

THIS LAND

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Planning and Persistence to Conserve the Plaistow Town Forest

This March, Plaistow voters will vote on a warrant article that, if successful, will be one of the last steps in the process of permanently conserving the now 404-acre Plaistow Town Forest. This initiative began years ago with the Plaistow Conservation Commission and was further endorsed through the work of the Plaistow First Committee in 2011. The project is being coordinated by the Southeast Land Trust.

The Plaistow Town Forest is located in the far northwest corner of the town along the boundary of Atkinson to the west and Hampstead to the north. This corner of Plaistow was historically referred to as Frog Pond Woods. The area was never serviced by a major road due to difficult terrain, poor soils and considerable wetlands along the Kelley Brook drainage. Hence the land was divided

by early settlers into small woodlots and meadow tracts to service local farmers. Eventually these small inaccessible parcels lost their value to landowners or were forgotten by distant heirs. By the mid-1970's, Plaistow had acquired by tax collector's deeds (for unpaid taxes) a total of 21 parcels that encompass approximately 325 acres. These lands later became the core of the Plaistow Town Forest.

More recently, the Plaistow Conservation Commission and Plaistow First Committee decided that permanent conservation of the Town Forest was an important goal. The Land Trust was chosen to spearhead the easement project in part because it had completed a similar, recent effort in Kingston. The project on the surface looked simple enough but when land trust staff began to dig into it, things got complicated quickly. One of the major early hurdles was proving that town did in fact own all of these parcels. In addition, several key properties were identified by the Town as priorities to add to the Town Forest. Given the anticipated high legal fees, survey costs, and acquisition expenses that the project would involve, the Land Trust pursued funding opportunities to help offset these costs.

A grant was secured through the Department of Environmental Services *Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Program*. This program was established to provide a funding mechanism to compensate for permanent wetland losses from construction projects when on site mitigation is impossible. The \$100,000 grant award is being matched by funds from the Plaistow Conservation Fund. A portion of this funding will also be used to repair eroded sections of trails.

Through this initiative, three priority parcels totaling approximately 79 acres have been added to the town's ownership. The largest of these is the 44 acre "McCarr" Lot



Plaistow residents enjoy a view of the heron rookery in Frog Pond during a January field trip. PHOTO BY DUANE HYDE.

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GET Out & About

Please register for any of our events by e-mailing info@seltnh.org or calling 603.778.6088.

Wildlife Seminar: New Hampshire's Bobcats with John Litvaitis

**Weds., March 26 - 7-9pm -
The Kingston Community Library**
Come and learn more about this magnificent animal. Read the full article on page 3.

Vernal Pool Walk: Frogs, Salamanders and Shrimp, Oh My!

**Sat., April 19 - 10-12pm -
The Pawtuckaway River
Reservation - Epping**
Join UNH Cooperative Extension Field Specialist and vernal pool enthusiast, Emma Carcagno on a walk at the Pawtuckaway River Reservation. We'll take a look at a handful of vernal pools located on the property in search of the fascinating critters that call these unique wetlands home.



PHOTO BY BRIAN HART

Conservation Projects Update

As this newsletter goes to press the Land Trust will be completing the acquisition of 18 acres of forested upland and wetland along Dudley Brook in Brentwood, NH. The parcel is the last of five properties totaling 265 acres to be conserved through a \$1.2 million grant awarded to the Land Trust to protect high priority wetlands within the Exeter River Watershed. The five properties were conserved through the purchase of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) conservation easements and protect over 7,500 feet of river and brook shoreline. After the sale of the conservation easements, two landowners (including the owner of these final 18 acres) donated the protected lands to the Land Trust to own and manage for their public benefits.

