

BANGOR LAND TRUST NEWS

FALL 2015



Pedal the Penobscot 2015

by Lynn Bolduc

The weather gods were smiling down on our ride, especially on Shirley Ellis, this year. All week my weather app had told me that rain was inevitable. Having ridden in PtP13 through a horrendous downpour, standing water on the roads and near hypothermia, I wasn't sure how committed I was to riding 52 miles in more of the same. And Bangor Land Trust board member and Road Ride Committee Chair Shirley Ellis, who has seamlessly organized this ride for the past six years, would not have had a fitting end to her career. Luckily the rain gods only teased us with a bit of mist, and we were blessed with comfortable riding temperatures for the entire day!

Despite the threat of rain, nearly 200 riders from near and far showed up to support Bangor Land Trust with

a good balance of riders at each of the distances offered. This has become an annual event for those of us who plan our rides early in the season. It gives us many distance options to choose from (14, 28, 52, 76 and 102 miles) - it's very important to note that 102 is more than 100 miles, as those extra two miles are bragging rights to your family and friends. The ride has a great atmosphere, friendly volunteers, amazing support, and of course, great food, especially at the rest stops. Whose wonderful idea was it to have pickles at the Bradley rest stop? (If there were a vote any rest stop including pickles would get mine.) And though I am a registered dietitian I was also won over by the snack-sized candy at each stop. When you are riding this far, all foods are legal, right? (Please note that when you ask a dietitian to write an article of course we have to focus on the food!)

This year on the 52 mile route riders were treated to a sight of an eagle along Route 43 close to Pushaw Stream.



Fellow cyclist and team CES rider Johanna Szillery and her friend Laura Mitchell noticed a large bird on the boulders along the stream and turned back to check it out. "Based on the size, mottled plumage and bright yellow feet we made the preliminary determination it was a juvenile bald eagle," said Szillery, though she admits she is an amateur birder. Just another perk of the ride.

Many thanks go out to celebrity rider Tim Godaire, riders, teams, corporate sponsors and volunteers who make this ride such a success and create enthusiasm for an event that is now celebrating its ninth birthday! Did you know this ride's net proceeds account for nearly a quarter of Bangor Land Trust's operating budget? We would love to hear your ideas and suggestions for an even better 10th year. Please mark your calendars for next year's event: September 11, 2016.

PtP photos by Larry Wade





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Dear Friends,

When you love a piece of land and take it into your heart, it becomes a part of you, an enduring comfort and pleasure. You want to be sure that it will always be there – for you, for others, for the animals who live there too. It's a natural step from the desire to protect a lovely place to doing the actual work of conservation. There is a lot to be done to conserve land – manage legal and financial matters, follow regulations, maintain boundaries and trails; but there is also good guidance available. The national Land Trust Alliance has written manuals and accredits land trusts, like Bangor and Orono land trusts, that are in good working order.

As it turns out, this is actually the easy part. It may be a lot of work, but the path is clear and well marked. A community of generous helpers can make it happen and is making it happen in Bangor thanks to you.

But Bangor Land Trust faces even more difficult challenges, ones where the paths are not so clearly marked. BLT has accepted the responsibility in a rapidly changing world of being a good steward of its preserves in perpetuity. Although it may not seem like much, a few degrees of change in the world's average temperature changes many things. Change requires decisions. For example, invasive plants like purple loosestrife and common buckthorn are taking root in BLT preserves, threatening the health of local ecosystems. Do we devote our precious resources to trying to get rid of these invaders or do we let changing nature take its course? Grasslands are shrinking in the Northeast, making survival perilous for Bobolinks and other grassland birds. What resources do we have to devote to maintaining healthy grassland habitat to support these species in trouble?

If we look at the big picture, the cause of most of our difficulty is carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. To protect habitat, for all species, do we not have a responsibility to help our communities lower their carbon footprint? You can be proud that Bangor Land Trust conserves forest that absorbs carbon from the atmosphere and that it offers wonderful wild areas close to home – but should we be doing more?

Food for thought and reflection. Solutions require many minds, many hearts, the wisdom of many joining together to take care of the only earth we have in the best way we know. Bangor Land Trust is a place for sharing ideas, opinions, and inspiration – a place to participate in meeting some of the most important challenges of our time.





Thank you!

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Thanks to Tim Godaire (top photo, second from right) for leading the PtP training ride on September 3rd and also for being our celebrity rider. The things you are doing for our planet and our community are really wonderful and much appreciated.

