



Piscataquog News

The Piscataquog Land Conservancy Newsletter

Protecting Clarkridge Farm in Goffstown

The Piscataquog Land Conservancy has entered into an agreement to purchase a conservation easement on 73 acres of land in northern Goffstown known as Clarkridge Farm. If you regularly travel on state Route 13 between Dunbarton and Goffstown – a section of the John Stark Scenic Byway -- you will know the property. Coming south out of Dunbarton, you climb a hill that opens out into rolling hayfields on both sides of the road, with a historic barn straight ahead set atop the ridge. As you crest the hill the sweeping view is of pastures, valleys, and big sky. It's a spot that makes you slow down and look, and one that would bring top dollar in the current real estate and development market. If PLC can complete our conservation easement purchase, it will remain open, bountiful, and beautiful forever.

Clarkridge Farm's name is a portmanteau of family history and topography. The land has been owned and farmed by the Clark family for over one hundred years. Today the farm is a diverse operation producing grass-fed beef, pastured pork, maple syrup and timber. The land that would be protected by PLC easement includes hayfields, mixed hardwood and pine forests, a variety of wetlands and open water. The land's agricultural productivity is supported by extensive areas of best-in-state farm soils. The very best of these soils are on fifteen acres of land that was recently purchased by the family to prevent it being sold for development. The land had already

been subdivided by the previous owner into five house lots.

To put the importance of conserving Clarkridge Farm in context, according to a 2020 report from the American Farmland Trust, 11 million acres of farmland was lost between 2001 and 2016 — that's a rate of 2,000 acres every day. New Hampshire ceded close to 50,000 acres of active farmland between 2012 and 2017 according to the USDA's 2017 Census of Agriculture. In short, places like Clarkridge Farm are rare, and becoming more so every year.

Yet the land is more than farm and forest – it is also healthy watershed and wildlife habitat. It contains eighteen acres of prime wetlands, most of which are palustrine – meaning they are characterized by the presence of trees, shrubs, and emergent vegetation. The property includes over one hundred feet of a first-order tributary to Harry Brook, which has been the focus of a longtime conservation effort by PLC and the Town of Goffstown. The land is part of a 1,200-plus acre unfragmented habitat block, and NH Fish and Game connectivity modeling indicates the land is part of a priority corridor for wildlife movement.

"We're excited to continue the family legacy of farming and land conservation," says Dan King.



Photography Courtesy of Clarkridge Farm

The PLC easement would expand on an existing 236-acre conservation easement held by the Forest Society on abutting land owned by the Clark family. It is also close by other protected properties held by PLC and others.

"We're excited to continue the family legacy of farming and land conservation," says Dan King, a member of the Clark Family and the current operator of the multi-generational farm. "Having an opportunity to keep land in agricultural use when you are trying to run a farm is rare, and we're thrilled to be a part of this. We hope to continue our record of land improvement, increasing soil health and improving water quality by applying regenerative agriculture techniques."

PLC Lands Protection Specialist Tom Jones says, "it is so great to work with such a knowledgeable family, and one so committed to and connected with their land."

PLC has until June of 2023 to raise the \$580,000 needed to complete the purchase of the conservation easement. We will be seeking major anchor grants from state funding programs, augmented by other public and private funders and local grassroots fundraising.

You can support the Clarkridge Farm Project – Learn More



To conserve the natural and scenic landscapes of the Piscataquog, Souhegan, and Nashua River watersheds of New Hampshire.



From My Corner

Chris Wells

PLC President/Executive Director

I recently had a spirited conversation with someone about why PLC protects land (it's a favorite part of the job). As we talked, I realized our exchange echoed a fundamental debate that has shaped the American conservation movement for nearly 150 years: are we conserving land primarily for the benefit of people, or preserving land from people for the benefit of "nature"?

In the 1870s, John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, and Gifford Pinchot, founder of the U.S. Forest Service, famously represented the two sides of this debate. They lived at a historical moment when the landscape of the American east and Midwest had already been utterly remade on the European pattern. The great plains and mountain west

was still being transformed via wholesale clear-cutting, mining, and grazing – all on lands that until then had been the domain of Indigenous peoples.

Pinchot's concern was that unless land management became "scientific" the United States would exhaust its natural resources, and so not be able to achieve its destiny as a great and prosperous nation. Muir too feared the looming destruction of the western landscape, but because the "wilderness" he loved was worthy of outright preservation – and veneration -- for its own sake.

