
Randolph ConComm: Rules for Conservation Areas

For Conservation Committee meeting of December 18, 2023

Slide presentation about establishing rules for passive recreation and DPW maintenance of conservation areas in Randolph, with notes from Randolph Town Councilor Jesse Gordon

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All photos are from the Mass Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary at the Museum of American Bird Art, 963 Washington St., Canton MA

A "welcome" sign plus a map is essential to making people feel like the Town of Randolph wants them to enjoy our open space. The ConComm has accepted this concept, and allowed "welcome" signs plus maps at several Conservation Areas last year. I'd like to expand that to a dozen more locations all around town, and add some other amenities to make people feel welcome--examples from Canton's Audubon open space...

Mass Audubon

There's More to Explore...

Mass Audubon
Department of Environmental Management
200 South Street
Boston, MA 02111
617-552-8124
www.massaudubon.org

Museum of American Bird Art
AND MILDRED HORSE ALLEN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Welcome!

Since the very beginning of human history, we have long admired the beauty and grace of birds. The Mass Audubon Sanctuary is a beautiful and peaceful place where you can enjoy the beauty of nature and the art of bird watching.

Who among you is responsible for our beautiful landscape? We invite you to join us in making the most of the beautiful landscape around you. The Mass Audubon Sanctuary is a beautiful and peaceful place where you can enjoy the beauty of nature and the art of bird watching.

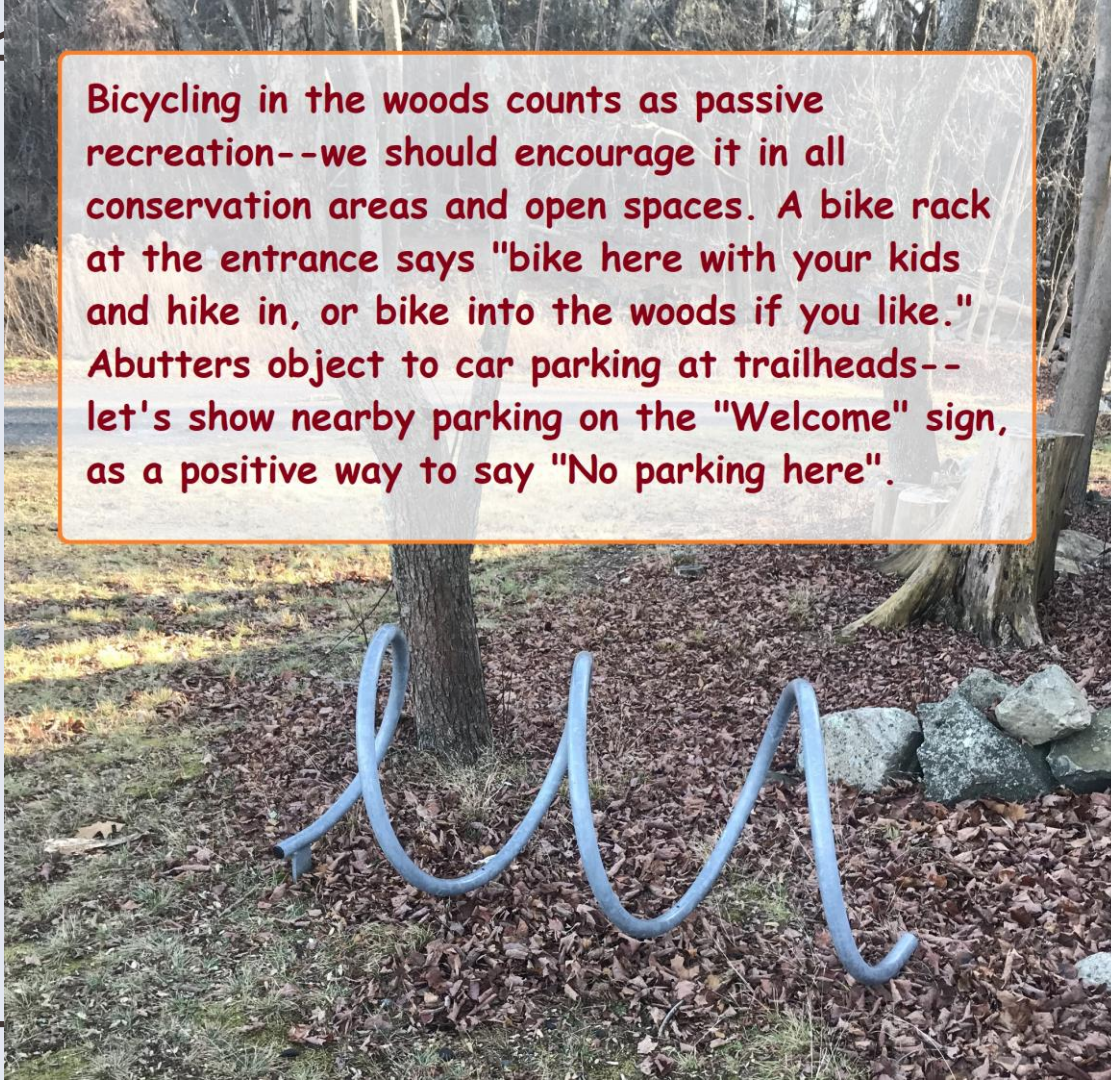
Experience nature in the heart of the city. The Mass Audubon Sanctuary is a beautiful and peaceful place where you can enjoy the beauty of nature and the art of bird watching.

