

The UNDERSTORY

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

FALL 2023

Clean water starts here.





The Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire (SELT) saves, shares, and stewards land for the benefit of people and nature in southeast New Hampshire. SELT serves 52 towns and cities of greater Rockingham and Strafford counties and has conserved more than 25,000 acres since 1980, including nature preserves, hiking trails, farmland, and scenic vistas.

SELT relies on its annual contributing members, committed Board of Directors, talented staff, and dedicated volunteers to keep advancing critical conservation initiatives in our region.

Our Mission

To protect and sustain the significant lands in our communities for clean water, outdoor recreation, fresh food, wildlife, and healthy forests.

Our Vision

Conserved lands in every community, sustaining people and nature.

Contents

- 3** A Trip to Remember
- 4** No Water No City
- 10** Conservation Coming Down the Pike
- 12** Answering The Call
- 18** Kid-Powered, Mother Nature Approved
- 24** For the Birds
- 28** The Trailblazer
- 31** We're going ponding!
- 32** Connect with SELT's Mission!

The Understory is the annual magazine of SELT, the Southeast Land Trust of NH. Written and photographed by David Johnson and Jerry Monkman. Designed by David Johnson and Cathy Arakelian. Edited by Brian Hart, Jean Dill, and Lizzy Franceschini.

A Trip to Remember

This summer I filled one of the biggest buckets on my bucket list. For some time, our family has dreamt of going on a cross-country trip to see as many National Parks as we could. Unfortunately, logistics and timing have always conspired against us.

But 2023 was the year it all came together, and our intrepid family was off on an epic road trip. In what didn't feel like nearly enough time to see it all, we hit 11 national parks – some of the true high points our country has to offer: the Badlands, Sequoia, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and so much more.

Thankfully, I don't have any Clark Griswold-like tales of vacation malfunction. What we did come away with was a backpack stuffed with memories, more miles on our odometer than I care to admit, and enough photos to fill three hard drives.

For me, through every new vista I had the chance to experience – new landscapes, new natural communities, new scenic views – I came away with this realization: our country is full of amazing, diverse special places. And more often than not, each of these places was protected in response to a group of citizens advocating for the permanent protection of the natural beauty, unique geology, or scenery of these places.

I also witnessed widespread development on a scale that is incomprehensible in our New Hampshire. As development and inappropriate uses are ever inching outward, fragmenting and shrinking our wild landscapes to ever smaller tracts, protecting those places is more important than ever.

I've always been enamored with our neck of the woods, but gaining the unique perspective that comes from a country-wide adventure, I am as confident as ever that our work – made possible by you – is more important than ever. In our relatively small slice of real estate, we have it all: rolling farmland, sturdy forests, picturesque shoreline, crystal-clear lakes, and majestic mountains. And to enjoy and benefit from these lands and sustain the fabric of our communities, we must act now. And thankfully, because of your support, we are.

Which brings me to one more trip takeaway: I am so grateful to you, our friends, neighbors, partners, and donors, for coming together to save, share, and steward these valuable lands. Our work doesn't happen without the support of our community – the like-minded conservationists that make our mission a reality – and the jewel that is southeast New Hampshire shines that much brighter because of you!

Warm regards,



Brian Hart
Executive Director, SELT



NO WATER NO CITY

The Rochester Water Works team carries forward a legacy of conservation-powered, forward-thinking H₂O protection and SELT is proud to partner with them on a journey that connects the past to the present – and ensures a future of clean water.

BELOW: A map of the City of Rochester in 1877. RIGHT: Rochester, today.
JOHN GISIS PHOTOGRAPHY



Ian Rohrbacher is proud.

You can tell in the way he talks about the goings-on at the Rochester Water Treatment Plant, or when he fires off kudos to the crew who help him pull the levers, test the levels, and maintain the overall flow of day-to-day water delivery.

As the Water System Superintendent for the City of Rochester, Ian – along with his incredible team – has one of the most important responsibilities there is. (You could easily make the argument that there's no more important job in civilization.)

"We have a saying," he says. "No water, no city."

Water plant operators are like offensive linemen in the NFL. You'll rarely notice them when they're doing their job, and the offense is humming, and water is clean and plentiful.

But when the quarterback is plastered at midfield or what comes out of your kitchen faucet has the consistency of steak sauce, well, it's a full-blown crisis.

"As a superintendent, I have a statutory obligation of being the primary operator," he says. "A primary operator is responsible for the entire public water utility, from source to tap, storage protection, treatment delivery, and all that good stuff."

"Good stuff" is doing a lot of heavy lifting here. The sheer amount of science and vigilance required to ensure a) water pours out when the handle is turned and b) drinking said water won't make you violently ill, is more than a vocation.

"It's a lifestyle," Ian says. "The system can never shut down. As staff, we enjoy our jobs. We are invested in it and see ourselves as servants and leaders."



That leadership is laced into the DNA of Ian's forebearers, the hydro jockeys from the Rochester of yesteryear who have been ahead of the curve for over 150 years.

"Back in 1870, there was no treatment needed because the water was so clean," Ian says. "All they had to do back then was to screen the eels and the turtles out and let the water go right into the system."

Things are just a bit more advanced now. The control center looks like something you'd find on the bridge of the USS Enterprise, which makes sense when your apparatus is responsible for keeping a community of over 33,000 people hydrated, cooled off, and healthy.

With responsibility as hefty as that, you'd

expect the tech to measure up. But this is a secret sauce to what makes Rochester's water protection legacy so renowned: and it's about as analog as it gets.

Dirt.

