More Habitat for the Birds

Thanks to MLT member and birding expert, James Reddoch, Valentine Farm Conservation Center is now an official birding hotspot. Hotspots are public birding locations created by eBird users. eBird, a creation of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, (https://ebird.org) began with a simple idea – “that every birdwatcher has unique knowledge and experience. Our goal is to gather this information in the form of checklists of birds, archive it, and freely share it to power new data-driven approaches to science, conservation and education.” This designation is part of MLT’s effort to increase birding opportunities at Valentine Farm through habitat improvement and monthly bird walks. This year, bird walks are scheduled for:

- **May 5th – 8am** Leader, James Reddoch, as part of Global Big Day (https://ebird.org/news/global-big-day-5-may-2018)
- **May 19th – 8am** Leader, James Reddoch
- **June 29th** Introducing the Maine Bird Atlas (Time TBA)
- **June 30th – 8am** Leader, Doug Hitchcox, Staff Naturalist, Maine Audubon
- Dates and times for the remainder of the season TBA

In addition to improving bird habitat, efforts will begin this summer to improve pollinator habitat by increasing the number and type of flowering plants on Valentine Farm. The Pollinator Garden will provide space for nature study, photography and art as well as the essential elements needed for a robust pollinator population. If you are interested in participating, a two-part garden orientation course is being offered May 14th and 21st from 5:30-7:30 at Valentine Farm. Then the fun begins. We will meet weekly throughout the season to plant a wide variety of perennials and annuals, build pollinator and bird boxes and create basic signage. The pollinator garden will be a multi-year effort, with the garden, paths, meeting places and more established over time.

Join the fun! FMI email barbara@mahoosuc.org.

“I am excited to participate in new birding projects and events with MLT. On upcoming birding walks, participants will be helping create a record of bird species which can be found on MLT properties. The data we collect will also be added to an international database which scientists use to track bird populations. From that, recommendations can be made for better conservation. So, aside from the fun of getting out and enjoying these beautiful mountains, forests and waters, it’s a chance to participate in citizen science. This is just one more small but important way to get involved in the conservation work of MLT.”

JAMES REDDOCH, MLT MEMBER AND BIRIDING EXPERT

More Habitat for the Bees
In my relatively short time working in our local communities as MLT’s Executive Director, I’m struck by how we are at the same time working on two very different endeavors. As always, we’re working on “permanence” as part of our mission to conserve natural areas to benefit the communities of the Mahoosuc Region—forever. Thousands of acres of special natural places in our regions are now under permanent conservation, and we’re working hard to set aside other irreplaceable lands where you can hike, swim, fish, or enjoy the view.

The second, perhaps more exciting, endeavor to notice is the quickly filling event calendar. Talks and programs to celebrate people making meaningful connections with our landscape: heroic adaptive skiers and rock climbers, a Mount Washington snow ranger, an astronomer, dog sledgers (and their dogs). Walks and hikes on our preserves: Puzzle, Whitecap, and Glassface Mountains, and the 1.2 mile universally accessible trail that new people are discovering every day at the Valentine Farm Conservation Center on the North Road in Bethel.

As we thank you for your support in 2017, we hope you have that good feeling about helping make conservation permanent—and that you are getting out and enjoying the area’s remarkable places and people.

On behalf of MLT’s Board of Directors, I would like to thank all of our members for their generous support of our organization during 2017; it was our best fundraising year ever, for which we are all extremely grateful. Our most significant accomplishment this past year was the acquisition of two parcels of land on Rumford Whitecap that connect the summit area with the Ellis River area, forming an important wildlife corridor covering an area of over 1,100 acres. This project began 12 years ago and was made possible by the generosity of donors like you. The Ellis River to Whitecap Mountain Project is one of MLT’s greatest achievements, of which we all should be very proud.

The upcoming year presents a new set of challenges, including land conservation opportunities and new programming at Valentine Farm Conservation Center. It will be an exciting year, and I hope that with your continued support we can enable MLT to reach its goals.
Member Profile
ERIC LIST, CHRISTINE TREFETHEN, ELIOT AND SOPHIE

Morning Glory Farm, Flat Road, Bethel
Mahoosuc Land Trust is grateful for its strong member support. As a member, what connects you to this organization? Is it a strong commitment to land conservation? An affinity to one or more of our properties? A belief that everyone should have access to the outdoors? In this new feature we will regularly profile members’ lifestyles, passions and connections to Mahoosuc Land Trust and the region.

Life is a series of choices. For Eric List and Christine Trefethen, a choice to purchase 5 acres of land in Bethel 20 years ago is giving them an opportunity to develop a lifestyle that has long been in their dreams.

Back in 1998, Christine and Eric were looking for land that could eventually turn into a self-sustaining homestead. The flat, open parcel, complete with remnants of an apple orchard on Flat Road showed promise. Slowly, over time, they built their house, created gardens, raised their two children, Eliot and Sophie, rejuvenated the apple trees and planted more. Recently, they added chickens and a couple of cows, sheep and goats and have increased their efforts to fulfill their dream of more personal self-sufficiency and keeping the land as a working farm.

For Eric and Christine, becoming members of Mahoosuc Land Trust mirrored their values of caring for the land and connecting to the community via local agriculture. Currently, they are busy experimenting with different crops and products to see what makes sense financially, fits into their daily rhythms and doesn’t require expansion into large machinery or work crew. Ice cider, cheese and 40 varieties of apples are some of the potential value-added products under consideration. Part of the mission of their farm is to connect people to the natural world through farming and food production. Their farm is associated with a non-profit organization WWOOF - Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms - that links people wanting to learn farming skills with organic farms willing to teach and house the volunteers. This program ensures Eric and Christine a year-round supply of students eager to experience life on a small, organic operation.