This January Board President Roger Stephenson (*left*) and Land Protection Director Duane Hyde (*right*) thanked landowner Isobel Parke for her donation of a conservation easement on an additional 58 acres of prime forestland off of Blake Road in Epping. The property abuts other land conserved by Isobel and is across Blake Road from the Land Trust's 175-acre Sullos Woodlands. It includes an interesting old mill site with a seven foot high breached dam on a tributary brook to the Pawtuckaway River. All told, Ms. Parke has conserved more than 220 acres of land, all within the priority conservation areas identified by the Land Trust and regional conservation plans. *Thank you Isobel!*



Town meeting season is a busy one for conservation, with critical votes in Plaistow, Sandown, Exeter, and Rye. Plaistow voters will be asked to authorize the conveyance of a conservation easement to the Land Trust on the Plaistow Town Forest while voters in Sandown are considering redirecting the Land Use Change Tax (a penalty paid when land enrolled in current use is developed) back to the Conservation Fund. In Exeter, voters will be asked to appropriate \$26,490, the final funding necessary to acquire the Elliott parcel as an addition to the Oaklands Town Forest. This project, known as the Growing Oaklands campaign, is a partnership with the Land Trust. The requested funds represent approximately 18% of the overall project cost, with the remaining funds from existing Town funds, a federal grant, and private sources. Last but not least, the Town of Rye will vote on a second open space bond, following on the heels of its expenditure of the \$5 million originally authorized in 2003. The Town matched that bond dollar for dollar with other cash and non-cash sources. This year's petitioned warrant article requests an additional \$3 million bond authorization for open space. ■

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Wildlife Seminar: New Hampshire's Bobcats with John Litvaitis



Sleeping bobcat.

COURTESY OF PAM CAMPAN VIA THE UNH BOBCAT STUDY

**Weds., March 26 - 7-9pm -
The Kingston Community Library**

Secretive and silent, bobcats exemplify the wild side of nature. They are also one of the most widespread animals in New Hampshire that's rarely seen. What do we know about New Hampshire's wild cats? What do bobcats need to survive? How many are there in New Hampshire? What limits bobcats? Biologists at the University of New Hampshire and New Hampshire Fish and Game Department have spent the last 4 years investigating how bobcats are adapting to the changing landscapes of the state. Come and learn more about this magnificent animal.

John Litvaitis has been a Professor of Wildlife Ecology at UNH for more than 25 years. His research projects have included a wide-ranging group of

animals that included coyotes, black bears, moose, snakes, turtles, flying squirrels, New England cottontails, and bobcats.

Do you love pizza?

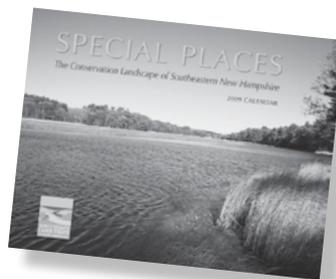
Come to Flatbread Co. in Portsmouth to benefit the Southeast Land Trust on Tuesday, May 20th, 2014 - 5-9pm

That evening Flatbread Co. will donate a portion of every pizza sold to the Land Trust (take-out orders count too). Land Trust Staff and Board will be present to mingle and thank you! So grab some friends and make a night of it! ■



"Sustaining People and Nature" Photo Contest

We are excited to announce our 2014 photo contest with the theme of "Sustaining People and Nature". What local conservation lands inspire you and connect you to the natural world? What special places mean something to you and your family or your community? Photos with people are encouraged! The top three winners will secure spots in our 2015 wall calendar and receive 10 printed calendars as a thank-you gift. Please note if your photo is selected for the calendar the photo's resolution should be 300ppi (pixels per inch) at an image size of 9"x12". This means the file size will be very large (20mb to 30mb). Please submit photos on our Facebook page or e-mail them to info@seltnh.org for consideration. For more details, visit us online or inquire at the office. We look forward to seeing your photos! ■



Your photo could be here!



Sixth Annual Birding Walk at the Piscassic Greenway

Sat., May 10 - 6-10am - Newfields

Rise and shine with avid birdwatcher Patience Chamberlin and Southeast Land Trust President Roger Stephenson for their annual Spring walk to explore the bird habitats of the Land Trust's 440-acre Piscassic Greenway. Among the birds you might see are Bobolink, Blue Jay, Brown-headed Cowbird, Black-capped Chickadee and Belted Kingfisher – and that's just the "B's"! Gearing up for the beginner birder and challenging for the intermediate as well. Don't forget your binoculars!

