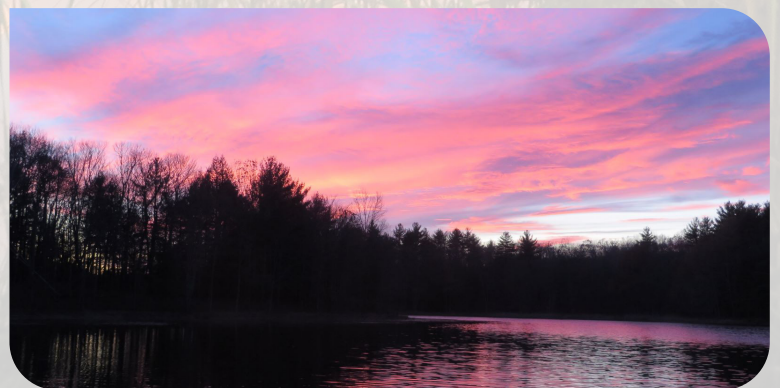
pollution—especially light and sound pollution—on our fellow creatures. "Instead of stepping into the *Umwelten* of other animals," he writes, "we have forced them to live in ours by barraging them with stimuli of our own making." The source of his book's title is a poem by William Blake, who in 1790 understood a great deal about *Umwelten*. "How do you know," Blake wrote, "but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?"

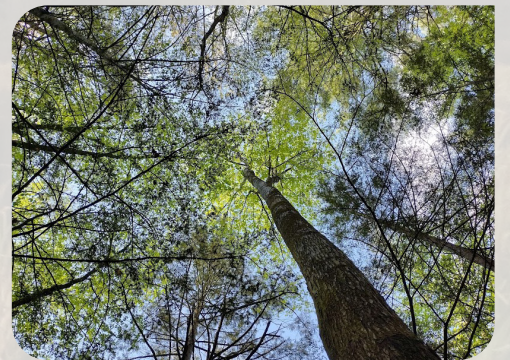
—Holly Mitchell



## Fitzgerald Lake Through The Seasons

So many things to do and see at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area! We hope you enjoy this kaleidoscope of recent images taken by BBC Board members Ceci Flinn and Dave Pritchard.





## 2025 Walks and Talks

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BBC's walk programs are free and open to the public. We ask that you **register beforehand**, which will allow us to answer any questions you might have and notify you of any changes or cancellations. **To sign up for any of the following walks, please send an email to Dave Pritchard at Registrar@BroadBrookCoalition.org.** Please check the Broad Brook website ([broadbrookcoalition.org](http://broadbrookcoalition.org)) for more information on any of these programs, or call Dave Pritchard (413-695-8442) or Dick Wynne (413-584-7930).

### **Vernal Pool Ecology** | Brad Timm | Saturday, May 10, 10:00 a.m. – noon | North Farms Rd. entrance

Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area is fortunate to contain several confirmed vernal pools just a short walk in from the North Farms Rd. entrance. Join biologist Brad Timm as we visit these pools and discover their truly unique ecology. We'll learn about the wide variety of animals that rely on vernal pools for their existence – from amphibians and reptiles to an amazing number of diverse invertebrate species, as well as some mammals and birds. And we'll explore the importance of vernal pools to overall ecosystem functioning, and how climate change might impact these critical habitats. We will also get the chance to see some of these animals in action during our walk while we learn about their captivating life histories. All ages are welcome and encouraged! Brad Timm is a wildlife biologist who has conducted amphibian research (typically centered around vernal pools) in New England for over 15 years

### **Spring Bird Walk** | Lesley Farlow and Steve Winn | Saturday, May 24, 7:30 – 10:00 a.m. | Cooke Ave. entrance

Lesley Farlow and Steve Winn, experienced birders and members of the Hampshire Bird Club, will lead a bird walk along the Pines Edge swamp and Boggy Meadow Road to the bird blind. We will look for breeding migrants and resident birds as we pass through a number of different habitats. We should be able to see and hear some migrating warblers, thrushes, vireos, swallows, herons, kingfishers and more. Bring binoculars if you have them. We will have a few extra pairs.

### **Fire in the Woodland Ecosystem** | Laurie Sanders

Tuesday, May 27, 10:00 a.m. – noon | Saturday, May 31, 10:00 – noon | Coles Meadow Rd. Entrance

In partnership with Historic Northampton | Come explore a portion of the 50+ acres of the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area that experienced a brush fire in November 2024 to see first-hand how the herbaceous layer is recovering. How damaging are brush fires of this size and intensity? What are the short-term and long-term effects of fire on the woodland ecosystem? **Note: Attendance for these walks is limited. Please register through Historic Northampton: [historicnorthampton.org](http://historicnorthampton.org)**

### **What's Up with Invasive Plants?** | Tom Annese

Saturday, June 7th, 10 a.m.– noon | Arcanum Field Parking Lot, Florence (carpool to site)

