WHOSE LAND ARE WE CONSERVING? When we start planning for a new land protection project, or seeking historical records about existing conservation land, our organizational instinct has been to lean on the information that is most readily available: who settled this land, where did they come from, and what did they use it for? Thanks to the 19th century New England tradition of writing everything down, we have learned fascinating things about the colonial history of our conserved lands. George Peabody’s untimely death by falling tree at Peabody-Fitch Woods, the tragic end of a hilltop farm at Tiger Hill Community Forest, and the short-lived bowling alley at the top of Pleasant Mountain are some that come to mind.

But as our staff and Board made a commitment to learning, we found it difficult to find information about conserved lands in the Lake Region prior to colonization. After over a year of research and listening, here’s what we know: We are conserving the land of the Wabanaki people. For thousands of years the Wabanaki (the people of the Dawnland), and more specifically the Pigwacket and Ammoncongan people, lived in relationship with the lands we now conserve. And because of the symptoms of colonialism, including violence, disease, and the loss of oral histories, the history of these relationships is not widely known. Despite this lack of information, it is the firm belief of our organization that we must not neglect this history.

Note from the Executive Director
continues on page 2
Wabanaki people and families continue to live in Maine and elsewhere, but since the late 18th century their physical presence has been nearly non-existent in the Lake Region. Our intention as we continue on this learning journey is not to speak for the Wabanaki, but instead to honor their past, present, and future legacy through listening and, when appropriate, information sharing. In this way we propose to live into our aspirations of being an ally to the Wabanaki people, and being better stewards of the land you’ve helped us conserve - for the benefit of all Mainers and visitors. Moving forward, when we tell the story of the lands we now protect, in addition to the tales of cabins in the wilderness, we will always acknowledge the first stewards of the Dawnland: the Wabanaki people.

Matt Markot
LELT Executive Director

If you are interested in learning more about the relationship between Wabanaki communities and conservation in Maine, visit firstlightlearningjourney.net/resources.

**Gifts of Stock**

Did you know we accept gifts of stock? Giving a gift of appreciated stock may be the best way for you to maximize your impact, while minimizing your tax burden. The best part? It’s easy! Just fill out our online form to be sent transfer information by email. The form can be found at lelt.org/donate. You may also contact Maggie directly at maggie@lelt.org or 207-647-4352.

*We are not financial or tax advisors. Please contact your financial advisor for information relevant to your unique tax scenario.*

**PARTNERSHIP PRODUCES PRESERVE SIGNS**

Coming to a preserve near you: new signs! Thank you to students at the Lake Region Vocational Center for constructing the beautiful sign posts, and to Muddy River Signs for making the metal hanging signs. We hope these signs will help make our parking areas & trailheads easier to spot from the road.
REMEMBERING JOANNE DILLER

JoAnne was an outdoor enthusiast, conservationist, avid hiker, skier, teacher and outdoorswoman. She was a volunteer for many local nonprofit organizations in Bridgton and the surrounding area. She was also an indispensable advocate and behind-the-scenes champion for the work of Loon Echo, working tirelessly to support the conservation of Pondicherry Park, Pleasant Mountain, and many other beloved natural areas in the Lake Region.

JoAnne was a mentor to many, with a special affinity for supporting young women and mothers, aspiring hikers and skiers, and people new to the outdoors. She found so much joy in sharing her love for the natural world with others.

It was JoAnne’s wish that donations in her memory be made to Loon Echo. As a result, over $35,000 has been raised in her memory. The funds will be used to support LEJT stewardship projects that will improve access to the outdoors, a mission that JoAnne particularly valued.

JoAnne’s legacy lives on in the lands she helped conserve, the trails she helped create, and all the people she introduced to the wonders of the woods, waters & mountains. She is sorely missed.

CONServation Matters to Us

One of the pleasures of coming back to Bridgton, Drew’s hometown, almost ten years ago was walking and hiking every area mountain or trail we could find. Five years ago, when Drew was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease, we were deeply saddened to think that being together in the beauty of the outdoors on a wooded path would now have to end. But, no! Thanks to the extensive amount of conserved land and number of well-maintained trails in this area, our hiking and walking time has gotten even better. We are out on the Peabody-Fitch Woods, Pondicherry Park, Bald Pate and Raymond Community Forest trails, in addition to other area land trust properties, on a weekly basis—year-round.

