



MONADNOCK CONSERVANCY

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2014

NUMBER 57

Wildlife on West Hill

Your backyard, our priority; 675 acres
slated for conservation

By Brittany Ballantyne



Richard Popovic

Large mammals, such as this bobcat, thrive where there are large tracts of unfragmented land.



Stephen Gehlbach

Great blue herons need secluded wetlands to breed successfully.

Just beyond downtown Keene lies the largest undeveloped area in Cheshire County. Minutes away from Main Street storefronts and restaurants, great blue herons soar and bobcats prowl acres of quiet woods. It's only 2½ miles for a bird to fly from the city center to this wildlife haven.

You see the West Hill ridgeline as you drive into Keene, especially from the north or east — it defines this valley. Parts of West Hill have already been conserved, and now efforts are underway to protect West Hill in its entirety with conservation easements on an additional 675 acres in Keene, Swanzey and Chesterfield.

Diane Gibbons, author of "Mammal Tracks and Sign of the Northeast," once owned land on Old Swanzey Road in Chesterfield — land that is now slated to be conserved. The Gibbons parcel together with two other parcels total the 675 acres targeted for this project. Composed of 28 acres of wetlands and nearly four miles of streams, the area provides a safe space for wildlife and protects water resources.

West Hill is home to many wildlife species including mink, black bear, bobcat, beaver, gray and red fox, porcupine, moose, deer, great blue heron as well as plenty of other birds, reptiles and amphibians. In terms of wildlife habitat, West Hill and its surroundings are home to "virtually everything that's in this area," Gibbons said.

Anne McBride, land protection director for the Conservancy, explained that West Hill is the eastern anchor of the California Brook Natural Area, a conservation corridor extending

all the way to Pisgah State Park. "The goal is the permanent protection of these lands so that this corridor will forever be undeveloped and be a haven for wildlife," she said.

In his final report and survey of the land, ecologist Dr. Rick Van de Poll said, "Part of what characterizes the Monadnock region is the unspoiled views of the highlands, the clean waters and the abundance of wildlife. The California Brook Natural Area contains all of these attributes at present, and in many ways is typical of what the natural environment has to offer the residents of the Monadnock region."

McBride said West Hill is part of the largest area in southern New Hampshire where major roads don't cut through the land, "and because of that, wildlife really thrive here because they're not being disturbed by people" or infrastructure created by people.

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Help us conserve West Hill

The Conservancy needs to raise \$372,000 to ensure the protection of West Hill. We can only meet this goal with the support of you and your friends.

To support the West Hill project, please donate online at www.MonadnockConservancy.org/support-us/West-Hill.html or call Pat Payne, development manager, at 603-357-0600.

A moment to pause

Slowing down reminds us of our responsibility in nature and to those around us

By Marc Patterson



Marc Patterson

Marc Patterson of Jaffrey is a native New Englander and volunteers as a trail steward with the Conservancy as well as with the Jolly Rovers Trail Crew.

I was raised in the Shunock River watershed of coastal Connecticut before moving to mid-coast Maine in my teens, eventually settling in the Monadnock region during my late twenties, where I've now lived for over a decade. No matter where I've lived, my life has been defined by a deep connection to nature and the acknowledgement that I am as much a part of the natural landscape as the forests, rivers and wildlife.

North Stonington in Connecticut, where I spent my childhood, used to be a small town, not unlike many towns in the Monadnock region. With the construction of a major casino a few miles from my home, the landscape was altered dramatically. Farms turned into strip malls. Acres of forest, where we would play, hike and camp, were cleared for condos and housing developments. An influx of people, anxious for new jobs, changed the culture of the place as much as the new construction changed the physical face of the place. This was the first major realization of how much we humans make a significant impact, and that we are part of the natural landscape, even as unnatural as some of our actions seem. It also drove home the idea that when we conserve land we not only protect it from future development, but we also ensure our culture and communities remain intact. By conserving and preserving the natural landscape, we preserve and sustain ourselves.

