



# Piscataquog News

The Piscataquog Land Conservancy Newsletter

## PLC Project to Protect New Boston's Great Meadow

PLC has embarked on an ambitious new conservation project that if successful will complete the protection of New Boston's Great Meadow, a 160-acre open water wetland that has been a preservation priority for PLC and the town since the 1980s. In December of 2023, PLC signed a purchase and sale agreement to acquire an undeveloped 250-acre property held by the estate of the late Alice Follansbee, who was a lifelong New Boston resident. The parcel includes the entire remaining unprotected shoreline of Great Meadow plus over two miles of frontage on the Middle Branch of the Piscataquog River and Buxton Brook.

The Follansbee land is located in the northwest corner of New Boston close to the Weare town line, and is bounded by Colburn, Middle Branch and Saunders Hill Roads. Its topography is generally rolling with elevations ranging from five hundred to seven hundred feet. The entire property is ranked as a top priority in PLC's newly-completed land conservation plan (for more on the plan, see pages 3-5), and is also ranked as some of the best habitat in the state by New Hampshire Fish & Game. The property is used now by the public for recreation, and this access would be secured in perpetuity through PLC ownership.

If protected, the Follansbee property will be the keystone in a mosaic of conserva-

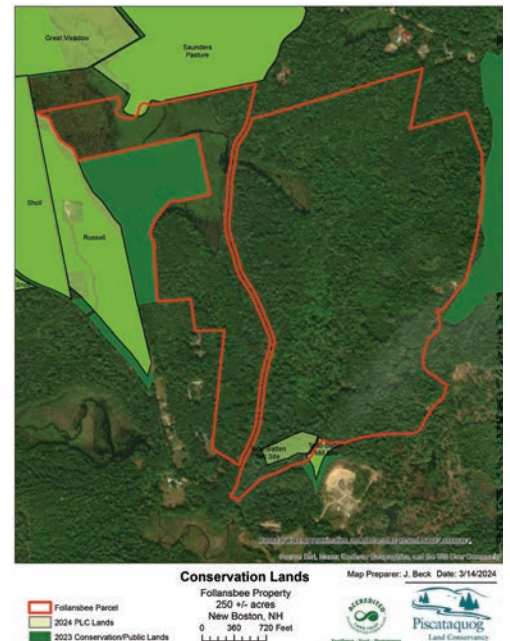
tion lands that already includes four PLC conservation easements totaling 276 acres around Great Meadow - Great Meadow (1988), Russell (2000), Saunders Pasture (2000), and Sholl (2007). Another PLC CE, Todd Batten Mill (1994), abuts the property to the south and east along Middle Branch Road, as does the Town of New Boston's Middle Branch Conservation Area. Other close by PLC properties include the Tuthill Forest Preserve, Thomas Sanctuary and Houghton Preserve.

*"We are thrilled that the opportunity to protect this land has finally arrived, after being hoped for by so many people for so many years."*

PLC must raise a total of \$525,000 to complete our purchase of the Follansbee property. Over the next few months we will be applying for major grants from state funding programs including the Aquatic Resources Mitigation (ARM) Fund and the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP). If these anchor grants fall into place, the balance of funding would come from a combination of public and private grants, town conservation funds and local private fundraising. PLC has until December 31, 2024 to make our fundraising goal.

"We are thrilled that the opportunity to protect this land has finally arrived, after being hoped for by so many people for so many years" says PLC's Executive Director Chris Wells. "We are grateful to the Follansbee family for their willingness to consider the conservation option and for giving us the time it will take to pull all the funding together."

Look for updates on the Follansbee project in coming months via PLC's monthly e-news. We will also be offering several guided walks on the property over the balance of this year.