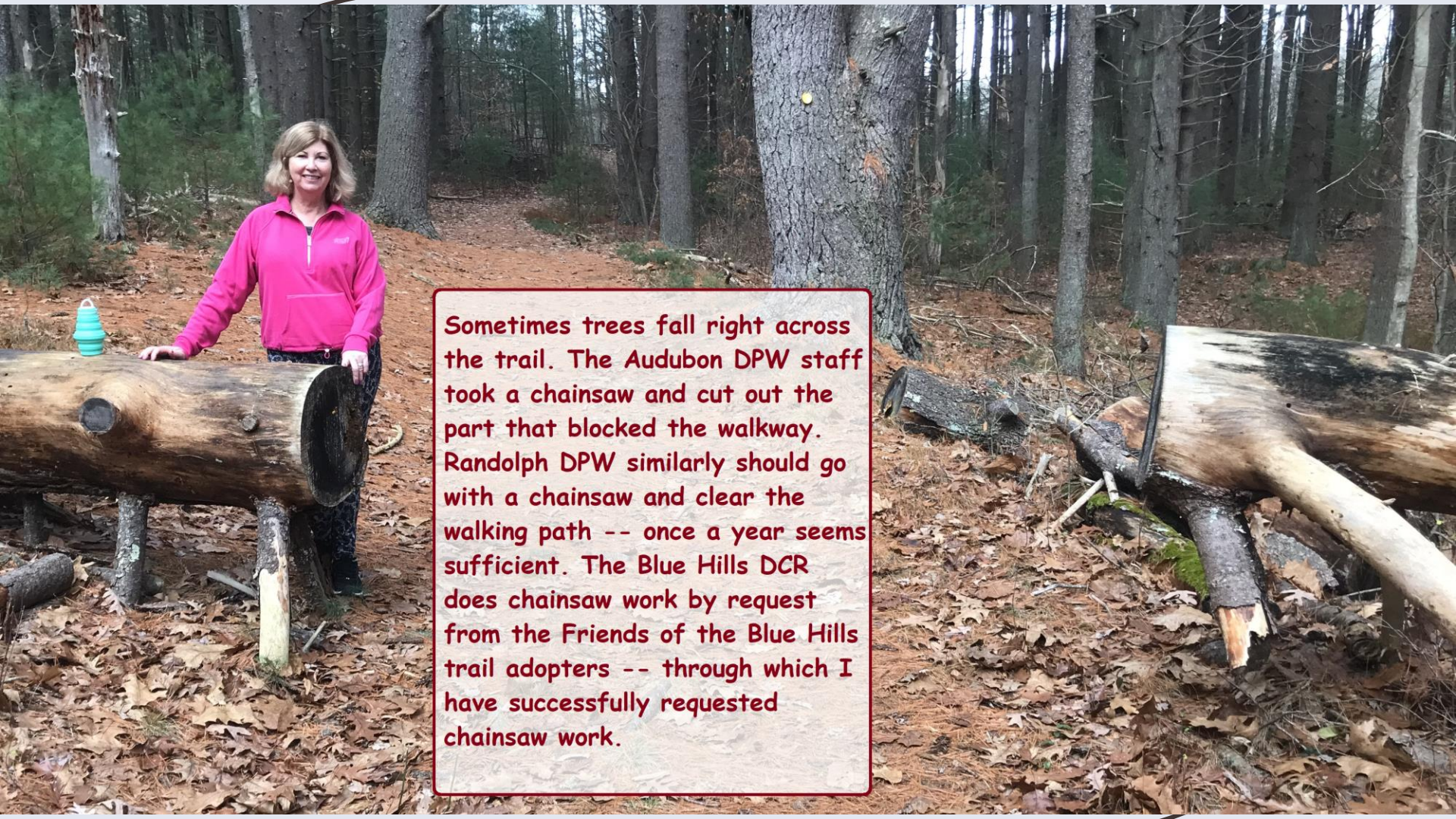
ART

TRAILS

OUR HISTORY

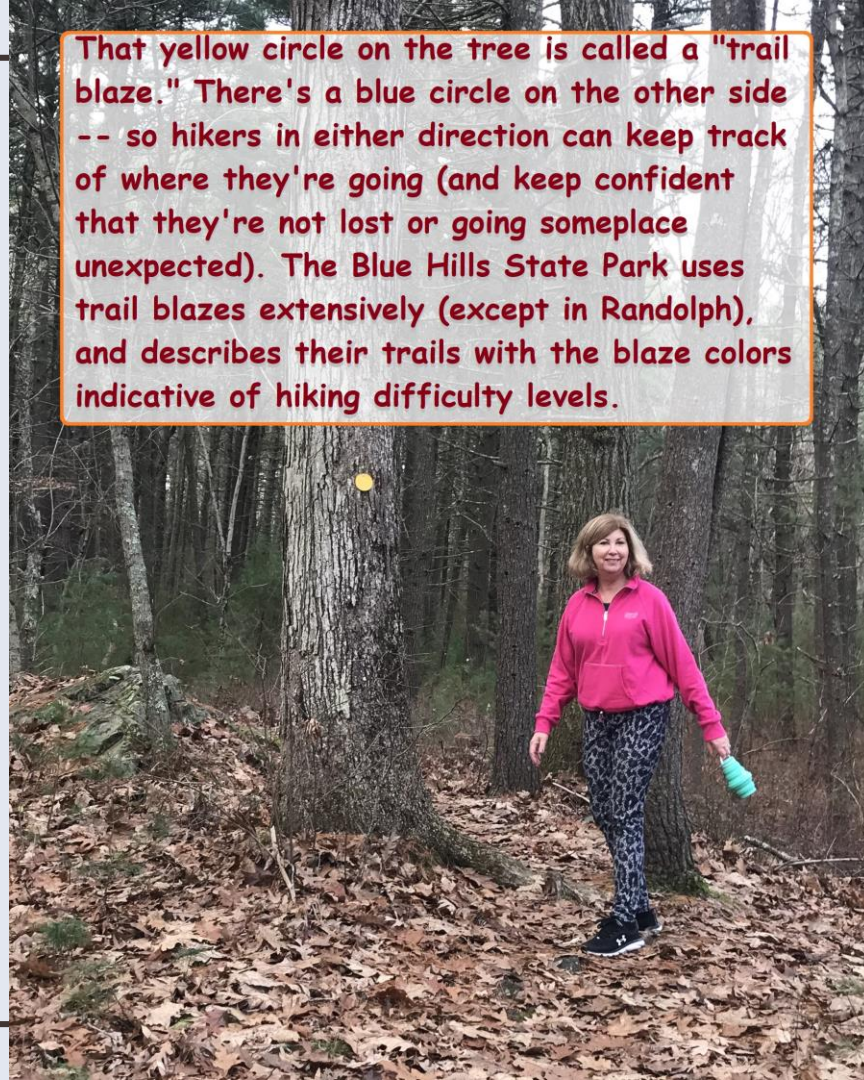
Bicycling in the woods counts as passive recreation--we should encourage it in all conservation areas and open spaces. A bike rack at the entrance says "bike here with your kids and hike in, or bike into the woods if you like." Abutters object to car parking at trailheads-- let's show nearby parking on the "Welcome" sign, as a positive way to say "No parking here".

