

Celebrating  
**30**  
1994 - 2024  
YEARS



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

**SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER** 413.477.8229 | EQLT.org

## MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL BRIDGE TIMBERS REPLACED!



It's been a labor of love and practicality with over a dozen volunteers spending many hours throughout last fall and into this spring. The original timber decking was showing signs of giving way in places, so it was time for a complete overhaul. Over 400 6" x 8" x 12 foot long pressure treated timbers were hauled into place by hand. The decking on all four bridges in the Hardwick and New Braintree section of the Mass Central Rail Trail are completely replaced. We are grateful for a \$55,000 grant from the MassTrails grant program which covered the cost to purchase the timbers and supplies for the project. Enjoy the fruit of our volunteers' labors when you head out on the Mass Central Rail Trail. ■

*Photo captions starting upper left going counter-clockwise: Mark cutting the curbing off the old timbers; Keith, Andy and Dean are placing a new timber at the pony truss; Mike and Dean are installing the curved washers which clamp the timbers to the metal trestle; a hearty group of volunteers that helped finish installing five sections of timbers in one day!*



MESSAGE FROM THE  
**Executive Director**

*Cynthia Henshaw*



This summer our consulting forester, Roger Plourde, will be working with our forestry intern, Harrison Raycroft (see page 3), to create a Forest Stewardship Plan for the recently donated land on North Brookfield Road in New Braintree. An important part of any plan is making choices.

A Forest Stewardship Plan starts with empirical data – by getting a detailed inventory of the plants and trees currently on the property. There will be twenty or more plots where the tree species, size, density and quality are recorded. Also, the understory and herbaceous plants are noted. Those numbers will be extrapolated into the mean stand diameter and overall volume of trees. Also important is the narrative description about the different forest types on the property.

Determining how we care for the land is a combination of what is currently growing on the land and what outcomes are the highest priority.

When Bob and Joannie Duris donated the land to EQLT, they expressed a preference of making the land available for public walking trails. That’s one choice easily made. More trail connections. Our planning team will evaluate the current farm road infrastructure and recommend areas where single-track trails can be added to expand the walking opportunities.

As with most old farms, invasive plants are present on the land. Where and when to tackle the control of invasive plants is a big choice to make. In general, EQLT wants to promote native vegetation. Choosing to start in areas with unique plants or sensitive wildlife habitat areas is one option, if treating the whole property is too big of a task all at once..

Caring for the fields also presents many choices. Currently the seven different field areas are cut annually for hay or rough forage. Their grass quality has declined recently with woody plants and golden rod becoming more prevalent. Should we partner with a hay farmer to improve their quality or let the smaller fields revert back to woods? Or should we seek more active vegetable production in some fields and change cutting practices to promote breeding of grassland birds in the largest field?

For every choice there are winners and losers. It’s EQLT’s role to plan thoughtfully about how the lands in our care fit into the regional landscape to chart a path forward that balances the many interests with the stewardship we can accomplish successfully. ■

**THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST**

fosters a meaningful relationship with 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

**Visit our website at [www.EQLT.org](http://www.EQLT.org)  
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# Getting to Know our Summer Interns

## Caroline Degrave and Harrison Raycroft

By Donald Root

With over 1,700 acres of woods, fields, wetlands, and streams in 24 separate property groupings throughout the nine towns in the East Quabbin region of Massachusetts, there is no lack of ongoing activity in managing these properties. As with many organizations like the East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT), making an impact depends so much on dedicated volunteers and this summer's enthusiastic interns are Caroline Degrave and Harrison Raycroft. This activity is a win-win for both sides as they help further a wide variety of important EQLT programs and projects while also gaining lifelong experiences from the work they are performing and meeting dedicated professionals across a range of topics.

Caroline grew up in East Longmeadow and Amherst and attended Amherst Regional High School and the Winchendon School during her senior year. She is attending Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA majoring in Environmental Studies. She currently lives in Hardwick, with her mom and her cat, Jamie. Her interests and hobbies include hiking, biking, swimming, playing tennis and basketball, being out in nature, listening to music, interior and graphic design, and reading.

Harrison grew up in Swampscott and attended Swampscott High School. He is attending college at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MA. He currently lives in Amherst with his pet cat Pickles. His interests and hobbies include birding, wildlife photography, cooking, hiking, learning about nature and spending time with his family and friends.

They both have been very busy this summer with activities. Caroline and Harrison have been painting and setting up storyboards with fun stories for hikers to enjoy when walking various EQLT properties like Wendemuth Meadow in North Brookfield. Harrison is helping to complete baseline documentation reports for some recently acquired EQLT properties. Both have been helping to check on the kestrel nest boxes and updating records on kestrel bird populations.

