

YOUR VALLEY

CONSERVE | CARE | CONNECT

SPRING 2020



**KESTREL
LAND TRUST**

*WHAT'S INSIDE: Kestrel Founder's Family Forest Conserved for All
Neighbors Rally to Create Whately Center Woods
How to Care for Each Other & the Land*



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Land Matters Now More Than Ever

SPRING HAS BEGUN ON SCHEDULE: the birds are singing and the vernal pools are teeming with life. Meanwhile, in the human realm, things are much less predictable. The pandemic has everyone trying to make the best of a difficult time. Families are homeschooling kids indoors. Elders are warned to stay at home. Many working people are trying to do their jobs from their couches, while others are out on the front lines of the health crisis—and everyone is stressed. We all need some relief.



Fortunately, our Valley provides abundant opportunities to get outdoors and find something wonderful, like a wood frog or a trillium flower, or simply the feeling of the sun on your face. *(See some ideas of places to visit on page 6.)*

During this time of crisis, I take comfort in knowing that the Valley has natural lands all around us, sustaining us every day, and I hope you do too. These public conservation areas and trails are here for everyone because YOU have invested in protecting the Valley's land. You have made it possible for nature to be close to home for so many people.

Land and water are the foundation of our health and well-being. Conservation areas, parks, trails, and farms close to home matter more now than ever. Be assured that because of your support, we will continue to bring the benefits of nature to people, and to conserve the forests, farms, and trails that make the Valley a great place to be "home."

The land is here for you, and we are here for the land.

Kristin DeBoer, *Executive Director*



PHOTO BY ANNEMARIE GRANILLO

Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst in 1830. While she was a prolific poet, her work was not publicly recognized during her lifetime. She died in 1886, and the first volume of her work was published posthumously in 1890.

FROM THE HEART OF THE VALLEY

Hope is the thing with feathers

by Emily Dickinson

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,*

*And sweetest in the Gale is heard
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm.*

*I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest Sea;
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.*

Opening New Worlds Through Nature & Friendship

ON A NOVEMBER EVENING AT HOLYOKE HIGH SCHOOL Dean Campus, the hallways are empty, but the large training kitchen is humming. Students and their culinary arts teacher, Steve Kantrowitz, are busy preparing butternut squash empanadas, charred beet salsa, and apple buckle for a farm-to-table dinner for the community.

Many of these students are part of a new afterschool program called EAGLE Club created by Eagle Eye Institute in partnership with Kestrel, to connect Holyoke's urban youth with the natural world. On this night, they gathered with teachers, administrators, and the nonprofits' supporters around a locally sourced meal to raise awareness of the power of this program.

This club of 8 to 10 students—from 9th through 12th grade—meets after school twice a month and one Saturday each month to learn about environmental careers, stewarding the land, and how to feel comfortable out in nature. Last semester, a Holyoke



CONNECT

Freshmen Ariadna, Nesmarie, Katelyn shared what they enjoy about the EAGLE Club (Earth Advocates: Green Leaders for the Environment) at a fall harvest dinner at the high school.

"[In EAGLE Club] we make new friends and go outdoors to do hands-on activities. I like going outside and being away from technology. Being alone, you breathe in the air and feel complete."

– Ariadna, freshman at Holyoke High Dean Campus

Staying Connected

IN CHALLENGING TIMES LIKE WE'RE facing today, we are reminded how important community is to our individual lives. At the heart of our Valley's community is the land. It connects us all in so many ways, whether at a farmstand, a woodland trail, or a library's community room to learn about the natural world.

Connecting people to the land and to each other is vital, which is why Kestrel offers programs like monthly natural history walks, arts events, and informative presentations. During the current public health crisis, unfortunately we won't be able to offer you all the programs we had planned for this spring and summer.

Because community connection matters now more than ever, we're in the

process of creating virtual ways to help you connect to the land and to others. Stay tuned for details about these and other online opportunities:

🍃 Live webinar on "Climate Change and Your Community" from our public library series that began last fall.

🍃 Short videos on vernal pools and other topics from our "Learning with the Land" natural history walks.

🍃 New trail maps for lesser known conservation areas you can explore.

🍃 Weekly ideas for creative things to do outdoors—with physical distance!

resident shared her career as a municipal park and landscape architect, inviting students to "redesign" their school's grounds to better meet the needs of their community.

With U.S. Fish & Wildlife staff, club members wielded drills and hammers to construct bluebird nest boxes and barn swallow structures to be installed at the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge in Hadley. And in February, the Club visited Eagle Eye Institute's forest in Peru, MA, to strap on their first sets of snowshoes and explore with a wildlife tracking naturalist.

