



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

Volunteer Spotlight, continued

The quick thinking and hard work of our volunteers meant that our trails at the Bradley Sanctuary were open two weeks after a major storm. We are so grateful to have such a phenomenal group of people ready and willing to help out when needed and to be part of such a supportive community. We could not do what we do without the help of our volunteers.



Tamsin uses Sarah’s map to make a plan

May 2nd is Valley Gives Day!

Hilltown Land Trust is advancing our mission to protect the land we love and provide innovative programming thanks to your support. On May 2nd, we will join with other nonprofits in the area for a 24-hour e-philanthropy event – Valley Gives Day.

Organized by the Community Foundation of Western MA, Valley Gives is a wonderful way to contribute to local causes that matter to you. Thanks to generous sponsors, the Community Foundation is offering fundraising prizes, including incentives for broadening the age range and geographical distribution of donors.

Please include us in the list of organizations you support on May 2nd! Know that your gift to Hilltown Land Trust makes a huge impact on the work we do! Money raised through Valley Gives will help us act quickly to protect priority properties in the Hilltowns and increase educational programming – keeping our region green, healthy and preserved for future generations.

To donate, visit:
tinyurl.com/ValleyGivesHLT



Hilltown Land Trust Board of Directors

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YES, I would like to make a donation/ renew my membership

_____ \$35 basic membership level
_____ \$50
_____ \$100
_____ \$250
_____ \$500
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Please provide us with your contact information

Name(s) _____
Address _____
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The Role of Land Trusts in a Changing Climate

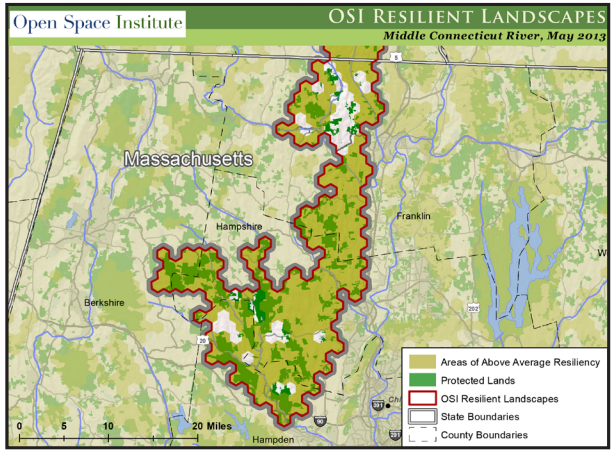
Before Hilltown Land Trust takes on a new land protection project, we consider the land’s recreational, scenic, and ecological values as well as the threat of development. Recently, a property’s resilience to a changing climate has also become an important factor. Ecosystems in the northeast face numerous stressors that, combined with climate change factors, make our forests, wildlife, and watersheds more vulnerable than ever. It is crucial to protect lands with a variety of micro-climates, certain soil types, and the potential for extensive north–south corridors of undeveloped land, as they will have a more lasting impact on the ability of our environment to sustain itself.

There are several new studies and tools to help conservation organizations and landowners understand climate resilience values of land. MassAudobon has developed *Mapping and Prioritizing of Parcels for Resiliency*, a free online tool that uses 30 years of rare species and natural community data to demonstrate conservation value at the individual property level.

The Open Space Institute (OSI) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) have also done tremendous work to advance our ability to predict the affects of climate change on ecosystems. Based on research in TNC’s *Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation*, OSI created a set of maps that identifies priority areas for conservation based on wildlife habitat and water quality protection. These are places that are less vulnerable to



*Bobcat in Williamsburg
Photo by Eric Weber*



Modified map of priority conservation area in the region, courtesy of OSI.

We are collaborating with other regional conservation organizations on a large-scale forest conservation effort in the area where Westhampton, Williamsburg, and

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The Role of Land Trusts, continued

Chesterfield meet. This spot is critical for connecting large blocks of protected land and is in the top 10% of land in the state for wildlife habitat. Our work in this area will help create a corridor reaching from Dead Branch State Forest in Chesterfield to the Mineral Hills and Marble Brook in Northampton.

