

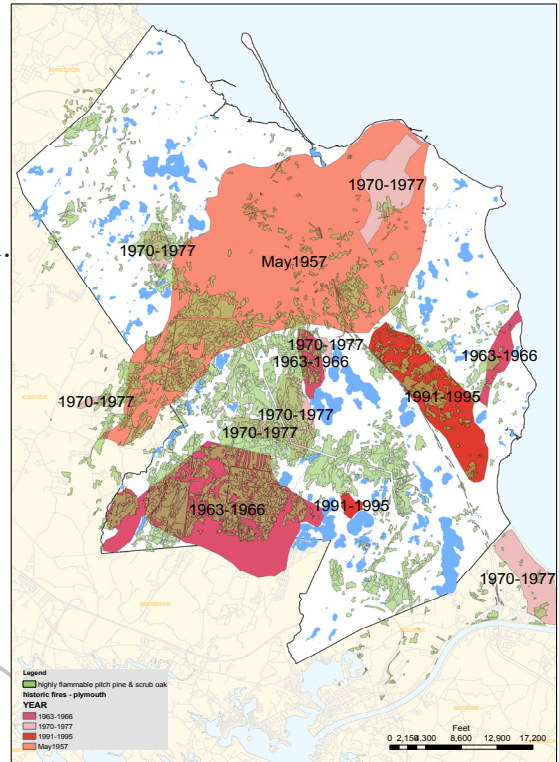
Six Ponds News

An Occasional Publication of the Six Ponds Improvement Association, Plymouth Massachusetts (www.sixponds.org) January, 2019

Take Fire Risk Seriously

In September 1900, the “Great Fire” raged through our Six Ponds neighborhood and throughout much of Plymouth, destroying everything in its path. People sought refuge in bogs and ponds, even the ocean. Nearly half of the town’s 103-square-mile land mass was blackened.

The fire started at College Pond on Wednesday and spread to Indian Hill (coastal Manomet) by nightfall. Winds shifted, and Ellisville and Cedarville were burning on Thursday. The fires raged on Friday around Halfway Pond and Bloody Pond. By Saturday the fires came almost full-circle, branching down the Agawam River into Wareham and Carver. The Old Colony Memorial reported “Human energies were powerless to cope with the fierce blaze, which hurried on by a blast of hurricane force, stretched across the area from College Pond to the sea in time almost calculable in minutes, rather than hours.”



Town of Plymouth Open Space Plan

Major Historic Forest Fires

Not as enormous as the Great Fire of 1900, our area has seen other significant fires::

- 1957: 15,000-acre fire jumps Route 3 in South Plymouth, destroying 6 cottages and causing 150 residents to evacuate; at one point, this fire was burning 18 acres per minute
- 1964: Wildfire blazes from Myles Standish State Forest into Plymouth, burning 5,500 acres and 20 cottages
- 1971: 165-acre fire with 50-foot tall flames damages two fire engines and injures 7 firefighters
- 1991: Fire along Route 3 burns 1200 acres destroying 2 cottages and a trailer
- 1995: 95-acre fire threatens more than 100 homes in the Bourne Road area causing residents to flee

We recognize the benefits of living in this beautiful area we know as Six Ponds. We also need to recognize the risks. Plymouth’s Emergency Management Director, Henry Lipe, acknowledges we are at risk from hurricanes, coastal storms, earthquakes, the nuclear power plant, etc. . . . but he has stated that by far our largest persistent threat is fire. Our area includes pitch pine, scrub oak and huckleberry. These have needles and leaves with flammable oils. In fact, pitch pine has the nickname “gasoline pine tree”. Accumulations of needles, leaves, and fallen branches fuel ground fires that

(continued on page 2)

Fire Risk (continued)

can climb shrubs and low branches, ignite volatile oils, and explosively spread fire to the tops of trees. “Crown fires” can throw sparks that travel long distances. The fire risk is even greater now that we have many standing dead trees in our region due to recent insect infestations, drought and natural aging.

Ironically, wildfires play a critical role in the preservation of pine barrens, which are well adapted to small ground fires and rely on periodic fires to remove competing species. Many of the native species that live among us actually depend on fire! But wildfires threatening our homes is very real.

Six Ponds past-president Love Albrecht Howard said, “I do think that all of us living in these pine barrens are greatly atypical from most suburban or rural residential sites. EVERYTHING around us is fire fuel. Many of us don’t even have lawns, we are surrounded by dry duff along with pine needles, leaves, downed branches, ericaceous groundcovers and stands of trees that come right up to our homes. I love being buried in vegetation, but I also recognize it’s a fire-hazard.”