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





Purple Finch



Swamp Sparrow

## It's For the Birds

Before dawn on a recent morning -- which also happened to be the first day of spring -- I stepped out my back door, coffee in hand, and listened. After months of cold winter silence, I was greeted by a small symphony of birdsong. I am by no means an expert, but like many people I have grown attached to the birds that share my little patch of New Hampshire: the chickadees chattering in the bushes, hawks calling to each other high on a thermal, the distant trill of a wood thrush at dusk. Many people come to conservation via a love for birds, and this is certainly true of many who have been part of the Piscataquog Land Conservancy over the decades.

Many of us were deeply discouraged by a study in 2019 that said North America has lost 30% of its birds since 1970, including big drops in many species common to the northeastern United States. Faced with information like this, most humans prefer hope and practical action to despair, and there are many things we can do as individuals to help bird populations stabilize and someday rebound. We can make our yards more bird-friendly through native plantings, mowing less, letting areas become brushy "early successional" habitat, using less pesticides, and controlling our pets.

Beyond our own backyards we can and must also conserve larger blocks of intact habitat where it still exists and manage these areas to provide diverse food and cover for different bird species, be they permanent residents or seasonal visitors. That is where PLC and our local, state and regional conservation partners come in. Since so many birds do migrate, we must also do what we can as Americans to conserve habitat in often far-distant corners of our nation, hemisphere, and planet. If we can do all these things, we can ensure that birds will always be there to break the silence on an early spring morning.



Bird and fox photos by Mike Thomas (above and top of page 3)



Yellow Warbler



Follansbee



## Introducing PLC's New Land Conservation Plan

Over the course of last year, the Piscataquog Land Conservancy developed a new land conservation plan for our 26-town service area. The timing was right for a comprehensive update because PLC's previous plan from 2014 was nearly a decade old and only covered half of our current region. In addition, new data related to climate resilience and adaptation had become available, while other existing natural resource data sources had been updated and refined.

PLC's new plan integrates this most-current natural resource and climate related data, selected and weighted to reflect PLC's overall strategic priorities, and mapped and prioritized for the PLC region using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. The resulting conservation priority areas identify those specific geographic locations with the highest concentration of natural resource values that provide multiple benefits to both people and wildlife. The plan also includes a network of connecting corridors between the core areas for wildlife (and in some cases human) passage. A map showing the plan's priorities can be found on the next two pages of this newsletter.

### Conservation Priorities

The plan's GIS data analysis classifies the top twenty percent of the PLC service area, or about 96,000 acres of land, as "Core Focus Area" (dark purple areas on map) and the next twenty percent of the region as "Supporting Landscape" (light purple) areas that buffer and connect the core areas. Before these data-derived areas were finalized, the project consultant reality-checked them against actual conditions and manually removed any overlaps with developed or otherwise degraded areas. Another four percent of the PLC region is identified as habitat "Connectivity Areas" (teal green on map) which were also manually added, using the riparian (stream) network, floodplains, topography, proximity to buildings, and the NH Fish and Game Department's own analysis of wildlife corridors.

### How Have We Done So Far?

As of the plan's completion at the end of 2023, 73,065 acres or about 34% of all the land identified as a conservation priority (core + supporting + connectivity combined) had already been permanently conserved. Of the 9,410 acres conserved to date by PLC, 7,359 acres or just over 78% are in areas identified as conservation priorities in our new plan. In other words, PLC has been generally acquiring land and conservation easements in the "right" places in recent decades, and there has been much progress overall in conserving the most critical land within our region. That said, the numbers also tell us there is still much left to do.

### What's Next?

PLC's now-completed land conservation plan will be used to guide every land conservation project we undertake over the next decade. It will also help focus our proactive outreach to landowners. It should be stressed that the plan is intended only as a guide for voluntary land transactions, and not for any type of regulation. Looking ahead, PLC will meet with Conservation Commissions in our service area towns through the rest of 2024 to explain the plan's methodology and findings, and how towns can use it in their own land conservation efforts. An interactive map and detailed technical report on how the plan was developed will both be made available on the PLC website.

