METACOMET
LAND · TRUST

Metacomet Land Trust Marks 30 Years of Land Conservation in South Central Massachusetts!

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* Founding Member of MLT
** Term expires in 2019

ABOUT US

Metacomet Land Trust is a tax-exempt conservation organization which preserves natural resources in south-central Massachusetts. We are a member-supported charitable organization and depend upon public gifts, memberships, and grants from both public and private sources to complete our mission. We are governed by a Board of Directors elected annually.

We are chartered to own conservation land and we also help landowners protect privately owned land through the recording of permanent deed restrictions which are enforced in perpetuity by Metacomet. Many of our projects are carried out in partnership with local and state government to preserve land and wildlife habitat.

In addition to our land conservation efforts, we also sponsor programs on environmental topics and the third part of our mission is to support affordable housing when it is sensitively designed to respect the environment.

Metacomet is a member of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition [www.massland.org] and the national Land Trust Alliance [www.lta.org]. We have adopted the Land Trust Standards and Practices of LTA as our operating model.

OUR MISSION

The Metacomet Land Trust is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the protection of open space and natural resources in the communities of South Central Massachusetts.

About the cover: Vernal pools or “spring” pools provide a special environment to amphibians, insects and other creatures for a portion of their life cycle. In the state of Massachusetts, vernal pools are defined by the presence of one or more obligate species - like wood frogs and yellow spotted salamanders. Protecting vernal pools means that these ancient species, who live as adults outside of the pool, will continue to have a place to reproduce. Certified vernal pools have special protection offered by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations, and additional protection may be offered by the by-laws of municipalities. Metacomet Land Trust directors and volunteers have supported the identification and certification of many vernal pools including four in the vicinity of Meadow Brook Uplands in Mendon. We offer educational opportunities and assistance in certifying vernal pools. Call us to learn more about them, or if you think you’ve come across a vernal pool.

Inset photo: Certified vernal pool, two young volunteers counting Mole Salamander eggs at Meadow Brook Uplands, Mendon. The greenish color of the eggs as they develop has been identified as a single cell photosynthetic algae inside of the eggs, providing energy and oxygen to the developing embryos... another example of nature’s resilience.

Family Hike in Franklin Woods

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

May 19, 2019

Greetings, Metacomet members and friends!

Close your eyes for a moment. Is there a special outdoor place that comes to mind? A beautiful and peaceful place that makes your life better just to think about it? Or, when you are driving to work each day, is there a spot that is just simply beautiful? Do you cross a river? Pass a farm? Take in a majestic tree? Catch sight of a bald eagle?

We are fortunate to be able to do that. We are all happier when we get to see some little bit of nature every day. Why? Because we live in an area that has some balance between development – housing and services – with open space. That's why we love where we live, because we have the best of both worlds.

As we celebrated our 30th anniversary, I tried to remember what life was like 30 years ago. Thirty years ago we were still working to clean up the industrial and municipal pollution that flowed into the Blackstone River. Thirty years ago we had not heard the term "fracking" and in 1988, we were just hearing from a scientist who introduced us to the words "greenhouse effect" and how it could change our climate.

Today, after thirty years of denial and inaction, "climate change" has become part of our lexicon. In the land trust community, we now talk of regenerative practices, carbon sequestration, the boon of invasive plant species that thrive on increased carbon dioxide, insect species that can now survive New England winters and how we can protect our special lands from super storms and raging fires.

Metacomet Land Trust – your regional land trust – works with land owners of all kinds – private, corporate and municipal – to preserve open space that will benefit all of us for generations to come. We also partner with other organizations to achieve our goals. If you love the outdoors and where you live as much as we do, share what we do with your friends and neighbors. Ask them to join our thriving organization that focuses on preserving our open spaces.

This is our challenge moving forward – to save ourselves and the land we love.

In conservation,

Lisa Mosczynski

Lisa Mosczynski
President

30th Anniversary Issue
Published by Metacomet Land Trust - 2019

Our History: 30 Years of Land Preservation in South Central Massachusetts – The Last Ten Years

Metacomet Land Trust (MLT) was founded by a small group of conservation-minded residents in 1988 to work in Blackstone, Bellingham and Franklin. In 1994, the Trust expanded its operating area into Douglas, Mendon, Millville, Norfolk, Sutton, Upton and Uxbridge. Over our 30-year history, the Trust has had a role in preserving more than 850 acres of open space. We currently own 22 properties and hold conservation restrictions on 12 properties owned by others. More than 60 individuals have volunteered their talents to serve on the MLT board of directors, some serving for decades. Many board members have also served as members of local Planning Boards, Conservation Commissions, and Open Space Committees.

2018 – Metacomet celebrates its 30th Anniversary. A 3-acre parcel in Upton and Milford with frontage on Mill Brook is donated to Metacomet by Jodi Naze and her husband. The Upton Conservation Commission holds a Conservation Restriction on the property known as the Blue Conservation Area. George and Joan Ford donate a 17-acre parcel off Hartford Ave to Metacomet; an 11-acre parcel with frontage on Stevens Pond in Sutton is donated to Metacomet by the Sutton Development Trust.

