

Karina Farmer

Freedom to Explore

New nature park transforms a vacant lot

A young boy comes running down the wide gravel path, grinning from ear to ear. It's his first time at the Winchester Learning Center Community Nature Park. It surely won't be his last.

Thanks to generous community support, this new nature park at the corner of Route 10 and Lawrence Street in Winchester is now open to the public. The 3.5-acre property is owned by the Winchester Learning Center, a United Way-funded agency that provides family resources, after-school programs, preschool, and childcare for ages 6 weeks to 7 years old.

The boy running down the path skips across a wetland boardwalk, then zips between hemlock trees before emerging into a clearing that features wildflowers as pollinator habitat.

Roberta Royce, executive director of the center, has long dreamt of an outdoor space for unstructured play to benefit both the center's children and the community. Her idea took root about four years ago, when Steve Gehlbach, a former Conservancy board president, connected Roberta with the land trust. A partnership was born.

Continued on next page

The center already owned the land, but it lacked the skills needed to turn it into a park. At the same time, the Monadnock Conservancy was searching for ways to bring nature closer to people, especially kids, but it lacked a suitable site. Together, the two groups accomplished what neither could do alone. The Conservancy's expertise in fundraising and trail building, paired with Royce's vision and expertise in early childhood development, made the perfect combination.

Thank you

Heartfelt thanks for the connections and support from four lead funders: C&S Wholesale Grocers, Mascoma Bank, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, and the Winchester Conservation Commission.

Gratitude also for these key partners: ArborClimb, Recon Trail Design, SnowHawk LLC, and the Student Conservation Association.

Thank you to the many individuals in the Winchester community and beyond who made this park a success!



Marc DiGirolomo

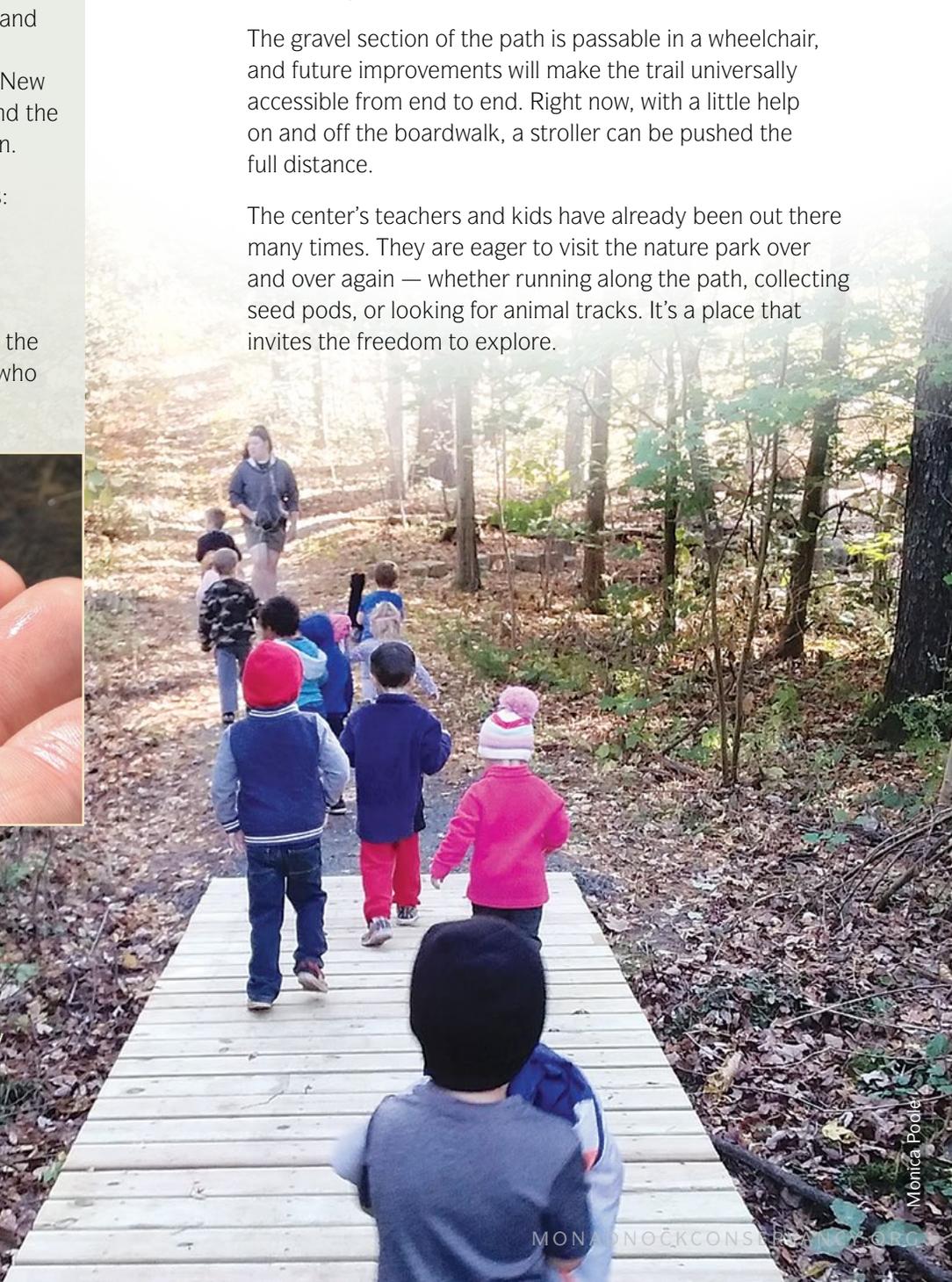
Winchester Learning Center Community Nature Park, Winchester

