

# HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.



Volume XXII, Spring

May 2006

# NEWSLETTER

## *A Word from the President* *David Goldman*

Dear Friends

Spring has arrived here in Hopkinton and it is time to get out of doors for some fun with nature. One item from this past winter is of particular note. **Bill Terry** has donated 22 acres of land to us, contiguous to the Trusts' North Mill property. The Trust will be extending our Karl B. Mighton trail onto this new acquisition this spring and summer.

On another note, the Trust is happy to announce the award of two scholarships to **Hopkinton High School seniors Benjamin Brush and Nicholas Verrochi**. Please see **Gail Clifford's** article and **Ben Brush's winning essay** on page 2 of this newsletter. We can all be proud of our young people if they turn out like these two young men.

The Trust would also like to announce and welcome **Mavis O'Leary and Beth Rohlfs** to the HALT Board as new directors of the organization. We expect both Mavis' and Beth's participation and counsel to prove extremely beneficial to the Trust and to Hopkinton.

With respect to land acquisition, the Trust expects to receive the 64 acres of open space set aside in the Estates at Highland Ridge (a.k.a. Hopkinton Highland II) from Toll Brothers sometime later this year. The property will be owned by the Trust and a Conservation Restriction will be held by the Hopkinton Conservation Commission. This property is of particular importance because there is an old trail that is already on the property and just needs some maintenance. This trail is also part of the HALT Northeast trail system that will take us from east Hopkinton at the Ashland town line all the way to north Hopkinton at the Sudbury river. The only piece of this trail system that the Trust does not hold yet is in the Hopkinton Highlands III project, but that is coming along and the Trust expects to obtain that land either late this year or early in 2007. In addition, the Trust is working with several projects in the southeast part of town to gain open space land in strategic areas so that the "greenway vision" can continue to develop. Your continued participation and financial support for the Trust is appreciated and allows the Trust to continue the work to protect the rural character of Hopkinton and provide the open spaces that we can all enjoy. **Thanks to all of you** who have donated to the trust, either you time, your energy, your participation and the funds that make the Trust successful.

On a personal note, I would like to wish all the residents of Hopkinton a wonderful and **safe** summer and I urge you to go out and enjoy the outdoors by using the trails that the Trust has created for your pleasure.

*David S. Goldman, P.E., President*

**PO BOX 56, WOODVILLE MA 01784**

# **HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.**

## **HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST**

### **SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

by GAIL M. CLIFFORD

Hopkinton Area Land Trust (HALT) offers scholarships to graduating seniors interested in studying environmental sciences and/or conservation of land and natural resources. The students must be residents of Hopkinton and be graduating from Hopkinton High School, Keefe Technical High School, Marian High School, St. Mark's High School, or Norfolk County Agricultural High School.

This year's awards go to Nicholas Verrochi of Old Elm Way and Benjamin Brush of Coburn Road.

Nicholas presented an extensive resume of activities, volunteer work and employment, showing excellent leadership abilities in both outdoor activities, especially sailing, and civic involvement. He became fascinated with biology in his sophomore year, and cemented his passion for the subject with his junior year science fair project, which led him to compete at the state level. Nick is a member of Hopkinton High School's Envirothon Team, researching local environmental issues.

Benjamin, also interested in a biology major, presented the most creative essay ever written by any of our previous scholarship applicants. The Directors of HALT were so impressed that we have printed it following this article, and would like to distribute it more widely. Ben is also a member of the Envirothon Team, and describes himself as a "nature advocate". His love of hiking, his leadership abilities in planning excursions and educating others on survival techniques, and respect for the wilderness are paramount.

The Directors of HALT are absolutely delighted with the caliber of these young men and we wish them much success in their chosen life paths.

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**Winning essay submitted by Benjamin R. Brush on April 5, 2006 as part of the Application for a Hopkinton Area Land Trust Scholarship.**

"The wind blows viciously as we endeavor to assemble our tents. The sky above has turned an ominous shade of purple

and begins to drip cold globs of water. I can't hear the thunder, but I can feel it as the sound waves reverberate off the walls of the canyon. Suddenly, the clouds yield forth their flood and an ensemble of cacophonous sound rips the afternoon sky sending this group of teenagers bounding off into the woods. We squat down and make a closed circuit with our feet and knees so that if lightening were to strike nearby we wouldn't be injured. Separated from each other by twenty feet of dense underbrush I am alone and shall sit here on top of a thin sheet of foam while we wait for the storm to pass. Slowly, the patter of the rain beats into my head through my hood much like the water has already soaked through my pants. Forty-five minutes of sitting in the rain is more than enough to make anyone consider why the heck they're putting themselves through such discomfort. Ironically, this is just part of my favorite pastime.

