

ATTLEBORO LAND TRUST NEWS

October 2020

A Monthly Newsletter on Outdoor Adventure and Conservation

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The World and Our Lives are in Peril

More frequent and more powerful storms, droughts and deserts expanding, while there is devastating flooding in other areas, food production is declining while the population grows causing increased food prices while others starve. There is greater air, water, and waste pollution, massive fires, and social unrest. These are all signs of **climate change** and **global warming**.

As we keep hearing complaints about the state of the world, we ask, "What can we do about it?"

First, we need the "**right**" people representing us in government; People who care about our community, the world, and the environment. This country was set up for the "people" not the big corporations and privileged few. Right now, the rich minority has more power than the people do. We need people who believe the science and are willing to work with other people in the world to make it a better place. We need leaders who will work with others to make the world a better place. Listening to the politicians has become futile where we have to go to media "fact checking" after every speech to find out what is real.

Second, we need **ALL companies** to take responsibility for their actions concerning the environment and welfare of the world and its people, not just how much money they can make.

Third, we need the "people" to become better informed so they can make the right decisions. Look for several news sources, carefully chosen for accuracy and always consider the source when evaluating new information. Social media is notoriously unreliable, and some broadcast companies are clearly biased. Check regularly, so you know what is "really" going on in the world and your community.

Fourth, we need everyone to do his or her part in protecting and improving the world. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Conserve, and Preserve our natural resources or we won't have any left. Don't cause any pollution that damages our fragile ecosystem.

Fifth, we need to unite with others who are working toward a better community. While one person can do something, a group can do so much more. That is how the Attleboro Land Trust, Audubon Society, and the City are working together to preserve our environment.

We need your help too.

Ed.

Contact Us

Attleborolandtrust@gmail.com

(508) 223-3060 ext. 3604

Attleboro Land Trust

P.O. Box 453

Attleboro, MA 02703

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send your email to

Attleborolandtrust822@gmail.com

WITCH HAZEL



Many of the plants we encounter on a walk in the woods have oddities or important botanical aspects for identification that can be fun to know. Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) is no exception. In writing this, it has occurred to me that delivering all these nuances of the plants may not always be helpful. I am asking the reader to take a leap into taxonomic elements that may become too detailed and confuse the experience. Since I have yet to see anyone walking with a 10x hand lens or a tree book, I

am changing my descriptive tact a bit for this article. I will emphasize the aspects to be enjoyed by the viewer; afterwards how deeply you *leap* into plant science will be up to you. What do you think?

In early spring, Charlie Adler and I were at the Nickerson Walking Woods verifying survey bounds on the north side of the property. In my search for a clear path dodging poison ivy, tangles of briar, standing water and a few snakes we were successful in finding the surveyed features. Walking on the wet high ground, I was amazed at how many Witch Hazel shrubs of all sizes were growing as an under story right there. My thought was that in fall, after leaf drop, the flower display in mid-October to mid-November would be a lovely sight before the cold winds blow.

Before I get ahead of myself, the native Witch Hazel is a small tree or multi-stemmed shrub that is common throughout our moist woodlands. The flower is yellow with half-inch long ribbon-like petals usually clustered at the ends of twigs. The oddity that helps identify the plant most easily is the fruit capsule that develops after flowering, which is carried through the summer into its next flowering event. When the fruit is ripe, the capsule opens with explosive force releasing the tiny hard, shiny black seeds several feet away. The mature empty capsules remain all winter. The fall leaf color of a bright pale yellow is not significant in the autumn under story as it blends too easily with the other foliage.

The plant was well known for its many medicinal uses by Native Americans and Colonials alike. An astringent oil is made from the alcoholic extract of the bark and is still in use today. The forked branches were used by dowsers to indicate the presence of under ground water. It is also planted for its ornamental value of late autumn blooms.

When I step into the woods, I get an instant feeling of escape. I wish that for you as well as you develop the skill of seeing and appreciating our local plant world. I suggest a good reference book, Plantnet.org on the internet, or the free Plantnet app, always using the botanical name to find the plant or tree you want. However, if you don't know the botanical name, the common name will give you the botanical name. The Plantnet app allows you to take a picture of the plant and it will help you identify the plant. Most smartphones have a magnifier feature so you can examine the features of nature better.