The American conservation movement has tried to balance, and if possible, integrate, these two views ever since. Twentieth-century wildlife advocates like Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold concluded that human beings

were (like it or not) part of nature, that every human action impacted the whole web of life, and that we needed to start acting that way.

Southern New Hampshire was once the home of native people who lived lightly on the land but nonetheless manipulated their environment -- especially with fire -- to meet their own needs. In a handful of generations, European settlers remade the land into what historian William Cronon calls "a world of fields and fences."

By the time Muir and Pinchot were having their debates in the late 19th century, rural towns in southern New Hampshire were de-populating and marginal farms were returning to forest. In the century that followed some farms persisted, while others became woodlots that supplied local lumber and paper mills.

Many of these working farms and forests are with us still. Others have become, whether

on purpose or by neglect, small wildernesses. Many more have been developed. The natural landscape we live in has a deep history of human interaction and influence. So long as we can conserve enough of its topography, soils and aquatic systems from permanent loss, this long cycle can continue. That's why we protect land. Because the fate of humans and nature remain entwined, and forever is a long time.

Remembering Pat Place and Ginny Brooks

This winter we lost two longtime and well-loved members of the PLC family -- Patricia Place of Frankestown and Virginia Brooks of Lyndeborough. We extend our condolences to their families, and our gratitude for everything they did to conserve land, water, and wildlife in the Piscataquog region.

Human Nature

Loop Trail Workday at the Burke Family Wildlife Sanctuary in Deering

On a chilly November day, PLC staff and volunteers gathered for a trail workday at our Burke Family Wildlife Sanctuary in Deering. Acquired by PLC in 2006, the 59-acre forested property is further protected by a conservation easement held by the Town of Deering. The land is divided in half by the Piscataquog

River and a large wetland. A .35-mile loop trail wanders through rich forest, crosses a small stream, and features a partial view of the property's wetland.

The agenda for the workday was to clear several large, fallen trees from the trail, and to install fresh trail markers. One of the downed trees, a hemlock, was so large that it required the team to re-route

the trail around it, rather than try to remove it. Brush from the trees was piled out of sight of the trail to create winter habitats for small mammals. Smaller obstacles such as branches, and rocks were also removed from the trail to make it as accessible as possible.

Check out the trail!



New for 2022

- An 80-mile course for riders seeking even more miles and elevation gain than our 100K (now called the 66 miler).
- Discounted registration fee of \$50 for riders 18 and under. Just contact us and we'll send you a discount code!

Register: [rosemountainrumble.com](https://www.rosemountainrumble.com)

If you are interested in volunteering, sponsoring the event, or registering a corporate team please contact Jill Ketchen at jill@plcnh.org. The Rumble is capped at 150 riders, so don't delay!

Rose Mountain Rumble Rides Again

August 27th – Lyndeborough, NH

Gear up to grind some gravel! PLC's late-summer cycling event in Lyndeborough and surrounding towns is back and better than ever. As always, the Rumble offers a variety of route options from a 25-miler for more casual riders, an intermediate 45-miler, a 66-miler and a new 80-mile course that will challenge the most competitive gravel grinders (you know, the ones who keep coming back for the ever-punishing Bible Hill climb). All routes begin and end at Lyndeborough's historic Center Hall, and registration includes a cool tee-shirt and our legendary post-ride lunch prepared by the Wilton-Lyndeborough Women's Club.



Photo Credit: Gabriella Nissen

52nd Annual Meeting and Harvest Dinner at Shirley Farm



Save the Date!

SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2022 | GOFFSTOWN | 2:00 PM – 8:00 PM

It's been far too long since the PLC community has been able to gather in person, so we are excited to announce that Shirley Farm in Goffstown has graciously offered to host our 52nd annual meeting and first-ever fall harvest dinner this September! We'll gather under a tent overlooking the farm's rolling pastures (which were protected by a PLC conservation easement in 2008) to enjoy dinner, live music, and a short program which will include the annual business meeting. For those interested in exploring the property and learning

about the working farm operation managed by Benedikt Dairy, there will be short outings and tour options available before the evening event. More details coming soon, and tickets will go on sale this spring.

We're very much looking forward to enjoying a beautiful September night on the farm with you! If you are interested in volunteering for this event or supporting with a sponsorship, please contact Jill Ketchen at jill@plcnh.org.

