



Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation

www.fells.org 781-662-2340 **Events Calendar pullout: pages 5-10**

News of the Fells Spring 2013

Fells Mountain Bike Racing

During the Fells Resource Management Plan process that expanded mountain bike use in the Fells, many expressed concern that with DCR's acknowledged inability to monitor usage, bike riders would abuse their new privileges. But few imagined how quickly the abuse would begin and to what extremes the bikers would go.

There is a national website — strava.com — which displays lists of posted bike-racing times on competitive 'Leaderboards'. Since the Fells RMP, more and more Fells bike racers have posted on this national racing website. After the Fells Reservoir Trail was converted by DCR to bike access riders began competing against one another by posting their fastest racing times on this formerly lovely nature trail. During 2012 *hundreds* of bike race times with top speeds of 20 miles per hour were posted on many *additional* Fells trails, and now bike racing is expanding to eastern Fells hiking trails. The increased threat to safety, especially to children and the elderly, on narrow trails goes without saying — Bike racing has no place in the Fells!

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Babes in the Woods Apprentice Training!

by Moriah Tumbleson-Shaw

THIS JANUARY BABES IN THE WOODS LAUNCHED A NEW Hike Leader Apprenticeship program. Trail guidance is now being provided to help Babes hikers expand their knowledge of the Fells, while potentially developing trained apprentices capable of leading hiking programs of their own in the future!

The Fells Adventure Babes hikes, which occur every Thursday from 10:00-11:30 am, were deemed the best venue for our intrepid hike leader, Terry Murray, to mentor apprentice hike leaders. The Thursday hikes are geared for families with kids in carrying devices, or with children who are able to keep up an adult pace for the full hike — no strollers are allowed. Smaller groups attending these hikes make an ideal training ground for new hike leaders.

Since most Fells hikers are familiar with just a few areas of the Fells, the apprentice-training program provides opportunities to deepen knowledge of new locations. From a designated starting point, parent-leaders will learn

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The Magic of Beavers

Fells beaver dam (Mike Ryan)

by Walter Kittredge

THE FIRST TIME I WALKED up Whitmore Brook Road I was unimpressed with the red maple swamp found there. The low diversity of plants consisted mainly of common woody shrubs like sweet pepperbush and high bush blueberry. The deep shade was gloomy, and the water dank and lifeless. Imagine my surprise when a later visit found the place sunlit and open with an inviting new pond. A beaver had arrived and set up a dam on the brook, flooding the area and killing off the trees. Ducks, frogs, fish and redwing blackbirds were happily using the new pond.

A beaver deceiver pipe was added to its dam to keep the water levels from rising too high, but sadly wasn't enough to ensure the beaver's survival.

Once the beaver had been removed, the water level dropped, mimicking a natural process of the pond filling in over time to create an emergent marsh. The contrast is remarkable, with close to ninety different plants now growing where before there were maybe a couple dozen. One of the new arrivals is the only plant in the Fells, of white-top aster, a tall plant with showy umbels of white flowers in the fall.

A late spring walk along the road now greets the visitor with

the royal fleur-de-lis of blue flag iris, with delicate blue-eyed grass at their feet. Summer is abuzz with dancing dragonflies, clouds of mingling midges, with the bulging eyes of frogs barely breaking the green surface of tiny floating duckweed.

It's easy to view the Fells as being static, because the trees often live for hundreds of years. But the cycles of flood, fire, and hurricanes help keep the forest vibrant, and increase its diversity. Beavers transform the landscape more than any other animal besides man. They remind us that transformation is a good thing in this world we share with others, and on which we depend for our own well-being.

Walking through the Fells in 1898 with Edwin M. Bacon



Fells Cascade pathway route today; note locations of points of interest described by the author in 1898

THE CASCADE ENTRANCE IS A NATURAL ENTRANCE, BETWEEN TWO BOLD ELEVATIONS — BLACK ROCK (243 feet) and White Rock — the “Twin Sentinels,” as they have been called, rising abruptly above the valley on either side of the steep and narrow passage thick with trees.

