



Friends of Webster Trails

FWT Newsletter - Spring 2020



Upcoming Events

May 16th - Trash pickup on the trails.

June 13th – Work on new entrance trail to Big Woods from Pellet Rd. (with Trails ROC)

Editor's Comments – J. Boettcher

On behalf of the Board of FWT, I hope you and your loved ones are healthy in these difficult times. The planning for the 2020 season must be regarded as tentative in view of the epidemic. We have new members on the Board: President, Trails Chairman, and Secretary and they will provide introductions. Our membership is now over two hundred! In this issue, there are reports of the officers, trail stewards, committees, a feature about bluebirds and one about

another strange tree and several other short blurbs. Read all about it, here!

President's Column – Anna Taylor

It's a Saturday morning as I write this, and like most Saturday mornings for the past 18 years, I have come in from a run. This morning it was a 6-mile trail run in Whiting Road Nature Preserve. It was a glorious morning, as most are on our Webster trails, a crisp 28 degrees, with sunny blue skies, rolling hills and quiet. Also, as I write this we are experiencing unprecedented events in our world and in our communities with the reality of the COVID 19 virus. My spring 2020 message as the New President of Friends of Webster Trails, as with everything else it seems, has been impacted by these events. Schools are closed, and Governor Cuomo has announced 100% of the workforce must stay home as of

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Sunday March 22, excluding essential services. This executive order includes the restriction that people are to remain indoors but does allow for “solitary outdoor activities”. Hiking or running by yourself or in small groups is allowed. These events have brought home to me two important points, first, now more than ever, I am reminded of the crucial role our trails and open spaces play in helping us to maintain our health and wellbeing. The second point, I am grateful to the past and present members and volunteers of the Friends of Webster Trails, whose hard work and commitment have provided us with miles of incredible trails to access during these difficult times. It has doubled my commitment, and enthusiasm for the mission of The Friend of Webster Trails. Our scheduled events may be delayed by the virus, but we will move forward with our plans and work towards our 2020 goals and further build on the progress of 2019.

As I am new to many of you, I was asked to provide you with a brief self-introduction. In my professional life I am a Project Manager and licensed architect. I worked in traditional architecture firms for 15 years, before moving into Project Management for the last 8 years. I have been volunteering with FWT the past three years. My responsibilities with FWT have included updating our Social Media, maintaining our Facebook and Instagram pages, and in 2019 adding the task of coordinating groups for Trail Work Days. This year I was excited to be asked to take on the role of Board President. As you aware, we have new volunteers this year on the board and a few new Trail stewards. I am looking forward to sharing the knowledge and experience of our ongoing FWT members and working with our new recruits to do all we can to further improve our Webster Trails and Open spaces.

As for a more personal introduction, I grew up in Webster and moved away for college at UB. Having lived in Buffalo a few years, I came back to live and work in Rochester. I bought a home in the city and joined the Oven Door Runners. It was with that running group that I discovered trail running, hiking and the ADKs. I honestly never thought I would move back to Webster, but as they say, never say never. I found Webster trails, specifically WRNP, on a date with my now husband the summer of 2007. After that date, I would return week after week to explore the “new to me” trails. They were incredibly maintained and well-marked. As I mentioned

earlier, never say never, I married that hiking guy and moved back to Webster to build a life with him, my step sons and our two goof ball dogs. We love our life in Webster, where we have been so fortunate to have found wonderful friends and neighbors. As for the FWT, after years of enjoying those Webster trails, I wanted to get involved and find a way to help keep them as beautiful as they are. That led me to the Friends of Webster Trails. Since my first board meeting I am continually impressed by the skill and knowledge shared, and level of dedication from everyone involved in this group.

Finally, let’s talk goals for 2020. The Board has been meeting since January of this year, in those monthly meetings we have developed the following goals for this year:

1. Maintain our Existing Trail Network and continue to support Scout Projects
2. Build New Trails: this year we will advance the State Road Property Trail network, located near the new Arbor Creek neighborhood.
3. Website Updates: Update our Website with clear and current information.
4. Promote FWT: raise awareness of our trails and our mission, through outreach and participation in community events aimed at families.

