

# HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.

# NEWSLETTER



Volume XXXXVI, WINTER

December 2016

*A Word from the President*  
*David Goldman*

Earlier this year a Life Scout, Andrew Palleiko, came to the Trust seeking an Eagle Scout public service project. The Trust proposed to have him clear and mark the trails in the northern section of the **Fruit Street Conservation Area**. When we walked the trails we soon discovered a number of auto tire dumps on the Fruit Street property. The project expanded to include the disposal of the tires, as well as the trail clearing & marking. The Trust contacted the **Central Massachusetts Mosquito Control Project (CMMCP)** for help. CMMCP members (Hopkinton being a member) could avail themselves of CMMCP services that dispose of tires, at no cost, because they form breeding grounds for mosquitos. Over the past two months the scouts, under the direction of Andrew, **removed 167 tires** from the first area and staged them for collection where the CMMCP could collect them. On a subsequent Saturday the scouts **removed 637 tires** from the second location and staged them on the property line between the Fruit Street property and the Pratt property. The CMMCP collected them and disposed of them at a recycler. The disposal fee for each tire is approximately \$3.00 each, a cost that the town avoided because the CMMCP service is funded by the state. In addition, the scouts filled a dumpster, provided by the town, with other junk material that was on the property. The Trust would like to congratulate Andrew on an excellent project. The Trust also thanks John Westerling, DPW Director, Norman Khumalo, Town Manager and Timothy Deschamps, Director of the CMMCP for their cooperation in this worthy effort. The end result is the clean-up of the Fruit Street Property and the avoidance of the cost to accomplish it.

At the last writing, the **Whitehall Woods Open Space (203 Pond Street)**, was close to having the Conservation Restriction (CR) finalized. The open space ownership passes to the Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) and the CR will be held by HALT. This was accomplished on October 18<sup>th</sup> when the CR, to the Trust, was recorded and the deed, to SVT, was recorded. **SVTAmeriCorps member** Lisa Long and Chelsea Poley organized a trail building day at the property. They along with volunteers, have created new trails, cleared existing trails, installed signage and removed invasive buckthorn. This event took place on **Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup>**. HALT & SVT are looking forward to a grand opening next spring that will connect the **Whitehall Reservation** to the **Upton State Forest**. Stay tuned for further information about this upcoming event. (also see the lead story on the next page.)

By maintaining these open spaces in Hopkinton, the Trust is helping to preserve, protect and increase the value of your property and maintain the rural character of the town. **We have closed on 1000 acres of open space land in the Trusts ownership or under Conservation Restrictions**, which provides for the preservation of that rural character we all want in Hopkinton. We are at the beginning of the great New England winter season and the end of the year. If you enjoy the use of the open spaces, please remember to help support the Trust, by becoming a member or by making a year end tax deductible donation, so that we can continue to provide this value to you the residents. So have some fun, get outdoors and enjoy nature's wonders. Find a geo-cache, take a walk in the Trust's properties, **welcome home**.

Very truly: *David Goldman*, President

**PO BOX 56, WOODVILLE MA 01784**

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## **Whitehall Woods (aka 203 Pond Street)**

John Coolidge and Anne Richards were the caring stewards of a 42-acre woodland on Pond Street for over 40 years. As they neared retirement, they knew that the value of their land would be a key part of their retirement plan, and yet they didn't want to see the land they loved covered with houses. Under Hopkinton's Open Space and Landscape Preservation Development bylaw, they submitted a plan to the Planning Board in 2013 that clustered 12 houses on small lots on a cul-de-sac, leaving 32 acres as preserved open space.

Because the property sits in a key location between Whitehall State Park and the Upton State Forest, Hopkinton Area Land Trust, Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), and several local conservation groups thought it was worth an effort to try to preserve all 42 acres of the property. Just next door, the state forest is home to a state-listed endangered species, and the Coolidge-Richards property, undeveloped, provided an important buffer to that habitat.