In addition to their expertise in creating value added products, Eric has become highly skilled in fruit tree pruning and top grafting. He is offering a series of hands-on workshops to those interested in developing these skills. To learn more, visit Morning Glory Farm’s Facebook page.
Volunteers are a key component of the long-term viability of Mahoosuc Land Trust, bringing diverse skills, perspectives and dedication. Meet, for example, forester Mike Richard of Albany Township. We couldn’t resist telling his story, especially when we learned that he spent four years in the treetops as a “licensed climbing arborist” pruning, cabling, and bracing trees. His work showcases the connections between natural resources and the people who rely on them for work and enjoyment.

Mike is now District Forester for the Maine Forest Service. His service region covers most of Oxford County with the exception of areas north of Upton and Byron. He replaces Merle Ring, who retired after more than 30 years of service to the region. Mike is excited to build on Merle’s work and to share his passion for forestry with landowners and the public. At MLT, Mike volunteers on the Stewardship Committee, which is responsible for overseeing the maintenance and monitoring of all of the trust’s properties. Mike’s wealth of hands-on and technical work experience adds a “boots on the ground” perspective to the committee. Also, his experience with Geographical Information Systems (GIS) is invaluable as MLT moves maps and data about its properties from paper to a digital format. This is great background to help MLT as we monitor our properties as part of our obligation to steward them “in perpetuity.” We asked Mike about being a volunteer for MLT.

First off, can you tell us a little bit about tree climbing?
I worked as a climbing arborist for four years before making the decision to return to higher education in forestry. I worked along the Lakes Region of New Hampshire and Southern Maine where I climbed trees to prune them, remove them or provide cabling and bracing to preserve them. This involved learning a lot of rope, chainsaw and rigging skills. Some of my favorite memories of that time were doing crane assisted removals with views of the White Mountains from the end of the crane’s ball. It was great work that I still sometimes do for friends and family, but I decided I wanted to spend more time in forests with my feet on the ground.

“You’ve lived in Western Maine for the past 6 years. How did you first learn about MLT?”
A couple years back when my daily commute was through Grafton Notch, I would pass by both the Grafton Loop Trailhead and Step Falls areas. I have always been interested in land conservation and was looking for a way to be more involved within the Bethel community. I decided to reach out to MLT about volunteering and have been part of the Stewardship Committee ever since.

“What excites you about being an MLT volunteer?”
I enjoy the opportunity to use my professional skills to help MLT care for its properties. I appreciate that by helping to further MLT’s mission, my family can look forward to spending time on properties that will be well managed for years to come. I also personally benefit from volunteering with MLT. Designing trail maps for Step Falls and Puzzle Mountain is a very satisfying creative outlet. Being part of the monitoring team allows me to better understand how land can change with time. It has also been an ideal way for me to make more connections with people in the community. I also look forward to helping with trail work now that my son is getting older.

What do you do as our District Forester?
I am one of 10 District Foresters providing technical and educational assistance to landowners, loggers, municipalities and other stakeholders. In addition to educational workshops, field demonstrations and media presentations, Field Foresters can provide some one-on-one contact with individual landowners. Meeting with individual land owners and walking their woodlot is a large part of what I do. I answer questions they might have and help to steer them towards goal-based forest management. We also try to encourage them to work with a consulting forester.

When he’s not at work, Mike enjoys spending time with his wife and son, hiking, fly fishing and playing the guitar and banjo. He is a graduate of the University of New Hampshire’s Thompson School of Applied Science Forest Technology and received his bachelor’s degree in Forestry from UNH as well.
Mahoosuc Land Trust Annual Fund Contributors

The board of directors and staff of MLT extend our deepest appreciation to the individuals, businesses, and foundations listed on these pages for their support of our Annual Fund this past fiscal year, January 1, 2017 - Dec, 31, 2017. As always, any omissions or misspellings are unintentional. We encourage you to notify us of any changes. Thank you.

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“Contact Mahoosuc Land Trust was the message given to three family members interested in conserving their deep ties to Maine. The warm welcome and guidance from MLT staff and Board members made the conservation easement gift a seamless, joyous occasion. My contribution to the Summit Society carries endless thanks for the joy of being received into a group of kindred spirits nourishing the community and landscape in Maine.”

MARTHA CHANDLER,
SUMMIT SOCIETY MEMBER

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Names presented in BOLD are Sustaining Members  
10+ years of gifts  
*New Member
SUMMERTIME.
Time for Annual Meeting

Participating and voting at the Annual Meeting is one benefit of MLT membership. This year, the Annual Meeting will be on Sunday, August 19th, from 4:00-7:00 PM. The afternoon will start at Gould Academy with a 3-D photography presentation by Roger Richmond (www.spacelightdesign.com) on “Nature’s Beautiful Tiny Places.” This visual odyssey showcases the spaces inside flowers, below the wings of a butterfly, ice in a tree, a feather and other natural elements that can inspire the design of the Hollywood Bowl or Brunelleschi’s Dome in the Florence Cathedral. Afterwards, we are off to Valentine Farm Conservation Center for a cookout and celebration of summer. Mark your calendar now. More information will be coming.