Good Luck. It does not matter whether the plant's bud scale is smooth or shiny, tan brown, pointed or blunt or if it's ninety feet tall. The how and what of your experience in the different seasons is up to you.

Phil Boucher



1 Way to Fight Climate Change

Some of us are activists, some are don't-carers, and some of us are the silent majority. No matter what we are, the Number One way we can all help fight climate change, global warming, and environmental decline is to hold individuals, politicians, governments, and companies accountable. Do it with the vote, the products we buy and consume, and the organizations we support.

Part of the **Mission of the Land Trust** is to "preserve open space and habitat through advocacy and education." Advocacy is "an activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions." Climate Change, pollution, runoff, and relaxing government regulations all work to undermine our mission by damaging the environment we are trying to preserve. Though we are a local organization, what happens in the state, country and world affects our mission and efforts.

These forces impact our Land Trust properties. Large portions of our properties contain wetlands, rivers and streams. Larson Woodland has the Bungay River, Lawrence Preserve has the Seven Mile River and Richardson Preserve has Chartley Brook. These all eventually lead across state lines. The current administration is cutting the EPA regulations back piece by piece and allowing polluters to avoid prosecution, all in the name of business and money. The "Navigable Waters Protection Rule" guts the "Clean Water Act" such that some of our property will no longer be protected habitat. Though the state has some jurisdiction to waterways solely



within the state, the new rule allows developers, businesses, and polluters to say the federal standards for Massachusetts, on which the state has based their clean water standards, are "trumped" by the new rule, if a waterway or wetland spillage goes over state lines. Since the EPA has cut their regulations and are refusing to enforce others, pollution, erosion, and destruction of wetlands, rivers and streams can prevail in the name of business again. Will we allow this to go unnoticed?

The administration is also now distributing and selling the rights to mining, drilling, and logging on national preserves and federal and public lands before the election in case they lose. This promotes pollution, loss of habitat and environmental destruction on previously protected lands.

In order to promote our mission, this publication is now including information on broader issues affecting all of the natural world as well as our local environment. This includes the impact of government policy, industry and institutions on our environment. You will find more in our 'Updates, Comments and Interesting Reading' section'. Working with schools, we will also be reporting on what we as individuals can do to minimize climate change, preserve habitat, protect the environment, and create more usable open space for the "people". This affects us and all future generations.



Turkey Vultures and Their Place

Turkey Vultures are a non-native species in this area. We see them soaring mostly over our highways and open areas later in the day after the thermals generated from the sun are available for their soaring. We also see them roosting in groups in trees and sometimes sitting on chimneys in winter to get some warmth, though most will migrate south for the colder months.

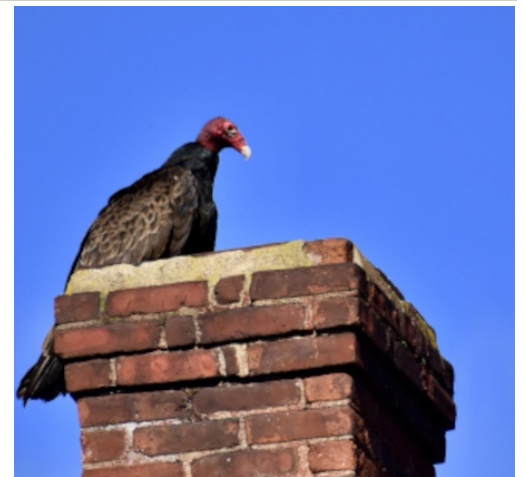
They didn't start to appear in this area until the 1960's and 70's. One of the things that brought them here was the abundance of road kill on our new super highways.



