



## IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Ardnaberry: We Need This Place
- 2 Nature-Based Education Takes Flight at Burley Farms
- 3 The Power of Partnerships
- 5 More Gifts During the Season of Giving
- 6 IRAs Offer Unique Giving Advantages
- 6 TrailFest 2021
- 6 The Mathey Center Vision Nears Completion
- 7 The Plot Thickets: Making a Rabbit Habitat
- 8 See Your Impact in Action!

Above: A sprawling salt marsh adjoining Ardnaberry.

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## Ardnaberry: We Need This Place (And others like it to protect the New Hampshire we love)

*I'm in Rye, close to the coast, a shell's throw from salt water. I know because I can smell it immediately; that insta-recognizable scent of saltwater and mudflats. I peel off Brackett Road and identify the entrance to my destination. It's a nondescript dirt road, and if you weren't looking for it, you'd likely miss it.*

*I turn off and drive. Past the gate, the private property signs, and then on and on and on and on. I'm about a half mile in and just as I start asking myself how in the world this driveway gets plowed in the winter I see it, sticking up from the ground like a stubby thumb. An odd rock edifice that could not have evolved naturally.*

*Um...is that a partially complete castle spire?*

*Welcome to Ardnaberry!*

**T**hirty years ago, Mike Thiel and Gail Richard were house hunting in New Hampshire. They were looking to move from Massachusetts and find something in the greater Portsmouth area.

Mike and Gail discovered their love for the area following a stint renting in the Portsmouth area and realized that the Seacoast was destined to be their home. As they circulated through the real estate listings, serendipity presented itself when they went to tour a property on Route 1A/Pioneer Road in Rye – and, like a slow-motion Hollywood love-at-first-sight scene set to *Faithfully* by Journey – they saw it across the way.

The perfect property, their dream locale: over 40 acres of land along Berry's Brook, buttressed by mature forests, and adjoining an expansive salt marsh looking out toward Odiorne Point.

"Look at the lucky people who own that," Mike Thiel recalls thinking.

It wasn't for sale, alas, but Mike and Gail nourished hope and, amazingly, ten days later they spotted an auction notice for that exact property. So, he and Gail jumped in their Ford Explorer and headed

*continued on page 4*

# Nature-Based Education Takes Flight at Burley Farms

The dawning of a new era of community outreach and family-focused engagement has begun! For SELT, nature-based education has long been a strategic priority, and our partnership with White Pine Programs the last several years has represented the first step on a journey towards offering rich experiences in the great outdoors for children of all ages and backgrounds.

We're excited to share that this fall saw the next step in that journey: a brand-new nature-based education partnership with the Epping School District. Through this investment, SELT is working with the school, teachers, and families to weave the love and enjoyment of the great outdoors into the students' everyday

learning experience. Epping children in grades K, 2, and 4 have been enjoying special field trips to Burley Farms and hands-in-the-dirt learning about nature through wild play recess and formal classroom lessons, led by White Pine Programs.

"Through this exciting partnership, we hope to add community benefit to our new hometown of Epping, while encouraging kids to discover and connect with a love of nature," says Bev Shadley, SELT's Deputy Director.

Thank you for making this happen! We look forward to sharing more about our nature-based education efforts, which will grow even more when SELT moves into its new home at Burley Farms.



Dear SELTies,

In late October I had the opportunity to be part of our very first Epping Elementary School field trip at Burley Farms. We greeted 60 kindergarteners and eight teachers, many of whom were fully dressed for Halloween!

Our program with Epping Elementary includes three distinct parts: 1) directly mentoring teachers on how to integrate nature connection into their teaching every day, 2) facilitated wild play recess, and 3) 9 field trips. SELT is funding 100% of this work. The land trust is making this investment because they trust the research that shows for ages 5-14, repeated experiences in nature, led by caring mentors, positively impacts conservation-minded behaviors later in life.

