

Newsletter



FALL 2011 | VOLUME 8 | ISSUE 4

Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

Serving the Central Massachusetts towns of Barre, Hardwick, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Oakham, Petersham, Ware, and West Brookfield

| P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick, MA 01037 | 413.477.8229 | www.eqlt.org |

FUNDING REQUEST SENT TO U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Partnerships are powerful indeed! More can be accomplished when working with others, and the recent Forest Legacy grant application is a perfect example of a positive partnership.

Of course it didn't happen overnight. The relationships began years ago. Conversations with the landowners all start out with a frank discussion about their dreams for their land and lives and how land conservation might advance those aspirations. Options are discussed, weighed, pursued and changed, until the right conservation opportunity fits. Conversations with colleagues at other conservation organizations begin at conferences, meetings and phone calls where we each learn about the goals and aspirations of each group and common purposes are explored.

All of this behind-the-scenes work lead to the recent Forest Legacy grant application which seeks \$5 million dollars to conserve 3,000 acres owned by 22 landowners. The application is formally known as the Quabbin Reservoir to Wachusett Mountain project and spans six towns including Barre, Hubbardston, Petersham, Phillipston, Princeton and Westminster. These woodlands are scattered across the landscape but all hold common values by either protecting our drinking water supply or expanding the corridors of permanently protected woodlands. Many of the properties do both!

The East Quabbin Land Trust supported four landowner families in their participation with the Forest Legacy application. After the recent hustle of getting the right papers signed, reviewing draft documents and discussing the program specifications, now the trick is to relax and wait as the application makes its way through various levels of review. We expect a positive outcome when grants are announced during summer 2012.

We want to thank the landowners for their dedication to conserving their woodlands. Without their support this opportunity would not be possible and we'd all miss out on the lasting legacy that land conservation provides. We also want to thank our colleague partners, especially Jay Rasku and Sarah Wells at the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, North County Land Trust, Nashua River Watershed Association, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Water Supply, and the Towns of Petersham and Barre.



The view of Mount Wachusett looking across the wooded landscape from one of the properties included in the application.

Are you intrigued by what these landowners are doing? Feel free to contact Cynthia at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org to get more information. And if you find yourself talking to one of our elected officials be sure to let them know that you support state and federal grants for land conservation, and that they should too. ■

STATE TAX CREDIT FOR CONSERVATION GIFTS NOW AVAILABLE!

Starting in 2011 there is a new powerful tax benefit available to Massachusetts taxpayers that engage in a conservation transaction - a State income tax credit worth up to \$50,000. Landowners can gift their land or a conservation restriction to a qualified conservation entity, including a municipality, the state or a nonprofit conservation organization, like the East Quabbin Land Trust.

To qualify for the tax credit the conservation land needs to meet public interest standards, such as protecting drinking water supplies, rare species and other wildlife habitats, agriculture or forestry, recreational opportunities and scenic or cultural values of state or regional importance. The East Quabbin region is rich with many resource protection parcels that are not developed or conserved that could qualify. To explore this opportunity contact Cynthia Henshaw at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org.

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



Recently the Board of Directors reviewed our vision statement as part of a strategic planning session. We reaffirmed that we want to be part of a regional community that continues to care for its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come.

But then the question is how does the land trust move farther towards that ideal? Continuing the work that we began in 1994 is part of the answer. Conserving vital farmland and managed woods so that they are part of our local landscape is a critical piece of the puzzle. But there is more to do too. Part of our shift is embodied in the AmeriCorps Service Learning Coordinator position, which is designed to get our youth out onto conservation land, learning about the natural environment through active, hands-on explorations. On page 4 you'll learn more about Kelly Wheeler, our Service Learning Coordinator for 2011-2012, and her interest and emphasis on sustainable agriculture. Kelly will be working with scout groups, youth groups, school groups and after-school programs to broaden an understanding of the natural world we are all dependent on. You can be sure the kids will be planting and starting seeds once spring rolls around!

