



Department of Conservation
and Recreation

Fall 2021

Conservation Connections

DCR Land Protection Program News

Dear Friends,

It is officially fall! Which means our favorite time of the year for site visits has arrived. Cool crisp mornings, colorful foliage, and an abundance of activity by wildlife preparing for the coming winter all add up to some stellar field days. It's also the perfect time for certain invasive plant management activities (see pg.2) and to catch a last glimpse of local migratory birds like the Ovenbird (see pg.1 & 4) before they leave for their wintering grounds.

Back in the office, land acquisition staff are both celebrating the end of a productive year of land protection and working hard to cultivate new projects. This past fiscal year, which ended in June, the team protected over 2,400 acres, including six CRs! Our newest CR additions consist of properties in Carlisle, Conway, West Newbury, Washington, and Fall River, and, with much excitement, the 1,389-acre Town of West Springfield-owned Bear Hole Reservoir which was protected in partnership with Mass Audubon. The Bear Hole Reservoir features an extensive forested landscape with important rare species habitat, excellent recreational opportunities including a trail network and a scenic waterfall, and numerous wetlands and ponds with over 50 vernal pools!

As our community of CR landowners continues to grow, we will keep on striving to support you in your stewardship endeavors (see pg. 3). If you have suggestions on how we can achieve this goal, please don't hesitate to reach out.

See you in the woods sometime soon!
CR Stewardship Program Staff

The newsletter for
owners of land
protected by a
Conservation
Restriction (CR) held
by the Department of
Conservation and
Recreation (DCR)

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Nature Corner Forest Birds

From the giant fish-eating Bald Eagle to the tiny nectar-sipping Ruby-throated Hummingbird, there is an incredible variety of birds that migrate through, breed or over-winter in Massachusetts. Here we feature three MA forest birds that have unique habitat requirements and breeding strategies.Cont. Page 4.

Ovenbird Nest—Photo by J. Morris-Seigel



Invasive Weed Control



Multiflora Rose

Non-native, invasive plants pose a significant threat to conservation lands in MA including many CR-protected properties. They frequently displace native plants thereby reducing the resources available to native wildlife that evolved to depend on native habitat. For example, caterpillars, which are the main food source for many birds, can typically eat only a limited number of specific plant species with which they co-evolved. When non-native plants arrive, the local caterpillars generally cannot consume them, thereby reducing a critical resource for birds. Non-native plants can also affect the physical and chemical composition of sites and impact farmland and crops. Because non-native plants evolved elsewhere, when they arrive at this region there may be no natural forces (such as the caterpillars)

to keep them in check. It is conceivable that perhaps someday biotic and abiotic forces will evolve or change enough to keep the invaders in check, but in the meantime, it is important to manage them to reduce their impact on native species.

The first step in managing non-native, invasive plants is to be able to recognize them. Identifying and eradicating a non-native plant when it first arrives in an area is by far the best control strategy, because after invasives spread it can be much more difficult to eradicate them. For properties where invasives have already spread, conducting an inventory of species and areas where they are encroaching would be a good first step in management. Depending on the species of invasive, the extent of its spread, and the surrounding environmental features, there are different techniques that can be used to control them. As with any activity on CR-protected land, be sure to **check your CR language before conducting any invasive control** to ensure the activities are permitted. Please reach out to us if you have any questions.



Japanese Barberry



Asiatic Bittersweet

Invasive plant control techniques include hand-pulling, cutting, mowing, girdling, burning, torching, grazing, smothering, biological agents, and organic and chemical herbicides. When determining how to control invasives, landowners should follow best management practices (BMPs)* and consider an [integrated pest management](#) (IPM) approach whenever possible. A few of the most common non-native, invasive weeds in MA include Multiflora Rose, Japanese Barberry, and Asiatic Bittersweet. For information on other common invasives please visit [Invasive Plants in MA](#) as well as links in the BMPs below. Please reach out to us if you have any questions on invasive management on your property or if you would like information on funding

sources that can help offset associated costs such as the [MassWildlife Habitat Management Grant Program](#). ***BMPs:** [Managing Terrestrial Invasive Species](#) & [Guidelines—Best Practices, Invasive Plant Management](#)

Landowner Survey

One of the goals of this newsletter and the CR Stewardship Program in general is to provide resources for CR landowners. In order to achieve this goal, we created a 5-minute poll to better understand CR landowner management objectives and the resources that would be most helpful to landowners. We hope that you will participate in whatever way is easiest for you. For those who prefer online surveys please visit this [CR Landowner Survey website](#) to fill out the survey. For those who prefer snail mail or a conversation, please feel free to answer the questions in a note to the CR Stewardship Program (136 Damon Rd., Northampton, MA 01060) or a phone call to Felicia Bakaj (857-338-4801, western MA) or Sasha Auer (857-310-2128, eastern MA).

