



Together, protecting forever
the land we love

Newsletter

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

Watch it Grow



Watch it grow

From gardens to grandchildren, life is sweeter when we help things grow.

There is a special joy that comes only from creating nurturing conditions and working to see something thrive. It takes passion, dedication, and a belief that the actions we take today will seed the ground for a beautiful, verdant, and healthy tomorrow. At the Monadnock Conservancy, growth has been on our mind. With the demand for conservation at an all-time high, we are committed to ensuring that we can meet this demand while continuing to steward the land already in our care. We often say land is “conserved forever,” and we intend to deliver on that promise.

In the next year, we will be unveiling our plans for the future of the organization. Through strategic analysis, allocation, and expansion of resources, we will be able to conserve more land and provide more opportunities for people to engage with nature. Thank you for supporting us in this work. We are honored to serve a community that loves the land and believes that future generations deserve to experience the beauty and bounty of the Monadnock region.



Just one example of the Monadnock Region's beautiful flora and fauna.

The best part of the job

Our Stewardship team has a big job, but the work does come with its perks, like being able to observe some of the region's most beautiful and rare flora and fauna. Many of these finds are very special indeed. Stewardship Coordinator Richard Pendleton spotted a mature American chestnut tree, an unusual find due to an imported fungal blight that killed most chestnut

trees in North America a century ago. Young trees can still be found, but they rarely survive to grow as big as this one! Rarer still was the nesting bald eagle our team spotted on one of the properties we steward. And some finds are as strange as they are rare, like this white pine tree that has seemingly defied gravity to remain standing.



A rare adult American chestnut tree, spotted on conserved land.



A nesting bald eagle sits high on a property we steward.



Broken trunk? No problem for the 'impossible pine!'

Wetlands & natural splendor

216 acres conserved in Francestown

Diane Schott was one of the Conservancy's earliest champions, serving multiple terms on the board of trustees, including as president. Before she and her husband, John, passed away, the Schotts made plans to establish upon their deaths a forest preserve in memory of their son who died in 2010. Now, we are truly honored to have become the owners and stewards of the Kermit A. Schott Forest Preserve, and we are grateful to Diane and John's children for working with us to make their parents' wish a reality.

The preserve consists of 216 acres along the northern boundary of Francestown, on the eastern

edge of the Monadnock region. With 1,400 feet of shoreline on scenic Shattuck Pond—the last remaining unprotected corner of the pond—and 45 acres of wetlands, water is the star of the Schott Preserve. Also significant is the fact that it connects to and enlarges a 1,000-acre block of previously conserved land, and nearly the entire property is classified as top-tier wildlife habitat by the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.

Conservation can be many things at once—in this case, a way of both honoring family and leaving a legacy for future generations.

Wetlands are one of the many vital natural resources protected on the Kermit A Schott Forest Preserve



A river runs through it

185 acres conserved in Gilsum

Is there anything more important than the water we drink? We don't think so, which is why we are so happy to have accepted a conservation easement on 185 acres in Gilsum. The property, now protected by the Granucci & Aarons Conservation Easement, sits east of Surry Mountain and features a half mile of frontage on both the Ashuelot River and Hammond Brook and nearly 12,000 feet of smaller streams that feed them.

Granucci & Aarons expands and enhances a 3,540-acre contiguous block of conserved land, which includes the French-Harris Memorial Forest, owned by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests; Surry Mountain Lake, owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Surry Mountain Preserve, owned by the Nature Conservancy; and four other properties on which we hold conservation easements. Wildlife, like us, needs connected and conserved land to adapt to climate change. Thank you to Peter Granucci and Paula Aarons for working with us to conserve this spectacular place, and to all the supporters who help fund our work.

"Working with the Monadnock Conservancy was a very rewarding experience. In this world where space for nature, in all its wild forms, is shrinking by the hour, we knew we wanted to place our land into a conservation easement but had no idea how to start, what questions to ask, or what was involved. The Monadnock Conservancy made it understandable and doable...This world needs to be loved; this natural, wild space needs to be given the respectful allowance it needs to flourish. Putting our land in easement abutting so much other preserved land does that - it's the way we felt we could truly do something to help that mattered." – Paula Aarons

**Funding for the project was provided by the Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership, a public/private effort to protect the Monadnock Highlands of western New Hampshire and north central Massachusetts. To learn more, visit www.q2cpartnership.org.*

Additional support made possible by a grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's MCF Conservation Assistance Fund.



A half-mile of frontage on the Ashuelot River is now conserved forever in Gilsum.

Flying high

92 acres conserved in Peterborough

Some great news out of Peterborough –

The Conservancy has accepted the donation of a conservation easement on 92 acres of forest and wetlands! Thanks to Peter and Suzanne Read for donating this easement, which adds the land to a block of previously conserved land totaling 399 acres. Large, contiguous blocks of conserved land are especially valuable for carbon storage and for enabling wildlife to adapt to climate change.

Our staff has observed as many as nine active great blue heron nests on the property (look at the picture to your right), proof positive that our feathered friends will appreciate this news as much as you do.



A heron takes flight over 92 acres of conserved forest and wetland in Peterborough.

Volunteering for impact

If you like working outdoors and getting your hands dirty, volunteering is a great way to support the Conservancy. Volunteers help us make vital improvements to our trails and maintain the thousands of acres we own and manage across the region. In early March, we were joined by employees of M&T Bank, who donated 25 hours to clear vegetation around research plots, build trails to connect the plots, and prune trees at the Maynard Forest in Gilsum.

We are indebted to all the enthusiastic volunteers who help us monitor conserved land and improve the forest for wildlife habitat and recreation, but we could use even more help with land and trail management activities. If you would like to volunteer, please email Janine Marr, Land & Recreation Manager (janine@monadnockconservancy.org) or Kate Sullivan, Operations & Development Manager (kate@monadnockconservancy.org), or call them at 603-357-0600.