Managing invasive plants can at times be . . . well. . . depressing. On this walk, we'll take a more light-hearted approach to invasive plant management and focus on practical measures to control invasive species and increase biodiversity on forest land. We'll review the more familiar invasive plant species and examine some invasive species new to Northampton. We'll discuss how to initially assess a site with invasives, develop a simple management plan, and use realistic strategies to contain and suppress them. Whether you're a grizzled and experienced weed warrior or someone just starting out, all are welcome. **Note: Meet in the Arcanum Field parking lot, N. Maple St., Florence**, where we'll carpool to private land nearby. Contact Tom Annese at [tannese@northamptonma.gov](mailto:tannese@northamptonma.gov) with any questions.

### **The Role of Fungi in the Forest Ecosystem** | Peter Russell

Sunday, Sept. 7, 10:00 a.m. – noon | North Farms Rd. entrance

Join mycologist Peter Russell on a foray to look at the fungi fruiting around Fitzgerald Lake. We will use the fungi we find to consider the roles they play in the ecosystem, especially their succession in space and time both on decomposing wood and as mycorrhizal partners with trees. The main purpose of the foray will not be to consider their edibility or medicinal qualities. Peter is a local resident, a member of the Pioneer Valley Mycological Society, and has been leading mushroom forays for many years.

## Workdays at the FLCA: Spring and Summer 2025

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### **Shrubland Habitat and Native Plants** | Saturday, May 3, 9:30 a.m. – noon

Several years ago, we established three "islands" of native shrubs in Cooke's Pasture to provide food and habitat for shrubland birds and small mammals. We return every year to prune the shrubs, cut back competing undergrowth, and replace plants that have not survived the winter. Tools will be provided, though additional clippers are always welcome. Wear long pants and bring along your favorite insect repellent. Meet at the Cooke Ave. parking lot at 9:00 a.m. or at the Fitzgerald Lake dam at 9:30 a.m. Contact Brad Timm at [bradtimm@gmail.com](mailto:bradtimm@gmail.com) for further information.

### **Annual Cleanup at the North Farms Road Entrance** | Saturday, May 17, 10:00 a.m. – noon

This is the day for cleaning up the North Farms Road entrance to the FLCA. We'll clear winter debris from the path to the bridge and boardwalk, pick up trash in the parking lot, and remove by hand invasive plants such as garlic mustard, Japanese knotweed, and multiflora rose in the adjoining woods. Please help us spruce up this heavily used route to the conservation area. Tools will be provided. Contact Dick Wynne at 413-584-7930 for further information.



## Removal of Invasives on Boggy Meadow Road | Sunday, June 8, 10:00 a.m. – noon.

The margins of roads provide excellent habitat for the growth of invasive plants. There are many patches of invasives along Boggy Meadow Road, which connects the old Moose Lodge parking lot at the end of Cooke Avenue with the Fitzgerald Lake dam. We will work our way along the road pulling, cutting, and digging invasive plants such as multiflora rose, Asiatic bittersweet, Japanese barberry, autumn olive, and non-native honeysuckle. Tools will be provided, but if you care to bring clippers, pruning saws, and lopping shears, it would be appreciated. And don't forget gloves, sunscreen, and insect repellent. Meet at the Cooke Ave. parking lot. Contact Holly Mitchell at [mhnmitchell@yahoo.com](mailto:mhnmitchell@yahoo.com) for further information.

## Removal of Water Chestnut from Fitzgerald Lake

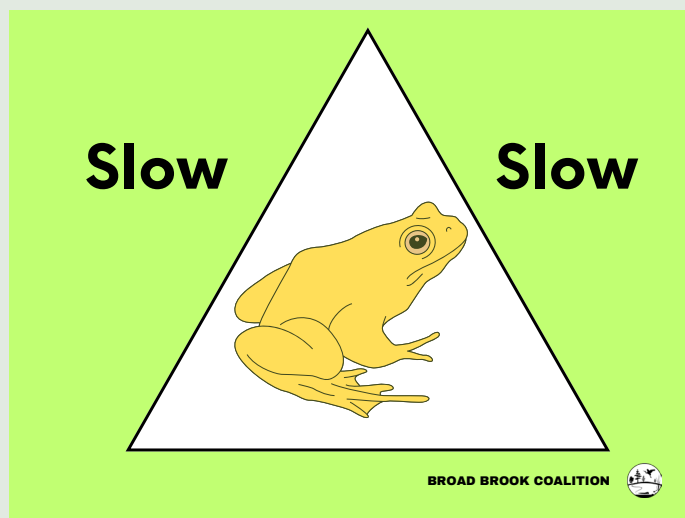
Saturdays June 21, July 12, August 2; Sundays August 24, September 14. 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Several years ago we implemented a new approach to controlling water chestnut in Fitzgerald Lake called "pull early, pull often." In 2017, we removed roughly 1,100 lbs. from the lake while in 2024 the yield was down to 90 lbs. Though we are pleased with the results so far, water chestnut seeds can remain viable for up to ten years on the lake bottom so we plan to continue our work again this year. We'll organize crews in late May, begin pulling in mid-June, and continue at 3-week intervals throughout the summer. Volunteers should bring their own canoes or kayaks. If interested, contact Tina White by email ([broadbrooktreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:broadbrooktreasurer@gmail.com)) or phone (413-341-0240) for further information.