While we only had two hours with these kids at the field trip, I witnessed an incredible emergence of confidence for the children in our group during this time. It was, at the beginning, abundantly clear which kids regularly go outside and which kids don't. One child in particular had never heard the word "salamander." After looking at pictures in one of our field guides, that same child was later turning over logs looking for one.

During a game, we talked about otters and herons and afterwards, we went on an adventure to see the nest that sits over the pond. The kids were delighted to play with sticks (something that's not allowed in the school yard), jump on stumps, and run around in the woods.

In just two hours, those kids experienced the delight of nature connection. They were engaged, curious and excited to come back in November. When we talk about equal access to nature, this is it.

In gratitude,

*Heather Campbell*

Executive Director, White Pine Programs  
whitepineprograms.org



Heather Campbell of White Pine Programs welcomes the first busload of Epping students.

COURTESY PHOTO



# The Power of Partnerships

Two pending conservation acquisitions highlight the power of partnerships through the US Natural Resources Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program, or RCPP. Earlier this spring NRCS awarded nearly \$7 million to the NH Source Water Protection Partnership, which is managed by the Merrimack River Watershed Council, and includes SELT, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, Trout Unlimited, Connecticut River Conservancy, and The Nature Conservancy in New Hampshire. This partnership seeks to execute multi-faceted projects including land conservation and habitat restoration through 25 targeted watersheds in the state. RCPP funds will be matched dollar for dollar – stretching limited federal funds even further.



An aerial view of the Pike property.  
© JERRY MONKMAN, ECOGRAPHY, LLC

## Pike (Durham)

One of SELT's first RCPP projects will be the purchase of the 40-acre Pike property on Packers Falls Road in Durham, a wonderful opportunity to preserve more than 1,200 feet of Wild and Scenic river frontage along the Lamprey River. This effort builds on prior work to protect the intake for Durham and University of New Hampshire's public water supply located on the abutting Thompson Forest which SELT helped Durham acquire in 2016.

Vernal pools dot the forestland along the river and it lies within a tapestry of more than 5,700 acres of conserved and public lands. Unlike most conservation projects, the Pike tract includes a home and barn which SELT will be subdividing and reselling as part of the project. (Interested in learning more? Visit [seltnh.org](http://seltnh.org) for project updates and the realtor listing coming soon!) The RCPP funds will be one of many knitted together for this effort.