OhMyGosh, what can we do? The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation is embarking on a ten year ‘fire reduction campaign’ at the Southeast section of Myles Standish State Forest (the section closest to Six Ponds). Forest thinning and controlled burns will help reduce fire hazards from that area.

What can I do to help protect my property? We are not suggesting clear-cutting the trees or the understory! Being extremely careful with outdoor grilling and things like firepits is critical. But reducing the fire fuel on our forest floors is prudent. Collection and removal of downed branches and brush is labor

intensive, you can hire people to do this. But as residents of Plymouth we are fortunate to have the privilege of open-air burning. Deliberate burning also comes with recognized risks, so burning is vigilantly controlled by the town and the state. This is a serious endeavor, requiring knowledge and working responsibly. The last thing you’d ever want to do is start a wildfire!

Open burning season runs from January 15 to April 15. Regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and enforced by our local Fire Department, you need a valid permit from the Town of Plymouth Fire Department. The Fire Chief reserves the right to deny open burning on any day due to weather or environmental conditions.

To learn more about open air burning: www.mass.gov/service-details/open-burning-safety

To obtain a permit: www.plymouth-ma.gov/fire-department/pages/burning-permits

There are additional actions you can take to reduce the risk of fire. See www.firewise.org and www.ready.gov/wildfires, or speak with the Plymouth Fire Department for more information.

Smokey Bear says “Only you can prevent forest fires”, but forest fires are a natural and necessary part of our regional ecology. Six Ponds will do its best to liaise with the Town of Plymouth, the Myles Standish State Forest and related groups to learn more about how we can work together as a community to help reduce the possibility of wildfire.

Be aware, be prepared! Six Ponds will keep you updated!

Six Ponds Executive Committee 2018-2019

President:	Aileen Briggs
Pompey Delafield	Peggy Conant
Vice President:	Margi Delafield
Sanford Leslie	Kate Harvey
Secretary: Dorie Stolley	Jean Loewenberg
Treasurer: Doug Post	Susanne Lucas
	Lucas Nichols
	Judy Savage
	Hampton Watkins

Contributors to this issue:

Aileen Briggs
Kate Harvey
Love Albrecht Howard,
Susanne Lucas
Doug Post,
Dorie Stolley
Hampton Watkins

Hunting Season

In November, a Plymouth Estates resident spotted a bow hunter walking down the road, which prompted many questions about hunting regulations. Some of the animals that can be legally hunted are deer, coyote, turkey, waterfowl, bear, rabbit, crow, and squirrel, among others. Although deer season ended on Dec. 31, legal hunting for several species, for example raccoon and opossum, is allowed in other winter months.

Here are a few specifics about hunting in our area:

- Massachusetts is divided into 15 hunting Zones, which may have different seasons.
- Plymouth and all of southeastern Massachusetts is in Zone 11. Cape Cod, starting at the canal, is Zone 12.
- Hunting Regulations for Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/hunting-regulations>
- Bloody Pond, Halfway Pond and Long Pond Rd intersection, circa 1930 All residents and non-residents must have current licenses, permits and stamps to hunt.
- Hunting begins ½ hour before sunrise and ends ½ hour after sunset.
- No hunting is allowed on Sundays.
- There are numerous “hunts” for deer with different dates (‘seasons’) and regulations: youth, paraplegic, archery, shotgun and primitive firearms.
- During shotgun deer season, hunting with a muzzleloader or bow is allowed. All hunters, including bowhunters, must wear a minimum of 500 square inches of blaze orange on their head, chest, and back during shotgun season.
- During archery season, bowhunters do not have to wear blaze orange.

Bowhunters cannot hunt within 500 feet of a dwelling, carry firearms or use dogs. People can hunt on private land if they have permission from the landowner and they can hunt on designated state and federal lands, such as the state-owned Halfway Pond Wildlife Management Area.

We remind everyone to focus on safety as you enjoy the outdoors this time of year. Hikers and their dogs should wear blaze orange when on or near any conservation lands or wooded properties, whether or not hunting is allowed.

For more information, visit www.mass.gov/topics/hunting

Six Ponds Sponsors Water Conference

Six Ponds is a key member of Watershed Action Alliance of Southeastern Massachusetts (WAA) and recently voted to sponsor the 2019 WAA conference. On March 29, *Water – New England’s Next Big Challenge* will be held at the Needles Lodge at 1 Camp Kiwanee Road in Hanson, MA. This affordable (\$25) conference provides information about and solutions to critical watershed health challenges in southeastern Massachusetts and beyond.

