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## A Hidden Treasure in Barrington – The Stonehouse Forest

SELT Enters Agreement to Acquire 1,500 Acres!

By Ellen Snyder

**S**ituated less than 5 miles from the busy junction of Routes 4 and 125 in coastal New Hampshire, 1,500 acres has remained undeveloped and wooded, sheltering bogs and fens, black gum swamps, beaver wetlands, and babbling brooks. This extraordinarily large tract of land in the Town of Barrington is the latest and largest land conservation project ever pursued by SELT.

Once planned as a private exotic game hunting reserve, the owners of this vast tract are now working with the Land Trust to conserve the property instead. A few miles of winding woods roads provide access into portions of the 1,500 acres; most is accessible only on foot or by snowshoe. The owners have kept it posted, gated, and closed to public access as they pursued their vision for a hunting reserve, building a handful of small huts and some rock walls, and creating small openings in the forest around old foundations. Mostly they’ve had a light touch on the

land, adding features that will be well-suited to future public access as SELT works with them to conserve this hidden treasure.

“Because of interested landowners and the support of our members and partners, we are able to work on many great projects, including this one that abuts our 230-acre Stonehouse Pond Conservation Area,” says Duane Hyde, Land Conservation Director for SELT. “This property is particularly exciting due to its large size, imbedded natural features, and future opportunities for stewardship and public access.”

Most of this property lies within the Lamprey River watershed. Several small, headwater streams begin here, gathering water from wooded slopes and a network of wetlands, then flowing southeast off the property to Mendums Pond and then to the Little River and eventually to the Lamprey, one of the major rivers that flow into Great Bay. These intact and unimpeded headwater streams are vital

*continued on page 2*

# The Stonehouse Forest *continued from page 1*

to downstream water quality—one of the many wonderful features of this unfragmented forested tract.

Two natural ponds lie in the northern reaches of the property. A spongy mat of sphagnum moss and dwarf heath shrub bog community of leatherleaf and stunted black spruce rings the 5-acre Round Pond. The bog transitions to a water willow—sphagnum fen then to open water. A diverse mix of wetland shrubs, sedges, and mosses also borders Little Round Pond. These are quiet, contemplative places, where you hear the rustle of leaves, a chickadee's call, and wood ducks take flight. It feels like a remote northern forest. Only if you listen really hard can you hear the rumble of distant highways.

The only dams on the ponds and streams within the 1,500 acres are those made by beavers. Two large wetland complexes above and below Marsh Road, a Class VI dirt road bisecting the property, show signs of active beaver: freshly chewed trees, mud-packed dams, and extensive open water dotted with a few lodges. The flooded wetlands have abundant snags and floating logs, rich habitat for birds, turtles, and other aquatic life.

Several black gum basin swamps are imbedded deep within the southern section of the property. Dominated by centuries-old black gums, these isolated wetlands—hummocky and mossy—are hidden from the woodman's axe and the beaver's sharp incisors. Black gums grow very slowly in these secluded swamps. Their deeply furrowed bark is thick and tough; its trunk forming a wide, gnarled canopy as it stretches skyward.

"This is the largest area of undeveloped open space left in Barrington and, as shown by Fish and Game's Wildlife Action Plan, it is some of the best remaining wildlife habitat in our town," says John Wallace, Chair of the Barrington Conservation Commission. "The whole commission is really excited about this project, as it will vastly expand the conserved habitat and public access provided by the popular and important Stonehouse Pond area."

Conserving the largest remaining forest blocks is one of the best ways to help plants and animals adapt to and maintain resilience against changes in weather patterns—such as more severe storms, summer droughts, heavy rain, shorter winters. The 1,500 acres is a

natural stronghold, with myriad micro-climates found within its unchanging physical features: rolling topography, rock outcrops, wetlands and stream corridors. With only a few small patches of invasive plants visible and negligible erosion, it is uniquely undisturbed by threats that plague other open spaces in this region.

SELT is at the early stages of what will be a multi-year, concerted effort to raise the necessary \$3.3 million to acquire, steward, and manage this amazing landscape. Kick off the Stonehouse Forest project with a guided hike in February (see Upcoming Events) that will surely get you excited about this project!



