



Spring 2009

THE Spruce

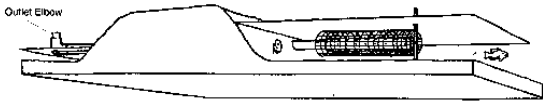
NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 2276 • Huntington Station • Shelton, Connecticut 06484

"WLCD's" Help Resolve Beaver/ Human Conflicts

Beavers have two natural tendencies. One is to keep building their dam higher and higher. The second is to rush to the sound of running water "to plug the hole in their dam." Naturally, the higher the dam, the higher the water level, and while the beavers don't mind, their human neighbors might object.

Environmentalists figured out a way around the two beaver instincts, by designing an underwater intake & discharge device that regulates the flow of water in the impoundment area. Although there are dozens of designs for such devices, they are generally called Water Leveling Control Devices or WLCD.



One variant of a WLCD is called the Clemson Tube. Briefly, a Clemson WLCD consists of an 8 or 10 inch diameter PVC pipe with one end pointing into the pond under water, perforated at the end to allow water to enter, and surrounded by wire mesh to prevent clogging with debris. The other end of the PVC pipe protrudes through the dam with an upright elbow to minimize the sound of water discharge. Variants of such devices are used with a surround cage to prevent the clogging of highway culverts.

With a properly sized Clemson Tube, no matter how high the beavers build their dam, the water level remains constant. Secondly, the noise of rushing water that triggers the "plug & patch instinct" is eliminated or minimized. Once installed, a Clemson Tube should be regularly inspected to make sure it is not plugged and is operating properly.

Such devices have been used successfully throughout the country to allow a beaver pond to co-exist within a developed community.

BEAVERS IN SHELTON

Many Shelton residents are often surprised to learn that we have beaver colonies living right here in town. The Far Mill River and Means Brook corridors provide some excellent habitat for beavers. These water bodies pass through several Land Trust and City owned open space parcels.

Beavers are very intelligent and industrious creatures. They are semi-aquatic and prefer to settle in areas with moving water, or marsh where they can build an impoundment dam. From the pond they create, they will consume the bark from surrounding woody plants, their favorites being aspen, willow, birch, ash, alder, and apple.

Beavers have one mate at a time, and often mate for life. Typically they have one litter per year, with 2 to 5 "kits" [cubs] in each litter. It is their inherent need and industrious ability to build impoundment dams that causes the most direct conflict with humans in suburban settings. The beaver uses the ponds they create for protection of their domed home from predators, and for transportation to their food sources. A hiker along a trail will find the ponds

fascinating marvels of animal engineering, but the homeowner whose basement is flooded, or the highway department whose road is flooded, may find it more of a nuisance.

All too often, the annoyed human's first reaction is to eradicate the offending wildlife. The official State of Connecticut policy is that beavers are not endangered, so they will not support trapping and relocation. The State seems to have no objection however to trapping and killing, though there are other options than can be tried.

Conflict between humans and beavers occurred here in Shelton not too long ago. A beaver family had moved into the Means Brook corridor adjacent to some open space, started their dam, and built a lodge. Residents along a nearby street complained that the historic spring-time flooding along their road was now being aggravated by the dam, even though the dam was hundreds of feet downstream and



See Shelton Beavers..page 4

Letting The Chips Fall Where They May

Several Trust volunteers attended a work party and wood-chipper demonstration before the winter snow began to fall this past November. One of the Trust's mowing contractors brought a tractor-mounted wood-chipper to demonstrate how easy it is to cut and chip brush and small trees as you go. The new equipment eliminates the rather labor intensive process of cutting, then dragging or burning the brush.

While the contractors operated the machinery, Trust members Don Pendagast, Rudy Gajdosik, Ed McCreery, Joe Palmucci, and Joe Welsh used the opportunity to help cut and chip trees, limbs, and brush. The pole-pruning chainsaw was especially useful along pathways to clear higher limbs that get in the way when we need to mow pathways with our own tractor.

The equipment proved to be very efficient and easy to use. The chipper / tractor allowed branches to be cut and fed directly into the chipper with very little effort. The woodchips dispersed as they fell to the ground, virtually disappearing into the field grass and woods. Once again reaffirming, that our efforts are more fruitful when "you have the right tools for the job."

The Trust plans to utilize these contractor services in the future to help address its stewardship needs. The Trust extends its sincere appreciation to contractors Jerry and Ron who volunteered their time, talent, and machinery on that cool November day.



Beavers in Connecticut

The State of Connecticut DEP web site states: Beavers were common in Connecticut when the first colonists arrived. However, by the mid-1800s, with no regulations restricting when and how many beavers could be trapped, the species was [eliminated] from the state. In 1914, a pair of beavers was relocated to Union in an effort to return beavers to Connecticut. By the 1950s, after additional releases, thriving beaver populations could be

found in some areas of the state. Connecticut's beaver population was well established by 1961 when a regulated trapping season was instituted to address the growing number of beaver damage complaints.

The beavers' natural range now includes forested regions in most of the United States and Canada. When fully grown they can weigh up to 65 pounds and be over 50 inches long, up-holding their position as the largest rodent in North America.

From an environmental point of view the ponds do serve an important function. Once again the DEP web site provides us with a good summary of these benefits: Beaver ponds and their associated wetlands provide habitat for

a wide variety of animals, such as insects, spiders, frogs, salamanders, turtles, fish, ducks, rails, bitterns, flycatchers, owls, mink and otters. Dead standing trees killed by flooding provide preferred nesting habitat for colonies of great blue herons and cavity-nesting birds, such as the wood duck and hooded merganser. The wildlife described by DEP, with the possible exception of mink, have all been observed around Shelton's beaver dams.

