

DONATION SOLIDIFIES KOHN'S CONSERVATION LEGACY

By Samuel Frost

Henry Kohn seems so at peace with his life in the woods that it's hard to imagine him ever living anywhere else. It's a shock to hear him say that the countryside has not always been his home. "I was a city boy growing up," he says almost sheepishly, as if recounting some past time in his life he'd care to forget.

Born and raised in Hartford CT, Kohn began his life's journey far from the seclusion of the West Hardwick farm that he has called home for the last 40 years. The urban phase didn't last long, however, as his love for nature blossomed at a young age. "I decided early on in life that city life was not for me," he says. He got his first taste of the countryside while attending camp in New Hampshire, and was never the same again. Soon he was off to boarding school in rural Connecticut, where he thrived amid the school's 2,000 acres of woodland and participated in numerous outdoors clubs. Next, he ventured even further into the wilderness to attend Paul Smith's College in upstate New York, where he studied forestry. He spent an enormous amount of time hiking and canoeing, not just locally but globally as well. He has traveled to the Himalayas multiple times and has hiked to the Mt. Everest base camp. Through these experiences, he developed a sense of wonder and love of nature, as well as a deep and abiding desire to protect it.

Eventually, his career in the timber framing business would lead him to Hardwick, where he and his business partner purchased a small house on Thayer Road surrounded by dozens of acres of pristine woodland. At long last, Henry had his own piece of nature for which he could serve as steward, protecting and caring for it as he saw fit. For forty years, he has done just that, and done it well. He and his wife Judy still live in that same small house (his former business partner, John Brooks, is now his neighbor), and his 40 acres of land remain largely in their original, untouched state. "This is my own little way of protecting what I can," he says.

This year, after decades of caring stewardship, Henry decided to ensure his conservation legacy by donating a conservation restriction on 20 acres of his land to EQLT. The land qualified for the Mass Conservation Land Tax

Credit program, which allowed Henry to receive \$75,000, or 50% of the conservation restriction's appraised value, back in state tax credits. In addition, the donation makes Henry eligible for a significant federal tax deduction. These financial incentives were vital in making the donation a possibility for Henry, as EQLT would not have been able to find the adequate funding to purchase the conservation restriction itself. Despite the fact that he will not quite receive the full fair market value for the donation, Henry was satisfied by the significant tax benefits. EQLT received grant funds from the Mass Conservation Partnership grant program and the Quabbin to Cardigan Partnership to cover transaction expenses, while Henry received a Mass Due Diligence grant for his own costs, particularly the appraisal of the property.

Upon visiting the now-protected land, it is easy to understand Henry's desire to conserve it. Clearly visible from his front windows, it features a large, serene pond bordered by forests on one side and fields on the other. It is a perfect

habitat for beavers, Great Blue Herons, and an endless variety of other important species, a fact certainly not lost on Henry. "I did this solely for the benefit of mother nature," he says. "I want to protect it as long as I can."

Despite the successful donation, he and Judy do not consider their conservation efforts to be over by any means. Last March, the two hosted a neighborhood meeting, inviting their neighbors to come to their house and spend an hour or two learning more about how conservation restrictions work. Their goal is to both educate others about the importance of conservation restrictions in protecting the local environment, and also to persuade their neighbors to help expand upon their land protection efforts. "It would be nice to have the whole pond conserved," Judy says. This effort to open their home to others to facilitate discussion about local conservation is the essence of EQLT's mission: Cooperation amongst the members of our community in pursuit of the mutually beneficial goal of preserving our shared natural environment. With people like the Kohns leading the way by example, hopefully many others will be inspired to join the conversation. ■



MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



The buzz in the hallways is deafening when you get 500 people together – all engaged and focused on ways to promote land conservation across the Commonwealth! That’s what it was like on March 21st during the Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference. You should come next year to experience first-hand the “buzz” around protecting the lands of our Commonwealth.

The keynote speaker was Congressman Jim McGovern. Among other points he shared his point of view that budget cuts are necessary, but so are strategic investments even in lean fiscal times. Spending on national security is important, and Congressmen McGovern argued that the definition of national security should be broadened to include prioritizing our land, water and air. The Land and Water Conservation Fund is perennially threatened with zero funding, but these dollars are payments from oil and gas companies intended to off-set some of the environmental damage done from their exploration and extraction practices. Instead, Congress siphons those funds for other pet projects. Congressman McGovern encouraged us all to be more vocal in our support for LWCF and other federal environmental programs. There were numerous comments that got widespread applause, including his discussion against the Kinder Morgan pipeline that threatens conservation land in western and central Massachusetts.