Over the past three years I have spent a combined seven weeks hiking in the wilderness and at least half of that time was spent in the chill rain dropped from Maine and New Hampshire skies. Yet, I would not trade one minute of it to have been in the comforts of a home. I feel surrounded by freedom when I am in the woods and not confined to a road or sidewalk. With all I need to survive strapped on my back and held in my head, I feel independent and liberated. The simplicity of setting a goal, planning how to achieve it, and then executing that plan and getting to the peak fuels me and I find it immensely rewarding to look back from the summit and actually see all that I have accomplished. I am not the type of person who waits for something to happen to them, I am the person that goes forth and makes things happen. Perhaps that is why I also often find myself in leadership roles in the mountains and elsewhere. Frequently, I have been turned to as the leader of the group and most knowledgeable person for a situation or topic. I have planned trips, led the group on excursions, and also taught the party lessons on survival and respectful ethics when in the wilderness. Additionally, I have also strived to give back to the forest by volunteering for trail work, campsite re-vegetation, and other various projects. I feel I am truly myself when I'm in the woods and not pressed by society to be someone or something else. Hiking is something I'll always do and it will forever be part of who I am.

This love of nature and my anticipated major in Biology qualify me for consideration in the Hopkinton Area Land Trust Scholarship. I will forever be a nature advocate and already have been as the wildlife expert for the Envirothon team, which competes annually in an environmental science competition. In fact, our team won the Rookie Team of the Year award last year. As part of this team we assess issues

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of importance to the community like preserving historic land, as well as wetlands awareness and other delicate areas. I hope that someday my experiences now will help me in such a way so that once I settle down in some town, I'll be able to be part of its conservation committee or other nature centered team and work to preserve what is left of the wilderness where I live."

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## **Cameron Highlands and Town Forest Hike**

Cameron Highlands is a 126 acre parcel of land bordered by Wood Street on the north and Winter Street on the west. This land was purchased by the town in 2001 and is significant because its trails link to existing trails in the Town Forest. The land is managed by the Hopkinton Open Space Preservation Commission.

On Sunday, April 11 the Hopkinton Trails Club hosted hikes through Cameron Highlands and the Town Forest. With over 50 people in attendance, two different hikes were planned, a shorter hike of approximately 1.5 miles and a longer hike of almost 3 miles. The shorter hike meandered through the hills and ravines of the Cameron Highlands, stopping to appreciate the views of mature hardwoods, pine groves and rock outcroppings. With the bright sun, blue sky and bare trees, the hikers were able to appreciate the expanse of natural terrain, which for many is a short walk or drive from their home.

The long hike traversed the length of Cameron Highlands and looped back up through to the Town Forest. They also experienced the natural beauty of the area, including several areas of swamp, which filter water on its way to Lake Whitehall. The hikers also were fortunate to see a group of deer, which quickly disappeared into the thick woods.

Several hikers commented that they hadn't realized such a special resource existed in Hopkinton. The club welcomed many newcomers from Hopkinton as well as visitors from towns as far away as Boxford. Photos and a map of the hike are posted on the Club website at [www.hopkintontrailsclub.com](http://www.hopkintontrailsclub.com).

The next Hopkinton Trails Club hike will be on May 20<sup>th</sup> at 10am and will include the trails around the Fruit Street property. The June hike will be in Hopkinton State Park on Saturday June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Details will be posted on the website. To be placed on the email list contact [hopkintontrailsclub@yahoo.com](mailto:hopkintontrailsclub@yahoo.com).