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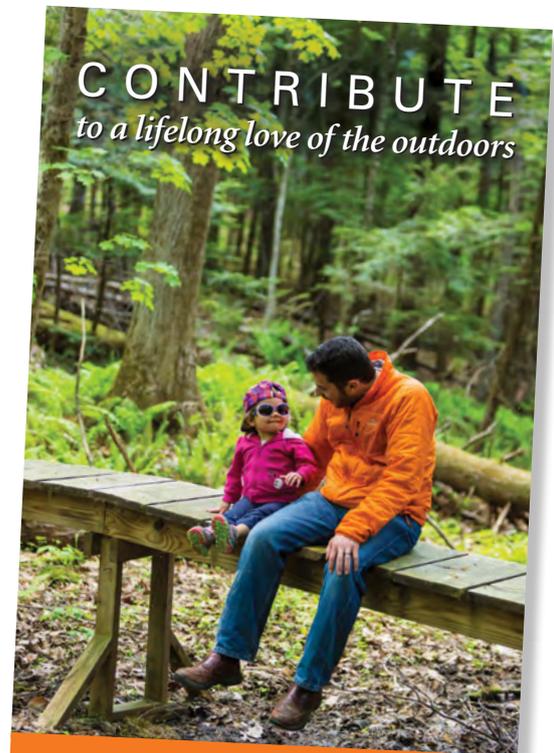
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PHOTO BY JERRY MONKMAN, TAKEN THIS YEAR  
ON A SELT-CONSERVED PROPERTY.

# Exciting News for New Hampshire's Native Cottontail

By Emma Tutein

After decades of shrinking numbers, the New England cottontail is showing signs of recovery. This small, rarely-seen rabbit was identified by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a candidate for federal listing in 2006, which prompted an unprecedented collaboration of public and private partners throughout New England to create habitat and conserve land for the species. As a result of the work accomplished through this collaboration, the US Fish and Wildlife Service will not be adding the species to the federal Endangered Species List. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell made the announcement herself at a ceremony in Dover, NH this past September.

Many are surprised to hear that a rabbit, with its reputation for prolific breeding, would find itself in trouble to begin with, but the New England cottontail has very specific habitat needs. They rely on dense, shrubby thickets for protection from predators. These habitats are often referred to as early-successional, young forest, or shrubland habitats, and are also important to many other species of wildlife. In New Hampshire, the decades following the large-scale abandonment of farmlands (1900's -1960's) were a time when early-successional habitat was relatively abundant. Over time, these habitats have naturally aged and reverted back to mature forests that are no longer suitable as rabbit habitat. As New Hampshire's human population continues to grow, other suitable habitats have either been lost or fragmented by development into parcels that are too small to support New England cottontails.

Further complicating matters is the fact that almost all of New Hampshire's remaining New England cottontail populations occur on private lands. The cooperation of private landowners willing to create, maintain, and conserve early-successional



New England Cottontail.

PHOTO CREDIT: US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

habitats is critical to the recovery of the New England cottontail. SELT (then Strafford Rivers Conservancy) was one of many partners who played a small, but important role in this critical work. SELT worked with at least 3 different landowners in areas with known populations of New England cottontails to facilitate the management of important shrubland habitats and conserve land where the rabbit is known to exist.

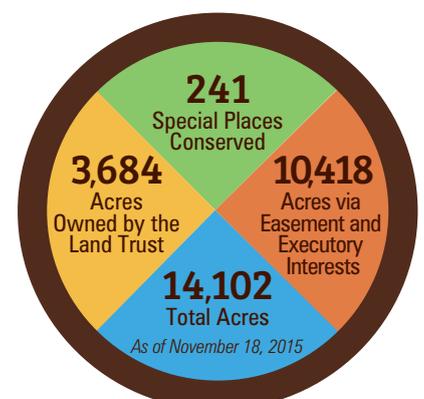
While it is estimated that over 4,400 acres of shrubland habitat have been restored for the rabbit throughout New England in the past 3 years, the New England cottontail still has a long way to go to a full recovery. Conservation and management efforts will continue until we reach the goal of 13,500 rabbits by 2030.