A boardwalk, which also connects the center to the park, was built last fall by the Conservancy's land manager, Rick Brackett, and Lew Shelley of SnowHawk LLC, a Walpole-based trail design and construction company.

The trail was built this summer by two crews from the Student Conservation Association — a national nonprofit that sends young people to improve public land and parks — under the guidance of Royce's son-in-law, Matt Coughlan, owner of Maine-based Recon Trail Design, and in partnership with the Conservancy. The crews also installed two series of tree stumps for children to play on and smaller dirt paths branching off the main trail to further explore the woods.

The gravel section of the path is passable in a wheelchair, and future improvements will make the trail universally accessible from end to end. Right now, with a little help on and off the boardwalk, a stroller can be pushed the full distance.

The center's teachers and kids have already been out there many times. They are eager to visit the nature park over and over again — whether running along the path, collecting seed pods, or looking for animal tracks. It's a place that invites the freedom to explore.



Monica Poole

From Alstead to the Atlantic

Expanding conservation in the Lake Warren watershed

Only a few miles long, Hale Brook is a major source of water for Lake Warren, which then drains to the Cold River and on to the Connecticut River. The rain that falls on Ann De Lancey's property in Alstead finds its way to the Atlantic via these rivers and Long Island Sound.

This is the sort of thinking that is needed in watershed conservation — protecting not just the immediate shoreline of a lake or pond, but also the brooks and wetlands, woodlands and fields upstream.

Ann De Lancey understands this. It's why she recently purchased a 5.6-acre lot and worked with the Monadnock Conservancy to conserve it, adding to an existing 54.7-acre conservation easement that she and her late husband donated in 2009.

"In general, anytime we can expand our existing conservation land, it's worth doing. This small lot is very developable and has frontage not only on Hale Brook, but also on a small tributary of Hale Brook," said Anne McBride, land protection director for the Conservancy. "By conserving this land, we are ensuring a buffer for these waterways and, therefore, Lake Warren."

