

P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road,
Hardwick, MA 01037

413.477.8229
EQLT.org



FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

New Preserve in New Braintree

By Cynthia Henshaw

Joannie and Bob Duris recently learned about the East Quabbin Land Trust while driving south on Lombard Road in Hubbardston and seeing the newly installed welcoming sign and kiosk at Henry's Grove. They were pleased to know of a local conservation organization that welcomes walkers and nature lovers to explore the woods and wilds in their neighborhood of central Massachusetts.

Over twenty years ago, Bob and Joannie bought 117 acres of fields and woods in New Braintree. The original plan was to build a new home on the land, which has several hay fields and a large linear wetland surrounded by mixed hardwood trees. Part of their interest in the land was that one field is large enough to land an ultra-light plane. Flying is one of Bob's passions – either in his Piper Cub, the ultra-light or one of his many model airplanes. Building the new house never happened, but they did learn a lot about the land over the years, even getting a wildlife habitat inventory completed.

Unfortunately, Bob was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer this summer and has since passed away. Part of their life planning revolved around the New Braintree property, where they agreed that they wanted the land to go to a local group for walking trails, nature study and farming. We're so pleased to announce that the East Quabbin Land Trust is that group, and we look forward to continuing Bob and Joannie's stewardship. A forest management plan will be prepared in 2024 including evaluating options for trail segments that expand walking access on the land. Part of the planning includes deciding on a property name, so stay tuned.

Bob and Joannie met through the Nordic Ski Patrol at Northfield Mountain. Their joint love of the outdoors lead to living on a dead-end road where the bears, deer, turkeys and foxes are regular visitors. Bob recently completed the trail loop leading to the beaver pond behind their house. Together, they had just started, this summer, rejuvenating their



Members of EQLT's board got to meet Bob and Joannie prior to the official land transfer at the end of August.

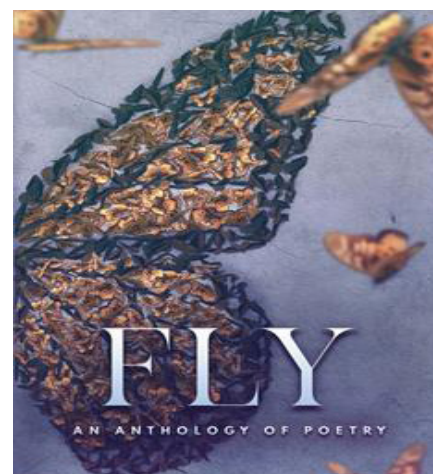
wildflower field with fresh seed. They enjoyed spending time at a summer cabin on Highland Lake in New Hampshire watching the loons and ducks. Joannie fondly recalls several vacations exploring western national parks, including Mount Rushmore, the Badlands, and her favorite – Bryce Canyon. Bob hiked much of the Appalachian Trail and actively supported others to safely explore wild areas by being a certified Basic Mountaineering Instructor with the ski patrol.

Professionally, Bob was an electrical engineer at Analog Devices in Wilmington. Calling him "very handy" is an appropriate description as he designed or repaired many machines and systems over the years. His first computer was a Heathkit model that he assembled. More recently he tackled projects with his 3D printer, including a lantern with favorite pictures of their cats and a vase full of roses. Bob wasn't afraid to tackle big projects. He added welding, wood chipping, stump grinding, GPS mapping and lots of electrical hobbies to his talents. He loved to challenge himself by learning new skills, and was always generously sharing his knowledge and time with others.

Joannie is equally accomplished, adding Children's book author to her resume. Now retired, she spent over 37 years as a psych nurse at Marlboro Hospital, and attributes her ability to stay calm in stressful situations as

a key element of her success. She believes that there is no such thing as crazy because everyone has their own "normal". It was her goal to help patients through rough patches and back to whatever their normal was. Joannie's skills lead her to also help colleagues by becoming a certified instructor of non-violent crisis intervention. She does miss some patients and co-workers, but definitely not all the paperwork and pre-dawn commutes during snowstorms.

B is for Berkshires is Joannie's first published book. It's an alphabet book that highlights special places and features of Berkshire County, such as "C is for Cave" which includes fun facts about caves used as hideouts, and ones you can explore at local sanctuaries. She's also had poems published in several anthologies, most recently in "Fly: An Anthology of Poetry", published by Hey Hey Books. All the poems focus on butterflies, especially monarch butterflies, and a portion of the sale proceeds will be donated to organizations that support these beautiful creatures. Joannie's poem "The Butterfly Net" was one of the contest winners and is a shape poem reflecting the swishing motion of a butterfly net. For more information about Joannie and her writing go to <http://joanduris.com>.