2017 – Webster is added to the Metacomet service area. A 38.9-acre parcel with 1800 feet of frontage on Stevens Pond in Sutton is donated to Metacomet by the Sutton Development Trust.

2016 – Hopedale is added to the Metacomet service area. Ruguleiski Woods, a 26-acre parcel in Upton, is donated to Metacomet by the Ruguleiski family.

2015 – Metacomet assists Mendon in preservation of the Pearson Farm, later named Cedar Hill Farm on

Thank You to Our 2018 Members, Donors and Supporters

Donors of Land in 2018
William S. O'Neil & Jodie Naze (Upton)
Sutton Development Trust (Sutton)
Mr. & Mrs. George Ford (Mendon)

Grants
The McCance Foundation

Members & Donors
Christie Anderberg
Patricia & Henry Aubut
Lisa M.Audette
Andy & Kathy Backman
Joseph & Maura Barbato, Jr.
Mary Beauchamp
Tom & Donna Bik
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Barry Lariviere
Carolyn Letvin
Anne & Cliff Matthews
Brian & Anne Mazar
Barbara McNamee
Beth & Paul Milke

Quissett Road, and agrees to monitor a Conservation Restriction on the property held by the town. The trust accepts a Conservation Restriction on a 4.7-acre parcel in Norfolk owned by Massachusetts Audubon.

2014 – Metacomet is granted Conservation Restrictions on three parcels owned by Mendon, totaling 147 acres. Metacomet partners with the Commonwealth's Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to preserve two parcels of land in Sutton, totaling 20 acres.

2013 – Metacomet assists Upton in raising funds for fencing and a parking area at the Whitney Conservation Area.

2012 – Shirley Smith donates a 14.3-acre Conservation Restriction on a wooded parcel along the Mill River in Mendon.

2010 – Metacomet accepts the donation of a 9.3-acre parcel on Manchaug Road in Sutton from Gretchen Richards and Robert Ferragamo, which overlooks Manchaug Pond. We help the Friends of Millbury Open Space raise the funds necessary to purchase a 15-acre parcel on Old Common Road.

2009 – Metacomet receives a bequest from the estate of Arthur D. Nelson which includes 14.5 acres on Daniels Street in Franklin. The largest (12 acre) parcel will be known as the Reid Memorial Conservation Area. Northbridge and Millbury are added to the Metacomet service area. We receive a Conservation Restriction on 13.6 acres of land adjacent to the Laurel Brook Club in Uxbridge.

2008 – Metacomet celebrates its 20th Anniversary and drafts a Strategic Plan to guide the future of the trust. We sponsor a Farm Tour of the Blackstone River Valley.

...for the rest of the story, see our website at www.metacometlandtrust.org

How to Reach Us

The Metacomet Land Trust

The Metacomet Land Trust is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization dedicated to land preservation and conservation.

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Gifts in Memory of Leon Mosczynski
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Susan & Buzz Speers
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In-Kind Donations
Michael Doherty, Esq. Franklin
Debra Eliason, Esq., Gloucester
Charles River Bank, Mendon
Lydia Sierra, Lydia Sierra Consulting, RI
The Muffin House, Mendon
Marjorie Turner Holman, Bellingham

Stevens Pond, Sutton

Conservation Projects Completed in Four Towns

Since the fall of 2018, thanks to the generous donations of conservation-minded land owners, Metacomet Land Trust (MLT) recorded gifts totaling 52 acres of land in Mendon, Northbridge and Sutton — and we have partnered with the Upton Conservation Commission to record a permanent restriction on the Blue Conservation Area, donated earlier this year to the Trust.

* George and Joan Ford donated 17 acres of woodland off Hartford Avenue West in Mendon to MLT. This area contains both mature hardwood and softwood trees and a wetland area. MLT continues to work with the Mendon Land/Energy Use Committee on additional projects. We currently hold three Conservation Restrictions (CRs) on town open space and also help the town monitor the restriction on a farm. Many thanks to our longtime supporters in Mendon who have made it possible for us to cover our legal and survey expenses for these projects.

* Sutton Development Trust, which donated 38 acres of beautiful woodland on Stevens Pond to MLT at the close of last year, now has donated an additional 11 acres adjacent to the first parcel. This expands the conservation area to almost 50 acres and will provide better public access to the area. Many thanks again to the owners for their decision to protect this lovely area in Sutton. MLT will work with the Sutton Conservation Commission to place a permanent CR on the land.

* In Upton, MLT granted a CR on the 3-acre Blue Conservation Area to the town of Upton. The parcel was donated to MLT by Jodi Naze and William O'Neil earlier in the year. This area is valuable for natural habitat and we are happy to partner with the Upton Conservation Commission to steward and monitor this area. A small portion of the land is in Milford – our first land project in this town!

* MLT has recently acquired its first property in the town of Northbridge. Twenty-four acres of open space in the Presidential Farms development was deeded to MLT by developer David Brossi. The forested land includes a trail and benches in a quiet peaceful setting.

