

Views from Mount Grace

MOUNT GRACE LAND CONSERVATION TRUST • CONSERVING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE



SPRING 2019
VOLUME 30, NO. 1

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Since 1986 serving:

Ashburnham

Athol

Barre

Bernardston

Erving

Gardner

Gill

Greenfield

Hardwick

Hubbardston

Leyden

Montague

New Salem

Northfield

Orange

Petersham

Phillipston

Royalston

Templeton

Warwick

Wendell

Westminster

Winchendon



Photo by Brad Compton

There are many ways to enjoy Eagle Reserve while respecting wildlife. Once the rare bird breeding season is over around early July, the conservation area is open for non-motorized boats, like canoes and kayaks.

Promoting Public Access while Protecting Rare Wildlife

BY JAY RASKU

Eagle Reserve Conservation Area is named for the pair of Bald Eagles who can be seen raising young there each spring, but they are not the only endangered species that call this place home. The secretive Pied-billed Grebe and the Ebony Boghaunter dragonfly lurk there as well. A dozen other species considered at risk because of their declining populations also find refuge among the shrubs, sedges, woods, and waterways of this protected wetland.

The chance of spotting these creatures makes Eagle Reserve an exciting place to visit – it's one of those unique places where there is always something wild happening. Having places like this to explore is important – they allow us to get close to nature and catch a glimpse of the rare and the beautiful. While we are breathing in clean air and seeing a stunning vista, we relax and restore our health.

Our challenge at Mount Grace is to find ways for us to experience the wonders of the natural world on our lands without disturbing the interesting wildlife that call it home.

We've been learning how to do this right thanks to all the trail-builders, carpenters, historians, experts, advocates, and visionaries who volunteered to create the Gunnery Sergeant Jeffrey S. Ames Wheelchair-

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Dear Friends,

Growing up in the city of Springfield, Massachusetts, I watched a lot of nature programs, like Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom, in my grandparents' kitchen on a television perched on a cart they rolled out from beside the sink. I was sure I'd have to travel to Alaska to ever see an American Bald Eagle with my own eyes.



It feels great to be part of the group effort to establish Mount Grace's Eagle Reserve Conservation Area within walking distance of the public elementary school in Royalston. And, that everyone, including those with limited mobility, or in strollers or wheelchairs, can see the eagles and their nest in a place as wild and beautiful as Eagle Reserve.

When Livvy and Charles Tarleton started growing organic vegetables at Sunset View Farm on Rt. 140 in Winchendon in the 1970s, I was eating from my grandparents organic garden at 21 Merwin Street. Online you can readily see the still empty lot where they grew a big garden since my mother was a girl. Now under separate ownership from the house, maybe one day it will be a garden in the community again. At Mount Grace, we are working with the Tarletons to ensure their beloved-by-many farm is both conserved and stays actively farmed. Whether growing up in the city or in a big, wild place like Tully Lake, as Dave Small was fortunate to do, memories and experiences, like the taste of fresh food or a sense of wonder about the lives of birds, mammals, insects and other creatures, can form both a foundation and a spring of appreciation for the land and nature.

With your support, we'll continue protecting and encouraging connections with the land.

Thank you,

Leigh Youngblood
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust protects significant natural, agricultural, and scenic areas and encourages land stewardship in North Central and Western Massachusetts for the benefit of the environment, the economy, and future generations.

We welcome your articles, photographs, comments, and suggestions. For information about becoming a member or to request a change of address, please contact:

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Gunnery Sergeant Jeffrey S. Ames Wheelchair-Accessible Nature Trail: The Story Behind the Name

BY CAMI DUQUET

Almost a year after the official opening ceremony, Alderbrook Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary in Northfield continues to provide individuals with a range of physical abilities an opportunity to experience the beauty and tranquility of the outdoors.

The key to the accessibility of Alderbrook Meadows is the Gunnery Sergeant Jeffrey S. Ames Accessible Nature Trail, a wheelchair-accessible pathway that winds through a towering grove of white pines and culminates at an observation deck that juts over the water to provide a panoramic view of the beaver pond. The trail was originally designed by Northfield resident Sam Richardson, and created with the help of community partners and volunteers during the Spring of 2018. Funds from the Northfield Kiwanis Club, Northfield Area Tourism and Business Association, the Northfield Community Preservation Act, and many other groups and individuals helped make the trail a reality.