And branches and roots and shrubs. Basically, all the forest contours that make up the wild topography surrounding Rochester's most important water supplies – the watershed that filters the rainfall and runoff that recharge the reservoirs.

"Basically, we have a series of cascading reservoirs that were set up a century ago," Ian says. "The water flows from the upper watershed down to the Rochester Reservoir, where we pump it. That's the trip water makes before it gets to the facility, traveling



The Water Works crew stand guard at the Rochester Reservoir. Left to right: Dan Proulx, Ian Rohrbacher, Zeke Lapiere, and Caleb Schag.

through all these channels and mixing and filtering on the way down.”

Protecting this precious land was how the Rochester water crew from days gone by kept the H₂O clean. This approach has been carried out through the last 100+ years, putting the Lilac City at the forefront of the conservation/clean-water calculus.

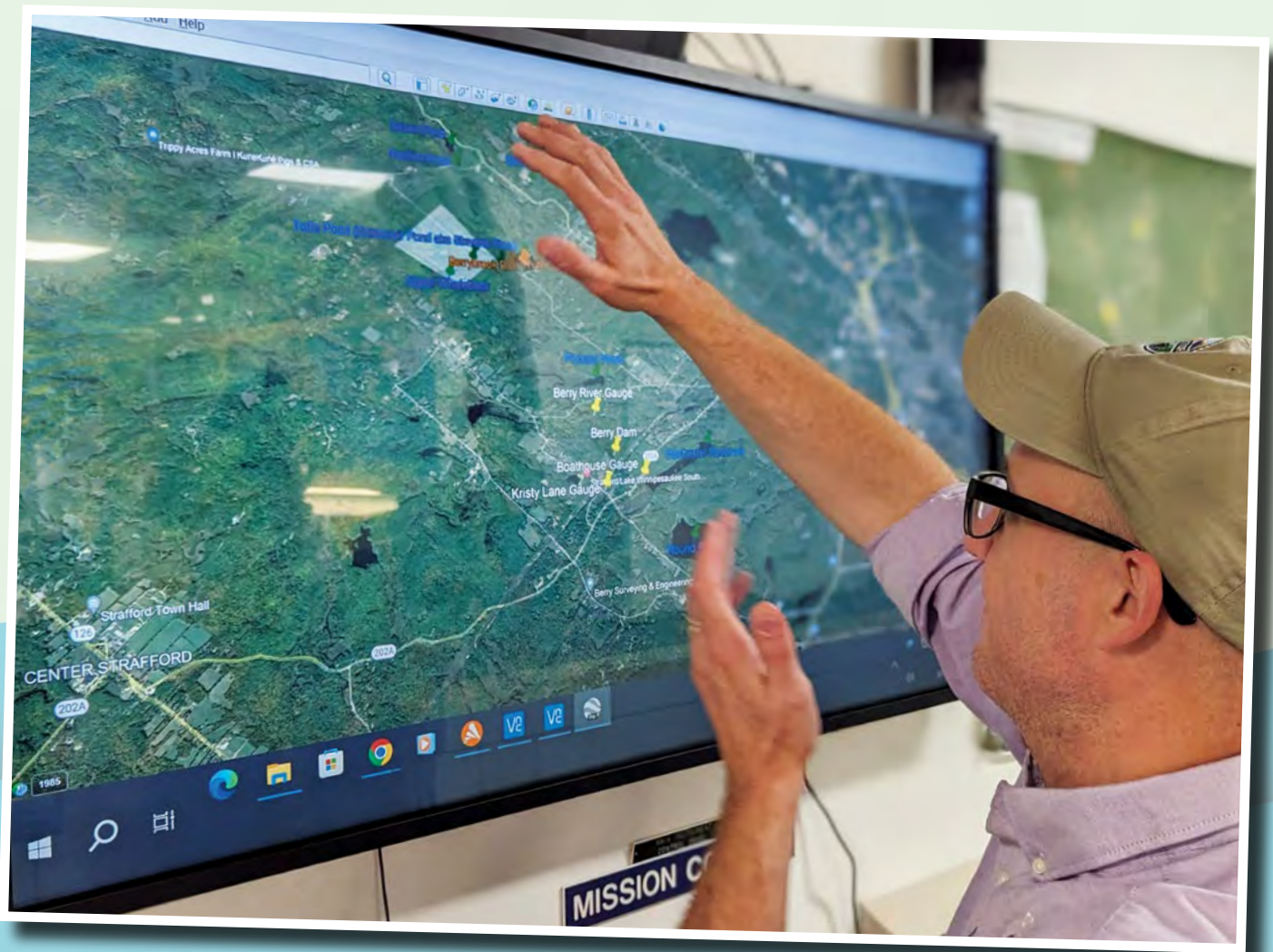
What about the next 100 years?

For a growing municipality like Rochester (the city’s population has grown 10 percent over the last ten years), scouting for the future water supplies is just as important as treating what is currently there. Identifying

potential wellheads, looking at lands that abut untapped water bodies – all this activity and investment are designed to future-proof the city for looming aqua-needs.

And that’s where SELT comes in. As one of Rochester’s go-to conservation partners, SELT and its conservation team have been active over the years identifying and conserving high-value parcels of land that lie within current – and future – watersheds.

“Having an organization like SELT that’s able to make the conservation pieces fit is great,” Ian says. “They help us leverage projects so it’s not just the water department that wants it. We can say that ‘this is a great



Ian and his team have a 24-hour, real-time readout of the status of Rochester’s water treatment network.

opportunity because the landowner wants to conserve it or maybe there are trails on it. But this land will also protect future utilities downstream.”