Between the slopes of the “Twin Sentinels” is the beautiful Cascade, or series of cascades, in which Shilly Shally Brook falls from the precipitous ledges above, over masses of picturesque rocks fringed with pine trees, and clusters of flowers and ferns; and from the hillsides as we ascend vistas open through the woods, often of extreme beauty.

The cascades are seen to the best advantage in the springtime or late autumn, when the hill streams are full, and the waters dash and bound down the rocky way; but they are not without many, if gentler, charms in the drier midsummer season. We reach the Cascade Rocks by a path along the base and north slope of Black Rock and as we approach the cliffs, by a scramble up the rough natural steps in the bush-clad steep at the right, ascend to Black Rock tip. Here we have our first full view of the valley from which we entered, with Melrose town to the north of us, Malden to the south, over the valley the hills on either side of Pine Banks, Revere and the waters beyond, and back of us the Fells wilderness.

From this point our walk continues, with Shilly Shally Brook at the right of us. Then crossing the

brook the path we follow bears northward, and then eastward, to Cairn Hill (300 feet). This hill is the culmination of the largest area of continuously high land in the Fells, nearly a square mile in extent.

Leaving the Cairn on the north side the next feature reached is Hemlock Pool, a beautiful sheet of water with fringe of fine hemlocks, and deciduous trees all about it. This is an interesting region, especially for the botanist. Taking now the carriage-road striking northward we round Shiner Pool on our left, a pretty little pond formed by the excavation of muck and by damming. Nearby, to the north of this pool, are fine old white pines, and nearer Woodland Road, a grove of pines.

From Woodland Road our course is westward along the southern shore of Spot Pond under noble hemlocks and pines. One of the fairest views up the pond is from Pickerel Rock, a short distance beyond the Medford Pump.

Excerpted from one of four Fells walks described by Mr. Bacon in his 1898 book Walks and Rides in the Country Round About Boston — Middlesex Fells, published for the Appalachian Mountain Club, describing the timeless beauty of Fells nature.

That special time of year

by Bryan Hamlin

I HAVE LIVED THROUGH A LOT OF SEASONS, and if you're like me you never get blasé about welcoming a new spring. First there is the joy of welcoming back old botanical friends, several of them some of the most beautiful flowers of any time of year. Moreover each year is different and exciting to see just when 'so and so' comes forth, and will this plant beat that one in 'first to bloom' this year.

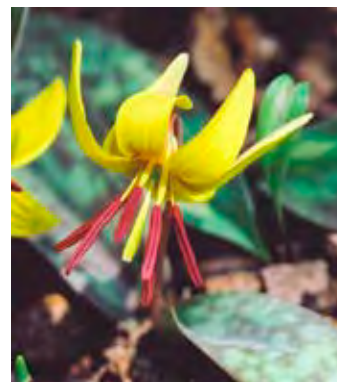
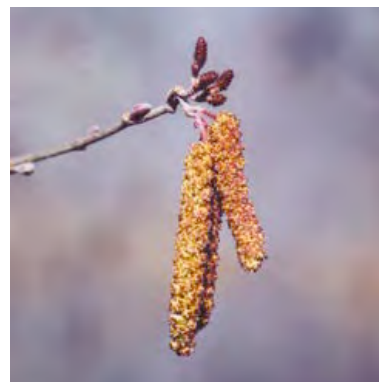
I write while snow is on the ground and not much sign of life in the Fells. I wonder if it will be an early spring again this year? During the last decade when Walter Kittredge and I spent studying the plants of the Fells we noted a definite shift towards earlier blooming times for spring flowers; but little in nature follows a straight line.

Nevertheless, by mid-March Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) and the Alders (*Alnus sp.*) should be flowering. Neither of these could be considered 'pretty' or fragrant. Skunk Cabbage looks and smells rather like rotten meat because, too early for bees, it is trying to attract flies as pollinators, even offering these brave early insects some warmth inside the

rounded shelter known as a spathe. The alders, soon to be followed by their cousins the birches, are wind-pollinated shrubs and trees dispersing pollen from dangling catkins that jiggle in the wind.

