

IT'S OFFICIAL! WENDEMUTH CONSERVED!!

At the recent 14th Annual Dinner and Silent Auction we celebrated the changes at Wendemuth Meadow over the past year. The land trust purchased the 30 acres in North Brookfield in March 2014. Since then working with the Friends of Wendemuth Meadow and stewardship volunteers a great transformation occurred, and more is on the way. First, the Town purchased a conservation restriction on the land, confirming the conservation values and setting the course as a place for the public, diverse wildlife and plants to enjoy and inhabit. Second, the efforts of stewardship volunteers, especially Harrison Achilles, was recognized for reversing the significant overgrowth of invasive plants and nursery stock along the stone walls, along with all kinds of other improvements.

Ann Hicks, co-chair with Harbour Fraser Hodder of the Friends of Wendemuth Meadow group, shared the following with those gathered at the dinner.

"The place we now call Wendemuth Meadow Preserve was owned by North Brookfield's "town father" Theodore Bates at the turn of the 19th century. The Bates family started the famous Quabaug Spring Water Company, selling the pure water from the spring that still bubbles up from the land. In 1936 the land was purchased by the Wendemuth family, who moved to North Brookfield when the town of Prescott was flooded to build the Quabbin Reservoir. The family had a dairy and vegetable farm there for more than 50 years. Many town residents remember the Wendemuth brothers tilling the land with draft horses, and harvesting the hay with hand scythes. The Friends of Wendemuth Meadow named the preserve after the beloved Wendemuth family.

The preserve is habitat for bobolinks, kestrel, bluebirds, swallows, deer, bobcat and bear, and for the uncommon plants Canadian Burnett and Ragged Fringed Orchid. These constitute a wet meadow and seepage slope habitat that is unique to the Brookfields in Massachusetts.

As we all know, preserving land requires the efforts of many people. I would quickly like to thank them all.

- Thank you to the Friends of Wendemuth Meadow group for your hard work, great ideas, and perseverance. Your grassroots efforts launched the project and your

dedication saw it to its completion.

- Thank you to the volunteers who have nurtured the land and the plants and animals that call it home with as much love as the Wendemuth family themselves.
- Thank you to everyone who donated to the fundraising, including incredibly generous individuals, corporations and foundations.
- Many thanks to the town of North Brookfield, its select board and department heads for their unwavering support and attention to detail. And to the Conservation Commission whose members were enthusiastically behind the project from the very beginning.
- Thank you to the state Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and Celia Riechel for awarding us the LAND grant that covered 68% of the cost and expenses of the conservation restriction.

- And thank you very much, everyone at East Quabbin Land Trust: the Board of Directors, the Land and Stewardship Committees, the volunteers and especially thank you to Cynthia Henshaw. Cynthia, your knowledge, enthusiasm and dedication to this project ensured its success! Please accept this thank you gift from the Friends of Wendemuth Meadow.

One of the things we did as our fundraising effort was nearing the end was to sit with a

donation jar at various town events. It was very gratifying to be sitting in a hot parking lot and to have people come over to put a couple dollars in the jar and tell us how much they enjoy walking on the land, or just sitting and looking at the beauty of Wendemuth Meadow. People need natural spaces, and they need to know that they have the ability to preserve the land they love. Land trusts are specialists in this pursuit and East Quabbin Land Trust in particular is incredibly successful at doing all these things. Ours is an amazing story of how communities and land trusts can work together to preserve land. We are sincerely grateful to the East Quabbin Land Trust for its guidance, and most of all for its purchase and stewardship of this beloved land! Thank you to everyone at East Quabbin Land Trust!"

We heartily thank Ann, Harbour and Friends for their commitment to conserve and steward Wendemuth Meadow! ■



Harrison sporting his personalized hoodie sweatshirt. He was recognized at the Dinner and Silent Auction for his tremendous commitment to stewardship of EQLT properties.

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



We are in the midst of an exciting time to be involved in farmland conservation in the East Quabbin region. Markets in the northeast are bringing stronger returns for locally raised products. Young people and those changing careers are attending special programs or going to school to learn about farming. Land values are rising again in other areas better known for agricultural soils and farming communities. These forces, and others, mean that we are experiencing strong demand for farms when they become available.