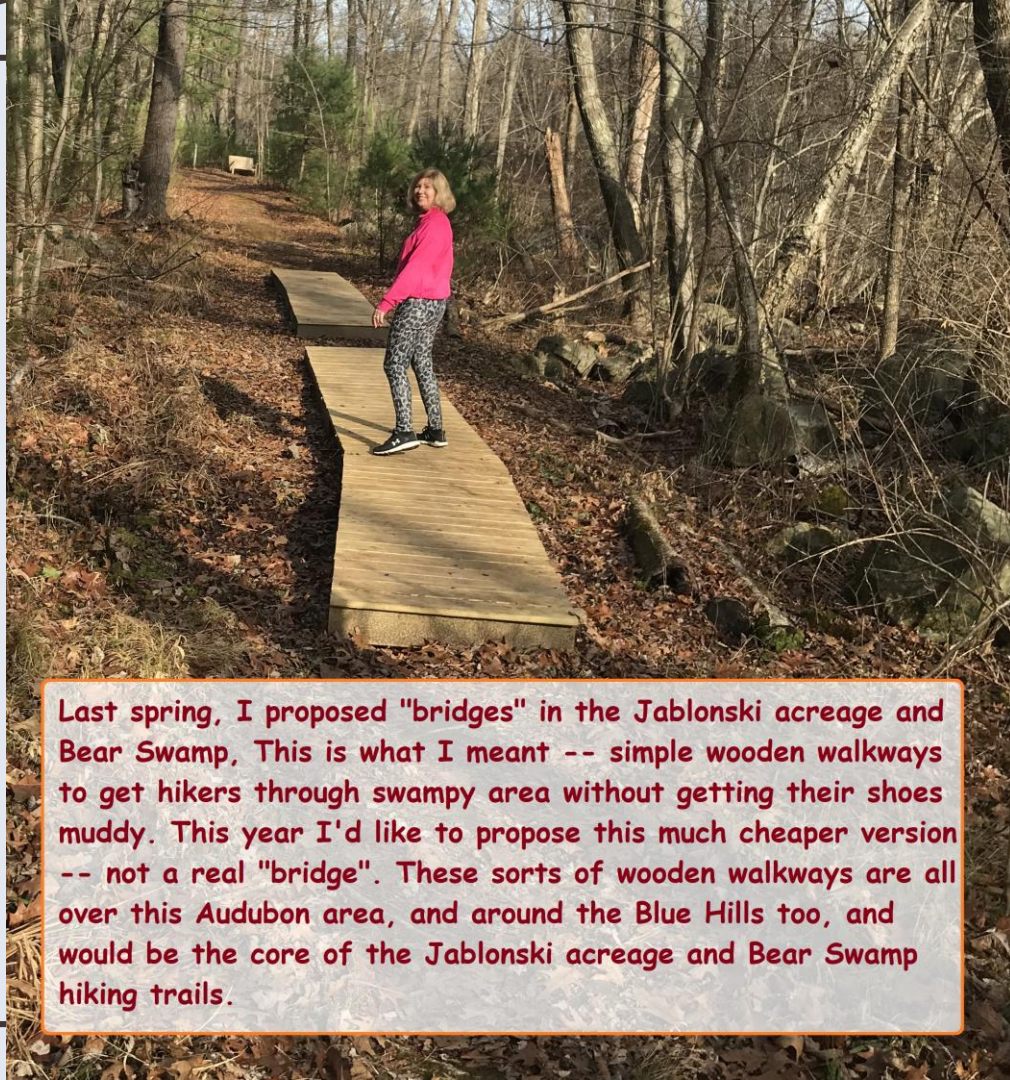




Sometimes trees fall right across the trail. The Audubon DPW staff took a chainsaw and cut out the part that blocked the walkway. Randolph DPW similarly should go with a chainsaw and clear the walking path -- once a year seems sufficient. The Blue Hills DCR does chainsaw work by request from the Friends of the Blue Hills trail adopters -- through which I have successfully requested chainsaw work.

That yellow circle on the tree is called a "trail blaze." There's a blue circle on the other side -- so hikers in either direction can keep track of where they're going (and keep confident that they're not lost or going someplace unexpected). The Blue Hills State Park uses trail blazes extensively (except in Randolph), and describes their trails with the blaze colors indicative of hiking difficulty levels.