As recently as last year, SELT worked with the City of Rochester to conserve two important properties, permanently protecting more than 70 acres along the Salmon Falls River, an important regional water supply. These properties connect with two other lands conserved by SELT, forming a daisy chain of watershed protection.

All said, the Rochester/SELT relationship has led to over 350 acres of conserved lands to support the city’s current drinking water

operation – and its future.

Outside of the rear entrance of the Rochester Water Treatment Plant sits a spindly, oxidized thingamajig, mounted on a slab of concrete, in an apparent place of prominence.

What is this hunk of junk that apparently deserves such reverence?

“That is an original upper intake screen for the Berry River from the 19th century,” Ian says.

An oxidized oddity to some. To others, like Ian, it’s a monument to prescient clean water delivery, historic H₂O engineering, and an evergreen truth: no water, no city. ■



Ian Rohrbacher points to an original upper intake screen from the 19th century, an important artifact in Rochester Water Works history.

Protecting Clean Water at the Source

Last year, SELT closed on two conservation easements in Rochester, permanently protecting more than 70 acres along the Salmon Falls River, an important drinking water supply for several downstream municipalities including Somersworth, NH and Berwick, Maine.

One of the easements was donated by landowners Zach and Joanne Pallas, who wished to leverage their gift to help protect an adjacent parcel now owned by the City of Rochester. In turn, the City agreed to donate a conservation easement to SELT on their land, expanding the block of conserved land along the river to more than 86 acres.

“Treatment plants and the people who operate them do a great job to make drinking water safe today, but new contaminants continue to emerge, and changes in land use inevitably change the quality of the water in rivers and lakes,” said Paul Susca, Administrator of Drinking Water and Groundwater Planning at NH Department of Environmental Services, which made a significant contribution to the conservation project. “Protecting water supply lands such as these parcels along the Salmon Falls River is the best way to ‘future-proof’ our water supplies.”

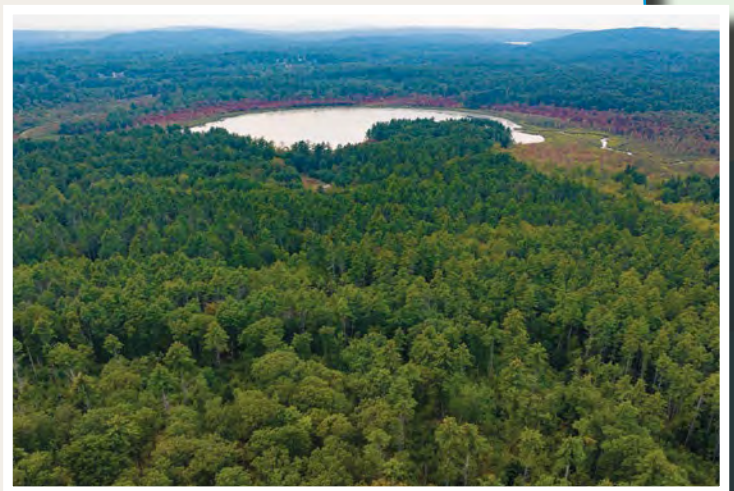
What’s On Tap

This year SELT is partnering with municipalities from Portsmouth to Manchester to permanently conserve public water supply lands. For instance, with Portsmouth, SELT will protect the 45-acre Fernald forest, with more than 3,900 feet of shoreline on the Bellamy Reservoir, which provides over 50% of the public water supply for Portsmouth and surrounding communities. The Fernald easement is the third project SELT and the City of Portsmouth have partnered to safeguard the City’s water supply.

In nearby Durham, SELT helped the Town acquire the Pike property, adjacent to the water intake on the Lamprey River (see full story on next page).

And further west, plans are moving forward to conserve the 77-acre Eaton property that abuts an existing SELT conservation easement and a massive block of conservation lands. This partnership with the Town of Auburn, Manchester Water Works, and the US Natural Resource Conservation Service’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program advances Manchester Water Works long-term strategy to protect the Massabesic Lake watershed, which supplies water to over 159,000 people.

“Protecting important water supply lands is one of SELT’s primary goals,” says Jeremy Lougee, Senior Conservation and Farmland Project Manager. “These efforts often spin off a multitude of other conservation benefits like securing important wildlife habitat, conserving a family farm, or adding to an existing community trail network. Our partnerships with Rochester and other communities are successful because they aim to protect clean water at the source. In that way, we all tend to think about these issues with the long-term view in mind.”



The Eaton property in Auburn.

JERRY MONKMAN-ECOPHOTOGRAPHY

An aerial photograph of a forest with a mix of green and autumn-colored trees. In the upper right, a green golf course is visible. The sun is shining from the top left, creating a lens flare effect.

Conservation Coming Down the Pike

There's 36 acres - and there's *36 acres*. The Pike property is the latter, a small but mighty land that protects the drinking water for the Town of Durham and UNH, gives shelter to valuable wildlife, and connects to a tapestry of conserved land.

In the 1920s, the Pike family from Boston would caravan to Durham to spend their summer days. The bucolic property had everything anyone would look for: open fields, shady forests, and plenty of frontage on the Lamprey River.

Now, over a century later, Bonnie Pike has worked with SELT and the Town of Durham to ensure this land, steeped in family history and natural resource value, has been protected forever.

In July, following a three-year process, the paperwork was completed, the easement was filed, and Bonnie exhaled a sign of relief: the long journey was completed and the property that meant so much to her personally and to her late husband Wilson had been conserved. (Durham owns the land and SELT holds the conservation easement.)