M&T Bank volunteers donated 25 hours to maintaining the Maynard Forest in Gilsum.

Here's to an eventful 2024!

We are committed to connecting people to the land, and events are one of the ways we do so. Monadnock Conservancy events can be pure fun, inspirational, educational, or all the above. 2024 is already off to a great start. We began in February with our Heart Hike, a fun way to celebrate Valentine's Day while getting out on the trail. Each year, we hide 22 wooden hearts on the Gramwick Trail in Jaffrey. Participants who find all the hearts and tag us on social media win some awesome Conservancy merch. Congratulations to the winners and thank you to everyone who took the opportunity to get out on the land in the dead of winter.

In March, we presented our ninth annual Stories About This Place at the Peterborough Town House. It was an amazing night, with record turnout and excellent storytellers. We were honored to have NHPBS host and author Rebecca Rule, local novelist Ernest Hebert, local farmer Tyler Rich, and friends of the Conservancy Bob Brown and Juliana Stevens. Each speaker brought a unique and entertaining perspective to living and working in the Monadnock region. If you missed it or would like to watch the program again, visit our YouTube channel through our website.

Also in March, we had our first ever Bears and Beers Trivia night at Branch & Blade Brewing in Keene. Ten teams packed the room, facing off in a quiz about nature, wildlife, and conservation in the Monadnock region.

More events are coming soon. This summer, we will lead a yoga session at one of our conserved properties; stay tuned for details. In June, we will launch our Forest Stewardship Summer Series in partnership with the Cheshire County Conservation District (CCCD), Distant Hill Gardens, and UNH Cooperative Extension. The first two of these learning events, which are for landowners or anyone who wants to know more about managing a forest, will take place on June 4th and June 26th. To register, visit our website under "Upcoming Events."

Rounding out the year, on October 5th we will once again hold our Annual Celebration and invite the whole community to enjoy a day of education and fun in Keene's Ashuelot River Park. This will be a very special year for us, our 35th. Stay tuned for more details, and we hope to see you at one or more events this year.



Local farmer Tyler Rich of Partners' Gardens presents at our storytelling event about his journey from acting in Chicago to farming in New Hampshire.



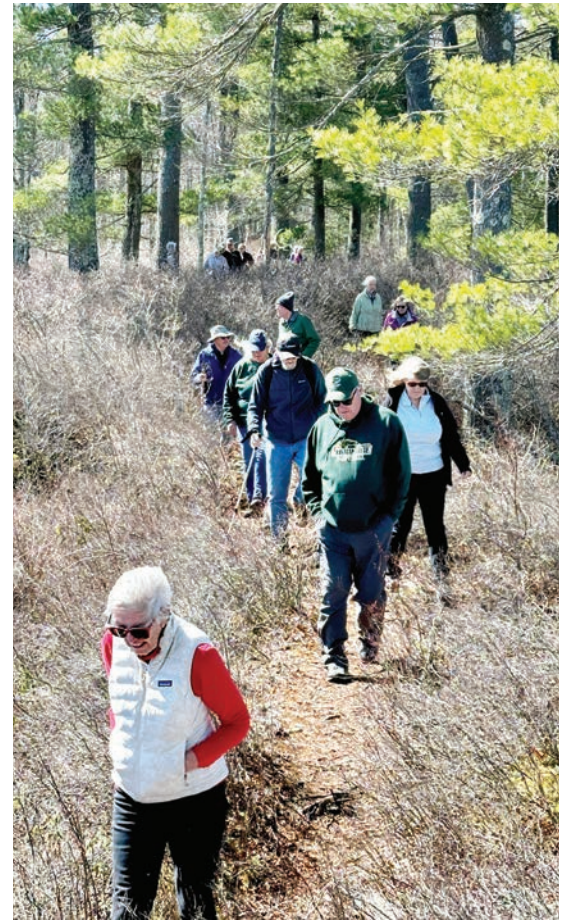
A packed house at our first ever Bears and Beers trivia night!



One of the 22 hearts we hid on the Gramwick Trail.

Cheshire Walkers

The Cheshire Walkers, our walking group for seniors or anyone who prefers a slower pace, is back for 2024. The spring season was another wonderful opportunity to introduce people to some of the most beautiful places in the region through fun, safe, and healthy outdoor recreation. This spring, 11 walks led by staff members and other Conservancy friends visited many cool properties, and participants even learned local secrets, like how to tip the famous Tippin' Rock in Swanzey! The Cheshire Walkers will return for the fall season, so watch our website and social media channels for more information.



The Cheshire Walkers out and about in Fitzwilliam.

Speaking for the land in Washington, D.C.

In mid-April, Executive Director Ryan Owens once again made his yearly trip to Washington, D.C. for Advocacy Days, convened by the Land Trust Alliance, an umbrella organization that helps land trusts advocate for our priorities at the highest levels of government. This year brought over 120 land trust staff, board members, and volunteers from more than 30 states to Capitol Hill to discuss conservation legislation and educate their Congresspersons on the critical role of private lands conservation. A priority message this year was passing a new Farm Bill soon and with robust conservation funding.

Although nothing is more important than the work we do locally, it's also important for us to have open lines of communication with policymakers. Thank you to the Land Trust Alliance for leading the charge!



Over 120 land trust professionals went to Washington, D.C. for Advocacy Days.



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Founded in 1989, the Monadnock Conservancy is a nonprofit land trust working with you and your neighbors in 39 towns throughout the Monadnock region to protect the land and water of southwestern New Hampshire.



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Our organization would not exist without your support. Below are new donors from the past year, we thank them, and you, for the generosity that protects and maintains this land that we love.

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