But in April a beautiful trio of flowers seem to 'battle' for who's going to bloom first and get the attention of the first brave bees: Hepatica (*Anemone americana*), Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) and Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*). Look for Hepatica on Bear Hill and a good place for the other two is near Bellevue Pond. By the end of April the attention-grabbing Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) will be blooming alongside streams, over-arched by Spice bush (*Lindera benzoin*) and Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*). Many early blooming plants are wetland plants because streams unfreeze more easily than the forest floor, transporting relative warmth through the area. By the end of April and into early May gorgeous violets (there are seven species in the Fells) will be appearing in many parts of the Fells. If I've caught your fancy, join me on my spring hikes or learn more at www.foundinthefells.com.

CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT:
Bloodroot, Hepatica, Marsh
Blue Violet, Trout Lily,
Smooth Alder Skunk Cabbage
(Bryan Hamlin)



Flowering Dogwood — *Cornus florida* (John Kramer)



SPRING 2013 HIKES & EVENTS

All hikes are free to the public and do not require pre-registration

MARCH

Hike the Southern Fells

Saturday, March 2, 2013

10:15 am - 12:30 pm

Leader: Dan Sumorok. Join Dan Sumorok on a hiking tour of the southernmost part of the Fells on the Skyline, Reservoir, and Cross Fells trails. This walk will end with a visit to Pine Hill and Wright's Tower, where the view includes Medford, Boston, and the Blue Hills in the distance. The trails are steep and rocky in places. Wear sturdy boots and bring at least a liter of water. Rain cancels. Meet at Bellevue Pond parking area, South Border Rd., Medford.

Animal Habitats Walk on the Rock Circuit Trail

Sunday, March 10, 2013

10:00 am - Noon

Leader: Pete Costello of Zoo New England. Join Pete for a family-friendly walk to explore and discuss

CELEBRATION OF SPRING with Boot Boutwell

Tuesday, March 19, 2013 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Botume House, 4 Woodland Rd., Stoneham (on the shore of Spot Pond)

Spring is a time of rebirth and renewal. In New England, the weather begins to moderate, the first flowers are already poking their heads above ground, and of course the days are getting longer. Spring arrives officially with the vernal equinox which occurs this year on Wednesday, March 20. Finally the days are as long as the nights, and they will be getting longer over the next three months. The Friends of the Fells will help prepare you to celebrate this joyous event with a pre-equinox celebration on Tuesday, March 19. We will learn why the seasons occur and why day length changes from season to season. We will celebrate the coming of spring with poetry, music and stories.

Weather permitting, we will go outside for a short nature walk to look for signs of the coming spring and to watch the sun set. And as celebrating is hungry work we will end the program with some refreshments. Meet at the DCR Botume House Visitor Center, 4 Woodland Rd., Stoneham. Parking is also available next door at Spot Pond Boating.

Note: Pre-registration is required: Call Boot Boutwell at 781-729-4712. Enrollment is limited.

animal and bird habitats, nests and animal signs in the Fells. Walking will be Easy to Moderate. Bring water and binoculars. Meet at 10:00 am at the Flynn Rink parking area on Woodland Rd. in Medford. Rain cancels. Email Pete at pbeararl@yahoo.com for more information.

The first signs of spring

Saturday, March 16, 2013

10:00 am – Noon

Leader: Bryan Hamlin. Join Bryan Hamlin in looking for the first signs of spring. Meet at Bellevue Pond parking lot, south end of South Border Rd., Medford. Steady rain

postpones till same time Sunday. Bryan's cell: 781-854-2058.

Hike 'n' Carry in Lawrence Woods

Sunday, March 24, 2013

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Leader: Linda Schwetz. Join Linda for an all-ages hike and trail clean-up in the Lawrence Woods area. Bags, gloves, and verification of two community service hours will be provided. Meet at 2:00 sharp at Victory Park, on Route 38 in Medford. Rain cancels. Call Linda at 617-803-3173 for more information.