Another HLT focus area in Worthington also exhibits strong climate change resilience characteristics. In 2014, TNC conducted wildlife surveys along the Little River-Route 112 corridor in order to assess the frequency of migration and vulnerability of species traveling over that roadway. This study was conducted as part of a larger effort to assess habitat connectivity in the Berkshire-Green Mountains corridor. In South Worthington, a mink was tracked from the river on one side of 112 to its den across the road. After being notified of their property’s role in providing habitat for this animal, the landowners made the decision to protect their land.

We feel incredibly lucky to live in such an ecologically dynamic place and grateful for the increasingly sophisticated research and mapping tools these organizations have made available for helping us prioritize protection of this land for the long term. With the help of our donors and partners, Hilltown Land Trust’s work on a local level will give all living things in our region and beyond the best chance of adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Affiliation in Action - Andrea Caluori

When Andrea Caluori served with us last year as our MassLIFT-AmeriCorps Community Engagement Coordinator, she coordinated a couple of events with The Trustees at the William Cullen Bryant Homestead in Cummington. On more than one occasion, she told Sally (HLT’s Executive Director) that her dream job would be to plan programs at the Homestead. When the job of Northwest Engagement Site Manager for The Trustees became available last spring, Andrea applied and was offered the job. We at HLT were especially excited, because it meant she wouldn’t be going far, as her new office would still be at the Bullitt Reservation!

Andrea started her new position last July, and has spent the past year planning programs at four properties, including Notchview (in Windsor) and the Bryant Homestead. While working with HLT, Andrea fused her arts background with her love of the landscape to create innovative events, and continues to plan programs for The Trustees that combine art, history, recreation, and food with the outdoors.



On the trails at Notchview

Born and raised in the Bronx, Andrea moved to Massachusetts 14 years ago to study at Mt. Holyoke College. Before serving with HLT, however, she was not very familiar with the Hilltowns. Andrea has since fallen in love with the people and places of the region, and recently relocated to Ashfield, a move she never could have imagined a year ago. She has even learned to cross-country ski and tries to get out on the trails regularly.

She has planned some exciting upcoming events: a mushroom cultivation workshop with Fungi Ally at Notchview on May 7th and Community Picnics at the Bryant Homestead starting June 23rd. And keep at eye on The Trustees’ website for the Farm-to-Table Dinner and Bryant Day at the Homestead in July!

The Trustees recently opened a new office in Florence, so we won’t be seeing as much of Andrea at Bullitt, but she continues to serve HLT as a member of our Outreach Committee. If you see her at an HLT or The Trustees event, be sure to congratulate her on her new job and home in the Hilltowns!

Managing the Stevens Property for Bird Habitat



Macy surveys the patch cut

Macy on the property for the assessment hike.

The 287-acre Stevens property, which straddles the Huntington/Westhampton line north of Route 66, already strongly supports moose, deer, and porcupine habitat. It boasts a diverse range of forest types and ages, some of which were created 10 years ago by a timber harvest Lincoln oversaw.

The mission for Lincoln and Tamsin’s visit was to check the forest for a variety of factors that support bird habitat, primarily forest canopy structure, age, tree species, leaf litter and woody debris, and the presence of ‘habitat trees.’ Lincoln identified many positive features already present on the land, including: leaf litter for Ovenbird nesting and invertebrate foragers; a swath of low canopy hemlocks for the nesting and feeding of warblers like the Chestnut-sided Warbler; dense, regenerating young forest that can support American Woodcock and Ruffed Grouse; and old large-diameter trees with cavities (‘habitat trees’) that are homes for woodpeckers and owls.



Chestnut-sided Warbler; Photo by Jeremy Coleman

After the visit, a new bird-friendly forest management plan was created. The plan’s recommendations focus on the lack of young, dense forest that provide low- and mid-story canopy. The new plan suggests that HLT create small patch cuts to encourage the growth of desired hardwoods such as oak and maple, and selectively cut other areas to release oaks. Both of these strategies would create a new generation of dense, brushy understory. Like most good forest management plans, the new proposal aims to generate multiple beneficial outcomes. In addition to the creation of bird habitat, if done properly, these treatments may also increase the value of the timber stand, benefit human recreation, and improve mammalian habitat.

