



SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Journeying Together towards the Matching Challenge: 20 Additional New Donors Became Members

By April Grandinetti

After several years of fundraising via an online challenge, it was a joy to Journey Together in person. We began this spring's fundraising Challenge activities, with a walk at Muddy Brook Wildlife Management Area lead by Chris Buelow. We learned all about the restoration management work happening there, including the regular use of prescribed burning to make the conditions favorable for barrens species. We listened to whip-poor-wills and woodcock as evening settled in. It was a magical way to kick off our event.

We followed this event, with a pond paddick Pond; the previous site of the Music Camp. Bill Zinni shared the details of how and why the rewilding of the Music Camp was happening. He shared his canoes as well as his insightful knowledge of some of the endangered native plants. The weather was spectacular and groups of families, friends and scouts enjoyed the day on and off the water. We shared hot dogs, s'mores, music and fun.

The Matching Challenge wrapped with a trek at Eva's Woods looking at spring flowers: wild sarsaparilla, wintergreen, partridgeberry, red raspberry, just to name a few. Lee Dougan and Caren Caljouw labeled and listed flowers for us to be able to identify on our walk. The walk was a great learning experience.

All of these events were a wonderful way of gathering together and appreciating all the work we do together to care for the land that sustains us. Along with gathering came the donations. This year we are pleased to announce that we raised \$30,000. Each of these dollars will be matched dollar for dollar bringing

our total to \$60,000! We are full of gratitude for each and every donor.

We were also delighted to gain 26 NEW donors. Donors like Christopher and Andrea C., of Hardwick. Christopher and Andrea moved their multi-generational family to Hardwick in July, 2021. They were familiar with the area having raised their three now grown children just a few towns away. The family had a vision of rescuing horses, raising livestock and growing their own food in a rural landscape. Hardwick and the properties that the East Quabbin Land Trust has

protected and conserved have set the scene for that vision to come to life. When asked why they decided to become donors of East Quabbin Land Trust during the Matching Challenge, Andrea responded, "I live nearby some beautiful properties owned by the East Quabbin Land Trust. I

"I live nearby some beautiful properties owned by the East Quabbin Land Trust. I enjoy hiking and exploring the surrounding areas and felt that it was important to contribute to this organization that does so much to conserve and protect our majestic community and woodlands." Andrea C. -Hardwick

enjoy hiking and exploring the surrounding areas and felt that it was important to contribute to this organization that does so much to conserve and protect our majestic community and woodlands."

Christopher and Andrea's donations and the donations of each and every donor make it possible for the East Quabbin Land Trust to continue to conserve land, protect endangered biodiversity, create education programs and family friendly events. We are grateful to each of you!

Remember that you can donate at anytime and also encourage others to become members so that we can continue to Journey Together to Care for the Land that Sustains Us! ■



MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



It's really a thrill to ease open the lid and see what's inside. Sometimes there's white fluff balls where the chicks are so young that they can't hold their heads up yet. Other times the chicks are older or there are cluster of four to five eggs. On this expedition we specifically visited American kestrel nest boxes that our volunteer monitors had positively identified as active breeding sites.

Drew Vitz, the Massachusetts state ornithologist, usually comes to the east Quabbin region once a year to check in on some of our 20+ kestrel boxes. This year we focused on capturing adult female kestrels so they could be fitted with a transmitter. The Motus wildlife tracking tower at Mandell Hill is part of the larger network of towers that can track movements of tagged birds in the area. So far, we mostly get hits from the male kestrel that has returned to Mandell Hill and was fitted with a transmitter last year. Go to <https://motus.org/data/receiverDeploymentDetections?id=8764> to see what species are noted and when they were detected.

A net is put over the nesting box opening, and then if the adult in the box bolts while the box is being opened, they don't get away. We checked in on six boxes in Hardwick and New Braintree. Of those we were able to capture five females who got a leg band, their weight and wings measured. Then they were fitted with the tiny transmitter that is worn like a backpack with a neck strap to keep it in place. The tiny solar panel and battery keep the unit functioning for several years. Kestrel #67489 received his transmitter on July 5, 2022. He was last detected at Mandell Hill on August 6th but returned on March 22, 2023. He's been at Mandell Hill all spring where he and his mate hatched five kestrel chicks!

EQLT's kestrel box program began when Jeff Smith and Harrison Achilles suggested that we add nesting boxes at several of our Preserves. The program has grown to 20+ nesting boxes that are monitored by a team of volunteers. Last year there were eight successful boxes with sixteen chicks and ten eggs. Of the six boxes recently checked there were fifteen chicks and four eggs. Soon we'll get out and check the other boxes and hopefully those totals will rise. It's great to know that kestrels in our region are hatching more chicks. Although the American kestrel is the most abundant falcon on the continent, their population levels are declining, a worrying trend that we hope to offset through successful breeding in our nest boxes. ■

THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST

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

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
Email: Office@eqlt.org

**Visit our website at www.EQLT.org
or "Like" us on Facebook!**

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Creating a No-Till Garden

By Thomas Clough

Why No-Till?