We have also learned that a Parkinson’s patient actually responds very well to the challenge of rocks, roots, and good old uphill. Give those feet something to work around and they work. Drew’s neurologist has confirmed, “My patients who do the best, who slow symptoms down, are the people who challenge themselves to move.” So, yes, those trails on conserved land are beautiful and full of nature’s harmony; but their “brain challenge” has also saved Drew’s (and my) active life. He has his walking sticks, his hiking boots, his winter hiking spikes, his blaze orange, and we are ready to go! With deep gratitude to all the conserved lands we love.

-Margaret Lindsey Sanborn and Drew Sanborn, Bridgton

Drew celebrates Trek for the Trails at the summit of Bald Pate
THE 2021 TREK FOR THE TRAILS PRESENTED BY NORWAY SAVINGS BANK wrapped up on Sunday, October 3rd. Over $10,000 was raised from the event, including entry fees, pledges raised by participants, and business cash and in-kind sponsorships. The top individual fundraiser was John Keller, who raised over $1,600.

New for 2021 were three trail running routes - one at Pleasant Mountain, Bald Pate Mountain, and Raymond Community Forest. Non-runner participants visited any LELT preserve to complete their ‘Trek’, and many filled in a trail passport by visiting four different LELT preserves and finding the stamps for their passport at each one.

Trek for the Trails is Loon Echo Land Trust’s largest annual fundraising event. Funds raised from the Trek help us steward over 8,000 acres of land and 30+ miles of trails in the Lake Region.


Conservation is about the trees, the trails, wildlife, clean water and climate, but it’s also about community. It’s all connected, we believe you can’t have one without the other. Thank you for helping us create a place we can—and want—to live in.

We had a busy year full of events, including a birding walk, vernal pool exploration, three sunset concerts, a kite day, a film festival under the stars, three trail running workshops, a plein air paint day with music and museum tours, yoga on the hill, history walks at Peabody-Fitch Woods and more. Thank you to all who attended an event as well as our partners and supporters for making it all possible.

Events connect people to the outdoors - and each other.
WE'RE SO THRILLED TO ANNOUNCE THAT ANOTHER forward-thinking, Maine-based business is generously supporting Sebago Clean Waters (SCW) and our Sebago Lake watershed forest conservation efforts. IDEXX Foundation’s grant to SCW over the next three years will help catalyze and advance additional forest conservation and watershed protection projects that aim to protect the drinking water supply for over 200,000 Mainers. Among these projects is conserving 7,500 acres of high-priority forestland that will protect water quality and provide a host of other benefits, including enhancement of climate-resilient landscapes, wildlife habitat, recreational access, and the local economy.

With support from business and non-profit partners, we can continue to build momentum toward creating positive and lasting impacts in our communities. Thank you to the IDEXX Foundation for supporting this critical initiative!

EAB is an invasive beetle that threatens all of the State’s ash trees (except ‘mountain ash’). There’s a lot at stake if we lose all of our ash trees:

- Loss of a food source for wildlife.
- Impacts to the hydrology and soil integrity of riparian and wetland areas.
- About $320 million potential economic impact to forest landowners.
- Loss of significant street trees in many communities. Removal of dying and dead trees will cost millions of dollars and change how many communities look.
- Loss of brown ash, which is a key material for traditional basket making—an important cultural tradition of the Wabanaki people.

EAB has been found in Bridgton. By continuing to monitor, and identifying local stands of ash, we can better inform future treatment and management to help save our ash trees.

YOU CAN HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF EAB!

- Don’t move firewood! Buy it where you burn it.
- Learn how to identify EAB and report any sightings to the State.
- Learn more about EAB in Maine: www.maine.gov/dacf/php/caps/EAB
IT WAS A BUSY SUMMER, WHERE TO BEGIN?

Aidan Hagerty returned for a second summer as LELT intern. We were so lucky and honored to have him back this year. He provided a real boost and he helped in all facets of our work. Thank you, Aidan. You are going to do great things in this world!

This year we committed to harnessing the power of our awesome community by offering more trail work volunteer opportunities. With the help of volunteers we were able to build a new trail at Tiger Hill Community Forest, finish a re-route of the Quarry Trail at Peabody-Fitch woods, build many a bog-bridge, repair erosion on the Ledges Trail at Pleasant Mountain, and so much more. Thank you to everyone who joined us.

LELT lands also hosted some interesting research in 2021. Staff and volunteers studied a heron rookery for the State of Maine from May until September. At one point in August, the rookery was alive with 8 birds of various ages, quite a sight to see.

Thanks to staff at the Nature Conservancy, we learned that Tiger Hill Community Forest is home to four significant vernal pools, an important part of the forest ecosystem. In all, there are many more pools within the boundaries of the forest, but four showed indicators of tree frogs, spotted and blue-spotted salamanders and fairy shrimp (yes, fairy shrimp, they’re very cool), deeming them particularly valuable.

