

A Tale of Two Timber Harvests

by Becca Hedlund

Logging on conservation land might sound contradictory at first, but timber harvests currently underway on two Southeast Land Trust-owned properties illustrate how active management advances three of the Land Trust's objectives: protect and enhance wildlife habitat, practice long-term sustainable forest management, and create opportunities for passive recreation. Despite common objectives, the two logging operations are "really quite different in goals and methodology," explained Phil Auger, Land Manager for the Land Trust.



Phil Auger (left) leads a tour of the Mast Road Natural Area harvest.
PHOTO CREDIT: SHERRI NIXON



Mast Road Natural Area Timber Harvest, January 2015.
PHOTO CREDITS: DEBORAH KURE

Mast Road Natural Area

"Here, it's like pulling out the weedy carrots so the rest grow better," he said as we toured Mast Road Natural Area in Epping on a snowy January day. Indeed, trees marked with blue paint for this harvest were surprisingly sparse; Auger chuckled at the contracted forester's light-handed approach – even by Auger's own standards.

At 531 acres, the Mast Road Natural Area is the Land Trust's largest single tract; the timber harvest area of the property encompasses about 150 acres and is part of the final phase of a multi-year restoration plan and enhancements. Specific goals for cutting vary. In some areas, for example, removal of red maple and low-quality pine and hemlock will create openings in a process called group selection or patch cutting. These openings will diversify the forest's vertical structure – ideal for songbirds. Cuts on another area of sandy soils will help regenerate the classic white pine stand that no doubt gave Mast Road its name more than 300 years ago, when the best trees here held the sails of the British royal navy. Earlier restoration work in 2013 graded a defunct gravel pit into a gentle sandy slope,



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On a Mission: Land Trust advances its mission of protecting farms,

BRENTWOOD · DERRY · DURHAM · FREMONT · ROCHESTER · STRATHAM

Stratham Helping Conserve a Regional Treasure

Stratham Hill Park and the adjoining Gordon Barker Town Forest are a regional recreation resource used by many including trail walkers, dog walkers, runners and mountain bikers. The amazing network of trails, easy access, and wonderful natural resources allow users to get away from it all and enjoy nature. But what many don't realize is a number of the trails cross onto and through private, unconserved property. At the March Town meeting, the voters in Stratham will have the opportunity to ensure public access to over a mile of trails as part of the Stratham Hill Park system by voting on a \$175,000 warrant article to support the acquisition of a 34-acre conservation easement on the Short property. The Southeast Land Trust is intended to be the holder of the conservation easement.



Snowshoers enjoy Stratham trails. PHOTO CREDIT: RON ELLIS

Protecting Drinking Water in Rochester

Helping our communities ensure they have clean drinking water now and for the future is an important tenet of the Southeast Land Trust's mission and we are working with the City of Rochester to do just that. The Land Trust already holds an 18-acre easement surrounding the City's drinking water well located near the Cochecho River, but the City is working with us on expanding that easement to encompass an additional 133 acres to further protect this important drinking water source for the City. We expect to complete this conservation easement project in the Spring of 2015.

Keeping the Lamprey Wild and Scenic in Durham

Our region is lucky to be home of one of only two nationally designated "Wild and Scenic" rivers in New Hampshire. Working with the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee and the Town of Durham, we are leading an effort to help conserve a scenic stretch of the Lamprey River through the acquisition of the 43-acre Thompson Forest property. With the passing of Shirley Thompson last year, who was a beloved member of the Durham and Oyster River School District community, the family agreed to sell this tract that surrounds an important drinking water intake for Durham and the University of New Hampshire.

Lifelong Dream of Protecting Farmland Coming True

Dottie Gunther deeply loves the land which she's worked on and cared for a good part of her lifetime. Forty plus years of boarding horses and managing the family farm hasn't been easy but she wouldn't dream of doing anything else and Dottie wants to keep at it for as long as she can. Dottie also wants future generations to be able to enjoy the land as she has, which is why she is working with the Southeast Land Trust to place a conservation easement on the 140-acre farm in Derry. Through the sale of a conservation easement, Dottie will be able to purchase the farm outright, securing her ability to stay on the land for the rest of her life. By voluntarily conveying a conservation easement on the land, Dottie will also be protecting the productive farm fields, upland forest, and frontage on Ballard Pond so that it can be used and enjoyed by future generations forever.



Gunther Easement in Derry. PHOTO CREDIT: KEVIN MCMANUS

forests, drinking water, recreational trails, and wildlife habitat

The Sweet Smell of Home: Rich Wildlife Habitat Expanded!

