Your Home in the Valley

What does “home” mean to you? Like me, it probably means much more than just the roof over your head. It’s the people you love and see every day, it’s the community you share, it’s the familiar and beloved landscape that nourishes and sustains your daily life. Whether you live down in the rich farmland of Hadley, or up in the forested hills of Leverett, or along the Norwottuck Rail-Trail in downtown Northampton, the Pioneer Valley is the place we all are fortunate to call home.

For more than four decades, the love of the Valley from people like you has given Kestrel Land Trust the inspiration and ability to protect the special places you care about. In these pages, you’ll see how valuable your support has been over the past year and half, and how much more that support will do for future generations.

Because when we conserve the land, we are also providing opportunities for a healthier lifestyle, a stronger connection to nature, a richer education, and a deeper relationship with the wildlife that also call this region home.

I hope the highlights that follow will remind you of what you love about the Valley.

Kristin DeBoer, Executive Director

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(413) 549-1097
info@kestreltrust.org
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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE VALLEY

JULY 2013 – DECEMBER 2014

Jonathan and Page Brady and their sons Nate enjoyed the 2-mile walk through Hadley farmland during the 5K for Farmland in October 2013. Page says, “I plan for the whole family to be back at it next year, enjoying the scenery and working to protect it!” See more on Facebook >

“THERE’S A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING
AND EVERYTHING IS ITS PLACE.”
– HADLEY WALTZING MAMMAL

National Recognition Reflects Local Commitment

The trust that landowners and communities have placed in Kestrel for decades is never taken lightly. That’s why after a rigorous application and review process, Kestrel was honored to have earned its seal of excellence as a nationally accredited land trust from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission in December 2013. Becoming accredited made Kestrel a stronger organization that’s prepared to serve the communities in our region reliably and ethically, even as future generations take the reins.

Cynthia Phelps and her husband Gary recently worked with Kestrel to conserve their family’s land on the Mount Holyoke Range. “We decided to conserve our land because we didn’t want to see it sprout housing developments. As we worked with Kestrel, we thought they were a well-run and trustworthy organization. This national recognition is well deserved, and proves what we already believed was true.”

Read More about the Gallup-Phelps Family Forest project on page 6.

Kestrel Land Trust

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Kristin DeBoer, Executive Director
Benjamin Wright, Land Conservation Specialist (2013-14)
Monica Crow, Development Director
Kari Blood, Outreach Specialist
Christine Volonte, Stewardship Manager
Paul Beaulieu, Staff (2011-14)
Laurie Sanders, Development Director
Christine Volonte, Stewardship Manager
Julie Shively, Bookkeeper

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Ralph S. Tate, Treasurer
James E. Scott (1980-2014)
Paul Beaulieu (2011-14)

2015 New Staff: Kat Deely, Mark Wamsley

2015 New Trustees: Joshua Epstein,
Marvin Moriarty, Joan Robb

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Marvin Moriarty, Joan Robb

ATIONALLY RECOGNIZED WITH LOCAL COMMITMENT

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Read More about the Gallup-Phelps Family Forest project on page 6.
SPECIAL PLACES
you helped conserve

Find more details in our interactive online version of this publication!
An Escape to the Woods

When Cynthia Gallup Phelps was a child, she rode her horse on the land her grandfather bought in 1939 on the southern slope of the Mount Holyoke Range in Granby. Her father and grandfather built the Rest a Lot Lodge where “city folk” could escape to the woods and reconnect with the outdoors—she and her husband Gary still run it as a bed-and-breakfast today. And, the family’s land provided hiking and camping adventures for the boys in the local Boy Scout troop her father founded.

The family loved their land, and shared the opportunity to enjoy it with others. Cynthia and her husband Gary knew that opportunity could be lost in the future when they are no longer able to care for the land. So, their family chose to conserve 186 acres as the Gallup-Phelps Family Forest, ensuring it will be there for families to share forever.