Unfortunately, and despite the fact that the property was the highest-ranking priority for preservation in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan, neither the Planning Board nor the Community Preservation Committee supported the effort to preserve it in its entirety, and a vote to purchase it outright was unsuccessful at Town Meeting in 2015.

Despite this setback, HALT and SVT felt that the 32 acres that were to be set aside as open space for the development still made for a good piece of conservation land. The open space was transferred to SVT on October 18, and as required by the bylaw, a conservation restriction was granted to the Hopkinton Area Land Trust.

The property is unique in its critical location because it forms a link between Whitehall State Park and Upton State Forest. These two properties form a block of over 3,100 acres of conservation land extending as far as Grafton. Joining these properties together created an extensive, protected corridor for recreation, wildlife and aquifer protection. The property itself is across from Lake Whitehall, and adjacent to the Miscoe, Warren, Whitehall Area of Critical Environmental Concern, serving as a buffer and providing supporting habitat.

A trail system exists on the property, but improvements are needed. SVT, HALT and AmeriCorps members began clearing trails to establish a better connection with the Upton State Forest on November 12. An official ribbon cutting ceremony is planned for the Spring of 2017!

Portions reprinted from Sudbury Valley Trustees web site

## **Berry Acres**

Berry Acres consists of close to 40 acres of open space with the town owning 28.7 acres and EverSource owning 9.9 acres, representing an easement across the property. The town of Hopkinton acquired the land in 1968 from Boston Edison Co. (now EverSource) with a 99 year lease. The trail entrance is located on Main Street across the street from Ice House Pond.

Several of the foot paths were cleared and cleaned out by the Boy Scouts in 1994 as part of an Eagle Project. In 2007 a system of trails was laid out, but since then, some of the trails became badly overgrown and a bridge at a stream crossing had been washed downstream. In August 2016, a volunteer group from EMC Corp. contacted the Hopkinton Trails Club seeking a community service project, and a restoration of Berry Acres was selected. After receiving approval from the Conservation Commission for the work, the team went to work. When the work was completed, the trails had been cleared and marked, and a newly reinforced bridge was solidly in place. Shortly thereafter, the Hopkinton Trails Club held a re-opening during that month.



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## **Hunting Season Information**

Autumn is a particularly wonderful time to be out in the woods. The air is cool and the color of the changing leaves can be spectacular. Extra caution is needed at this time of year however. This is deer hunting season and many of the areas we love to explore in Hopkinton are open for hunting.

There are three hunting seasons for deer in Massachusetts. The 2016 dates are:

- Bow & Arrow: October 17 thru November 26
- Shotgun: November 28 thru December 10
- Muzzle-loaders: December 12 thru December 31

You can still enjoy the woods during this time if you use common sense and take a few precautions:

- Be aware of which areas are open for hunting and when (no hunting on Sundays!)
- Wear blaze orange clothing (at least a hat)
- If walking with your dog, dress him/her in an orange vest
- Avoid hikes during prime hunting times (dawn & dusk)

For more information about hunting seasons and safety in the woods, visit the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (Mass Wildlife) webpage.

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## **Eastern Bluebirds**

I have heard of people waiting for years to attract bluebirds to their yards. I was not actually trying to attract bluebirds, but a few years ago a couple showed up to partake of the bird suet. Recently, I have seen as many as eight bluebirds in my yard.

Bringers of happiness in all seasons, eastern bluebirds are small members of the thrush family that inhabit fields and clearings throughout Massachusetts. Bluebirds were once rare in Massachusetts during the winter, but in recent years the number of winter bluebirds has been climbing. The bluebirds visiting my yard are most prevalent in spring and autumn. I see less of them during the summer,

maybe because I don't feed the birds as much during the summer. Most of the bluebirds stay through the winter.