Traveling Route 124 from Jaffrey to Marlborough, one moves along curvy winding roads with an array of stunning scenery of Mount Monadnock and the surrounding region. But at 50 miles per hour, one misses far more than he or she sees. Conservation

brings us to a place of slowing down, of seeing the unseen, of understanding our connection to the land more deeply. When we hike the many trails of this region we are presented with the opportunity to slow down, to engage with the environment beyond having a simple destination in mind. Each step is grounded in the present. We focus on the now and the reality that is in front of us. In my time as a volunteer trail steward for the Monadnock Conservancy, it didn't take long to start appreciating this region on a more profound level.

What became apparent was that when I go out into the forest, whether to camp, hike or to work on trails, I don't do it to disconnect or "get away from the world." Conversely, I do it to reconnect and plug in to what really matters. Life fills us with distractions from the truth that we are as much a part of nature as the deer, fox and ancient oaks. We are all made of the same stuff, the same biological matter. When my hands are rooted in the earth, moving stone for a step or grubbing out a new trail, I'm connecting with my past, present and future.

Conservation allows me to see the land and space around me as sacred, whether I'm in a village center, an open field or a young forest still maturing. It allows me to connect to my natural self, my wild mind, and reminds me of my obligations not only to the land, but also to the community and to the future. Through the practice of conservation we take a moment to pause, to stop living consumptively and to feed the element that is feeding us, acknowledging with mindfulness our reciprocal responsibility in nature and to those around us. 🌲

What does land conservation mean to you? We want to know!

Post your comments on our Facebook page.



MONADNOCK
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STAFF

Ryan Owens, executive director, *Walpole*; Anne McBride, land protection director, *Nelson*; Stacy Gambrel, conservation project manager, *Keene*; Emily Hague, stewardship director, *Keene*; Rick Brackett, land manager/GIS specialist, *Fitzwilliam*; Jim Bride, development director, *Dublin*; Patricia Payne, development and membership manager, *Hancock*; Katrina Farmer, communications manager, *Dublin*

www.MonadnockConservancy.org

Info@MonadnockConservancy.org

Upcoming events

You've been asking for more events, and we listened! Even more events will be added throughout the spring and summer; bookmark our online calendar at MonadnockConservancy.org.

Preview screening of Ken Burns film "The Roosevelts: An Intimate History" benefiting the Hooper Preservation Fund and the Walpole Historical Society

Thursday, June 19, 2014, at 7 p.m.

Premiering to general audiences on PBS in fall 2014, this film chronicles the lives of Theodore, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, three members of the most prominent and influential family in American politics. A portion of the proceeds goes directly toward purchasing a conservation easement on the Hooper property in Walpole. Purchase tickets in advance for reserved seating and/or pre-film reception with Ken Burns. Film shown at the Bellows Falls (Vt.) Opera House.

Hewes Hill hike

Sunday, June 22, 2014, from 9 a.m. to noon

Join us for a moderately strenuous hike up Hewes Hill in Swanzey, following the Tippin Rock Trail, with discussion of the notable geological features, and some bushwhacking. Co-sponsored with the Harris Center.



Katrina Farmer

Trail skills workshop

Saturday, July 12, and Sunday, July 13, 2014, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day

This two-day training at the Calhoun Family Forest in Gilsum will give you the skills needed to create and maintain hiking trails. Learn about tools and safety procedures, trail design and construction, and maintenance of timber bridges, stone steps, puncheons, turnpikes and switchbacks. \$10 registration fee applies.

Calhoun Family Forest pre-harvest tour

Friday, July 18, 2014, from 3 to 6 p.m.

Take a tour through the Conservancy's Calhoun Family Forest in Gilsum to see the areas marked for a timber harvest and learn about planning a harvest, improving timber quality and managing for wildlife habitat on your property.



Katrina Farmer

Easygoing paddle to Whittemore Island

Saturday, July 19, 2014, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Whittemore Island, at the center of Thorndike Pond in Jaffrey, has been protected since 1974, but only recently came under the ownership of the Conservancy. This guided outing introduces you to the island and its trails; BYOB (bring your own boat!).

Orchard Hill Breadworks pizza night fundraiser

Tuesday, July 22, 2014, from 5 to 8 p.m.