Early spring at Bellevue Pond

Wednesday, March 27, 2013

9:15 am – 11:30 am

Leader: Boot Boutwell. Spring has arrived. We will see if we can find any signs of spring on a walk around Bellevue Pond and down along Straight Gully Brook. The walk will focus on plant ID as well as fun and interesting natural history. Meet at the Bellevue Pond parking lot on South Border Rd. in Medford. Steady rain cancels. This walk is free of charge and open to the public. For more information, call Boot Boutwell at 781-729-4712.

APRIL

Hike the Southern Fells

Saturday, April 6, 2013

10:15 am – 12:30 pm

Leader: Dan Sumorok. Join Dan Sumorok on a hiking tour of the southernmost part of the Fells on the Skyline, Reservoir, and Cross Fells trails. This walk will end with a visit to Pine Hill and Wright's Tower, where the view includes Medford, Boston, and the Blue Hills in the distance. The trails are steep and rocky in places. Wear sturdy boots and bring at least a liter of water. Rain cancels. Meet at Bellevue Pond parking area, South Border Rd., Medford.

Early spring at Virginia Wood

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

9:15 am – 11:30 am

Leader: Boot Boutwell. Spring is here and signs of the season are popping up all over — if you know where to look for them. Join Boot Boutwell for a nature walk that will focus on plant ID as well as fun and interesting natural history. Meet at the Virginia Wood parking lot to the

right of the house at #1 Woodland Rd. (at the intersection of Woodland Rd. and Pond St.) in Stoneham. Steady rain cancels. This walk is free of charge and open to the public. For more information, call Boot Boutwell at 781-729-4712.

Animal Habitats Walk on the Rock Circuit Trail

Sunday, April 14, 2013

10:00 am – Noon

Leader: Pete Costello of Zoo New England. Join Pete for a family-friendly walk to explore and discuss animal and bird habitats, nests and animal signs in the Fells. Walking will be Easy to Moderate. Bring water and binoculars. Meet at 10:00 am at the Flynn Rink parking area on Woodland Rd. in Medford. Rain cancels. Email Pete at pbeararl@yahoo.com for more information.

Serve the Fells for DCR Park Serve Day

Saturday, April 20, 2013

9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Contact: Rich Sanford. Fells supporters of all ages are invited to join

in a day of service at the Fells in conjunction with DCR Park Serve Day. Available projects will include trail cleanups, habitat restoration, and trail maintenance hikes at various sites throughout the Fells Reservation. Meet at Flynn Rink (Woodland Road, Medford) between 9:00 and 11:00 am to register and receive your work assignment. Groups are welcome. Please bring water, snacks, sunscreen and/or bug spray to suit your needs. Any required tools will be provided. Lightning cancels, otherwise please dress for the weather. Call Rich at 617-335-7310 or email rich_sanford@alum.mit.edu for more information.

Enjoy the delights of spring

Saturday, April 27, 2013

10:00 am – Noon

Leader: Bryan Hamlin. Join Bryan Hamlin in enjoying the delights of spring. Meet at small parking lot opposite gate 8, midway along South Border Rd., Medford. Steady rain postpones till same time Sunday. Bryan's cell: 781-854-2058.

MAY

Resident & Migrating Birds

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

8:00 am – 10:00 am

(with possible extension until noon for those who wish)

Leaders: Dana Jewell & Ingeborg Burggraf. Join Dana and Ingeborg on an easy walk looking for resident and migrating birds as they move north towards their breeding grounds. Meet at the Greenwood Park parking lot, Pond St., Stoneham across from the Stone Zoo. Rain cancels.



Palm Warbler (George McLean)

Hike the Southern Fells

Saturday, May 4, 2013

10:15 am – 12:30 pm

Leader: Dan Sumorok. Join Dan Sumorok on a hiking tour of the southernmost part of the Fells on the Skyline, Reservoir, and Cross Fells trails. This walk will end with a visit to Pine Hill and Wright's Tower, where the view includes Medford, Boston, and the Blue Hills in the distance. The trails are steep and rocky in places. Wear sturdy boots and bring at least a liter of water. Rain cancels. Meet at Bellevue Pond parking area, South Border Rd., Medford.