I hope in reading this you will jump in and help us in working towards and achieving these goals. If you and your family, coworkers, club or group, have time, and energy, join us for a Trail Work Party, or join our Habitat Preservation Committee for a day. If you snowshoe, ski, hike and/or run the trails, give us your feedback and share your adventures. If you are a birder, native plant expert, artist, or musician who loves the outdoors, tell us how you enjoy the trails. Please reach out with your ideas to further grow our membership and add to beauty of the open space and trails in Webster.

Lastly, in these uncertain and stressful times, we hope you can find some peace and solace in nature. We encourage you to use our trails. Stay safe, and take care.

Trails Chairman Report – Craig Hurlbut

Spring arrives this year bringing the coronavirus, an unprecedented event in all our lives. I wish all our readers to be safe and well during this time. Social distancing is something new and apparently is a good

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defense against the virus. Perhaps the good news is that people feeling confined to their homes will get outside more, practice social distancing, and enjoy the great trails we have in Webster.

Each year the Friends of Webster Trails organizes work days to maintain and improve the trails. For the most part these happen on a Saturday morning once a month from April to October. The projects we have scheduled for this year, and their timing, could change as a result of the virus. On March 20 Governor Cuomo asked people to stay indoors. Hopefully that only lasts a short time and the virus will be behind us sooner than later.

May 16th is planned for trash pickup on the trails.

On June 13 we plan to collaborate with our friends from Trails ROC to work on the Big Woods Trail where it ends at Pellet Road.

On July 25 we will welcome the Webster Thomas cross-country team and Coach Brunswick to help us on the Four Mile Creek Trail. Trail steward Dennis Kuhn has some big plans for improvement.

On August 6 Genesee Regional Off-Road Cyclists (GROC) will join us to work on Whiting Road trails. This will be mostly pushing and spreading gravel in the wet spots.

On September 19 we will be putting gravel and drainage pipes on the Chiyoda Trail.

We recognize that the Hojack Trail between Klem Road and Van Alstyne Road has sections that are under water at times. The mud makes it difficult for walking or biking and it causes people to go off the trail. This has been discussed for a few years and the work to improve this area is very expensive. We continue to investigate options including maybe just improving short sections each year.

The Whiting Road Nature Preserve (WRNP) is a favorite for many people including me. Check out the Black Trail which was improved last year with two new boardwalks to traverse the low, wet areas. As you enter the parking lot off Whiting Road there are certainly some significant potholes. Hopefully we'll see those fixed this year.

Please consider joining us on a work day this spring and

summer. The Webster Trails are a great way to get outdoors, get some exercise, and meet like-minded people. We can use everyone's help to make them even better!

By way of introduction, I have been a Webster resident of 20 years, an avid outdoors person and an Adirondack 46er.