Caroline is working closely with several EQLT volunteers while helping to beautify various EQLT properties like Little Marshy Meadow in West Brookfield (with board member, Louise Garwood), pollinator gardens on both Ware and New Braintree Rail Trails and the vegetable/flower garden at Wendemuth (with preserve steward, Tom Clough). Harrison has had the opportunity to work closely with EQLT private consulting forester Roger Plourde on some activities while also shadowing several MA Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) service foresters to learn about forestry management plans and timber harvesting.

Harrison signed up for the EQLT summer internship program with the objective of learning more about forestry with hands on experience alongside experienced professionals. His future goals include one day becoming a forester in some capacity and working in the Northeastern forests to make a difference.

Caroline joined the program to help better understand conservation efforts like preservation, public education, and recreational activities in the area she lives in. Her future goals are to continue to educate herself about



***Harrison and Caroline standing by a story stand recently installed at Wendemuth Meadow, 25 Bates Street in North Brookfield.***

the ways she can apply her concentration/specialization in Environmental Studies to the workplace and contribute to protecting the environment and combatting the very serious and complex climate change crisis. ■

***Harrison and Caroline assisting Jeff Smith as he prepared to check an American kestrel nesting box for eggs or chicks.***



# Hills of East Quabbin Ride

The inaugural Hills of East Quabbin Ride happened on Saturday, June 22 with over seventy riders heading off on loops of 25 or 50 miles around the region. Lloyd Ortman and Jon Hogan designed the tracks to pass by various EQLT properties, with the mid-ride stop at our headquarters, 120 Ridge Road in Hardwick. People enjoyed the challenging “Hills” and appreciated starting and finishing at Farmer Matt’s at 860 West Brookfield Road in New Braintree. Planning has begun for the second Hills of East Quabbin Ride slated for Saturday, June 14, 2025. Please join us for the fun!



# Meet Jon Hogan:

## Outdoorsman and cycling enthusiast

By Donald Root

The key driver and organizer for the recent Hills of East Quabbin Ride fundraiser held on June 22, 2024 was Jon Hogan. With his assistance a team worked tirelessly to: (1) map out a 25-mile and 50-mile loop past beautiful farms and deep woods of central Massachusetts with much assistance from Belchertown cyclist Lloyd Ortman, (2) ensure the loops went past multiple EQLT properties located in North Brookfield, Hardwick, West Brookfield, and Oakham, and (3) coordinate all registrations and event logistics. The event was a great success with 35 riders for the 25-mile loop and 40 riders for the 50-mile loop and helped raise nearly \$4,000 for EQLT conservation programs.

Jon grew up in city of Worcester and attended both Burncoat and Wachusett Regional High Schools. Afterwards he went on to attend college at UMASS Amherst majoring in Human Services. He currently lives in Ware. Over the course of his career, Jon has worked in the field of community mental health services throughout the Hampshire and Franklin counties. After retiring in 2016, Jon has been actively cycling throughout the many towns that EQLT serves. Riding through these towns he greatly appreciates the beautiful scenery, the well-maintained roads, the (mostly) courteous drivers and the great workout.

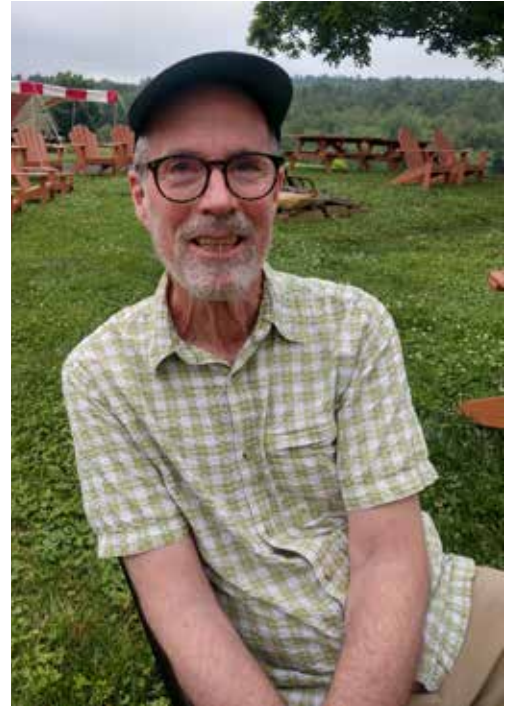
After previously working on and participating in the successful fundraising cycling events with The Franklin Land Trust (D2R2) and the Opacum Land Trust (Tour Opacum), Jon approached Cynthia about hosting a similar event with EQLT and the towns we serve. The successful event both started and ended at Farmer Matt's in New Braintree with tour highlights

including passing EQLT properties of Wendemuth Meadow (25 Bates Street, North Brookfield), Mandell Hill (660 Barre Road, Hardwick), Deer Park Preserve (Barre Road, Hardwick), Patrill Hollow Preserve (Hardwick Road, Hardwick), Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve (165 Wickaboag Valley Road, West Brookfield), and Eva's Woods (Ware Corner Road, Oakham).