The trail is named after Jeffery S. Ames, a veteran who served for 22 years in the United States Marine Corps. His father, Bill Ames reflects “My wife Nancy and I are proud of Jeff’s service and named the trail in his honor. He served in over 9 countries throughout his national service which left him 80% disabled. We hope this trail will be enjoyed by many veterans and their families.”



The accessible trail offers an immersive experience among abundant vegetation with interpretative signage and plenty of places to rest and take in the beauty of the property.

On Saturday, May 25th, Mount Grace will be hosting a Veteran Appreciation Excursion. Veterans and their families as well as community members are invited to experience the beautiful property while recognizing and honoring veterans, whom just like Jeff, made sacrifices in service of our country.

Protecting Rare Wildlife *> continued from page 1*

Accessible Nature Trail at the Alderbrook Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary in Northfield [See more about an upcoming event at Alderbrook Meadows in the article above]. The trail encourages everyone—from those with mobility challenges to families with kids in strollers—to follow a pathway down to a pond for an immersive experience in nature without disrupting the beavers and birds that call Alderbrook Meadows home.

With that in mind, TerraCorps member KimLynn Nguyen worked with Royalston Conservation Commission chairman George Northrop and his team of volunteer commissioners to design a trail that aimed to keep the wetland resource, wildlife, and the land unharmed. The new trail was also built above the surface of the ground to avoid the possibility of disturbing areas used historically by Native Americans.

This winter, a hardy crew of volunteers including Mount Grace President Steve Rawson, Dan Monette, Jerry Marcanio, Rob Jalbert, Maureen Blasco, Ray Jackson, Mike Zlogar, and Dave MacLean braved snow, ice, and some threatening looks by the area beavers to build an amazing 24 x 10 foot observation deck – designed by Mount Grace board member Jerry Wagener – that reaches out over the water for tremendous views of the area.

A grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Trails Grant Program provided the majority of funding for the project. On Saturday, June 29th, you are invited to experience nature from the new trail and deck on Opening Day. Hope to see you there!

Elizabeth Farnsworth Challenge Brings New Members to Biggs Society

BY DAVID KOTKER

Karro Frost remembers Elizabeth Farnsworth's first trip to Mount Grace's 518-acre Arthur Iversen Conservation Area in Warwick. "Elizabeth had just started working for Mount Grace, and since we had been living in the neighborhood for years I walked the land with her."

The two stayed in touch as members of the Conservation Ladies—a potluck group for women in biology and conservation in the valley. "One of the last things we did together was when she taught me how to play bumblebee, so that I could hand pollinate rare milkweeds in the state."

This winter, Karro was one of the Mount Grace members who made gifts in memory of Elizabeth—an idea sparked by a challenge gift by Nancy Goodman, which matched gifts of \$2,500 or more made in Elizabeth's memory. "Leigh called me in December and I sat and thought about it," Karro says. "Clearly Nancy had felt inspired and that inspired me, so I realized it was something I would be able to do as a monthly gift."

Karro and her husband Jack Cadwell, who grew up in the neighborhood, have been the local experts on Iversen for years. Jack is a window maker, and Karro is a botanist with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. As a volunteer, she helped conduct the first inventory of plant species on Myra Iversen's 1988 gift of land to Mount Grace—which became the core of the conservation area.



Karro Frost on the trail

Karro and Jack are also in the middle of realizing a long-held dream—protecting land the Cadwell family has owned on Hastings Pond Road. "We're fortunate to have conservation-minded neighbors. We all love the pond and we've joined together to protect the land around it," Karro explains. "It really pleases me to see this protected, and Jack has been walking on these lands since he was a child. This gift is just another way of making sure the land will always be protected and looked after."

If you would like information about joining the Margaret Power-Biggs Society or making a monthly gift, please contact David Kotker at 978-248-2055 x19 or kotker@mountgrace.org.

Partnership Spotlight: A Climate-Concerned Naturalist

BY MICHAEL MCGRATH

The partners that comprise the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (Partnership) are vital to its continued success. The Partnership's current TerraCorps member, Michael McGrath, recently sat down for a conversation with one of our long-time partners, Dave Small of the Athol Bird and Nature Club.