Having the opportunity for individual and family exploration of the outdoors is critical too. Developing trails that are attractive and interesting is another key element of our mission. The rail trail is a central example, and will provide an essential off-road opportunity for exploration, especially for those not able or interested in climbing steep hillsides or clambering over the ubiquitous New England rocks. Trails are already open at the Moose Brook Preserve, Mandell Hill, Patrill Hollow Preserve, Frohloff Farm and Indian Rock at Spring Hill Farm. Check out our website for trail information and a new trail map of the Patrill Hollow Preserve.

The loop trail at Mandell Hill is getting a new structure to boast about, the Chris Ellison Memorial Birding Platform. Chris was an avid birder and was often found at Mandell Hill checking on the bobolinks or migrating hawks. The birding platform is a wonderful legacy of his love of birding and keen interest in sharing the wonders of the natural world. Standing twelve feet in the air, visitors will have a fabulous view of the action on the ground and in the air. The construction is scheduled to finish by mid-November and we encourage you to help if you can and certainly bring the whole family for a visit and walk at Mandell Hill once the platform is finished.

A key word that we keep coming back to is 'community'. Community is built one personal relationship at a time. Through our activities and events the East Quabbin Land Trust is building a community of people connected to one another and the land that we live on. We seek your help expanding this community of caring individuals and families. Invite a neighbor or friend to one of our events in the coming months. As a community we can care for our natural environment and support a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come. ■

THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST

works to foster the sustainable use of our natural and historic resources for the benefit of all generations through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters in our region of Massachusetts.

As a non profit organization the East Quabbin Land Trust envisions a regional community that continues to care for its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come.

We welcome your thoughts, articles, and photographs on events in our area. For more information about the trust, to become a member, or request a change of address, please contact our office at:

East Quabbin Land Trust
120 Ridge Road, PO Box 5
Hardwick, MA 01037-0005
413-477-8229 (tel & fax)
email: eqlt@comcast.net

Visit our website at www.eqlt.org

BOARD & STAFF

Martha Klassanos	WARE, <i>President</i>
Terry Briggs.....	HARDWICK, <i>Vice President</i>
Jerry Reilly.....	HARDWICK, <i>Treasurer</i>
Rick Romano	HARDWICK, <i>Clerk</i>
Mick Huppert.....	PETERSHAM
Judith Jones	NEW BRAINTREE
Mark Mattson.....	OAKHAM
Ginny Rich	BARRE
Harry Webb.....	HARDWICK
Stan White.....	HARDWICK
Cynthia Henshaw	Executive Director
Caren Caljouw	Stewardship Coordinator
Pattie Rich	Bookkeeper
Kelly Wheeler	Service Learning Coord.

MARK MATTSON: *Outdoorsman, Ecologist and Land Trust Supporter*

By Judith Jones

Mark Mattson of Oakham, MA has long been a friend to the East Quabbin Land Trust, contributing as a member and a loyal volunteer. Now he is our newest member of the board. I spent an evening with Mark talking about his background, professionally and growing up in Minnesota, to understand why land conservation and water quality are important to him and why he believes an organization such as the EQLT is a worthy cause to support. And also why he enjoys the camaraderie and challenges of our projects.

Mark holds a B.S. in Biology from the University of Minnesota and a PhD. in Ecology from Cornell. He is an Environmental Analyst/Fresh Water Ecologist for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Division of Watershed Management, making assessments through water quality sampling of the lakes, streams and reservoirs throughout the state.

Mark grew up on a farm in Minnesota with his parents, four brothers and a sister. His family had a cabin on a lake and a river in Northern Minnesota and they spent lots of time on the water and in the woods. Hunting and fishing are pastimes that are still his passions today.

“My father liked boats. My brothers and I each built canoes and kayaks and we went hunting and fishing all the time. Minnesota is the land of 10,000 lakes. Growing up in the west, there were a lot of public lands available, large expanses of forests and streams. To me it was a wonderland. Here, it’s such a contrast — everything’s private — protected public land is very rare. It seems even more important to do preservation in Massachusetts. The population keeps growing; the land needs protection. By protecting the land you’ll also protect the water.”

Mark originally got roped into volunteer days at the Land Trust, cutting and burning brush and projects like erecting the flagpole on Mandell Hill. He says, “It is a lot of fun, you get to meet people who share your values. I like being part of that community.”