The search for Pink Lady Slipper Orchids

Saturday, May 11, 2013

10:00 am – Noon

Leader: Bryan Hamlin. Join Bryan Hamlin in looking for pink lady slipper orchids and other spring beauties. Meet at Long Pond parking lot, gate 13, at the NW end of South Border Rd., Winchester. Steady rain postpones till same time Sunday. Bryan's cell: 781-854-2058.

Animal Habitats Walk on the Rock Circuit Trail

Sunday, May 12, 2013

10:00 am – Noon

Leader: Pete Costello of Zoo New England. Join Pete for a family-friendly walk to explore and discuss animal and bird habitats, nests and animal signs in the Fells. Walking will be Easy to Moderate. Bring water and binoculars. Meet at 10:00 am at the Flynn Rink parking area on Woodland Rd. in Medford. Rain cancels. Email Pete at pbeararl@yahoo.com for more information.

Spring Wildflowers at Long Pond

Wednesday, May 15, 2013

9:15 am – 11:30 am

Leader: Boot Boutwell. Spring wildflowers are in full bloom at Long Pond. Join Boot Boutwell on a nature walk which will focus on wildflower identification as well as fun and interesting natural history. Meet at the Long Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Winchester. Steady rain cancels. This walk is free of charge and open to the public. For more information, call Boot Boutwell at 781-729-4712.

Hike 'n' Carry at Doleful Pond

Sunday, May 19, 2013

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Leader: Linda Schwetz. Join Linda for an all-ages hike and trail clean-up from Greenwood Park to Doleful Pond. Bags, gloves, and verification of two community service hours will be provided. Meet at 2:00 sharp at Greenwood Park, on Pond St. in Stoneham. Rain cancels. Call Linda at 617-803-3173 for more information.

Introduction to Spring Ferns

Saturday, May 25, 2013

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Leader: Rosemary Mosco. Bring on the greenery! Naturalist and fern enthusiast Rosemary Mosco will discuss the secrets of the Fells' ferns (and possibly some of their botanical friends) with an eye to some of their wacky traits that are particularly evident in the spring. Beginner botanists are welcome! This gentle walk meets at the Greenwood Park parking lot, across from the Stone Zoo. Heavy rain or lightning cancels.

BABES IN THE WOODS

TUESDAY HIKES

Note: All hikes are from 10:00am to 11:30am
For hike descriptions, see page 10



- March 5**
Sheepfold to Bear Hill
Meet at the Sheepfold parking lot, off Fellsway West/Route 28, Stoneham.
- March 12**
Bellevue Pond to Panther Cave
Meet at the Bellevue Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Medford.
- March 19**
Spot Pond Stroll
Meet at the DCR Botume House Visitor Center, 4 Woodland Rd., Stoneham. Parking is also available next door at Spot Pond Boating.
- March 26**
Escape to Silver Mine
Meet at the Sheepfold parking lot, off Fellsway West/Route 28, Stoneham.
- April 2**
Long Pond Nature Trail
Meet at the Long Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Winchester.
- April 9**
High Service Reservoirs
Meet at Gate 53, Fellsway East, Melrose.
- April 16**
Crystal Spring to Virginia Wood
Meet at the Greenwood Park parking lot, Pond St., Stoneham across from the Stone Zoo.

- April 23**
Sheepfold to Bear Hill
Meet at the Sheepfold parking lot, off Fellsway West/Route 28, Stoneham.
- April 30**
Bellevue Pond to Panther Cave
Meet at the Bellevue Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Medford.
- May 7**
Spot Pond Stroll
Meet at the DCR Botume House Visitor Center, 4 Woodland Rd., Stoneham. Parking is also available next door at Spot Pond Boating.
- May 14**
Escape to Silver Mine
Meet at the Sheepfold parking lot, off Fellsway West/Route 28, Stoneham.
- May 21**
Long Pond Nature Trail
Meet at the Long Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Winchester.
- May 28**
Bellevue Pond to Pine Hill
Meet at the Bellevue Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Medford.

What is Babes in the Woods?