## Teneriffe Mountain (Milton)

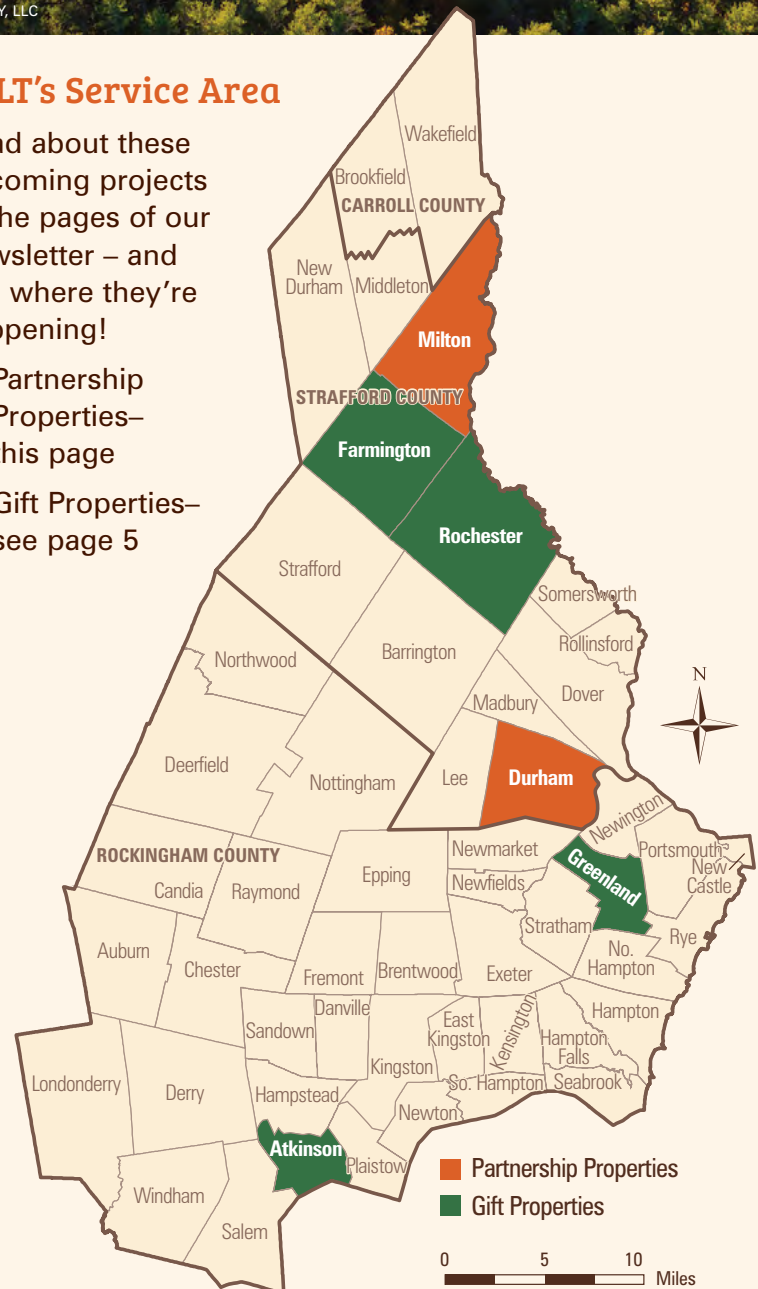
SELT is excited to team up with our good friends, Moose Mountains Regional Greenways (MMRG), on the exciting 242-acre Teneriffe Mountain Forest project, a landmark conservation and recreational property in the heart of the Moose Mountains Region. The RCPP will be providing \$145,000 toward the conservation of the land, once slated for development.

The highest point in Milton, Teneriffe Mountain boasts views of Mount Agamenticus and Blue Job Mountain, is home to abundant wildlife, and will feature hiking trails that offer excellent recreational opportunities and views close to the summit. SELT will hold the easement on this land, and MMRG will be the landowner and manager. MMRG is seeking the final funds on this acquisition. To contribute or learn more, check out [www.mmrgnh.org/teneriffe-mountain-forest](http://www.mmrgnh.org/teneriffe-mountain-forest).

## SELT's Service Area

Read about these upcoming projects in the pages of our newsletter – and see where they're happening!

- Partnership Properties – this page
- Gift Properties – see page 5





*Ardnaberry continued from page 1*

over, navigating down the winding half-mile driveway, barely a trail at the time, met the owners, toured the property and promptly came to a shared realization:

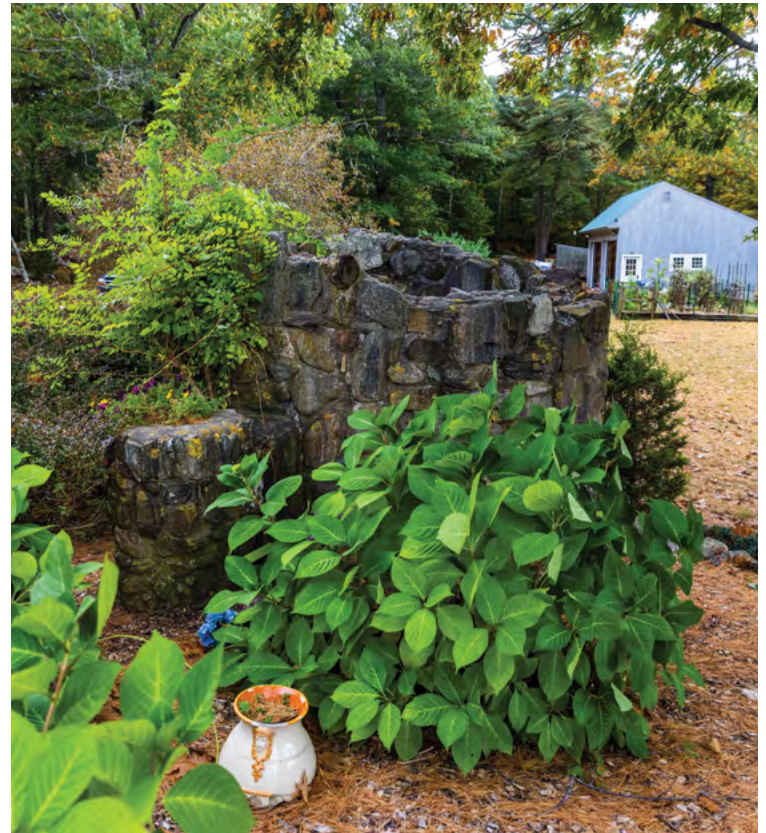
“We need this place.”