Another was the increase in populations of game animals due to the lack of hunting. The species around here is *C. a. septentrionalis* or the Eastern Turkey Vulture. Turkey Vultures eat carrion (decaying animals) and do NOT kill any prey. Unlike the Black Vulture down south that depends on sight to locate dead animals, Turkey Vultures mostly eat small dead animals, which they can detect by smell, even in wooded areas. Since they don't kill their food, they have weak claws and beaks. Hence, they cannot tear open the hide of an animal, so roadkill is particularly good as the vehicle hitting it normally tears open

the carcass. They have bald heads and legs so bacteria won't accumulate and their highly acid digestive tract and urine tends to kill any bacteria. Most scavengers in the area, fox, coyote, and possums like fresh kills and will only eat old carrion when they are extremely hungry but Turkey Vultures will eat old decaying kills.

So are turkey vultures really bad? They have been hunted and killed by farmers and others who blame them for killing their animals and wildlife but the only things they could kill might be frogs and mice. They are one non-native that is actually good for the environment by removing and cleaning up dead carcasses that could cause the spread of disease among other animals and humans.



THE LAND TRUST ACCEPTS ALL KINDS OF DONATIONS

Did you know that the Land Trust accepts legacies?

Although we often focus on donations of conservation land, we also gratefully accept donations of other property that can be sold with the proceeds used to purchase conservation land.

Sometimes, landowners cannot donate the most desirable and significant open space outright because they need to realize some cash when they can no longer own it themselves. A bargain sale may be the solution. One of our most precious preserves was acquired through a bargain sale. The landowner received about one-third of the market value of the land, while still achieving the desired effect of preserving the land in perpetuity as their legacy.

If your personal estate plan does not include a legacy to the Land Trust, please consider making a significant gift that will support and sustain our local environment for generations to come.

(for details, contact Jon Almeida at jon.almeida@marcumllp.com)

The Attleboro Land Trust is looking for Supporters by becoming a member, making a Tax-Deductible Contribution and/or as a Conservation Volunteer. Membership, contributions or volunteering can be done securely at Attleborolandtrust.org or by mail at Attleboro Land Trust, P.O. Box 453, Attleboro, MA 02703. Thank you for your support.

Attleboro Community Garden



Karen St Amand

The Attleboro Community Garden officially closes for the 2020 season on October 24 although several gardeners will be gardening through early winter.

A "Planting and Growing Garlic" workshop, conducted by Juliet Teixeira is tentatively planned for 10 am at the Garden for October 31. Juliet has a great passion for the growing of garlic as seen in the August email newsletter. The workshop is open to the public but participants will be limited. If anyone is interested they should contact Juliet at texjade@yahoo.com or 508-222-2569 to confirm the date and time and whether we have room.



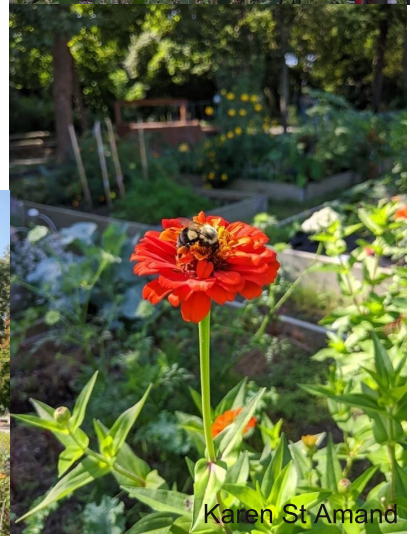
Karen St Amand



Karen St Amand



[facebook.com/attleborogardenlibrary](https://www.facebook.com/attleborogardenlibrary)



Karen St Amand

Colonial Garden



The irrigator pole with the owl to the left is nine feet tall, while the front irrigator is four feet so the corn is growing tall.

This is the last pumpkin the varmints have not eaten. The white leaves are powdery mildew caused by hot dry conditions. We cannot use any fungicide on our conservation properties.



Pandemic Got You Stressed: Unwind on our Trails

Many people, probably most, are stressed by the pandemic. Stores and restaurants are closed or only have pickup. Some businesses can't open or have special restrictions. Schools are in a turmoil with mixed schedules. Incomes are reduced or nonexistent. And the federal government has failed to manage the pandemic as well as most countries. **Hike Attleboro** wants to help.