“For me it’s a win/win,” Bonnie says. “I’m able to conserve this property and preserve the character of the area and Durham gains an important land for their water protection.”

Indeed, that’s what makes the Pike property so valuable. At 36 acres, it may not necessarily wow with sheer size, but what it may not have in quantity, it 100% makes up for in quality.

Beyond valuable wildlife habitat and vernal pools teeming with life in the spring season, the property’s proximity to the federally designated Wild and Scenic Lamprey River makes it immensely valuable in its own right.

The true kicker is its fit into the patchwork of nearly 400 acres of contiguous conserved land, specifically how it fills in a gap between the SELT-conserved and Town-owned 54-acre Thompson Forest on one side and the SELT held conservation easement on the Burrows tract on the other side.

This is of particular importance as the Thompson Forest – and now the Pike property – sit so close to the water intake pipe and pump station where the Durham-UNH water system withdraws water to service the town and university community with drinking water.

“This isn’t just any old 36 acres,” says Duane Hyde, SELT’s Land Conservation Director. “The adage of ‘dilution is the solution to pollution’ does not work in such proximity to a drinking water intake. Conserving this land is very important to keeping a clean water source available to the Town and University.”

Conservation almost always requires strong partnerships and SELT not only worked closely with the Town of Durham to conserve the Pike property, but also several state and federal funding sources which included the State of New Hampshire’s Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund, the State’s Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund Program, the US Natural Resource Conservation Service’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership. ■



Duane Hyde, SELT’s Land Conservation Director, Bonnie Pike, and Gail Jablonski, Business Manager for the Town of Durham.



Bats across North America are facing an existential threat. And the losses in New Hampshire have been especially staggering.

But hope is not lost.

Using the tools in our utility belt – land protection, stewardship, research, awareness – we can band together to help these winged sentinels once again take flight in the night sky.

**ANSWER
THIS**



RING E CALL



There are few jobs on the face of the planet that sound less appealing than “spelunking bat swabber.” Just imagine: gearing up head-to-toe in personal protection equipment, strapping on your lighted helmet, and descending deep into the moist, pitch-black void of a cave.

Next, you’re doing the exact opposite of what 99% of the human population has hardwired into their DNA: actively seeking out a colony of sleeping bats.

And that’s the easy part. You see, once you have hopscotched the slippery rocks, zig-zagged around guano deposits, and ducked and dodged unforeseen outcroppings, the true not-for-the-faint-of-heart task awaits.

Quietly, you sneak up to one of the slumbering bats – ever careful not to disturb the colony and unleash a leather-winged cyclone of

squealing and flapping – and slowly, oh so slowly, remove your cotton swab and gently wipe the bat’s snout.

After a few more swipes of the wings and forearms, you stow your swab and creep back out toward daylight, exiting the dark recesses of the cave. Your mission is complete. You carry back your precious snot-filled cargo, its destination a laboratory where test-taking awaits, and answers are sought.

You see, friend, the swab you carry is more than a simple cotton-stick: it is the lance of Nature’s Pugilist, and you wield it with purpose and precision.

Because we are in conflict against a formidable foe, who, if left unchecked, will lay waste to a key member of our ecosystem.

The Battle for our Bats has begun.

ABOVE: A little brown bat takes flight. RIGHT: Reaching bats in their headquarters offers a dark, damp adventure.

“Bats are awesome.”

So says Sandi Houghton, Wildlife Diversity Biologist for New Hampshire Fish and Game. If anyone can make that claim, she can, as she has built a professional life in the world of biology and knows the voluminous benefits bats bring to the terra firma table.

Now, if you were to rank the forest creatures people would most enjoy having a face-to-face encounter with, bats would likely slot somewhere below “cranky mountain lion.”

Let’s face it: bats just aren’t built for snuggles.

But Sandi knows. She knows bats are vital to a healthy natural world and their absence would unleash dastardly repercussions. They are 100% in the “you-won’t-miss-them-until-they’re-gone” category of wildlife.

“I don’t think people understand how small they are,” she says. “As with the case with any wildlife, just try to avoid direct contact. They don’t want to be in your living space as much as you don’t want them there!”

What bats lack in girth, they more than make up for in voracious appetite.

Their ability to gulp up massive amounts of insects (often in the thousands per day!) is unmatched when it comes to efficiency and effectiveness; they’re heavyweight eaters dominating the featherweight division.

“They’re consuming up to their body weight on a given night,” Sandi says, “and even more than that if they are nursing. Bats are eating right off the vegetation and leaves, swooping down to capture the insects.”