This year’s conference topics include: water quality and quantity; outreach, regulation and enforcement; and the future of our water supply. We are very excited that Alex Hackman of the MA Division of Ecological Restoration will present the plenary talk. He is responsible for both the Tidmarsh and Eel River restorations in Plymouth and many other wetland restoration projects across the state. Alex is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and will motivate you to continue your good work in support of healthy watersheds.

On March 29th, join us for a day of education, networking and collaboration. You will meet many other like-minded people who care about the quality of life on our ponds, the state of our waterways, and the health of our environment.

For more information and registration: www.watershedaction.org or email dorie.stolley@gmail.com.

Save the Date: Six Ponds Winter Gathering

Saturday, January 26th, 5 – 7 p.m. (snow date Sunday, January 27th)
Wildlands Trust Barn, 675 Long Pond Road, Plymouth

Last year's inaugural Winter Gathering was a great success . . . so . . . back by popular demand, please join SIX PONDS for our 2nd Winter Gathering to share food, drink, laughter & camaraderie!

During the evening, President Pompey Delafield will welcome us and introduce Teacher/Naturalist Doug Lowry from Mass Audubon's South Shore Sanctuaries, who will share a brief presentation on winter tracking!

Winter is a magnificent time to get outside and explore! The adaptations our natural community members have developed to deal with temperature extremes are most impressive. We will explore a few of those adaptations and learn how to interpret the evidence left behind in the form of tracks and traces from our warm-blooded neighbors. Maybe even borrow some of their coping skills as we embrace the season!



Feel free to bring a friend, member or not! And this is a BYOB (wine and beer) event. It would be lovely if you could bring some small savory or sweet munchie finger food to share. We will provide cups, plates, utensils and water. RSVP is required. Please respond to Aileen Briggs (asbriggs1@comcast.net)

YOU can help keep our ponds and aquifer clean!

Everything we put in to our drains, put on our lawns and gardens and use on our properties ends up filtering down to our groundwater and running in to our ponds. Every household has an impact on how we care for our water resources. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reminds us to have our septic systems pumped regularly, reduce stormwater runoff, and keep chemicals and fertilizers out of our ponds. Here is a Top Ten List of things we can easily do!

- Use fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides sparingly – or not at all
- Dump NOTHING in to streams and storm drains
- Vegetate bare spots in your yard or cover with chopped up leaves
- Sweep up driveways, walks and gutters and compost detritus and yard waste at least 100' away from any pond, bog or waterway
- Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces; consider adding rain gardens to catch runoff
- Take your car to a car wash instead of washing it at home
- Check your cars for leaks; always recycle motor oils
- Pick up after your pets
- Have your septic system inspected and pumped regularly; **never ever** put chemicals, paints or other toxic substances down your drains
- Do NOT flush pharmaceuticals; there is a convenient pharma drop box in the lobby of the Plymouth Police Department at Exit 5

There is a free annual hazardous waste drop off in Plymouth; in 2019 it is on Saturday, April 13th from 9 to 1 p.m., at the DPW at 169 Camelot Drive, Plymouth.

Six Ponds Water Quality

The results of the 2018 season are back from Envirotech Labs and again this year the water quality of our ponds is very good. That said we have experienced a significant algal bloom in Halfway Pond, but there does not appear to be a strong correlation between the water chemistry and the algal bloom.

The lab also checked the coliform bacteria counts in our ponds. The highest reading was for the near surface sample in Round Pond. The observed value was 90 colony forming units (CFU) / 100 milliliters (ml); the actionable value is 235 CFU/100 ml. All other pond samples were near or below reportable levels, at five or fewer CFU/100 ml.

The final item of note is the observation that the chloride ion concentrations are highest for Bloody Pond, followed by Little Long Pond and Long Pond. These concentrations are 2-3 times greater than Gallows and Halfway Ponds and are almost certainly due to road salt runoff and infiltration from Route 3, Long Pond, Clark, and Oar and Line Roads.

But there is some good news for Bloody Pond. Six Ponds alerted Mass. Highway of the problem. As a result, when Route 3 is repaved (slated for 2019), the Massachusetts Highway Department is upgrading the storm-water drains next to Bloody Pond and will be installing leaching catchments. This should greatly reduce the amount of road salt, chemicals and road waste which currently dumps in to Bloody Pond.