"We are pleased to be celebrating our 30-year milestone as a regional land trust serving 15 communities," stated the organization's president, Lisa Mosczynski, "We started out 30 years ago with 3 towns and, as more communities saw the need to partner with a land trust to preserve and protect their valuable open space, we have expanded to help them. Today we own 506 acres of conservation land and hold conservation restrictions that restrict development on an additional 344 acres. Among other partners, the trust works with individual owners, municipalities and the Commonwealth to preserve critical open space in the region."

Metacomet Land Trust is an all-volunteer, membership-based organization and is always ready to welcome new members and friends who want to work with us. We are motivated by our motto -- "Because we love where we live!" -- and we work to keep open space and recreation available to everyone. It is thanks to our donors, whether large or small, new friends as well as longtime members, that Metacomet can continue to accomplish so much. THANK YOU for supporting the Land Trust.

"Preserving and protecting land comes at a cost, most of which is shouldered by our members and donors," said treasurer Susan Speers of Franklin. "We truly depend on the public's support for conservation close to home."

Can One Person Make a Difference?

So where does conservation begin? Sometimes it starts with lofty dreams. Other times it starts with a nightmare. Either way, conservation efforts require persistence, time, energy and often ... money.

For example, the conservation of Meadow Brook Uplands, a hundred acre parcel in Mendon, started after a hiker noticed pink flagging in various areas of the pristine forest uplands and wetlands. Review of town documents revealed a huge disappointment - the land had been sold, and already approved for development of homes. These homes were to be located close to a large great blue heron rookery that had once been recognized as the second largest in the state with nearly 100 nests and several vernal pools. The land was recognized as valuable in the state DCR Heritage Landscape Inventory, an Audubon Important Bird Area, the Blackstone Valley Prioritization Project and The Nature Conservancy's Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation Focus Areas… but those designations were not enough to protect it. Could one person advocating for the land make a difference. Communications with the town Land Use Committee started the ball rolling, and the owner was receptive to conservation if the land was purchased at a bargain sale price. Hundreds of hours of volunteer work, including a Conservation Restriction to be held by Metacomet Land Trust, secured a state grant and matching funds from the Town of Mendon CPA funds. Today, this land is owned by the Town of Mendon, and

permanently protected. The volunteer has now joined the board at Metacomet Land Trust to help other land lovers ready to take on a conservation project simply because they love where they live. It's not too late!

These homes were to be located close to a large great blue heron rookery that had once been recognized as the second largest in the state with nearly 100 nests and several vernal pools.

Other projects start with the desire to pay forward a legacy, to leave something behind for future generations - a dream of forests and animals communing long after the donor is gone. Protecting water quality, and the oxygen-producing undeveloped tracts of land are by-products of this type of dream. Land donations can contribute to our planet's long term climate resilience. The permanence of a donation to a land trust can accomplish this goal. Of course, Metacomet Land Trust must trace through the steps of due diligence to assure ownership and the condition of the property. Engineering drawings, surveys and title certifications are often needed. This can be costly for the donor, and for the land trust. Your conservation donations help make this kind of dream a reality.

Metacomet Land Trust Protected Lands

AS OF MAY 2019

Metacomet Land Trust owns 506 acres of conservation land, of which 20.5 acres in Sutton are co-owned with the MA DCR, and 7 affordable housing lots in Franklin. We hold conservation restrictions on another 344 acres. Properties conserved by Metacomet are located in Bellingham, Blackstone, Franklin, Mendon, Millbury, Norfolk, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, and Wrentham

Conservation Land

Blackstone

- 131 acres, Hop Brook Preserve (portion of the Daniels Farm), Mendon Street donated by Doris Daniels King in 1998.

Franklin

- 15 acres, Reid Memorial Conservation Area on Daniels Street in Franklin in a bequest from Mr. Arthur D. Nelson to honor his wife, Gwendolyn Reid Nelson in 2009.
- 10.5 acres, Dawn Marie Circle, donated by Colella and Son, Inc in 1990.
- 41.7 acres off Lincoln Street, within Franklin Woods open space subdivision deeded in 1994.
- 1.75 acres, Lady Bug Trail; outdoor classroom used by Kennedy Elementary School and Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary donated in 1994. Dedicated to Alfred S. Ferguson in May 2000.

Mendon

- 17 acres off Hartford Avenue West donated by George and Joan Ford in 2018.

Northbridge

- 26.6 acres off Roosevelt Drive within Presidential Farms open space subdivision deeded in 2019.

Ford Property, Mendon

Sutton

- 3.2 acres, Central Turnpike donated by the Peladeau Family in 1994.
- 127.5 acres, Chase Road (and Millbury) donated by Henry Boria in 1999.
- 6.5 acres on Putnam Hill Road, donated by James and Marina Gvazdauskas in 2001.
- 9 acres on Manchaug Road, designated as the John S. Duff Memorial Preserve, donated by Otco, Inc. in 2001.
- 7.6 acres off Manchaug Road, donated by John and Donna Couture in 2002.
- 9.3 acres, Lake Manchaug Overlook, donated by Gretchen Richards and Robert Ferragamo in 2010.
- 6.5 acres, 1/2 interest in land off Putnam Hill Road, donated by Robert Nunnemacher in 2014.
- 14 acres, 1/2 interest in land off Mendon Road, donated by Marie Linder 2014.
- 38.9 acres, Stevens Pond, donated by the Sutton Development Trust in 2017.
- 11 acres, near Stevens Pond, donated by the Sutton Development Trust in 2018.

