

Views *from* Mount Grace



WINTER 2020
VOLUME 31, NO. 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Conservation in a Changing Climate
- Recently Completed Forest Management at Song Memorial Forest
- The Put-In
- Frugal and Fabulous
- Margaret Power Biggs Society: Paul and Melinda Godfrey

Since 1986 serving:

Ashburnham

Athol

Barre

Bernardston

Erving

Gardner

Gill

Greenfield

Hardwick

Hubbardston

Leyden

Montague

New Salem

Northfield

Orange

Petersham

Phillipston

Royalston

Templeton

Warwick

Wendell

Westminster

Winchendon



The effects of climate change impact our region in the form of a snowstorm before Halloween this year.

Photo Credit: Norm Eggert Photography

Conservation in a Changing Climate

BY AARON NELSON

I will never know the New England that my parents did, and my children will never know the New England I grew up in. Since I was young I have been cross-country skiing out from my backyard, and each time I pause and wonder how many more snowy winters I will see here. With each passing winter it seems there is less snow and more rain, less frost and more mud. Storms seem to pass through with greater ferocity by the month, and just a year ago a tornado touched down a mile from my house in Ashfield. With each hike I see more stressed and dead trees, weakened by drought and devastated by insects brought by warmer weather. Climate change is not a problem for the world 20, 30, or 70 years from now, it is the context of the world now. The evidence is all around us in the lands we love.

A favorite saying of mine from climate activists is “we can’t save the world, but we can save a lot.” Our lands may never be the same, but that doesn’t make them any less precious or beautiful. If anything, it makes the work of Mount Grace more urgent than ever, and in the short time I have been with Mount Grace it has been heartening to see how we are addressing climate resilience in our conservation work.

> continued on page 3



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WINTER 2020 • VOLUME 31, No.3



Dear Friends,

The wind is rattling the 100-year old windows here at Skyfields, with occasional snowflakes joining the oak leaves blowing across the yard. It is easy to feel buffeted by the agitated winds of conflict and the unknown in our society, climate, and health these days. It is challenging to find peace even as we all shelter at home. At Mount Grace we have been focusing a lot of our thinking and work on resilience. How do we prepare for and withstand the unpredictability of our current situation and future?

Shared in this newsletter are articles about the importance of biodiversity, adaptability, and evolution. Together we are being taught by Nalini at Quabbin Harvest how to cook new unfamiliar foods and “tired” vegetables to avoid waste, or learning from Mike Mauri about how he capitalized on what could have been seen as a tragic blow down at Song Forest to do a strategic cut to help wildlife habitat and encourage diversity in our forests.

As a land trust we make commitments to our community and landowners for perpetuity. This promise can feel awe inspiring in the given moment, and it is only possible if we go beyond the immediate to think about how we best prepare our lands and selves for whatever might come. A healthy forest is not comprised of one type of tree of one age, but rather its health is derived from variety. This same lesson holds for all aspects of Mount Grace. The answer to resilience doesn't lie with one property or plant species, but with the health of our whole interwoven community.

Warmly,

Emma Ellsworth
Executive Director

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust protects significant natural, agricultural, and scenic areas and encourages land stewardship in North Central and Western Massachusetts for the benefit of the environment, the economy, and future generations.

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We welcome your articles, photographs, comments, and suggestions. For information about becoming a member or to request a change of address, please contact:

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

1461 Old Keene Road
Athol, MA 01331
978-248-2043 (tel)
978-248-2053 (fax)
landtrust@mountgrace.org
Visit our web site at mountgrace.org
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Recently Completed Forest Management at Song Memorial Forest

BY MICHAEL MAURI

One thing that is rarely considered attractive – visually – is a recently logged area of forest. This is quite understandable and is especially true when seen up close in a larger opening before any new trees start growing. What you tend to notice at this time is the slash, the stumps, and the exposed soil or leaf litter. Perhaps you also notice the nice light and lines of sight. But it can take a seasoned eye to appreciate that you may also be seeing the starting point of an essential phase in the forest process. This phase – sometimes referred to as the early-successional or young forest phase – brings with it new trees, a diversity of habitats, and other effects that complement what is provided by the surrounding mature forest.

The moment right after logging also seems to be the time, understandably, when photos used to oppose logging are taken and posted. Fewer of these pictures seem to be posted after the new growth becomes lush and thick. It is easy to take discouraging photos right after logging, but it is possible to take inspiring photos as well. It probably depends upon how, in your mind's eye, you see the logging fitting into a larger picture.

In that spirit, I am providing a photo of the recently completed logging at Song Memorial Forest in Warwick. The undulating shape of the opening was determined largely by the pattern of blowdown in the October 2019 storm. This cutting will be an enhancement of the forest overall through the creation



Aerial photo of the recently completed logging at Song Memorial Forest in Warwick. Photo Credit: Donn Downey.

of beneficial changes and contrasts that stimulate growth, provide habitat that is lacking, and contribute to resiliency and sustainability in the many functions our forests fulfill.