Marston Conservation Project Complete

PLC and the Town of Bedford are pleased to announce that we have completed the conservation of 123 acres of land formerly owned by the Marcia Marston Trust in Bedford and Goffstown.

On December 23, 2021, the Town of Bedford purchased approximately 46 acres of undeveloped land from the



Marston Trust located on the west side of Wallace Road, on the Bedford/Goffstown border. The Trust had previously been preparing to market the land for development. The million-dollar purchase was funded from the town's conservation fund, meaning there is no impact on town taxpayers.

As an added conservation measure, the Town of Bedford conveyed a conservation easement on the 46-acre parcel to PLC. The town also signed an agreement with the Marston Trust giving the town a right of first offer to purchase an added 72-acre parcel located across the

street on Wallace Road if the Trust ever decides to sell it in the future.

In a separate transaction completed on December 15th, the Marston Trust donated 77 acres of nearby land in Bedford and Goffstown to PLC to be managed for wildlife conservation and low-impact recreation.

The property owned by PLC will be known as the Marston-Dunlap Wildlife Sanctuary and the Town of Bedford property will be the Marston-Dunlap Conservation Area.

"We are thrilled to see this ambitious conservation project

completed, and grateful to the Town of Bedford and the Marcia Marston Trust for being incredible partners throughout the process," said PLC President Chris Wells.

"Marcia Marston, a lifelong resident of Bedford, appreciates the efforts of the Town of Bedford and the PLC to accomplish this significant conservation project to protect and conserve open space," said Peter Rotch, the attorney for Marcia Marston.

This project was supported by generous contributions from the Samuel P. Hunt Foundation, the McIninch Foundation, and the individual support of local community members. Thank you!

Common Name	Scientific Name	% (# of seeds/ft ²)	Seed/ft ²	lb/acre	lbs/0.02acre	Bloom
Little Bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	5.50%	3.30	0.596	0.012	Grass
Canada Wildrye	<i>Elymus canadensis</i>	3.00%	1.80	0.688	0.014	Grass
Eastern Columbine	<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>			0.078	0.002	Early
Golden Alexanders						Early
Smooth Penstemon						Early-Mid
Hairy Penstemon						Early-Mid
Evening primrose						Early-Mid
Canadian anemone						Early-Mid
Wild Bergamot						Mid
Common milkweed						Mid
Butterfly milkweed						Mid
Yellow False						Mid
Spreading dog						Mid
Panicledleaf t						Mid
Common Yarrow						Mid-Late
Narrowleaf Mount						Mid-Late
Hoary Mountainmint						Mid-Late
Showy Ticktrefoil (legume)						Mid-Late
Boneset						Mid-Late
Common evening primrose						Mid-Late



Beauty AND THE BEES

Pollinator Planting Project at Gregg Hill in Deering

Conservation campaigns tend to feature the big, bold, and breathtaking creatures – moose, bobcat, birds of prey. Their existence represents the sum of land protection efforts – a single bobcat requires five square miles (3,200 acres) of territory to have enough prey to sustain its existence. Protective efforts focused on the micro level are important, too. Healthy supporting habitats for large animals owe much to invertebrate populations. Insects provide food for prey, pollination to native plants, and they help keep invasive and harmful pest populations under control. Without robust native invertebrate populations, ecosystems can collapse.

The Deering Conservation Commission (DCC) is working to support insect populations at the Gregg Hill Property, bought by the town in 2005 and protected by a PLC conservation easement in 2021. The property, a former ski slope with a rope tow, is home to a large meadow with

southern exposure – the perfect location for pollinator friendly plants. “I came up with the idea of a pollinator garden for the Gregg Hill lot after seeing what Deering residents Amanda Marsh and Eric Simon were developing on another nearby conservation easement, known locally as “The View;” said Gary Samuels, Chairman of the Deering Conservation Commission, and a PLC Trustee. On the Gregg Hill property Samuels saw an opportunity to add to Deering’s local ecosystem and outdoor amenities by developing beneficial pollinator gardens and meandering trails for all to enjoy.

Establishing pollinator gardens can be a challenge, though. Preparing the soils for ideal germinating conditions requires extensive planning, manual labor, and a years-long commitment. The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation develops region-specific conservation resources and offers consultation to land

managers. Mike Thomas, also a member of the Deering Conservation Commission and a PLC Trustee, worked with both the Xerces Society and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to develop a technical strategy for the Gregg Hill property. The plan outlines site preparation, seed-sowing techniques, invasive management, native plant seed-mixes, and long-term stewardship practices.