Upton

- 26 acres off North Street known as Ruguleiski Woods, donated by the Ruguleiski family in 2016.
- 3 acres in Upton (and Milford) on Mill Brook, designated as the Blue Conservation Area and donated by Jodi Naze and William O'Neil in 2018.

Ruguleiski Woods, Upton

Meadow Brook Uplands, Mendon

Foxfire Farm, Uxbridge

Conservation Restrictions

Note that some of these properties are privately owned and their future development is restricted according to their agreements with Metacomet and the Commonwealth.

Bellingham
- 11.7 acres on Charles River, off Plymouth Road, owned by the Bellingham Conservation Commission and conserved in 1990.

Mendon
- 14.3 acres, conserved by the late Shirley Smith in 2012.
- 97 acres Meadow Brook Uplands, owned by the Town of Mendon and conserved in 2014.
- 24.2 acres Muddy Brook North, owned by the Town of Mendon and conserved in 2014.
- 26.6 acres, Muddy Brook South, owned by the Town of Mendon and conserved in 2014.

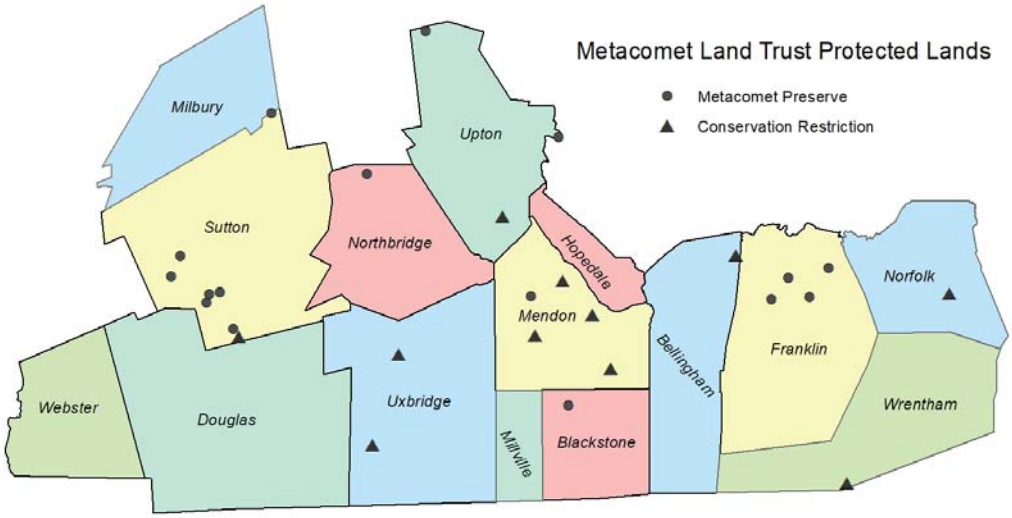
Norfolk
- 4.7 acres, conserved by Mass Audubon in 2015.

Sutton
- 35 acres conserved by the estate of Daniel Griffith in 2004.

Upton
- 62 acres off Chestnut Street, owned by the Bernat family and conserved in 1997.

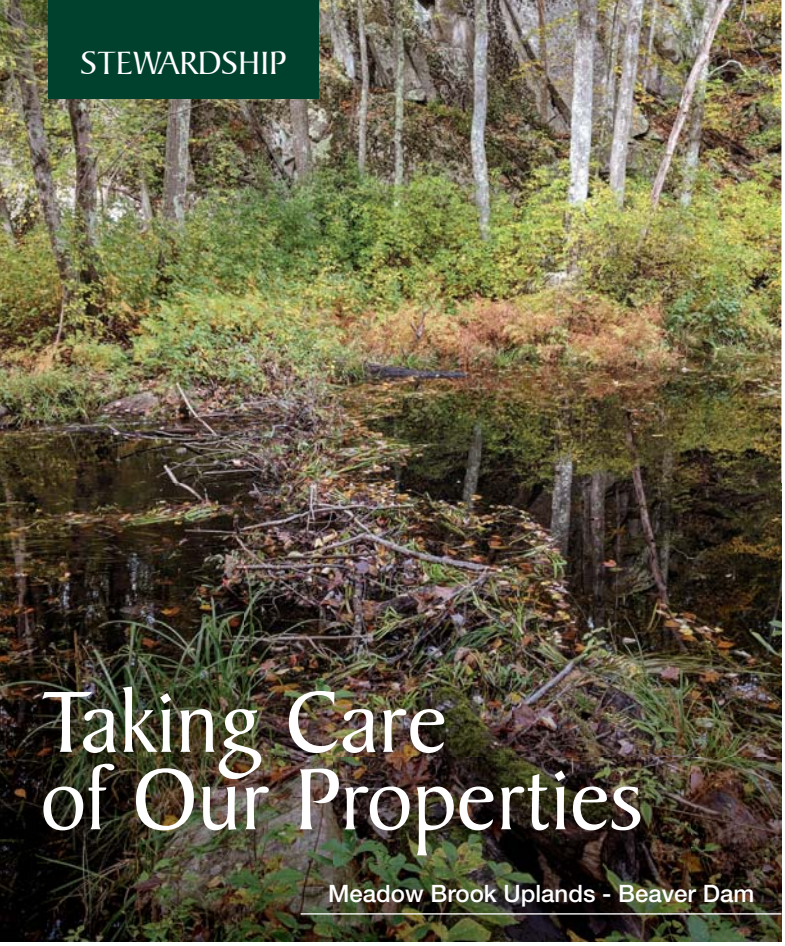
Uxbridge
- 27 acres, Foxfire Farm, owned by John and Ann Hanscom and conserved in 2000.
- 13.6 acres, Laurel Brook, conserved by the New England Forestry Foundation in 2009.