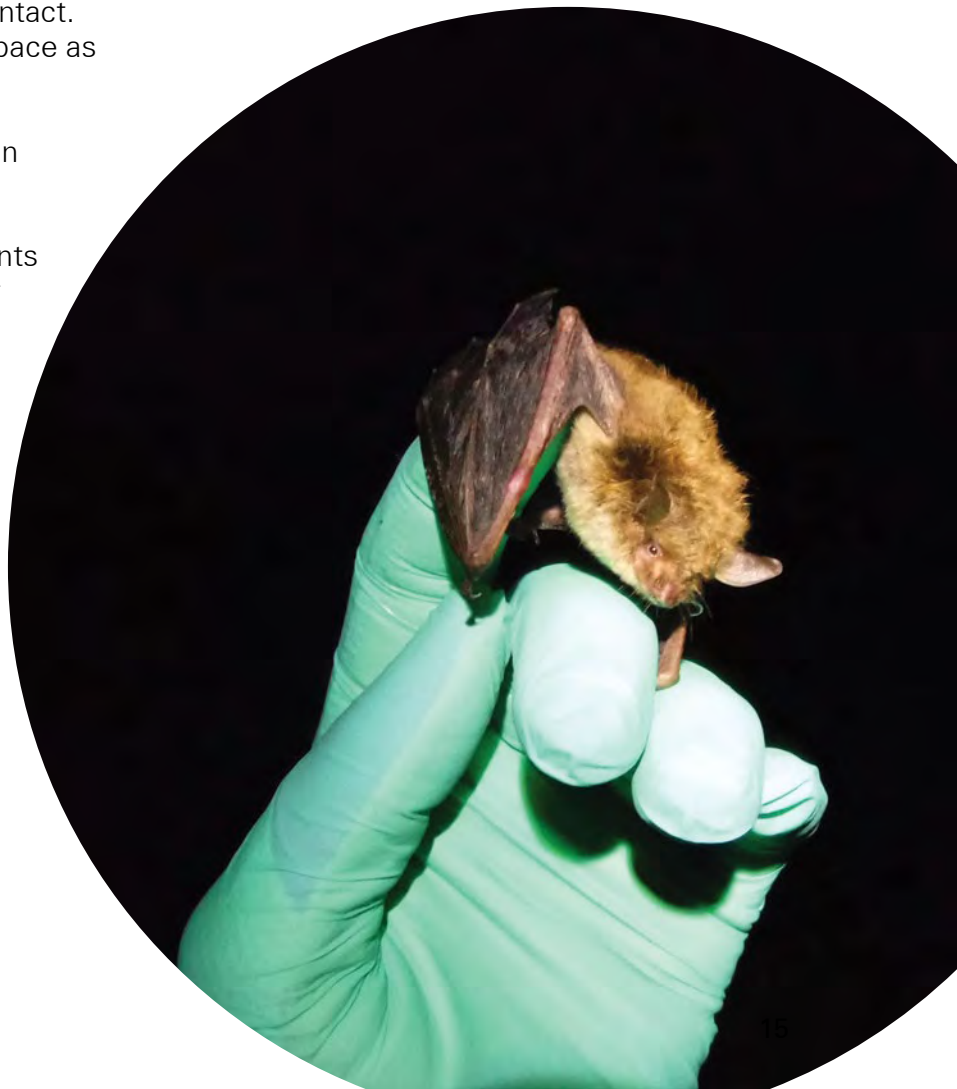
Not only do these arthropod appetizers include mosquitoes but bats also ingest a variety of harmful pests that can wreak havoc on crops.

In fact, studies estimate that bats save up to \$1 billion a year in crop damage by devouring pests.

Add to this their pollination abilities (they can pollinate flowers that only open at night as well as over 300 species of fruit!), the case for bats being awesome is voluminous.

Which is why their rapid disappearance is one of our greatest ecological travesties.

White Nose Syndrome (WNS) was first documented in New Hampshire in 2009. Caused by an invasive European fungus that grows in cool and muggy conditions – i.e., places like caves and mines where bats hibernate – WNS has devastated bat populations across North America, including New Hampshire.





According to a recent study in Conservation Biology, WNS has killed a staggering 90% of northern long-eared, little brown and tri-colored bat populations in less than ten years.

The fungus is especially pernicious, as it is easily spread from place to place. When it infiltrates a habitat, the fungus attaches itself to the bat, growing on its nose, ears, wings, and tails. It acts as an irritant, waking up the bat from its slumber during its hibernation period, and forcing it to burn through its fat stores. With its reserves depleted, the bat will eventually starve to death.

In New Hampshire, the little brown bat and the northern long-eared bat have suffered the

most losses, suffering “dramatic declines” as Sandi notes. How dramatic?

Four of the five bat species that hibernate in the Granite State are listed as state Endangered, and in January, the US Fish and Wildlife Service just reclassified the northern long-eared bat from Federally Threatened to Federally Endangered.

These types of classifications are a factor in governing SELT’s forest management activities; Staff check in with the NH Natural Heritage Bureau and NH Fish and Game help to help inform management decisions using the best available intel for the project area.

ABOVE: The signs and symptoms of White Nose Syndrome can be obvious for affected bats.
RIGHT: Shagbark hickory, like this tree found at Stonehouse Forest in Barrington, offers quality bat accommodations.

“We have to be constantly vigilant about emerging threats to wildlife,” says Deborah Goard, Stewardship and Land Engagement Director for SELT. “Our stewardship practices are often guided by the protection and encouragement of habitat and with the way White Nose Syndrome has decimated bat populations in New Hampshire, being able to adapt our approach is paramount. Bats are critical to a healthy ecosystem.”

“Several New Hampshire bat species will roost in loose tree bark and in tree cavities,” said Chad Fierros, Forest and Wildlife Habitat Manager for SELT. “Forest management that favors retention of large, mature trees and older forests is favorable for summer roosting for bats. Managing for these types of habitats is an important component of SELT’s stewardship approach, and doing so with summer roosting in mind helps give the bats, and especially their offspring, the best chance to thrive during warmer months. If more bats remain healthy until winter, more may end up surviving the winter.”

If you’re a landowner, there is a role for you to play in The Battle for the Bats: if you plan on doing any forest or wildlife management on your property, follow guidance from the US Fish & Wildlife and talk to your forester; when possible, don’t evict any bats that have made a home in your barn; and stay out of caves and mines in the winter, so as not to disrupt any hibernating bats (really, steering clear of abandoned mines is generally good life advice, regardless).

