



# Westborough Community Land Trust 2015 Annual Report





## Ten Years of WCLT Scholarships

The year 2015 was the tenth year of the Westborough Community Land Trust's (WCLT) Earth Day essay contest and scholarship program. WCLT awarded two \$1,000 scholarships and two honorable mentions to graduating high school seniors. Selections were made on the basis of essays written for the Earth Day essay contest.

This year marked the first time that the essay contest and scholarships were open to graduating seniors who live in Westborough but attend a high school other than Westborough High School.



*Margaret Baldwin*

Westborough High School senior **Margaret Baldwin** won a scholarship for her essay describing her interest in helping people learn about the plants, animals, and history of Gilmore Pond and her project of preparing an interactive trail guide that will do so. She will attend Rice University.



*Scott McCullough*

Westborough High School senior **Scott McCullough** received a scholarship for his essay about his interest in sharing the enjoyment of nature he experienced on the Charm Bracelet trails around Mill Pond and his project of building raised garden beds for residents of the Bridge in Westborough. He plans to attend the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

**Erica Christensen**, a senior at St. Mark's School, was recognized with an honorable mention for her essay describing the impacts of the everyday behaviors of average Americans on places such as Mill Pond, its trails, and Veterans' Freedom Park.

Westborough High School senior **Stephen J. Falvey** was recognized with an honorable mention for his essay describing his personal experience growing up near Mill Pond and learning to keep the area clean and to recycle whenever possible.

"It's interesting to realize that this year's seniors — born in 1996 or 1997 — are essentially the same age as WCLT, founded in 1997," said Annie Reid, acting chair of the WCLT Scholarship Committee. "These young people have basically grown up with WCLT in town. They've enjoyed and learned from its trails and projects and the open space areas in Westborough."

## President's Letter

### Building Partnerships

The name of our organization is the Westborough **Community** Land Trust. One of my goals as president is to build partnerships between WCLT and the surrounding community.



Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), a regional land trust, has long been a partner with WCLT. Charm Bracelet trails cross SVT property at Sawink Farm, Walkup Robinson Reservation, and Cedar Swamp. This year we have been collaborating on an effort to increase open space protection in Westborough. In January WCLT partnered with SVT to offer an estate-planning workshop to local landowners, including several from Westborough.

Thanks to Jeanette McCarthy, we formed a productive new partnership with the Westborough Newcomers Club. So many people from the Newcomers Club planned to attend our Meet the Raptors live animal event that we had to offer two shows! The Newcomers Club made a donation to help defray the cost of the event, which was also funded by donations from the Westborough Cultural Council and the Knights of Columbus. Next month I plan to lead a hike for the Newcomers Club. Steve Rowell, Kelly Thomas, and I met while we were members of the Newcomers Club almost 20 years ago. Now we serve together on the WCLT Board of Directors.

A few weeks ago Adam Boyce invited me to deliver a presentation to the Westborough Civic Club. I provided an update on recent WCLT activities, thanked the Civic Club for past support of our projects at Gilmore Pond, and welcomed future cooperation between our organizations.

Two local companies, Mayer Tree Service and 3C Electrical Company, contacted me about doing service projects for WCLT. On Arbor Day, Mayer Tree Service cleared a new trail in Orchard Swamp. Folks from 3C Electrical were some of the 120 volunteers who participated in our annual Earth Day Clean-up.

Last month I gave a presentation to the Westborough Conservation Commission. WCLT maintains trails at the Town's Bowman, Libbey, and Headwaters Conservation Areas. In September, WCLT plans a Grand Reopening at Bowman Conservation Area to celebrate recent trail improvements, and to provide an excuse for having a party.

We continue to work with girl scouts and boy scouts on service projects. A local Girl Scout troop recently planted woodland wildflowers at Gilmore Pond.

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## Land Preservation Committee

The Land Preservation Committee (LPC) continues its involvement in various support activities to ensure the protection of open space throughout the town. We worked with the Stewardship Committee on the construction of new trail projects and the maintenance of existing trails. We also consulted directly with Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), specifically with Steve Sloan, their land protection consultant, to identify large properties in town that might be protected.

We continue to evolve as a committee. Adam Last, an environmental engineer, has joined our group. Two members, Darcy Lane and Carolyn Spring, have left.

We are still negotiating with several land owners in the Orchard Swamp area (between Route 9 and Haskell ball fields) for an additional 49 acres of property that would extend our ownership in that one area to more than 120 acres. We also have an agreement in place to acquire 22.5 acres of additional property on Otis Street. Once these two acquisitions are completed, WCLT's total ownership in town will increase from 172 acres to about 240 acres.

We continue to work toward finalizing the Charm Bracelet easements in order to establish a continuous loop of nearly 28 miles of trail connecting the various open space areas and neighborhoods in town.

We also continue our support role in the design and construction of various components of Gilmore Pond Park, WCLT's 14-acre open space preserve off Quick Farm Road and Gilmore Farm Road. This year we will assist the Stewardship Committee with the installation of shrub plantings, ground covers, and a gate to complete the entry to the park.

As always, we seek the involvement of other WCLT committees in our work. We commit to working to further the goals of WCLT and to protect the natural resources of Westborough for all to enjoy.