Butterfly poem collection to support these beautiful creatures.

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



Volunteers make the EQLT world go-round!

It's your energy, enthusiasm and guidance that make the programs and projects of the East Quabbin Land Trust possible. I can't say "thank you" enough.

At a recent volunteer gathering we went around the room to introduce ourselves; after all, it's great to know the people who are dedicating their time and skills to this conservation work. People are passionate about their local community, people want to know their neighbors, people want to mitigate climate change, and people want to live with the plants and animals. Tremendous skills and life experiences were in the room: teacher, carpenter, retail work, engineer, banker, scientist, salesperson, retired military, business owner, finance analyst, archivist and architect to name a few professions represented. It's these skills and personal passion that make complex projects come to fruition!

About half a dozen folks are meeting regularly, all fall, to make safety improvements to the lattice truss bridge over the Ware River along the Mass Central Rail Trail. We've enjoyed the changing colors and good camaraderie as we cut out the old timbers and slide in the new ones. It's heavy, dirty work. A HUGE thank you to Mike, Rick, Mark, Andy, Brenda, and Dave for their weekly efforts. Also, Marty, Joe, Lexi, Connor, Jed, and Gary have lent their arms and back muscles to this tremendously important effort in securing a solid decking from the Hardwick to New Braintree sides of the river. We'll focus on the pony truss bridge improvements in the spring.

Increasing access to the Country Store building in Petersham is important. We do want everyone to be able to get safely to the counter to order breakfast or buy healthy, local food if they choose. The historic 1840 building sits on a very small piece of land that slopes off steeply to the east. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of Jordan, Phil and Mike, we have a ramp system plan that is ADA compliant. They've created the design and drawn up the plans. Now we're working through the local and state permitting process. Once that's approved, we'll seek funding support to make the ramp and building accessibility a reality. Cross your fingers, by this time next year, the ramp will be in place.

There are many ways to support the land conservation and caring activities of the land trust. Your financial support is tremendously important to cover expenses associated with the ongoing work. Volunteering is equally critical. Please know that you have my heartfelt "thanks" for all that you do to make our region a better place for all. Come, share your ideas and your passion. ■

THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST

fosters a meaningful relationship to the natural world by conserving, connecting with and caring for the farmlands, woodlands and waters in the East Quabbin 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

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The Man Who Goes Into the Woods: Mike Stoll

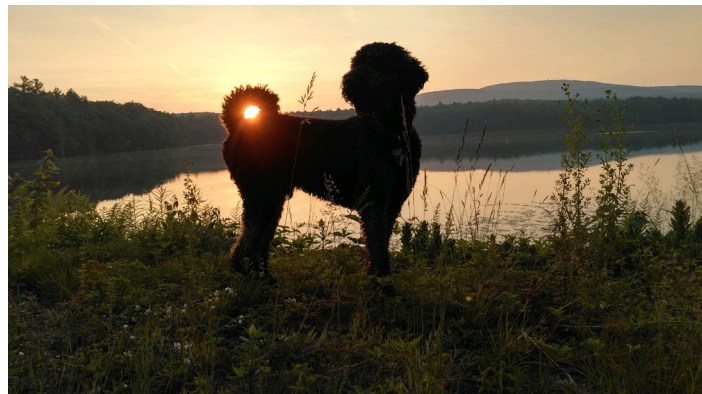
By April Grandinetti

Mike Stoll grew up in Hubbardston in the 1960s. He has always had a love of “going in the woods”, even at a very early age. He recalls being “mislocated”. Or what he begrudgingly admits was getting lost, really lost, when he was about 5 years old, in what is now Hidden Meadow Preserve. “I have a long history there!”, he said. Mike is looking forward to the impending expansion of the single-track trail network beginning this fall.

Mike attended college for engineering at WPI in the 70s, then moved out of state to complete grad work at University of Florida. Mike is a retired Naval Officer (Civil Engineer Corps) and spent time overseas in Spain, Italy and Guam. He worked for many years as a water engineer. Often his responsibilities included oversight of natural resources and environmental regulatory compliance. For example, Mike oversaw the construction of at least a dozen water towers, outside of Toledo, Ohio.