A fun, summer evening with a purpose: 100 percent of the profits after costs will go directly to the Conservancy. Come to Orchard Hill in Alstead to make your own gourmet pizzas, bake them in a wood-fired oven and then eat them outside while listening to live music. Bring friends and family, beverages and your pizza toppings of choice.

West Hill wander

Saturday, August 9, 2014, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Come learn why this nearly 700-acre area is so important, and why it is a priority for conservation. A moderately strenuous, 4-mile-loop hike will bring us to a remote beaver pond with a great blue heron nest on West Hill in Keene (see story on page 1).

Get more details by calling 603-357-0600 or go online: www.M MonadnockConservancy.org/news-events/calendar.html

Stacy Gambrel: conservation project manager

By Brittany Ballantyne



Brittany Ballantyne

Stacy Gambrel, the Monadnock Conservancy's recently hired conservation project manager, grew up in the suburbs of Detroit where she watched what was once farmland be developed into strip malls, roads and buildings. For this reason, she envisioned herself in a career that actively works to stop this from happening.

Now, she is doing just that and more. Stacy said her role at the Conservancy is not just about protecting land forever but also fostering community.

"I really want to make good connections with landowners. I want people to feel comfortable working with us and that they're making a good decision conserving their land. I want them to feel supported through the process," she said.

In her position, Stacy is responsible for cultivating and maintaining landowner relationships, managing land conservation transactions, collaborating with municipalities and other organizations, and evaluating potential conservation projects. A particular emphasis in her job will be to help refine and expand the Conservancy's farmland protection program, which is a priority of the organization's strategic plan.

Since starting the job in early March and moving to Keene, Stacy has already fallen in love with the area. "It's a really good fit for me, for my lifestyle," she shared, and spoke of how active people are enjoying the walkable city.

Stacy likes running along the rail trail in

Keene as well as hiking, but making the most of the outdoors is not new to Stacy, as she has done a three-day cycling trip in Maine, from the western part of the state to the coast, biking 180 miles for the American Lung Association.

Before coming to the Conservancy, Stacy lived and worked in Maine for 13 years where she served as a project manager for Maine Farmland Trust, assisting landowners with the process of conserving land. She holds a Bachelor of Science in urban and regional planning from Michigan State University and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Maine.

The Conservancy impressed her with the total amount of acres that have been protected, even though it is a smaller regional land trust. "This group also shows that it's mature," Stacy explained, "because it's been around 25 years, and I think you can really see that in the goals of the organization."

In regards to her upcoming projects, Stacy can't wait to start. "I am interested in seeing large acres protected.... There's definitely a deep-down, rewarding feeling that you get when you can drive by a property and think, 'I helped protect that.'"

SPRING CLEANING?

Give your unwanted items a new home!

Our office is in need of a few things, and we would be grateful for any donations:

Laptop computer

with battery in good condition, and preferably with Windows and Office 2010

Portable electronic devices

e.g., tablets, iTouch, pocket computers

Portable speakers

(not computer speakers)

Garmin GPS units

(any models)

Birdhouses on posts

for marking corners in easement fields

Binoculars

(any models)