It’s been three decades since Mike and Gail purchased their dream property. Inspired by time he spent in Ireland, where he lived at a country home called “Ardnalvalley” (“overlooking the valley”), Mike named their land “Ardnaberry” (“overlooking Berry” as in “Berry’s Brook”).

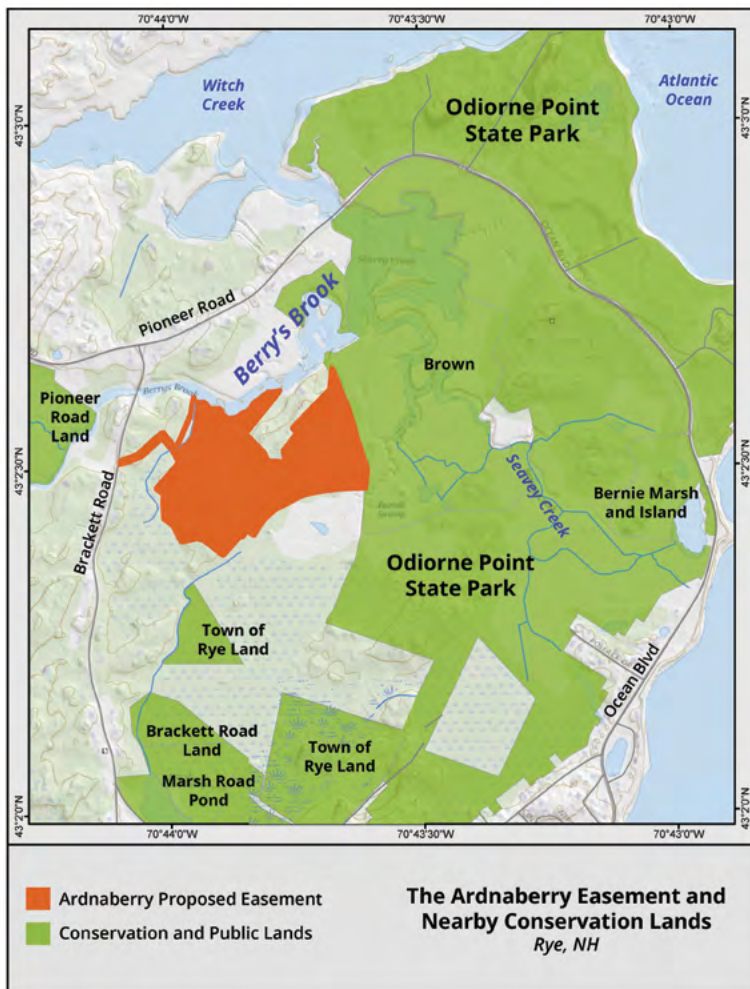
This whimsical nomenclature fits the land perfectly. Whether it’s the vestiges of an ambitious castle construction that a previous owner had begun to erect, complete with a partially-built tower adjoining a stone parapet or the sheep meandering about (sheep were included with the original purchase of the property and their progeny call Ardnaberry home today), there’s something eccentric and unique about this place.