Right now, the East Quabbin Land Trust is in the midst of two farmland conservation efforts. In both cases the plan is to purchase the farm, see the land conserved and find farmers or farm families that want to purchase the conserved land to run a business. These are multi-step, multi-year efforts that aren't straightforward or simple transactions. Working through the various issues to successfully conserve the farm and see the land remain productive is core to our mission. Conserving these farms is critical to meet the community strategic needs and maintain farming as a way-of-life in the East Quabbin region.

There is significant risk involved in purchasing land when a future farmer is not yet identified. Fortunately, there is strong interest in both farms from farmers wanting more land or a switch in their location. We are confident that we can find suitable farm buyers.

In the coming months we are seeking business plans and letters of intent from interested famers. We are working with farmers across Massachusetts to review the information and provide technical, non-biased feedback on each proposal. As more steps of these farmland conservation efforts progresses, we look forward to sharing those details through the newsletter. In the meantime, if you or someone you know is interested in farming in the East Quabbin region, be sure to get in touch to share their passions. Keeping a vibrant community means keeping farms productive. The East Quabbin Land Trust is pleased to be working with farm owners throughout our region to accomplish those goals. ■

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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TOM CLOUGH: Volunteer Work Brings Tom Back To Roots

By Sam Frost

Early on, it appeared that Tom Clough was destined to make environmental conservation his life's work, as he looked to embark on a career studying coastal bird life. While working on his Master's degree in wildlife biology at UMASS, he spent two springs at the Manomet Bird Observatory in Plymouth, MA, banding birds and conducting research on the migration patterns of the Atlantic Brant. He also took part in a study on the Cape Cod National Seashore, where he sought to determine the effects of off-road vehicles on nesting terns and shore bird feeding activity. Later, he set off on a two-month expedition up to the Canadian subarctic, where he was dropped off by a bush pilot near James Bay with the mission of observing the migration routes and tendencies of the shore birds there.

However, Clough's life would soon take a turn away from wildlife research, and it would be many years before he would return his focus to the environment. He spent seven years in social work, helping autistic and mentally disabled children, before again switching professions by starting his own landscaping business. Specializing in planting and maintaining flower gardens in front of local establishments, the enterprise has been in operation for 28 years, all the while with Clough at the helm.



Tom raking the walk in front of the Gilbertville Fitness Trail in preparation for the official opening last fall.



Catching Tom after a recent Stewardship Committee meeting.

Now, though, after spending decades apart from his original field of interest, the New Braintree resident has started to get back into conservation, using opportunities at EQLT as an avenue to make this transition. "It's something I've always wanted to do, but was too busy," he says. "I should have done it a lot sooner." He started slowly, participating in some

EQLT-sponsored walks and other outings such as "BioBlitzes," in which experts lead groups of people on visits to certain EQLT properties and attempt to identify as many different species as possible. "I'm amazed by the knowledge that some people have," Clough says. He then began to increase his involvement by starting to volunteer on various projects, including the rail trail. His level of participation in EQLT affairs continued to escalate as time went on, culminating with his eventual appointment to the

Stewardship Committee, on which he still serves. As a member of that body, he meets once a month with other active



Tom and other volunteers looking at invertebrates under microscopes during the winter BioBlitz at Pyncheon's Grist Mill Preserve.

members to discuss and resolve issues on EQLT's properties ranging invasive species and livestock management to signage and neighborhood relations. He is thrilled with his return to conservation and natural resource management after all these years, and he strongly recommends that similar-minded folks do the same. "People should get involved," he says. "The kind of people you meet and the amount of knowledge they have is unbelievable." ■

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL DINNER AND SILENT AUCTION - June 27, 2015

Our annual gala fundraising event was another magnificent evening, full of greeting friends, excellent food catered by Reed's Country Store and raising nearly 10% of our annual budget through generous responses of participants to the challenge grant and silent auction. We are grateful to all who come and support the East Quabbin Land Trust.

We are especially appreciative of the financial support received from the following event underwriters:



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Please support these businesses and thank them for underwriting the Land Trust dinner!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

This wonderful evening would not have been possible without the support of many individuals and businesses. The silent auction raised over \$10,000 in support of the programs and activities of the East Quabbin Land Trust.

Silent Auction Item Donors:

Harrison Achilles
Debra and Alan Bachrach
Dee Blanton
Wendy Bolognesi
Kaye Boothman
David Cameron
Tom Clough
Darcie Confar
Gail Coolidge
Coolidge family
Karen and David Davis
Jim and Betty DiMaio
Beverly Duda
Sarah Durham and Craig Winer
John Goodrich and Linda Young
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Many Hands Organic Farm
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Salem Cross Inn
The Centered Place
The Country Store, Petersham
Tower Hill Botanical Garden
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Whitco Sales, Inc.



