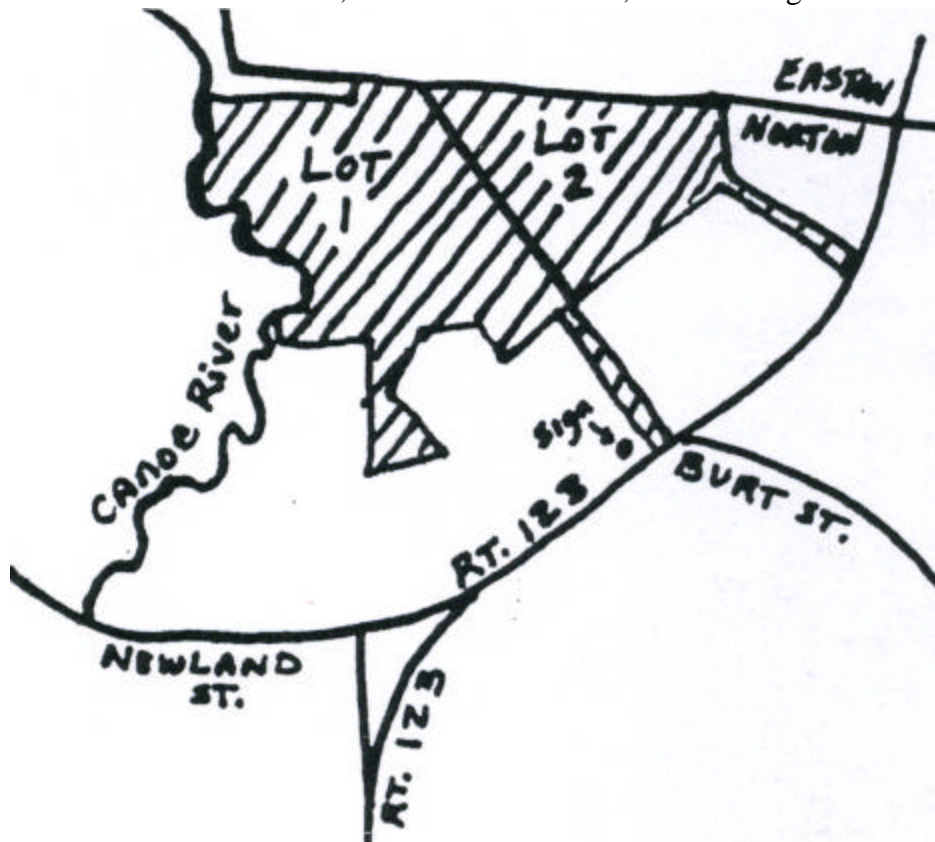


Wildlife Habitat Evaluation of the Canoe River in Norton MA 2006-2008

3. Canoe River Greenbelt and Recreation Area

In 2001, the Subon property located on East Main Street was purchased for \$391,000.00 with 47% funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant. The property was subdivided into two lots. Lot 1 is managed by the Conservation Commission. Lot 2 is managed by the Recreation Commission. Proposed plans for the Recreation parcel (lot 2) call for a public swimming pool, playground, picnic areas and multi-use field although a master plan has not been created. The land is now part of the Canoe River Greenbelt, preserved for wildlife habitat and referred to as The Canoe River Greenbelt and Recreation Area.

Shortly after entering this area volumes of trash in the forms of tires, construction debris, oil bottles and household waste join with the erosion caused by ATV's, and motorcycles to distract from the variety of habitats on the property. The majority of the area, about 75%, is flat with sandy soil. The canopy in this part is relatively thin at 25 to 50% coniferous and deciduous forest. Specific species include White pine, a modest amount of Eastern red cedar and a few Atlantic white cedars. Deciduous species represented include Red maple, Gray and Yellow birches, Eastern cottonwood, Sour cherry, Black oak, Pin oak and small amounts of White oak. At the sub-canopy level were more White pines. The shrub layer was dominated by that stuff that smells good when you wrinkle it (sweet fern) and the herb layer consisted of grasses and ferns. Also in this area was evidence of deer, calls of various birds, and tree frogs.



The Conservation Commission manages Lot 1. This parcel is preserved for watershed and wildlife habitat protection. Lot 2 is managed by the Recreation Commission with the intent of locating future ball fields on the property.

Wildlife Habitat Evaluation of the Canoe River in Norton MA 2006-2008

The remaining 25% of the property, in the south/southwest corner, is hilly and less sandy. The canopy is reasonably full at 50 to 75% but still coniferous and deciduous forest. Tree species found here were White pine, Red maple, White oak, Pin oak, Black oak, Gray birch, Eastern cottonwood and Biltmore hawthorne. The sub-canopy was predominantly White pine and there were no shrub or herb layers. Also present are two big puddles that may be potential vernal pools. One is very small, roughly 10' by 20' while the second is somewhat larger and at least has quite a bit of moss growing in it.

Brian Reid of the Wildlands Trust did a rapid resource assessment of the property on May 25, 2000 and found that the reach has a high quality aquatic habitat and is known to support two rare mussel species. He also noted well supported natural communities of Alluvial red maple swamp and Atlantic white cedar swamp. Approximately one half of the property is an abandoned gravel pit. Within the gravel pit Brian heard Prairie warbler and Chipping sparrow both of which are declining in the northeast due to the loss of open non-forested habitat such as is present here.

On September 10, 2006 Dave Small and Earl Baldwin, of the Athol Bird and Nature Club, led a bird and butterfly walk through this and two other areas. We observed Blue curls, Pearly



everlasting, Rabbit's foot clover, Little bluestem, Yarrow, Goldenrod, White aster, Bidens, Foxtail grass, Jewelweed, Red sorrel, Smartweed, Autumn olive, Butter & eggs, Chicory, Deer tongue grass, Japanese knotweed, Yellow hawkweed, Canada St. johnswort, Sweet fern, Meadowsweet, Milkweed, Red cedar, Round headed bush clover, British soldiers, Spreading dogbane, Black raspberry, Blue toadflax, Reindeer lichen, Purple aster, Daisy

fleabane, Mullein, and Silverrod. Wildlife observed was Eastern towhee, Crow, Cormorant, Catbird, Chickadee, Slug, Lady bug, Cricket, Tiger beetle, Praying mantis, Velvet ant, Smooth tiger beetle, Golden digger wasp, Cicada killer (wasp), Clearwing caterpillar, American copper, Gray hairstreak, Clouded sulfur, Orange sulfur, Clouded/orange hybrid (white form), Cabbage white, Great spangled fritillary, Monarch, Pearl crescent, Hummingbird moth, Fowler's toad, Garter snake, Red-backed salamander, Shadow darter, Common green darter, Meadowhawk, turtle nest, deer. This trip was attended by about eight individuals as well as Open Space Committee members.