What truly caught Mark’s attention was the Rail Trail project: “I was immediately interested. Years ago, when we lived in Conway, we’d take the boys on the bike path at that end of the rail trail; it was safe and fun. The kids loved it. I remember when I was a child at my grandfather’s house we’d grab bamboo cane fishing poles and walk down the railroad

bed to a little bridge and go fishing. I loved that. I thought if I could develop this for kids to do around here -- that would be a lot of fun. The other thing, it’s a big challenge with tons of steel and wood. It’s a problem to figure out. It was a challenge I thought I could take on. I love big projects, big things. My goal is seeing it complete so people can actually bike it to Boston. If I can help restore three miles, that would be good!”



Mark talked about what it means to him being involved with the Land Trust. “The Land Trust is something you can do that makes a permanent difference for the better. Everything else you do is so temporary; you want to do something that is permanently good. I try to give a lot of time between work and family. You work for the Land Trust when you have the time, and you have to get me before hunting season!”

Mark has many areas of expertise and is happy to share them. “I already hike around the Land Trust’s lands hunting turkeys. I’m comfortable in the woods and I’ve got a GPS. With my work I know how to use GIS systems to do electronic mapping, and I can help Caren Caljouw with mapping the property boundaries.”

We talked about his views of the next big challenges facing the Land Trust. He spoke of finishing the Rail Trail, and acting quickly, when we can, grabbing parcels of land as they become available. Again, he mentioned Minnesota: “I miss the big landscapes. Out here you need to protect the little pieces, like pearls on a string, and make these protected corridors.”

“We tend to look at protecting water quality in terms of watersheds,” he says. “We look at the land use to see how it alters the water chemistry. Look at the typical problems—erosion, storm water coming in, excess nutrients and bacteria problems. They are all land-based issues. The more development you have in a watershed the more problems you have. Water quality would improve, ideally, done through passing common-sense zoning laws. Different techniques are appropriate for different situations. It is possible to protect land and water quality and still maintain productivity and jobs. The Land Trust is an important resource for our region. Land protection equals water protection, and everyone needs clean water.”

WELCOMING KELLY WHEELER

This month we welcome Kelly Wheeler as the new Service Learning Coordinator for the East Quabbin Land Trust. Kelly is a recent graduate of the University of Massachusetts with a degree in Plant, Soil, and Insect Sciences with a concentration in Sustainable Agriculture and Permaculture. She is passionate about creating local food systems in her community and helping to connect youth to the land that sustains them. With Kelly's agricultural background that means there are lots of opportunities to build herb spirals, start seeds, make rain barrels, create pollinator gardens and other hands-on, get-dirty tasks that broaden our understanding of where our food comes from. In addition, kids will get to build and maintain trails, complete nature crafts, learn about conservation and create a story book. Kelly will connect with kids out on our conservation lands, on the school grounds, in the classrooms and at our office.

A life goal for Kelly is to create school gardens in her hometown of Ware to facilitate hands on connections between the youth and their food supply and to foster healthier eating habits. In her experience, school gardens offer an unparalleled educational resource for teachers and students while simultaneously teaching a valuable skill the children can use throughout their lives. As a Service Learning Coordinator, Kelly will get first-hand knowledge of the local students, teachers and administration which will help as she advances school gardens in Ware.

Kelly is also starting a small farm of her own in Ware. She is in the process of converting her entire front yard into food production and erecting several greenhouses with the hope of starting a small CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). Her yard is being converted from lawn using a no-till method called sheet mulching. This method uses cardboard and other waste paper products to smother the

grass and then compost and mulch are put on top. The next season, the soil is ready to plant in. In her spare time Kelly enjoys playing guitar, glass-blowing, and of course walking her two dogs on the beautiful trails conserved and maintained by the East Quabbin Land Trust.



Kelly Wheeler and Allison Gillum moving rocks at Mandell Hill as a Service Learning Project during their orientation as AmeriCorps volunteers with the MassLIFT program.

Kelly is part of the 2011-2012 class of AmeriCorps volunteers associated with the MassLIFT program. The East Quabbin Land Trust is one of sixteen participating organizations with the overall goal of increasing the pace of conservation. AmeriCorps MassLIFT members serve at host sites spread across the state. Members monitor protected lands, expand local interest in conservation, initiate land conservation projects, and engage young people in service learning.