And then you have the stunning natural resource value that Ardnaberry boasts; seriously, this reads like a greatest hits of prime-time conservation value: over 1,500 feet of shoreline along Berry’s Brook, a popular kayaking and fishing destination, critical wildlife habitat for endangered birds, fish, and reptiles, and priceless salt marsh, which covers just over eight acres on the property and offer precious benefits for land and sea, providing coastal protection, water filtration, nitrogen absorption, and erosion control.



A partially completed castle turret at Ardnaberry.

© JERRY MONKMAN, ECOPHOTOGRAPHY, LLC



All of that, added up, results in a true coastal gem – and why Mike and Gail made the decision to conserve it forever.

“We want to keep it as natural as possible,” Gail says. “We just never want it to be developed.”

To that end, Mike and Gail have decided to donate a conservation easement to SELT, which is, obviously, an extraordinarily generous gesture considering the prices of real estate these days (especially New Hampshire coastal real estate!)

But that’s the power of Ardnaberry. It is intoxicating. It is special. And for Mike and Gail and the Seacoast community, it will be everlasting.

“This is the longest I’ve ever lived anywhere,” Mike says. “It’s a part of me. I pinch myself daily at how lucky we are to live here. I never take it for granted.”

*To permanently conserve Ardnaberry, SELT must raise a total of \$50,000 to support costs for a boundary survey and legal fees, as well as funds to ensure our ability to monitor and enforce the easement in perpetuity. To see the status of current fundraising, or if you would like to support SELT’s conservation and long-term stewardship of this wonderful property, please visit [seltnh.org/rye](http://seltnh.org/rye) or use the enclosed envelope (and note “Ardnaberry”). We agree with Mike and Gail: we, indeed, need this place!*







## More Gifts During the Season of Giving

SELT is grateful to work with landowners like Mike Thiel and Gail Richard who generously offer to donate easements on their properties. As the giving season arrives, we wish to express our appreciation to each of these landowners for generously partnering with SELT.

### **Killam (Atkinson, NH) “A Wild Kingdom”**

In late 2019, the Killam family contacted SELT about donating a conservation easement on a portion of their 40-acre property located along Westside Drive and Oak Ridge Drive in Atkinson. The Killams have carefully managed their land for several generations and keep what is now a long list of the variety of wildlife they have spotted on the property. The list includes great horned owl, scarlet tanager, black bear, bobcat, coyote, fisher, and more! What the Killams have known all along was further substantiated by the recent “Connect the Coast” wildlife connectivity study, which shows their land along Hogg Hill Brook being an important wildlife connectivity corridor for species movement between large blocks of habitat. To help conserve the Killams’ land, the Atkinson Conservation Commission has generously provided funding and SELT has a pending Moose Plate grant.

### **Pallas (Rochester, NH) “Leveraging Impact”**

Back in 2018, Zach & Joanne Pallas reached out to SELT to inquire about donating a conservation easement on land they own along Crowhill Road in Rochester, hoping their generosity could catalyze a larger effort between SELT and the City of Rochester.

Fast forward nearly three years, the Pallas’ generosity is leveraging and creating an even larger conservation impact. SELT is nearing the finish line of a larger project which will protect approximately 71 acres of land adjacent to the Salmon Falls River. Coupled with an adjacent purchase of land by the Rochester Conservation Commission, this 87-acre block of protected land permanently protects critical wildlife habitat, trails for outdoor recreation, and a high-value public drinking water resource for the Cities of Rochester and Somersworth, NH and the Town of Berwick, ME.