All of this is having an impact. At the dinner, four students spontaneously volunteered to share their thoughts with the audience. They each spoke of how in the short time they had been part of Eagle Club, the experience had already made them feel more confident as people, and more interested in being outdoors. It's an important step as we nurture a love of the land in our young people.



Join the Virtual Community

By email: kestreltrust.org/email-list-signup

On FaceBook: @KestrelTrust

On Instagram: @kestrel_land_trust

Online: kestreltrust.org

Kestrel Founder McClung's Family Forest Now Conserved for All

Robert M. McClung, one of the original Kestrel Trust

founders, had a deep love of animals beginning when he was a child collecting butterflies in the 1920s. By the time Bob and his wife, Gale, moved their family to Amherst in 1962, his skill as a writer, his training as a zoologist, and his passion for wildlife had merged into a successful career as children's book author and illustrator.

Two years later, Bob and Gale purchased 55 acres of forested land in neighboring Pelham. Bob would visit and explore his woodland after lunch every day with his dog, and regularly brought his sons, Tom and Bill, to play there as well.

Bill recalled that when he was a little older, at dinner his father would describe where he went that day, hand drawing maps to figure out where he had gone. "Since I have a good sense of direction, I would say 'Yes, Dad, this is where you were.' I've been out there all my life too."

Eventually, this land would become Bill's home, when his father deeded him 2 acres to build a house for his own family. Bill and his wife Emily have lived there for 34 years, raising their own children while enjoying and caring for the surrounding forest as his father had.

"Our daughter and her friends would spend hours out there, making little forts under the roots of fallen trees," Emily said.

In January, Bill and Emily contributed to the McClung legacy by conserving the

majority of their family's land as an addition to the Buffam Brook Community Forest created by the Town of Pelham in partnership with Kestrel. Nearly 40 acres off of Buffam Road are now permanently conserved thanks to the generous sale of the McClung's land to the Town at a sub-



Author Bob McClung walked his dog daily in the family forest that his son Bill has now permanently conserved in Pelham.

stantial discount. This land in the eastern Pelham Hills contains upland forests and a scenic, fast-flowing stretch of Buffam Brook, a headwater of the Fort River.

Family's Land Expands Buffam Brook Community Forest

With the addition of the McClung's land, the Community Forest now totals approximately 200 acres among several adjacent parcels, but it is also part of much larger

network of 3,400 acres of conserved land.

This extensive block of protected forest includes land set aside for safeguarding drinking water for Amherst, Pelham, Belchertown and Springfield, as well as other public and private conservation lands. Protection of this land also ensures that critical habitat will remain intact for a wide variety of wildlife, including black bear, bobcat, moose, and more. And, these interconnected forestlands provide an important north-south corridor for wildlife adapting their ranges to a changing climate.

The land will be managed as part of the larger Buffam Brook Community Forest, with a balance of sustainable forestry, wildlife habitat conservation, water resources conservation, and non-motorized public recreation. The area also allows for hunting and fishing. Hiking trails on the McClung parcel will be connected to other new and existing trails for public use. Public access to the property will be available from the new trailhead and parking area on North Valley Road, one of several public access projects Kestrel has managed in partnership with the Town.

The project was funded by a USDA/US Forest Service Community Forest Grant encouraging sustainable forest management, public education, and recreation, as well as the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' Conservation Land Tax Credit Program.

Neighbors Rally to Create Whately Woods

Properties like the Whately Center Woods aren't usually marked on maps, but local residents know them well. They are also growing increasingly concerned about the future of these "hidden gems."

Montserrat Archbald, who lives in Whately, has been enjoying this expansive woodland near her home for 25 years. "I discovered the trails not long after my family moved to Whately in 1994," she said. "I've taken a walk there almost every day since then. It's a very special place to me."

This 120-acre forest, owned by the Dauchy/Weinthal family, is only half a mile from Whately's historic town center. It provides neighbors with a network of trails on land with striking geography, sloping upward from the floor of the Connecticut River Valley into the foothills of the Berkshires. In a town with plentiful open space but lacking in public access to woodland trails, the Whately Woods has become a favorite community destination. Neighbors like Montserrat use it for hiking, trail running, skiing, snowshoeing, hunting, and snowmobiling.

The land is almost completely forested, with small streams, wetlands, and vernal pools scattered beneath the forest canopy. The diverse forest includes large mature trees that help to sequester carbon to combat climate change. Neighbors who visit the woods often see or hear wildlife, including black bears, coyotes, bobcats, porcupines, and ruffed grouse.

Community Support Is Critical

For generations, pockets of accessible, privately-owned forestland like this one have served as informal recreation areas for communities across western Massachusetts. But as these lands begin to pass from family ownership, there's no guarantee



Kestrel Board Chair Scott Jackson (right), a Whately resident, and Kristin DeBoer, Executive Director, with one of the many old trees in Whately Center Woods. Conserving this mature forest will help sequester carbon to fight climate change.

that the land will continue to be available to the community. That is the situation today for this forest in the center of Whately.

