



FRIENDS OF UPTON STATE FOREST NEWSLETTER

*“To preserve, enhance and protect the natural
and historic resources of Upton State Forest”*

Volume 1, Number 2

March 2006

President’s Message

By Ellen Arnold

Our challenge as officers is to accomplish the mundane but necessary steps of forming an organization while maintaining your enthusiasm. We appreciate your patience with the process and hope you will participate in some of the upcoming activities.

Congratulations to Bill Johnston at being elected Vice President for North & South America for the International Association for Birds of Prey. Due to his new responsibilities he has stepped down as our Vice President but agreed to continue on the Board as a Member at Large.

We welcome Karen Obers’ energy and enthusiasm as our new Vice President. Louis Despres was elected as the second Member at Large. This completes the 2006 Board of Directors.

The two Members’ at Large are representatives of the membership on the Board of Director’s. Any concerns, ideas or issues that you want addressed can be discussed with them and it is their responsibility to bring it to the Board. Of course, you are always welcome to come to any meeting of the Officer’s or Board and all of us welcome hearing from you directly.

Thank you to everyone who has congratulated me on my award as one of Massachusetts’ “2006 Unsung Heroines.” This is your award as much as it is mine. Without your support, enthusiasm and encouragement none of what we have accomplished would have happened.

****Upcoming Events****

****April 2 Trail Maintenance Day****

Registration **9AM** at Headquarters’ Building-Liability waiver required. Bring-hand tools (loppers & hand saws)

No Power Tools

Wear leather gloves and work clothes.



Lunch provided for all workers.

If you can bake for dessert let Ellen Arnold know at 508-529-

6610. Order your sub at registration.

*****April 23 Earth Day Clean Up*****

Registration **9AM** at Headquarters’ Building-Liability waiver required. Bring a canvas bag or pails to carry the trash you pick up. Wear gloves and bright clothing so you can be seen if we are near the road. **Prizes** for various categories of trash! **Raffles** \$1.00 or six for \$5.00. **Lunch provided for all workers.** Contact Ellen if you can bake.

*******April 24 General Meeting*******

7 PM Upton Senior Center.

******Program******

Have you ever been attacked by Multiflora Rose, wounded by Japanese Barberry or strangled by Oriental Bittersweet? **Ann Hanscom of Blackstone Valley Gardeners will speak about Invasives.** How does what we plant in our garden affect the environment? Learn about the changes that are coming to area garden centers.

Encounters by Karen Ober

(Each newsletter we try to feature a different use of Upton State Forest. Have you ever



encountered a person or group you would like to tell us about?)

Bay State Trail Riders Association (BSTRA)

If you have ever seen clusters of horse trailers in the CCC Building parking area, or met groups of riders searching for scavenger hunt clues in the Upton State Forest, then you have already met some members of BSTRA. Incorporated in 1973, BSTRA evolved from a small group of equestrians passionate about trail riding to an organization that has become one of Massachusetts leading trail advocacy groups. Over just the past ten years, BSTRA has contributed skills, labor and money worth \$149,342 for projects to add trails, protect or purchase land used for trail riding and improve trails all over Massachusetts, including the Upton State Forest.

BSTRA holds at least two rides a year at Upton. The first ride, in April, is the Earth Day Ride. Riders scour the woods for trash (water bottles, cans, wrappers, hoses, croquet sets, you name it!) and a prize is awarded to the rider who returns with the most junk. The other ride is the annual Scavenger Hunt. Have you ever seen strange items dangling in trees along the trails, along with signs requesting that you leave them alone? Have you ever been asked if YOU'RE a clue? Well, the Scavenger Hunt is on. Riders search for clues and objects to solve riddles along the way. This is one of BSTRA's most popular events and competition is fierce.

BSTRA holds Work Days in Upton every year, usually in the spring weeks before the Earth Day ride. Trails are scouted to assess storm damage from the winter and teams of volunteers divide up the work to clear, brush back and improve sections of the trails. Often

the Work Days are held in cooperation with other groups, such as the New England Mountain Bike Association or volunteer community service groups.

This year BSTRA is inviting members of the Friends of Upton State Forest to join them for the forest Work Days and Earth Day ride. Bring your own hand tools and work gloves and learn how to brush back trails. You will have the chance to see parts of the forest you are perhaps not familiar with, meet other forest users and log hours toward volunteer time. Volunteer hours have a real value that can be factored into grant applications! The more interest we show (by logging hours) the more seriously our grant applications will be considered. Lunch will be provided for all volunteers.

The next time you encounter horses in our forest, remember that the riders likely belong to BSTRA and that they share the same passion for our forest that the Friends do! BSTRA is very pleased that Upton State Forest is developing such an active Friends group and our members look forward to sharing future events with you.

Vernal Pools Workshop

Using aerial maps the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program has identified at least 100 probable vernal pools within Upton State Forest. Certifying the pools provides protection for the pool under the state's wetlands protection regulations.