Thanks to the Ride Committee members (middle photo from left to right: Greg Edwards, Dick Andren, Lynn Bolduc, Michele Benoit,

Shirley Ellis, and Carolyn Eaton). Members missing from the photo are Linda Perkins, Kathy Billings, Katelin Craven and Steve Jordan.

A very special thank you to Shirley Ellis for serving as PtP Ride Director for the past six years. Bangor Land Trust has been very fortunate to have had your dedicated service.

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Why would grassland birds such as Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows, Meadowlarks, and Upland Sandpipers have developed migration patterns that take them to Maine for the breeding season?

Did New England once have grasslands? This sounds improbable but the archeological and historical record points



to that conclusion. You may have heard that the forests of central and southern Maine were decimated to make room for farming and that the forests came back after the American Civil War.

What is often forgotten is that since the last Ice

Age there have always been grassland ecosystems in this region. They never were extensive like the Great Plains but rather in persistent pockets along the coast. They have been in areas with very porous soils and along rivers or where the soils are too thin to support trees. A sandy plain on Long Island, New York, held more than 60,000 acres of grasslands. Forests evolve where more than 20 inches of rainfall are evenly distributed throughout the year. This makes New England naturally forested.

Using fire, Native Americans modified the natural environment to produce grasslands to encourage grazing animals that they could then hunt. Early European explorers noted that along Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island there were extensive plains without forests or trees. Early settlers in the Salem Massachusetts area reported tree-less areas 500



acres in size. And, of course, those marvelous engineers, beavers, created extensive meadows by damming streams to create ponds that then drained when the beavers left for another site.

Birds, like other animals, take advantage of every suitable ecosystem. Fossil evidence indicates that grassland birds were living in Pennsylvania 11,000 years ago. Birds that needed grassland nesting areas found Maine grasslands and began to rely on them for breeding habitat. As Maine forests have regrown and the grasslands have gotten smaller or disappeared, Maine grassland birds have had a hard time and their populations have shrunk. According to information published by Robert Askins of Connecticut College 14 of the 19 species of grassland birds in New England have declined significantly in the last century. Although small populations of grassland species have existed in Maine for thousands of years, the fate of these birds is uncertain as climate and land use change ever more rapidly.

In the 21st Century human activity has reached into every environment and ecosystem. Coastal wetlands have been altered and beaver activity greatly reduced. It therefore behooves owners of surviving grassland to manage it with great care to ensure that these long time residents have a place to feed and breed.

How can we manage for grasslands when pastures and fields are often abandoned, trees naturally tend to replace grasslands in our region, and we try to prevent fires from burning the landscape? How can we maintain this important ecosystem? Can our mowing machines take the place of great herds of grazing animals and prevent trees from becoming established? Unlike most other types of plants, grasses evolved to grow from the bottom up to withstand continual grazing. Cutting off the tops does not hinder growth. Young trees and shrubs grow from the tips of their shoots, so cutting them off repeatedly kills them or greatly stunts their growth.

Maine's grassland birds, like all organisms, are extraordinarily specialized for specific ecological niches. Understanding and meeting their needs is an important part of conservation stewardship. Bobolinks, for example, travel 6,000 miles from northern Argentina to get to West Penjajawoc Grasslands in May. Their survival is threatened all along their migration route. We should do our part to make them welcome when they arrive here to breed. Those that arrive deserve our best hospitality. Bangor Land Trust is doing its best to maintain grasslands where they can safely raise the next generation.

Maintaining Grassland Habitat

by Lucy Quimby, Dave Thompson & Rob Ostrowski

With the gift of land come the responsibilities of stewardship. Bangor Land Trust's first stewardship questions are always: Who lives there? And what do they need?

Visitors to West Penjajawoc Grasslands know that Bobolinks return there each May to mate and raise their families. They need both a suitable place and an undisturbed time to raise a brood. They nest on the ground and need the cover of tall grass through July. Baby Bobolinks run around on the ground for several days before they are able to fly.

A mower harvesting the hay during this time risks killing the baby Bobolinks or exposing them to hungry raptors and other predators. Alas, hay is most nutritious for farm animals if mowed in June, just when the Bobolinks are most vulnerable. Farmers have a hard choice to make between the needs of their farm animals and the welfare of the Bobolinks. A neighboring farmer had mowing rights to West Penjajawoc Grasslands for many years, but now has retired. It is up to BLT to meet the challenges of maintaining this field.

BLT's informal surveys at West Penjajawoc found the highest concentration of Bobolinks nesting in the middle of the field, as far from the tree line as possible. Bobolinks may prefer this habitat because it helps them avoid predators, and/or because they face less competition from other bird species. At West Penjajawoc, we observed very few Bobolinks in areas near the marsh and its wooded border. There we saw nesting Red-winged Blackbirds and Swamp Sparrows, among other species. Perhaps the subtle changes in vegetation made the area nearer the marsh attractive to other, more aggressive species, making it harder for the Bobolinks to compete for territory.