There is a sliver of good news here: thanks to efforts from entities like UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Fish and Game – as well as the hardy Bat-Nose Swabbers – WNS is getting tracked and bat populations are getting counted each year. Has there been any kind of bat-bounce-back? The answer is “yes,” but with a massive caveat: the climb back up to historic populations is ridiculously steep.

“We are seeing more little brown bat colonies being reported,” Sandi says. “Any recovery is

going to be slow and uncertain because it’s been such a dramatic decline. There are tiny glimpses of hope, and we’re excited about it, but we’re not out of the woods.”

So, yes, we’re still in the woods. But through continued land conservation that protects habitat, thoughtful stewardship to encourage wildlife health, and collaboration with like-minded allies and landowners across the region, there is a slow, tough path out of those dark and dreary woods, to a reality where our bats are thriving once again, and they finally get the respect they deserve. ■





A photograph of a forest scene. In the foreground, a large, thick, brown tree branch with rough bark extends horizontally across the frame. Behind it, several thinner tree trunks and branches are visible, some in focus and some blurred. The ground is covered with brown leaves and twigs, suggesting a forest floor. The background is a soft-focus view of a path leading into a dense forest of green trees.

**KID-POWERED,
MOTHER NATURE
APPROVED**

For a group of nature-defending, power-tool-curious fifth graders, getting outside and using their hands to benefit the living landscape of Stonehouse Forest is as great a school day as you could ask for.

There is activity up ahead. Faint voices ring out from the far reaches of Stonehouse Forest in Barrington. As you navigate through the foliage, those voices intermingle with other sounds: whirring, banging, clanging – the time-tested soundtrack to good old-fashioned manual labor.

The site of this cacophony is the recently constructed “Boulder Trail,” which connects the Stonehouse Pond kiosk to the iconic swimming boulder that sits on the shore of Stonehouse Pond and has long been a go-to spot for epic cannonballs.

Today, the trail is buzzing. Volunteers zigzag about, hauling branches and hanging signs, driving nails and drilling holes. But it’s not the usual crew working on the land. Not corporate volunteers, or local service organizations, or even SELT’s skilled team of volunteer land stewards.

Nope, today, it’s fifth graders – and they’re crushing it.

“This is our ‘service-palooza’ project,” says Dianne Pelletier, a fifth-grade teacher at Oyster River Middle School and one of the leaders for today’s expedition. “The entire Oyster River Middle School of over 600 students is participating in community service today. Our team chose to come here to Stonehouse Pond to help protect this beautiful area.”

The volunteer day represents the culmination of a unique education project the class had undertaken; the “Trout in the Classroom” program gives students the opportunity to

raise their own trout in a class setting, then release them into a nearby body of water. (The program is sponsored by SELT conservation and stewardship partners Trout Unlimited and New Hampshire Fish and Game Department).

That nearby body of water? Stonehouse Pond, of course. So, for Phase 1 of the Oyster River Stonehouse Forest Adventure, the class brought their nurtured, fully-grown brook trout to the pond and released them into their new home.

“We’re here to clean up the trails to help make the pond healthier for the trout we raised,” said Caroline, an Oyster River fifth grader.

Following the trout release, the Oyster River crew segued into part 2 of their outdoor experience: hard work! And judging by the number of grins, the high-octane activity, the eagerness to try out new tools, and the rapt attention paid toward Yohann Hanley, SELT’s Trails and Community Engagement Manager, some dirt-under-the-fingernails is precisely what this group was all about.

And the task at hand?

“We are working on creating a revegetation area around the end of the dam at the Fish and Game boat launch.” Yohann says. “People have been coming across the dam to get to the swimming area and the foot traffic has stripped the understory of the forest behind us.”

Which is not what you want. The disappearance of the vegetation and lower forest structure that makes up the understory opens the door for erosion, which degrades the shoreline





area over time, keeps new shoreline plants from growing, and exposes tree roots and degrades/compacts soil.

“This is a popular area with each person’s footsteps having an impact,” said Chad Fierros, SELT’s Forest and Wildlife Habitat Manager. “It’s difficult to keep your foot from sliding at least once when walking on those slopes and each time that happens, it sloughs away topsoil, a crucial part of the forest that takes many decades to re-accumulate.”

The Boulder Trail not only makes access direct

and more convenient (and separates swim traffic from the nearby fly-fishing/boating area owned and managed by NH Fish & Game), but it also reduces impact on the surrounding, sensitive habitat.

So, the Oyster River team is hanging signs and roping off sensitive habitats to guide the users where they need to go.

“We’re putting big sticks and smaller sticks down over there so people won’t walk on that part anymore and the plants can grow back,” says Oyster River fifth-grader Finnian.



Marking the new swimmers' trail is their primary duty, as the team has fanned out along the length of the path to install all the necessary directions to get users from Point A to Point Boulder.

You know what that means: *power tools*. Truly – the clarion call of torque knows no age restrictions and Diane's detachment of eager middle schoolers were vying for the opportunity to fire up one of the DeWalts and go to town.

"The academics we have been talking about

in the classroom now have their practical application here," Diane says. "The kids can come out here and really have hands-on experiences of why learning all those science concepts is important. And for the community service part, this opportunity develops leadership skills and empowers the students to want to do good in the places where they live. Plus, it's a really great way to spend a school day."

Finnian puts it this way:

"It beats math." ■



Tailwinds



For the Birds

Linda, Susan, and Sarah knew there was a need in the community for live bird education. So they drew upon their volunteer experience, their community connections (like SELT!), and their love for wildlife to create an en-raptor-ing experience.

Greta may be the only turkey vulture in the Northeast who has her own rocking horse.