Mike returned to Hubbardston in 2022. Shortly after returning to the area, Mike attended the Hubbardston annual town meeting where one of the articles requested funding for a collaborative effort between the town, the state and EQLT to purchase and conserve 275 acres on the eastern side of town. A portion of those acres now are EQLT’s Hidden Meadow Preserve on Lombard Road, which has a conservation restriction held by the Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation. The town voted to provide \$75,000 towards the effort from its Community Preservation Act funds. At the time Mike was not an official resident and could not affirmatively vote on the effort; however, Mike did speak in support of the initiative and kept EQLT in mind for future volunteer opportunities.

If you know Mike Stoll, he is never without his trusty (he trusts that he’ll get in trouble!), canine companion Buddy, a standard poodle rescue. Mike is one of East Quabbin Land Trust’s many generous volunteers. Earlier this spring, Mike joined a youth activity that EQLT hosted and he kindly shared his knowledge and experience of tapping for maple syrup. Mike came prepared with not only tools and knowledge for the demonstration but also enthusiasm for sharing his joy of the outdoors. He shared



Buddy at Mare Meadow Reservoir, Hubbardston enjoying a sunrise!

hours of his time, creating an opportunity to learn best practices from his years of trial and error. Mike was eager to make the experience one that kids could fumble at and still learn. This year Mike has been an integral part of several EQLT projects including completing an ADA compliant ramp at The Country Store in Petersham and monitoring conservation restrictions.

Hidden Meadow and Henry’s Grove are EQLT preserves in Hubbardston located on Lombard Road which is coincidentally the road Mike lives on. His curiosity was piqued after noticing a small EQLT boundary sign and observing a logging operation underway. Mike looked up EQLT and attended the trail building and maintenance session, where he met several volunteers working on the trail to the east branch of the Ware River. “The rest is history!”, says he.

Mike has spent the majority of his volunteer time working on Henry’s Grove and Hidden Meadow (especially Hidden Meadow!), working on trail layout and maintenance, tracking the moose movements, and locating the best places for wood duck boxes. His other involvement includes supporting the Station Loop Ramble “last runner” safety check, participating in the geocache scavenger hunt, bird watching walks, habitat restoration, demolition cleanup, fund raising and of course any event that includes food! This year his boat in the Hubbardston Dingy Dash was “EQLT Soars”, a boat of cardboard and duct tape with an eagle’s head and tail feathers made by volunteer Brenda Brownell. Mike won the race and donated the proceeds to EQLT for more trail building at Hidden Meadow.

Mike loves being outside, observing nature and even foraging, eating off the land. Mike is most comfortable in the woods observing and enjoying nature. His professional and personal experiences allow him to stay connected and make a difference in environmental, conservation and preservation causes. Mike enjoys adventure racing, which is a multidisciplinary team sport involving navigating over an unmarked wilderness course. While participating in these challenges he has seen whales, seals and sea turtles in Hawaii, bears and deer in West Virginia and salmon spawning in Ireland. On his travels he has seen Water ouzel (bird) in Colorado, red deer (actually elk) in Ireland and orangutans in Borneo.

Mike believes you should never miss a sunrise, reclaim, repair, repurpose, recycle, and be sure to leave the lightest footprint possible on our Earth.

You can catch Mike and Buddy on many of the East Quabbin Land Trust’s preserves and trails. Mike is a fine example of a preserve steward, volunteer and friend. ■

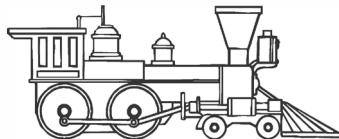
“Don’t walk behind me; I may not lead. Don’t walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend.” Camus

12th Annual Station Loop Ramble

Sunday, October 15th was an excellent day for a run or walk. All the participants used a portion of the Mass Central Rail Trail in New Braintree and Hardwick as they started and finished at the site of the former New Braintree Rail Station. THANK YOU to all the volunteers that made this race possible, the sponsoring businesses, those who donated prizes, and to all who participated! We are already looking forward to next year's race. Stay tuned for details! ■



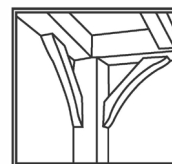
Thank you to our Station Loop Ramble Sponsors!



2023 - 12th Annual Station Loop Ramble



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2023 Farm to Table Dinner

By April Grandinetti

It was a comfortable fall evening as the guests began to gather under the large white tent on Magi's Lawn. Hard to believe that Saturday, September 16th started out as a blustery, windy day due to a passing off-shore hurricane, but the winds died down and cleared the way for a great evening full of friendly faces and animated conversations, celebrating community and land conservation while breaking bread together. An activity wholeheartedly endorsed by our much-missed board member, Magi Durham Ziff!