Eastern bluebirds are easy to identify thanks to their bright blue backs and brick-red breasts. Some females may be rather subdued in coloration, to the point where their backs are blue-gray and their breasts only faintly rusty, but the pattern of colors remains the same. Bluebirds are smaller than blue jays, and they lack the pointed crests, black collars, and extensive white on the wings and tail that blue jays show.

Bluebirds rarely eat birdseed (although they will occasionally take shelled sunflower chips). Sixty-eight percent of their diet is made up of insects such as grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, spiders, and caterpillars. They enjoy mealworms. They may eat suet, especially during winter months. They also like the fruit of plants such as flowering dogwood, eastern red cedar, holly, and pokeweed. (Bluebirds will swallow dogwood berries whole and then regurgitate the pits.) They may eat fruit in winter (when it may make up 50% of their diet), fall, and summer; and also in the spring, especially if insects are scarce.

In spring and summer, bluebirds nest in holes, either in trees or in birdhouses put up for their use. They mostly forage for insects on the ground, occasionally catching flying bugs on the wing. As the weather gets colder, many bluebirds flock together for migration. Those that remain in Massachusetts dine primarily on soft fruits, and a pair of bluebirds may remain on or near their breeding territory all through the winter.

Some regularly stay through the winter as far north as Oregon, the southern Great Lakes and New England. They may switch habitats, however, gathering in small flocks and moving into open woods or juniper groves where wild fruits and berries will keep them fed in the cold. During the winter, small groups may roost together at night in tree holes or in other shelters. This is one good reason to consider leaving your nest boxes up for the winter season – attracting bluebirds may be possible even in the winter.

Want to attract bluebirds:

- Put up a nest box specifically designed for bluebirds.

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- Put your nest boxes in the right habitat. Bluebirds like semi-open grassland habitat, such as mowed lawns or meadows, orchards, and roadsides.
- Leave nest boxes up year round
- Put out a birdbath
- Plant native plants that produce berries that bluebirds like

Although pesticides and competition from house sparrows in the early and mid-20th century negatively impacted bluebirds, they have recovered well in recent years and are stable or increasing both as breeding birds and wintering birds. Much of this recovery is thanks to concerned citizens who put up bluebird boxes in their fields for these birds to nest in.

## **Pipeline Loses, Conservation Wins**

A proposed 420 mile natural gas pipeline through upstate New York and Massachusetts would have cut through more than 100 conservation properties in Massachusetts alone, carrying natural gas from the fracking fields of Pennsylvania. But the proposal met with intense opposition and it was withdrawn last May.

The pipeline would have crossed state parks, wildlife reserves, conservation lands, farmland and the Connecticut River.

The energy company Kinder Morgan unexpectedly withdrew the proposal last May, citing a lack of commitments to use the fuel.

When it was withdrawn, Jack Clarke of the accredited Mass Audubon, said the pipeline was the wrong infrastructure, carrying the wrong fuel, through the wrong state, at the wrong time. The days of dependence on fossil fuels are closing as Massachusetts turns its attention to clean renewable sources of energy, such as wind, hydro and solar.

“It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men’s hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit.” –Robert Louis Stevenson

**You can take an important step for your community: Offer your leadership, political support, and charitable gifts to a land trust. Better yet, consider donating a conservation easement on your land. It is an investment in the future that offers attractive tax benefits and the satisfaction that the land you love will be protected forever.**

### **Become a Member of HALT**

Family	\$30 _____
Sentinel	\$50 _____
Centurion	\$100 _____
Steward	\$250 _____
Protector	\$500 _____
Conservator	\$1,000 _____
President’s Circle	\$1,000+ _____

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

All contributions to HALT are deductible for income tax purposes.

Mail to:  
Hopkinton Area Land Trust, Inc.  
PO Box 56  
Woodville, MA 01784  
508-435-6578

Or email: [info@hopkintonarealandtrust.org](mailto:info@hopkintonarealandtrust.org)

Choose your membership level now at:  
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