I went to a workshop on engaging volunteers. Much of the work EQLT accomplishes is because volunteers make it possible. With distinct categories – X, Y, Baby boomers and Traditionalists – and each group looking for something different from their volunteer experiences and ways to communicate, it becomes more important to target volunteer recruitment. EQLT events are shared through the newspaper, website, direct emails and Facebook. I’d not heard of MeetUp.com before, but that site is another avenue to connect with people that want to get outdoors and do things. Let me know if you have suggestions of other ways to make it easier for us to stay connected.

In the afternoon there was a session about current legal issues for land trusts where diverse topics were raised: Is there a need for title insurance when a land trust acquires a conservation restriction? What’s new with the state-wide conservation restriction template. Discussing issues with access to trust properties and challenges to the recreational use statute. The recreational use statute protects all landowners if someone gets hurt on your land as long as there is no fee for use of the land and the landowners conduct was not willful, wanton or reckless. These and other legal issues need to be followed to ensure we are fulfilling expectations and best legal practices.

Attendance at the annual conference means EQLT can stay on top of important issues to land trusts. ■

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 land trust, to become a member, or request a change of address, please contact us at:

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

Visit our website at www.EQLT.org
 or “Like” us on Facebook

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DEB HOUSTON AND LEE MCLAUGHLIN: Different Roads to Environmental Advocacy

By Sam Frost

EQLT supporters Lee McLaughlin and Deb Houston have both always had a love of the outdoors. They've just often had different ways of pursuing that passion.

Raised in Upton, MA as the son of a well-known fisheries biologist (the Charles T. McLaughlin Trout Hatchery in Belchertown bears his father's name), Lee knew almost immediately that he wanted to turn his love of nature into a career. Following in his father's footsteps, he worked for Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife for 30 years, spending most of his career as the district fisheries biologist in Worcester County. His primary duties included fish stocking, surveys of lakes and streams, and analysis of the environmental impact of various projects that had the potential to impact fish populations. He worked at the Quabbin and Wachusett reservoirs, improving their fisheries and assisting the Massachusetts Department of Conservation (now the Department of Conservation and Recreation) with expanding public access for recreation, especially fishing. He also played a role in direct land acquisitions, determining the value of various projects so that they could be ranked on a regional and statewide basis. "I was called upon to take a look at the projects for their value [to] fish, wildlife, and recreation," he says. He took part in several projects in the Quabbin region, including the Raccoon Hill, Ware River Muddy Brook, Moose Brook, and Prince River Wildlife Management Areas. He liked the area so much that he decided he wanted to live here, eventually moving to Hardwick in the 1970s. Unbeknownst to him, his future wife was also moving into town around that time. For her, however, the journey there had been quite different.

Deb grew up in the verdant hills of Vermont, so it nearly goes without saying that she developed an appreciation for nature at an early age. Even while spending her high school years in Washington, D.C., with the Library of Congress as her local library, she still missed the beauty and tranquility of the countryside. However, she saw the country more as a way of life than as a potential career path.

"I must say that I never really defined myself by a "career" and I still don't think of that aspect of my life as very important," she says. "I have always believed that my lifestyle (where I lived) was more important than how I supported that lifestyle. Since I wanted to live in Vermont and then a rural part of Massachusetts, I found ways to support that desire."

To help maintain the country life that she wanted, Deb worked a wide variety of jobs, ranging from higher education to farming. In addition to serving as a student advisor at Community College of Vermont and UMass, as well as director of a worker assistance center at Mount Wachusett Community College, she spent time milking goats and cows, working as a waitress, and doing dispatching and personnel work at Hardwick Kilns.



Though they journeyed along separate paths for many years, Lee and Deb ultimately ended up in the same place: Chicken Feather Farm on Sibley Road in New Braintree, where they moved in 1991 after getting married. They have since ended their old careers (Lee in 2002 and Deb in 2005), but one could hardly call the couple "retired." Their passion for the outdoors is still as strong as ever, and they are quite active in producing field-grown perennials, which they sell

at the Amherst Farmers' Market, by special order to gardening professionals, and to local gardeners by appointment at their farm. "Both Lee and I have always gardened--a love we each inherited from our mothers," Deb says. "While we were working for the state we began our perennial business, selling plants at the Barre and Holden Farmers' Markets."