A longer article about the recent forest management activities can be found on the Mount Grace website.

Conservation in a Changing Climate > *continued from page 1*

In conserving our landscapes, Mount Grace has championed pioneering tools to map the most intact climate resilient landscapes in our region. Preserving these landscapes provides spaces for plants and animals to migrate as their habitat range changes. We work with our forester Mike Mauri to integrate climate resilience in our forests, from encouraging the biodiversity and the growth of climate resilient tree species to promoting carbon sequestration and storage. Our conserved farmlands preserve important resources to provide not only healthy local food, but to have food available for our communities amid extreme weather and rising food insecurity.

Much of this work has been done behind the scenes here at Mount Grace. Going forward, you will be hearing more about these and other projects, and how we are learning and working to address climate change in every part of our work. We hope that you will join us as we find ways to ensure that our lands and communities not only endure but thrive. The uncertainty each new season brings highlights the urgent need for the evolving, adaptable approach Mount Grace has taken to find ways to live in balance with our land, even as it changes before our eyes.

The Put-In

BY EMMA ELLSWORTH

It's an easy corner to drive right past, just a nondescript small field on the bank of the Connecticut River; however, walking alongside the farmed field down to the riverbank, I am awash with memories. This is the "put-in." My father, Dr. Allen Ross, purchased the property in 1987 primarily to be a spot close to our home where we could launch our canoes. Secondly, Dad wanted to block a planned development for the adjoining parcels.

From the river's edge looking south there is a spectacular view of Mount Toby. There is a nice "bench" half-way down, where for years we had a hammock strung between two massive maples. Afternoons were spent buried in books, enjoying the cool breeze off the water that also kept the mosquitoes at bay.

Early mornings before a day at the office, Dad would bring his racing canoe down to the put-in. We might paddle up to the old railroad bridge where the Deerfield River meets the Connecticut River, or down to the new bridge in Sunderland. On long training days we would do both. In the spring, when the water was high enough to get over the fallen logs, we might explore the Sawmill River where one could spot a beaver playing or some wood ducks around a bend.



Emma Ellsworth with Val Hamlet after spreading her dad's ashes in the Connecticut River by the canoe put-in.



Executive Director Emma Ellsworth got into her hobby of canoeing as a child because of her dad's love for the sport.

There was nothing Dad enjoyed more than introducing people to canoeing in his favorite spot on the river. He would patiently teach strokes; show new paddlers how to read the water looking for eddies and spots with faster or slower currents; and point out the eagles' nests, the "concretion rocks" buried in clay on the river bank, or even the old car hidden half in the water. It was a spot where Dad introduced me to the medicinal value of exercise and nature. Dad's cure for heartache, stress, and life struggles was a good hard workout somewhere beautiful. Dad's canoe put-in was one of the most powerful "prescriptions" he wrote in his life.

The **canoe put-in** will be donated to Mount Grace and made available as a public spot for recreation.

Frugal and Fabulous

BY CATHY STANTON

If you've enjoyed food from Nalini's Kitchen at Quabbin Harvest you already know how nourishing and delicious Nalini Goordial's cooking is. What may be less obvious at first is how Nalini is helping the co-op fulfill the ecological part of our mission—to be respectful of the resources of land, water, and other species that sustain all of us.

Adding our prepared foods division two years ago greatly reduced the amount of food that we're not able to sell because it's past its peak of freshness or stamped "sell by" date. Kale or swiss chard that have gotten a bit tired are massaged into colorful, flavorful salads. A loaf of bread left from last week's Rose 32 delivery is turned into panzanella with the help of dressing, herbs, and veggies. Overabundant plums or daikon radishes become pickles or chutneys, tasty "sides" that make the offerings from Nalini's Kitchen so special and different from other eating options in the area.

As a girl, Nalini learned to cook in ways that are both frugal and inventive, making use of every bit of food and also recognizing that care in the kitchen is a direct expression of care for one another. We're trying to embody that nurturing spirit in everything we do at the co-op, from finding ways to make good food available to those who are least able to afford it to supporting the people and businesses who produce and share that good food.



Store Manager Julie Davis joins Nalini Goordial in the kitchen to film the first of our "Cooking with Quabbin Harvest" videos this summer.

You can learn more about how Nalini cooks on our new YouTube channel featuring short videos with recipes and tips. We're also looking forward to a post-COVID world where we can work on reducing our packaging with some new reusable container options. As always, the co-op remains a work in progress!



Colorful Panzanella (left) and spring rolls (right) popular favorites, make good use of foods that might otherwise not be sold.