Are you home on mornings with young children? Come for a walk in the woods with Friends of the Middlesex Fells hike leader Terry Murray. (Find more info about Terry on his website, terrytheinventormentor.com) The walks occur every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 10:00 am to 11:30 am. See weekly calendar section for hike locations. Rain or snow cancels. No dogs please. All hikes are drop-in format — no pre-registration is required. Hikes are always free, but we encourage you to become a Friends of the Fells member to help support these programs.

THURSDAY HIKES

Note: All hikes are from 10:00am to 11:30am
For hike descriptions, see page 10

- March 7**
High Service Reservoirs
Meet at Gate 53, Fellsway East, Melrose.
- March 14**
Long Pond Exploration
Meet at the Long Pond parking area, South Border Rd., Winchester.
- March 21**
Bear Hill Exploration
Meet at Gate 21, Fallon Rd., Stoneham.
- March 28**
Middle Reservoir Exploration
Meet at Gate 16, Hillcrest Parkway, Winchester.
- April 4**
Bellevue Pond and Beyond
Meet at Bellevue Pond parking area, South Border Rd., Medford.
- April 11**
North Reservoir Exploration
Meet at Gate 18, Hillcrest Parkway, Winchester.
- April 18**
Bellevue Pond to Pine Hill
Meet at the Bellevue Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Medford. Additional parking is available on Governors Ave.
- April 25**
Long Pond Exploration
Meet at the Long Pond parking area, South Border Rd., Winchester.

- May 2**
Bear Hill Exploration
Meet at Gate 21, Fallon Rd., Stoneham.
- May 9**
Middle Reservoir Exploration
Meet at Gate 16, Hillcrest Parkway, Winchester.
- May 16**
Bellevue Pond and Beyond
Meet at Bellevue Pond parking area, South Border Rd., Medford.
- May 23**
North Reservoir Exploration
Meet at Gate 18, Hillcrest Parkway, Winchester.
- May 30**
High Service Reservoirs
Meet at Gate 53, Fellsway East, Melrose.

SATURDAY HIKES

Note: All hikes are from 10:00am to 11:30am
For hike descriptions, see page 10

- March 2**
Long Pond Nature Trail
Meet at the Long Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Winchester.
- March 9**
Crystal Spring to Virginia Wood
Meet at the Greenwood Park parking lot, Pond St., Stoneham across from the Stone Zoo.
- March 16**
Sheepfold to Bear Hill
Meet at the Sheepfold parking lot, off Fellsway West/Route 28 Stoneham.
- March 23**
Spot Pond Stroll
Meet at the DCR Botume House Visitor Center, 4 Woodland Rd., Stoneham. Parking is also available next door at Spot Pond Boating.
- March 30**
Long Pond Exploration
Meet at the Long Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Winchester.
- April 6**
Woodland Path Trail east or west
Meet at Flynn Rink, Woodland Rd., Medford.
- April 13**
Sheepfold and Beyond
Meet at the Sheepfold parking lot, off Fellsway West/Route 28, Stoneham.
- April 20**
Spot Pond Stroll
Meet at the DCR Botume House Visitor Center, 4 Woodland Rd., Stoneham. Parking is also available next door at Spot Pond Boating.
- April 27**
Crystal Spring to Virginia Wood
Meet at the Greenwood Park parking lot, Pond St., Stoneham across from the Stone Zoo.
- May 4**
Long Pond Nature Trail
Meet at the Long Pond parking lot, South Border Rd., Winchester.
- May 11**
Woodland Path Trail east or west
Meet at Flynn Rink, Woodland Rd., Medford.
- May 18**
Sheepfold and Beyond
Meet at the Sheepfold parking lot, off Fellsway West/Route 28, Stoneham.
- May 25**
Spot Pond Exploration
Meet at the DCR Botume House Visitor Center, 4 Woodland Rd., Stoneham. Parking is also available next door at Spot Pond Boating.

Babes in the Woods Apprentice Training!

continued from front cover

how to become fully familiar with a hiking trail route, and to successfully guide the group through the woods and back to the starting point in a bit less than 1.5 hours.

Hike leader advisor Terry will help parent-leaders gain confidence in their abilities to rely on the trail map and common sense, as well as honing interactive and communication skills with parents during the hike experience.