If you are a leader of a youth group and want to explore the possibility of a service learning project, please contact Kelly at servicelearning@eqlt.org or 413-477-8229. ■

Statewide recreation survey seeks your input

The Mass. Division of Conservation Services is strongly encouraging Massachusetts residents to fill out an important survey that will help guide decisions on how state funding can be best used for the acquisition of conservation or park land, development of new parks, or renovation of existing parks and recreation facilities. Every five years each state must update the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) to remain eligible for funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant program. Go on-line to fill out the survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BL79V26>.

Information from the 2006 SCORP report is instrumental in documenting the local need for completing the Mass Central Rail Trail and supporting grant applications for additional land conservation within our region. Please take ten minutes to provide your perspective on our local recreation needs.

GAINING PERSPECTIVE

By Chris Buelow

Major construction has begun on the Chris Ellison Memorial Observation Platform. Members of the East Quabbin Land Trust had envisioned an observation platform at this panoramic overlook on the open ridge of Mandell Hill in Hardwick since EQLT acquired the property as a gift from Betty Morss in 2003. Now with construction nearly realized, the observation platform rises 12' high, immediately above Mandell Hill's hayfields, and offers wide and distant views of the East Quabbin region and beyond.

Mandell Hill's location and elevation provide an important perspective of the area's landscape, revealing that what we often perceive as individual landmarks are in fact interconnected; flowing from one to the next. Standing in places like this is a critical exercise in calibrating conservation goals at the landscape level.

Mandell Hill is an important property in regard to the Land Trust's three primary goals: the preservation of active agriculture, wildlife habitat and rural culture. Acres of hayfields are managed here for the mutual benefit of grassland birds and grazing cattle, while a network of trails wind through field, forest and historic sites across the 200-acre property. But looking east into the Ware River Valley adds the additional perspective of context. The steep slopes of Mandell Hill flow mostly unfragmented to the Winimusset section of the Ware River Valley. Centered in the eastern view is Winimusset Wildlife Management Area, a 550-acre property on the flats of the Ware River that, like Mandell Hill, supports high numbers of grassland birds, and also adds regionally significant tracts of marsh and wet meadow habitat complemented by hundreds of acres of adjacent active farmland. Shadowing the Ware River through its entire run through Winimusset Flats is the Mass Central Rail Trail, with sections visible from Mandell Hill.

The Ware River bends due south just below Winimusset and is joined by Moose Brook, a moderate-sized cold-water stream flowing from the northwest. Though Moose Brook is not visible from Mandell Hill, the dramatic slopes of the Moose Brook Valley are the dominant feature of the northeast view. In fact, the northern end of Mandell Hill's ridge forms the western wall of the Moose Brook Valley

and is where another key EQLT property, the Moose Brook Preserve, is located. The rich forests known from the Moose Brook Preserve, and that shade the ecological treasure of Moose Brook itself, actually span the entire western slope of the Valley, and are linked in an unbroken canopy to the forests of Mandell Hill. The eastern slope of the Valley is a mosaic of working farmland and woodlands, flowing nearly seamlessly to the farmland and natural areas of Winimusset Flats.

The view to the west from Mandell Hill provides a similar experience. The land falls away first to the Fish Brook Valley, then rises on the hayfields of the north ridge of Goat Hill, then falls away to the wet meadows of the Danforth Brook Valley, then rises once again to the fields and woodlands of EQLT's Patrill Hollow Preserve, before falling again to the Muddy Brook Valley, and ultimately to the vast wilderness of the Quabbin.



The hearty, and soggy, group of volunteers after successfully raising the structure for the Chris Ellison Memorial Birding Platform

Standing at Mandell Hill at dusk, the two steeples of Hardwick Center silhouetted

against the purple sky, it's nearly impossible to date the scene. And because the great majority of this landscape to the west has been protected, this land should indefinitely look and function just as it does now. 250 years out this may be one of the last remaining town centers in Massachusetts that can boast such an atmosphere of immediate working farms and woodlands.