### **Berg (Greenland) “Small, but Mighty”**

For years, Wallace and Florette Berg have been on a mission to conserve their small but mighty 10 acres in Greenland. Located along Norton Brook and adjacent to I-95, the Bergs’ fields and forestland might seem like a surprising conservation priority. However, it provides important public drinking water protection – located in Portsmouth’s water supply well head protection area. And more significantly for wildlife, their land along Norton Brook is part of a regionally significant wildlife connectivity corridor identified in a recent study, “Connect the Coast”, a science-based study of where wildlife is likely to move between large blocks of open space. As part of this project, SELT hopes to learn more about how wildlife uses the Norton Brook corridor and their use of a very large culvert under I-95. Stay tuned!

### **The Flume (Farmington) “A Bit of North Country”**

Fred and Nancy Smith purchased their seven acres in 1972, using it as a rural weekend retreat from their home in New York. A beloved local swimming hole along the Mad River, “The Flume,” as it is referred to, strikes visitors as a piece of the North Country here in southeastern New Hampshire. After permanently protecting this land in 2002 by donating a conservation easement to the then Strafford Rivers Conservancy, the Smiths have now decided to donate the ownership to SELT. The Smiths have always been good stewards and allowed public enjoyment of The Flume and SELT is honored to have the trust and confidence of the Smiths to be this place’s next steward.

*A huge thank you to each of these landowners for saving these important open spaces, and to our SELTies, for helping make it all possible.*

# IRAs Offer Unique Giving Advantages

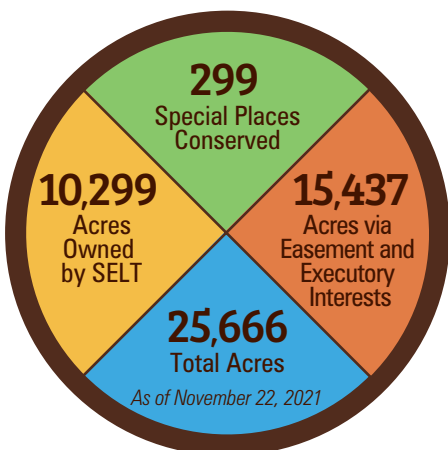
As we approach the end of the year, there are compelling giving options for people with Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), providing the opportunity to make a meaningful impact on the natural world while potentially reducing your family's tax burden.

Effective, January 2020, when IRA holders reach age 72, they must take a required minimum distribution (RMD) from their IRA accounts. Prior to 2020, the RMD went into effect when the account holder turned 70.5. (Confused? That's understandable: those who turned 70.5 during the calendar year 2019 are still required to take the RMD; the 72 age minimum applies to those who did not reach 70.5 as of December 31, 2019).

To avoid taxation on these required withdrawals, donors have a unique way to support their favorite charities. Donors can request the distribution to be sent directly to a non-profit organization like SELT. Such distributions are called a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) and meet the required distribution but are not taxed or counted toward the donor's Adjusted Gross Income. A QCD can be made for any amount up to \$100,000 a year.

Please contact SELT Deputy Director Bev Shadley at 603-658-9752 or [beverly@seltnh.org](mailto:beverly@seltnh.org) with any questions or to further discuss this opportunity.

## Land Conservation by the numbers



# TrailFest 2021



On October 9, over 200 people gathered together to celebrate a day of fun and conservation at the 2021 edition of TrailFest. The event represented the culmination of two months of peer-to-peer fundraising from a collection of teams who secured donations for their trail-running adventure – which was the centerpiece of the day.

“This year’s TrailFest was a little different from years past,” said Zoe Graves, SELT’s Outreach and Volunteer Manager, “but everyone had a wonderful time enjoying the outdoors, running the trails, and supporting SELT’s mission of saving, sharing, and stewarding the lands we love.”

*A special thank you to our sponsors: NEMO Equipment, Bellamy and Watson Fields, Catherine Arakelian Graphic Design, and Friends of Kingston Open Space*



A feathery display by On the Wing. AARON BAKER

# The Mathey Center Vision Nears Completion

Help bring us over the finish line!