Flatbread Co. Fundraiser

Tuesday, May 20 - Portsmouth, NH

Grab some friends and make a night of it! Read the full article on this page.

Save the Date! Southeast Land Trust's 2014 Annual Conservation Celebration & Cookout

Saturday, June 7 - Kingston Community Recreation Center - Kingston, NH

Join us as we recognize landowners and communities we have partnered with and enjoy a local foods-focused cookout, followed by field trip options to several of our properties. More details on our website soon. ■

Southeast Land Trust's 2014



Annual Conservation Celebration & Cookout

A Renewed Mission and Vision

In early 2013, the Southeast Land Trust embarked on a comprehensive planning process to explore and evaluate our region, our work, and our vision for the future. Our goal was to ensure our work remains relevant to the people and communities we serve by re-envisioning the role of a land trust in these changing times.

The strategic planning process involved not only internal brainstorming and discussion, but also inviting input from community stakeholders, members, landowners, and partners. We met with and absorbed input from scores of people interested in the future of southeastern New Hampshire. It was a refreshing and invigorating process that confirmed our good work and pointed out areas for improvement and increased attention. After considerable deliberation among the Board and Staff, this January the Board adopted a new vision and mission and four goals for the period of 2014-2018.



Our new vision is a simple statement of the relationship of people, community, and nature: Conserved lands in every community, sustaining people and nature.

Our new mission is to protect and sustain the significant lands in our communities for clean water, outdoor recreation, fresh food, wildlife, and healthy forests.

This restated mission recognizes that conservation is achieved in two steps – first protection and then stewardship. It also clearly ties the desire for conservation land to people and communities while continuing to recognize that sustenance of nature itself is a goal of our work too.

The Strategic Plan identifies four goals for the Southeast Land Trust, listed below:

- 1. Strategic Land Protection:** proactively protect Conservation Focus Areas with an added emphasis on farmland and water resources
- 2. Connect People to Place:** Expand our visibility to broaden and strengthen the connection of people and communities to the Land Trust's work
- 3. Broaden our Relationships:** Deepen our relationships with members, residents, and communities to expand our reach, increase our effectiveness, and ensure our long-term stability
- 4. Sustain our Success:** Continue our conservation work through model stewardship of our lands and easements

As with any plan, it is only effective if it is implemented, tracked, and evaluated. Therefore for each goal the plan identifies associated strategies and tactics, the responsible party within the organization, a timeline for the work, estimated costs, and measures of progress. We will report to you, our members, on our progress through our Annual Report.

By the time you receive this newsletter, a summary of the strategic plan will be posted to our website. I encourage you to read it, and am confident that you too will be excited about our renewed mission and vision and the daily, on the ground work that we will be pursuing. As always, please do share your thoughts and suggestions on our work and this Strategic Plan by calling or e-mailing me directly. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Hart". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Brian Hart
Executive Director

Strategic Plan: 2014–2018

Here is a snapshot as to what the Strategic Plan's four goals mean for the Land Trust's work in 2014. For more details on the Strategic Plan, please visit www.seltnh.org.

Goal: Strategic Land Protection

Focus conservation efforts, including farmland and water resources

Strategy: Conserve 2-3 working farms annually

Fresh food is not possible without farmers, customers, and land.

Conserving farmland through farm-friendly easements can address the unique needs of farmers and support the production of fresh food locally.

In Practice in 2014:

- Currently pursuing conservation outcomes on five working farms



Each year of the Strategic Plan, the Land Trust will aim to conserve at least two working farms, like Stout Oak Farm, which was protected in 2012.

Goal: Connect People to Place

Strengthen the connection of people and communities to our work

Strategy: Engage the Public

The lands we own are our greatest ambassadors to our work. Each year of this plan we will improve access to two properties through new kiosks, welcoming signs, marked trails, and clear brochures and maps.