*PLC's land conservation plan was developed through a collaboration of PLC board and committee members, staff and consultant Peter Steckler of Northeast Conservation Services. The project was funded in part by the Land and Climate Grant Program, a joint initiative of Open Space Institute and Land Trust Alliance made possible with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Jane's Trust Foundation, the J.M. Kaplan Fund, the Volgenau Foundation, and the William Penn Foundation.*

**Conservation Plan Continues on Pages 4 & 5**

## Save the Dates!

With spring already upon us, here are a couple of dates to block on your calendar for later this year: first up is the 9th Annual Rose Mountain Rumble (RMR) cycling benefit on Saturday, August 24th. For the uninitiated, the RMR is a non-timed gravel ride that tours the scenic dirt roads of Lyndeborough and surrounding towns. We offer a variety of route options from a 25-miler for more casual riders and families, an intermediate 45-miler, to 66 and 80-mile courses that challenge the most competitive gravel grinder. Registration includes water & snack stops, a delicious post-ride lunch provided by the Wilton-Lyndeborough Women's Club, and a tee-shirt custom-designed each year by local bike builder and graphic artist Kris Henry. Net proceeds benefit PLC. To learn more and register, visit [www.rosemountainrumble.com](http://www.rosemountainrumble.com). We sell out a little earlier each year so don't wait too long!



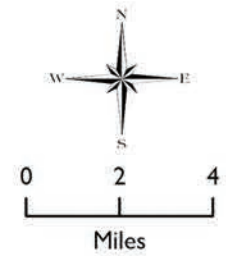
Photo Credit: Gabriella Nissen

Just a few weeks after the RMR, PLC will hold our third-annual Fall Harvest Dinner on Sunday, September 22nd. Last year's dinner outside under the tent at the Mile Away in Milford was a big hit, so we're doing it there again. The party starts with a social hour and live music, followed by dinner, dessert and a short program. Tickets will be \$50 per person and go on sale a little later this spring. If you haven't attended the fall dinner before, we hope you'll join us for this genuinely fun and

relaxed gathering of the PLC community. Bring a friend, make a friend! In a change from the past couple of years, we will hold our brief Annual Business Meeting separately from the fall dinner. We'll gather by Zoom the day before, on September 21st, to hear brief reports and elect board members for the coming year.



# PLC's New Land Conservation Plan



## Legend

- Project Area
- PLC Service Area Towns
- PLC Protected Land within Conservation Focus Area
- PLC Protected Land outside Conservation Focus Area
- Conservation/Public Land within Conservation Focus Area
- Conservation/Public Land outside Conservation Focus Area
- Conservation Focus Areas**
  - Core
  - Supporting Landscape
  - Habitat Connectivity Area