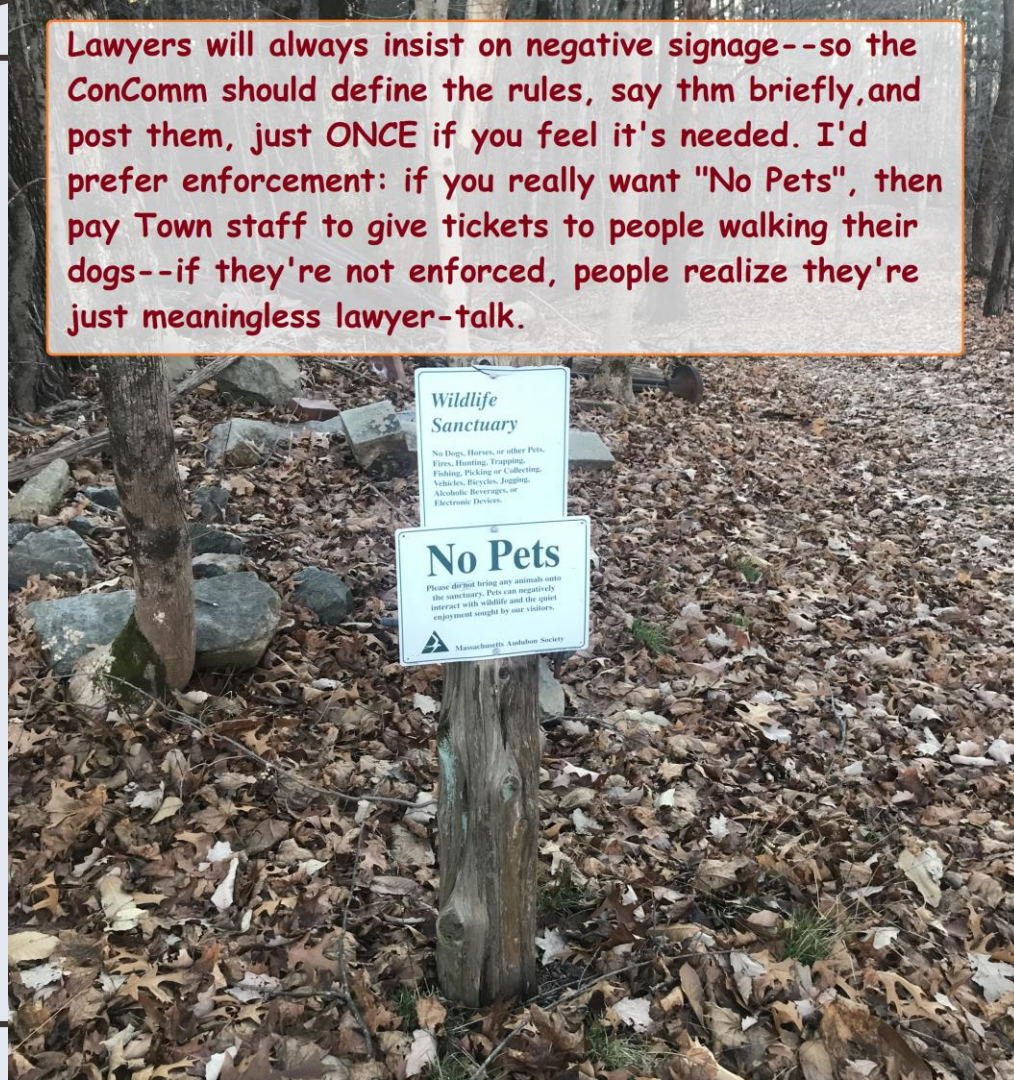


Last spring, I proposed "bridges" in the Jablonski acreage and Bear Swamp. This is what I meant -- simple wooden walkways to get hikers through swampy area without getting their shoes muddy. This year I'd like to propose this much cheaper version -- not a real "bridge". These sorts of wooden walkways are all over this Audubon area, and around the Blue Hills too, and would be the core of the Jablonski acreage and Bear Swamp hiking trails.

This Audubon trail has a half-dozen benches built, so hikers can take a rest and enjoy the scenery. They're placed at pretty locations -- this one overlooks a small brook -- or at "trail split" locations. You can see a signpost to the left of the bench, saying something like "0.5 miles on Trail A to the left; 0.3 miles on trail B to the right".



Lawyers will always insist on negative signage--so the ConComm should define the rules, say thm briefly, and post them, just ONCE if you feel it's needed. I'd prefer enforcement: if you really want "No Pets", then pay Town staff to give tickets to people walking their dogs--if they're not enforced, people realize they're just meaningless lawyer-talk.



Wildlife Sanctuary

No Dogs, Horses, or other Pets.
Fires, Hunting, Trapping.
Fishing, Picking or Collecting.
Vehicles, Bicycles, Jogging.
Alcoholic Beverages, or
Electronic Devices.

