

# HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.

# NEWSLETTER



Volume XXXX, Spring

May 2014

## *A Word from the President*

*David Goldman*

Spring is a beautiful time in New England. The weather has moderated and the days are certainly getting longer with enough daylight in the early evening to get out after dinner to enjoy the great outdoors. With that in mind, I'd like to tell you about the events of the past few months. The Trust has been the recipient of a 6.6 acre property adjacent to the Deneen Open Space off of Oakhurst Road. In addition, the Trust has partnered with the Lake Maspencok Preservation Association (LMPA) with them accepting the Grant of the Conservation Restriction (CR) on the combined 13.5 acres of the Deneen Open Space and the Austin Powder Open Space. This project is going to be one of the premier open spaces, with trails the lead off to Peppercorn Hill. In addition, the Trust is working with a Boy Scout on an Eagle Project to provide a connector trail to the trails already on the property, a connector trail to the Peppercorn Hill, and to help with the field work for the baseline documentation needed to requirements of the CR. The Trust also has obtained a volunteer to act as the Land Steward for this property and assist the LMPA with monitoring the land.

On other matters, the Whisper Way Conservation Restriction has been signed by the Trust, the Open Space Preservation Commission and is waiting for the signatures the Selectmen and then to final signoff by the State. The Trust has also proposed a CR on the Sylvan Way Open Space (approximately 16 acres) in order to connect the Cameron Woods Open Space property and the Phipps Woods Open Space property so that contiguous trails could be made available from Lake Whitehall all the way to the Whisper Way parking area (near Rte. 495 and off Woods Street).

We have not forgotten our geocaching program, with several new caches in the planning stages. Some caches will be in the Trust's new properties and new CR areas. Please stay tuned.

As ever the Trust continues to need you as a member and for your support. The Trusts' open spaces in Hopkinton provide some very real benefits to you. By maintaining the open spaces, the Trust is helping to preserve and increase the value of your property in Hopkinton and maintain the rural character of the town. **We have closed in 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 spring and summer seasons and if you enjoy the use of the open spaces please remember to *help support the Trust, by becoming a member or by making a 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 Trusts properties, **welcome home**. For those of you who are members and haven't yet renewed your 2014 membership, please look for a membership renewal letter in the mail very soon.

Very truly: *David Goldman*, President

**PO BOX 56, WOODVILLE MA 01784**

# **HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.**

## **HALT Holds Conservation Restriction on Fruit Street Property**

In 2002, the town of Hopkinton purchased approximately 250 acres of land off Fruit Street, funded in part by the local Community Preservation Fund. The town then developed a 25-year master plan for the site, portions of which had been used previously for sand and gravel extraction. The master plan included an active recreation facility, future municipal well sites, a wastewater disposal facility, and approximately 98 acres of open space for passive recreation. Other uses, such as a school, affordable housing, and a Department of Public Works facility were included in the master plan but have not, as yet, been developed. In 2003, Hopkinton Area Land Trust (HALT) and Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) agreed to co-hold the Conservation Restriction (CR) on 145 acres.

Many entities had a stake in the project, including the town's Department of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and the Open Space Preservation Commission. Balancing the many town needs and interests contributed to the lengthy time period to complete the CR, and at times, it seemed the project might never be completed. Then last year, the state announced a new requirement for its LAND grant reimbursements to towns for conservation land acquisition costs: any municipality that had previously purchased conservation lands with CPA funds was required to have CRs in place on all of those properties before becoming eligible to receive LAND grant monies on future projects. With a LAND grant application pending for Hopkinton's Elmwood Farm acquisition, it became critical that the Fruit Street CR be finalized before the end of June to meet the LAND grant deadline.

The CR was finally recorded on June 25, 2013, concluding what has perhaps been HALT and SVT's longest land protection project, finalized ten years after the project's inception! The CR, which is now co-held by SVT and HALT, is extremely irregular in shape. It includes significant stream frontage on Whitehall Brook, portions of which have been designated an Outstanding Resource Water.

