



ASHFIELD CHESTER CHESTERFIELD CONWAY CUMMINGTON  
 GOSHEN HUNTINGTON MIDDLEFIELD PLAINFIELD  
 WESTHAMPTON WILLIAMSBURG WINDSOR WORTHINGTON

## New Breckenridge Route 9 Spur Trail

Last summer, HLT blazed a short new trail at our Breckenridge Sanctuary in Williamsburg, connecting the existing loop trail to a large pull-off on Route 9. Thanks to the efforts of HLT's 2015-16 Land Steward Michael Madole, and several of his AmeriCorps predecessors, HLT installed an information kiosk at the trailhead and marked the new trail with yellow blazes. We hope this effort increases the visibility and accessibility of Breckenridge for future trail users and provides more ample parking for HLT events at this property. The information kiosk and trail entrance is located between Dufresne's Sugarhouse and the Williamsburg-Goshen town line, on the north-east side of Route 9. Visitors can still use the other property entrance on Old Goshen Road where we are helping the Williamsburg Woodland Trails Committee improve the bridge over Blake Brook so it isn't quite so scary in winter!



*Kiosk at the new Route 9 Breckenridge trail*



*Photo Contest Honorable Mentions: Clockwise from left, photos by Vicky Griswold, Bill Madden, and Walter Cudnohufsky*

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## Protecting Land for Generations to Come



*Sugar maple at the Warner property  
 Photo by Lauren Owens*

This fall, Hilltown Land Trust completed our 40th conservation project by permanently protecting 200 acres of key wetland and wildlife habitat in Goshen. A Conservation Restriction on this property was donated to HLT by Gary Warner of Florence. The land is an important connector between large blocks of protected land including the D.A.R. State Forest and Lily Pond Wildlife Management Area. Conserved wetlands and habitats like those protected on the Warner land are critical for native plants and animals to thrive.

The Warner project was fairly straightforward for HLT. It was a donation involving a single landowner without major glitches, yet it took well over a year from the first conversations to the final conservation of the land. **So what is involved in the process of protecting a property and why can it sometimes be lengthy and complicated?**

Once a landowner has decided that they want to protect their land, they need to find a conservation partner, such as HLT. The partner needs to consider the conservation values of the land including wildlife habitat, water resources, scenic views, recreational opportunities, and potential for forestry and agriculture. They also must determine whether the natural resources of the land make it a valuable area to protect and if they are the proper organization to undertake the project. Not every piece of land should be protected and some projects make more sense for one organization than another depending on location and characteristics.

Another question is whether the landowner wants to continue owning the land or wants to transfer ownership. The former typically leads to a Conservation Restriction (CR) which limits future development, but maintains private ownership, while the latter is a simpler transfer or sale. Then there is often the process of negotiating a sale price, which involves an appraisal of the value of the land.

Once the basic "deal" is structured, the more conventional land transaction work can commence. This involves title research, a thorough site visit, environmental assessment, and fundraising. CRs require additional work, including compiling a Baseline Documentation Report (describing the current conditions of the land) and negotiating the terms of the CR document (a legal document stating what rights are extinguished once the land is protected and what future land uses will be permitted).

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*Protecting Land, continued*

In Massachusetts, the CR needs the approval of the conservation organization, landowner, town Select Board, and Secretary of the MA Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and typically is reviewed by the lawyer representing each of these parties as well. Finally, land that is protected through a sale or donation often requires the conservation partner to develop a management plan.

All of these steps take time, and issues can delay a project at many points along the way. While this can be a lengthy process requiring patience and perseverance, it is well worth the effort in the end! With the Warner property protected, 200 acres now permanently provide an important breeding and feeding area suitable for many animals, including birds, moose, bears, otters, turtles, and fish.



*Ferns and young hardwoods at the Warner property  
Photo by Lauren Owens*

## Meet Our New MassLIFT-AmeriCorps Members!

Hilltown Land Trust is again fortunate to be hosting two MassLIFT-AmeriCorps members this year. Get to know Tamsin Flanders (Land Stewardship Coordinator) and Katie Carr (Community Engagement Coordinator), who will be serving at HLT through July 2017.

### What makes you interested in land conservation?

TAMSIN: I strongly believe in the importance of protecting farmland and have become very interested in protecting the forested land that dominates the hilltowns. As someone interested in the long term health of the environment and in keeping people connected to the natural world, land conservation is a natural fit.



*Tamsin Flanders*



*Katie Carr*

KATIE: I grew up in a city (Seattle), but a city full of parks and surrounded by natural beauty. Over the years, I had many teachers that instilled in me reverence for the space we share with other beings. This inspired me to volunteer with local environmental organizations, something I have done now in three different states.

### What did you do before coming to HLT?

TAMSIN: I worked for seven years on farms in the area—Red Fire Farm, Old Friends Farm, and Hart Farm. I also continue to do administrative work for the Hadley-based solar aggregator Rural Aggregators of New England, for whom I have worked for three years now.