*Randy Waterman, Chair; Don Burn, Adam Last, Craig Richov, Jim Tashjian*

## Stewardship Committee

The role of the Stewardship Committee is to maintain and manage WCLT lands, as well as to develop and maintain trails on other town lands, encouraging public enjoyment of open spaces while preserving habitat for native plants and animals. We carry out these activities through a variety of collaborative activities with Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, school groups, and other local organizations.

During the past year, we again benefited from Eagle projects that have been completed or are in progress. We are ever grateful for the interest and considerable effort these young men show in working with WCLT. Projects include additional steps at Bowman Conservation Area, invasive plant removal at Gilmore Pond, bridging and stiles along Upper Jackstraw Trail, trash removal at Indian Pond, a trail reroute at Libbey Conservation Area, trail reclamation and bog bridging on the Blue Flag Trail, and a new kiosk at Bowman Conservation Area.

The Girl Scouts, too, are burnishing their talents on projects with WCLT. Under way are two Gold Award projects (Senior Girl Scouts, working individually), three Silver Award projects (Scouts working individually or in pairs), and one Bronze Award project (Junior Scouts working as a troop). They include creating phone apps describing a particular property, revamping/reimagining the information in our kiosks, reblazing some trails, adding trail information signs, and creating a PSA (public service announcement) featuring WCLT and the Charm Bracelet. These projects are intended to have a legacy, different from the Eagle projects which focus on leadership. It is exciting to have so many young women involved.

In April, the synagogues in town sponsored a Mitzvah Day of service, bringing more than a dozen volunteers to Bowman Conservation Area to begin reopening and refurbishing trails. A group of seniors from the WHS Character Education through Service class is building bridges for the new trail that will be opened on our Orchard Swamp property behind the Haskell ball fields. We are grateful for the help of all our volunteer collaborators.

*Marjorie Fisher, Chair; Jerry Breecher, Don Burn, Mark Fox, John Metzger, Brian O'Keefe, Hank Rauch, Al Sanborn, Scott Shumway; new members Keith Martin, Jim Slack, Carol Zarrow*





## Membership Committee

WCLT now has more than 330 memberships, including over 500 individual members and 15 new memberships. Membership renewals, in June of each year, are a critical source of funds and human resources. Membership dues totaled over \$7,300. Our membership continues to grow. The 2014 – 2015 Annual Appeal raised \$10,600.

Active members are crucial to our success in protecting open space and preserving the natural beauty of Westborough. We encourage everyone to participate in WCLT-sponsored events and to get involved in committees and stewardship projects.

Membership renewal letters have been mailed. The Annual Appeal will take place in November to coincide with year-end giving. We thank all WCLT members and friends for their loyal support.

*Maureen Johnson, Chair*



Top of Cedar Hill photo by Scott Shumway



Red-tailed hawk and scarlet tanager photos by Garry Kessler



## President's Letter continued

Next year I plan to continue to build an actively engaged membership and expand the concept of partnerships to include corporate memberships. If you have contacts with the local business community or experience building partnerships between non-profits and corporations, we would love to have you join us in this new endeavor.

*Scott Shumway, President*

## Education Committee

The Education Committee's events are designed to heighten the public's awareness of our natural environment and the importance of protecting it. Our Family Nature Hikes opened with a migrating bird walk at Lake Chauncy with Paula Kirk and Annie Reid. A ramble to Gilmore Pond with Marge Fisher showcased the latest trail link to the Charm Bracelet. November's Trolley Line Hike with Don Burn followed the old trolley route through woods and along roadsides, beginning at Westborough Office Park. Expert tracker Paul Wanta engaged all ages in a search for signs of wildlife at the Bowman Conservation Area in January. How to tap maple trees and produce your own maple syrup was a popular hands-on workshop offered by Janet Anderson. The spring foraging walk about wild edibles with Dan Jaffe of the New England Wild Flower Society was cancelled due to weather. The five-mile National Trails Day Hike climbed Cedar Hill and passed through Crane Swamp to finish on the newest trails over Walnut Hill.

A highlight of WCLT events is the annual live animal program, with two performances this year due to popular demand. In "Meet the Raptors" licensed bird rehabilitator Tom Ricardi presented five Massachusetts birds of prey, including a falcon, owl, kestrel, hawk, and eagle. The children were delighted with these majestic birds. Thanks go to Westborough Cultural Council, Newcomers Club, and the Knights of Columbus for their support.

At WCLT's annual Earth Day Clean-up, 120 volunteers filled 150 bags with trash from the town's roadsides and 44 litter-strewn sites identified by Bruce Tretter, who once again coordinated the event. Teams participated from eight local businesses, Explorer Post 85, WHS National Honor Society, Westborough Civic Club, and the Newcomers Club. We thank the Department of Public Works, Don Gale, and his crew for their support.

The Annual Meeting featured the stunning video, "Epic Journeys," which followed three shorebird species and the challenges of their round trip journeys between northern and southern hemispheres.

*Kristina Allen, Chair; Susan Abladian, Janet Anderson, Kathy Leblanc, Elaine Moore, Rachel Radin, Annie Reid, Christopher Sassetti*