Wrentham
- 27 acres at the Hancock Christmas Tree Farm, conserved by Bill and Joyce Marland in 2005.



Affordable Housing Lots:

Seven house lots totaling 4.8 acres in Franklin with affordable homes on each parcel, are owned by Metacomet Land Trust since 1991, and leased to owners.



Taking Care of Our Properties

Meadow Brook Uplands - Beaver Dam

Metacomet Land Trust currently monitors 12 Conservation Restrictions (CR) which protect 344 acres of forest, meadow, and farmland. In addition to yearly monitoring, Metacomet is preparing "Baseline Reports" to document existing conditions at some properties. Baseline reports are generally prepared for new projects.

Metacomet directors visited properties protected by CRs, such as Plymouth Road Conservation Area in Bellingham, as part of our yearly monitoring program. The Trust also works with towns to address any serious encroachment problem at any protected property.

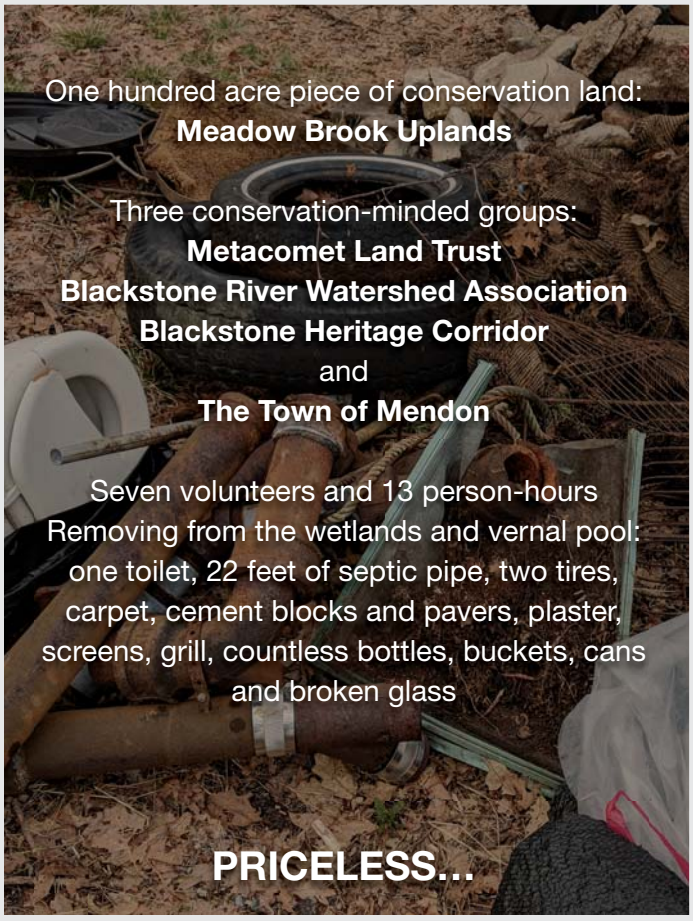
Plymouth Road Conservation Area in Bellingham

Open to the Public

All Metacomet preserves are open to the public. Trails are present at some properties, including the Hop Brook, Stevens Pond, Franklin Woods, Coronation Drive, and Boria preserves.

The Trust constructed a trail-head parking lot at the Hop Brook Preserve in Blackstone. Several hundred feet of new trail was created to link the parking area to the existing trail system. We also installed a roadside sign and timber frame kiosk at Hop Brook parking lot and mapped trails at Hop Brook and at the Franklin Woods property in Franklin.

Working with the Town of Mendon and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, we mapped trails and helped to produce a trail map for the 97-acre Meadow Brook Uplands, which was released to the public in 2019. We also worked with volunteers to clean up dumping in the wetlands, and installed signs to discourage future dumping at the same site. Meadow Brook Uplands includes the brook outlet for Lake Nipmuc. With the water level rising and threatening septic systems in the fall of 2018, we worked with the town to acquire emergency funding to breach the beaver dams, and monitored both beaver activity and the water levels for several months.