Montserrat said, **"I would be heartbroken if this land was logged or developed. Now that a parcel in the middle of this woods is changing hands and there's an opportunity to protect it, I will do anything I can to help."** Many people in her community share her feelings. Whately residents and friends are joining together to save this special place that offers fresh air and nature's healing powers, both of which are needed more than ever during this period of uncertainty.

Neighbors have rallied to support Kestrel's plan to acquire and permanently conserve this Whately Center Woods parcel to ensure that it remains accessible to the local community. As of early April, Whately neighbors had raised more than \$42,000 toward the \$65,000 that's needed to ensure that this "hidden gem" is protected forever for the benefit of the community.

Kestrel has secured a Massachusetts Landscape Partnership grant for this effort. The Whately Conservation Commission is recommending that residents support the project by voting to allocate Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to help fulfill the local funding match required by the state grant.

And, a generous donor has offered a 1:1 match for gifts to the Whately Center Woods project before the Town Meeting CPA vote, anticipated in early June.



A Song for the Woods

Montserrat Archbald, who has loved the Whately Center Woods for 25 years, wrote a song to encourage her neighbors to help save this special place.

"I'm always happy walking in the woods. I wrote 'In the Woods' from my own experience because I wanted to express how special it is to me.

Everything is drawn from real life, including bear and porcupine encounters, and the way a fox will poop on a rock in the middle of the trail!" **You can watch the video at kestreltrust.org/blog.**

Help Save the Whately Woods! Go to kestreltrust.org/give/one-time-gift and select Whately Center Woods as the designation.

Caring for Each Other and the Land



Picture yourself stepping outdoors after being cooped up inside. Chances are you feel more relaxed, energized, and happier. You know firsthand what research has been telling us for years: Being out in nature, even for just five minutes, is beneficial to our mental and physical health.

As the COVID-19 crisis has shuttered offices, stores, and other indoor public spaces, many people are getting outdoors around the region to escape the confines of their houses. Public conservation areas play an important role in providing access to this “essential service” provided by nature.

Many conservation areas and trails are now seeing more use than ever. While getting our dose of nature is crucial, when

we're outside we all must take steps to care for the health of others, and the land itself.

If you're getting outdoors beyond your own backyard, keep these tips in mind:

Tips to Care for Yourself & Others

Even outdoors, **maintaining physical distance is essential** to preventing the spread of the virus. Current guidelines tell us to stay at least 6 feet apart. Carefully step off the trail to let others pass.

Don't hike in groups. Go for a walk alone, with family you live with, or with one or two friends who are willing to honor the 6-foot rule.

To minimize overcrowding, **if a parking area is full, take it as a signal that this site is “at capacity”** and go elsewhere.

When you head out, **have a backup plan—or several—for other places to go** in case your first choice is too crowded for safe distancing. (See box below for ideas.)

Don't go to public outdoor areas if you have flu symptoms, have tested positive, or have been in contact with someone who has symptoms of coronavirus.

Don't take unnecessary risks on long or difficult hikes that could lead to needing rescue or an emergency room visit.

Tips to Care for the Trail



Heavy foot traffic can damage trails, surrounding trees, and plants. Help disperse this impact by **choosing lesser-known trails**.



Walk on the center of the trail. If you must step off to bypass mud or other hikers, step on stones or tree roots to avoid widening the trail. Take care not to trample delicate plants—or step in a patch of poison ivy!



During wet periods, choose paved or hard-surface routes (e.g., bike trails or paths at the Quabbin Reservation), or hikes that climb through higher, rocky terrain, not those in wetlands or low areas.

Thank you for doing your part to protect our community and the shared trails that nurture us all!

Escape the Crowds on Trails Less Traveled

Many more people are heading out to our local conservation areas now. You can help disperse the crowds—to protect both people and the land—by exploring lesser known places like these. **Download maps with details at kestreltrust.org/connect/trailmaps/**

SAW MILL HILLS CONSERVATION AREA (Northampton, City-Owned): The Roberts Hill trail network offers moderate hill climbing with nice views from several overlooks.

DYER CONSERVATION AREA (Hadley, Kestrel-Owned): An easy, short up-and-back hike along a stream with a mix of field, forest, and wetland habitat.

JABISH BROOK CONSERVATION AREA (Belchertown, Town-Owned): Mostly flat, rocky, forested loop trail crossing a picturesque brook.

NOTE: Some organizations, including Mass Audubon and The Trustees, have decided to close their public conservation areas due to heavy use. Some cities and towns are also closing parks and recreation areas. Before heading out, check with town, state, or organization websites to see if anything has changed.