SAVING THE RANGE FOR TODAY & TOMORROW

The Phelps’ decision to conserve their land is part of a much larger effort to protect thousands of acres of at-risk land on the Mount Holyoke and Mount Tom Ranges for recreation and wildlife. In 2014, Kestrel and our trusted state and local partners (MA Department of Conservation & Recreation, and the Towns of Amherst, Granby, Hadley, South Hadley) helped the Phelps and several other landowners conserve a total of 522 acres in Granby, Hadley, and South Hadley.

Much of these lands on the Range provide gorgeous views from the New England National Scenic Trail that runs for 215 miles from northern Massachusetts to the Long Island Sound in Connecticut. Conserving these lands not only provides recreational opportunities for today, but future generations of people and wildlife will reap the benefits as well. Read More >

“Driving back from NYC, I feel my heart swell at my first sighting of the Holyoke Range. The mountains are glowing purple from the setting sun, capped by pink clouds. We drive past fields stretching all the way to the mountains, and then forests, amaze to my home. After only a few days away, I am grateful for this amazing place I live in, and for all those whose efforts and love protect it for generations to come.”

SARA EINLOFF ACKER, PELHAM

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COMING TO VISIT

Mt. Holyoke Range, North Visiting Center
1500 West Street, Amherst, MA
> mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/parks/trails/holyoke.pdf

FIND OUT MORE

New England National Scenic Trail
Work days, Events, Artists on the trail
> newenglandtrail.org

COURTESY OF THE DAILY HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE

CARLOS SALAS

DONATE
A Classroom That Expands the Mind While Soothing the Spirit

It’s a chilly spring day, but Elizabeth Besozzi, a junior at Smith College, is happy to be out in the woods instead of being confined to a classroom. She is surveying the forest floor for red-backed salamanders as part of her research at the MacLeish Field Station in West Whately. The Field Station, owned by Smith College, holds nearly 200 acres of forests and meadows, with stunning hilltown views—and it will now remain that way forever.

"The Field Station has provided me with incredible access to a variety of unique study locations and tools," Elizabeth says. "It’s a hands-on, collaborative learning space that is integral to my research." She’s certainly not alone in her appreciation of this unique outdoor campus. Ellen Sulser is finishing her first year at Smith, and she already sees the Field Station as an excellent resource. "Not only does it serve as an extension of our liberal arts curriculum, but it also serves as a retreat for students and faculty, with miles of beautiful trails and scenic overlooks."

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH THE LAND

Emmett Wald, a senior, has been guiding tours and providing natural history lessons at the Field Station for several years. "I believe strongly in the human connection to nature, and that interpreting places that humans are drawn to is a vital way to get them to care about taking care of our planet." On a personal level, she says, "I love having a space out in nature where I can go to counterbalance the stress of academic life."

Now that the land is permanently protected with a Conservation Restriction donated by Smith College, Elizabeth is glad that future students will have the same opportunities for exploration, relaxation, and inspiration. "I am thrilled that students will be able to take advantage of the resources MacLeish has to offer, fostering a love of nature for generations to come."

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BRINGING THE FARM TO THE COMMUNITY

The new Fort River Farm Conservation Area in Amherst will soon be growing not only healthy food to feed families in need, but also farm-savvy folks of all ages. Now that the 19-acre farm is protected by the Town and Kestrel, the community group Grow Food Amherst (GFA) is partnering with the town to create a public gardening space, an incubator farm, and a wildlife preserve and nature trail. As an outdoor learning center, new farmers will learn the ins and outs of sustainable farming, while children from the abutting Fort River Elementary School will be able to walk over a footbridge to a living classroom. GFA is also working on plans for an educational pollinator garden for bee habitat, John Gerber, co-chair of GFA, says, "This will be a living, learning laboratory where people can practice farming and gardening, ecology, and—just as important—building our community."