The first stages of the plan were put into action in Fall of 2020. The field on Gregg Hill was mowed, with special consideration given to ecologically sensitive areas where native orchids and blueberries currently thrive. In the Spring of 2021, the DCC and volunteers installed six bluebird nesting boxes and began the site preparation for two 24” x 24” pollinator garden plots, and seeding was completed in the Fall.

“Before doing more extensive planting, I wanted to be sure that we could succeed with this small-scale project,” said Samuels.

The group will be keeping an eye on the plots this Spring, looking for signs that the plantings have taken root. They’ll also be looking out for black swallow-wort, an invasive species that was identified on the property at the initial evaluation. An extremely aggressive plant, if allowed to establish black swallow-wort will out-compete the young, slower to establish native plants. Black swallow-wort is also detrimental to Monarch butterfly populations – a poisonous doppelganger of milkweed that can kill Monarch caterpillars.

What are the next steps? The DCC is seeking funding for an interpretive trail and a gravel parking lot for public access. Other plans include installing a kiosk in the parking area, native bee houses, and benches for visitors to rest at and enjoy the gardens and scenic views.

This ongoing effort is one rooted in community partnerships, volunteers, and support from the town. “This collaborative effort has been a great way to get the community involved in enhancing pollinator habitat,” said Thomas. “This project would not be possible without support from the Deering Board of Selectmen, volunteers from the Deering Conservation Commission and Hillsborough Youth Services, and technical assistance from the Xerces Society and Natural Resource Conservation Service.”

Volunteer support for this effort will be critical to its success. If you’re interested in learning more about the project or volunteering, please contact: Mike Thomas at mikethomas206@comcast.net



Photography by Mike Thomas



Panicledleaf ticktrefoil	<i>Trientalis americana</i>	0.73%	0.45	0.026	0.002	Mid
Common Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	20.00%	12.00	0.183	0.004	Mid-Late
Narrowleaf Mountainmint	<i>Pycnanthemum tenuifolium</i>	0.30%	3.00	0.034	0.001	Mid-Late



Canadian anemone	<i>Anemone canadensis</i>	2.00%	1.20	0.117	0.002	Early-Mid
Wild Bergamot	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	3.50%	2.10	0.072	0.001	Mid
Common milkweed	<i>Asclepias syriaca</i> , PA ecotype	0.65%	0.39	0.110	0.002	Mid
Butterfly milkweed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> , PA ecotype	0.30%	0.18	0.112	0.002	Mid

Anonymous Donor Acts Locally

In January, PLC received a very generous and totally unexpected gift to support our land protection work in Weare and Deering. The donor, who prefers to remain anonymous, explains their motivation this way:

“Over the last couple of years running and cycling around the area I noticed more and more PLC markers from the road, and on some of the trails I run too. With so many lots being developed recently I got curious as to how land conservation worked and who’s active in the area. PLC is certainly the preeminent organization in these parts, and I’m really grateful for what you’re doing here.”

Golden Alexanders	<i>Zizia aurea</i>	1.00%	0.60	0.152	0.003	Early
Smooth Penstemon	<i>Penstemon digitalis</i> , PA Ecotype	2.25%	1.35	0.147	0.003	Early-Mid
Hairy Penstemon	<i>Penstemon hirsutus</i>	5.50%	3.30	0.037	0.001	Early-Mid
Evening primrose (Sundrops)	<i>Oenothera fruticosa</i> var. <i>fruticosa</i>	8.00%	4.80	0.055	0.001	Early-Mid
Canadian anemone	<i>Anemone canadensis</i>	2.00%	1.20	0.117	0.002	Early-Mid
Wild Bergamot	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	3.50%	2.10	0.072	0.001	Mid
Common milkweed	<i>Asclepias syriaca</i> , PA ecotype	0.65%	0.39	0.110	0.002	Mid

Citizen Science Takes Flight at PLC Preserve in Mason

Migratory Bird Survey Helps Inform Stewardship Plans



Birds are in trouble. A 2019 study of bird populations in the United States and Canada by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology found a net population loss of close to three billion birds since 1970. One of the greatest threats to migratory birds is degradation and fragmentation of the habitat they use for breeding and nesting, and preserving these places and managing conservation lands with an eye to their needs are ways we can help.