And of course, the two have also been generous enough to lend their time, resources, and expertise to the EQLT on many occasions. Their beautiful gardens are a featured attraction on EQLT's North Brookfield-New Braintree Garden Tour, and Deb has frequently helped out with the bouquets for the annual dinner and silent auction, as well as with the landscaping at the office at 120 Ridge Rd. Lee has taught a class on aquatic invertebrates, and also contributed his knowledge of wetlands to an evaluation of a 324-acre piece of property on Wickaboag Valley Road in West Brookfield that was ultimately purchased by the state Department of Fish and Game and is now known as the West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area.

As Deb and Lee have demonstrated, an appreciation for our natural environment can manifest itself in many ways. One does not need to make environmental protection their life's work in order to make a difference (although, as in Lee's case, it certainly doesn't hurt). Many of us are like Deb, who didn't make conservation her career but still viewed the countryside as a way of life worth working for. Let us all do what we can to protect that way of life and the natural environment that makes it possible. ■

The Place You Call Home:

A landowner magazine, free to East Quabbin Land Trust members

By Cynthia Henshaw

This new magazine is part guide, part inspiration, and part thought-provoker for landowners in Massachusetts. Its 80 pages are filled with tidbits about what to expect in the woods through the seasons, bugs that are devastating our trees, how to prune your trees and much, much more.

Really this is a guide for landowners who believe that, with careful stewardship, the landscape that makes our region so special can support and sustain us for many generations to come. Readers are encouraged to think about many of the hidden treasures living out in the woods, especially about how they relate to wildlife and encourage wildlife.

At the start, Michael Snyder implores us to appreciate the varied benefits of wild apple trees. “Wild apple trees don’t just exist; they grow and give, fight and feed. They emerge, they succumb, they sprout, they break. They engender life. And through it all, wild apple trees are remarkably productive. It may not be in board feet or bushels, but they put out nonetheless...” Wild apple trees on your property may once have been part of a plantation or surprise spread by a passing bird. Either way, animals, birds, insects and fungi all find their way to the tree for food or shelter. Giving these wild apple trees the chance to stay alive will help wildlife too. Ten slow steps to apple tree restoration are listed to help rejuvenate your trees. Several of the steps involve enjoying the fruits of your labors, including stopping to rest with an apple, drinking cider, or eating a pie. A list of tools you might need is also included, but taking it slow is essential to restoring the long forgotten apple trees.

Getting outside and learning more about your land is at the heart of *The Place You Call Home*. Maybe you already do that, or have a forester help you with your stewardship. If you don’t there’s a checklist on page 16 of special features that you can look for as you walk around. Water, and its many varieties are at the top of the list. But stone walls, large cavity trees, and cliffs also are things to look for. “Complex three-dimensionality is at the heart of [wildlife] habitat. And the more complex the structure of the forest, the greater diversity of animals whose needs will be filled there” states Stephen Long. This means that landowners should think about how their woods change from the front of the lot to the back, but also if they have a range of tree heights and densities. “For forest birds, it’s vertical diversity that is crucial. The wood thrush, for example, sings from the canopy, nests in the mid-story, and feeds on the ground. Almost all – if not

all – songbirds use more than one layer for feeding, roosting, breeding, nesting and raising broods.”

Foresters are good partners for landowners. Foresters provide the technical background and years of experience to guide on-the-ground decisions. Whether your main interest is the wildlife, aesthetics, receiving income from timber sales, or any number of other woodland values, a forester can translate your goals into specific changes in the woods. Patrick White’s article “Consulting Foresters: What They Do and Why You Need One” fleshes out the details. Beyond a management plan and timber sale, “Another role of the forester is to educate landowners about the big picture of land ownership.” The big picture includes cost-share programs or current use tax programs or connecting