KATIE: I have a Master's Degree in Library Science and previously worked as an academic rare books librarian at a large public university and at bookstores. During my service year, I am continuing my work as a knitting instructor at Webs in Northampton.

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*New MassLIFT AmeriCorps Members, continued*

### What was your favorite outdoor activity growing up?

TAMSIN: I grew up in rural Vermont where for eight years I had a horse that I rode all over. I found and explored all the places I could possibly ride, forming intricate maps in my head. When I went to college and gave that horse up, I took up long distance running and used my own legs to do the exploring.

KATIE: Exploring the tide pools of the San Juan Islands in Washington State and Gulf Islands in British Columbia. It was like magic—this whole world that was only accessible to me at certain times of day. I loved turning over rocks and discovering what was hiding underneath.

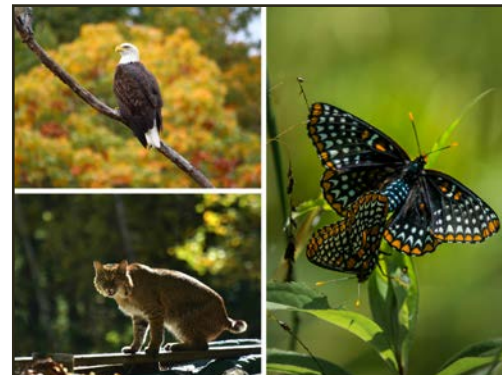
### What is your favorite outdoor activity now?

TAMSIN: Hiking. I learned to slow down my exercise so that I can pay closer attention to my surroundings. And birding—I've fallen in love with bird song and behavior. It's like another language that you learn and then can just listen to whenever you're outside and the more you pay attention the more birds tell you about themselves and about what else is happening around you.

KATIE: I love hiking with my husband and dog near our house on Mt. Tom. We live very close to a conservation area and walk there regularly when the mosquitoes aren't too bad. I really enjoy biking on the bike paths near my house too. We just discovered snow shoeing and I hope to do a lot more of that this winter!

## Flora & Fauna of the Hilltowns: HLT's Fall Photo Contest

This fall, we held our second ever Fall Photo Contest, with the theme Hilltown Flora and Fauna. People were invited to submit photos of plants or animals taken in rural Massachusetts towns west of the Connecticut River. We were blown away by the quantity and quality of the images people submitted! Congratulations to Tricia Bergland, Vicky Griswold, and Carol Wasserloos for their winning photos. Thanks to a generous donation by the R. Michelson Galleries in Northampton, these three are now beautifully matted and framed.



*Clockwise from top left, Photos by Vicky Griswold, Carol Wasserloos, and Tricia Bergland*

On November 20th, we hosted Photos & Pie, an opening reception for the photo contest exhibit at the Bullitt Reservation. Twenty people joined us on a snowy November Sunday for a delightful afternoon drinking tea and hot chocolate, eating pie, and appreciating local art and artists.

All of the photos submitted for judging are on display at HLT's office at the Bullitt Reservation through the winter. Visitors are welcome to come view them on weekdays when the building is open to the public. They are also available for viewing on our website and Facebook page.

## HLT Co-sponsors Event to Celebrate the Outdoors

On Sunday, November 27th, over 200 runners, walkers, and their friends and family joined us for the 12th annual Gorge après Gorge 5k trail run and family fun walk at the Chesterfield Gorge. For the second year, Hilltown Land Trust co-sponsored this wonderful community event with founders Leslie Charles and Tanya Rapinchuk. The event is held every year on the Sunday after Thanksgiving in Chesterfield. Charles and Rapinchuk started the event as a way to share their love for the majestic beauty of the Gorge with their family, friends, and neighbors. What started as a small gathering of a few dozen people walking together



*Runners proudly display their cookie medals*

along the trail has grown over the years to include a 5k race and community potluck.

What really makes the event unique is original prizes and focus on community. All race finishers get homemade cookie medals, and top finishers get to choose from hand-knitted and crocheted hats sent in by volunteer crafters from around the country.



*Race winners show off their hat prizes*

The Chesterfield Gorge is a property of The Trustees of Reservations. Andrea Caluori-Rivera, Trustees Engagement Site Manager (and former HLT MassLIFT-AmeriCorps Community Engagement Coordinator), was on hand to answer questions and provide information about the area. She helped organize the event last year with HLT and was happy to participate again.

Florence Bank sponsored the event again this year, and many local businesses donated prizes for a raffle to benefit HLT. Community members, Northampton High School National Honor Society members, and HLT Board members volunteered to help sell raffle tickets, register runners and walkers, direct parking, help with race logistics, take photos and video, and staff the potluck table. The participation of local residents and businesses makes this event successful and maintains the homegrown, community spirit.

We are so delighted to be a part of this fun community event and look forward to continuing to help make it a success in the years to come.



*Leslie and Tanya address the runners*