The moose, turtle, bobcat, river otter, and heron are thankful. A healthy moose will eat 40-60 pounds of browse daily. The river otter and great blue heron are sensitive and need a safe and stable place to live, forage, and play. Mother bobcat ranges far and wide in order to teach her young. Slow turtle travels farther from the water's edge than you might think. All of these wondrous creatures have been filmed on Southeast Land Trust properties, and all of these animals benefit from a mosaic of high quality habitat. Several of these species require a home range of at least one square mile (640 acres) and thanks to a recent commitment by a generous donor, 34 acres of land abutting the Kelliher Memorial Forest in Fremont and Brentwood will be owned and managed by the Land Trust – bringing the cumulative total of contiguous conservation land in this wildlife hotspot to one square mile of high quality, sweet pepperbush-smelling, home sweet home. ■



Wildlife habitat expanded in Fremont and Brentwood. PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID VIALE

A Tale of Two Timber Harvests, continued

ideal as potential nesting sites for the turtles living in the adjacent wetland.

The Mast Road timber harvest is fully mechanized. An enormous feller buncher coupled with a processing head combines several functions in rapid succession: its arms grab the tree while the base is cut quickly with a large circular saw, then it delimits the tree and automatically bucks it to length for the optimal wood products: pine and hemlock sawlogs, hardwood mat logs and pulpwood for paper production. Finally it sorts the output into piles for removal to the landing, a cleared area where trucks haul the materials to market. Timing the operation for mid-winter when the ground is frozen minimizes the impact of the heavy machinery on the soil. After completion, the landing area will be seeded with a grass mix that provides wildlife fodder and inhibits invasive plants. Auger expects the improved trails and access will draw more visitors to enjoy this property.

Kelliher Memorial Forest

Outstanding wildlife habitat makes the 129-acre Kelliher Memorial Forest in Brentwood and Fremont one of the most exciting properties owned by the Land Trust. "It's a real hotspot for wildlife," Auger explained, because it abuts Spruce Swamp, which at 800 acres is the largest wetland in southeastern New Hampshire. And the best viewing spot here is a peninsula into the swamp where a beaver dam provides a major corridor for wildlife.

The timber harvest area for the Kelliher property covers about 60 acres, and unlike at Mast Road, the method here is a whole-tree

chipping system that will produce biomass chips for fuel as well as fuelwood and sawlogs. Intermittent ½ acre "patch-cuts" along the beaver ponds will remove conifers to reestablish the shrubs and hardwoods that beaver eat – and encourage them to stay. On upland areas where previous logging left hemlock and red maples in place, those now-dominant species will be removed to favor the white pine, oak and black birch that are optimal for forest health. And a 4.5-acre area of low-quality white pine and mixed hardwoods will be clear-cut for shrub growth with the intention to lease it for sheep and goats to graze and control invasive plants.

Trail work planned for 2015 includes a footpath along a lovely old cart path lined with stone walls that leads to a small clearing. From there the paths diverge – the northern "Air Force Road" goes directly to the site where a B-52 crashed in 1959, while the lower path is an old farm-access trail that will loop into the Air Force Road and also include a spur to the peninsula. Other improvements include parking, kiosk, signage and possibly a wildlife-viewing platform. The circa 1740 farmhouse, which is not owned by the Land Trust, will be converted to an 80-seat farm-to-table restaurant.

Income generation from the timber sales is not in itself a goal for Southeast Land Trust-owned properties, though it can be a side benefit that helps to further the Land Trust's conservation work. "Human-centered goals are the bottom of the priority list," explained Auger. "Our goals are wildlife habitat and the protection of key natural resources first, water quality protection, enhanced recreation opportunities, and long-term sustainable forestry." ■

GET Out & About

“Timberdoodling” at Dusk!

Aikman conservation land in Rollinsford • Tentative dates

depending on bird migration:

Tuesday, April 7 • 6:30pm and

Thursday, April 9 • 6:30pm

(Check our website or Facebook page for updates as we get closer.)

It's time to view the amazing mating ritual of the American Woodcock. Male Woodcocks begin with a peculiar dance and then take to the air with a spectacular flight. Join Kevin McEaney, Southeast Land Trust Board member, for an informal gathering to view this unique courtship dance, also called “Timberdoodling.” Depending on weather conditions, Woodcocks can be active for 15 minutes or for an entire evening. All ages are welcome and children must be able to stand quietly for up to an hour (the birds are distracted by voices and movement). The group will leave from the parking area promptly at 6:30pm. Please register for this free event by e-mailing register@seltnh.org and be sure to specify which evening you'd prefer to attend. Registration is limited to 25 spots per evening.

Birding for Beginners at Piscassic Greenway

Saturday, May 16th • 6–10am

Join Roger Stephenson and Patience Chamberlin for our annual spring birding trip. We'll meet promptly at 6 a.m. at the Piscassic Greenways trail kiosk on Bald Hill Road in Newfields and explore six different habitats. Among the birds we'll see are Bobolink, Blue Jay, Brown-headed Cowbird, Black-capped Chickadee and Belted Kingfisher – and that's just the “B's”! Geared for the beginner and challenging for the intermediate as well – be sure to bring binoculars, water, snacks, and dress for the weather. Registration is limited to 20 spots. Please sign up by e-mailing register@seltnh.org.

Be sure to check in often at www.seltnh.org and www.facebook.com/SoutheastLandTrustofNH for event updates and photos!