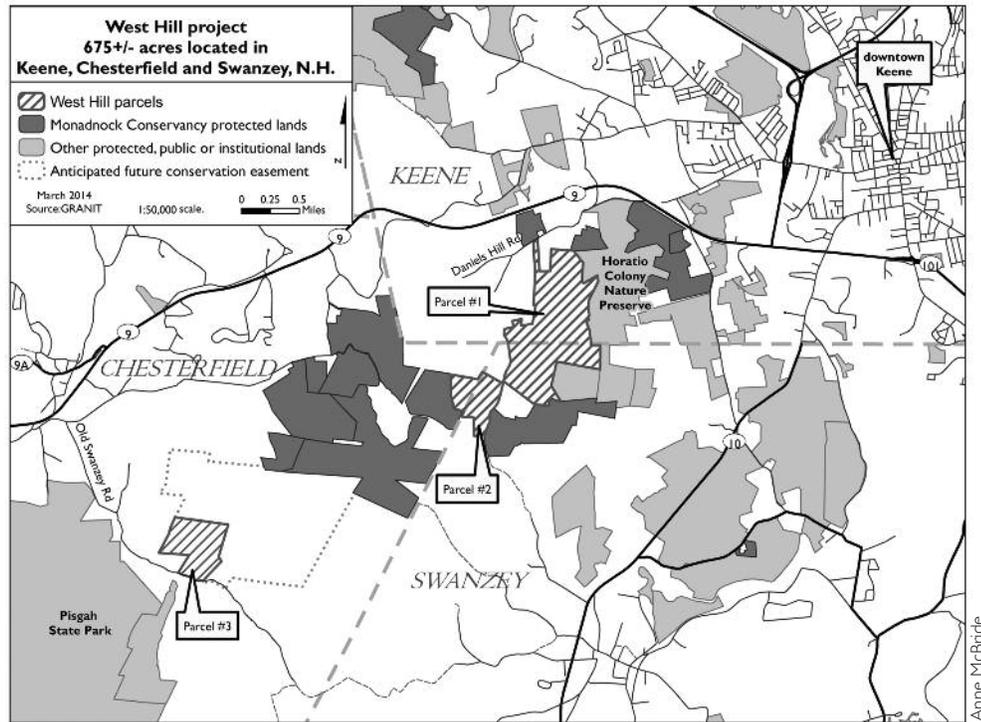
Drop off items at our office in Keene or call us at 603-357-0600 to arrange a pickup.

West Hill

continued from page 1



Stephen Gehlbach



Anne McBride

Since West Hill lies on unbroken property, “protecting it is very important, especially with the pressures of civilization pressing in on so many natural areas,” Gibbons said. “A lot of it is still fairly untraveled.”

When Gibbons and her husband first stumbled on their old property in the Chesterfield section of the California Brook Natural Area, she said she “just fell in love with it.” After purchasing the land, she began walking and mapping the area as well as writing in a journal about her experiences and keeping mental notes of the tracks she would come across.

“It’s a wonderful place for solitude and quiet, I would love to go and just listen to the wind, listen to the birds ... and just feel the connection with the natural world and the animals,” Gibbons shared.

Her first sighting of a beaver here is one of the most special memories she has of the outdoors. “There were a lot of experiences that were terrific, and the place is just loaded with wildlife and wildlife sign,” she said.

Gibbons explained that beavers are some of the most important animals to save as the flooded wetlands they create offer unique habitats for birds, amphibians and various types of mammals — but saving these beavers begins with saving the environment in which they thrive.

The parcel contains vernal pools, scenic views and the opportunity for others to enjoy the quiet moments Gibbons described. If the

area is not protected, though, there are no guarantees this natural wonder will stay for years to come.

McBride pointed out that the land has also been identified by multiple organizations and agencies as being a high priority for conservation. It is one of the most important tracts in the California Natural Brook Area to protect due to its large size and the fact that it directly connects two other blocks of conserved land. One such organization was the California Brook Working Group, composed of conservation commission members from Keene, Swanzey and Chesterfield; students and faculty from Antioch University New England; representatives from the Colony Memorial Trust, owners of the abutting 500-acre Horatio Colony Nature Preserve; and nonprofit conservation groups as well as citizens and landowners within the watershed. From the beginning, the group identified the West Hill parcels as a high priority, and now the Conservancy has taken on the role of preserving this land forever.

Gibbons has hopes for seeing the area conserved with as little intrusion as possible, because, “the more we turn everything into parking lots and malls and housing developments, I think we suffer at a very deep level. So, preserving places like the California Brook Natural Area are vitally important, not only to the earth and animals and plants and the diversity, but also to us.” 🌲



Anne McBride

Want to know first-hand what makes this property so special?

Join us for a hike on August 9; see event listing on page 3.

Welcome to our new members!