Buffers preserve wildlife habitat. They help slow the movement of stormwater runoff, reducing the erosion of soil and lessening the impacts of downstream floods. If land use along a stream were to change significantly, the benefits buffers provide could be lost. Conserving the land, then, ensures that Hale Brook stays healthy and contributes to the water quality of Lake Warren, the Cold and Connecticut rivers, and even Long Island Sound.

Hale Brook, Alstead



A Leader in Conservation

Award recipient treats this region as his home

Ben Haubrich's dedication to conservation and caring for his community extends well beyond the Conservancy. "Ben's held just about every volunteer position you can for a land trust," said Alex Metzger, stewardship director for the Monadnock Conservancy.

A resident of Frankestown, Ben volunteers with the Monadnock Conservancy, the Piscataquog Land Conservancy, the Harris Center for Conservation Education, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, the Frankestown Conservation Commission, the Frankestown Land Trust, and the New Hampshire Coverts program.

He seems to be everywhere and working with everyone — chairing committees, leading field trips, organizing people, and helping in any way he can.

Ben received the Abe Wolfe Land Protection Award. The award, which is not given annually, is presented to an individual, group, or organization that has shown outstanding leadership in land protection in the Monadnock region.

"He doesn't just do the work and go home. You can tell that this region is his home, and that's how he treats it," Metzger concluded.



Katrina Farmer

Ben Haubrich, former manager at Monadnock State Park, shows off his award, a framed photo of Mount Monadnock.

2021 Volunteer of the Year

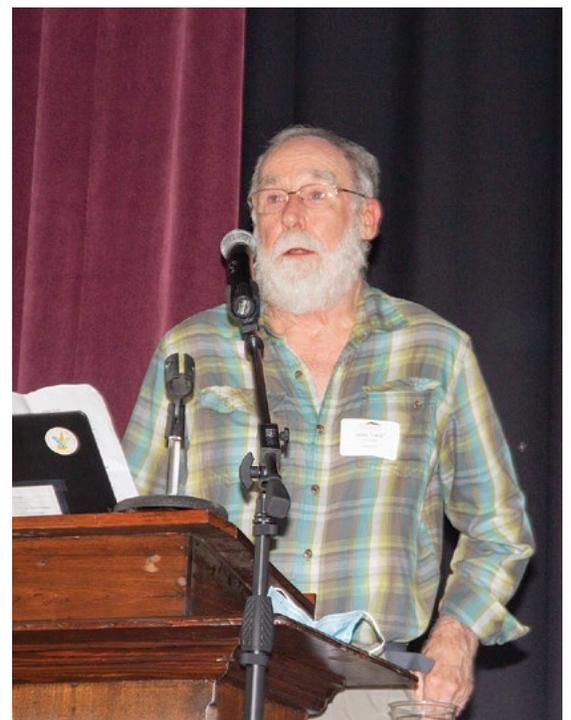
He talks the talk, and walks the walk

John "Jack" Kondos of Spofford was named the 2021 Volunteer of the Year, an award presented annually to an individual for outstanding volunteer service to the Monadnock Conservancy.

Jack is passionate about solar energy, climate change, and land conservation, and he has been a steady, dependable volunteer for the Conservancy since 2006. First, as a land steward, he visits three to five conserved properties each year to document any natural or man-made changes in the land. He also helps with trail building and maintenance.

"We are fortunate to have Jack contributing his time and talents to the Monadnock region's environment," said Richard Pendleton, the Conservancy's stewardship coordinator, as he announced the award at the 32nd Annual Celebration held in mid-September.

"I am really honored and grateful for the opportunity to participate in the legacy of the Monadnock Conservancy's land conservation efforts," Jack responded.



Nathaniel Stout

John Kondos expresses his appreciation for being named 2021 Volunteer of the Year.

Shoring Up a Riverbank

Landowners collaborate on restoration

A section of the Cold River in Walpole, just above where it joins the Connecticut River, has been eroding severely ever since a 2005 flood destabilized its banks. With each storm, more and more of the prime farm soil on both sides, which are conserved properties, washes away downstream.