1. Every time you rototill, weed seeds that were suppressed below the surface are brought into the light and can successfully germinate. By not rototilling you will have fewer and fewer weeds over time.
2. Micro-organisms and mycorrhizal fungi are essential partners for your plants because they help make the nutrients and water more available from the soil for use by the plants. When the populations of micro-organisms and mycorrhizal fungi are healthy there is less need for fertilizer. Rototilling physically kills and damages many of these beneficial organisms. No-Till gardening allows the micro-organisms and mycorrhizal fungi populations to increase, making your plants healthier.
3. Adding organic material such as wood chips and hay improves the soil structure. Soils with higher organic matter and soil carbon can hold more moisture, leaving more of the rainwater for the plants to use, rather than running off quickly after rain fall. Higher organic matter in soils helps prevent soil erosion and flooding.
4. Growth of plant roots and associated mycorrhizal fungi collects carbon from the atmosphere, helping to stem the rising level of atmospheric CO²



The Goyette youngsters excited to plant their garden.

"We've thoroughly enjoyed our experience with the community garden at Wendemuth Meadow. It's an activity that our family enjoys doing together, and just being in the meadow provides such peace and tranquility. I look forward to visiting the meadow daily! It's become my happy place."

"With all of Tom's guidance, the straw bail gardening has been coming along beautifully! The vegetables seem to be flourishing, and we are so excited to be able to eat and share all of the goodness that comes from them. We are so grateful for this opportunity." -Jeanne Goyette



Three-year Process for Success

Creating a no-till garden takes time, but once established you will have a healthy garden with very few weeds. Here's how we did it at the community garden at Wendemuth Meadow, 25 Bates Street in North Brookfield.

Year 1: The main goal is to kill off the grasses and plants without turning the soil. The first step is to weed-whack the area that you want to convert to a no-till garden. Get as low as you can, but don't disturb the soil. Cover the whole area with cardboard making sure that you're overlapping the edges so there's full coverage. Another helpful hint is to remove as much plastic tape or labeling as possible so that you don't end up with small pieces of plastic in your growing beds. Spread a couple inches of wood chips over the cardboard. If you have hay, straw or leaves available, those are good alternatives to wood chips. Because it takes a couple of years to prepare the soil for direct planting, and we wanted to grow veggies from the start, we planted directly into straw bales. If you want to know more about that process, search for straw bale gardening resources and you'll learn how to prepare the bales for growing.

Years 2 & 3: The cardboard is doing its job of suppressing the weeds and may still be partially intact. The straw bales used for planting in the first year provide excellent organic matter for the next couple of years. To begin growing in the soil, you'll need to dig through the cardboard and create a hole big enough to plant your seedlings. Add compost and organic fertilizer to each hole. Be sure that you're getting the roots into the mineral soil. Then spread out the partially decomposed straw throughout your garden. It will continue to decompose, adding nutrients to the garden and helping to keep the ground moist.

After Year 3: The straw and layer of cardboard are thoroughly decomposed. The soil micro-organisms and mycorrhizal fungi are thriving in the nutrient rich garden. Each year continue to add organic matter to serve as a mulch layer for water retention and continue suppressing weeds. ■

Conservation of the former Music Camp: Expanding the Muddy Brook Wildlife Management Area

By Chris Buelow and Cynthia Henshaw



Photos By: Bill Zinni

It's been over a decade of negotiations, but the former Music Camp is now under the care and control of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The East Quabbin Land Trust played a critical role in those negotiations, through its pre-acquisition of the land, removal of its buildings (see opposite page) and re-sale to the Department of Fish and Game (DFG). A truly successful partnership conservation effort! We are also grateful to the Mifflin Memorial Fund for financial support that helped bridge the gap between DFGs funding allocation and the full cost of the effort.

The Music Camp has long been a conservation priority due to its many natural features and landscape setting. The property is entirely within Priority Habitat (as delineated by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program) and supports known occurrences of eight species listed pursuant to the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. These species include terrestrial barrens obligate species, bog obligate species, and aquatic species associated with the property's 2,000 feet of combined frontage on Muddy Brook (a cold-water fishery with high mussel richness) and Hardwick Pond (a locally significant sand-bottom pond).