FIND OUT MORE

Smith College MacLeish Field Station
Living Building, Student Research, Land History
> smith.edu/ceeds/macleish.php

YOU CAN HELP

Join Grow Food Amherst
Sustainability Workshops, Community Gardening
> growfoodamherst.org
Even the Largest Need Safe Passage

Imagine you are one of the largest land animals in North America. You carry around 1,000 pounds of body weight on your long, gangly legs—but still you’re good at navigating the tangled forest floor. Though you’re viewing the world from 6 feet up, you can’t see long distances very well. Instead, you focus close up, on fresh, young leaves, tree buds, twigs, and aquatic plants. You’ll need to eat 40 to 60 pounds of these a day, so to find enough to eat, you may have to roam a large area, especially in winter.

On this day, you’ve walked for hours, then suddenly there’s no more trees, no more food: just a wide-open, hard surface and impassable structures beyond. Despite being the biggest animal around, this is a treacherous situation.

CONNECTING LARGE LANDSCAPES

Moose are not the only animals that face this challenge: all types of animals from bears and bobcats to smaller creatures like porcupines and otters face it too, whether they’re looking for food or a safe place to rear their young. That’s why protecting large, wild areas—as well as the undeveloped corridors of land that connect them—is so vital.

The Town of Belchertown, partnering with Kestrel, recently added 90 acres of unbroken upland forest to the Jabish Brook Conservation Area. Just west of the Quabbin Reservoir, this rolling terrain is part of a critical “wildlife highway” joining the protected forests surrounding the Quabbin to the wooded slopes of the Mount Holyoke Range.

Over the past 10 years, together we have protected more than 1,000 acres in this corridor, so animals like the moose will be able to find what they need to make a safe and healthy home for their next generation. Read More >
Universal Access to Unique Experiences

It's a bright, sunny late October day in the Valley: Perfect for an autumn stroll to see the colors changing in the trees and hear the twitter of birds preparing for their journey south. Until now, if you didn’t have the ability to walk or to see, it would be impossible to enjoy this experience that many of us take for granted.

But, at the official opening of the Fort River Trail, dozens of people of all ages in wheelchairs, with canes, or just the supportive arm of a friend set off to explore the woods, meadows, and Fort River in the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge. The many smiles and wide eyes show how much it means to them to have the freedom to venture out on this universally accessible trail close to home.

FREEDOM FOR THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

The 1.2-mile path provides a firm gravel surface for wheelchairs with a low, wooden border on either side so that the visually impaired can navigate with a cane. Wooden boardwalks traverse wetland areas and benches provide scenic places to rest surrounded by nature.

The project was the brain-child of Andrew French, project leader of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s Conte Refuge, who notes that though our region has many recreational trails, very few are universally accessible. Having spent 8 months in a wheelchair after an accident many years ago, he understands the need for them personally.

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The majority of the trail is on a parcel of land that Kestrel secured for the Refuge. This was part of the 300 acres of land purchased for the Refuge in Hadley over the last decade in partnership with Trust for Public Land. “They acquired the property when we were unable to,” French said. “It would not have happened if it weren’t for Kestrel Land Trust.”

The old. Rock Farm in South Amherst may have been a small piece of land, but it is found big champions in its neighborhood. For nearly a decade, this meadowland bordering the Norwottuck Rail Trail was slated for intensive condominium development. The property went into bank foreclosure before any building was completed, and a neighborhood group—the South Amherst Conservation Association—jumped in the opportunity to change its future.

They enlisted help from Kestrel, the Town of Amherst, and Department of Conservation & Recreation to conserve the land as part of the greenway surrounding the trail, which is enjoyed by thousands of people each year for biking and walking. Inspired by its scenic view of the Mount Holyoke Range and the Pelham Hills, and its excellent bird habitat, community members stepped up and donated significant funds to help acquire the purchase of the land as a town conservation area. Thanks to the dedicated community support, the Norwottuck Rail Trail will remain a unique place to enjoy the peace and tranquility of our rural Valley.

“My love of the outdoors initially motivated me to volunteer with Kestrel. I felt I could combine being outdoors with doing something positive and productive for the community. Only after volunteering did I realize what an impact Kestrel continues to make in the Valley, helping to create a better place for people and wildlife.”