It's put to good use too. Often, she will jump from her window-view perch and go for a quick rock. Maybe she'll fine-tune her ripping and tearing technique by using her powerful beak on the fabric, taking out tufts of stuffing. It's also one of her favorite places for lunch, usually a smorgasbord of ragged mouse and rat parts.

No one is entirely sure why Greta loves that rocking horse, but they do know it suits her colorful personality and her roommate, George – a quiet, statue-still barred owl that observes these shenanigans with a bemused look (the standard expression for owls) – doesn't seem to mind.

That's just a snapshot in the Tailwinds scrapbook. Founded by Linda Noon, Susan Willoughby, and Sarah Kern, Tailwinds provides educational programming about native raptors, which are birds of prey, carnivores with hooked beaks and sharp talons.

And though Tailwinds has been around for less than a year, their dance card has filled up fast with schools and organizations lining up to get a look at their avian magic.

"We want to educate," Linda says. "We want people to have those 'oh wow' moments because many have never seen a bird up close like that or been given the opportunity to learn about their biology, behavior, nesting habits, and habitat and conservation needs."

Tailwinds materialized when Linda, Susan, and Sarah realized there was a void in the region for raptor education with non-releasable raptors. All three founders have significant raptor rehabilitation and community outreach experience – and the fact that Linda and Susan were friends and literal neighbors in Kensington added up to this brand-new adventure.

"I got really hooked on being close to these birds," Susan says. "And because Linda and I were neighbors and we already got along really well, it was a perfect fit."

With Sarah as the third piece to the puzzle, bringing her twenty plus years of educational experience to the table, the three were ready to journey into the great unknown of creating a new business from scratch, getting all the



necessary permits (Tailwinds holds Federal and NH State permits for education and exhibition of raptors), designing collateral, and eventually building a home for the birds.

What would the future hold? Was this risk going to be worth it? Is there actually a niche for raptor education and rehabilitation? The answer was a resounding yes.

“After we got settled in and got going, I had to do a lot of outreach,” Linda says. “But I have not needed to do any marketing now thanks to word of mouth.”

Word of mouth certainly spread following the summer 2023 “Vulture Culture” presentation Tailwinds put on at The Nan and George Mathey Center for People and Nature at Burley Farms to a standing-room only crowd.

“Many of our SELTies care deeply about wildlife,” said Lizzy Franceschini, SELT’s Outreach and Education Specialist. “Having Tailwinds come present at The Mathey Center drew people into our organization as they realize the connection to the birds, conservation, and our land.”

The connection between birds and conservation is inescapable and a reason why the Tailwinds trio boasts significant SELT DNA.

“It’s all about habitat for these species,” Linda says. “That habitat is just disappearing and so what SELT does is so important.”

“These birds need somewhere to live,” Susan adds. “And conservation is so important because they are losing those places.” ■



Susan and Linda, at home with their raptors.



The Trailblazer

Pam Hall, Board member, super-SELTie, and environmental engineering extraordinaire is all about encouraging others to become conservation superstars.

One day, years ago, Pam Hall heard a knock at her door. When she opened it, she found herself face-to-face with then-Senator Al Gore. He and a New Hampshire political contingent had been canvassing. Little did they know, the woman who answered their door knock was more than sympathetic to their green cause – Pam Hall was, in fact, on her way to becoming a leading figure in the realm of environmental sciences and local conservation.

Following an hour-long conversation at her dining room table, Al and his crew bid farewell, but not before pausing to look at the 24-foot dragon floatie sitting in Pam’s front yard, an ocean-going conveyance she and her family enjoyed. The next day, one of Al Gore’s staffers called Pam to ask where they could get their own dragon – the Senator wanted one to take his family down his favorite river in Tennessee.

Then – and now – this much remains true: Pam Hall inspires other people.

Now, Pam is as modest as they come, but she would be the first to admit her goal as a SELTie – both as a donor and as a Board member – is to set an example for others to follow.

“I think it’s so important to bring new people into SELT’s mission,” she says. “We’re a growing organization and if we can bring in others, they will in turn bring in their friends and family members.”

The equation is straightforward: more SELTies means more opportunities to connect people to nature. This creative nimbleness appeals to Pam in a big way; it taps into the entrepreneurial spirit that she has adopted

over more than 30 years, when she served as Chief Executive Officer of Normandeau Associates, a national environmental consulting firm that she joined in its nascent stages in 1971.

Not that she had always had “running a highly successful science company” in her playbook. In graduate school, she thought her career destination was going to be research and academia. But the momentum of the burgeoning political and cultural environmental movement in the early ‘70s, combined with her desire to make an impact in her community, led her on a different path, one towards applied sciences, and, eventually, another degree in business administration.

“I was really lucky,” she says. “I started working for Normandeau in 1971, and EPA had just formed the previous year. And the first Earth Day was in 1970 when I was in graduate school. The timing was perfect. I was able to work for a very small start-up company, using my academic training, and trying to address some of the many environmental problems at that time.”

When she wasn’t at the vanguard of the eco-business world, Pam was a vociferous volunteer, serving on the Boards of a variety of esteemed New Hampshire conservation organizations. Eventually she made her way to SELT’s board, the land trust active in her seacoast community.

And the rest is history. Pam is a first ballot SELTie Hall of Famer and has lent her expertise and experience to the organization’s strategic and programmatic direction during its most critical junctures.

She was a board member during SELT's move to Burley Farms in Epping and was an initial supporter of ATLAS (All-Terrain Learning Adventures), SELT's foray into nature-based education.

But her SELT philanthropic heart belongs to unrestricted support for operations.