Three Eagle Scout Projects Have Been Completed on MLT Properties:

2002 Boardwalk at Franklin Woods
Sean Kelliher, Troop 126
Franklin

2010 Trail improvements at Ladybug
Christopher Gerber, Troop 99
Franklin

2017 Kiosk at Franklin Woods
Ryan Walsh, Troop 126
Franklin

Photo was taken near Mendon's Muddy Brook North conservation land, across from the Twin Drive-In. The pink is Dibaeis baeomyces, commonly known as pink earth lichen. It is also found in the Arctic Circle. It's fascinating that this lichen digests the rock and clay to make a more fertile soil for future plants. Resilience!

Measurement of sap flow by scientists at Harvard Forest.

Healthy Forests in Central Mass: Keeping It Green

Photo credit John Hirsch

As part of Metacomet Land Trust's celebration in 2018 of our 30th anniversary, with the theme "We love where we live!," we hosted a free talk and photo show in June at the Sutton Town Hall to look at current research on New England's forests and how landowners can manage their land for the future. Photographer John Hirsch and Ecologist Jason Aylward teamed up to present photographs and newest research on the Wildlands and Woodlands vision for our forest landscapes.

Jay Aylward is a research technician for Harvard Forest, working on the Wildlands and Woodlands vision. His focus is on the ways in which a forest changes over time; more specifically, how management, deer pressure, and invasive pests influence those dynamics.

Jay provided an update on the September 2017 release of Wildlands and Woodlands, which not only looks toward the basic goal of protecting 70% of New England in forests by 2060, but also calls for protecting 7% of the landscape in farmland, and makes additional recommendations for slowing and shifting development in a way that maintains the connection between communities and the land that sustains them. The Wildlands and Woodlands reports, and the Harvard Forest research supporting them, have led to significant policy changes in Massachusetts and increased conservation funding throughout New England, and are becoming increasingly relevant at the federal level and in other regions across the country.

Photographer John Hirsch is the author of And Again: Photographs from the Harvard Forest which portrays both the beauty of the forest in Petersham and the work of the teams of scientists conducting research there. "The forest is a microcosm for the world in which we live and begins to help us envision the future we may inhabit," Hirsch writes. John's work is rooted in a documentary style, illuminating quiet moments in emergent or changing societies.

Storybook Walk at Foxfire Farm

Tossing milkweed seeds from their pods into the wind!

This public event, hosted by Metacomet Land Trust, was held on Sunday, September 23, 2018, at Foxfire Farm in Uxbridge, MA, to celebrate Grandparent's Day.

Marjorie Turner Hollman from the Blackstone Heritage Corridor led a "Make Your Own Storybook Walk" with the kids and their families and friends to explore the outdoors. Their goal was to look, listen, touch, feel, and take in the experience. Then they went back to create a storybook about their experience. Great fun was had tossing milkweed seeds into the wind with Ann Hanscom, landowner, and, at the stream, throwing rocks and sticks into the current. It was a tossup which was more fun! Neither age, mobility, nor sightedness was a limit to participation in this program, which was sponsored by Metacomet Land Trust, and co-sponsored by the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, as part of the 2018 "GO!" September events.

Reading the Forested Landscape with Tom Wessels

Every forest tells a story and this program helped us read it.

Metacomet Land Trust has partnered over the years with like-minded organizations to bring fascinating programs and activities to the local communities it serves. One such program was "Reading the Forested Landscape" presented by Tom Wessels, a highly regarded educator and author. Friends of Upton State Forest (FUSF), Metacomet Land Trust (MLT) and the Upton Open Space Committee (UOSC) came together to bring ecologist Tom Wessels to Upton. Tom Wessels is a terrestrial ecologist, author of five books, and a professor at Antioch University New England in the Department of Environmental Studies.

This was a free, open-to-the-public, well-attended, full-day program starting with an indoor slide presentation at the VFW. After lunch, the program continued in the field at Upton State Forest where Mr. Wessels guided the group though the wooded landscape, sharing his knowledge about the clues that tell how a forested landscape was formed. Did a hurricane come through? Was the land cleared for crops, and livestock? Is it old growth forest? We learned the answers to these questions and others.

Butterfly Walk at Leland Wild

Metacomet Land Trust and Leland Wild sponsored a Butterfly Walk at Leland Wild in late June. Once the former Norfolk Airport, but now known as Leland Wild, the property is an approximately 200-acre privately owned conservation parcel in Norfolk, MA, with access to the Charles and Mill Rivers. Managed for grassland nesting birds, reptiles, amphibians, and other sensitive wildlife, the property boasts forest, grassland, wetland, vernal pool, floodplain and riparian habitat. It offers a variety of habitats for numerous species of butterflies, including the Baltimore Checkerspot, Gray Hairstreak, and Silver-bordered Fritillary. Grassland birds, Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrows, were also noted during the walk. Additionally, the property has been designated by Natural Heritage as priority habitat for the Eastern Box turtle. The property is open to the public for passive recreation. This Butterfly Walk was led by expert naturalists and MLT members Cathy and Tom Dodd. One participant declared, "It was awesome, and hot, but so great." He said the place looked like heaven on earth.