MARY LOU SPLAIN
STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEER

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DONATE

DONATE
Volunteer Passion Makes “Forever” Possible

Janet Dakin loved animals and the land in the Valley that wildlife needed to survive. Though the town of Amherst was starting to protect some special places in the 1960s, increasingly there were more it couldn’t save. The land needed her help. So Janet and her husband Toby founded the Kestrel Trust in 1970, and there began a legacy of volunteering that would shape the future of their home.

Passionate volunteers have been the driving force behind Kestrel Land Trust for more than 40 years. Today Kestrel has a small staff, but people who are willing to give their time are essential to our work. In fact, Kestrel has more volunteers now than ever before. Throughout 2014, 120 volunteers gave 824 hours of their time to the land—equal to more than 100 full-time workdays! Almost 90% of Kestrel’s conserved lands were monitored by volunteers: Collectively, they visited nearly 2,500 acres of land to ensure that it’s being enjoyed and not harmed.

Working Together

As more land is permanently conserved, which is a commitment to stewarding that land forever, the need for more people to help care for it will continue to grow. To address that need, a new volunteer group has begun to tackle jobs such as removing litter, maintaining trails, and controlling invasive plants. These volunteers are dedicated to improving wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities for everyone in our communities.

Looking forward, this group has high aspirations. “Ultimately, we’d like to foster a region-wide group of powerhouse volunteers who collaborate to accomplish stewardship goals across the Valley,” said Chris Volonte, Stewardship Manager. “Many groups in the area are working toward similar goals of trail maintenance and habitat improvement, so it makes sense to pool our resources and work together to get things done.” To make that happen, we are training volunteers, organizing work parties, and providing opportunities to spend time in beautiful natural areas with others who are committed to shaping the Valley’s future together.

SAVING KESTREL’S NAMESAKE

It’s not easy being North America’s smallest falcon. You’re tiny enough to be eaten by larger raptors. Sometimes, when you visit your favorite feeding grounds, you find that buildings have replaced the grasslands that used to provide tasty prey. The American kestrel’s population is in decline in our region, in part due to a loss of nesting sites. The Kestrel Nest Box project has been an exciting effort to help boost their chances of adding to the next generation. With the help of volunteers, 15 nest boxes have been built and installed around the Valley since 2012. In 2014, three of those boxes provided safe homes for 10 feisty baby kestrels. What’s more, because of skilled volunteers willing to watch and report on activity at all the boxes, valuable information is being shared with the Massachusetts State Ornithologist to add to his statewide study, which aims to learn more about how to save Kestrel Land Trust’s namesake.

“Volunteering for Kestrel over the years has made me much closer to my community, allowing me to establish deeper relationships with local landscapes, people, and wildlife. The folk at Kestrel are devoted to their mission of protecting beautiful, natural spaces in our area, and as a volunteer, I’m proud that I’m able to contribute to this mission.”

CATHY CASHMAN,
STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH VOLUNTEER

“We are so grateful to our volunteers who dedicate their time, talent, and effort to help shape the Valley,” said Renee Theberge, President. “In 2014, we had 30% more volunteers! Of the 73 properties we monitored, our volunteers visited the vast majority!”

Who got it done?

Of the 73 properties we monitored, our volunteers had the usual majority! (a total of 2,775 acres)

Your time is a gift!

The total number of hours volunteered also increased significantly!

2013 2014

VOLUNTEERS

824

361

BOARD

10

STAFF

9

Our Volunteer Community Keeps Growing!

Who got it done?

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2013 2014

VOLUNTEERS

824

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BOARD

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STAFF

9

Our Volunteer Community Keeps Growing!