## Welcome to SELT's new members of 2015!

As of November 18, 2015

Mark & Diane Alden	Merril Dwyer	Fred & Josephine Kies	Katherine Santoriello
Brian & Molly Amend	Kimberly Farah	Jennifer Kinsey	Steve & Carolyn Schulten
Samantha Andrews	Steve & Sharon Farrington	Anne & Lewis Knight	Lisa & Dan Schwartz
David Baker	Lisa Ferrisi Guttman	Paul & Lynn Kursewicz	Jonathan Shiner
Tim & Kathy Barton	Michael Firczuk & Katie Perry Firczuk	Betty La Grassa	Robert & Joanne Smith
Tammy Benjamin	Sue & Tom Fitzgerald	David & Debbie Luchsinger	Ian & Laurie Smith
Shelby & David Boynton	Heather Flewelling	Veronique Ludington	Misty Spangler
Eleanor Bradshaw	Elizabeth Fowler	Thomas Lydon	Andreas & Karlene Stecher
Bob Brett	John & Donna Foy	Peter M. Mahoney	Robert & Robin Stowell
Gillian Carter	Maryse Gartner	Frances Masi	Andrea Sweet
Stephen & Adela Carter	David & Kimberly Gibson	Martha McCann	John & Joan Szoke
Mindy Chadrow	Frank & Joan Graf	Diane McDonough	Lisa Teague
Erik & Michele Chapman	Lisa Graichen	Dawn McDougal	Vincent & Cheryl Tulley
Arol Charbonneau	Linda Harvey	Jeffrey Melton & Jeanne Miller Melton	Elizabeth Valway
Caden Cole	Jean Helfinstine	Jennifer Near	Steven & Karen Webb
Cherie Corbett	Julia Henry	Michaela Neiro	James & Laura Whitlock
Paige Covert	Adele Holcombe	Sarah Nickerson	Les Wiberg
Dean Curtin	David & Lynn Holmes	Roy Fox & Rebecca Niebling	Jennifer Wilhelm
Jeanne Danczuk	Thomas & Colleen Jarvela	John Parker	Gail Wingate
Kim Davis Smith	Robert Johnson	Donald Pongrace	Janet Wojciechowski
Michelle Decoste	Mark V. Joyce	Sandra Rand	Shantar & Abby Zuidema
Steph Delude	Joanne & Howard Kalet	David & Elizabeth Reyes	
Matthew Vadeboncoeur & David Dexter	William Kellenbeck	William & Susan Riffert	
Brenda & Tim DiMatteo	Pat Kelley	Susan & Jeffrey Ross	
Chris & Julia Dundorf			
Kyle & Olivia Dupell			

## Land Conservation by the numbers



# Inspired to Help

By Sandy Goodspeed, Volunteer

**M**y goals in life are simple. I want to contribute and make a positive difference in people's lives. As a single parent for many years, I was unable to share much time with school and community organizations needing volunteers. I greatly appreciate all you folks out there who lead sports teams and help our kids in myriads of ways. My children are better off because of people like you. Now, I want to give back.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SANDY GOODSPEED

When I married about eight years ago, I moved from St. Petersburg, Florida to Epping. I learned to love the changing seasons and the intensity of dynamic weather. I embraced winter and took up skiing and snow shoeing, complementing my love of cycling and kayaking. In fact, my dream vacation – an active adventure in New Zealand – would include kayaking in Milford Sound, hiking the Routeburn Track, cycling near Wanaka, plus taking a scenic mountain flight to Siberia Hut and jet boating through Mount Aspiring National Park.

My path to volunteering with SELT began with a leadership role in restoring the circa 1883 Watson Academy, a historic building in Epping. Our Parks and Recreation Director needed help writing a grant to receive funds from LCHIP (the Land & Community Heritage Investment Program – which provides grants for historic restoration and land conservation projects in NH). As an outcome of the application process, the NH Preservation Alliance listed the old school as one of the “Seven to Save”. During award presentations, I was touched by another proposal from the Alliance to save historic farms and agricultural landscapes. The rural nature of New Hampshire is so attractive and valuable to me, it was tough to imagine it going away!

Then, this past winter I was inspired to join SELT's grassroots effort to encourage Epping voters to approve funding for the conservation of the 1,115 acre Harvey property. This was no small effort as it involved getting the town to spend money, but we made it happen with more than 80% in favor!

At that time, I was also looking for a longer-term way to contribute and give back. I contacted SELT and here I am, a regular, weekly volunteer at the SELT office in Exeter. It feels wonderful to be making a contribution to such a valuable cause.

It's so interesting to see how life's twists and turns can take

*continued on page 7*

## 13th Annual Fall Foliage “Fun-raiser”

**O**n November 7th, 2015 SELT welcomed close to 200 guests to Portsmouth Harbor Events to “Celebrate it. Save it.” at the annual Fall Fundraiser. The event featured live music, delicious hors d'oeuvres, a fun photo booth, 135 diverse Silent Auction items, 11 unique Live Auction items, and SELT's most successful fundraising “Paddle Wave” ever! The event raised

over \$85,000 needed to continue conservation projects that benefit our local communities with trails, farmland, clean water, wildlife, and scenic views. We would like to express our deep gratitude to the many volunteers, guests, donors, and sponsors who made this event possible.

