



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



Department of Conservation
and Recreation

Winter 2022-23

Conservation Connections

DCR Land Protection Program News

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! It's been a busy, productive past year with a few changes we'd like to share with you. Our big news this season is that we have a new CR Stewardship Program Coordinator, replacing Felicia Bakaj who left in January. Caroline Raisler (contact information on left) joins us from the MA Department of Agricultural Resources, where she spent the last 3 years conducting Agricultural Preservation Restriction stewardship work. Prior to that, she was the Watershed Preservation Restriction Coordinator for DCR Division of Water Supply Protection for 10 years. In addition to coordinating the CR Stewardship Program, she will be conducting CR monitoring for the southern half of MA. Caroline loves Restriction Stewardship because she enjoys getting to know landowners and getting to walk outside in a diverse array of habitats. She especially loves when she gets to see wildlife, so let her know what you've seen recently. Caroline is excited to be joining the Program, and very much looks forward to meeting all of you!

The Land Protection Program acquisition staff is working on several new CR projects and hopes to protect over 2,000 acres with CRs in seven different towns by the end of June. There are also upcoming staff changes in Acquisition: Jen Soper, who many of you have come to know over the years, has retired (see page 2) and we are currently looking for two new Land Protection Specialists to join our team! See you in the woods sometime soon!

CR Stewardship Program Staff

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Nature Corner Dragonflies and Damselflies

From the giant Dragonhunter to the tiny Little Bluet, the world of dragonflies and damselflies, collectively known as Odonates (Order Odonata), is amazingly diverse both in the variety of species and the many different habitat conditions they require. The easiest way to tell dragonflies and damselflies apart is to watch how they position their wings when they perch since dragonflies will keep their wings spread while damselflies will hold them together in an upright position.

.....Cont. Page 4



Widow Skimmer

Jen Soper Retirement Tribute

Massachusetts is one of the best places in the US to live, in no small part due to the many conservation areas and tens of thousands of acres across the state that have been protected to preserve their scenic values, water resources, wildlife habitat, diverse flora and fauna, and cultural and agricultural resources, and to provide recreational opportunities. Behind the scenes, land protection specialists are the ones who make this happen by identifying lands with special conservation values, working with landowners, and navigating the land acquisition process all the way up to when the deed or CR is recorded (and often beyond). Many of you know and have worked with Jen Soper who has been a DCR Land Protection Specialist since 2008 and a key member of the state land conservation team for over 35 years. Jen has managed countless land protection projects in western MA, including acquisition of 19 CRs totaling more than 3,000 acres, and added over 4,400 acres of fee land to the State Parks System. Many of these projects have been on the Mt. Holyoke Range, where Jen's focused efforts over the last 14 years have solidified protection of this iconic and beloved landscape. Among many of Jen's contributions, her strong conservation ethic, passion for the environment, excellent sense of humor, and joy in working with people have been a major asset to land conservation in MA and to the DCR Land Protection Program. We asked Jen Soper a few questions:



Land Protection staff with Jen Soper at lower right.

What are some of the things you look for in a property to be protected?

The first two things I look for are 1) is the property next door to a DCR property, and 2) is the landowner interested in selling it or protecting it with a CR. I look at how the property CONNECTS to neighboring forests, streams, ponds and people and whether it has special features such as rare species, an established trail that leads to a scenic view or the fishing is outstanding!

What are some aspects of land conservation that you are most passionate about?

I am mostly passionate about my favorite twins, Flora and Fauna, and helping to ensure that they don't get an eviction notice. When properties remain undeveloped and informed management is allowed, trees aren't the only beings that thrive. When you love a place, you are motivated to care for it. People can continue to touch their natural world and nurture their own sense of love and appreciation. It's not just an outdoor play-space. Being outside is a meditation, it is spiritual. Caring for it, actively managing the forest, is Meaningful Work.

Is there any one place that you are most proud of protecting?

There are several that stand out – often because of the landowner relationship, or property location, or because of the way it made me feel. After hundreds of site visits with trusted colleagues and beloved dogs, I have a visceral appreciation for the gift that is our shared amazing public land. One dog expresses it best when a landowner gives permission to let him off-leash occasionally. After we are on a trail for about 15 minutes, he breaks into a 'happy daisy-dance' where he simply runs around as though he is tracing a giant petaled flower pattern on the forest floor. He looks back at us, and he is happy. We smile too. We get it.