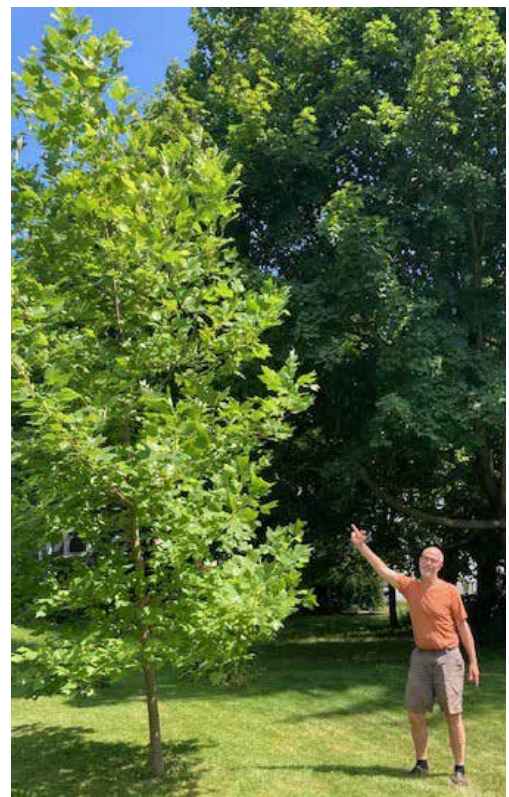
We are so grateful to Jon and fellow EQLT volunteers for their tremendous support in making the Hills of East Quabbin Ride a huge success. Jon shared, "I am so pleased that we're able to combine my passion for riding with helping to raise funds for EQLT and doing something that was a win-win for everyone. I'm glad to have been a part of this meaningful event."

Jon first got to know about the East Quabbin Land Trust after seeing information about the FREE tree planting program in Ware four years ago (see page 6). Jon received a Newport plum tree in his front yard. He liked that so much that he asked for more trees! After consulting with the program arborist, a tulip tree, ginko and Norway spruce were added. "That tulip tree must be 25 feet tall now - it's a monster." commented Jon. It's true, tulip trees grow fast, straight and tall.

After the first tree was planted, Jon joined EQLT for the workshop lead by Tom Clough on strawbale and no-till gardening at Wendemuth Meadow in North Brookfield. Being outdoorsy and active, Jon's also explored the Mass Central Rail Trail section off Church Street in Ware. Both on foot and by bicycle. He's looking forward to the time when the rail trail is connected all the way from Grenville Park to Gilbertville and beyond. ■



***Catching Jon at the registration table of the inaugural Hills of East Quabbin ride (above); standing beside his recently planted tulip tree which is growing well! (below)***



# Planting Trees in Ware

By Cynthia Henshaw



***“This is a great program. A knowledgeable forester helped us choose options. When the tree arrived, they did all the work. I just watched. All of this was provided at no cost to us. It’s such a great deal!”***

***– Jim Rutherford, Church St., Ware.***

The cooling impact of trees is all too clear during hot summer days. You can feel the heat as you get out of the car in our business districts with large parking lots and no shade. At times it can be 10 degrees hotter than just a couple miles into the backcountry roads.

Trees, of course, help with more than lowering the temperature. Trees filter the air and reduce pollution that causes asthma and other breathing difficulties. Trees are the backbone for most of our houses, furniture and many tools. Trees support a wide range of insects, birds and animals as they feed, breed and shelter throughout the year. Trees use large volumes of water in their daily living, helping to lessen flood waters. And trees convert carbon dioxide into oxygen so essential for human life.

The East Quabbin Land Trust, and our partner the Opacum Land Trust, are wrapping up a successful effort to plant trees in Ware and Southbridge respectfully. This effort was supported by a \$252,000 Landscape Scale Restoration grant from the US Forest Service, with matching funding from the Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation Urban Tree program. This grant funding and matching state support meant that the trees were FREE to all eligible Ware homeowners.