## **Suburban Safari Book Review**

**By Mavis O'Leary**

The goals of H.A.L.T. and other land conservation agencies promote the preservation of land for present and future generations, while building an awareness and appreciation of the environment and the importance of ecology. Thinking of these goals, one envisions acres of wooded forests, grassy fields, trails and babbling brooks, but it is the appearance of an animal, bird or wildflower, or other inhabitant of these preserves that catches our attention. After reading the book, *Suburban Safari*, the reader's awareness increases and prods one to look more closely at our *own backyard environments* to see what creatures live there and to think about what measures one might practice to preserve the ecology for the "best interests of the inhabitants there", for now and in the future.

**TITLE: SUBURBAN SAFARI: A YEAR ON THE LAWN**

**AUTHOR: HANNAH HOLMES**

**PUBLISHED: New York 2005 262pp.**

**THE AUTHOR:** Hannah Holmes lives in Portland, Maine. Ms. Holmes is also the author of *The Secret Life of Dust*. In addition, Ms. Holmes has written articles about travel and science for magazines such as the New York Times, Outside, Sierra and Los Angeles Times.

In an era of heightened ecological and environmental awareness and resources, this author chooses to use her own suburban backyard as an observatory. The two tenths of an acre of grass, the accompanying plants and trees, insects, birds and creatures is located near the ocean in South Portland, Maine. The author envisions herself as a "benevolent dictator" to the citizens of her patch of lawn. As a responsible dictator she feels the need to learn about the lives and living conditions of the population so that she will "administer this patch of ground in the best interests of all its citizens".

In a lighthearted, but scientific manner Holmes becomes fascinated with the daily habits and needs of every living organism from the lowly slug to the mighty oak trees that live on her patch of grass. The author's observations spans a wide swath of detail from the lives of insects, birds and a multitude of four legged creatures to the effects of the ice age and ocean, on the formation of the underground of her domain. In order to further comprehend and authenticate some of her observations the author calls on numerous scientists and experts. The book provides an impressive list of references which are subdivided by fanciful and

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humorous headings such as, "A Flood of Feathers" and the author even admits to intimate feelings for a few of her new acquaintances, as she names a friendly chipmunk, "Chippy" and a yearling Crow, "Yawp".

This book is enjoyable reading. It is not your ordinary book on science or nature. It is packed with detailed and factual information about the many ritualistic behaviors of the inhabitants of our own backyards, the effects of their environment produced by Mother Nature or humans, and feats of surviving or not. Through the author's observations, descriptions and explanations, a new appreciation and understanding emerges in the mind of reader, almost to the point of using the author's endearing names at the sight of crows and chipmunks in your own backyard.

## **Call to Action: Support New Incentives for Land Conservation!**

With over 40 acres of land being developed across the state every day, legislation to encourage landowners to protect their land is stalled before the House Committee on Ways & Means. The *Massachusetts Conservation Incentives Act* (H. 4218) would provide a state income tax credit to taxpayers who donate land for conservation. The House of Representatives needs to act on this important bill before the formal legislative session ends on July 31!

The bill--which was drafted by Mass Audubon and The Nature Conservancy/Massachusetts Chapter and sponsored by Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington)--would establish a state income tax credit for donations of land to public agencies and private non-profit conservation organizations. Lands protecting drinking water supplies, unfragmented wildlife habitat, archaeological and historical resources, scenic vistas, recreational opportunities may be eligible. Qualified donors would receive a state income tax credit valued at 50% of the appraised value of the land, limited to \$50,000. The credit cannot exceed the donor's annual state income taxes, and may be carried forward for 10 years.

The actions taken over the next decade by public agencies, non-profit organizations, and private landowners to address the unrelenting pressures of development will permanently shape the future of the Commonwealth's landscape. The time has arrived to make conservation a more attractive financial option for the future.

Visit [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org) for more information on how to contact your state representative asking him/her to release this act for a floor vote.

From the Mass Aududon Society web site-  
[www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org)

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.

### **APPLICATION AS A FRIEND OF HALT**

|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Individual Friend | \$15 _____   |
| Senior Friend     | \$10 _____   |
| Family Friend     | \$25 _____   |
| Associate Friend  | \$50 _____   |
| Supporting Friend | \$100 _____  |
| Sustaining Friend | \$300 _____  |
| Corporate Friend  | \$500+ _____ |

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to volunteer your time or services HALT?

\_\_\_\_\_

All contributions to HALT are deductible for income tax purposes.

Make checks payable to:

**HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST, Inc.**

Mail to:

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