Of special note, on December 6th, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection held a pre-proposal conference in Worcester to provide information to organizations interested in submitting grant proposals for water quality testing. Susanne Lucas attended the conference on behalf of the Six Ponds Improvement Association. We'll let you know more about grant applications in a future newsletter.



Bloody Pond, Halfway Pond and Long Pond Rd intersection, circa 1930

A Century of Celebration at Pinewoods Camp

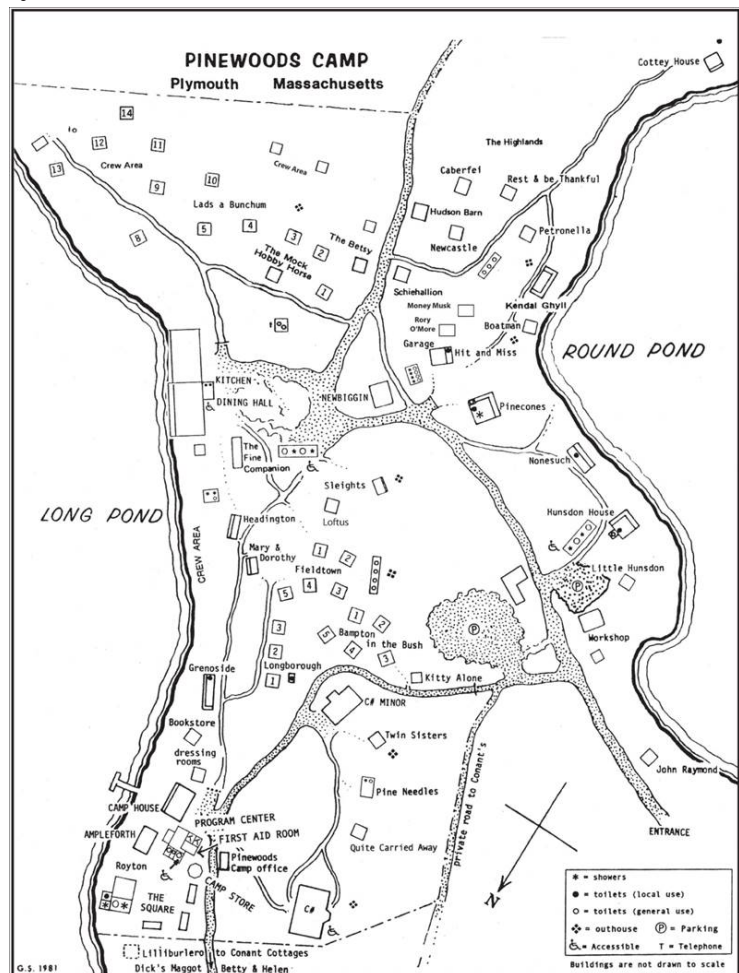
The sound of bagpipes, fiddles, foot clomping, and folk "wa-hoos" are familiar sounds of summer to generations of Six Ponders on Long Pond and Round Pond. But did you know that our neighbor, Pinewoods Camp Inc, is the oldest continuously operating facility for traditional dance and music in the United States?

The property was originally home to Pine Tree Camp, established in 1919 by Helen Storrow, the Boston philanthropist and one of the earliest supporters of Girl Scouts of America. Pine Tree was the First National Girl Scout Leaders' Training School. Also a passionate supporter of English country dancing, Mrs. Storrow married her two interests by inviting the staff of the 'American Branch of the English Folk Dance Society' to teach dance to the Girl Scouts. The Camp operated as both a Girl Scout and English Dance Camp through the early 1930s when it was transferred to the Conant Family who played a leading role in shaping the dance and music programming that we still enjoy today. In 1976, Pinewoods Camp, Inc. (PCI), was formed as a non-profit to take over the ownership and management of the property from the Conant family.

Today, Pinewoods serves over 2,400 campers annually who come to enjoy many forms of traditional dance, music and song. The camp property is home to over 100 separate buildings, including camper cabins, a dining hall, dance pavilions, gathering spots, and work spaces. Pinewoods campers and crew come from around the globe and are passionate about the Pinewoods location, infrastructure, community, and culture. Core to the culture are inclusion and environmental sustainability, as is evident in the Camp's ongoing efforts to protect the area's natural habitats, supporting "green" operations like local food sourcing and eco-friendly cleaning supplies, and to promote a sense of belonging among its community members with inclusive elements like gender-neutral changing rooms and mobility accessibility.

