

# Views from Mount Grace

MOUNT GRACE LAND CONSERVATION TRUST • CONSERVING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE



WINTER 2016 - 2017  
VOLUME 27, NO. 3  
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Tracking hikes are a great way to learn which creatures a resilient local habitat supports. Mount Grace will offer two tracking hikes this winter (see page 6).

## "A New Blueprint" To Save Forests

BY DAVID KOTKER

Land trusts work to protect America's outstanding natural places in perpetuity, but what can be done to protect a habitat when the climate that shaped it changes? One answer comes from the North Quabbin—and scientists who study America's forests are taking note.

*Conserving Nature in a Changing Climate*, published this fall, synthesizes new climate science to show how land trusts can help mitigate climate change and its effects. The report explains how to identify and map the places most likely to remain "**resilient**" in the face of climate change. In a resilient landscape features such as diverse elevations and topography lead to ecological variety. As conditions change, resilient places are the ones most likely to continue to support a wide array of plants and animals.

To show how a land trust can turn this science into local conservation, the report studied our own North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership. *Conserving Nature* ends with a 28-page case study on the Partnership's 2014 creation of a resiliency map—which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has called "a new blueprint for protecting ecosystems."

> continued on page 3





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Dear Friends,

At the dedication of the Senator Robert D. Wetmore Memorial Fishing Hole in November, we stocked the West Branch of the Tully River with native brook trout. Temperature is the quality of a stream that determines whether brookies will thrive. Tree cover makes a big difference in keeping the water cool. Did you know that land conservation is Goal #1 in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's wildlife adaptation strategy? Networks of connected conserved land are most effective.



Both the Hunting and the Blakely family lands touched on in these pages are great examples of local land connected across time through many generations and across a network of conserved lands that will continue to benefit us all into the future.

We also said goodbye this year to three remarkable women with special connections to the land and Mount Grace. Edith Facey of Leyden conserved her land in 2014 and then lived to the age of 100. Edith's ashes are buried near the expansive view she enjoyed so much. Lila Teich Gold was a long-distance supporter from Brooklyn, New York. Family in western Massachusetts led to her years-long connection to Mount Grace. Lila started our Local Landscape Collateral Fund – deposits kept by their owners, but pledged to collateralize land projects. She liked how “quaint” and effective Mount Grace is, but her own favorite project was republishing an old cookbook from England, *The Jewish Manual*, originally written in 1846.

Nina Barszcz, age 55, lived in two worlds: on a pond in the village of Tully in Orange, MA and in West Orange, New Jersey where she was vice president of human resources at Prudential. Nina grew close to the land and people of the North Quabbin in the wave of back to the landers of the late seventies at Butterworth Farm in Royalston. Near or far, young or old, land reaches the heart of so many.

Thank you for supporting the lasting legacy of conservation,

Leigh Youngblood  
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.

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

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## Neighbors Volunteer to Ready Hunting Farm For Conservation

BY JAMIE POTTERN



Thanks to all the volunteers who pitched in to make this possible!



On November 5th and November 19th over 40 volunteers convened at the 6th-generation Hunting Farm on East Chestnut Hill Road in Montague. Energetic neighbors and friends assisted landowner Willie Hunting in cleaning up debris on the property in order to prepare it for permanent conservation within the next few months.

Willie Hunting is one of several neighbors participating in an 800-acre, multi-landowner conservation initiative: the *Mormon Hollow Working Lands Corridor Project* in Wendell and Montague. Led by Mount Grace, the Mormon Hollow partners include the Towns of Wendell and Montague and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game.

The project will protect multiple working farms and forests, pristine wildlife habitat, and the headwaters of several local brooks; creating a conservation corridor connecting 30,000 acres of protected land between the Connecticut River and the Quabbin Reservoir. All the conservation projects will be completed by June 2017.



## “A New Blueprint” To Save Forests > *continued from page 1*

Today, the Partnership and Mount Grace use that map to plan conservation across a half-million acres. Resiliency benefits have helped make the case to conserve hundreds of acres, including projects like the Mormon Hollow Landscape Partnership—which protects local farms that serve to knit together a vast and diverse variety of landscapes.

Creating the map also helped strengthen a local coalition to support land protection. “Over the course of a year, partners shared ideas and decided how to bring this new science into the mix,” says Sarah Wells, Director of Land Protection at Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. “Because so many stakeholders contributed to the conversation, we built the groundwork for partnerships.”