Dave's commitment to protecting open space and connecting people to the outdoors goes back to his childhood roots at Tully Dam where he discovered his love for nature and became an avid bird-watcher. That early childhood love for nature has served as the cornerstone for many of his activities. Over his

lifetime Dave has done it all: he's worked for the state, he runs a local nature club and volunteers for many non-profits, and he serves on almost too many committees to count. Dave also leads by example, growing pollinator gardens in his own yard while devoting countless evenings and Saturday mornings to leading hikes and giving presentations about our local wildlife.

For Dave, being involved with the Partnership is an ideal way to contribute his naturalist knowledge to help protect the critical natural resources of the North Quabbin while we still have the chance. Beyond sprawl and fragmentation, he is also concerned with the growing threat of climate change

Quabbin Harvest Celebrates Its First Decade

BY CATHY STANTON

Quabbin Harvest has come a long way since its founding in 2009 and will be celebrating its tenth anniversary this coming year!

Ten years ago, the co-op started out by selling weekly produce shares under a pop-up tent in the Orange Innovation Center parking lot and after a couple of years, expanded to a tiny volunteer-run store. Five years after its founding, the co-op moved into its current home at 12 North Main Street, which Mount Grace purchased as part of its own mission to help protect and support working agricultural land in the region.

Julie Davis, one of the co-op founders, had only recently moved to Orange in 2009 when she attended an early meeting at the invitation of Deb Habib of Seeds of Solidarity around forming the co-op. Deb and her husband Ricky Baruc had conserved their farm with Mount Grace in 1996. Julie was inspired by the vision for the co-op, and with her background

in supermarket management became the buyer for the shares program, a role she has filled ever since. Currently, she serves as Team Coordinator, managing the day-to-day operations of

what is now a six-day-a-week storefront retail operation with eight part-time staff members.

That early connection reflects the interwoven networks of people and projects focused on land stewardship, the local food economy, sustainability, and community resilience present in the North Quabbin area.

There's lots to celebrate in having launched this small food business to support local farmers and provide nutritious food in an economically-struggling area, and sustaining

it for a decade. Beginning with the 2019 Annual Meeting in March, the Quabbin Harvest Board of Directors are gathering stories and photos from its first ten years and plan to share them in a booklet to be published by Haley's of Athol. Stay tuned for that and other events to celebrate the anniversary!



Amy Borezo, Mary Hakkinen, Nina Wellen, Julie Davis, and Zita Rasid are volunteering at the very first distribution of produce shares on August 12th, 2009.

and the negative impacts it could have on our beautiful region. Some challenges of climate change include storm surges and increased heatwaves. The growing challenges of climate change make one thing certain: to tackle these global problems, we need to act locally. For example, our region's forests play a critical role by absorbing greenhouse gases responsible for the warming climate.

Made up of both public and private groups who are concerned with conserving land for the benefit of both human and



natural communities, the Partnership is prepared to ensure a resilient future. In Dave's words, "The unique collaborative model of the Partnership ensures that everyone has a seat at the table and that our partners can communicate with one another, providing input on the various projects that we are working on." He went on to remark, "You put the layers together and see how it fits." The Partnership is stronger because of partners such as Dave Small. We are grateful that he continues to share his time and energy with us.

Building Community Around Local Food

BY KAT KOWALSKI

Since our inception in 1986, Mount Grace has worked to protect dozens of farms across Franklin and Worcester Counties, but our contribution to strengthening the local food system has not stopped there. In 2013, Mount Grace founded the Greater Quabbin Food Alliance (GQFA) in collaboration with local partners from across the region.

The Food Alliance is a network that convenes community leaders to share information, collaborate on projects, and pool resources to build a healthy and vibrant local food system. Mount Grace has organized and hosted over 10 gatherings which occur twice a year. Participants range from farmers, restaurant owners, health professionals, planners, hunger relief organizations, residents, land conservation staff, and more. These meetings include a series of fun, informative, and quick presentations we call “Lightning Talks” and are followed by break-out sessions where working groups brainstorm solutions to various challenges affecting the food system.