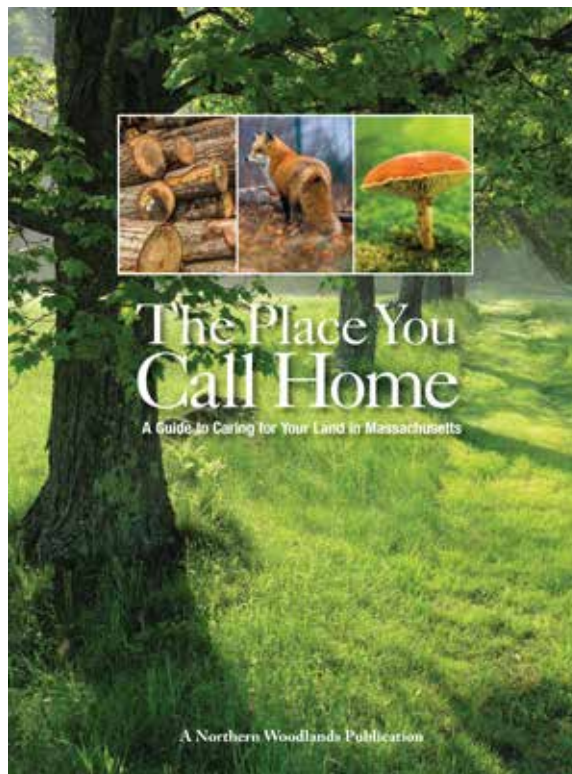
with neighbors on specific projects. Having a consulting forester on your side increases your likelihood of reaching your stewardship goals and deepening your enjoyment of owning land.

After investing so much time and energy, many landowners want to see their land stay as woods or farmland. New Braintree farm owners, Randy and Joan Walker share their story of how they are working to conserve their property. The first step is a family meeting, “so everyone can get on the same page”. This is critical because family dynamics can often be tough. It’s not easy to talk about a time when you will be gone, but is critical if you want to guide the future of the land. Step two is defining the plan. The Walkers set up an LLC to own the land because it protects the land against personal legal liability and

has specific tax benefits. The third step involves a conservation restriction, to permanently protect the land from future development. “Our goal is that it will always be a farm; we’re going to set it up and lock it up,” said Randy.

Other articles address keeping the fields open, current use tax program information and tick borne diseases, among others. There’s a lot of information packed into this well-written and informative magazine brimming with tips on being proactive in your woods. Best of all the articles are filled with hope for the future.

We hope you all want to read it for yourself! Members and supporters of the East Quabbin Land Trust can get their free copy of *The Place You Call Home* by contacting Cynthia at chenshaw@EQLT.org or 413-477-8229. Not a member? Please consider a \$50 membership for 2015 and you can sign up on our website, www.EQLT.org. ■



Recent Gifts in Memory of Loved Ones

We thank the family and friends who chose to honor their loved ones by making a gift to the East Quabbin Land Trust in their memory. They will be missed.

Richard Bachtold

Katherine Barr

Richard A. Creamer

Jeannette Donovan

Jack Hinkley

Magi Ziff

Winter's Promise

By Richard Bachtold

Sometimes, when one beholds winter's enduring
barren landscape,
an ancient despair returns, a vast void
with apparently few surrounding verdant signs
despite one's desperate desire.

During this lonely longing, this winter time often speaks
about prolonged patience through words of seasonal waiting --
a message from an embracing song that reminds us
of red-breast robins, white crocuses, and green buds
on faithful ash,

all memorable notes in a circling Hymn,
which promises us again, in the seeming Death of winter,
and a world without color,
the coming of spring and the great turning
toward the greening of all Life.

Out and about this winter with EQLT!



Winter tracking at the Cernauskas property along the Ware River in Wheelwright



Checking samples of insects and tiny creatures using microscopes as part of the Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve bioblitz.



Susan Gainley presenting her historical findings on the Frohloff Farm in Ware.