Jen retired last month and to say that we will miss her greatly would be an understatement! We wish her all the best on her next life adventure and cannot thank her enough for the energy and comradery she has brought to the program and for her lifetime of work protecting lands in MA.

Funding Opportunities for Landowners

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to forest managers and agricultural producers through its EQIP grant. Several DCR CR landowners have been successful in securing EQIP funding in the past, including funding for invasive plant control. EQIP funding can be used for projects that improve water and air quality, conserve ground and surface water, increase soil health, reduce erosion and sedimentation, improve or create wildlife habitat, and/or mitigate against drought and increasing weather volatility. Farmers and forest landowners who own or rent agricultural land are eligible. For more information visit:

[Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#)

In Case You Missed It....

Last year we mailed out the new CR Landowner Handbook to all DCR Restriction landowners. The handbook was created to serve as a helpful tool for landowners and provides information on Restriction property monitoring, landowner management resources, baseline documentation reports, the content of a Restriction document, and much more. If you did not receive a copy and would like one or need an extra copy, please let us know and we will mail you one (see contact info on page 1).



Also, in our Fall 2021 newsletter edition we included a landowner survey and appreciate all the feedback we received! It's not too late to fill out the responses if you would still like to (bit.ly/crlandownersurvey) or as always feel free to reach out anytime with questions or comments.

Invasive Mile-a-Minute

Please be on the lookout for the highly invasive Mile-a-Minute weed (*Persicaria perfoliate*)! Mile-a-Minute is native to Asia and was first discovered in MA in 2006. Despite serious efforts to control it, it has spread to many areas of the state. Mile-a-Minute can grow up to 6 inches a day and can outcompete, cover and kill other plants. If it is not detected early and eradicated, it can be a serious menace and have devastating effects on natural habitat and ecosystems as well as agriculture.

Mile-a-Minute has triangular leaves, small barbs along the stem and saucer-shaped leaves at the stem nodes. It produces metallic blue berries. See the links below for identification tips and photos.

Methods for controlling Mile-a-Minute include hand pulling (watch out for barbs), repeated mowing, herbicides and biocontrol. As with any activity on Restriction-protected land, be sure to check your Restriction language

Mile-a-Minute Photo by LiChieh Pan



before conducting any invasive control to ensure the activities are permitted. Please reach out to us if you have any questions or would like any assistance determining next steps should you find Mile-a-Minute on your Restriction property.

For more information and to report Mile-a-Minute to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources which is tracking occurrences, please visit:

[MA Introduced Pests Outreach Project](#) and the

[Mass Audubon Mile-a-minute website](#)

Dragonflies and Damselflies Cont. from Page 1..



Ebony Jewelwing

MA has 166 different Odonata species and you will find them in fields, forests, rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, freshwater & tidal marshes, bogs, fens, & even urban areas, zipping around catching insects (including blackflies and mosquitos!), often with erratic flight patterns. Within those different habitat types, Odonates have many different niches. For example, the Arrowhead Spiketail prefers the start of rivers (forested seeps in particular); the Twin-spotted Spiketail prefers to be a little farther downstream in narrow, forested brooks; and the big hanging clubtails prefer large, wide rivers far downstream. The Wandering Glider is an example of a dragonfly that uses urban areas; it can be seen cruising parking lots & hovering over car hoods as if they were puddles. It is one of 16 dragonflies known to migrate in North America and travels up to 4,400 miles!

Odonates spend the majority of their life as aquatic nymphs, with many spending years in the water, feeding on aquatic organisms such as mosquito larvae, before emerging and transforming into the damselfly or dragonfly you see flying around. Many Odonates will only survive a short time as adults, so reproduction becomes a top priority. Some Odonates have interesting courtship displays. The male Ebony Jewelwing, a common damselfly in MA, will perform a “cross” display by holding one set of wings downward and the other set up, followed by a fluttering display that entails whirling its wings in front of a female.

Egg laying by female dragonflies and damselflies is typically directly in water of ponds, bogs, marshes, streams, and rivers, or sometimes on vegetation next to water. Some species will scatter eggs from the air, while others will go below the waterline to lay them. Unpolluted water is necessary for much of the Odonate lifecycle, and a robust population of Odonates in an area is a good sign that the water is clean.

There are 22 species of Odonates that are listed as Species of Concern, Threatened or Endangered in MA. Threats to Odonates in MA include destruction or degradation of habitat, water pollution, filling of wetlands and removal of vegetation around wetlands, pesticides and agricultural run-off, and climate change.



Twin-spotted Spiketail

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