If you're interested, intrigued, or even just curious, come join us on Thursdays, see details in the Calendar section of this newsletter. At the very least you'll have an adventure and one day you might find yourself leading a Fells hike of your own!

For more information about the Babes in the Woods Apprenticeship Program contact Friends of Fells at 781-662-2340 or email at fells.org.



Spring awaits Babes hikers (Terry Murray)

Detailed hike descriptions

Tuesdays: Babes Classic

A stroller-friendly meander through the Fells. Children of all ages are welcome, whether they are hanging out in a carrier, kicking back in a stroller, or tromping through the woods on their own two feet. Terry will point out interesting sights and sounds unique to that day's trail, and there will be a mid-hike break for snacks and fun. When it's warm, Terry loves to show off his giant bubble wands!

Thursdays: Adventure Babes

These hikes are not stroller-friendly, and children should either be in carriers or able to keep an adult pace through mixed terrain. We will take the trail less traveled, and break a sweat. A short break will allow a little time to rest and refuel.

Saturdays Family Babes

This is the weekend edition of our hikes. Like Tuesdays, kids of any age are welcome. However, programming may be targeted to 5- to 8-year olds who can't join us during the week.

Program note

For convenience you may download and fill out the annual liability release form linked on the Friends of the Fells website on the Babes in the Woods information page. Please fill out and give to Terry at your next hike. Babes in the Woods is co-sponsored by the Friends of the Middlesex Fells, the Medford Family Network, the North Suburban Family Network, the Malden/Everett Family Network, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Questions? Call the Friends at 781-662-2340, or go to www.fells.org

Fells Mountain Bike Racing

continued from front cover

During the November 17th Parks Friends Groups conference in Worcester DCR officials admitted that they were not aware that organized bike racing has been occurring in the Fells. Concerns were expressed by conference participants that dangerous and unlawful usage of public trails was exactly the type of consequence the agency was cautioned against by the public during the RMP process.

For example, a November, 2011 letter to DCR commissioner Edward Lambert written by six Fells district state legislators stated:

Without having the appropriate enforcement tools and resources in place, the proliferation of illegal trails and prohibited activities will continue unabated. As such, any resource management plan must address this problem as its top priority.

Dismissing similar warnings from greater Boston environmental organizations and Mass. friends groups, DCR proceeded to authorize expansion of bike riding in the Fells without demonstrating the capacity, or even the will, to monitor, limit, enforce or fine illegal activities. In short, unimpeded and expanding Fells bike racing demonstrates how the Fells RMP has expanded instead of restricting the 'culture of non-compliance' which the DCR management plan was supposed to address.

The Friends has been informed that DCR intends to post signs in the Fells stating that unauthorized racing of any kind is not permitted, and that the agency has not yet determined what if any legal steps it will take regarding Strava's continued posting of Fells racing times. Left unaddressed is whether DCR will take steps to monitor and enforce regulations.

Safety of visitors must be the top priority in the Fells. DCR should actively prevent bike racing on all Fells trails, enforce regulations against illegal bike riding throughout the Fells, and report to the public on citations and fines issued (if any) for bike riding infractions. To protect visitor safety the Reservoir Trail should be restored to non-vehicular use.

You can help build a campaign to stop bike racing in the Fells:

- » Contact Friends of the Fells — your ideas are important to us: www.fells.org or 781-662-2340.
- » Join Friends of the Fells — become a member, visit our website at www.fells.org

- » Donate to Friends of the Fells — your contribution will help our campaign to ensure a safe and natural Fells. An easy to use Donate button is on our website.
- » Contact elected officials asking their help to prevent conversion of the Fells into a bike recreation center.
- » Write DCR commissioner Edward Lambert ed.lambert@state.ma.us — ask for protection for visitors and natural resources, monitoring and enforcement to stop illegal and harmful bike activity.



Strava website bike race trail sections in the eastern Fells

Finding Ferns

By Rosemary Mosco

Last September 23rd I led a fern walk in the Fells. I wasn't expecting a huge turnout; when I first started learning about these plants, I confess that I found them frustrating to get to know. It took some time before I was a fern fanatic.