In Practice in 2014:

- Upgraded trails at Tucker-French Family Forest in Kingston and Danville
- New trails at the Kelliher Memorial Forest in Brentwood and Fremont



Property sign

Goal: Broaden our Relationships

Broaden our relationships with members, residents, and community to ensure our long-term stability

Strategy: Tell our Story

Whether it is online or in print, our successes will shine by telling the story of sustaining people and nature.

In Practice in 2014:

- Annual Report produced by June
- New membership brochure
- Full-color newsletter (coming soon!)



Calendar and website

Goal: Sustain our Success

Sustain our conservation work through model stewardship of our lands and easements

Strategy: Model Good Stewardship

We will continue our track record of monitoring all conservation easements annually by utilizing the best available technology, our volunteer corps, and professional staff to ensure the promise of conservation is fulfilled.

In Practice in 2014:

- Review spring 2014 aerial photographs for all 122 easements
- Conduct physical site walks of 83 easements (Staff: 48, Volunteers: 35)
- Hire summer intern to support stewardship program

Planning and Persistence to Conserve the Plaistow Town Forest, continued

which, coincidentally, had been acquired by the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) as mitigation for work along Route 125 nearly 20 years ago. When NHDOT learned of the Plaistow Town Forest project the department agreed to transfer ownership to the town without compensation with the understanding that a conservation easement will permanently protect it from development. The McGirr parcel is located on the ancient Frog Pond Road in the southernmost portions of the Town Forest.

The Town Forest was also enlarged by the acquisition of a 21-acre parcel owned by the Emerson Family. The family agreed to a generous bargain sale of this lovely property which had been in continuous family ownership since the mid-1700's. Robert Emerson III, now living in Georgia, has the original deed framed on a wall in his residence. Adding this parcel completed the Town's ownership of Frog Pond, what is today a large beaver flowage that supports a small great blue heron rookery and other important wildlife.

Finally the list of new parcels includes a 14-acre tract that was once owned by Cyrus and Olive Noyes. The Noyes Family lived on a small farm in Atkinson which this backland parcel abutted. Recent Plaistow tax records and deed research indicated that the property still belonged to the family. After months of extensive deed research and contact with family heirs the property was found to be owned by the town after all! The original Collector's Deed was located in the basement of the Plaistow Town Hall by a determined town employee and later found to be misfiled at the Rockingham County Registry of Deeds. So the Noyes parcel was in fact already owned by the town!