We need to de-stress. Nature and exercise are great healers. You can take a brisk or leisurely walk on the many trails or parks in Attleboro for free. Trail maps for the Land Trust trails are on our website. Audubon's Oak Knoll and Attleboro Springs trail maps are on their sites. There are eight parks in the city. To find their locations, go the city site and search for "park locations". There is a trail around Manchester Reservoir where many decades ago Boy Scout Troop 28 under Scoutmaster Stan Holton used to camp. City residents can get a special sticker to park at the end of Beagle Club Road. Orrs Pond also has some trails but the area behind the reservoir is restricted because of the police shooting range. There is a trail on Holden Street along the Bungay River and another behind the fire hydrant next to Finberg field.

So get out and take a walk. Breathe in the fresh air, see the plants and animals, and walk off the stress to feel refreshed and renewed. We'll keep working to make more areas available.



What's Happening on the Barrows' Farm in 1720

HARVEST of course. It is the end of the growing season, most of the crops need to be harvested, and the old stalks and greenery removed. It was an all hands job for everyone from age six to the oldest. Mom would take care of the youngest and do shucking and chopping near the house. The major crops of corn, beans, rye, flax, squash, pumpkins, and apples had to be harvested before or right after the frost. Flax was left for last as the food and feed crops were most important.



The corn was shucked and placed in raised ventilated corncribs to dry. The best was saved for cornmeal and seed. The beans were also shucked and left out in the sun to dry along with the squash and pumpkins that were chopped into pieces. We still need to check dry beans for stones from the drying. They had to be taken in in the evening and put back out the next morning. Drying was one of the major methods of food preservation at the time along with brining and smoking for meat and salting for meat and fish.

The apples were put in barrels to be made later into hard cider, the most common drink of the time. The colonial apples weren't true eating apples but were more like crab apples unless you were lucky enough to get the seeds for a Yellow Sweeting from William Blackstone's orchard. There is still a crab apple tree on the property.

The corn of that era would only produce one ear per stalk but the stalks could be used as silage to feed cows, hogs and horses through the winter. The stalks were cut off about 6 inches or a foot up and moved to the barn. The remainder would be tilled back into the soil for the planting of ground cover. Thomas Jefferson was a firm advocate of ground cover crops as they put nitrogen back in the soil for the next season

Finally, the flax was pulled, bundled, and left upright in the fields to dry. It would be rippled later to get the seed.



WHAT WE MISSED

Two years ago, the Attleboro Land Trust was invited to participate in a summer program with the **Attleboro High School** Career Specialist Amanda Lauro and Biology teacher Gregg Finale for the area **School to Career** program. We accepted the offer as it seemed in line with our educational outreach and a desire to engage with younger individuals about the value of nature and open space. Volunteers and a course of instruction came together at a Land Trust site, the Deborah and Roger Richardson Nature Preserve.



All the volunteers knew they were not teachers but people anxious to share their knowledge. As trainers we realized that we were just dipping our toes into an experiment of summer experiential learning for a group of non-outdoors oriented students. Our naivety paid off in the form of a casual outdoor classroom. We introduced some old school and new technology methods of surveying, safe tree felling, names and uses of trees and shrubs, invasive plants, importance of the water and carbon holding capacity of open land, installation of garden irrigation and for them to see that Nature itself was a teacher. Imagine their surprise when they learned that the common weeds dandelion(*Taraxacum officinale*) and plantain(*plantago major*) were edible. The subjects were varied but the things we learned listening to them and their questions were of equal value to their non-professional teachers.

In the academic year of 2020, everything in schools and student life changed as the scramble for education continuance ensued. Once we realized our outdoor classroom was not going to be helpful in solving this problem, for a moment our thoughts shifted into neutral. As late spring approached due to the times we were in, Bill Lewis was determined to have a “Colonial Garden” to produce items for the **Farm to Table** classes in September. The desire to keep the students connected to the gardening process, even at a distance, seemed too important to ignore. The reality was that it was our connection to them and we were missing the instructional opportunity of working with the students.

Without grades or tests, we will never know what impact we may have had through our projects on these students. The experience with them invigorated us and was making us better instructors. We saw that you had to meet the students where they are and understand their level of development. If teaching is the art of discovery,



then we surely opened up new avenues of learning.