Pleasant Mountain Preserve is home to an exemplary Red Pine Woodland. We got to tag along with University of Missouri scientists who stopped by to study the site’s long history of fire adaptation. There are trees still standing after dying in fires over 100 years ago. It is believed that this site has never seen any large scale human disturbance, such as agriculture or timber harvest. Even more remarkable than we had imagined.

After a busy summer season, the shorter days remind us that we must prepare for winter. Over the years LELT preserves have seen an increase in fall and winter uses like hunting and backcountry skiing. The lands you help us protect provide food, freedom and special places for families to come together in all seasons. Tracking critters at Peabody-Fitch Woods, snowshoeing and xc skiing at Bald Pate, or ice fishing on Perley Pond: these activities can really shorten a long winter. We’ll be offering opportunities to get out and explore with our staff this winter, please consider joining us. We even have snowshoes you can use.

Thank you for helping us have a wonderful 2021, we’ll have many more great events and volunteer opportunities in 2022.

-Jon Evans, LELT Stewardship Manager

Forests vs. Woodlands

Forests have a closed canopy permitting very little light to penetrate to the ground below. There are often several overlapping layers of trees, with a mid-story and understory comprising a variety of shade-tolerant shrubs and a sparse layer of soft-stemmed plants.

Woodlands have a more open canopy, and their sparse, woody mid-story allows more sunlight to reach the ground. This light permits the growth of a dense ground cover containing a variety of wildflowers, grasses, and sedges. Fire plays a large role in maintaining woodland habitats.

Source: University of Missouri
PONDICHERY PARK TRAIL WORK
This summer and fall our stewardship team spent many hours working in Pondicherry Park. While the park is owned by the Town of Bridgton, we took on a more prominent role in the management of the popular trail system in 2021.

Since the park is nearly ten years old, many of the bridges were starting to deteriorate. With the help of a dozen volunteers, the LELT stewardship team constructed and installed 25 new bog bridges in the park this year.

Investing in this trail infrastructure is important not only to keep the trails safe, but to keep water off the trail to keep erosion at a minimum.

Thank you to the Town of Bridgton for purchasing the cedar boards, our stewardship team of Jon & Aidan for their expertise, and all the volunteers who gave their time to keep Pondicherry Park in good shape for the many, many people who enjoy it.

A COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY
Integral to our mission is making sure everyone has the opportunity to get outside on LELT lands and trails. As we invest in our trails, how can we make sure we’re not creating barriers to access? How can we actively remove barriers and make sure we’re offering trails that suit a wide variety of people?

This summer we were grateful to work with and learn from Enock Glidden of Go Beyond the Fence and Maine Adaptive Sports and Recreation. We look forward to our continued partnership as we design new trails, and work to improve our existing trails so that more of our community can enjoy them.

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM
This summer we launched the LELT Ambassador Program in response to the increased trail use we’re seeing on our more popular trails. Volunteer ambassadors were present at trailheads to inform community members about the trails, leave no trace principles, LELT & our conservation work, and other safety tips.

Kudos to Lorne Schneider, Steve Mortimer, Ed Pontbriand and Deb Gellerson for committing a combined 53 hours of ambassadorship, interacting with over 700 hikers. We hope to grow & continue the program next summer. If you’re interested in getting involved send an email to maggie@lelt.org and keep an eye out for training opportunities in the spring.
StoryWalks® Connect Literacy & Time in Nature

This year we hosted StoryWalks at Hacker’s Hill Preserve, Mayberry Hill Preserve, and in Pondicherry Park.

StoryWalk® is an innovative and delightful way for children (and adults!) to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time. Laminated pages from a children’s book are attached to wooden stakes, which are installed along an outdoor path. As you stroll down the trail, you’re directed to the next page in the story.

We heard great feedback from all those who enjoyed the stories throughout the summer & fall. Zoe, age 9, said “I liked the story a lot.” Valerie wrote, “We loved this! Four kids running through the forest looking for the next pages. What a fun experience!”

Thank you to Casco Public Library and Bridgton Public Library for their help & partnership, and IslandPort Press for their pre-made StoryWalk® books. Funding for the Casco StoryWalk® was provided by a LELT Environmental Education Grant and Bridgton StoryWalk® funding was provided by the Onion Foundation. We can’t wait to bring back the StoryWalks® next year with new stories.

The StoryWalk™ Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition (VBPC) and the Kellogg Hubbard Library.