Now BLT needs to answer more questions: How often should we mow the field and with what? A brush hog or a sickle bar mower? Should we remove the cut grass? Can we find a use for it even though it is not the most nutritious hay? Will the field need an application of lime to rebalance the pH after years of use? Will the field need tilling and replanting at some

point? How much will all this cost? How will we raise the necessary funds?

BLT Board member Dave Thompson and his wife Pat went out several weeks ago



and carefully collected soil samples for the Agricultural Extension service to analyze and recommend what treatments the field needs to grow the thick grasses that Bobolinks prefer. There are three major soil types in West Penjajawoc Grasslands, and a fourth that occupies less area. Different areas of the field will need different amounts of lime and fertilizer to produce optimal grasses.

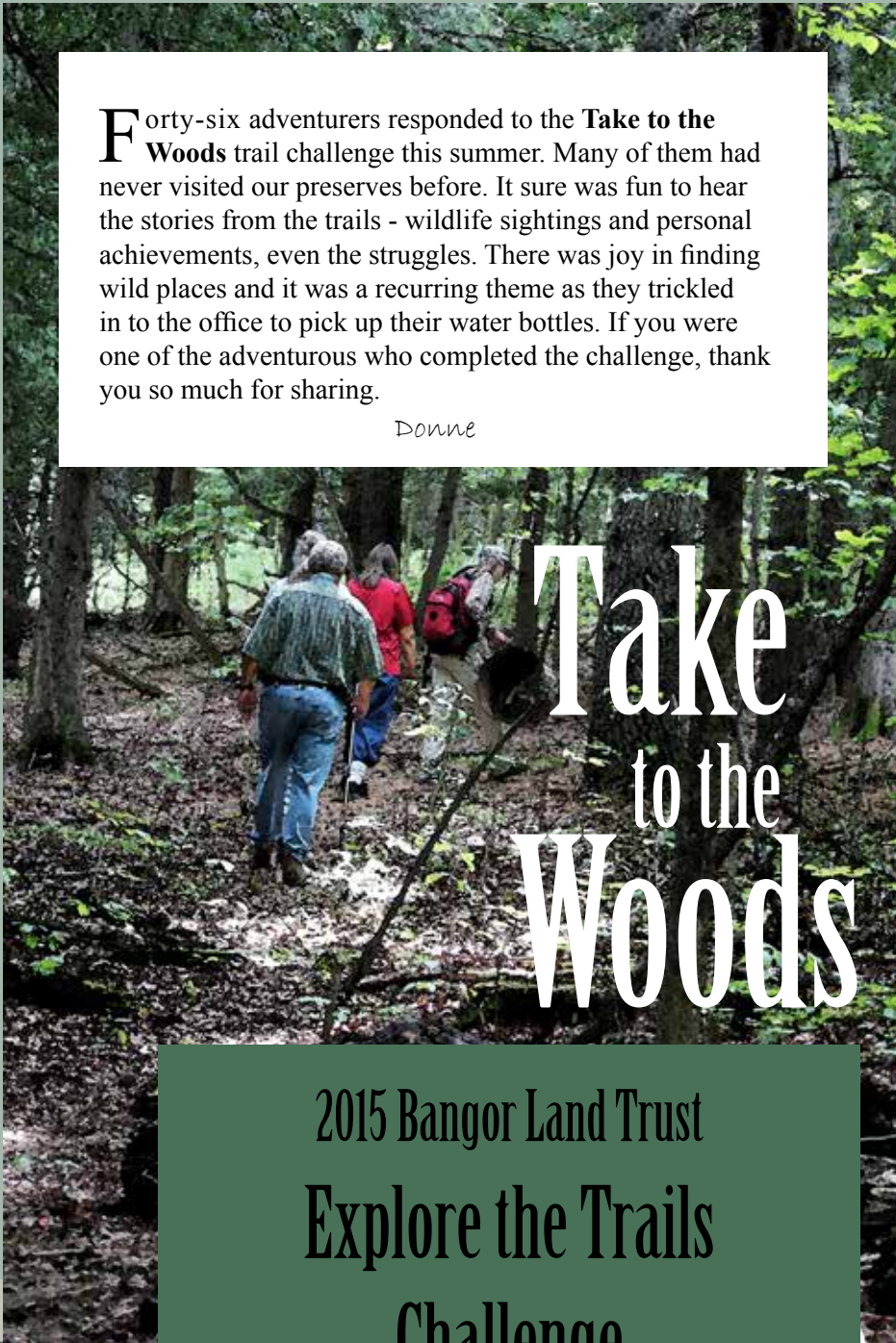
BLT made the decision to interrupt the natural progression of West Penjajawoc Grasslands – to prevent nature from returning the field to forest. It decided to protect the nesting habitat of a species in trouble, to take care of the Bobolinks and other grassland birds that have shown large decreases in numbers in the last 50 years. When you accept responsibility for stewardship of a piece of the natural world, there is a lot to learn and many decisions to make – it is a big responsibility.