In between these gatherings, Mount Grace staff and TerraCorps members facilitate working groups to achieve goals such as supporting local farmers markets, increasing access to healthy food, or encouraging widespread composting. One working group formed after farmers came forward with a concern for the viability of the Orange and Athol Farmers Markets and the Quabbin Harvest Co-op at a Food Alliance meeting. Since then, this working group has used various tactics to increase community engagement around local food, such as having live music and a “Kids Corner” at the Orange Farmers Market, and monthly farmer demonstrations at Quabbin Harvest.



At the December farmer demonstration, Danny Botkin of Laughing Dog Farm taught attendees how to make decorative (and edible!) garlic wands with local materials. To learn more about upcoming demos and register for our next gathering, visit the Greater Quabbin Food Alliance at quabbinfoodalliance.wordpress.com.

As we enter our 6th year running the Food Alliance, we continue to connect with more community partners and inspire innovative projects that help strengthen our regional food system, support farmers, encourage the conservation of our beautiful and irreplaceable farmland, and increase the health and well-being of our Greater Quabbin community.

SPRING 2019 UPCOMING EVENTS – *Join Us!*

Vernal Pool Discovery Hike

April 13th 10am-12pm
Arthur Iversen Conservation Area, Warwick

Earth Day Celebration

April 19th and 20th
Various time and locations, see details on the last page!

Women in the Woods

May 11th Morning Hike
Holtshire Rd, Orange

Veteran Appreciation Excursion

May 25th 10am
Alderbrook Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary, Northfield

Eagle Reserve Accessible Trail Opening Day

June 29th 9am
Eagle Reserve Conservation Area, Royalston

For more information on these upcoming events, visit our website or reach out to Cami Duquet at 978-248-2055 x13 or at duquet@mountgrace.org. Looking forward to seeing you there!

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Grants Received:

The Bromley Charitable Trust
Massachusetts Conservation Partnership

\$100,000 Challenge Grant
\$9,950 Project Cost

Gifts were Received:

In Memory of Elizabeth Farnsworth, Senator Robert D. Wetmore, Mick Huppert, and Thomas Mann III

In Honor of Sarah Wells

Special Thanks from Mount Grace to ~

Nancy Goodman, board members, and supporters who responded to the Elizabeth Farnsworth Annual Appeal Challenge

Amy Wood and Hamshaw Lumber for providing discounted materials to build the wildlife viewing platform at Eagle Reserve

Steve Rawson, Danny Monette, Jerry Wagener, Ray Jackson, Gerald Marcanio, Rob Jalbert, Maureen Blasco, Gary Bringham, Dave MacLean, and Michael Zlogar for volunteering at Eagle Reserve

Marie Erie, Bonnie House, and Laurel Facey for volunteering at our Skyfields Arboretum office

Jeff Blanchard for donating metal-printed photographs of the Bald Eagles at Eagle Reserve Conservation Area

Clare Green and the North Quabbin Recovery Center for leading a mindfulness walk on the Gifford Family Memorial Forest

Dave Small and Ernie LeBlanc of Athol Bird and Nature Club for their collaboration on the Christmas Bird Count Programs at the Royalston Community School and Dexter Park School

Aaron Ellison, Beth Ingham, and Mike Jones for presenting at the March Membership Drive Pub Science Nights

Element Brewing Company, Gardner Ale House, and Honest Weight for hosting the March Membership Drive Pub Science Nights



Volunteer Ray Jackson has all hands on (or below) deck as he helps build the observation deck platform at the Eagle Reserve Conservation Area.

mountgrace.org
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Celebrate **EARTH DAY 2019** with MOUNT GRACE!

Friday, April 19th, **Skyfields Arboretum**, 1461 Old Keene Road, Athol MA, 9am-6pm
Saturday, April 20th, **Alderbrook Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary**, Millers Falls Road, Northfield MA, 10am-1pm



What better way to celebrate Earth Day than by volunteering outside? Join us at Skyfields Arboretum in Athol on Friday April 19th or Alderbrook Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary in Northfield on Saturday April 20th to help with stewardship activities on the land! We will be cleaning up trails, installing bird boxes and signage, building a kiosk, painting benches, restoring a blueberry patch, helping out in the office, and much more! There is something for everyone to do.

Register on our website or reach out to KimLynn Nguyen at nguyen@mountgrace.org or 978-248-2055 x14 with any questions.