**THANK YOU!**

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# Upcoming Events

For complete calendar of events, please visit [www.seltnh.org](http://www.seltnh.org)

We request registration for all events so please let us know you're coming by emailing [register@seltnh.org](mailto:register@seltnh.org). Suggested donation to attend SELT's outreach events is \$5 per person or \$10 per family. We hope you'll join us! (Keep an eye on our Facebook page and website for popup events this winter that are weather dependent like skiing, skating and snowshoeing!)

## Winter Tree Identification Walk with Phil Auger

Saturday, January 9th, 2016, 9–11am  
Rye Town Forest, Rye NH

Join us for a winter tree and shrub identification workshop at the Rye Town Forest. The workshop is for all knowledge and skill levels. We'll learn about how to use the 3 B's – buds, branching and bark as well as site, form and ecology to help with woody plant identification during our long winter leafless season. Phil Auger, the SELT Land Manager, will lead the workshop. The group will meet at the Rye Recreation Area parking at the end of Recreation Road. Registration closes Friday, January 8th at Noon.

## Member Appreciation Open House

Thursday, January 28th, 2016, 5:30–7:30pm  
6 Center Street, Exeter

**We've Moved!** SELT has moved its office a couple doors down to 6 Center Street in Exeter. Please join us for a Member Appreciation Open House on Thursday, January 28th, 2016, from 5:30-7:30pm. Come check out our new place, meet our Staff and Board members, and enjoy some light refreshments while mingling with other SELT members. We hope to see you there!

## Tour the Stonehouse Forest

Saturday, February 6th, 2016, 9–11am  
Barrington, NH

Kick off this exciting new 1,500 acre project located in Barrington by attending a hike of the Stonehouse Forest property with Land Conservation Director, Duane Hyde. We'll get some great views of several natural ponds, large glacial erratics, streams, and if we are lucky maybe a peak at some of the local wildlife that call this spot home. The hike will mostly be on woods roads, but there will be some portions that will be "bushwhacking" off the trail with uneven terrain that is steep at times. Overall the hike is moderate and will last approximately 2 hours. We will meet at 9 am at a woods road entrance to the property on Route 9/202 in Barrington. The entrance is just a few hundred feet north of Hearthside Drive. If you have a GPS and enter 261 Franklin Pierce Highway, Barrington it will direct you close to the woods road entrance. Registration closes Friday, February 5th at Noon.

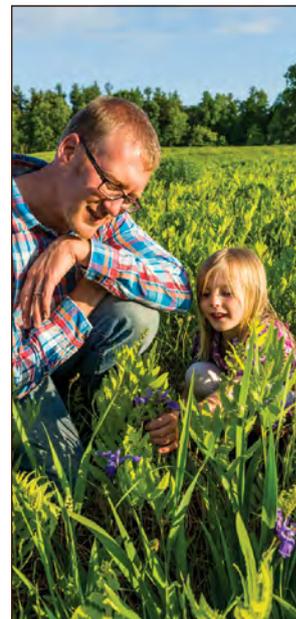


PHOTO CREDIT: JERRY MONKMAN

## Winter Wildlife Snowshoe at The Burley Farm

Saturday, February 20th, 2016, 9–11am  
The Burley Farm, Epping

Join UNH Cooperative Extension Field Specialist and SELT Board Member, Emma Tutein, on a snowshoe walk at the Burley Farm in Epping. This beautiful property contains fields, forest and wetland habitats, and is home to many winter wildlife species including fox, coyote, fisher, mink, and more! We'll look for and learn how to identify various tracks and sign of wildlife throughout the property. Please bring snowshoes (snow permitting) and dress appropriately for the weather. Registration closes Friday, February 19th at Noon.



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PHOTO CREDIT: JERRY MONKMAN



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# Year-end Projects Push SELT to Nearly 1,000 Acres Conserved in 2015 – Made Possible by You!

SELT is busy this holiday season wrapping up a number of significant projects that range from farms that support our local food system, to natural systems that provide valuable wildlife habitat, to properties that are important for clean drinking water supplies.