Tom Dodd is planning workshops about the pools and how they are certified. **Thursday, April 13** from 7:30 to 8:30 PM at the Upton Police Station he will present a slide program to introduce the value of vernal pools and the animals (salamanders, frogs and others) that utilize them and an overview of the certification process. **Saturday, April 15** at 9:30 AM he will lead a ½ mile walk from the trail head parking lot at Upton State Forest to a vernal pool where you will look and listen for these animals. This will give participants the opportunity to participate in the process of certifying a vernal pool.

Trail Etiquette by Karen Ober

The following tips will help make your encounters with equestrians safe and pleasant for all. If you have any suggestions for trail etiquette please share them with us for a future issue.

1. **Do** give a loud “**hello**” or “**heads up**” as soon as you see a horse to let the rider know you are there.
 2. **Do** move to the right of the trail to allow the horse to pass. The rider should pass at a walking pace.
 3. **Do** remember that horses may be frightened of anything they have not seen before. That includes skies and poles, snowshoes, umbrellas, baby carriages, dogs and small children.
 4. **Do** listen for and follow directions from the rider, especially if the horse appears nervous.
 5. **Don't** allow your dog to rush up to a horse. The instinct of the horse is to run away (dangerous to the rider) or to strike (dangerous to the dog).
 6. **Don't** reach to pet a horse unless you have asked permission first. Don't be offended if the rider says no, most horses don't like strangers reaching for their faces. The rider may realize the horse is nervous or likes to bite fingers.
 7. **Don't** allow children to run up to a horse. Most children are used to animals in a petting zoo or mounted police horses. Those horses are trained to be in that situation. Set a good example for your children by asking permission first.
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Logo Contest

Our group is having a contest for students under age 18 to design our logo. Invitations have been sent to area schools and the media. If you know a talented youth tell them about our contest. The grand prize is a \$50.00 American Express gift certificate. Applications and contest rules are available by writing to us at PO Box 258, Upton (01568) or email fusf@charter.net.

Membership Report

At our January meeting we had 38 members. By the end of the meeting we had 50 members! Today our membership is 64 regular members and 5 associate members. Our newest members are from North Smithfield, RI and our most distant members are from Sandwich to the east and Lanesboro to the west! One of our founders is from Marlborough. Other towns represented include Bellingham, Grafton, Hubbardston, Milford, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, Westborough, Whitinsville and Worcester, proving that Upton State Forest has friends in all directions.

Associate members are important to our success. They do not get full membership privileges but they do receive our newsletter. Their membership is a statement of support for our efforts. When approaching officials with a request their numbers add to the strength of our position. Associate members can upgrade to a regular membership at any time and their five dollar dues are credited to the upgrade. So if you know someone who lives at a distance or feels they can't be active in our group encourage them to become an associate member.

The Board of Directors challenges all of you to bring in new members. Let's see if we can add to the list of towns where we have members. If you would like copies of our membership application to carry in your car or your backpack email fusf@charter.net or call 508-529-6610.

E mail address and Web Site

For those of you who prefer to keep in touch through email our address is fusf@charter.net. Send any questions or suggestions there and if you would like future newsletters sent electronically leave us a message.

The next step is to set up a web site. Since that will be done soon we want to hear from you. If you have suggestions about the content or pictures taken at Upton State Forest you would like to share let us know.



Friends of Upton State Forest
PO Box 258
Upton, MA 01568-0258



June 10--Save the Date

We will be partnering with DCR for **CCC Day at Upton State Forest on June 10**. Plans are to have a fun and family oriented event with something for every age. **Smokey the Bear** will make an appearance riding the State Brush Fire Truck. There will be sack races, scavenger hunts and music. A **mountain man** will set up camp and there will be a pony or two on hand. Ranger, Val Stegamoen, will lead three **walks** to historic CCC sites including Dean Pond. There will be **more** so watch your May newsletter for details.

We will need help that day and the day before with set up, parking and manning various areas. If you can give a couple of hours or all day please let Ellen Arnold, Karen Ober or Lurissa Capobianco know.

This will be a day to **celebrate Upton State Forest**.

Mark your Calendar

March 26 Data Collection at the Forest

Leave a message at 508-529-6610 or fusf@charter.net if you can give us an hour to meet and survey park users. In two hours on March 5 we interviewed over 50 people from many towns. It was a lot of fun and we met some nice people. We want to find out where people feel we should be putting our energy and resources as well as prove to officials that Upton State Forest deserves a place in the budget.

March 27 Trails Committee meeting

Upton Police Station meeting room. 7:30 PM. Anyone interested in trails should plan to attend.

Bird Walks with Tom Dodd

Join Tom and others looking for birds that frequent Upton State Forest. Dress for the weather; bring insect repellent, binoculars if you have them and your enthusiasm.

April 15 6:30 AM and 8:00 AM

May 21 6:30 AM and 8:00 AM

June 10 6:30 AM and 8:00 AM

Meet at the Upton State Forest trail head parking lot.

ORV Public Comment

Ellen & Karen attended an ORV hearing at W. Boylston on March 14. We were pleased with what we learned and will report at the April meeting.