Ellen Adams, Walpole
 Whitney Aldrich, Walpole
 Sally J. & William J. Allen, Walpole
 Joanna Andros, Walpole
 Douglas Arotsky &
 Karen Sullivan, New Ipswich
 David & Robin Babin, New Ipswich
 William & Anne Batesole, Walpole
 James & Pamela Baucom, Walpole
 Candace Bergstrom, Stoddard
 Raymond A. Boas, Walpole
 Richard G. Boutwell, Jaffrey
 Mrs. Jane Bowry, Walpole
 Kathryn Bowry, Wellesley, Mass.
 Katie Brown, Walpole
 Elisabeth & Stephen Bryan, Walpole
 Jennifer Burr, Walpole
 Jacqueline Caserta, Walpole
 Laura & Noel Cassidy, Walpole
 Cummins & Susan Catherwood, Walpole
 Betsey Chickering, Walpole
 Carol Christian, Rydewood, Wash.
 Janet Clough, Alstead
 Sidney Craven, Walpole
 Tom Crouse & Kay Enokido, Walpole
 Steven Dalessio, Drewsville
 Leon Daniels, Walpole
 Alan & Matilde Duprey, Walpole
 Doreen Durand, Walpole
 David O. Durling, North Walpole
 James Dyer, Walpole
 Helen T. Emma, New Ipswich
 Marc & Sue Fillion, Walpole
 William S. & Catherine B. Fletcher, Walpole
 Merrilee Frable, Stoddard
 Barbara & Jack Fraunfelder, Walpole
 Karen Galloway, Walpole
 Paul Gauffin, New Ipswich
 Jennifer A. German, New Ipswich
 Christian & Holly Gowdy, Walpole
 Robert & Kerry Grenier, Walpole
 John J. Grignon, New Ipswich
 Carol Hamilton & Peter Johnson, Peterborough
 Jennifer D. Harris, North Walpole



Jim Bride

Members and supporters gathered last summer for a guided hike on Dublin's Beech Hill.

Jack & Stephanie Heddon, Walpole
 Marilyn S. Hicks, Walpole
 Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Hodgkins, Walpole
 Steven L. Horton &
 Valerie Vincent-Horton, Walpole
 Nathalie Houder, Walpole
 Nancy M. Howland, Bedford, Mass.
 Elaine Hughes, Walpole
 Barbara Hunter, Walpole
 Andrew Irwin, Hillsborough
 David & Karen Kuniholm, Walpole
 Glenn & Laurie Lamothe, Keene
 Barbara Langman, Walpole
 Joan Larkin, Walpole
 Giselle & Carlo LaScala, Keene
 Joe & Beverly LeClair, Bellows Falls, Vt.
 Margaret Lee, New Ipswich
 Charles T. & Sheila M. Lennon, Walpole
 Kevin & Patricia Little, New Ipswich
 Donn C. & Barbara J. Lounsbury, Walpole
 Nathan & Sarah Lynch, Walpole
 Thomas & Sally MacPhee, Bellows Falls, Vt.
 Myra Mansouri, Walpole
 Krystyna & Dennis Marcom, Walpole
 Peter W. Martin, Washington
 Nancy Mendel, Spofford
 Bevin Mitchell, Walpole
 Michael J. Murray, New Ipswich
 Mike Nastri, Marlborough, Conn.
 R. Todd Nielsen & Patricia M. Dooley, Walpole
 Scott L. Northcott, Walpole
 Matthew Oliveira, New Ipswich
 Brian & Kerry Pickering, Drewsville
 William A. & Waide A. Pillsbury, New Ipswich
 Judith Prager, Somerville, Mass.
 Richard A. Ransome, Walpole
 Ann Rasinsky, Walpole
 Nancy Robie, Fitzwilliam

Marjorie Ann Rogers, Walpole
 Richard & Shirley Sanctuary, Walpole
 Mr. Tim Schloemer &
 Dr. Denise Poulin, Greenfield
 Steven Schoppmeyer, Walpole
 William A. & Carolyn A. Shannon, Walpole
 Sarah Massin Short, Derry
 Jane P. Skofield, Walpole
 Marci-ellen Selig Smoger, Hancock
 Alan & Anne Soini, New Ipswich
 Andrea Stanislaw, New Ipswich
 Diane Steele, New Ipswich
 Mr. & Mrs. Mervin Stevens, Walpole
 Sandy Swinburne, Marlborough
 Donna & Steven Tanzini, New Ipswich
 William Therrien, Walpole
 George S. Thomas, Dublin
 Thomas J. Thompson &
 Vivian Smith-Thompson, New Ipswich
 Latricia Jeanne Van Patten, Winchester
 Janet Van Zandt, Jamaica Plain, Mass.
 Women of Walpole, Walpole
 Walpole Historical Society, Walpole
 Charles Warrender, New Ipswich
 Mary Warzecha, Walpole
 Cathy A. Watson, Walpole
 John F. & Priscilla M. Watson, Fayetteville, N.Y.
 Eric Webb, Marlow
 Cindy & Dave Westover, Walpole
 D. Curtis Williams &
 Suzanne M. Bazin, Walpole
 Thelma F. Zak, Walpole
 Terry Zehr, Walpole