Eighty guests attended the Farm to Table event. The food was prepared and catered by the Hitchcock Tavern of West Brookfield. The ingredients of the meal were sourced from the following friends of the Land Trust:

- **Brookfield Orchard**
- **Honey Bee Orchard**
- **Hunt Road Berry Farm**
- **Mace Chasm Farm**
- **Petruzzi Farm**
- **Rondeau's**
- **Round Table Farm**
- **Still Life Farm**

The bar was stocked with beverages from:

- **Agronomy Farm and Vineyard**
- **Lost Town Brewery**
- **Ragged Hill Cider**

The flowers were provided by **Blair House Blooms** and Ginny Rich. Donations for the raffle were provided by:

- **Briar Ridge Farm**
- **Golden Goose Geoponics**
- **Hardwick Crossing**
- **Mimi's Coffee House**
- **Petersham Country Store**
- **Rose32**

The support of each of these businesses helps us make the journey together, to do the work that we do, to care for the land that sustains us.

The evening was a time to gather with our friends, celebrate our connections, and highlight the value of delicious, local sustainable agriculture. Thanks to all for being part of our journey! ■



Leadership Circle: Mural Painting on the MCRT in Ware

By April Grandinetti



It was a rainy afternoon when members of the East Quabbin Land Trust's Leadership Circle gathered by the fence mural on the south section of the Mass Central Rail Trail in Ware. The fence is seven tenths of a mile from the parking on Church Street, keeping the river to your left. Margaret McCandless, artist and storyteller, shared her inspirations for the mural with great enthusiasm. Pointing out details and explaining the process, she told of the many hours she spent working on it over the summer, sometimes with volunteers in tow. The mural is full of images of animals and local history. The painting takes you on a journey along the river from the head waters to the mills of Gilbertville and Ware. Our members also participated in a scavenger hunt within the mural. Leaves of five different native trees, the four seasons and yellow canoes make up some of the details of this art piece. Thank you Margaret, Nal's Paint and funding from the Ware Cultural Council, for creating this wonderful mural for all to enjoy on this section of the MCRT. ■

Bridge Timber Repairs at the Mass Central Rail Trail

By Cynthia Henshaw

The Mass Central Rail Trail is built on the former railroad line – running through Barre, New Braintree, Hardwick and Ware – originally connecting Northampton and Boston in the late 1800s. As the Ware River winds its way through the valley the railroad took a straight path, requiring several crossings of the river. Two historic bridges still span the Ware River and are integral to our sections of the Mass Central Rail Trail.

After a decade of use, the decking timbers are showing signs of decay. It was time to replace them. With

funding support from a MassTrails grant, plus lots of volunteer labor, the decking on the lattice truss bridge is now fully replaced. A handful of volunteers spent many, many mornings throughout the fall working on the bridge, including Dave Broschart, Brenda Brownell, Rick Dorsch, Mark Mattson, Dave Perkins, and Andy Wiewel. Others came for one or more sessions, including Gary Brigham, Connor Geary, Jed Geary, Lexi Pease, Joe Pease, and Marty Standrowicz. We're grateful to them all. Those timbers are heavy, and you can't be afraid of heights on this "job". The

historic pony truss is up next for decking replacement. Please join the volunteer crew as we replace 130-feet of timbers, likely starting in the spring.

The recreational importance of the Mass Central Rail Trail is witnessed regularly when you spend any time working on the trail. People walking or bicycling or rolling, either by themselves, with their canine companions or in a group. Everyone is happy to be outdoors, getting tremendous physical and mental benefits from being on the trail. ■

Moving timbers into place.



Rick, Mark, Dave and Mike take a well deserved break.





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INSIDE:
12th Station Loop Ramble



FALL 2023 | VOLUME 20 | ISSUE 4



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GIVING TUESDAY

NOVEMBER 28, 2023

GivingTuesday is a global movement unleashing the power of generosity. GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: A day that encourages people to do good. Since then, it has grown into a global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity. Join the movement and give.

Last year, 102 donors generously supported EQLT and exceeded our challenge fundraising goal on GivingTuesday. Show your support by making your year-end gift during the GivingTuesday membership drive.

Your yearly sustaining pledge counts towards the \$30,000 GivingTuesday challenge.