# Conservation News in Brief

## Amphibian Crossing Signs

In March BBC set out roadside signs on either side of the North Farms Rd. entrance encouraging drivers to slow down where the road dips and passes over the Broad Brook culvert. Amphibians such as wood frogs, spring peepers, green frogs, toads, and spotted salamanders are known to cross this stretch on rainy spring nights on their way to the wetlands and vernal pools of FLCA. The reflective green signs have a simple but effective design: a large frog logo with **Slow** on either side. Signage such as this has been shown to help slow traffic at known amphibian crossings. Thanks to Tina White for designing these attractive signs!



## Japanese Stiltgrass and Black Swallowwort in FLCA

Tom Annese of the Northampton Office of Planning and Sustainability has let the Board know that he has spotted two invasive plants in the conservation area that are of particular concern. Japanese stiltgrass grows 1 to 3 feet high and can form dense stands along trails and roads that quickly spread into the woodland understory. Its leaves are narrow and lance-shaped, with a silver midrib. Black swallowwort is a slender vine with opposite, waxy, oval leaves that end in a sharp tip. It is found climbing or sprawling especially in open fields, but can spread into woodlands as well. If you notice either of these plants, please notify the BBC Board at [info@broadbrookcoalition.org](mailto:info@broadbrookcoalition.org).



*Japanese Stiltgrass*



*Black Swallowwort*

## Avian Influenza

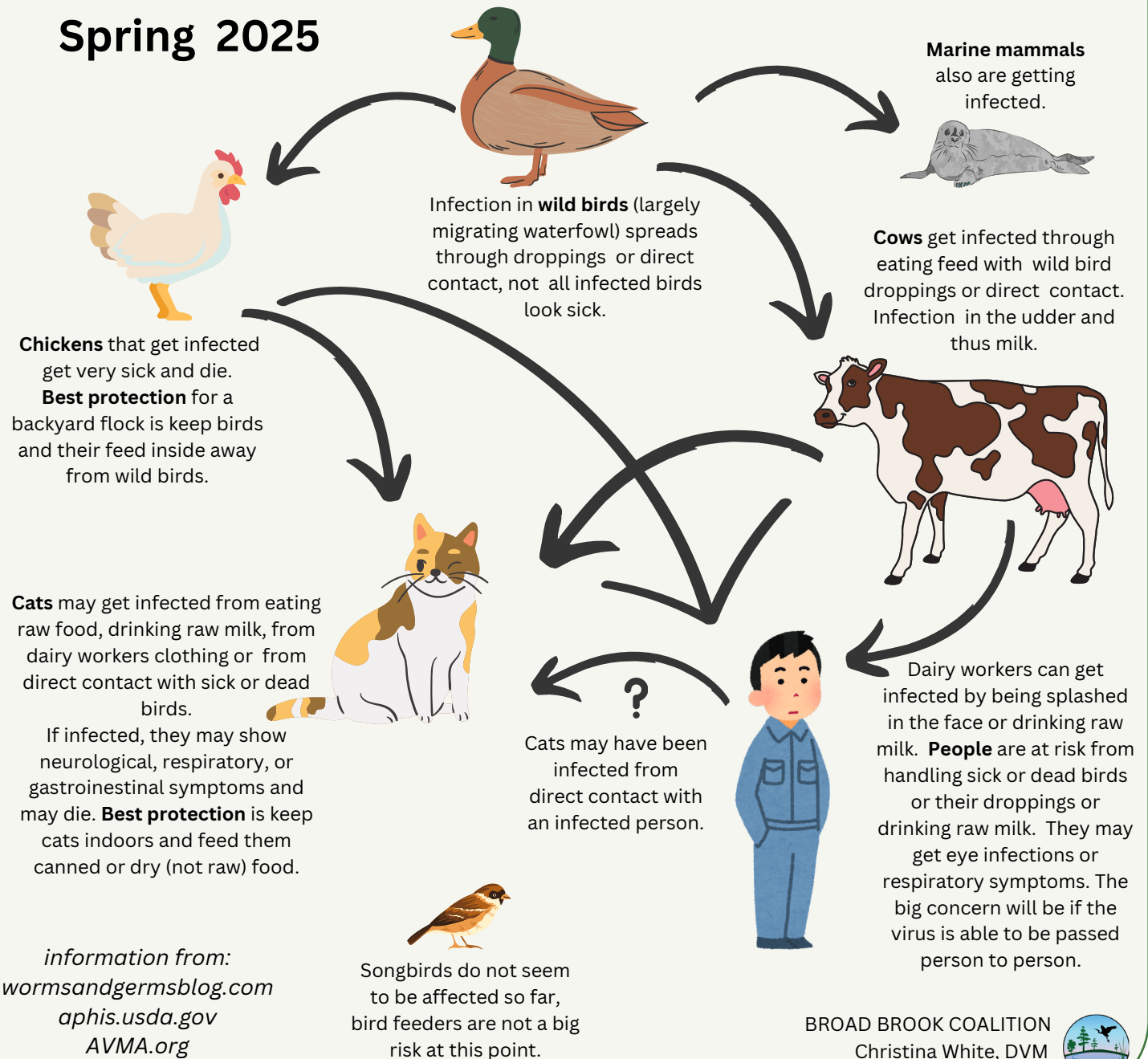
Avian influenza, like human "flu," tends to change slightly year to year. In the past few years, a more deadly strain of avian flu has been affecting wild birds and chickens, and is more infectious to mammals, including dairy cows, cats, and people. There have been several dramatic die-offs of some species of migratory birds, like northern gannets, and other birds can carry it without looking ill. At this point, most human infections have been in people who work