MANY THANKS TO:

Ed and Sue Reed for catering the event,
Rose 32 Bread for donating bread,
Robinson's Farm for donating cheese,
The Country Store for donating the ginger thyme lemonade, and
Judith Jones and Nancy Grimes for organizing the event and all those who volunteered to set-up and clean-up for the event.



WITH EQLT'S HELP, KESTRELS ON THE REBOUND

By Sam Frost

As is well known to anyone who regularly reads these pages, the East Quabbin Land Trust is highly active in the preservation of our beautiful local scenery and natural landscapes. However, EQLT's mission runs much deeper than that. Namely, it is also focused on the protection and revitalization of local wildlife, a pursuit exemplified by its important role in ongoing local efforts to protect our region's rapidly falling number of American kestrels.

A small species of falcon, the American kestrel has a wide range extending across much of the Americas. However, its Massachusetts population has waned significantly in recent years, owing mainly to habitat loss. A lover of open areas such as meadows and farm fields, the kestrel has seen its preferred nesting sites and hunting grounds diminished by increased urban development and reforestation brought on by agricultural decline.

Fortunately, local residents are taking action to reverse these losses by increasing available kestrel nesting sites. As part of statewide program conducted by the Department of Fish and Wildlife, they construct nesting boxes that simulate the dead tree cavities where kestrels prefer to make their homes. They position these boxes in large, open areas away from forest edges in order to reduce competition from rival cavity-dwellers and maximize the kestrels' chances for success in nesting and breeding. Some of these projects have taken place on EQLT's very own properties, including Mandell Hill in Hardwick and Wendemuth Meadow Preserve in North Brookfield, both of which are home to happily nesting kestrels. Local volunteers Chris Buelow and Jeff Smith, along with Massachusetts state ornithologist Andrew Vitz, have taken a leading role in the construction and monitoring of these nesting sites.

Buelow and Smith kicked off EQLT's kestrel protection efforts about seven or eight years ago when, while discussing the placement of bluebird boxes at Mandell Hill, they decided that the location was also an ideal habitat for kestrels.



Drew Vitz and Harrison Achilles installing a kestrel nest box last spring.

They built and deployed a couple of nesting boxes, and were rewarded for their efforts the following spring when a pair of kestrels took up residence in the newly constructed nesting

sites. They've been there ever since. For Buelow, this success had been many years in the making. Born and raised in Hardwick, Buelow has had a passion for kestrels since watching them in the pastures of his childhood home. He remembers being dismayed as a teenager to notice their disappearance from his family's property as well as many other locations around the town.

"One spring weekend I came home from college, and on a whim, built a kestrel box, put it up in those pastures, and literally by the end of the day there was pair of kestrels moving in. This told me that not only a lack of nesting structure was a major limiting factor for these birds, but that they would respond positively with some help." Inspired, he created and deployed more boxes in various places around the region for the next 20 years.

In early 2014, several EQLT members attended an informational meeting on American kestrels, where they listened to a talk by Andrew Vitz, the Massachusetts state ornithologist. Upon being hired to his position two years prior, Vitz had been tasked with bird conservation throughout the state. As American kestrels are one of the fastest declining avian species in the Commonwealth, he soon began working towards restoring the bird back to its former numbers. After speaking with some of the EQLT members at the meeting and hearing of the success Buelow and Smith (along with their master box builder Harrison Achilles), had achieved in attracting kestrels to Mandell Hill, he offered pay a visit to the preserve to offer technical assistance. On his subsequent visit to the nesting site, he banded one of the female kestrels as well as helped in the deployment of several additional boxes. He continues to help monitor the birds and is working with EQLT to put up more boxes at other locations.