Metacomet Partners with the Blackstone Heritage Corridor

Blackstone Valley Gorge Walk with Volunteers-In-Parks' guide Tom Bik

Metacomet Land Trust has joined in partnership with Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor's Volunteers-In-Parks program. This partnership with Blackstone Heritage Corridor (BHC) shares common goals of protecting lands of special concerns in the Blackstone Valley. Some of these are clean water, habitat protection, land preservation of areas of special features of natural, cultural importance, and educating the public through excursions and programs. Through BHC's Volunteers-In-Parks program, Metacomet volunteers donate valuable volunteer time to provide public outreach educational programs and activities. Volunteers lead walks, bike rides, paddles, historical tours and other events, highlighting the many special places throughout the Blackstone River Valley.

In 2018, Metacomet volunteers led several walks of the Blackstone Gorge and on the Blackstone Greenway Bike Path. Volunteers also hiked to the Tri-state boundary of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, and worked on trash clean ups in Blackstone and Millbury.

Bird Banding at Foxfire Farm

An especially exciting happening at Foxfire Farm this year was Dr. Brandi van Roo and her students from Framingham State University coming to do a ten week breeding bird survey (leg banding). The protocol for safely catching and handling the songbirds is designed by The Bird Banding Laboratory at the Pawtuxet Wildlife Research Center, which collects, stores, and analyzes the data. All bird banders must be licensed under the auspices of the U.S. Geological Survey. These surveys increase the body of knowledge about wildlife worldwide, specifically, in our case, song birds and their nesting behavior.

Studies, such as Bird Banding Surveys, glean clues as to what environmental changes are taking place, and how certain species (in this case birds) "know" what to do in response. Their capacity for flight has allowed them to evolve extremely long annual migration routes, enhancing feeding and nesting opportunities. Both birds and humans inhabit the planet from pole to pole, in ocean and desert, in mountain and valley, and all because of migration.

On June 8, 2018 at 6:00 AM, the nets we set up on Foxfire Farm were opened to a clear, still sunrise. Soon it was time to see if any birds were in the nets. We had a Barn Swallow, Yellow Warbler, and Song Sparrow. Back on the terrace, each bird was banded and documented - breed, gender, age, wing length, molt stage, feather condition, brooding status. We learned several correct ways to hold each bird, working quickly to minimize stress, then we took a smart phone photo, and released. On subsequent trips to the nets we found three more Song Sparrows, five Grey Catbirds, Downy Woodpecker, Brown Headed Cowbird, a pair of Cardinals, two Baltimore Orioles, and a Chipping Sparrow. We banded twenty-one individuals, of nine native songbird species, throughout the morning.

We also tallied all the birds we identified by sight or ear; thirty-eight species. The farm is quite varied in habitat types; a brook and associated wetland, mixed tree species in the woods. open meadows, a house and two barns, and gardens. It is important to understand how to manage the various systems found in the surroundings; how to meet the needs of not just the humans living here, but also the plants and animals; how to reach for a sustainable equilibrium.

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To join or renew your membership in the land trust or make a donation,

please mail a check to:
Metacomet Land Trust
P.O. Box 231
Franklin, MA 02038

☐	Friend	$ 25.00
☐	Steward	$ 50.00
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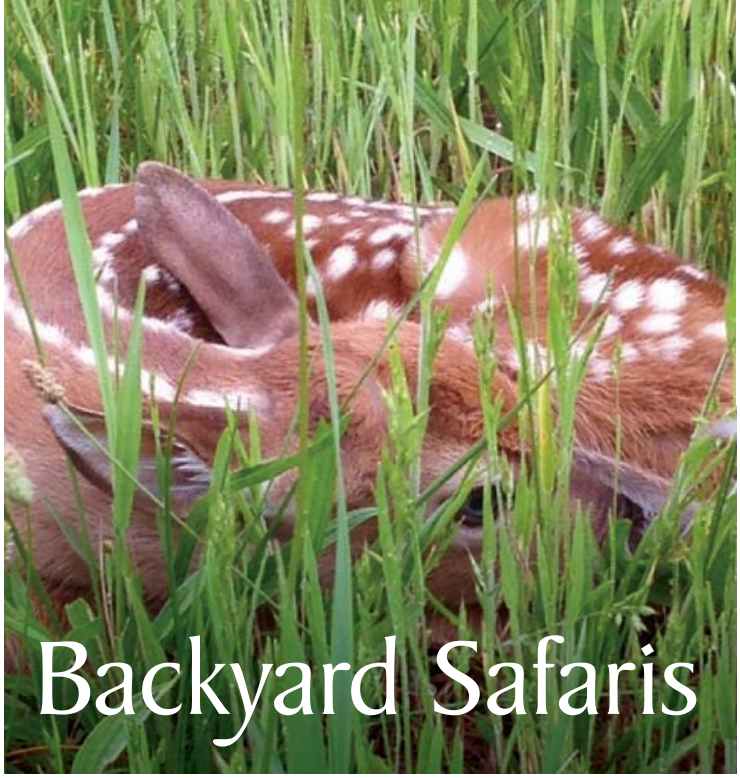
Annual or special donations from members, friends, and the business community are a big part of our annual operating budget. Donate securely on our website using PayPal. Thank you!