To restore the riverbanks and make the land more resilient to continued extreme weather driven by climate change, two landowners collaborated with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Monadnock Conservancy this summer.

A team of engineers and heavy equipment operators armored the riverbanks — not with giant boulders or riprap, but with the root balls of massive trees.

These masses will slow the river during floods, preventing erosion and allowing the riverbank to revegetate naturally. In time, the timber will decompose, but the new vegetation should hold the riverbank in place, protecting the soil and re-creating important riparian habitat. Bank edges support an entire web of organisms, from insects to amphibians, reptiles, and fish, and on up the food chain.



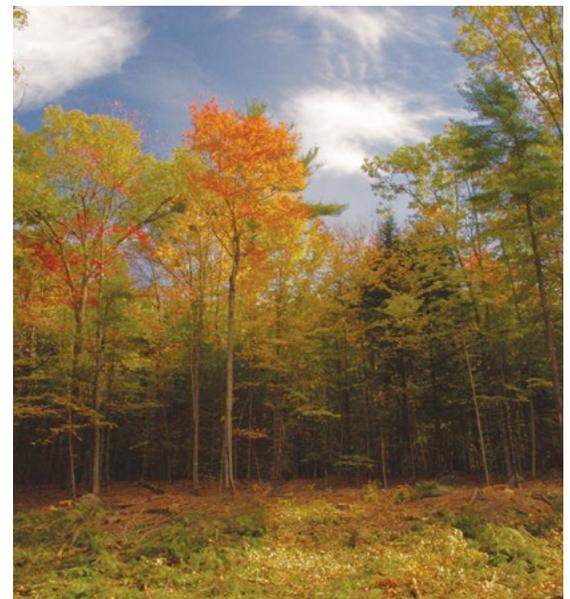
Rootwads are placed along the edges to direct the streamflow away, thus reducing erosion and naturally restoring the riverbanks.

Deer Population Drives Forest Dynamics

A research project with Antioch University New England has been underway at the Monadnock Conservancy's Maynard Forest in Gilsum for a few years. Eight one-acre forest openings were established in 2014 as research plots. Some plots were fenced and some left unfenced, commencing a long-term study of how the local deer population affects the regrowth of trees, especially red oaks, which need large, sunny openings to regenerate.

Student-intern Hannah Cuzner continued the study this summer, visiting the plots several times

each month. She took note of what tree species were growing as well as their size and condition. Fenced plots were flush with young trees. In the unfenced plots, by contrast, nearly all tree seedlings, especially oaks, had been eaten. The evidence is clear that the large deer population to the south, on City of Keene land where hunting is prohibited, is exerting heavy pressure on the Maynard Forest. "These forest openings should be great for red oaks, but the deer aren't giving them a chance," Hannah said. "It's both challenging and fascinating to balance wildlife's natural order with other goals for the forest."



Forest openings like this typically encourage the growth of red oak — but deer will eat the seedlings.