Though the future of American kestrels in Massachusetts is still a concern, recovery efforts such as those at EQLT's preserves offer encouraging signs for the birds' prospects. "An increase in their numbers has been evident in several regions in Massachusetts, and we hope to see a state-wide increase in their population for years to come," Vitz says. "Many people are thrilled to see them returning to areas throughout (the state)." As Vitz, Buelow, and Smith strive to help kestrels gain back the ground they've lost, they will depend on continuing availability of prime kestrel habitats. To ensure their success, EQLT will keep working as hard as it can to ensure that unspoiled open spaces such as Mandell Hill are always in plentiful supply. ■



STATION LOOP RAMBLE:

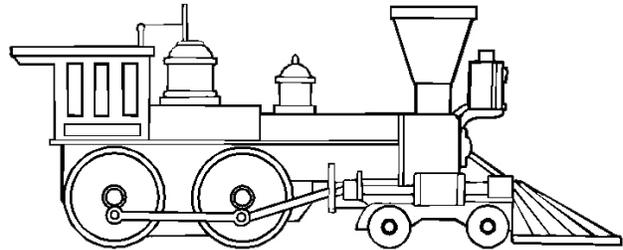
Including a Kid's One Mile, 5-Mile Classic, and a 5k Run/Walk

Sunday, October 11, 2015

Depot Road, New Braintree,
at the intersection of West and Hardwick Roads

Start Times:

- Kid's One Mile at 9:30 am
- 5-mile Classic at 10:00 am
- 5k Run/Walk at 10:05 am



All events incorporate part of the *Mass Central Rail Trail* and begin and end at the site of the former New Braintree Train Station. The races travel past scenic farmland, and through deep woods, and skirts the Ware River.

The 5-mile classic is a hilly road and trail race with a flat fast finish on the Mass Central Rail Trail. Kid's One Mile and 5k Run/Walk are entirely on a flat course. Adults must accompany children running this course. Each mile is marked and mid-run water stop provided. Post race refreshments and free raffles.

Entry fee: \$20.00 per adult -- \$10.00 for children age 13 and under

All fees are none refundable. Registrations received by September 14th will receive a T-shirt.

Day-of registration: Begins at 8:30 am and ends at 9:15 am on October 11th.

Make checks payable to: East Quabbin Land Trust, Inc.

Mail to: East Quabbin Land Trust

P.O. Box 5, Hardwick, MA 01037-0005

Age Groups: 18 & under, 19-29, 30-39, 40-49,
50-59, 60-69, 70+



Cash prizes will be awarded to the overall first male and female finishers, and special gifts for the top finishers in each category... plus a prize for the best costume participant!

Please pre-register by mailing the completed form.

For more information, contact Cynthia Henshaw, 413-477-8229, chenshaw@EQLT.org

Name: _____

Age on race date: _____

Address: _____

Sex: M _____ F _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

T-shirt size: S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____

Email: _____

Waiver of Responsibility must be signed for registration to be considered valid.

I agree to assume all responsibility for all risk of damage or injury to me as a participant in this event. In consideration of being accepted as an entrant in the East Quabbin Land Trust's Station Loop Rumble, I hereby, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, release and discharge all organization and individuals associated with the race from all claims, damages, rights of action, present or future, whether the same be known, anticipated, or unanticipated, resulting from or arising out of, or in incident to, my participation in this event. I hereby certify that I will not participate in the run unless I am physically fit and sufficiently trained for completion of the event. I also give permission for the use of my name and/or picture in any broadcast, photograph or other account of this event.

Signature (required) _____

Parent Signature (if under age 18) _____

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SUMMER 2015 | VOLUME 12 | ISSUE 3

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UPCOMING EVENTS...

JULY...

Saturday, July 18, starting at 9:00 AM, Meet at Wickaboag Valley Road (south of Snow Road), West Brookfield

Summer BioBlitz at Pyncheon's - Following up on the winter BioBlitz, we will spend the morning trekking through the woods and exploring Sucker Brook. Volunteers of all abilities are wanted! Bring field guides and wear good walking shoes. We'll even go fishing!!

AUGUST...

Wednesday, August 12th, starting at 8:00 PM, Mandell Hill, Hardwick

Perseid Meteor Shower Viewing: Every August the Perseid meteor shower gives a magnificent display. Join us for the peak evening at the Ellison birding platform at Mandell Hill. Leave your car in the parking area on Barre Road at the intersection with Ridge Road and follow the luminaria along the grassy path. Bring chairs, blankets, bug spray and snacks. Rain or cloudy sky cancels event.

Friday and Saturday, August 21st - 22nd, The Common, Hardwick

Hardwick Community Fair: This is a quintessential country fair with animal and vegetable shows, tractor parade and frog jumping. The land trust booth and dunk tank will be there! Stop by and see what's new.

Sunday, August 23rd, 2 PM, East Street, Petersham

Gross Farm Open House: Bring the whole family to explore this farm that is in the process of being permanently protected through sale of a conservation restriction to the Town of Petersham. A history tour and scavenger hunt are available for participants. Dress to walk through grassy fields and woods.