Or go to our website at: metacometlandtrust.org/donations/give-the-gift-of-membership/



Backyard Safaris

In 2018, Metacomet launched a new program to study the plants and animals on a single property each year. This past summer we investigated the healthy ecosystems of one of the privately owned conserved properties where we have been engaged with the landowners since 2000, Foxfire Farm in Uxbridge. The owner, Ann Hanscom, had won a Backyard Safari with her winning bid in a silent auction held at our Annual Meeting in April. This wildlife survey took place with the help of our volunteer naturalists, who visited the property five times from May through September, each visit focusing on one type of animal or niche in the natural world. We invited members and friends to join us on these visits as part of our educational outreach.

On May 20, 2018, the project began to inventory the biota at Foxfire Farm. Russell Holden, science teacher and naturalist, and Ann Hanscom, amateur naturalist and landowner (together with her husband, John) put feet on the ground, heads together, and eyes in every direction. Russ and Ann are board members at Metacomet Land Trust, holder of a Conservation Restriction which protects the farm. Within two hours they tallied over 100 species of plants and bugs.

On May 22nd, Doug Williams, from Stoney Brook Audubon Sanctuary, and his daughter Emily, joined Russ and Ann, along with Blackstone Valley Birders leaders Beth and Paul Milke, at 5:30 a.m. for a sunrise bird count. It was a treat for the amateurs to be accompanied by people who knew the birds not just by sight, but by song as well.

The Backyard Safari species inventory offered unique experiences. Among other events, there was a Biodiversity Safari in May, a Crepuscular Creatures Nature Walk at Dusk in June, an Insect Extravaganza in July, a Wetlands Safari in August and a Safari for mosses, lichens and mushrooms in September. Each visit yielded so many species.

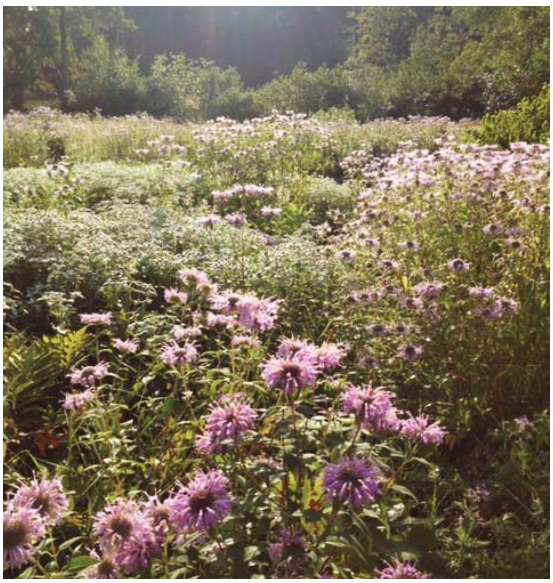
Property owner Ann Hanscom wrote about our results and her own observations of life at Foxfire Farm. Ann is a keen observer of the world in which we live and is eager to have more people share our experience. “I hope having these stories available stirs up interest in what the land trust offers, and will show some of the benefits of saving land,” Ann says. “I hope people want to be present on the land and see that a Conservation Restriction has a public benefit.” You can see her stories on our website at https://metacometlandtrust.org/programs/metacomet-land-trust-biodiversity-safaris/

Pollinator in the Meadow

Swallowtail Butterfly

Warm/cold; dark/light; day/night; excitement/calm; stillness/time

As the sun went down, I cross-country skied from the house to the barn, going along the river, up across the pasture, and then to the barn, taking pictures as I went. The whole shoot took about 20 minutes or less. The play of light here is magic! We have MLT to thank for helping us save such magic with a CR - Ann Hanscom, Foxfire Farm



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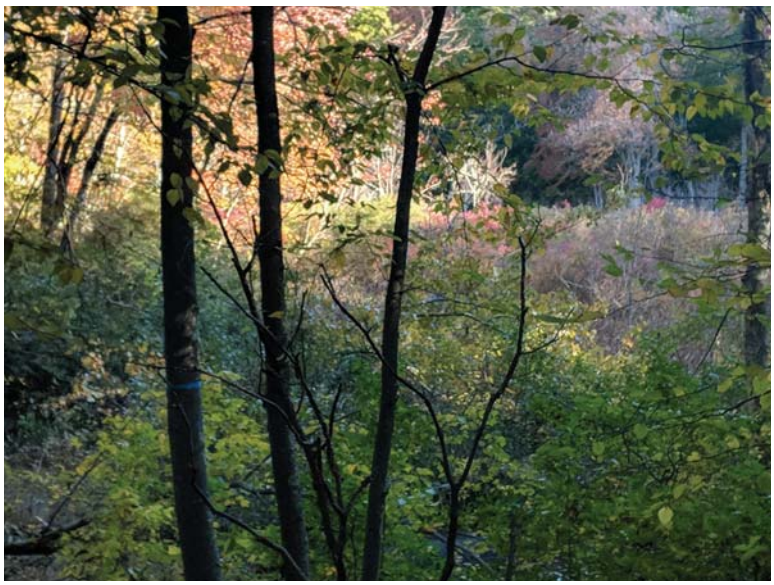

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