**1 City of Rochester “Henderson” tract:** The City is granting a conservation easement to SELT that will permanently conserve 133 acres of land that includes one of the City’s primary drinking water wells. Conserving this property will help ensure that the residents of New Hampshire’s sixth largest community will continue to have clean drinking water.

**2 Ten Rod Farm:** SELT and the City of Rochester are working to complete the conservation easement on the 176-acre Ten Rod Farm project, which is helping a young farming couple reach their dreams of having their own farm that will provide local food and farm activities for Rochester and the greater Seacoast community.

**3 McGivern-Thayer Conservation Easement:** Linda McGivern and Ben Thayer know that someone has to be first in order to start the conservation ball rolling. That is why they have generously agreed to donate a conservation easement over 38 acres of fields and forest in Rollinsford near Fresh Creek. With their leadership, we hope great conservation will continue in this agriculturally valuable area.

**4 Sweetser Farm:** The Sweetser family from Nottingham is set to accomplish a significant conservation trifecta with their 198 acre conservation project with SELT. First they will conserve their important farmland prior to selling, and SELT will work with them to hopefully find a buyer that will support the local agricultural economy. Second they are conserving statewide significant habitat including a rare forest system, and lastly the end result of this project will be another critical piece of the conservation puzzle in the growing necklace of the Pawtuckaway to Great Bay Greenway.

**5 Thompson Forest:** When Durham Town Councilors told us that they haven’t seen a conservation project as important to the community as the 43-acre Thompson Forest tract, SELT knew it had partnered with the Town and Lamprey River Advisory Committee on a very worthwhile project. Not only will the Thompson Forest conserve the land immediately around the Town and University’s drinking water intake, it will also result in public access to a beautiful stretch of the federally designated Wild and Scenic Lamprey River.

**6 Dufresne Conservation Easement:** SELT is partnering with the Town of Auburn on a 63-acre conservation easement that will help protect the drinking water supply

for the City of Manchester, while at the same time keeping valuable fields available for agriculture.

**7 Limperis Farm:** Lee and Carolyn Limperis took a first step in the conservation of their farm and forestland located in Epping, Newmarket, and Newfields when they transferred to SELT 163 acres of important forest and wetland that included frontage along the federally designated Wild & Scenic Lamprey River and in the heart of the Pawtuckaway to Great Bay Greenway. With this important habitat protected, the next step is to conserve their productive farmland that provides fresh produce to their many farm stand customers and on the wholesale market.

**8 Town of Stratham “Zarnowski” tract:** The Town is granting a conservation easement to SELT that will permanently conserve 29 acres along the tidal shoreline along a secluded portion of the Squamscott River with wonderful views of an osprey nesting platform and extensive saltmarsh habitat.

**9 Buttonwood Farm:** A short drive from Manchester, Concord, and Nashua puts Derry in the spotlight as a desirable community to live, but it still retains and wants to preserve some of its agricultural and rural heritage. SELT has worked with the Town of Derry on an effort to conserve the 110-acre Buttonwood farm which will keep the land available for active farming, while at the same time protecting land that supports the Arlington Mill Reservoir.