"We all like to contribute to specific programs or land conservation projects, but we also need to grow the organization," she says. "We must contribute to operations through unrestricted giving, memberships, or annual giving. That's really, really important for future success."

Because the stakes are through the roof – Pam has the perspective and the frontline experience to know that conservation today is as critical as it has ever been, especially in the construction hotbed that is southeast New Hampshire.

"The development pressures are so high, so intense," she says. "And they're not lessening."

To help SELT evolve to meet these needs and champion the cause of unrestricted giving, Pam introduced the Conserve Together, New Hampshire Forever matching challenge. Her ambition, with her generous matching gift, is to draw in new donors who are looking to double the impact of their gifts and entice existing supporters to increase their giving to support SELT's critical and core work to save, share and steward the lands you love.

"I just wanted to find a way to raise more money and bring in new members, so we can move the organization forward," Pam says. "As SELT protects more land, adds needed programs such as nature-based education, and gets involved in local communities, it needs more staff and other resources to support operations. The need is now. The opportunity is now." ■

Conserve *together.* NH *forever.*

Still not a donor to SELT? Inspired by Pam to increase your unrestricted giving? Then Pam Hall's *Conserve Together, New Hampshire Forever* challenge match is for you! Your gift today will be instantly matched dollar-for-dollar!

The *Conserve Together, New Hampshire Forever* campaign supports SELT's mission of saving, sharing, and stewarding the lands we all love. Please give today to conserve scenic views, rural character, wildlife habitat, working farms, coastal and forest health, clean water, and trails for all.

Give securely at seltnh.org/conservetogether or return the enclosed remittance slip to see your impact doubled!

We're going ponding!



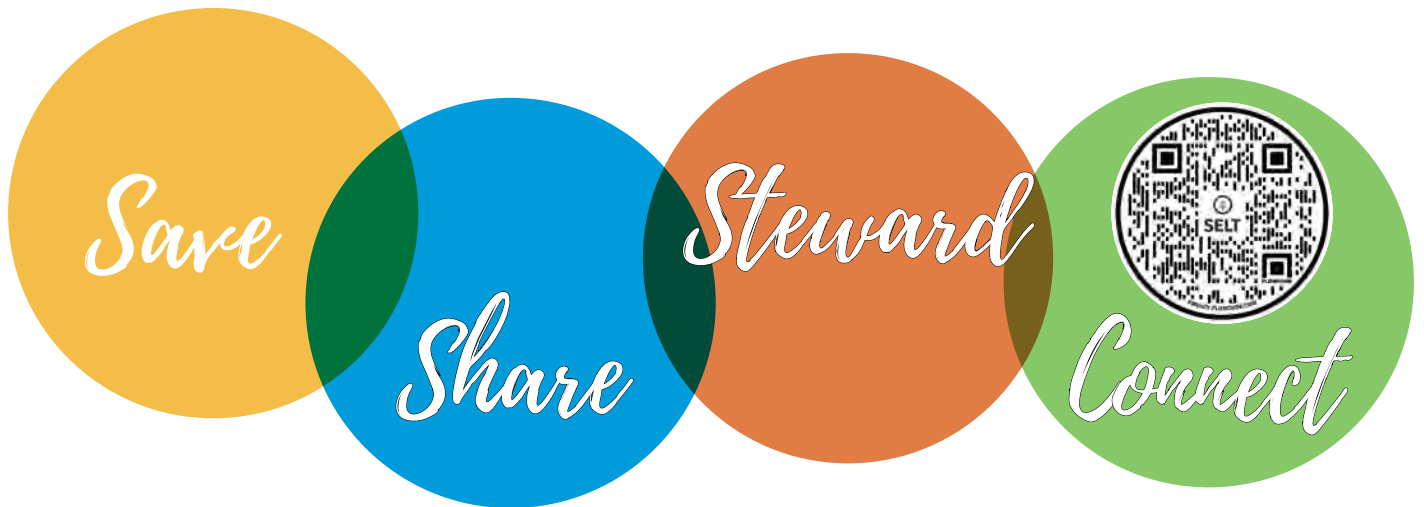
When it comes to up-close-and-personal experiences in the great outdoors, it doesn't get much better than heading out to a nearby pond with nets and buckets and looking for all the little critters zipping around below the surface.

Just ask the junior SELTies who explored the beaver pond at Burley Farms during an ATLAS field trip. How exciting to dip those nets into the water and pull out a living thing to look at – and maybe even touch!

"There's nothing like the thrill of a great frog hunt," says Lizzy Franceschini, SELT's Outreach and Education Specialist. "Our littlest SELTies especially love catching frogs and often show wonderful collaboration skills as they work together to find and catch them. A huge part of ATLAS is getting kids to fall in love with outdoor adventures, to not be afraid, to fully immerse themselves in the experience, and get wet and muddy and happy."



247 North River Road, Epping, NH 03042
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SAVE

SELT conserves the special places in our communities for clean water, outdoor recreation, fresh food, wildlife, and healthy forests. We do this through ownership and working with landowners to place conservation easements on their properties.

SHARE

Conservation is forever! SELT's team of stewardship staff and committed volunteers thoughtfully manage and monitor our properties – all to ensure these wonderful lands are cared for so that they can be treasured for generations.

STEWARD

What do these lands have in common? They are for all to enjoy! Whether it is the miles of trails, or the local farms producing fresh food, or the pure water flowing from your taps, SELT's properties are protected for the benefit of everyone in our communities.

CONNECT WITH SELT'S MISSION!

Join or Renew Today! Scan the code or visit seltnh.org