Beaver ponds also filter and trap sediments and excess nutrients, and serve as water storage and recharge areas, providing opportunities for canoeing, fishing, wildlife observation and waterfowl hunting.

Wildlife in Crisis

Wildlife in Crisis is a non-profit organization located in Weston, Connecticut, dedicated to the care and nurturing of injured or orphaned birds and animals, with the primary objective of returning them to their natural habitat. The Wildlife Center also seeks to educate the community on the preservation of open spaces. Open spaces provide safe, natural habitats that are free of pesticides, vehicles, and noise, all of which adversely affects all living creatures.

Dara Reid is the Director of Wildlife in Crisis, which was started in 1989. Dara has a Masters of Wildlife in Biology Degree. She is sometimes assisted by local veterinarians, and is knowledgeable about environmental law. She, along with volunteers and her husband, Peter, spend their days (and sometimes nights) tending to the needs of more than 5,000 animals each year. The list of their bird and animal patients include everything from tiny hummingbirds to bald eagles, fox, deer, turkeys, blue birds, sea gulls, possums, raccoons, and many others. They are kept busy 13 or more hours a day, seven days a week, especially from May to September when many babies are born.

Although local police and veterinarians refer some volunteers, Dara advertises at area colleges, recruiting graduate interns (Bachelor's degree preferred) willing to work at least six months at the center. Some volunteers have stayed over a year. The job is "all consuming because we are surrogate parents,

responsible for raising the babies," says Dara. The workers are asked to commit to at least 6 months, as the animals need consistency of caretakers. "At times we work round the clock, feeding the baby birds every 20 minutes," she adds.

In 2001 they released their 10,000th bird, and the numbers have since, kept increasing. Each year they receive approximately 15,000 phone calls from people who are concerned about a bird or animal that appears to be injured, or in need of assistance. After speaking with the caller, Dara may ask the individual to bring it to the center, where Dara will examine it and give it the help it needs.

Since her furry and feathered patients can't be expected to pay for the care they receive, the Wildlife in Crisis center must pay for the facilities, food, and medicines necessary to assure their survival. With no governmental assistance, or public grants, that often means that Dara must come up with the money herself. So, it is indeed, very much appreciated when private individuals make a donation to help defray some of the expenses.

If you would like to know more about Dara and the Center's work, you may contact them at:

Wildlife in Crisis, Inc.

P.O. Box 1246

Weston, CT 06883

203 544-9914

www.wildlifeincrisis.org

Your interest and support will be very much appreciated, especially by the birds and animals that are helped.



Annual Meeting April 8

The Annual Meeting of the Shelton Land Conservation Trust will be held at the Plumb Memorial Library, at 7 p.m., on Wednesday, April 8, 2009. At that time, the Trust will conduct its election of Officers and Board Members. The meeting is open to all Land Trust members, and the general public. Light refreshments will be served.

The meeting will also feature guest speaker Eric Hamerling, Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest & Parks Association (CFPA). Over the past century, CFPA has been instrumental in the acquisition of more than 100 state parks and forests for public use and enjoyment. When the organization began its work in 1895, Connecticut was 20% forested; today it is 60% forested.

In addition to protecting land for public enjoyment, CFPA's visionary leaders established the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System in 1929, which traverses public and private lands throughout Connecticut and is enjoyed by thousands of citizens each year.

Today, approximately 825 miles of trails are maintained by hundreds of CFPA volunteers working in cooperation with many public and private landowners.

To learn more about CFPA and its current activities and programs, please do come to the April 8th meeting, meet Eric in person, and learn first hand, of all the good works and benefits this organization contributes to Connecticut and its residents. You may also visit their website at ctwoodlands.org

Membership Renewal

April is membership renewal month, and members are urged to continue to support the Trust and its work by mailing back their membership renewals with the dues payment.

In March, the membership committee mailed out "renewal" letters to all active members. The letter reminds and encourages members to maintain their active status with the Trust. Membership dues, accounts for about half of the Trust's annual expenses, and is a vital element in the Trust's ability to continue its work of preserving and maintaining land in its natural state.

If you haven't yet mailed in your dues, please plan to do so as soon as possible. We need, and depend, on your support.

Shelton Beavers continued

less than 12 inches high at that point.

Since there were no studies to compare the historic area flooding to the situation (at that time) the beavers became the primary culprit, and the cry went out to have the City trap and kill the offending beavers. For a while, cooler heads prevailed as efforts to mitigate the flooding were made. Despite the fact the water did subside, the beaver family suddenly disappeared during the summer.

No one knows whether the animals simply moved on, or whether they were privately and secretly dealt with. If it was the latter situation, it was indeed a sad event since we know that there are alternatives to killing

the animals.

(See WLCD Sidebar on page 1)

Should we encounter another human / beaver conflict in Shelton, perhaps a more thoughtful process can be pursued to try and preserve what makes Shelton so unique: office towers, homes, farmland, and open space filled with diverse wildlife.... all in one town.



Shelton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.

P.O. Box 2276 • Huntington Station • Shelton, Connecticut 06484

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Lisa Olsen
Joseph Palmucci
Donald Pendagast
Robert Wnek

Member Emeritus

Robert Stockmal

Associate

Margaret Paulson

2009 General Meetings

Wed. Feb. 11 - 7pm

Wed. March 11 - 7pm

Wed. June 10 - 7 pm

Wed. Sept. 9 - 7 pm

Wed. Nov. 11 - 7 pm

Additional meetings to be announced.
All general meetings will take place at
the Shelton Community Center.

To be better informed about Land Trust Activities,
and local conservation issues, why
not join the Trust's Email Alert list.
To be added, simply send an email
to slctjoew@sbcglobal.net