Jabish Brook Conservation Area

What the Valley Means to Me

Paul Beaulieu is an environmental scientist with expertise in wetlands and river restoration. He's been president of the local chapter of Trout Unlimited, and served on Kestrel's Board of Trustees for many years.

How long have you lived in the Pioneer Valley?

I recently turned 60: With the exception of a brief stint in Colorado and a year's sabbatical in Slovenia, I have lived my whole life in Granby. College classmates have told me they envy that I was able to build a career in my chosen field while remaining in my home town. It's been a great place to grow up and to raise my own family. I love it here!

How do you like to spend time outdoors?

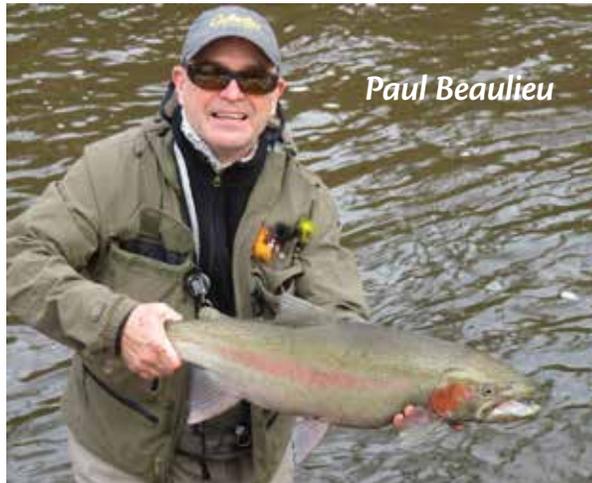
Fishing, hiking with my wife, Karen, and fishing again.

What is a favorite place in the Valley where you like to spend time outdoors?

That's a tough one, because there are many, but given a choice, I'd say somewhere along the west branch of the Swift River in Shutesbury, fly rod in hand. That's where my dad and Uncle Marty taught me how to fly fish.

What do you love about the Pioneer Valley?

Two words: Culture and Nature, existing side by side.



Paul Beaulieu

What is it about Kestrel Land Trust's mission that resonates with your personal values?

As an environmental sciences major at UMass, I was required to read Aldo Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac." (thank you Dr. Lockwood!) The book had a profound effect on how I view the world and I see his call for a land ethic implemented in everything that Kestrel does.

Complete this sentence:

"I give to Kestrel Land Trust every year because..."

I give to organizations that have a track record of getting stuff done. And Kestrel gets stuff done!

VOLUNTEER VOICES
Leah Jacobson-Hardy



Leah studied biology at Wheaton College and works at New City Brewery and Central Rock Gym. She lives in Florence.

AS A TRAIL RUNNER, I FEEL A GREAT responsibility to protect public spaces for my community and future outdoor enthusiasts. One day on a run in the Mineral Hills, I saw a Kestrel Land Trust sign and felt so grateful to know that someone was conserving the trails I spend many hours of my life plodding around on.

I studied biology and also became obsessed with maps as a student in the Outdoor Leadership Program at Greenfield Community College. The intersection of recreation and land conservation was obvious to me, and getting to know Kestrel's work helped fill a gap in my education about that process.

As a volunteer with Kestrel's Com-

munity Crew, I love learning about the folks who attend Kestrel events and why they care about the land. I think community engagement is key to ensuring the longevity of these public spaces. I'm always inspired by the members who show up to community gatherings ready for action. The commitment and strength in this organization is so hopeful and encouraging to me as a younger member.

I've been working in the taproom at New City Brewery in Easthampton and at Central Rock Gym in Hadley. I wasn't sure how I'd use my biology degree, but life is about creating your perfect brew, and for me that includes trail running, conservation advocacy, and of course, beer!

Join the Community Crew! kestreltrust.org/give/volunteer
Help connect people to the land and to each other.



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Give Back TO THE LAND

Join Kestrel and our regional land trust partners in a 24-hour online giving event to support the vital work of conserving forests, farms, and waterways in Western and Central Massachusetts.

You need the land, and the land needs you.



WEDNESDAY
April 22
Earth Day!



See the entire image on the front cover!

COVER ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Patrick Zephyr

Awake, DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH

I was scouting the forest near one of my favorite waterfalls in Sunderland and found this shallow cave. The wild places I have been exploring and photographing for over two decades recharge me and bring me peace and presence, which has never been more important than in these challenging times. I feel fortunate to be able to share this passion for the forest with my family: We wander among the trees every day.

I've been lucky enough to experience a powerful feeling of being part of it all and not just an observer. In that place, I feel connected to this earth and awake.

View more of Patrick's inspiring work at patrickzephyrphoto.com.