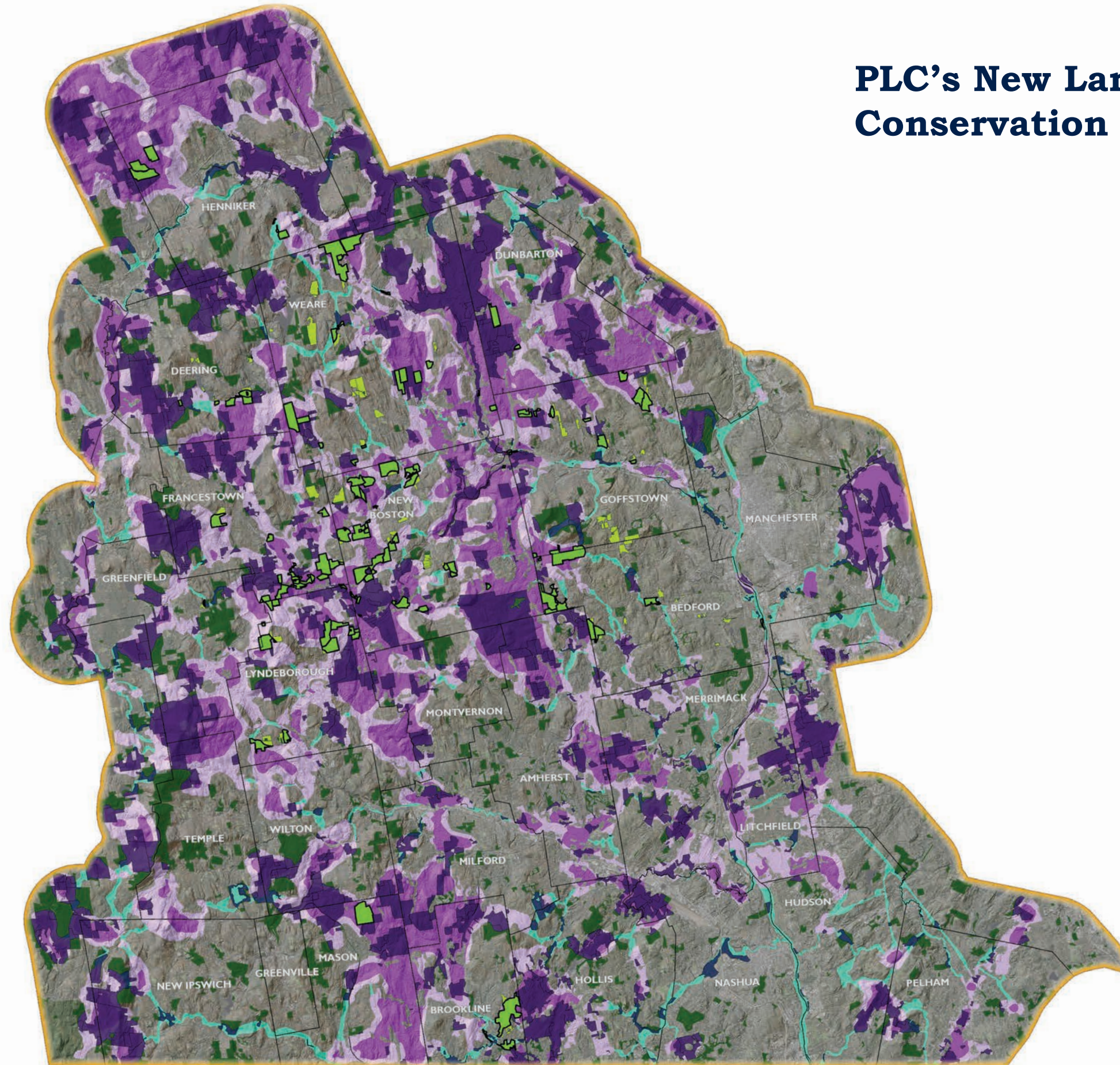
**Figure 7:**  
**Conservation Focus Areas**  
 PLC's Strategic Land Conservation Plan

Map Created 3/15/2024 by:

Data Sources:  
 Northeast  
 Conservation  
 Services, PLC, NH  
 GRANIT



**Northeast  
 Conservation  
 Services**







## Temple Mountain Project Completed

Thanks to a remarkably generous landowner and engaged local citizens, a beloved local landscape received a holiday gift just before Christmas. In our final project closing of 2023, PLC accepted the donation of seventy-one acres on the eastern slopes of Temple Mountain. The forested property is located just off Route 101, and directly abuts Temple Mountain State Reservation. After the closing, landowner Barry West said “it is really gratifying to see this land go into permanent conservation for wildlife and so future generations can enjoy it the way my partner Julie and I have.” PLC has named the property the West Highlands Preserve.

While the land itself was donated to PLC, we set a goal to raise \$30,000 to cover transaction expenses and long-term stewardship. After the Temple Conservation Commission committed \$15,000 to the effort last fall, PLC put out a call to area residents to help raise the balance. As we approached our December 1st fundraising deadline, local trails group Friends of the Wapack helped us get across the finish line by alerting their members. In the end, sixty-five individuals and families contributed to the campaign, and we made our goal on time and in full. To all of you who contributed, thank you!