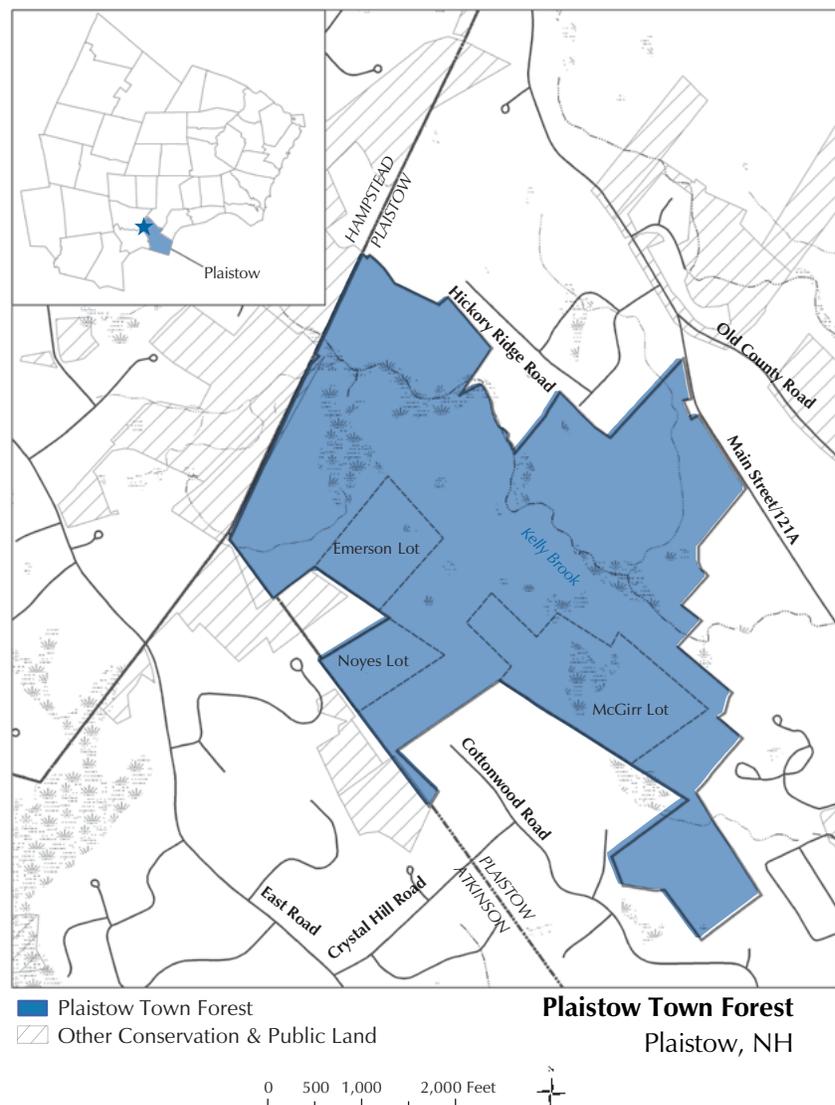
"The proposed conservation of the Plaistow Town Forest is an example of a community partnering with the Land Trust to protect a recognized asset for the benefit

of future generations," notes Phil Auger, Land Agent for the Southeast Land Trust, who along with Land Protection Director Duane Hyde, has managed the project. "We're proud to help the Town achieve its goals."

With a successful town vote in March, the 404-acre Plaistow Town Forest will be one of the largest permanently conserved properties in this highly developed portion of Rockingham County. The forest will be protected by a conservation easement that will be "held" by the Land Trust. The easement will allow for sustainable withdrawal of water for the public and will allow and support the continuation of the outstanding forest management and recreational

uses of this property, which is a certified Tree Farm. The town hired a licensed forester, Charlie Moreno, to write a comprehensive forest stewardship plan for the property about 20 years ago which is being updated now. There has been one carefully supervised timber harvest that helped open the area now used for parking on Main Street. The extensive, well-marked trails are heavily used year round for walking, snow shoeing and cross country skiing (motorized vehicles are prohibited). The trails were developed in a succession of outstanding Eagle Scout projects.

Visit www.seltnh.org for an update on the Town vote or for future opportunities to visit the Plaistow Town Forest! ■



A Wander in the Woods: Reflections from Southeast Land Trust Properties

Kelliher Memorial Forest, Brentwood/Fremont

Leaving a busy day behind me, I step onto the trail and head into the woods. With the snow crunching loudly underfoot, my entrance doesn't go unnoticed as a pileated woodpecker immediately alerts my arrival to the rest of forest. I give a quick "hello to you too" back to the bird, and continue on my way. Almost immediately I cross the small tracks of a gray fox. I decide to follow it, hoping to learn a little more about this little canine that I rarely see in person.

The gray fox trail follows the hiking trail for a short way before cutting into the woods, taking a straight route. I follow along, my pace surely much slower than the fox's, clumsy on my two feet to its four. Following the story of the tracks, it seems the fox has slowed his pace and diverts from its straight-line route. I emerge again on the hiking trail where I find the fox has gone to investigate a squirrel cache, already dug up by the squirrel. Perhaps the fox was hoping to find any acorns left behind by the squirrel, or maybe paused to daydream about finding the squirrel itself. Either way the fox marked the emptied cache for good measure before trotting off into the woods again.