The brook flows northward into Westborough's Cedar Swamp Area of Critical Environmental Concern, the headwaters of the Sudbury River. Most of the remainder of the property within the CR is wooded upland, with some wooded wetlands and early successional meadow.

Old stone walls run through the interior, and a network of public trails crisscross the property. Ample parking is available by the playing field complex at the rear of the property, from which the trails are most easily accessed.

From The Wren, Sudbury valley Trustees, November 2013

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## **Center Trail Update**

Now that the weather is nicer, you may want to check out the new Center Trail. The Center Trail has been widened, flattened, covered with stone dust, and made more accessible not only for walkers, but for runners and bikers.

The 1.1 mile Center Trail is the crown jewel of the 68 acre Terry property. Trail heads are located on Main Street directly across from Hopkinton Lumber on Rt. 135 and at the Loop Road behind the high school. From Rt. 135 the trail generally follows an abandoned railroad line to Milford that was built in 1863 and removed in 1950. A large trail sign designates this trail entrance. The trail is well marked and comes out at the high school Loop Road. The trail does continue along a short portion of the Loop Road and then on to Chamberlain Street, but this part is more of a walking trail.

Revitalization of the Center Trail began in 2011 after HALT received a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation to repair severe erosion damage to the trail. The grant totaled \$17,525. After the Grant award was announced, the Hopkinton Downtown Revitalization Committee submitted a request to the Community Preservation Committee for \$120,000 in funds to upgrade the trail from what was primarily a walking trail to a multi-use trail. These funds were approved at town meeting to improve the trail surface to a surface useable by wheeled non-motorized vehicles, including bikes, strollers, and wheel chairs.

As you walk along the trail, you would never know you were in the middle of Hopkinton, it's more like the middle of Vermont. The trail crosses three granite bridges from the railroad days; passes by a beautiful hayfield on the east side of the trail; and is surrounded by flora and fauna.

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## **Restoring the American Chestnut Tree**

In 1904 Hermann Merkel, chief forester at the New York Zoological Park, now known as the Bronx Zoo, noticed a new disease on some of the American chestnut trees. The following year, it was identified as the chestnut blight, imported on Asiatic chestnut trees. The blight spread 50 miles a year and in a decade killed up to 3 billion chestnut trees. By 1950 only 50 to 100 American chestnut trees remained in the US. In the early 1900s chestnut trees grew over 200 million acres from Maine down through the Appalachian Mountains to as far south as Florida and west to the Ohio valley.

It is estimated there were close to 4 billion chestnut trees and 25% of the trees in the Appalachian Mountains were chestnuts. Chestnuts were an important food source for wilderness animals from bears to birds, as well as people, as roasted chestnuts were often sold by street vendors. Chestnuts fallen from trees in the forest were so deep that some people scooped them up with shovels. And chestnuts were used to feed livestock. Because the wood was straight grained and easily worked, it was valuable from a commercial standpoint, as it was resistant to decay and used for fences, furniture, home construction, flooring, paper pulp and other uses.

Of course, not all chestnut trees were killed. There are only about 100 large ones growing in their old range and there are some in Oregon and Washington, as the blight is not as prolific in the moderate climate. And you'll occasionally see small trees in the forest, but the blight kills them before they can develop into mature trees.

But all is not lost. Through the efforts of organizations such as The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF), founded in 1983, the American chestnut is being restored. The TACF has organized scientists and researchers around the world, and millions of dollars from universities, government agencies, industry and other foundations toward the goal of restoring millions of American chestnut trees that resistant to the chestnut blight. By inbreeding the American chestnut with its Chinese cousin, researchers have created an American chestnut with some resistance to the blight and have developed a virus that can be injected into affected trees to combat the fungus. After initial cross breeding with Chinese chestnut trees, the trees are "backcrossed" with other American chestnuts, resulting in a tree that is about 94% American chestnut.