This year, Mount Grace will host a series of wildlife tracking walks specifically designed to show what resiliency looks like on the ground and how local conservationists can identify and protect crucial landscapes that can mitigate climate change impacts. The next walks will be in Athol and Ashburnham this winter (see page 6). “A wildlife tracking walk is a tangible way to show the connection between resilience and movement across the landscape,” adds Wells “That’s what this work is all about: supporting a living landscape.”

As climate change continues to increase pressures on native species, land conservation—by sequestering carbon, reducing sprawl, and easing the stresses on habitat—offers local answers to a global problem.

*Conserving Nature in a Changing Climate*, released by the Open Space Institute, the Land Trust Alliance, and the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, is now online at: [climatechange.lta.org/resilience-guide/](http://climatechange.lta.org/resilience-guide/)

# MARGARET POWER-BIGGS SOCIETY

## MEMBER PROFILE:

### Bob Clark and Fifi Scoufopoulos

BY DAVID KOTKER

If you try to get Bob Clark to talk about himself, chances are you'll find the conversation quickly morphing into a discussion about protecting the forests, watersheds and streams, and open land along with laying out and constructing trails, and documenting the natural history in Petersham.

Bob and Fifi Scoufopoulos were married in 1987. The two are active participants in Town causes and government, with Fifi serving on the Board of Health and as a Library Trustee and Bob chairing the Conservation Commission, which he has been a member of since 1979. He is a former chair and member of the Open Space & Recreation Committee, and Co-chair of the Historic District Commission.

Look at the history of conservation in Petersham, and Bob Clark's name is one that keeps coming up. Working with the East Quabbin Land Trust he has helped conserve landmarks like the Church of St. Mary and St. Scholastica, Gross Farm CR (now Rice's Roots Farm) and the King and Gould properties. As the Conservation Committee chair, he has just completed his fourth LAND (Local Acquisition for Natural Diversity) Grant. He has also partnered with Mount Grace to support protecting Davenport Pond and the 648-acre Tom Swamp property.



Bob Clark and Fifi Scoufopoulos

A Corporate Trustee of The Trustees of Reservations, Bob is an ambassador for local and state wide land conservation. "Over the years as I speak with people I assess what is most valuable to them about living in Petersham and explain the need for protecting our pristine rivers, forests, wildlife corridors, and agricultural land" he says. "I plant the seeds and nurture their growth. I find that our agricultural land and landscape are very important to people, and that our many hiking trails are really important to people far and near."

Bob and Fifi have been Mount Grace members for 20 years, and have been members of the Margaret Power-Biggs Society since its founding in 2007—just another one of the ways they can support the rural, small-town character of Petersham. If you would like information about joining the Margaret Power-Biggs Society, please contact Major Gifts and Grants Manager David Kotker at 978-248-2055 x19 or kotker@mountgrace.org.

## Women in the Woods

BY SARAH WELLS

Looking at old New England deeds, it's common to find property boundaries described with phrases like "at the foot of an old hemlock tree" and "by a large stone." It's also common to find property ownership described with names like these: Thomas, Frederick, John, William. In 2015, I got a call from Kimberly Blakley. Her parents, Larry and Connie Blakley, wanted to conserve their land in Athol after learning that the neighboring Meuse, Stoddard, and LeBlanc families were participating in a local conservation effort. Looking at the Blakley deeds, I came across something I hadn't seen before. Over the course of nearly 100 years, the original Rice family farm and surrounding woods had been passed down to Connie

thanks to Ella, Jennie R., Jennie M., and Jane. She's the fifth woman in her family to care about this patch of woods and streams along the New Salem town line. This spring, Connie conserved her family's land, permanently protecting her 140-odd acres for generations to come.

Connie's land has been conserved as part of our Quabbin Heritage Landscape Partnership Project, which has also led to the conservation of Harvard Forest's Tom Swamp research area and Chimney Hill Farm in Petersham, as well as the creation of the South Athol Town Forest.

## Green Burial in Green Fields

BY CANDACE CURRIE  
GREEN BURIAL MASSACHUSETTS

Recently, I found myself driving through the Berkshires into Franklin County. Along this journey, I drove past fields that had been just mowed. I opened my car windows so I could smell the sweet, dewy mist hanging in the fields. Then, I glimpsed at pumpkins waiting to be carved into jack-o-lanterns or transformed into aromatic pies. Those views showed me the active and productive landscapes.