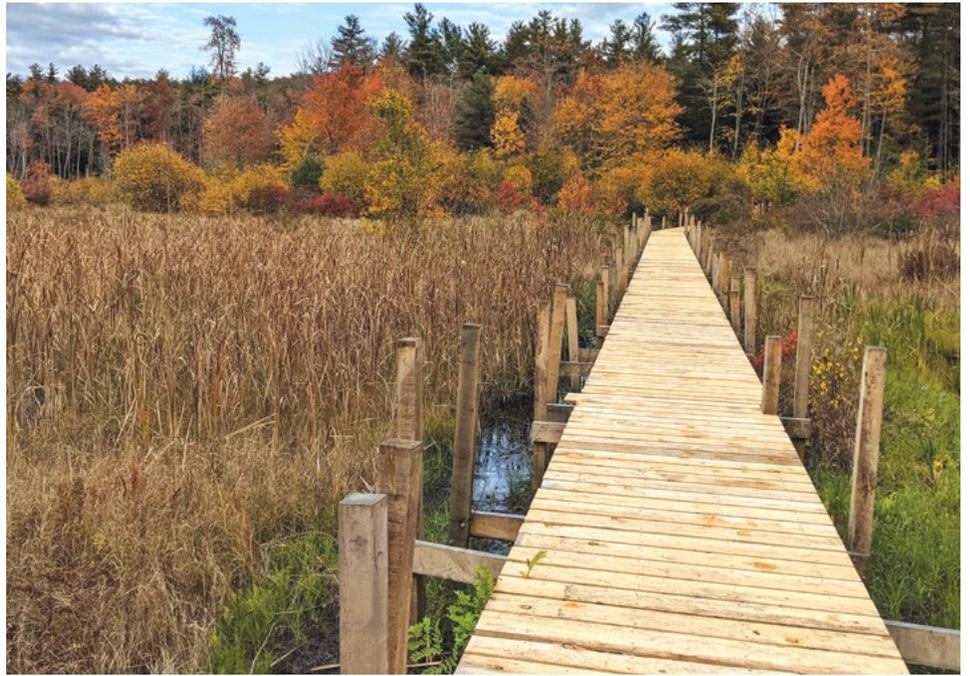
Would you like to protect forever the land we all love?

If you'd like to contribute to the annual fundraising campaign or become a member of the Monadnock Trailblazer monthly giving club, you can use the enclosed reply envelope or give online at [MonadnockConservancy.org](https://www.monadnockconservancy.org). Or, contact Lindsay Tafas, development director, at Lindsay@MonadnockConservancy.org or 603-357-0600, ext. 113. Thank you!



Better for Hiking, Better for the Land

The new boardwalk on the Cranberry Meadow Pond Trail off Old Street Road in Peterborough is officially open! We apologize that lumber shortages and delays pushed this project much, much later into prime hiking season than we anticipated. This boardwalk is built for decades of use. Being elevated, it's better for the wetlands. And, between seasonal high water and climate change increasing the intensity of rain storms, it's better for our feet, too.



Ryan Owens

Oak timbers anchor this new boardwalk for a longer lifespan.

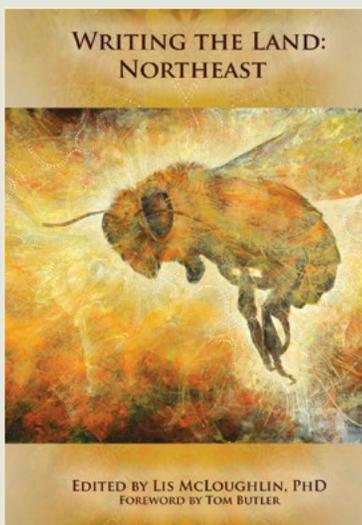
Welcome Kate

Office manager Nat Stout retired this summer and, in his stead, a new, full-time position was created. Please welcome our operations and development manager, Kate Sullivan. Kate is already at work processing your donations and providing critical support to programs and operations. She joins the Conservancy after serving as the volunteer manager at NEADS, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit organization that trains service dogs. Previously, she worked for nearly a decade in the forestry industry. She holds a bachelor's degree in forestry from the University of Vermont. In her spare time, Kate enjoys hiking, kayaking, skiing, and traveling.



Katrina Farmer

Kate Sullivan is the new operations and development manager.



Giftable Poetry Book Celebrates Nature

“Writing the Land: Northeast” is the result of a collaboration of 11 land trusts and 40 poets. In the Monadnock region, four local poets — Ann Day, Swift Corwin, Rodger Martin, and former state poet laureate Alice Fogel — each visited one of four properties owned by the Conservancy and wrote poems inspired by these protected lands. The anthology is a great gift idea (\$25, including shipping), and, with its publication in November, it is perfectly timed for the holiday season. Order your copy today! Please contact Kate Sullivan, operations and development manager, at Kate@MonadnockConservancy.org or 603-357-0600, ext. 101.