No Pets

Please don't bring any animals onto
the sanctuary. Pets can negatively
interact with wildlife and the quiet
enjoyment sought by our visitors.

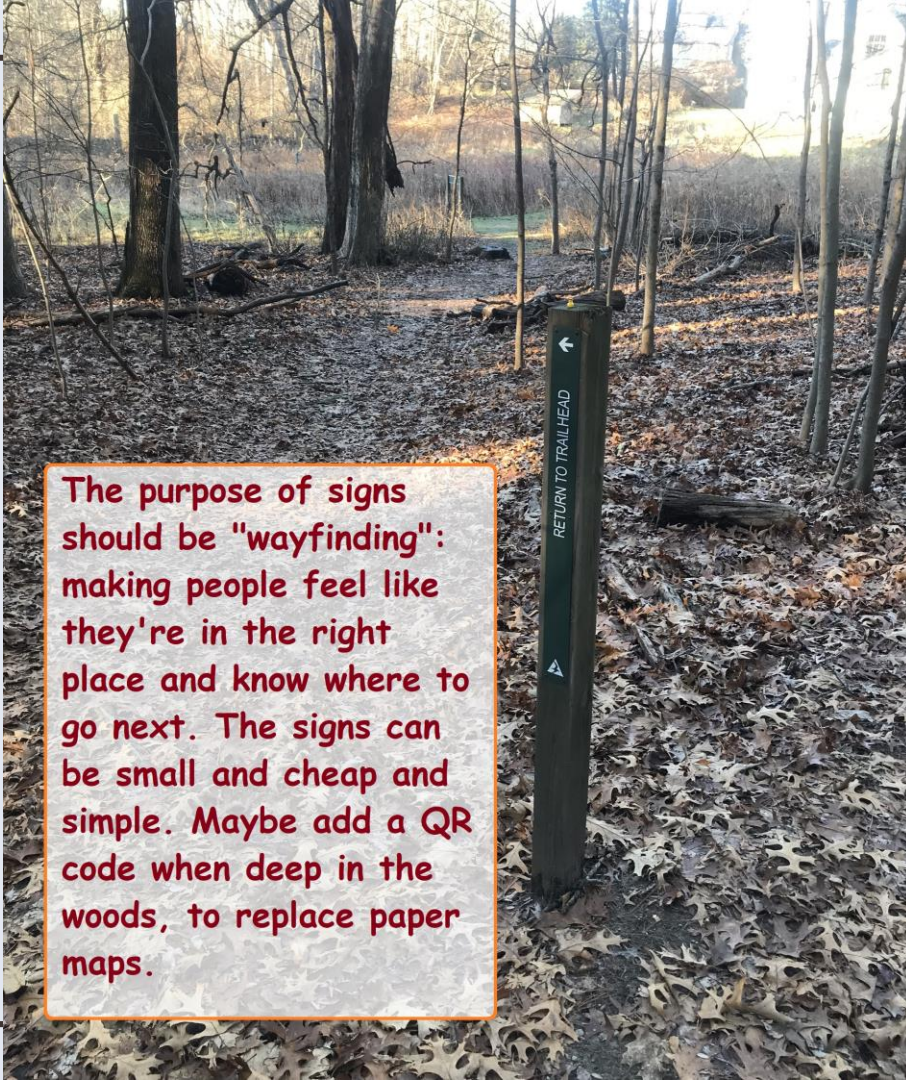


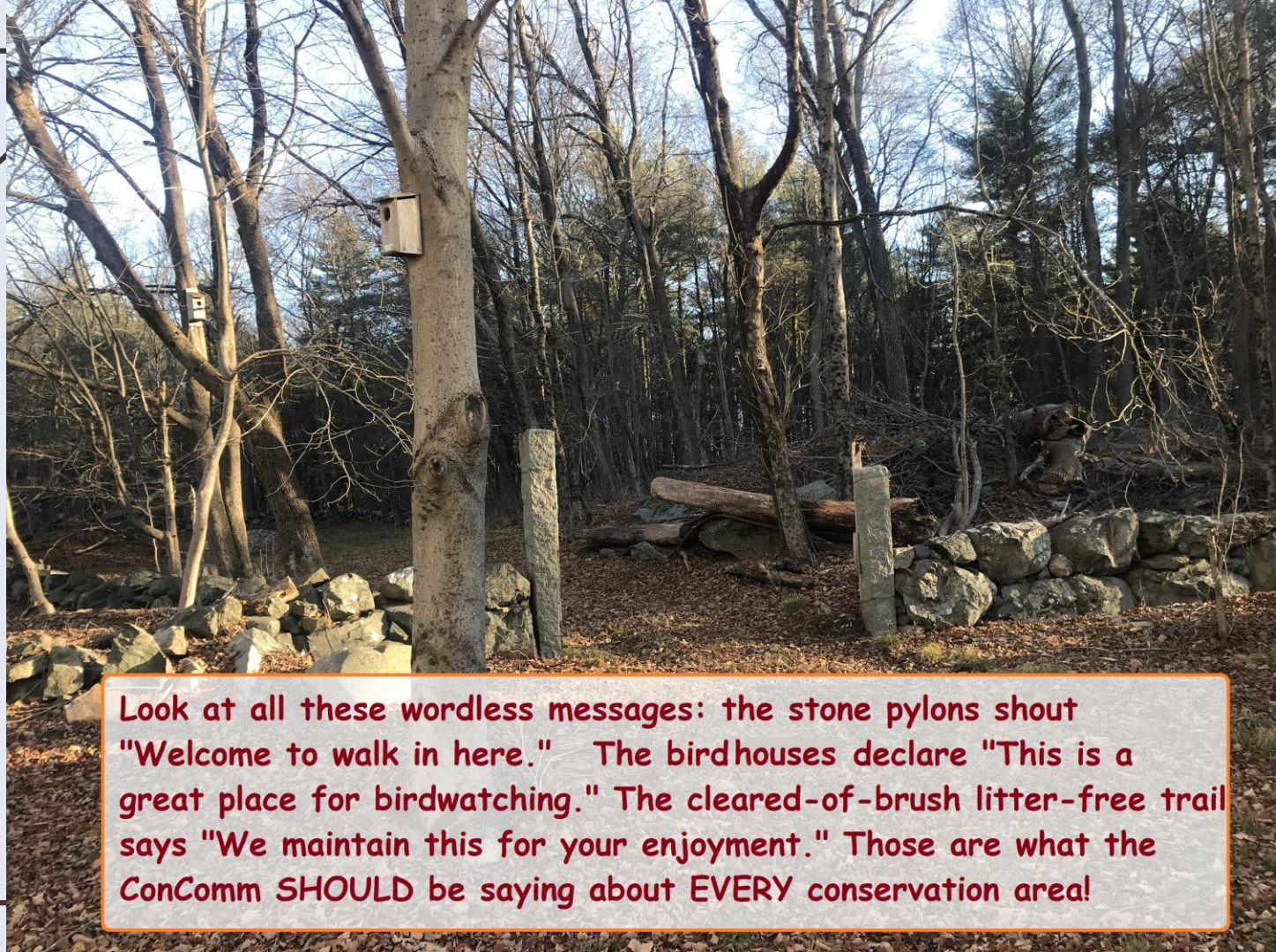
Massachusetts Audubon Society



Positive signage says "This area is maintained with your tax dollars so enjoy it and respect it." Note the stone pylons behind the sign--they say "Welcome" without the need for words. Note the blue-dot trail blaze on the tree--that says "Start here and enjoy your walk" without any need for language translation.

The purpose of signs should be "wayfinding": making people feel like they're in the right place and know where to go next. The signs can be small and cheap and simple. Maybe add a QR code when deep in the woods, to replace paper maps.





Look at all these wordless messages: the stone pylons shout "Welcome to walk in here." The birdhouses declare "This is a great place for birdwatching." The cleared-of-brush litter-free trail says "We maintain this for your enjoyment." Those are what the ConComm **SHOULD** be saying about **EVERY** conservation area!

Randolph already has conservation areas just like this one. All we have to do is open them to the public, and ask DPW to maintain them—under the guidance of the ConComm.

The Mass Audubon wildlife sanctuary shown here is on Washington Street near downtown Canton (directly across Canton's main street from the Canton High School) – just like Randolph's conservation areas are near developed neighborhoods.

The Mass Audubon wildlife sanctuary is 80 acres – our Lokitis Conservation Area could be bigger than that if we include Avon (our side is 35 acres; Avon's side is over 50 acres)

I would like to propose to the Community Preservation Committee that CPC funding pay for positive signage and DPW trail maintenance, to facilitate passive recreation usage, at the Lokitis Conservation Area, and at other conservation areas around Randolph.