The property also supports the following Habitat Components, as identified by the Massachusetts [BioMap3](#) project: Aquatic Core, Wetland Core and Rare Species Core, as well as Regionally Significant Rare Species and Regional Connectivity. The Music Camp property is valued for its great potential to support high integrity—and in some cases, globally rare—fire-influenced Priority Natural Communities through restoration. Further up the watershed, the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game has invested significant resources in the restoration of the adjacent Muddy Brook Wildlife Management Area's regionally

important fire-influenced landscape, and wants to expand these habitat improvement efforts onto the Music Camp property. Now that work will be possible!

From a landscape perspective, the Music Camp acts as a hub connecting the Muddy Brook valley corridor and the Dougal Range, which has long been a priority conservation area for EQLT resulting in conservation of the Frohloff Farm, Hyde and Dumas woodlands, and soon to include Pat's Sanctuary on Hardwick Pond Road in Ware.

The Muddy Brook valley corridor is one of the most important inland barrens systems in Massachusetts, covering several thousand acres of protected open space and supporting one of the richest assemblages of rare, imperiled and highly specialized species in the interior of the state. The Dougal Range is approximately 2,000-acres centered on the 4-mile-long ridgeline; a mostly contiguous landscape feature supporting historically fire-influenced oak-hickory woodlands and its own wealth of rare and specialized species.

With the Music Camp protected, these two regionally important areas for open space protection, rare species conservation and natural community restoration will be linked in a way that connects the Ware River (a river with its own regional environmental significance) to the Muddy Brook valley corridor and directly into the vast acreage of the Quabbin Reservoir.

The Music Camp property is entirely within the aquifer for the Town of Ware's drinking water supply well at Barnes field. Protection and re-wilding of this property eliminates future threat of septic system waste entering the water supply and potential reduction of available water through new residential well drilling. ■

Re-wilding the former Music Camp

The process of re-wilding the approximately 90-acres on Hardwick Pond was accelerated this spring with the removal of the former camp buildings. Within weeks of removing a building the oak seedlings were sprouting in its footprint. In the northeast, where there is usually enough rain we are used to the quick growth of barren areas into grasses and forbs, and eventually shrubs and trees. For this newest addition to the Muddy Brook Wildlife Management Area, the hope is to promote the little bluestem grasses on the sandy plain, which provide habitat for rare insects and assorted wildlife.

The complicated process of building demolition was completed by Brown's Trucking and Excavating. Yes, it's

a bit more involved than just pushing the buildings over! The asbestos survey discovered three buildings with "hits" including tiles, tile mastic and windowpane caulking. The removal process was challenged by severely deteriorated roofs and floors after years of water damage and rot. Our awesome collaborators at Brown's stepped over those hurdles and each building was successfully removed. Local friends and supporters reused some windows, doors, stones, stone tiles, metal, wire and even the industrial sized freezer unit. The rest was crushed and hauled away to ReSource Waste of Ware, who supported this re-wilding effort by lowering their tonnage rate significantly, as a donation. ■



Three cabins at the edge of the grassy field.



Two cabins demolished and prepared for removal.



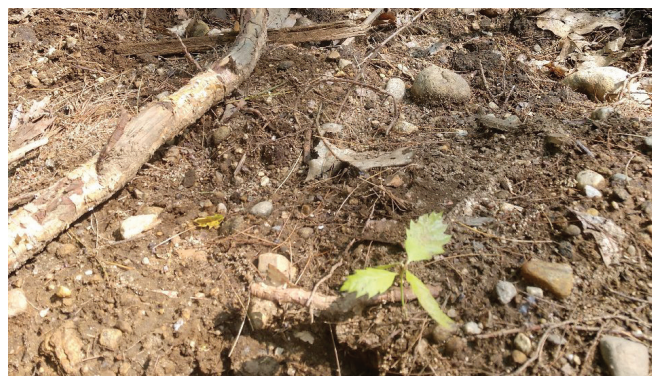
Volunteers hand picking debris from the former cabin sites.



Loading the truck for disposal.



The field full of little bluestem grass is important wildlife habitat to promote.



Oak seedling sprouting in the former cabin site.

2023 Summer Raffle:

By April Grandinetti

Want to Journey with EQLT and win one of TWELVE fantastic prizes?

How it works: Enclosed is a booklet of 5 raffle tickets. Each ticket is \$10 or all 5 for \$45. Use the enclosed envelope to return the filled-out ticket stubs with your payment to EQLT. You can purchase the tickets yourself or sell them to friends and neighbors. If you would like to purchase or sell more tickets, please contact April at agrandinetti@EQLT.org or phone the office, (413) 477-8299.

There is no obligation to buy or sell tickets. However, if every supporter purchased or sold the enclosed tickets, it would raise significant funds for more land conservation which protects biodiversity, expands trails and creates opportunities for wildlife management. Thank you for *Journeying Together* and being a part of the 2023 summer raffle!

Winners will be chosen on Saturday, August 19th at 3 pm, at the close of the Hardwick Community Fair. Tickets can be purchased up until the time of the drawing. Prizes are awarded in the order listed below. You do not need to be present to win; we will notify winners and get them their prizes.