Six Ponds members are invited to check out Pinewoods for themselves. You are welcome to visit the Camp anytime to walk, join a meal, or attend an evening concert. Just let the Executive Director, Carl Mastandrea, know in advance so he can meet you himself (manager@pinewoods.org or 508-224-4858). For those interested in taking a deeper dive into the Camp experience, in 2016 PCI introduced a new scholarship program specifically designed to encourage members of the Six Ponds neighborhood to attend camp. It was established in memory of Gerda Conant, former Camp Manager and much-loved member of the Six Ponds community. See www.pinewoods.org for more information.

As we hunker down for winter, know that Pinewoods Camp is actively planning for another great season of dance and music, just as it has for 100 years!



Eastern Coyote aka Coywolf – a new species in our midst



Eastern Coyote aka Coywolf – a new species in our midst. (Coywolf photo courtesy of Jon Way)

It's bigger than a coyote, but smaller than a wolf. You may see one trotting by at dusk or hear a pack yipping in the distance. They inhabit virtually every eco region from New Jersey to northern Maine, and they have lived here since the 1930s. This is the Eastern Coyote or Coywolf. Recent genetic tests have shown they are actually a hybrid of coyote, wolf and dog, that's why this hybrid species is bigger than their Western cousins. Averaging 30-45 pounds, their tracks are distinctly dog like, oval and 3 to 3.5 inches long, and the coat colors range from blonde to darker black and brown, but are usually tawny brown.

Predators, like Coywolves, are healthy for our environment. They keep rodent populations in check, and they help herds of ungulates, like our White-Tailed Deer, stay in better balance by weeding out the weak, the young and the injured. Fears that these animals could become a bigger threat, especially to people, are largely unfounded, as they are generally timid around humans. That said, there are precautions to take when living around any predator species.

Dr. Jonathan Way, a resident of Cape Cod and a leading researcher on Coywolves, offers the following information and precautions. Coywolves feed mostly on small mammals, although they are opportunistic and will eat anything from fruit to meat. Most of their diet consists of mice, voles, rabbits and woodchucks, but they can and do take deer. They prefer edge habitat with woods next to open areas . . . you know, the perfect suburban yard. They are most active from dusk to the early morning hours, but they will also hunt in daylight.

Domesticated dogs are actually considerably more dangerous than Coywolves. Dog bites average 4.7 million incidents per year in the U.S. and 800,000 require medical attention. Fifteen to twenty people die from dog bites/mauling every year. Annual insurance losses due to dog bites are approximately \$1 billion.

By comparison, there have been only 5 Coywolf bites in Massachusetts history. And in the past 400 years, there have been just two human fatalities from Coyotes/Coywolves in all of North America.

How to avoid the most common interactions:

1. DO NOT let dogs (especially small breeds) outdoors without constant supervision. Fences should be at least 5 feet tall and secured at the bottom.
2. Dogs taken outdoors by their owners should be leashed unless in a fenced yard, where they should still be supervised and checked regularly.
3. Dogs should not be tied outdoors. A tied dog is a vulnerable dog.
4. Cats should be kept indoors unless trained to remain at home, and brought in before nightfall. Coywolves are just one of many mortality factors for outdoor cats.
5. DO NOT feed Coywolves. If you are feeding birds or other animals Coywolves can be attracted to your yard just like any other animal looking for an easy meal.
6. DO chase Coywolves away and make noise (bang pots and pans, blow a whistle) if you don't want them in your yard. Or . . . enjoy watching them quietly from a window. Several people on Great Herring Pond have whole families of Coywolves in their yards from time to time.

With a little precaution, we can coexist with these animals without incident. Enjoy the wildness that Coywolves bring to our neighborhoods.

Want to learn more? We recommend Jonathan Way's website and his books. We thank Jon for information from his website, and for his beautiful Coywolf photo.

<http://www.easterncoyoteresearch.com/>

SIX PONDS MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

To be more environmentally proactive, the Six Ponds Membership Committee is trying to acquire all active members' email addresses to send announcements, invitations, and at least one newsletter via email. The few active members who have not provided their email will receive paper copies via snail mail.

If you have a new email or know of someone who would like to join the Six Ponds Association, please send the information to Aileen Briggs at asbriggs1@comcast.net. Thank you!

2019 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please do look for your membership renewal letter this March! Dues are still only \$20 per household per year . . . !

Happy New Year!