Do you know someone who would like to become a member or do you want to give a gift membership? Visit our "Support us" section online at www.MonadnockConservancy.org.



Ryan Roy

Vernal pool project

For two consecutive years, the Monadnock Conservancy and the Harris Center have partnered on the vernal pool project. This citizen science program trains volunteers to identify and document vernal pools so that amphibian breeding areas can be protected. The Conservancy has identified potential pools on some of its easements and, with landowner permission, volunteers are currently out gathering field data and verifying, or ground-truthing, the pools. Nine volunteers visited nine of our conservation lands and documented a total of nine vernal pools in 2013. This year, the goal is to visit another nine properties. Photos and an interactive map of landowner-permitted vernal pool information are on the AVEO website (www.aveo.org/citizen-science/vernal-pools). Documenting vernal pools has already helped with land management recommendations on our California Brook Headwaters easement and our Whippoorwill Farm easements.

Survey says the Conservancy should do more of what it's already doing

Last fall, the Conservancy worked with an independent, nonprofit consulting team, Executive Service Corps, which uses seasoned executives and professionals who volunteer their time and expertise, to survey active members, potential members and lapsed members. Survey questionnaires were developed in collaboration between ESC and the Conservancy task team. In addition, all 35 towns within the Conservancy region were analyzed using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, IRS and other online resources to examine population trends, median household income, education levels, age distribution, median home value and average charitable contributions for each town. Three key findings emerged from ESC's analysis. There is a lot of

satisfaction with the Conservancy's work, and people care most about wildlife, rural character and planning for the future. Thirdly, less than 1 percent of the region's residents are Conservancy members, and of the towns where the organization holds conservation easements, only one town has a significant number of donors. The Conservancy needs to do more to increase the number of donors in these towns. If you are interested in reading the final report, see the Publications section online and download "A Market Study for Monadnock Conservancy" (www.MonadnockConservancy.org/news-events/newsletters-and-publications.html). Thank you to everyone who participated!



Lowell Bauer

Walpole Winter Festival highlights Hooper project

The Conservancy played a key role in the first Walpole Winter Festival at the Hooper Golf Course on March 2. An estimated 300 people, many kids, were in attendance and enjoyed a day full of skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, snowmobiling and socializing. Executive Director Ryan Owens was on hand to answer questions and share maps and photos about the Hooper conservation project. He also led a group on snowshoes through the Hooper forest, adjacent to the golf course. Though fundraising was not a top objective of the day, donations, merchandise sales and a lead sponsorship from the Savings Bank of Walpole netted nearly \$3,000. The project is now 65 percent to goal, having raised more than \$400,000 in cash and pledges. Efforts continue to secure the total \$600,000 to purchase a conservation easement on the Hooper property.



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www.MonadnockConservancy.org

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Save the date
25th Annual Celebration
Saturday, August 23, 2014

Keynote speaker:
Peter Forbes
conservationist, writer and
co-founder of The Center for
Whole Communities

Peterborough Town House
Peterborough, N.H.

9:00–11:30 a.m.
Field trips to follow

Give the gift of open space



Katrina Farmer

Friends and family: \$25 membership special

If you haven't yet renewed your membership for 2014, please take a moment to do so by using the enclosed envelope. If you already have renewed, thank you! It's thanks to you that we can accomplish our mission: conserving land around the region, watching over what is already protected, developing trails and recreational opportunities, and offering educational programs.

And as we celebrate our 25th year, you can also give that same gift of open space to friends and family — this year for only \$25. Please consider a gift membership today. Simply check gift membership on the enclosed envelope, and we'll process your gift at this special reduced rate.

Your gift allows us to do so much — thank you!