MARGARET POWER BIGGS SOCIETY

Member Profile: Paul and Melinda Godfrey

BY DAVID KOTKER

As the land surrounding Paul and Melinda Godfreys' Wendell home slopes up from Mormon Hollow Brook, a wide diversity of plants thrives in their various natural communities. Paul and Melinda can tell you all about them since they met in a graduate school ecology class in the 1960s and are both well-versed in the flora of New England.

This great awareness of and love for nature has inspired them to make the trust a beneficiary of their wills. "We never wanted to see this land developed in any way, shape, or form," said Paul, "and Mount Grace has done so much to make that possible both for us and around us."

The Godfreys moved to Wendell in 1992 after Paul, a Professor of Plant Ecology at UMass, began taking his classes to explore Fiske Pond. "There are a tremendous variety of plants in a very small place there," Paul explained. "Bog plants, meadow plants, species that are most commonly found either north or south of here. At Fiske Pond, there's a whole array of different species together and it makes for a tremendous field trip."

The species lists compiled on these field trips came in handy in 2004 when Wendell partnered with Mount Grace to create the Fiske Pond Conservation Area. That was the Godfrey's introduction to Mount Grace, and Melinda now co-chairs the Fiske Pond Advisory Committee, while also serving as a volunteer land steward at Hidden Valley Conservation Area.

The Godfreys were also quick to help in 2015, when Mount Grace's Mormon Hollow Landscape Partnership needed



Paul and Melinda Godfrey with Leigh Youngblood at the 2017 "Party in the Hollow" to celebrate the completion of Mount Grace's Mormon Hollow Landscape Partnership.

landowner partners to build a large-scale project in town. Their participation helped the project conserve more than 700 acres, including several local farms.

As Melinda summed up: "We were happy to help because protecting farmland is essential for our food security. We'll need a wide variety of different crops and farms available to us in the future because we really can't predict what the impacts of climate change will be. That's something Mount Grace does that benefits all of us."

If you would like information about making a planned gift to Mount Grace or about joining the Margaret Power Biggs Society to help conserve the local landscape, please contact David Kotker at 978-541-1767 or kotker@mountgrace.org.

Winter 2020 Upcoming Events - Join Us!

WILDLIFE TRACKING WORKSHOP

Led by Paul Wanta

Saturday, January 16th

(Inclement weather date: January 23rd)

Skyfields Arboretum, 1461 Old Keene Rd, Athol, RSVP Required

FAMILY-FRIENDLY ZOOM

STORYTELLING NIGHT

Sunday, February 21st

Online Registration Required

MAPLE SUGARING WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 20th

Sunset View Farm, 157 Gardner Rd, Winchendon

RSVP Required

Visit our website at mountgrace.org/events for up-to-date event information.

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Over 180 people watched our first ever virtual Annual Meeting, which featured a special interview between Leigh Youngblood and Emma Ellsworth, lovely videos of our completed projects for the year, and a live keynote presentation from Greg Watson. Thank you to all who sent in their mail-in ballot to vote and those who tuned in live!

Special Thanks from Mount Grace to ~

Jean McCurdy, Len Crossman and Family, Steve Rawson, Jim Javorsky, Dave McLean, and Ray Jackson, Norm Flye, Pat Larson, Kris Gunderman, and Bobby Curley for clearing and maintaining the trails;

Jean McCurdy, Len Crossman, Steve Rawson, Gary Brigham, and Ray Jackson for installing trail signs;

Brian Hall for assisting with monitoring the properties;

Robin Conley, Joanne McGee, Julia Blyth, and Jenny Tufts for removing invasive glossy buckthorn at Alderbrook Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary;

Nancy Ames for providing snacks for a work day;

Will Hunting and Arianna Collins for cleaning up a property;

Mike Barry for removing the tree at Alderbrook Meadows;

David Singer and Keith Ross for providing consultation;

Olivia Lukacic for organizing the Women in the Woods hike;

Larry Fitzmaurice and Jean McCurdy for speaking and leading the hike at the opening of Earleacres;

Marilyn Ryngiewicz, the Lexington Field & Garden Club, and the Cary Memorial Library for inviting Leigh Youngblood to present; Mark Trepanier, Tom Trepanier and Reece Haines for assisting with the virtual annual meeting;

Bonnie Benjamin for helping with the Youth Environmental Education program;

Anne Colturi for donating use of her photo for the Annual Report cover;

Tom Ellsworth, Mike Mauri, Janice Kurkowski, Cathy Stanton, and Bob O'Connor for helping plan and lead Mount Grace events; The Friends of Alderbrook Meadows for maintaining the Gunnery Sergeant Jeffrey S. Ames Accessible Nature Trail;

And all of our Mount Grace Board and Committee Members!

We could not have done any of this without you!



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Athol, MA 01331

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**You are OWLsome for
supporting Mount Grace on our
2020 Annual Appeal Drive –
thank you for protecting the
land for me and my friends!**



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