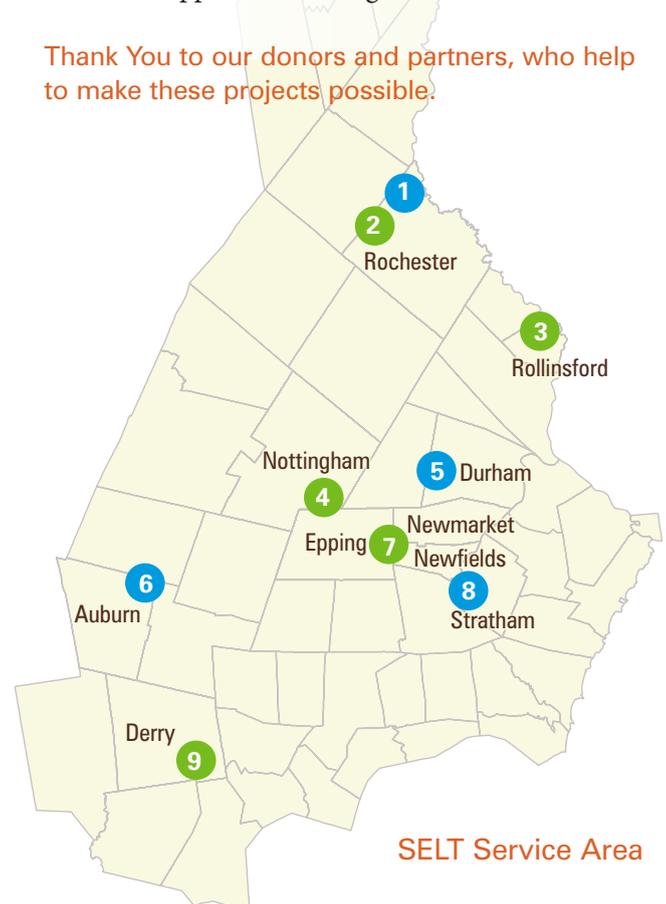


DRINK IT. SAVE IT.



FARM IT. SAVE IT.

Thank You to our donors and partners, who help to make these projects possible.



SELT Service Area

## A Tribute to Cyrus "Cy" Sweet

The New Hampshire conservation community suffered a sad loss with the death of Cyrus B. Sweet on September 30th from complications of throat cancer. After retiring from the Air Force, Cy spent much of the last thirty years with his wife Bobbie, supporting with their time, energy and resources the nonprofit organizations that help protect our region's natural resources as well as our historic buildings and thriving arts community. Cy cared deeply about Great Bay and its surrounding landscape. He served as a Trustee of the NH Chapter of the Nature Conservancy for 19 years. He also served Strawberry Banke Museum, the Gundalow Company, and the Conservation Law Foundation. In 2014, Cy and Bobbie were honored with the Eileen Foley Award for Community Service presented at the annual "roast" organized by Friends Forever.



Cyrus Sweet

PHOTO CREDIT: DARYL BURTNETT FOR THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Jamey French, who serves on the Board of the Nature Conservancy's NH Chapter, recalls that Cy was often a man of few words. Cy listened carefully to the most challenging discussions and at Board meetings was famous (usually at a critical juncture) for making clear and insightful comments that moved the dialogue and the decision making process forward. Whether it was protecting Great Bay or working on a new program to protect declining fish stocks in the Gulf of Maine, Cy was prepared to offer the bold and perhaps risky alternative that was more likely than not the successful option.

Cy and Bobbie demonstrated substantial philanthropic leadership by making initial investment in SELT's Sweet Land Protection Fund. This Fund was established by the SELT Board of Directors in 2007 to honor the commitment and generosity of the Sweets toward land conservation efforts in this region. To date, generous donors have contributed \$250,000 to the Fund, which provides the Land Trust with quick access to funding for emerging conservation opportunities that require immediate or short-term response.

The Sweet Fund has made possible the protection of Awcomin Marsh in Rye, land along the Pawtuckaway River in Epping and Raymond, among others.

The SELT Board, Staff, and larger conservation community extend our deepest sympathy to Cy's family and pledge to continue doing the work of conserving special local places that he cared about so deeply.

## Inspired to Help *continued from page 4*

us places we never imagined. After helping write the LCHIP grant, I joined the Epping Parks and Recreation Commission and agreed to lead the effort to complete the Natural Playground installation at Mary Blair Park, which happens to be on conservation land. So, part of my task required working with the Conservation Commission to protect tree root structures in the parking area. Not surprisingly, the Conservation Commission also had an opening for administrative help, so I volunteered to fill that void. The Commission then considered starting a conservation land monitoring program, which prompted me to approach SELT staff for their guidance. Next thing I know, I'm walking conservation land with SELT's Conservation Easement Steward, Dani Christopher, across the river from the park, where the Rec Commission wants to develop more trails.

It seems I've come full circle. How wonderful is that?

**Volunteers play a vital role in SELT's success – from photography to filing to fundraising. Are you interested in volunteering your time and talents to SELT? Let us know by completing the Volunteer Inquiry Form at [www.seltnh.org](http://www.seltnh.org) (Under the "Support Us" tab choose "Volunteer Opportunities").**

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**David Viale** Conservation Project Manager

### Questions, Comments, Concerns?

To contact the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire, please call **603.778.6088** or email [info@seltnh.org](mailto:info@seltnh.org).

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VIEW IT. SAVE IT.

## A Hidden Treasure in Barrington

see page 1

## Exciting News for New Hampshire's Native Cottontail

see page 3

## Gift it. Save it.

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(These shirts run a bit small, so we encourage you to order up a size.)



(Actual size.)



(Graphic enlarged for readability.)

### SELT t-shirt in action!