I also drove by fields that weren't cultivated. Grasses were getting taller. Shrubs were getting wider, and young birches and serviceberries had set roots and were literally branching out. I'm sure there are hundreds of reasons why land is no longer farmed or grazed, but I'd like to see those areas remain open.

As I travel through the counties of Massachusetts, I believe there's another way to use these seemingly vacant fields while still maintaining their pastoral sense of place. When plants, bugs and animals die, they are transformed by soil microorganisms into food for other living beings. This transformation takes place without the aid of fertilizers or irrigation. Nature is doing what nature does - transforming and replenishing. This process is the one that occurs in a green cemetery.

Why do we – humans - feel the need for something more when we die? Have you thought about being laid to rest in a field



**Green burial creates a conservation legacy for the future.**

and letting nature transform you into another living entity? We want to make natural or green burial an option for you and for everyone in Massachusetts.

Perhaps you have field or forested area that isn't being used. Perhaps you've come across an old family burial ground on your property. Perhaps you've never thought about a burial ground as a way to create or maintain a pastoral sense of place. Green Burial Massachusetts, Inc. and Mount Grace are looking for a parcel of land for this purpose. Please consider transforming those places – the ones you love – into a natural burial ground.

Connie loves the woods, particularly the wild critters that call it home. An avid gardener, Connie pays attention to the wild activity in her garden and beyond. She knows which hawks have recently passed through, and who has been nibbling in the garden.

Last April, three young women spent five hours of their April vacation walking the land with clipboards, GPS units, and a compass, helping us conduct our "physical site assessment." After discovering vernal pools, countless piles of moose scat, and the remains of a decapitated mouse, these next generation woods-women are taking their cue from Connie: tread lightly, pay attention, and take care of the woods."



**Cordelia (9), Cadence (8), and Reece (6) explore Connie Blakley's now-protected woodlands.**

# STEWARDSHIP

## Eagle Reserve Trail Grants

BY MARCELA MALDONADO

Mount Grace is making trails! For two years in a row Mount Grace has been a recipient of a Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Trail Grant.

In 2015 Mount Grace received the maximum grant available to construct an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant trail in Northfield. Thanks to the recent donation of a 5-acre wetland sanctuary from Bill and Nancy Ames, and a groundswell of community support to build a new trail, Mount Grace has begun planning for the Gunnery Sergeant Jeffrey S. Ames Nature Trail at Alderbrook Meadows Sanctuary. Pioneer Valley Regional High School students are working in creating signage, an observation deck, and benches for the trail, and will work with Northfield's historical commission research local cultural and natural history to create text for the signs.

This year Mount Grace received a grant to build a trail system at our new Eagle Reserve Conservation Area in Royalston. Eagle Reserve is a beautiful, ecologically important 140-acre property next to the Royalston Community School which is working with Mount Grace to integrate the Reserve and the trails into their curriculum. The trail system includes an ADA accessible trail, providing individuals with low mobility access to enjoy the vast wetland that makes up

most of the property. A second trail will guide visitors through a peninsula that juts out into the water offering a secluded place to enjoy nature.



Creating a new trail is a balancing act which involves improving access to outstanding natural beauty while minimizing potential impacts to habitat.

## WINTER 2016 - 2017 UPCOMING EVENTS *Join Us!*

**Stories of Green Burial:  
Local People and Places  
Greenfield Public Library  
402 Main Street, Greenfield  
Saturday, January 14  
10-11:30am**

Learn from those who have conducted green burials for members of their family or community. Explore the possibility of donating or selling your land for the purpose of establishing a green cemetery in the Pioneer Valley. Come with your questions and curiosity. The program is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

**Wildlife Tracking Workshop  
Skyfields Arboretum  
1461 Old Keene Road, Athol  
Saturday, January 28, 9am-Noon**

Learn to spot and interpret the signs of local wildlife in a morning walk through the trails and woods around Skyfields led by veteran tracker and naturalist Paul Wanta. From mice to moose, the woods and wetlands behind the Arboretum offer denning, grazing, and hunting grounds for an all-star team of native species. This year's workshop is limited to 25 participants, and is free for current Mount Grace members and \$10 for the general public.