This interconnectedness of landscape was well embodied by Chris Ellison. Chris had an innate ability in his daily life to move through and understand these landscapes in a way that most people can only achieve by periodically stepping aside to view things from broader perspectives. So often we would hear of the typical Chris Ellison weekend: sitting for hours, listening, deep in some pre-dawn hollow of the Moose Brook Preserve; moving next to take in the sunrise hours at the marsh edge of Winimusset; standing arrow-straight behind his spotting scope at the margin of Mandell Hill for hours looking at bobolinks and bluebirds while

EIGHT INCH PROGRESS!

Currently we are measuring progress at the rail trail by eight inch increments. That's because each deck timber is six by eight and twelve feet long. Since the lattice truss bridge is 150 feet long, it is quite a few timbers to get into place. Each one gets the bridge eight inches closer to a completed deck!

Eleven students from Quabbin Regional High School volunteered at the rail trail on September 24th. They got into an excellent working groove and put down thirty timbers in a little over an hour. The mosquitoes were persistent, but the students didn't let that stop them.

Thanks to all the tremendous volunteers that have helped at the lattice truss bridge so far: Brandon Boggs, Becky Bottomley, Will Bottomley, Caren Caljouw, Jim Cameron, Melissa Chobot, Mackenzie Craig, Ric Craig, Victoria Dunn, Dan Hanson, Kane Hardeker, Rick Hendra, Sabrina Keller, Brian Klassanos, Matt Koziol, Linda Leehy, Rod Leehy, Keith Martin, Mark Mattson, Denis Ouimette, Jerry Reilly, Don Rich, Ginny Rich, Rick Romano, Mike Stevens, Tanner Stuart, Susan Turnbull, Gina Vasseur-Melle, Kelly Wheeler, Allisha Wilander, Andrew Wilander.



Mark Mattson emerging from the underside of the bridge after installing new blocks on top of the double bents.



The Quabbin Regional High School students at the end of a successful workday laying down timbers at the lattice truss and clearing brush along the rail trail.

By the time you read this a second work day will have happened with a goal to lay down half the remaining deck timbers. Come on out and see how far we got!

There is still an opportunity for you to heave a timber into place, drill some holes or tighten lag screws! More timbers need to find their way out onto the bridge, and then it's time to install the railing posts, curbing timbers and railings. If you have a hankering to help, please do. Contact Cynthia at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org to find out about the next work day. ■

Gaining Perspective continued from page 5

waiting for the Common Nighthawks to stream overhead as they navigated south above the Ware River on September evenings.

For Chris, seeing the landscape in terms of that flowing mosaic was not merely an exercise in conservation, it was an unconscious way of life. In dedicating this observation platform to Chris, we will continually be reminded of seeing beyond the individual landmarks and getting to the bigger picture ideals. Linking the view from this platform to Chris' memory will remind us that by conserving these landscapes we are in fact conserving ourselves. ■

CHALLENGE ISSUED

An anonymous donor has issued a challenge to the members and supporters of the East Quabbin Land Trust to complete the fundraising for the Chris Ellison Memorial Birding Platform. It's a **dollar for dollar match up to \$1,000**. The project cost is \$7,000, not including many volunteer hours, and \$5,000 is committed.

The platform will be a sturdy post and beam structure twelve feet off the ground looking out over the fields at Mandell Hill with an excellent view of the Ware River valley and Mount Wachusett. Construction has started and if the weather cooperates, the platform will be open by mid-November. Won't you help complete this birding platform in Chris' memory? ■

Blue Revolution: Unmaking America's Water Crisis

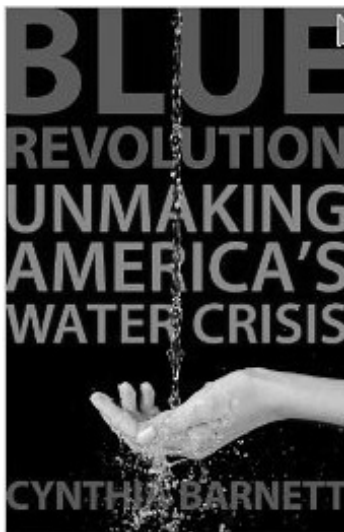
By Cynthia Barnett (Beacon Books, hardback \$16.90)

*Reviewed by Russ Cohen, Rivers Advocate at the Mass.
Division of Ecological Restoration*