One year ago, the vision of the Nan and George Mathey Center for People and Nature only lived on paper. Today at Burley Farms, thanks to support from hundreds of SELTies and community members, there stands a building that is nearly completed on the outside and is on schedule for SELT’s move-in next March. The Mathey Center will be a net-zero energy building, completely powered by solar energy produced on site, one of many design approaches to create a sustainable, low-maintenance building. Others include siding that does not require painting or staining and a metal roof with a lifespan of 40+ years.

“We’re thrilled to be nearing the completion of the vision for Burley Farms,” says Brian Hart, SELT’s Executive Director, “and equally excited to have incorporated sustainable design principles in the building.”

The Mathey Center Matching Challenge is nearly complete, with just \$4,000 remaining. You can help bring us over the finish line by making a gift at [seltnh.org/matheycenter](http://seltnh.org/matheycenter). Thank you!



The Mathey Center close to its final form. COURTESY OF CHAPMAN DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION



# The Plot Thickets: Making a Rabbit Habitat

Somewhere on a SELT land, a brontosaurus moves through the property. Treetops are mulched and fallen limbs and stumps are ground down. In its trail lies a wake of transformed landscape, as land about to transition out of thick young forest is turned back into a shrubby thicket.

Said brontosaurus is not of the Mesozoic variety; it is an impressive bit of heavy equipment, deployed for expansive land management projects. This is one of them, as SELT's Stewardship team works to return a portion of the property to early successional habitat.

As defined by the US Department of Agriculture: early successional habitat is habitat with vigorously growing grasses, forbs (herbaceous flowering plants), shrubs, and trees which provide excellent food and cover for wildlife but need disturbance to be maintained. Examples of such habitats include weedy areas, grasslands, old fields or pastures, shrub thickets, and young forest.

For this recent project, the SELT team worked with wildlife biologists and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to create early successional habitat. This type of habitat benefits a variety of common wildlife such as small mammals, birds, and snakes. An important consideration for this work is it is also close to known populations of the New England cottontail, the only rabbit native to this area and an endangered species in New Hampshire that needs early successional habitat to survive.

Once common, the population has shrunk, with approximately 13,000 New England cottontails left and within a much smaller range, which includes southern New Hampshire. In recent years, a broad coalition of partners throughout NH, ME, CT, NY, MA, and RI have worked together with the goal of increasing the suitable habitat for the cottontail and increasing their population in order to keep the species off of the federal Endangered Species list.

New England cottontails are most threatened by a loss of habitat, resulting from increased development as well as the maturation of thousands of acres of forests that no longer contain the dense thickets the cottontail needs to stay out of grasp from predators. As this property is conserved forever and owned by SELT, it offers a reliable landowner and location to create and maintain rabbit habitat on the landscape and help the New England cottontail continue to remain in the area.

And that's what the management efforts with the brontosaurus are all about: creating that habitat that the cottontail would be eager to call home, turning sections of those old woods into a thicket and, eventually, a young, healthy forest to support our region's wildlife as well as a rabbit that needs a little help.



New England cottontail

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## Questions, Comments, Concerns?

To contact SELT, please call **603-778-6088** or email [info@seltnh.org](mailto:info@seltnh.org).

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## **Ardnaberry: We Need This Place**

*see page 1*

## **IRAs Offer Unique Giving Advantages**

*see page 6*

## **The Plot Thickets: Making a Rabbit Habitat**

*see page 7*

# **See Your Impact in Action!**



SELT STAFF

Discover the exciting opportunities to connect to nature and engage with SELT's mission to save, share, and steward the lands we love!

### **Events Sampler**

**SELT Book Club with Guest Host Mary Magnusson: *Diary of a Teenage Naturalist* by Dara McAnulty**  
January 12, 2022 • 5–6 pm •  
SELT Office, 6 Center Street, Exeter, NH

**Outdoor I LOVE Nature Crafts for Kids!**  
Monday, February 14, 2022 • 10 am •  
Burley Farms, Epping, NH

Check out our website for all the upcoming field trips and events and register today for your next outdoor adventure!

Visit [seltnh.org/events](https://seltnh.org/events)  
to register!