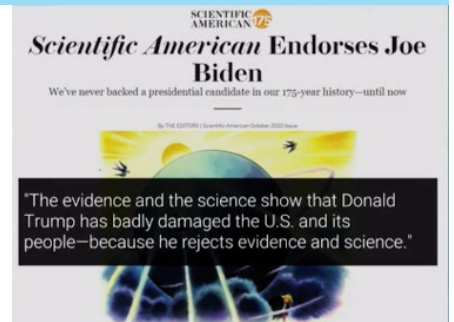
Thankfully we did not garden virtually. It was the real deal and we found that in these “unprecedented times” the nitty-gritty and hands on work of the garden and food production was a sign of hope. What we missed were the students to share the learning and positive aspects that we took from each other. Our garden plans for 2021 are formulated as we now wait to see how things progress for us all. In probably the best way possible for us, our work and commitment simply said to the high school students;

We stand with you and we stand for you.

Phil Boucher

Updates, Comments, and Interesting Reading

Scientific American magazine, for the first time in 175 years, has put forth an endorsement for a presidential candidate. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/scientific-american-endorses-joe-biden/>

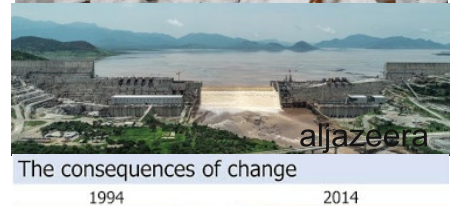


Rhode Island is the first contiguous state to exceed 2 degrees C in 130 years due to global warming. We are right next door.

Stanford University has found that “meal worms” can digest waste polystyrene and polyethylene. Meal worms are used as feed for chickens and pigs. After eating, any harmful by-products are excreted making the meal worms safe as feed. They are now trying to cultivate the bacteria that makes this possible to make the system more efficient.



The US has cut foreign aid to Ethiopia in a bid to coerce them into accepting a Nile Dam Agreement put forth by the US that overwhelmingly favors Egypt over Ethiopia who is building the dam to provide power to their country.

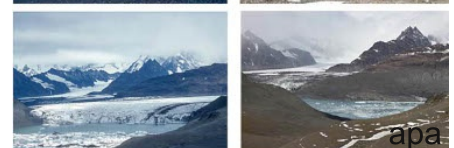


Scientists from Leeds and Edinburgh universities and University College London have found by studying 30 years of satellite data that we are losing about 1.2 trillion tons of ice a year due to global warming resulting in sea level rise.



NJ has passed the first paper bag and one use plastic bag ban.

Pine needles fuel forest fires. In India, they are using the pine needles for biomass gasification to produce electrical power thereby reducing forest fires.



Rising seawater temperatures are causing stronger storms and moving sea creatures north. Blue crabs are coming into New England while lobsters move up to Canada.

The current EPA has allowed coal fired power plants to continue to deposit highly toxic “coal ash” in unlined ponds there by polluting the area, particularly watersheds.



After 21 years of droughts in the west, it looks like there will be a severe water shortage by 2025. Yet the area still is expanding requiring more water and mountain runoff has decreased by 12% producing less.



China’s Yangtze region is suffering from severe drought and temperatures 1-3 degrees Celsius higher due to global warming. This is causing deserts to form where there used to be farmland.

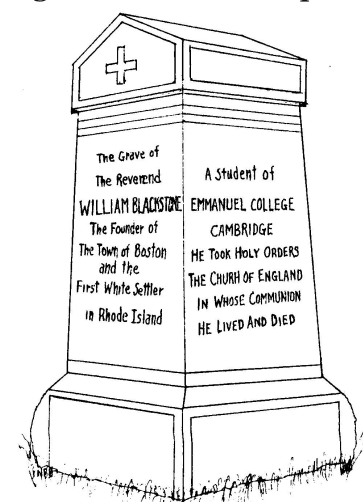
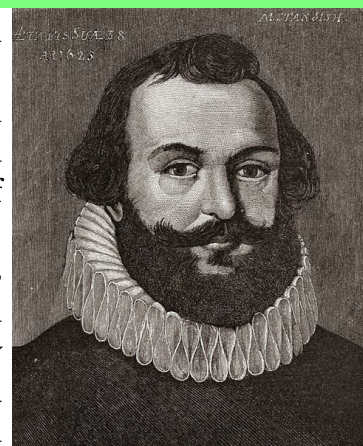
In India, they are putting solar panels over irrigation and water supply canals. This is not only a smart use of space but by placing them over the canals, it reduces evaporation, thereby preventing water loss.