I continue to follow the fox's path as best I can, occasionally losing the faint tracks in areas where the snow did not wish to cooperate. After a few more minutes I look up to see the trail lead straight under a hemlock tree. Notably, the ground under this tree is littered with small hemlock twigs, a clear sign of porcupine activity. In the winter, porcupines feed on woody vegetation, particularly inner bark, buds, and needles of hemlock, and the bark of hardwood trees such as sugar maple, beech, and birch among others. The fox tracks show barely a pause in response to the signs of porcupine, continuing on its straight path.

I continue to follow the trail until I emerge at the edge of an old beaver meadow. The tracks head straight across. Given the



Bobcat tracks.
EMMA CARCAGNO

warmer temperatures, I am hesitant, but decide to give it a go. I take less than ten steps across the grassy edge of the wetland before it's clear that I should turn back if I want to leave with dry feet. I follow the edge of the wetland to see if there is another place to cross. As the wetland narrows, the ice seems firmer and so I tentatively step out into the open to head across. Suddenly, I hear the alarm calls of a small bird. A winter wren is hopping about, not too happy about my approach. I sit and watch the tiny bird hop in and out of a large hole along the bank

of the wetland, amazed at how such a small creature can survive such tough winters. Slowly the wren's alarm calls fade as the bird moves further off into the forest, and I continue across the wetland. Successful this time, when I reach the far bank, I decide to take a closer look at the large hole where the wren had been hopping about. As my face gets close to the opening, a strong smell fills my nose. It's not an entirely unpleasant smell, but it's certainly a strong one. I lift my head and widen my field of view. I suddenly realize that I'm looking at one of two entrances to a porcupine den. I investigate further and find more evidence: well-established trails leading straight to several nearby hemlock trees, piles of scat close by, and that smell, ever-emanating from the den.

Sadly, I notice the time and realize that I have to call it a day. Leaving the rest of the fox's trail a mystery, I turn back and follow my own tracks back to the hiking trail and out of the woods. As I get close to my car, I give a little thanks to the fox, who led me to so many other discoveries in the woods on this cold winter's day. I'm amazed at how following one animal's trail led me to so many other signs of wildlife, many more than I would have seen otherwise. I look forward to coming back out another day to uncover more of the gray fox's secrets. ■

Emma Carcagno, Board Member



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Questions, Comments, Concerns?

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Page 8: Eva Powers



An evening to benefit the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire
Friday, April 25, 2014 ■ 7pm

The 2014 Wild & Scenic Film Festival is the largest environmental film festival in North America and this local showing is a collection of short films that explore the environmental concerns and celebrations of our planet. This year's Wild & Scenic Film Festival is themed "emPOWERment" – and what better way to be inspired to act on behalf of our shared world than through an evening of beautiful, engaging films!

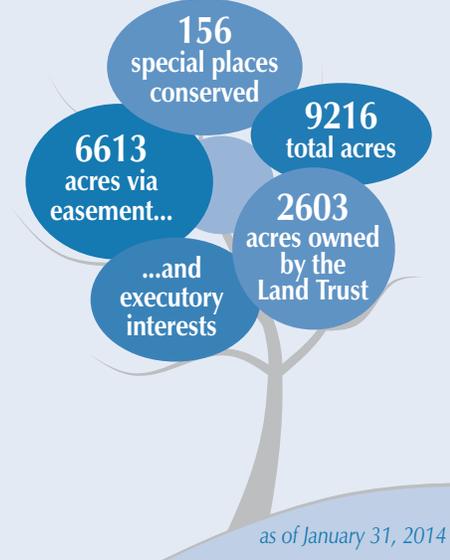
We thank our Lead Sponsor, ReVision Energy, for making this event possible! ReVision Energy is the local industry leader in the design and installation of commercial and residential solar systems in New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts. The Festival is underwritten by the Green Alliance, Upton & Hatfield, LLP, Northland Forest Products, and Veris Wealth Partners. ■

Tickets are \$15 each and available
 at *The Music Hall Box Office* or
www.themusichall.org



Land Protection

BY THE NUMBERS



Wild and Scenic Film Festival Returns April 25

See details on back page

A Renewed Mission and Vision

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 OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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