COMPOSTING WITH KIDS

By Shelby Braese

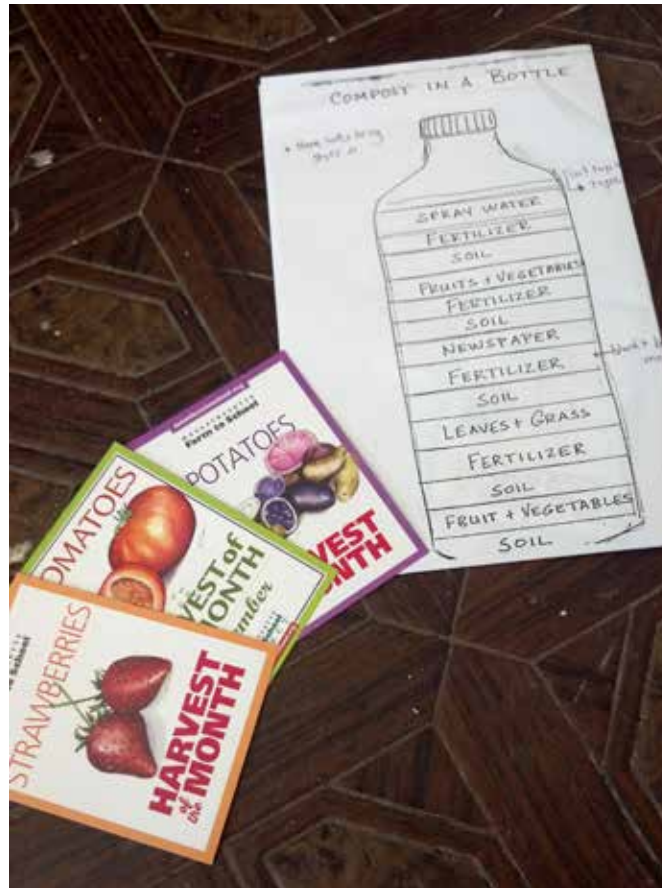
To me, learning more about what I eat and growing my own food is rewarding. Now that spring is here, the gardening and nutrition project with youth from the Hardwick Youth Center is underway with a focus on composting to get our gardening efforts off to a nutrient-rich start. Much planning has gone into this project with the overall goal to have a functioning, lively garden established by mid-June. To accomplish that the students will be introduced to new ideas and get them excited about things they can do right at home! To start this venture in the cold months of winter means starting with something you could do anywhere: composting!

Compost is the process of turning food scraps, lawn clippings, old leaves and other organic “waste” into a rich fertilizer that produces more food in gardens. With this in mind, I planned two activities for the kids (aged 5-12) to begin this project. The first is a closed-system bottle composting project involving clear plastic bottles and layers of various compost ingredients. The layers are soil, vegetable matter, fertilizer (for us in the form of compost starter), leaves, and newspaper. We cut the tops off the bottles and layered the ingredients. Everything was then misted with water and the bottle tops taped on with clear packing tape. There is no air flow, the only physical thing we will be doing to these bottles is letting them sit, decompose, and occasionally give them a shake. In the coming months, the kids can observe the change in their bottles from week to week. Already the level of ingredients is falling as it decomposes.

The second project is worm composting, creating a vermiculture bin. Worm composting is something that can be done anywhere by anyone. All it requires is newspaper or cardboard, food scraps, some soil, compost starter, and the most important thing: red wiggler worms. Red wigglers eat their way through the items in the bin. Their poop, more commonly called castings, is a great plant fertilizer.

When I first introduced the youth center kids to the idea of a worm bin, they became overwhelmingly excited

about it. Some made faces about “gross” worms, most were positively intrigued. When asked “How many worms will go into the bin?”, they were a roar of excitement as they got closer and closer to the correct answer. What started with a guess of “10 worms” eventually made its way up to the



actual answer; about 1000. Yes, for about a 5 gallon container, it takes about 1000 worms to start a worm bin. From there the red wigglers will reproduce and become even more efficient as their numbers increase. To set up the bin, ventilation holes were drilled in the top and upper sides of the bin as oxygen is required for the worms and proper decomposition of the food waste. Drainage holes are drilled on the bottom for when liquid collects from the decomposition.

To fill the bin, the kids rip up a ton of newspaper and cardboard. Then a layer of food scraps was layered with compost starter (which includes many of the essential bacteria a bin needs to get going), some leaves and grass, and then all covered with some more newspaper. The layers were repeated up to the ventilation holes. Shredded newspaper was the top layer and sprayed with just enough water to make it moist. We closed the bin and let the mixture sit for a week. The red wigglers are added the following week. Each week the kids bury their food waste and let the red wigglers do their job. In a few months, we will use our compost from both activities to fertilize our garden!

Through the next several months the kids will plan the garden, learn about different plants that can be grown in our climate, and ultimately get out into the garden beds in front of the old Youth Center location in Hardwick off Rte. 32 down the street from the municipal building. Even though the Hardwick youth center closes for the summer in the end of June, the youth center kids and their families can continue to visit the garden beds to weed and harvest the crop to expand their access to healthy food all summer. If you are interested in helping out with the youth center garden or other youth engagement projects please contact me at servicelearning@eqlt.org. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS

The East Quabbin Land Trust is sponsoring more events and work days than can be printed in the newsletter. Be sure to check our website, www.EQLT.org, for full event listings and up-to-date details. Don't forget to "Like" us on Facebook.

APRIL...

Saturday, April 18, starting at 9:00 AM, Meet at 25 Bates Street, North Brookfield

Bluebird Nest Box Installation - Wendemuth Meadow has beautiful open fields and a wet meadow that we know is home to bobolinks. We want to encourage bluebirds too, but nesting sites are scarce. Join Harrison Achilles and EQLT supporters to install bluebird boxes at Wendemuth Meadow. All the tools and supplies will be provided.