## Temple Mountain Supporters

- Elizabeth Albert
- David Andrews
- Dudley & Jeannette Baker
- Julia Banks
- Joslin & Ross Bennett
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- Karen Simmons
- Eric and Beth Soederberg
- Robert Spoerl
- Jeffrey & Lynne Stone
- Temple Conservation Commission
- Christopher Thorp
- Joe Vaughan
- Frances Von Mertens
- Robert Weston
- Richard Widhu

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## PLC Welcomes New Board Members...

As 2024 gets under way, the Piscataquog Land Conservancy is thrilled to welcome two new members to our Board of Trustees: **Andrew Eills** of Amherst and **Betsy Holmes** of Deering.

Andrew's involvement with the Piscataquog Land Conservancy began in 2018 when he rode the Rose Mountain Rumble, which introduced him to PLC's mission and stewardship. Since then Andrew has been a member of the organization's Land Protection Committee. Andrew practices health care and corporate law with Sheehan, Phinney, Bass and Green, P.A., and has served on non-profit boards including Red River Theatre and Granite VNA.

Betsy has been involved with PLC since 2006, starting as a member taking walks, later becoming an event host, and then serving as a property monitor. She recently retired as library director at New Hampshire Institute of Art and combines her interest of the outdoors with her art as a plein air painter – PLC properties appear regularly in her work. Betsy also volunteers with Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNH as an art history instructor and is a docent at the Currier Museum of Art.

To read more about Andrew, Betsy and the rest of PLC's twelve-member board, visit the PLC website. Welcome and thank you for serving Andrew and Betsy!

## ...And New Staff!

PLC is also very pleased to welcome two new members to our small but mighty staff team. **Marlene Paulsen** of New Boston joined PLC as our part-time Membership Coordinator in the summer of 2023. Her previous professional experience includes many years working in a local law office. Marlene is an avid equestrian and was a longtime board member of Piscataquog Area Trailways. **Jonathan Beck** started as PLC's new Land Protection Specialist in March 2024. He lives in Bedford and served on the Board of the Bedford Land Trust before it merged with PLC in 2019. Jonathan has as significant previous land protection experience working in the greater Chicago area, and is thrilled to be back in the conservation field.



## Volunteers Make Their Mark in 2023

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our volunteer monitors, PLC's 2023 property monitoring was completed right on schedule! Eighty-six monitors spent over 430 hours monitoring all 134 of our properties. Annual monitoring is an essential part of the land conservation process, and our volunteer monitors play an integral part in ensuring the continued, effective protection of the wild places we all know and love. Looking ahead to 2024, PLC is looking for additional volunteer monitors. Property monitoring gives volunteers an opportunity to explore new lands (or perhaps reconnect with familiar lands!), develop field navigation skills, and build relationships with landowners and other volunteers.

### Interested in property monitoring?

Please fill out the volunteer inquiry form on our website or email Dan at [dewald@plcnh.org](mailto:dewald@plcnh.org)





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603.487.3331 | [plcnh.org](http://plcnh.org) | [plc@plcnh.org](mailto:plc@plcnh.org)

## SPRING EVENTS

- Sun. April 14 - Spring Hike to Rose Mountain Preserve, Lyndeborough
- Sat. April 20 - Farming History Walk at Tuthill Forest Preserve, New Boston
- Sun. May 12 - Mother's Day Birding at Saunders Pasture, New Boston
- Sun. May 19 - Birding at Nissitissit Headwaters Preserve, Mason
- Sat. June 22 - Summer Solstice Hike at Tarr Sanctuary, Goffstown/Bedford

To register for PLC outings,  
please visit our website:  
[plcnh.org/events/](http://plcnh.org/events/)



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Completing the Protection of New Boston's Great Meadow



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