The planting started in the fall of 2019 with a volunteer planting day adding 20+ trees to Grenville Park. You can see those trees and other planted more recently as you walk through the park. There was a big hiccup in planting during Covid, but over all, Ware homeowners and the Town of Ware received an impressive 679 trees.

The trees came in all sizes, and were chosen based on homeowner preference and the available space. A variety of oaks (*Quercus* sp.), maples (*Acer* sp.), tulip (*Liriodendron* sp.), cherry (*Prunus* sp.), apple (*Malus* sp.), and dogwoods (*Cercis* sp.) were planted among other varieties. Most were about six to eight feet tall and will grow quickly in areas of open sunlight and being watered weekly by the homeowners. These trees will provide shade, air pollution control, wildlife habitat and water control for decades to come, benefiting the homeowners and visitors to Ware.

This work couldn’t have happened without the arborists and tree planting crew members, all who actively promoted the goal of getting more trees into Ware. Thank you for your dedication and hard work digging rocks and staking trees. The impact of these trees will last many generations! ■



# Story Trail Summer

Getting kids started on a walk or hike is often the hardest part of the adventure. We're here to help and have set up two story trails this summer – which set out breadcrumbs of reading at the start of the walk. Who doesn't want to know what happened? The next page is only 40 feet away, so let's go see!

EQLT's Access and Equity Committee wants to support people of all ages and abilities in getting outdoors to explore, get some exercise, and learn something in the process. This year, with funding from the North Brookfield Cultural Council, Ware Cultural Council and Massachusetts Cultural Council, the story trails at Wendemuth Meadow (25 Bates Street, North Brookfield) and the Mass Central Rail Trail (250 Upper Church Street, Ware) have better stands to hold the book pages.

Construction of the story stands is based on the stands built for the Fobes Memorial Library in Oakham. A few adjustments were made – using a solid polycarbonate cover with a top bend to be waterproof and more support to keep the board from warping. A big “thank you” to these volunteers who shared their expertise and time to get them built: Tim Jones, Eric Scherrif, Steve Garwood, Judith Jones, Jody Kablack, Becky Ikehara, Ann Hicks, Louise Garwood, Harrison Raycroft, Caroline Degrave and Cynthia Henshaw.

We encourage you to get out onto the trails and enjoy the stories, which change every two weeks. Here are highlights of a few stories coming this year:

***Whoo-Ku Haiku: a Great Horned Owl story*** by Maria Gianferrari. Stunning illustrations and gorgeous haikus lead young readers through the dramatic life cycle of one of America's most beloved wild animals. Watch as a pair of great horned owlets peep and squeak in their feathered nest. Mama and Papa hunt for food and fend off predators while the chicks grow strong enough to hop and flap between the branches of their tree, then leap and fly away.

## ***I eat Poop***

by Mark Pett.

This story is a heartwarming and hilarious picture book about friendship, fitting in, and accepting each other's differences. Dougie has a secret: He's not a ground beetle. He's a dung beetle, and he loves eating poop. Dougie knows he should be proud. Dung beetles help process waste and do other extraordinary things! But Dougie also knows that if anyone at school saw his lunch, he'd be an outcast.

***Birdsong***, by Julie Flett. When Katherena and her mother move to a small town, Katherena feels lonely and out of place. But when she meets Agnes, an elderly woman artist who lives next door--her world starts to change. Katherena and Agnes share the same passions for arts and crafts, birds, and nature. But as the seasons change, can Katherena navigate the failing health of her friend?

***Mowing***, by Jessie Haas. Nora helps her grandfather mow the field by watching for little animals in the tall grass and warning him to circle the horses and mowing machine around them.

***Thank a Farmer***, by Maria Gianferrari. Bread, milk, wool, fruits, and vegetables: things that fill our day to day lives. But where, and who, do they come from? Across wheat fields and city rooftop gardens, mushroom beds and maple forests, Thank a Farmer traces the food and clothing that a family uses back to the people who harvested and created them. ■



***Captions left to right: Tim heating up the polycarbonate cover before bending to shape; Tim and Eric fitting the pieces together; Steve adding supports to the backer boards.***





*Caring for the Land that Sustains Us*

P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road  
Hardwick, MA 01037  
Phone 413-477-8229  
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**INSIDE:**

**Mass Central Rail Trail repairs completed and inaugural Hills of East Quabbin Ride is a success!**



SUMMER 2024 | VOLUME 21 | ISSUE 3



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**13<sup>th</sup>**

# Station Loop Ramble

Sunday, October 20, 2024 - 9:30am

Including a Kids Run, 5-Mile Classic, and a 5k Run/Walk!



Register at: [EQLT.org/station-loop-ramble/](http://EQLT.org/station-loop-ramble/)