Treasurer's Report – Bill Polito

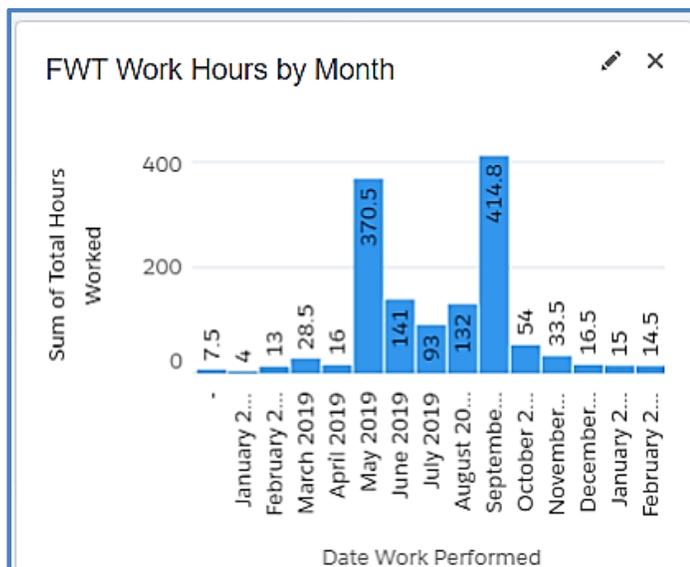
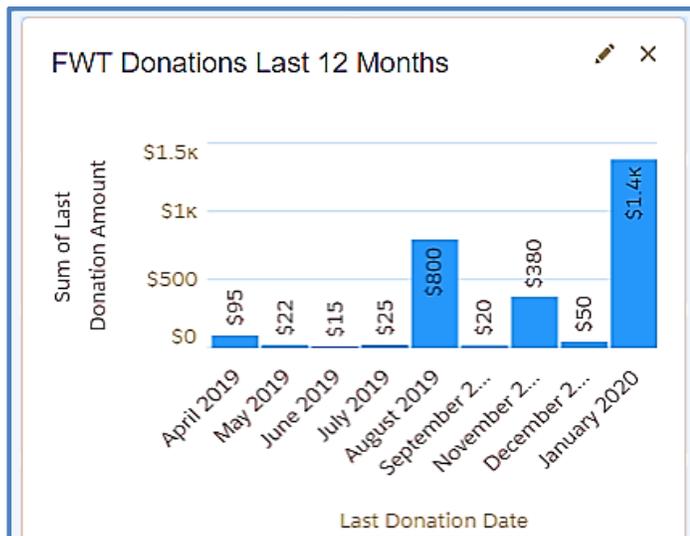
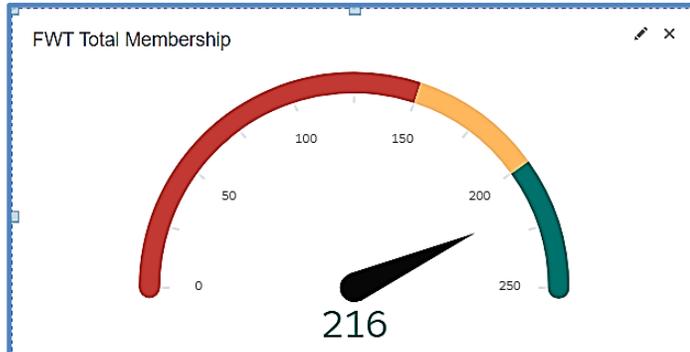
The report is for the end of last year since there hasn't been much activity so far this year. One item to note is that FWT supported 7 Eagle Projects last year costing \$9,000 for material.

Friends of Webster Trails			
For: Dec 2019			
	YTD	YTD Prior Yr	
Donations			
Memberships - PayPal	\$2,807	\$2,285	
Memberships - Checks	\$1,715	\$3,605	
Amazon	\$49	\$50	
United Way		\$27	
Webster Educators 50/50		\$90	
Interest Earned on Saving	\$4	\$4	
United Church of Christ	\$834	\$882	
Roc Trails	\$2,000	\$2,000	
Roc & Soul	\$200		
Webster Library	\$8,635	\$4,664	
TrailsRoc	\$500		
Schantz Trust		\$2,500	
Total Donations	\$16,744	\$16,107	
Expenses:			
Community Arts Day	(\$20)	(\$20)	
IRS Filing Fee	(\$40)	(\$40)	
Supplies	(\$10,467)	(\$13,606)	
McAllister sign			
PayPal Fees	(\$111)	(\$107)	
Wegman's, Chipotle, Guidas	(\$83)	(\$152)	
Weekend Printer		(\$650)	
Site 5	(\$215)		
Papa Reggios	(\$233)		
Total Expenses	(\$11,169)	(\$14,575)	
Net Cash Movement	\$5,575	\$1,532	

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Membership News - Denise Billsback

We have been close to 200 members for some time but we now are well above that – 216! Note also we are tracking work hours on the trails by the members.



Hickory Bark Woods Trail – Sharon Galbraith

If you have not visited this newest Webster open space, consider doing so. Spring will be here soon - flowers will be blooming and birds will be singing. This trail is a lovely short walk, is handicapped accessible and located just across the street from the library. Come see what a fine job the scouts and FWT have done building the boardwalk to the platform.

Whiting Road Nature Preserve News – Ron Happ

The trails at Whiting Road Nature Preserve saw many users this winter as usual. While not a lot of maintenance is done on the trails in the winter, I saw many of you when I was out cutting bittersweet vines and removing the occasional fallen tree. On that note, if you observe a fallen tree or any problems on any of our trails it would be very much appreciated if you would report it with the location to our website (webstertrails.org) so that we can take care of it as soon as possible. This summer, I hope to address some of the wet problem areas on the trails.