**Wildlife Tracking Workshop  
Paul C. Dunn Woodland Preserve  
11 Hewitt Road, Ashburnham  
Saturday, February 11, 9am-Noon**

Paul Wanta will lead a second tracking day at this 166-acre property, which was donated to Mount Grace in 1991 by Paul and Laura Dunn. A forest management demonstration site, Dunn has a variety of habitats and geology including white pine forest, red spruce swamp, and a glacial esker overlooking wetlands drained by the Millers River. Look for sign of the animals that make their homes here and learn what makes this mix of natural communities a resilient landscape at this free workshop, which will conclude with hot chocolate around a roaring fire.



# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

## Grants Received:

1772 Foundation	\$165,000	Mormon Hollow Landscape Partnership
Tortuga Foundation	\$40,000	Unrestricted/Program Support
Tortuga Foundation	\$15,000	MassLIFT-AmeriCorps Program
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests	\$8,358	Hastings Pond Project

Gifts were received *In Memory of*: Nina Barszcz

## Special Thanks *from* Mount Grace to ~

Artisan Beverage Cooperative, The Blind Pig, Senator Steve Brewer, Barb Ericson, The Gifford Family, Senator Ann Gobi, Clare Green, GRRR Gear, Fred Heyes, Johnson's Farm, Pat Larson, Peter Mallet, New Salem Preserves, Noel's Nursery, Pete's Tire Barns, Quabbin Harvest, Garth Shaneyfelt, Joel Shaughnessy, Representative Susannah Whipps Lee, Allen Young, and Michael Young for helping to host, lead, provide supplies for, speak at, and coordinate Mount Grace events

Ben and Susie Feldman for hosting Mount Grace's 30th Anniversary Celebration

Athol Granite Works, Attorney David J. Singer, Butler's Painting & Decorating, Cindy Coppolino, Conservation Works, EWH Anderson Appraisal Services, Kim Levitch Associates, Kimball-Cooke Insurance, O'Connor Real Estate Associates, and Orange Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram, for sponsoring the Anniversary Celebration

Brian Hall, Henry Woolsey, John O'Keefe and Mike Mauri for leading walks at the Anniversary Celebration

Larry Buell and Earthlands, Red Apple Farm, and Uptown Package Store for donating and discounting apples, pumpkins, cider, donuts, wine, and a tent for the Anniversary Celebration

And thanks to Redeker Rentals for late night tent adjustments!

Al's Quick Lube, Déjà Vu Women's Consignments, Chris Eaton, Flowerland, Hamshaw Lumber, Hartman's Herb Farm, House of Wax, Mimi Hellen Jones, Sue Hellen, Bonnie House, Landry and Meilus, Diane Nassif, Orange Saws, Petersham Package Store, Rose 32 Bread, S & S Appliance, Stephanie Selden, Stitches Embroidery, York Nordic, and Yours His & Ours for donating items for the Raffle & Silent Auction

Michael Abbate, Brad Compton, Melinda Godfrey, Ashley Green, Ted Haber, Fletcher Harrington, Maggie Hensel, Alec Hudson, Willie Hunting, Dan and Nina Keller, Dan Leahy, Kathy and Sam Lovejoy, Suzy Polucci, Ray Purington, Walter Ramsey, Lilliana Richards, Liz Smith, Peter Tomb, Glenn Trumbull, and Karen and Katy Ziemiak for volunteering at Hunting Farm

T.S. Mann Lumber Company for donating the memorial stone for the Bob Wetmore Memorial Fishing Hole at Gifford Forest

Nancy Allen, Mimi Hellen Jones, and Steve Rawson for their help with the new signage at the Gifford Forest

The Gifford and Wetmore families, for helping to create a new destination where people can encounter nature

New Jersey born Nina Barszcz came to Royalston as a young woman looking for a connection to the natural world. She found a community where people had "a much closer relationship to the landscape—knowledge and experience of the lakes, rivers, hills, and forests shaping their sense of place." Nina kept this sense of connection all her life, spending time in the North Quabbin with her husband Frank each year until she passed away at the age of 55. Nina's love of nature and passion for the land will be missed by all who knew her.



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The fish are already biting at the Senator Robert Wetmore Memorial Fishing Hole at our Gifford Memorial Forest in Orange. Maps are available at [mountgrace.org](http://mountgrace.org).