A case in point is PLC's 267-acre Nissitissit Headwaters Preserve in Mason, which we acquired in 2020. The property features a mosaic of actively-managed forest, wetlands, vernal pools, a sizable pond, and thousands of feet of perennial and intermittent streams. It also has a network of logging trails, many already reverting to brush, that could form the backbone of a recreational trail system. As new landowners with a long-time horizon, the land presents PLC with opportunities -- and choices to make.

Not long after PLC acquired the land in Mason, we were

approached by local bird enthusiast Gail Coffey. She asked permission to conduct a bird research project on the property, a requirement for completing her Birding Certificate Program with Massachusetts Audubon. Coffey first developed her interest in birding from an introductory class at Beaver Brook Association in Hollis and has been birding in our region for almost thirty years. So, when she asked, we enthusiastically said yes.

Once a month from November 2020-October 2021 Gail monitored five sites for a minimum of fifteen minutes each, identifying birds by visual observation and vocalization. The sites were chosen to represent the land's different habitat types: pond-wetland system, field and shrubland, forest and vernal pool, early successional forest, and pond-shrubland-forest edge. Over the fourteen-month period, 68 different species were observed, with the most observations occurring in May of each year -- the peak of spring migration.

"I really enjoyed conducting the bird survey on the Nissitissit

Headwaters Preserve," says Coffey. "I could see the habitat dependence and preferences of many bird species. Eastern Kingbirds and Common Yellowthroats were around the pond and Chestnut-sided Warblers and Eastern Towhees were in the shrubland areas. In the forested areas, I identified Scarlet Tanagers and Black-throated Blue Warblers. It was quite exciting to see the diversity of birds in these different habitats."

Based on the results of her survey work, she recognized the importance of protecting the Preserve's sensitive breeding and migratory bird habitat from human disturbance. In particular, Eastern Towhees and Prairie Warblers are dependent on "early successional" shrubland and old field habitats. The Towhees nest on the ground and Prairie Warblers nest a few feet off the ground in shrubs or trees. Perpetuating shrubland habitat on the Nissitissit property will specifically benefit these two species, both of which are "of conservation concern" -- naturalists-speak for they're in trouble. Maintaining this habitat

type will also benefit the more common Chestnut-sided Warblers, Indigo Buntings, and Gray Catbirds.

"From a stewardship perspective, this information is invaluable," says PLC's Stewardship Coordinator Dan Ewald. "We already knew that the Headwaters property was ecologically special, and now thanks to Gail's work we have detailed habitat data to inform trail-building and forest management decisions. We have already used her data to refine the route of a walking trail we are planning for the property."

Read Gail's Report

Upcoming Birding Events with PLC:

April 27 – What Birds Will I Find Here? - Zoom with Matt Tarr of UNH Extension

May 21 – Spring Birding – Mason with Gail Coffey & Weare with Mike Thomas



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR!



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PLC's Spring Gear Shop is Open!

We've teamed up with Mint Printworks in Nashua once again to bring you seasonal logo-wear that is not only super-stylish, but proceeds from every purchase support local conservation! We're excited to offer some great hats, layering shirts for hiking, and shirts in youth sizes this season. This is a pre-order campaign and the store will be open until April 22nd. You can find all of the details at the online shop, but act soon because these are limited run items and may not be available in the future.



Shop Now!

To Learn More and Comment

Full list of standards:
landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices

Website: landtrustaccreditation.org

Email: info@landtrustaccreditation.org

Mail:

Land Trust Accreditation Commission,
Attn: Public Comments
36 Phila Street, Suite 2
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Fax: 518-587-3183



Comment Period is Open for PLC's Land Trust Accreditation Renewal

Comments on Piscataquog Land Conservancy's application will be most useful by June 30, 2022

The Piscataquog Land Conservancy is in the process of renewing its national land trust accreditation, which happens every five years. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies, business practices and finances to confirm adherence to national standards.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how Piscataquog Land Conservancy complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust.



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UPCOMING OUTINGS & EVENTS

- April 27 | What Birds Can I Expect Here? – Zoom
- May 14 | Wildflower Walk – Weare
- May 21 | Spring Birding Walks – Mason and Weare
- May 22 | Unlocking the Mystery of Pulpit Rock – Bedford
- August 6 | Paddle in Deering – Deering
- August 27 | Rose Mountain Rumble – Lyndeborough
- September 18 | 52nd Annual Meeting at Shirley Farm – Goffstown

To register for PLC outings,
please visit our website:
plcnh.org/events/



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