Sunday, April 26th, starting at 8 AM, Meet at the Hardwick Common

Long-distance Walk around Hardwick: We will walk on part of the trail network that circles the center of Hardwick. These trails are passive recreational trails that cross private and public conservation lands. The loop is 8 miles and will take us through mid-afternoon. Be sure to bring lunch and plenty of water. Dress for the weather.

MAY...

Saturday, May 2nd, starting at 8:30 AM thru 4:30 PM, Harvard Forest, Petersham

Beyond the Honey Bee: Conserving our Native Pollinators: This conference has a full line up of speakers discussing native pollinators, their habitat needs, cognitive-based behavior, and importance on plant development. To register or for more information email hubbardstonnatureclub@yahoo.com.

Saturday, May 9th, starting at 2 PM, Main Street, Gilbertville

Tree Identification Walk along the Gilbertville Fitness Trail: Come stroll along the Ware River and learn what trees (and shrubs) are growing in the neighborhood with Kate Marquis, our state service forester. We will share tips on plant identification so that you can identify species in other places, too. Dress for the weather.

Saturday, May 16th, 8 AM, Brook Road, Hardwick

Migratory Bird and Wildflower Walk at Moose Brook Preserve: Welcome back the birds that leave our northern climate for the winter – warblers, wrens, and others. Moose Brook Preserve is part of an intact wooded area and attracts many bird species as they head north. We'll also look at the ground to see what wildflowers are popping up. Don't forget your binoculars, bird and wildflower books!

Sunday, May 17th, 4:30 PM, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick

Annual Potluck and Membership Meeting: Bring your favorite dish to share with land trust members. Then after our brief membership meeting we will learn more about creative re-use of wood from Brian Flavin of Old Wood Antique Interiors. Brian has turned some of the old boards in the Wendemuth Meadow barn into a conference table, and there are plans for more transformations. Learn about the process and see how old, dusty boards become beautiful objects.

Saturday, May 30th, 9 AM, Wickaboag Valley Road, West Brookfield

Spring BioBlitz at Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve: Join us for this second opportunity to catalog the diverse animals, plants, fungi and fish that live part of their lives on this preserve. Bring your binoculars and field guides as we comb the preserve to expand the 60+ species list begun in February.

JUNE...

Saturday, June 6th, 10 AM thru 2 PM, West Road, New Braintree

Family Fun on National Trails Day at the Mass Central Rail Trail: We'll have a variety of activities ready for you and your family to enjoy the rail trail. Think scavenger hunt, story walk and live music! Bring your family to get some exercise and explore the area.

Sunday, June 7th, 8 AM, 25 Bates Street, North Brookfield

Bobolink Watch: Help document the bobolink population at Wendemuth Meadow. This summer we will begin to track the number of breeding bobolink pairs to monitor their success rate. Bring your binoculars!

Saturday, June 27th, 5:30 pm, The Cultural Center at Eagle Hill, Hardwick

14th Annual Dinner and Silent Auction: Join your friends and neighbors as we celebrate the work of land conservation and stewardship through a festive summer dinner and silent auction. Tickets are \$55 and can be purchased at www.EQLT.org or by returning the reply card in your invitation being mailed separately. Catered by Reed's Country Store.

Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

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KOHN CONSERVATION DONATION

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14TH ANNUAL DINNER AND SILENT AUCTION



Join Us!
Saturday, June 27, 2015
at 5:30 PM

At the Cultural Center at Eagle Hill
242 Petersham Road, Hardwick

Tickets are \$55.00 per person.

Tables are set for eight or ten people. You can reserve your seats or a full table by purchasing tickets from the website, www.EQLT.org.

Please RSVP by June 19th.



If you have a treasure in your attic or a service to offer, please call 413-477-8229 or email chenshaw@EQLT.org to arrange the donation.



Summer Buffet Menu

- Mixed Grill
 - Roasted Vegetable Couscous
 - Assorted Summer Salads
 - Artisanal Bread by Rose 32 Bread
 - Robinson Farm Cheeses
 - Local Produce by Stillman's Farm
 - Ginger Thyme Lemonade by The Country Store
 - Strawberry Shortcake • Coffee and Tea
- Catering by Reed's Country Store*

Cash Bar: Wine and Beer
Wine by the bottle available