An avid birder, Tamsin was delighted to have had the opportunity to accompany Lincoln Fish on this assessment. Hilltown Land Trust looks forward to following the recommended improvements with the next timber harvest on the Stevens property.

Visit our website for more details on the grant and forest management for improving bird habitat on this property.

In 2016 HLT received a grant through Foresters for the Birds (a program of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation) to revise the forest management plan for our Stevens property. The grant helped pay for a forester to assess the quality of and suggest improvements to existing woodland bird habitat for priority woodland-breeding bird species in Massachusetts. On a bright day last November, our MassLIFT-AmeriCorps Land Stewardship Coordinator Tamsin Flanders joined forester and former HLT board member Lincoln Fish and his dog

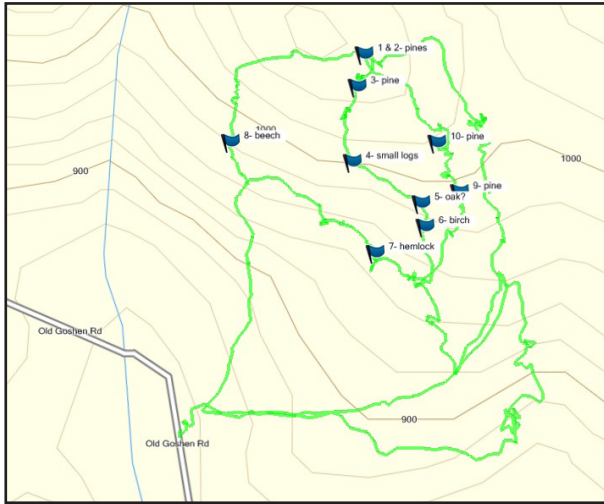
Volunteer Spotlight: The Williamsburg Woodland Trails Committee



Some of our volunteers at Bradley

On February 25th a tornado touched down in the hilltowns, tearing off roofs, toppling large trees, and downing power lines. HLT’s Bradley property in Williamsburg sustained considerable tree blowdown over trails. Thanks to the efforts of the Williamsburg Woodland Trails committee (WWT), we have a happy tale of how that property was restored to a well-groomed trail system in the span of two weeks.

The whole clean-up effort started with Sarah LaPointe, a volunteer property monitor trained by HLT and a member of WWT. Sarah lives near HLT’s Bradley property and knew firsthand that the February 25th storm was severe. She headed out to take a look soon after the storm with her property monitoring tools: GPS, camera, and notebook. Sarah spent four hours walking the trails on the 41-acre Bradley property, noting GPS points where trees were blocking the trail and taking pictures to show the extent of the damage. She found 10 large trees blocking trails, one hazardous snag that would require technical equipment to remove, and numerous small branches scattered about the trail network. Sarah then distilled this information into a map with associated photos and sent that material to HLT’s Land Steward and her fellow WWT members.



Sarah LaPointe’s map of the storm damage

With Sarah’s detailed assessment, HLT staff quickly organized trail clean-up activities. First was a “chainsaw day” to perform the technical work to cut the large trees. Four volunteers worked quickly on a snowy morning to buck up the downed and dangling trees so they could be moved easily (and safely) by other volunteers. Two days later, in 20-degree weather, 11 additional volunteers ventured to the woods for a couple of hours to haul logs, clear branches, and close a hazardous trail. Many of these stoic volunteers are members of the WWT, while several others were new HLT volunteers.

The partnership between the WWT and HLT runs deep. For many years the WWT has helped HLT maintain the Bradley and Breckenridge properties, building and repairing bridges, maintaining trails, marking boundaries, installing informational signs, and publicizing HLT events.

In return, many of HLT’s volunteers and MassLIFT-AmeriCorps members have helped the WWT with other projects including building new trails, making maps, assessing trails for ADA accessibility, GPS training, and co-sponsoring events.

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