directly with animals in agriculture, and have been mild. Cats have been infected by contact with clothing from the agricultural workers, or from raw milk or food, even commercial raw food. Since this is a health issue for wildlife, domestic animals, and people, we wanted to share this graphic to help you understand what you can do to prevent infections.

—Tina White

# Avian Flu Spring 2025

## How to protect your pets, your flock and yourself



BROAD BROOK COALITION  
Christina White, DVM



## Species Spotlight

(This is the thirteenth in a series of articles featuring species of animals and plants that are readily found in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. A fuller version of this article will be placed on the BBC website, [broadbrookcoalition.org](http://broadbrookcoalition.org).)

**Common Name:** Common Eastern Firefly

**Scientific Name:** *Photinus pyralis*

**Physical Description:** The Common Eastern Firefly adult is a small (0.4in.-0.7in), soft-bodied beetle. Their wing-coverings (called "elytra") extend the length of their body and are black with a yellow border. They have a shield that covers much of their head which is yellow with a black dot in the middle bordered by a pinkish-red color. Both the male and female have a light-emitting organ at the end of their abdomen; it occurs in the last three segments of the male's abdomen, whereas it only occurs in the second-to-last segment of the female's abdomen.

**Longevity:** Their underground larvae live for 1-2 years; adults live three weeks to two months.

**Distribution:** The Common Eastern Firefly is widespread throughout the eastern U.S. and eastern Canada.

**Habitat:** They are most often found in meadows, fields, and woodland edges. Some good spots at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area are likely Cooke's Pasture, South Pasture, and the dam.

**Reproduction:** Most breeding takes place in June and July in Massachusetts. Males flash while flying to attract the attention of females. Male Common Eastern Fireflies often flash every 5 to 7 seconds. They will then wait for a female(s) to flash in response, which usually occurs 1-2 seconds after the male's flashing. The female will remain sedentary, typically on tall grass or other tall herbaceous vegetation. The male(s) and female(s) will continue to flash back and forth to each other until the male reaches the female. After mating, the female will lay up to 500 eggs underground. The eggs hatch and the larvae will take 1-2 years to grow, after which time they will transform into an adult for a short period of time. The larvae are often referred to as "glow worms" because they have the ability to emit light.

**Diet:** Adults and larvae eat a range of invertebrates such as worms, snails, larval beetles, and more. They inject prey with a poison that immobilizes and liquifies them.

**Conservation and Management:** A large number of firefly species and populations are in decline due to a combination of factors such as increasing light pollution, reduction in habitat, and use of herbicides and pesticides. One easy way that you can help these fascinating animals is by reducing the outdoor lighting at your home at night, especially during the months of June and July when they are breeding.



### Interesting Facts:

- Sometimes called the "Big Dipper Firefly" because the male's flashing pattern resembles a "J", like the shape of the Big Dipper constellation.
- It is one of over 150 firefly (or "lightning bug") species in the United States.
- Females of a different genus of fireflies ("Photuris") trick male Common Eastern Fireflies by mimicking the flashing signals of female Common Eastern Fireflies. They then eat the males that get lured in.

—Brad Timm

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[www.broadbrookcoalition.org](http://www.broadbrookcoalition.org).

There, you can view upcoming events (such as our Walks/Talks and Work Days), learn about the animals and plants found at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, and access current and previous newsletters, among many other features.

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[www.broadbrookcoalition.org](http://www.broadbrookcoalition.org)

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