In *Blue Revolution: Unmaking America's Water Crisis*, recently published by Boston-based Beacon Books, award-winning journalist Cynthia Barnett reports on the many ways one of the most water-rich nations on the planet has squandered its way to scarcity, and argues the best solution is also the simplest and least expensive: a water ethic for America. From backyard waterfalls and grottoes in California to sinkholes swallowing chunks of Florida, *Blue Revolution* exposes how the nation's green craze largely missed water – the No. 1 environmental concern of most Americans. But the book is big on inspiration, too. *Blue Revolution* combines investigative reporting with solutions from around the nation and the globe. From San Antonio to Singapore, Barnett shows how local communities and entire nations have come together in a shared ethic to dramatically reduce consumption and live within their water means. The first book to call for

a national water ethic, *Blue Revolution* is also a powerful meditation on water and community in America.

Reviews of other books on water and other related topics can be found at the Mass. Division of Ecological Restoration's website. Their most recent newsletter is found at: <http://www.mass.gov.dfwele/der/newsletters/ebbflow9/ebbflow9.htm#publications>. ■



SAVE THE DATE

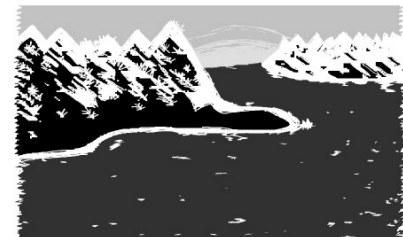
**Eleventh Annual Dinner and
Silent Auction**

Saturday, February 18, 2012

If you want to become a sponsor or have an item to donate for the auction, please contact the office at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org. Items accepted through February 13th. ■

*Please support our
2011 Dinner and Auction Sponsors
and thank them for underwriting the
land trust dinner!*

New Harbour Financial Services
Dresser & McGourthy, LLP
Rose 32 Bread
Fivestar Services
The Cultural Center at Eagle Hill



NEW HARBOR

Client-centered financial guidance

THANK YOU JOHN AND LINDA!

The conference room at the East Quabbin Land Trust's headquarters had a make-over this summer, thanks to John and Linda Tomasi, of Jonda Design. New glass panelled doors welcome visitors, and fresh paint and comfortable furniture make it a pleasure to host informal gatherings and structured meetings. The specimens from the Tyler Collection are highlighted around the room bringing conservation of the natural world into focus.



East Quabbin LAND TRUST



Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

P.O. Box 5
120 Ridge Road
Hardwick, MA 01037
Phone/Fax 413-477-8229

www.eqlt.org

EQLT News | INSIDE...



PROGRESS AT THE RAIL TRAIL

FALL 2011 | VOLUME 8 | ISSUE 4

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 5
Hardwick, MA

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER...

Saturday, October 22, 1:00 PM

Rewilding the World: A look at local Invasive Plant Control, meet at Mandell Hill, Barre Road, Hardwick – Meet for this gentle hike and see first-hand how invasive plants like Asiatic bittersweet and multiflora rose are being controlled to enhance native plants and animals at Mandell Hill and Deer Park Preserve. This walk is part of a series of events hosted by the Haston Free Public Library to promote the concepts of Rewilding in our own neighborhoods.

NOVEMBER...

Saturday, November 12, 7:00 PM

East Quabbin Concert Honoring the Land, at the Haston Free Public Library, North Brookfield – Singer/songwriter Sarah Stockwell-Arthen performs on behalf of the East Quabbin Land Trust. Her contemporary acoustic folk songs celebrate the connections between preserving land and creating strong rural communities.

DECEMBER...

Sunday, December 4, 2:00 PM

Our Changing Landscape: The Cultural and Natural History of Mandell Hill, at the intersection of Barre and Ridge Roads, Hardwick – Join Chris Buelow, Susan Gainley and Caren Caljouw as we visit the new birding platform, explore old foundations, stone walls, wildlife habitats and other natural features along the way.

SATURDAY WORK DAYS continue...

Join us at 9am on the first Saturday of each month and volunteer to help with the maintenance of EQLT properties. Email announcements are sent each month. If you are not receiving these announcements please contact Cynthia at chenshaw@eqlt.org or 413-477-8229 to get on our email list.