Welcome New Supporters!

Donors are the backbone of conservation in the region

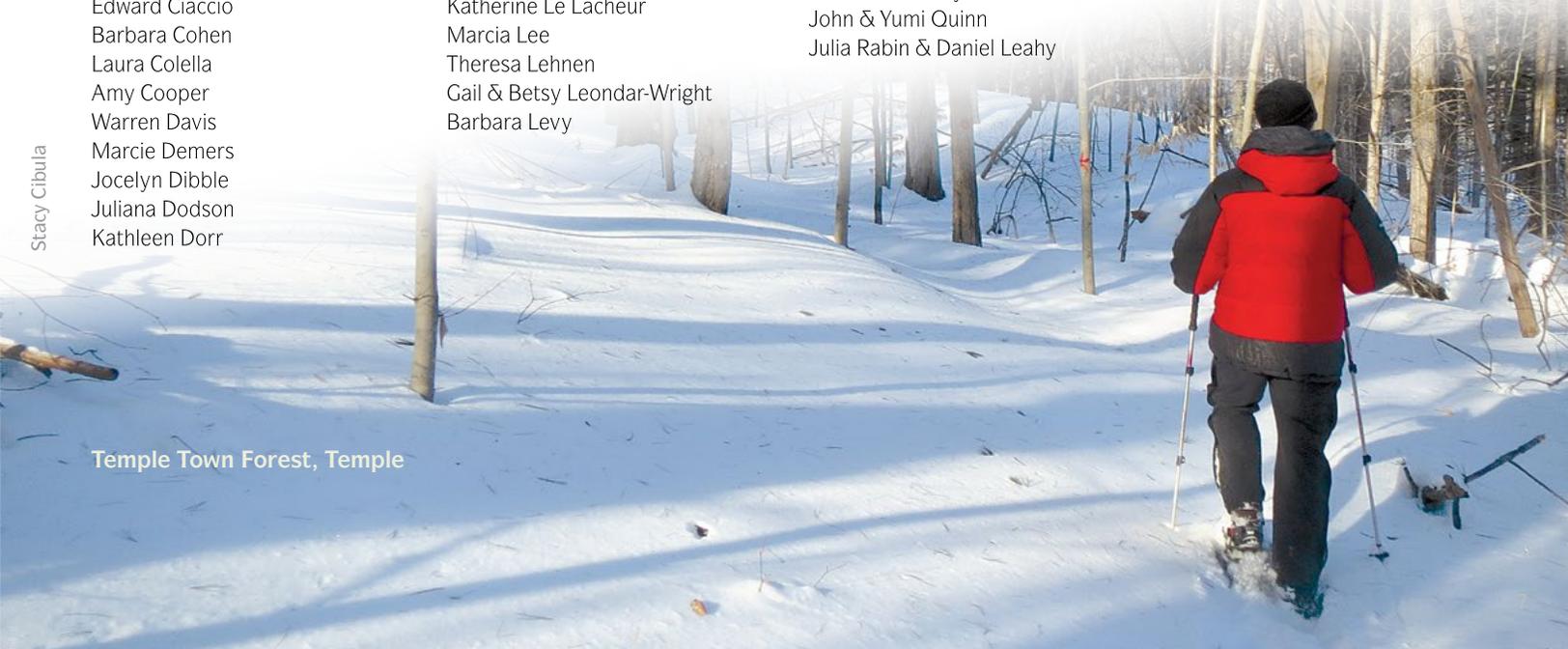
For more than 30 years, people like you have supported land, water, and wildlife conservation in the Monadnock region. Protecting the precious outdoor places we love takes an entire community, and we couldn't be more grateful to the first-time donors listed here who join our loyal supporters in extending the benefits of nature for all to enjoy.

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“Children, nature, and community
all coming together.
I am so excited for the future.”

– Roberta Royce, executive director,
Winchester Learning Center

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