Reverend William (Blaxton) Blackstone: First White Settler of Attleborough From: The History of Bristol County, MA by D. Hamilton Hurd

Wait! But, William Blackstone settled on the Blackstone River in Cumberland. That is very true, but let's see how the story unfolds.

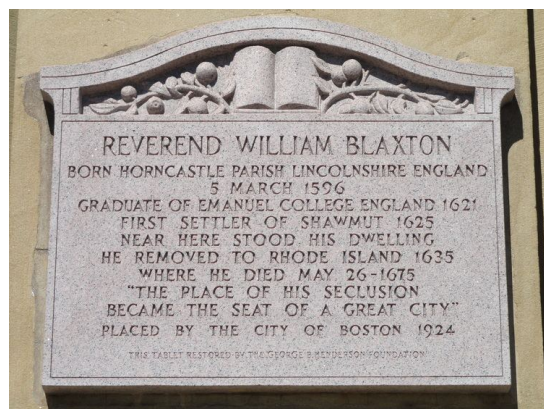
Reverend William Blackstone had been an Anglican minister in England, but he lived in an age of religious bigotry, intolerance, and persecution, and "not being able," as he said, "to endure the power of the Lord Bishops," He sailed to the new world in 1623 with Capt. Robert George's expedition to found a church settlement. The George's expedition returned to England, but the Reverend Blackstone stayed and sought an asylum in the wilds of America, where he might enjoy his own opinions unmolested. He moved to "Shawmut", the peninsula now known as Boston. He had claimed the peninsula, called Blackstone's Neck. However, as other settlers, Puritans, moved into the area, he found the same intolerant and overbearing spirit among his new associates, and becoming "discontented with the power of the Lords Brethren," he was compelled to seek another retreat. In 1634, he sold his right and title in the peninsula to the inhabitants of Boston.



In 1635, he removed to another retreat still farther in the wilderness. This place was on the eastern banks of the Pawtucket River, now Blackstone, and within the Old Colony, and was within the ancient limits of Attleborough, in that part called the Gore, which became Cumberland, R. I. in 1745. This was about ten years before the settlement of Rehoboth and a few years before that of Providence. In this solitary retreat, he built his house ("Study Hall", largest library in the colonies), cultivated his garden, raised cattle, and planted his orchard on about 200 acres. His house and garden he surrounded with a park, which was his daily walk. Here he remained for many years in entire seclusion from the world; here was none to disturb his lonely retreat. He was furnished with a library, and nature and study

charmed his solitary hours. He thus seated himself for life, in peaceful solitude on the banks of the Blackstone River. He was friends with Roger Williams and on his trips to Providence; he would bring apples, Yellow Sweeting now Roxbury Russet and Rhode Island Greening, first American apple, to give to the children. During his residence here, Mr. Blackstone married Mrs. Sarah Fisher Stevenson, widow of John Stevenson, of Boston, July 4, 1659. She died about the middle of June, 1673 at 48. He survived his wife only about two years, and died May 26, 1675 at 80. "Study Hill" and the library were burned two years later in King Phillip's War. William had been a friend of Metacomet (King Phillip) and used to teach the Native Americans under an oak tree by his house. Perhaps his son-in-law John and his son John weren't as tolerant after William died.

His son-in-law, John Stevenson, came with his mother when she married Mr. Blackstone, being about fourteen years old, and lived with them until their death. He received 50 acres of the land and lived there until his death, and their son John (1660), who was a minor at William's death, received 150 acres, which he later sold. Reverend William Blackstone was the first settler of Boston, Rhode Island, and Attleborough.



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ALTOptout@gmail.com and leaving their email address. Bill Lewis Editor*