In this time of coronavirus, I have been very happy to see so many people and families on the trails enjoying the fresh air and getting exercise while maintaining social distancing

Four Mile Creek Preserve Bow Hunting - Dennis Kuhn

Last fall I wrote about the many fishing opportunities at the Fourmile Creek Preserve. At the time there were several runs of steelhead trout, brown trout and Chinook salmon.

Another outdoor activity that you might wish to pursue in the fall is archery deer hunting. There is an abundant population of deer throughout Webster and the seventy-two acres of Fourmile Creek Preserve is available to licensed archery hunters who are willing to follow some rules that are specific to that property. This also applies to the Gosnell Big Woods Preserve, Whiting Road Nature Preserve and Finn Park.

To be eligible to participate in this deer hunting program you must be a resident of Webster and pay Webster Town taxes. Participants must be at least 16 years of age and have all New York State legal permits and licenses. New hunters must have successfully completed a qualifying archery shoot. You must also attend a

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mandatory meeting for all hunters registered for this program.

Qualified hunters must sign up for dates, times, and location before hunting. You may not be permitted to hunt unless you are on the official schedule. For more information regarding permitted hunting areas, days and hours permitted, tree stands, and other details please visit the Town of Webster website. In addition, all NYS DEC hunting laws must be followed. Online registration begins August 1st or by calling 872-7103. There is a \$10.00 per person fee to participate.

Good luck and please follow hunting procedures that ensure the personal safety of the many people who hike the trails of the Four Mile Creek Preserve.

FWT Habitat Preservation Committee - Norma Platt

Please join us for the 2020 season!

(COVID-19 allowing)

- **Good company**
- **Good exercise**
- **Making a difference**

FWT Habitat Preservation Committee consists of a dedicated group doing our best to keep Webster Open Space friendly to native species, that is, free of invasive plants and insects.

Projects we work on have to be aligned with what is possible given the resources at hand. The Town of Webster is a valuable partner – mowing fields to maintain meadow habitats and participating in removal of invasive insects. Other resources include the scientific and conservation efforts such as the NYS Hemlock Initiative, (<https://blogs.cornell.edu/nyshemlockinitiative/>) and the NYS DEC. We even have hopes for a biocontrol of swallowwort (<https://nivemnic.us/biological-control-approved-for-invasive-black-and-pale-swallow-wort/>). During the summer season, we do fieldwork on Friday mornings. We choose areas that are mostly free of invasives – and try to keep them that way.

To participate, contact Norma Platt directly at normap1@rochester.rr.com or use the FWT website.

Strange Tree Adjacent Small Meadow

In last fall's FWT newsletter, Norma Platt described a strangely shaped tree in the Big Woods. That tree was likely shaped by the result of human intervention in the manner of marker trees made by Native Americans. In this newsletter, I report another strange tree but this one looks to be the result of natural processes.



On the right of the photo, somewhat obscured by vines is a cherry tree of some 70 yrs. At about 10 ft, the trunk divides in two and one of the branches extends in a horizontal arch of 20 ft or so nearly touching the ground and supporting a sitting figure in the photo. This same limb then grows upward some 6 ft or so before being terminated by a saw. This limb is some 8-10 inches in diameter. I'm puzzled by what would have caused such a limb to develop (shade avoidance?), but once developed it grew a considerable distance away from the trunk in a horizontal direction. At some time, I suspect another tree fell across it nearly forcing it to the ground. Perhaps the conifer stump to the right of the sitting figure was the culprit. This tree is located about 100 ft along the trail from the Small Meadow into the Big Woods. Maybe you have another idea how this tree happened.

Bluebirds on FWT Trails – John Boettcher

The Eastern Bluebird was designated the state bird of New York in 1970. Unfortunately, about this same time the species was undergoing rapid decline. This was due to changes in agriculture favoring larger fields, bigger equipment and the elimination of hedgerows between small fields. These hedgerows held dead trees with

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woodpecker holes where the bluebirds would raise their young. There was also competition for nest holes by the European Starling and House Sparrows, both of which are non-native, invasive species. To counteract this, some individuals started experimenting with man-made nest boxes. In 1993 the New York State Bluebird Society put up boxes along Rt. 20 in western NY, an area largely devoid of bluebirds in the early 1980's. In 2000, the area showed a dramatic increase in population. So much so, that the experiment was repeated along the north-south US 11 with similar results. With these successes, boxes started appearing throughout the area.