Over 30,000 of the new chestnuts have been planted under the watchful eye of scientists. It will take 75 to 100 years to know whether the tree can be re-established as a mainstay of Eastern forests.

Chances are good that the trees will successfully expand their domain—relatively quickly in some areas; slowly but surely in others. Over the decades this new generation of American chestnuts will change the forest from floor to canopy: Their uppermost branches will bring shade to areas that have too little; their quickly decomposing leaves will carpet the soil and drift into streams and standing water, staining the water with nutrients; their trunks will be home to billions of insects and mammals, their branches the foundations of nests; and, one day, when the trees are mature enough, they will drop scores of chestnuts for the first time in more than a century.

In the spring of 2003, the first American chestnut tree research orchard was planted in Massachusetts at Moore State Park. It is situated in a small field adjacent to the parking lot.

Horse chestnuts, which are poisonous if eaten, are not to be confused with American chestnuts. How do you tell the difference? – the edible variety always has a pointed end.

Restoring the American chestnut tree is a long term, ambitious project. Thankfully, there are thousands of volunteers working on doing just that. It will take 75 to 100 years to know whether the tree can be re-established as a mainstay of Eastern forests. Three billion chestnuts trees in the forest would be a sight to behold.

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## **2014 Year of the Salamander Campaign**

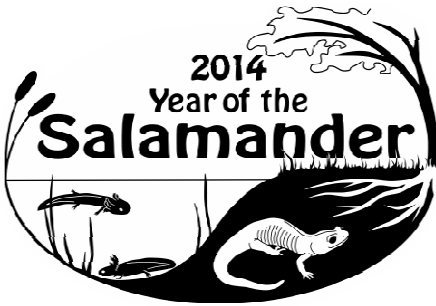
Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC), along with conservation groups, have designated 2014 as the Year of the Salamander. MassWildlife and the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) are also participating in this worldwide effort to promote salamander education, research, and conservation.

Warm evening temperatures and steady rain in early March 12th triggered the first spring-breeding amphibian movements of 2014 in southeastern Massachusetts. Although some parts of the state still have some cold days to work through, the onset of spring amphibian season is just around the corner. With the

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arrival of 50-plus-degree days and 40-plus-degree nights with rain, breeding migrations of some of our favorite salamanders and frogs will be underway.

Spotted Salamanders, Jefferson Salamanders, Blue-spotted Salamanders, and Wood Frogs will be emerging from their forest retreats and piling into vernal pools to mate and deposit their eggs. Spring Peepers, Pickerel Frogs, and Leopard Frogs will be chorusing in large, open wetlands. Other frogs and salamanders will become active, moving about the landscape in preparation for their respective breeding periods that come a bit later in the spring. Many of these animals will need to cross fields, yards, and roadways to reach their destinations.



## **American Woodcocks**

Woodcocks have stocky bodies, cryptic brown and blackish plumage and long slender bills. Their eyes are located on the sides of their heads, which gives them 360° vision. Unlike in most birds, the tip of the bill's upper mandible is flexible.

As their common name implies, the woodcocks are woodland birds. They feed at night or in the evenings, searching for earthworms or other invertebrates in soft ground with their long bills. This habit and their unobtrusive plumage makes it difficult to see them when they are resting in the day.

He is one of the earliest migrants to arrive in Massachusetts, often coming as early as the end of February. The male American Woodcock has an elaborate display to attract females. He gives repeated "peents" on the ground, often on remaining patches of snow in the early spring. The peenting goes on for a while, then he launches into his sky dance. Silently he takes off, sloping up gradually, and as he gains height he begins his twittering sound. More and more frantic it becomes as he circles overhead, 100 meters in the air. Toward the end, the twittering is joined by loud vocal chirping, and the woodcock starts his descent. Abruptly it stops, and he coasts silently back to his peenting location. This is a good

time to try to find out where he is calling from, so as soon as the chirping stops, look just above the horizon to look for him sloping in for a landing.

**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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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

All contributions to HALT are deductible for income tax purposes.

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

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