Thank you to the following businesses and individuals for their generosity.

Two 2023-24 Season Passes to the Cultural Center at Eagle Hill. Value: \$700

Two Night Stay for Up to Four in Arlington, VT. Value \$500

Foursome with Cart to Cold Spring Golf Course, Belchertown. Value: \$240

Dinner for Four hosted by Judith Jones and Jody Kablack. Wine and beer provided. Value: \$200

\$200 L.L. Bean Gift Card from East Quabbin Land Trust.

Variety of Meats from Mace Chasm Farm, Keeseville, NY. Grass-fed beef, pork and chicken raised and butchered on the farm. Delivered frozen to you. Value: \$200

\$150 Gift Certificate to West Brookfield Art and Frame Gallery. For custom picture framing.

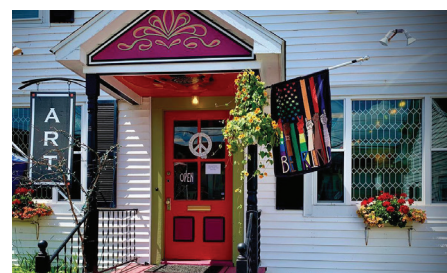
1939 Ford Woodie Wagon Ride and Picnic for Four hosted by Jerry and Liz Reilly. Enjoy a scenic tour of the Quabbin region and stop and picnic with your hosts. Value: \$150

Two Tickets to the EQLT's Farm to Table Dinner on September 16. Value: \$150

Six Months, 1 lb per Month, Coffee Subscription at The Joy of Beans Coffee, West Brookfield. Value: \$120

One-Hour Massage Wendy S. Bolognesi. Massage in the style of your choice. Value: \$85

\$25 Gift Certificate to Farmer Matt, New Braintree.



Meet Our 2023 Business Partners

*Our Business Partners play an important role in helping the
East Quabbin Land Trust continue to Care for the Land that Sustains Us!
Thank you For Making this Journey Together!*

GOLD



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**Business partnerships are still available!
Contact April at: agrandinetti@eqlt.org**



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INSIDE: Conservation of the former Music Camp



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Leadership Circle: Something Fishy's Going On

By Cynthia Henshaw

It was a bright, sunny afternoon in early April, when over twenty-five leadership circle members gathered at the McLaughlin Hatchery in Belchertown. Lee McLaughlin, a retired regional fisheries biologist guided the group and shared with us the family legacy, that his father was the regional director for fish hatcheries. All were eager to learn more about what happens in this facility run by the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. We were not disappointed!

The assistant manager, John Susa, took time out of his busy schedule to explain the important work that happens in support of recreational fishing throughout the Commonwealth. There are two pools, approximately 30 feet by three feet in the building courtyard, with brook trout, rainbow trout and brown trout swimming in the well-aerated water. But that's just a tiny glimpse of the real hatchery. Behind the U-shaped building complex is the real fish growing area – with 16 long pools, each divided into ten sections, to grow the fish until they are large enough to be stocked in streams and ponds across the state. It takes about 18 months from when they arrive as couple day-old eggs until they are 12" – 18" long.

Primarily the McLaughlin Fish Hatchery raises rainbow trout. The other state-owned hatcheries (Montague, Sandwich, Sunderland

& Palmer) focus on raising brook trout or brown trout and are not open to the public. The explicit goal is to stock mature rainbow trout for immediate harvest by licensed fishers. These fish are for eating. Since they've been raised in clean Quabbin water and formulated fish food, there's no concern about bioaccumulation of heavy metals.

Inside the building are smaller pools.



The federal government fishing program supplies the fish eggs. They arrive just a few days old and are immediately set out on mesh trays. The trays are slanted so that all the eggs are

exposed to well-oxygenated water, not just those placed at the leading edge. This stage lasts for about a week while the growing fish use their egg-sacks for nourishment. Once the egg-sacks are depleted, then the tiny fry start to move around searching for food. The fry are moved into other pools as they grow in size and need to spread out.

Once the fish are approximately two inches long, they can be moved to the outdoor pools. At this stage, the biggest challenge are the Great Blue Heron, who routinely come for an easy meal. During our visit, netting was draped over several of the pools to protect the fish. The mature fish are stocked in Massachusetts' cold-water brooks and streams during March, April and May. There were plenty of fish still evident in the outdoor pools, but they'll be transported to a local stream soon. Then the smaller fish still inside the building will be moved outdoors and the cycle can repeat.

Leadership Circle members are those who contribute \$500 or more annually to the East Quabbin Land Trust in support of caring for the land that sustains us. Leadership Circle members are invited to special trips, gatherings or educational programs during the year. Please consider joining the Leadership Circle now.