The nest boxes have a rather small hole which eliminates competition from the much larger Starling mentioned above. There is still a problem with House Sparrow which can be overcome by picking a site for the boxes far away from houses where bird feeders sometimes draw the sparrow. There is also competition for the boxes by the Tree Swallow which is a native and desirable bird. This can sometimes be minimized by putting boxes up in pairs since the swallows and the bluebirds seem to be good neighbors. Placement of the boxes is done in an open field with relatively short grass where the bluebirds can find insects, their principal prey.

In early spring, bluebirds start courting and building nests in the boxes. The nests are very tidy and cleverly woven from grass or pine needles. With the completion of the nest, the female starts to lay eggs perhaps one each day with a final clutch of 4-6 eggs. The eggs are usually blue and small (3/4 inch). The female then incubates the clutch and in a week or so the eggs hatch. The young are naked and totally dependent on their parents. It continues to amaze me that in two weeks these infants will be the same size of their parents and ready to leave the nest. The parents have to get a LOT OF INSECTS. We landlords are privileged to witness this process during our regular visits. Once the young have left the nest, the box is cleaned out and this encourages the bluebirds to repeat the process. It is common to have two clutches in a nest box during a season. Breeding is usually over in early August.

In the open space areas of Webster, there are many places with nest boxes and you have probably seen them already. The boxes are installed and maintained during the season with regular, approximately weekly, visits. Maintenance involves checking the nests for problems

like ants or rain intrusion and removal of old nests and nests of house sparrow. The ones in FWT areas and their landlords are: WRNP Orange Trail (Ron Happ), WRNP Brown Trail (Frank Calandra), GBWP Big Field Trail (Philip Weidenborner, John Boettcher), GBWP Small Meadow Trail (Philip Weidenborner, John Boettcher). All of us landlords are delighted to talk about our boxes and may even be able to show you a nest, eggs or even young birds.

Mark Yaeger Retirement

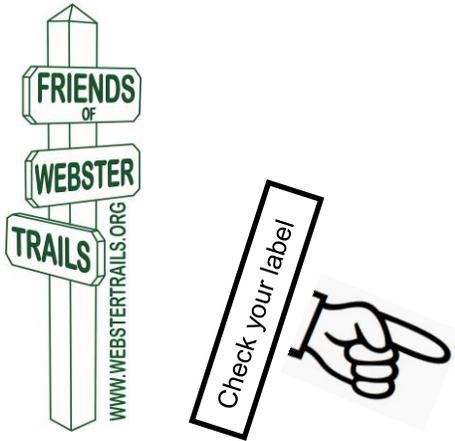
Mark will be retiring after 19 years as Commissioner of Parks and Recreation for the Town of Webster. In a recent Webster Herald Mail Bag letter, Ron Nesbit, former Supervisor for the Town of Webster, relates the accomplishments of this outstanding individual in establishing the new Parks and Rec facility at Chiyoda, the First Responders playground and water spray park, the Challenger Miracle Field and numerous other projects. Most important to FWT is the supervisory and guidance role Mark played regarding our organization and for this perspective I asked Hal Harris (past FWT president) for a few words.

"It's been a fun fifteen years since the Town began purchasing lands under the Open Space Referendum. Initially, they did not have a plan beyond preventing development. A citizens committee was formed to develop guidelines for management of these new assets. Under Don Baird's leadership, the committee debated the sometimes conflicting ideas of what stewardship and public access should look like. The resulting recommendation was a vision for a network of recreation trails and "forever wild" stewardship of the lands. With Mark's guidance, Friends of Webster Trails became the implementer of this vision. Over the years we have designed and built over twenty miles of interconnecting trails with several dozen bridges. We have an active trail maintenance program. We engage the community through mentored service projects and work parties. We have an ongoing effort to preserve the natural character of the lands. This success would not have been possible without Mark's enthusiastic support. A big thank you Mark! Our best wishes for your new adventure."

FWT Board 2020

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Friends of Webster Trails
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Friends of Webster Trails advocates for the preservation of the natural character of Webster's open space lands. We promote through sensible management, education, and low-impact access. We advise the Parks and Recreation Department and assist by planning, maintaining and promoting recreation trails in the Town of Webster.

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Editor: John Boettcher

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