0

DONATE

0
Getting closer to nature through photography with Youth Action Coalition
Amherst

Celebrating land and life at the 5K for Farmland & Farmers' Market Festival
Hadley

“Keeping land as land—whether forest, wetland, or field—is essential. Wishing won’t make it happen; we have to invest in it. Kestrel does that where I live, so supporting Kestrel is something I can do and see the results. Plus they sponsor wonderful outings to explore and learn about the places we’ve collectively preserved.”
ELISA CAMPBELL, AMHERST

“UMass Outing Club slogging through spring’s high waters near the Connecticut River Oxbow
Leamington

“‘The Valley is my home, and I’ve supported Kestrel for many years because I know they are always working to save the places that matter to me.’
ANNE CANN, AMHERST

The Valley is my home, and I’ve supported Kestrel for many years because I know they are always working to save the places that matter to me.”
ANNE CANN, AMHERST

Geologist Richard Little speaking for the rocks at Mt. Tom
Holyoke

“I never realized how ‘at home’ I felt in the Valley until I moved away! It’s truly a magical place and I’m so grateful to have had the opportunity to help protect this landscape.”
ALLY SULLIVAN
MASSCITY AMERICORPS VOLUNTEER

Donating to Kestrel helps you make a difference, every day. When you give to Kestrel, you’re supporting local conservation in the Connecticut Valley. You can help protect land and water, and keep it in the hands of the people who care most about it.

DONATE

‘I never realized how ‘at home’ I felt in the Valley until I moved away! It’s truly a magical place and I’m so grateful to have had the opportunity to help protect this landscape.’
ALLY SULLIVAN
MASSCITY AMERICORPS VOLUNTEER

DONATE
Combined Financial Overview for 2013 & 2014
We operate on a lean budget. More than 80% of our operating expenses are funded by individual donors, and more than 80% of those expenses go toward saving land, stewarding land, and building opportunities for people to connect with the land.

Every dollar you give is leveraged 10 times more as we partner with local, state, and federal agencies to attract public grants and investments. Over the past 2 years, your donation enabled the protection of more than 2,000 acres of forests, farmlands, and riverlands.

Your help is vital to the work of conserving the Valley we all love. Kestrel Land Trust would not be able to make a difference in the lives of people and wildlife without you there beside us.


Together We’re Conserving the Valley You Love
Whether you’re living in the Valley all your life or moved here to set down roots, the lands that surround you are your home. You care about the future of that land and you take action by supporting Kestrel’s work. But have you thought about how far the power of your support actually goes?

Far beyond your own backyard, you are ensuring that land throughout the Valley continues to grow fresh, local food; keep the water we drink clean and the air we breathe healthy; protect homes for animals and birds; and provide special places to explore, recharge, and inspire you.

Thank you for helping make it all possible!

Believe in the power of your support

“Public and Private Funds Raised for Protection of 2,032 Acres
Conservation, Stewardship & Community
Fundraising & Administrative
Occupancy

EXPENSES
Public and Private Funds Raised on Protection of 5,203 Acres
Unrestricted Gifts & Grants
Restricted Grants & Other Income
Events

INCOME

$5,543,576 $436,289 $169,414 $42,556
$436,289 $42,556
$5,543,576 $436,289 $169,414 $42,556
$623,060 $5,543,576
$5,543,576 $623,060
$5,543,576 $623,060
$623,060
$5,543,576 $623,060
$5,543,576 $623,060

$6,191,835

Total income:

$6,282,406

Total expenses:

88%

90%

7%

3%

14%

3%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%

1%
“Painting outdoors has provided me some of the happiest moments of my life as an artist. Not only am I surrounded then by my subject, but I can actually feel its presence—the sun on my arms, the breeze at my back, the temperature of the air. These are the qualities that I try to make one feel in my paintings.

Sometimes we look at Nature and we are fascinated to see how things move and change. However, there are other times when we look, and we wish that things could stay just as they are forever. Those are the moments that I know I have to make a painting.”

LEWIS BRYDEN

The cover painting, “Valley Prospect,” was created by local artist and Kestrel supporter Lewis Bryden who has lived in the Pioneer Valley for 25 years.

Lewis is represented locally by R. Michelson Gallery See more of his work online at LewisBryden.com