Ferns can be unassuming plants, often skulking in shady, moist corners of the forest. They don't produce showy inflorescences, and none of our northern species reach great heights. But people who are willing to seek out our ferns will find that they're full of intriguing secrets.

So I was surprised and happy that a big crowd gathered in Greenwood Park for my hike!

After a brief introduction to fern history, reproduction, and general characteristics, we ventured into the woods to meet the plants. It was a bright sunny day – not necessarily the best day from a fern's perspective, but perfect for humans.

We encountered many species along the short path. Marginal Woodfern poked out from a rocky outcrop; delicate Lady Fern, a favorite of the Victorians, unfurled its fronds in secret spots off the main path. I introduced the toxic Bracken Fern, as well as the humorously named Interrupted Fern (so called because the fertile

Interrupted Fern (Rosemary Mosco)



leaflets interrupt the frond, not because it has poor conversational skills). Many of the species we encountered were culturally important. Others had thrived since the time of the dinosaurs.

I had a great time meeting the other plant enthusiasts and tackling their questions. Ferns are subtle but deeply fascinating plants that deserve a second look. I invite you to join me on a Fells fern hike on May 25, see details in the calendar section of the newsletter.



Naturalist Rosemary Mosco points out polypody fern on January 27 Fells Green in Winter hike. (Caitlin McDonough MacKenzie)

“Nobody can discover the world for somebody else. Only when we discover it for ourselves does it become common ground and a common bond and we cease to be alone.”

Wendell Berry, *A Place on Earth*

HELP NOW: Donate to The Friends of The Middlesex Fells

Your contribution to the Friends of the Middlesex Fells will help preserve this priceless landscape for the enjoyment of this and future generations! We truly need your financial help in dealing with the proposed development which threatens the very essence of the Fells. Your support for Friends programs benefits Fells visitors of all ages.

Donation Levels

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In addition to mailing a check you may now contribute online! See the 'Donate' button on www.fells.org.

The Friends of the Middlesex Fells is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible. Check with your employer's Human Resources Department to see if they will match your gift.

JOIN US: Become a member of the Friends of the Middlesex Fells

- New Membership (includes trail map!) Renewal

Which level would you like to join?

- Life Member \$1,000
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Donate online, or make checks payable to the Friends of the Middlesex Fells and mail this form to:
Friends of the Middlesex Fells, 235 West Foster Street, Melrose, MA 02176

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Please add friends@fells.org to your email address book to prevent email blocking.

- Check here if you would like to receive the Friends of the Middlesex Fells volunteer opportunities questionnaire.

\$6 Trail Map with descriptions of the Fells geology, natural and cultural history, and plants and animals on the back

\$3 *Creation of the Middlesex Fells* by Michael Ryan, executive director, Friends of the Middlesex Fells

\$4 *The Middlesex Fells: An 1898 article* by William de las Casas

\$10 *Changes in the Flora of the Middlesex Fells*, a reprint of the 2012 *Rhodora* article with a complete list of plant species and habitats.

\$18 Friends of Middlesex Fells Fox T-shirt (Please visit www.fells.org for details)

\$8 Pack of 4 Fells postcards: Lawrence Woods Pond, Spot Pond, Spot Pond Brook, Ravine Road Hemlock Grove

All prices include shipping and handling.
Contact the Friends of the Fells for wholesale prices.

Friends of the Middlesex Fells Board

Bryan Hamlin/Chair; Sandra Pascal/Vice Chair; Mike Ryan/Executive Director; Heidi Kelf/Secretary; Mike Oliver/Treasurer; Mayor Robert Dolan; Joyce Calabro, Bob Ghika, Walter Kittredge; Dana M. Jewell; Carol McKinley; Rich Sanford; and Bob Weggel



Spot Pond evening light (Mike Ryan)

Return Service Requested

If you would like to receive Friends of Fells email updates on program changes, breaking news or alerts, please send your email address to friends@fells.org.



News of the Fells Spring 2013

Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation | 235 West Foster Street | Melrose, MA 02176
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