Living with Black Bears

by Emma Carcagno

With the large amount of snow we've got on the ground this winter, it's hard to believe that spring is right around the corner, but it is! The days are getting longer, birds are singing more, barred owls are calling for mates (or perhaps already sitting on nests), and tree buds are starting to swell. Before we know it this snow will melt away – I promise, it really will – and migrating birds will return, filling our early mornings with their eager songs. Frogs and salamanders will make their way on rainy nights to vernal pools, deep with snowmelt, for their early spring breeding. And one creature, a little larger than most, will lumber out of their long winter's sleep. Black bears will emerge from their dens with one thing on their minds – food!

The Southeast Land Trust recently hosted world-renowned bear expert, Ben Kilham, in Exeter to speak about his experiences raising orphaned bear cubs and studying the behavior of adult bears. What a treat! Ben captivated the room of over 150 people with his stories, photos and video clips. Ben has spent countless hours in close proximity with wild black bears and he made it clear that food is one of the main drivers of black bear behavior. It is no surprise that it's also the primary reason for negative bear-human interactions.

In early spring, as bears emerge from their dens in search of food after a long winter of sleeping, it's common to hear reports of bears taking down bird feeders, getting into trash cans, eating pet food left on the porch, and otherwise getting into trouble with humans. The bears are simply following their natural instincts. Bird seed, human food (left behind in the trash), and pet food are simply too nutritious to be ignored, especially early in the spring when the bear's natural foods are scarce.

Many people may be familiar with the adage “A Fed Bear is a Dead Bear,” but it seems that many people may not realize how true that statement is. Once bears make a habit of associating food with humans, they can become nuisance animals, which have to be killed to protect people and property. Bears play an important role in the New Hampshire landscape and we love knowing they are living on some Southeast Land Trust reserves. Luckily, there are easy things you can do to help prevent these types of conflicts, and to keep bears on the landscape in southeastern NH.



Josie the Black Bear. PHOTO CREDIT: BEN KILHAM

Here are a few simple things you can do to avoid bear conflicts:

- **Take down your bird feeders on April 1st** every year. Clean up any spilled birdseed from the ground and dispose of it in the trash. Don't put your feeder back up until December 1st.
- **Secure your garbage** in airtight containers inside a garage or other adequate storage area. Put your garbage out the morning of pickup, not the night before.
- **Don't leave pet food dishes outside** overnight.
- **Clean and store outdoor grills** after every use.
- **Avoid putting meat and other smelly food scraps in your compost pile.**

Have you spotted a bear in southeastern New Hampshire? We'd love to hear about it! E-mail us at info@seltnh.org. ■

Welcome Zoe and Jeremy!

As a result of our recent merger and expanded service region, the Southeast Land Trust is growing its staff to meet the needs of the organization. We welcome **Zoe Aldag, Development and Operations Specialist** and **Jeremy Lougee, Land Protection Specialist** to our team!



Jeremy Lougee joins the Land Trust after working five years as an Easement Specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Durham, NH. Prior to this, he spent several years in California working as a Project Manager for the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County. Jeremy holds a BS in Ecology from Montana State University-Bozeman and an MS in Environmental Conservation from University of New Hampshire. While at UNH, he co-founded the NH Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation and started a volunteer water quality monitoring program for the Seacoast. Jeremy was raised on a small NH dairy farm and now resides in Newmarket along the Lamprey River. He enjoys outdoor pursuits of all kinds, though he is particularly fond of foraging wild mushrooms which he offers to local restaurants and herbal centers.



Zoe Aldag graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Conservation Studies. Zoe has held internships with the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership, BLH Writing Solutions, and the NH Department of Environmental Services. In her spare time she enjoys cooking, riding her bike, traveling, and enjoying all the area has to offer. Zoe grew up in Lee and lives in Kittery with her rescue dog, Woody. ■



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To contact the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire, please call 603.778.6088 or e-mail info@seltnh.org.
PO Box 675, Exeter, NH 03833
Fax: 603.778.0007
Website: www.seltnh.org

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The Wild & Scenic Film Festival returns to Portsmouth for its 5th Year!

An evening to benefit the
 Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire
 Friday, April 24th, 2015 • 7pm •
 At the Music Hall Historic Theater

The Wild & Scenic Film Festival is the largest environmental film festival in North America. This local showing is a collection of unique short films that explore the current environmental issues and celebrations of our planet. Join us for an evening of inspiring and beautiful films – and support our local conservation work with your ticket purchase!

Tickets available at The Music Hall Box Office in the Historic Theater, 28 Chestnut Street, Portsmouth, NH, 603.436.2400, or www.themusichall.org.

\$16 per ticket (Please note: a \$5 service charge is added per ticket to phone or web orders. To avoid this charge you may purchase your tickets in person at the Box Office: Mon–Sat, Noon–6pm). ■



Many Thanks to our
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Land Protection BY THE NUMBERS



As of January 31, 2015

Join us for The Wild & Scenic Film Festival on April 24!
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