Forty-six adventurers responded to the **Take to the Woods** trail challenge this summer. Many of them had never visited our preserves before. It sure was fun to hear the stories from the trails - wildlife sightings and personal achievements, even the struggles. There was joy in finding wild places and it was a recurring theme as they trickled in to the office to pick up their water bottles. If you were one of the adventurous who completed the challenge, thank you so much for sharing.

Downe



Take to the Woods



2015 Bangor Land Trust
Explore the Trails
Challenge



Bangor Land Trust's Hunting Policy

Conserving land for public use requires the combined efforts of many different and varied user groups. To be successful we need to respect one another's needs and wishes and always be mindful of everyone's safety. Certain topics are guaranteed to evoke a variety of opinions: Hunting tops the list! Some people don't like killing animals, particularly when we put so much effort into conserving wildlife habitat. Others see hunting as a traditional Maine activity, one that meets a variety of needs – recreation, wildlife population management, and human nutrition.

Different BLT preserves have different rules about hunting and trapping. Anyone wanting to hunt and/or trap on a BLT preserve should contact the BLT office to register or get permission.

Some BLT preserves are subject to a Land for Maine's Future Project agreement because LMF helped fund BLT's purchase of several properties. The terms of the very popular LMF bonds require that land purchased with these funds, along with land pledged as "match" for the LMF funds, be managed according to an LMF Project Agreement. LMF Project Agreements state that Bangor Land Trust "shall not prohibit hunting, fishing, or trapping on the premises, except to the extent of applicable state, local or federal laws and regulations."

City of Bangor ordinances forbid the discharge of firearms in Zone 1, and allow it only with written landowner permission in Zone 2. The City of Bangor firearms rules are online here: <http://www.bangormaine.gov/filestorage/422/424/1177/FirearmsDischargeMap.pdf>. Please note that the boundary between Zone 1 and Zone 2 may be hard to locate on the ground! BLT will give applicants written permission to use firearms in preserves that are in Zone 2 and are subject to an LMF Project Agreement. That includes Northeast

Penjajawoc Preserve and parts of Central Penjajawoc Preserve. State of Maine laws require written landowner permission for trapping. BLT will give written permission for trapping in preserves that are subject to an LMF agreement. (Northeast Penjajawoc Preserve and Central Penjajawoc Preserve)

Bangor Land Trust requires that hunters wishing to bow hunt on BLT preserves register at the BLT office, and again, the preserves where bow hunting is allowed are Northeast Penjajawoc Preserve and Central Penjajawoc Preserve.

We will be putting more information about hunting on BLT preserves on our website, bangorlandtrust.org,

Always wear blaze orange wherever you are in the woods during hunting season!



Thank you BLT member and volunteer, Geoff Gratwick, for fixing the bridge on the Blue Trail at Walden-Parke Preserve, for mowing the Grasslands, and for all the other work you do on the preserves.

DO YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EARLY

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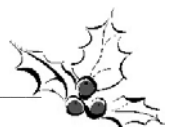
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Bat Nesting Box Raising at West Penjajawoc Grasslands

BLT members have been busy this summer! Bill Childs volunteered his time and expertise to build two complex bat condos for West Penjajawoc Grasslands. When they were finished, Dave Thompson organized a crew (which included Bill Childs, Bill Phillips, Katelin Craven and Shirley Ellis) to raise the condos on the morning of July 30th.

Unfortunately, bats have been severely threatened by White-nose Syndrome, wind farms, and habitat loss. White-nose Syndrome has killed over 5.7 million bats since 2006 and it spread to Maine in 2011. That means that these condos are more important than ever to provide bats a safe place with optimal temperatures to raise their young and sustain their population. Bats are a long-lived species that have only one or occasionally two pups at a time so it will take a long time to rebuild their populations. These bat condos are most likely going to be used by Big Brown Bats and/or Little Brown Bats, a proposed endangered species here in the state of Maine. We hope to see new tenants soon!