Survey Questions:

1. Would you prefer to receive the newsletter in paper form or through email?
2. What are your primary management goals for your CR property?
3. What do you view as the greatest challenge(s) in meeting your management goals?
4. Have you engaged in estate, legacy or succession planning?
5. What information or resources provided by the CR Stewardship Program would be most helpful to you? (e.g., funding opportunities, management focused information, legacy planning, connection to other landowners, etc.)
6. When it is safe to do so, would you be interested in an event for DCR CR landowners? (i.e., a walk, talk by resource experts, lunch, or something similar)
7. Do you have any other thoughts on land management or landowner resources that you'd like to share with the CR stewardship team?

Funding Opportunities for Landowners

Please be sure to check your CR to ensure the activities are permitted before applying for funding.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service offers technical and financial assistance to landowners interested in restoring and enhancing wildlife habitat on their land. Eligible landowners include farmers, forest landowners, recreational landowners, corporations and local governments, and project duration is 10 years. For more information please visit the [Partners for Fish and Wildlife website](#)

MassTrails Grants *Current deadline: February 1, 2022*

DCR offers grants to non-profit organizations and municipalities to design, create and maintain trails in MA. Eligible activities include project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails and the amenities that support trails, including on privately owned lands. If you are an interested private landowner, consider partnering with a local non-profit or municipality on a project. These are matching grants that require the applicant to provide a minimum of 20% of the total project cost. All applications for projects on land protected by a DCR CR require a letter of support from DCR's CR Stewardship Program. Please contact us at least 30 days before the grant deadline with details on any project proposals. For more information visit [MassTrails Grants](#) & [MassTrails Grant Application](#)



Forest Birds Cont...

The Ovenbird, named after the type of nest it builds, is a warbler that inhabits mature deciduous or mixed deciduous/coniferous forests and prefers large contiguous forest tracts with areas that have deep leaf litter and less ground cover. It builds its oven-shaped nests on the forest floor usually under or near a small break in the canopy and often in the vicinity of a fallen tree. The Ovenbird typically walks on the ground to find food, foraging for invertebrates such as ants, beetles and caterpillars in leaf litter and on rotting logs. Its loud “teacher... teacher...teacher” song can be heard reverberating through the forest in spring and summer.



Ovenbird



Brown Creeper

The Brown Creeper, named after its foraging strategy, inhabits mature forests with large trees and snags. It forages by flying to the base of a tree and “creeping” up the trunk, gleaning and probing for arthropods and their eggs and larvae. It nests under the loose or peeling bark of dead trees or sometimes the loose bark of live trees such as Shagbark Hickory. The Brown Creeper’s high pitched “tsee” call can be heard year-round.

The Black-throated Blue Warbler also breeds in mature forests but requires a dense cover of shrubs or saplings including species such as Hobblebush, Mountain Laurel and Striped Maple. The male can be heard singing “zee zee zee zreeeeee” in spring and summer. Nests are placed in the fork of a shrub or sapling and are constructed from strips of bark typically from yellow or white birch, are

lined with pine needles, moss, shredded bark fibers and mammal hair and are glued together by silk from spider webs. The Black-throated Blue Warbler eats mainly caterpillars, flies and spiders. It is one of many birds that can benefit from forest disturbances that allow for light to reach the forest floor for shrub and sapling growth. Forestry is one management tool that has been used to create better habitat for the Black-throated Blue Warbler and the Foresters for the Birds Program has specific recommendations for this species as well as funding opportunities. For more information visit [Foresters for the Birds](#) & [Forestry Bird Guide](#)



Black-throated Blue Warbler

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Conservation Connections is produced
semi-annually for owners of land protected
by a DCR-held Conservation Restriction.

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