



# Pascommuck post

Summer2020



## President's Report

### ***Dear Friends of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust:***

Summer greetings to you. In the midst of the most challenging times for all of us, the beauty of nature and the lure of our lovely trails at the Trust sites, have brought comfort and smiles to all of us. We would very much like to thank those of you who added a bit extra to our Maintenance Fund this year as we all struggle with personal priorities and the necessity to keep our trails open. We are happy to report that our trails have been accessible to all throughout the pandemic and are being well used and appreciated by all. In fact, by the use of so many more people, we have had to enlist additional help from our regular maintenance people to keep them clear.

It is important to remind everyone who walks our trails that keeping the required social distance and wearing face masks is imperative to keep all of us safe. Please comply with the Governor's request on this. Remember to bring your face mask with you. If the trails are crowded, please return at a later time. Thank you.

### ***Fall Plant Sale***

We are very hopeful that we will be able to hold our Fall Plant Sale this year. It all depends on the status of the virus statistics which we hope will continue to head downward in July and August. When we get into Phase III, and can safely hold the Plant Sale, the location may be changed this year to reduce space pressure on the Big E's Supermarket. Many of the plants we had to maintain in lieu of the spring sale will be for sale. We'll look forward to seeing you then. Be assured that all Trust members working at the sale will be wearing face masks and, if possible, gloves.

### ***Property Maintenance***

Kevin Mulligan, the caretaker of our properties, has been extremely busy with many special projects this year aside from his regular duties of keeping the trails clear for our visitors. Without his energy, enthusiasm and skills in carpentry, as well as landscape maintenance, the Trust would be in a serious situation. Thank you so much, Kevin!

Some of the major projects accomplished since our last newsletter in January (This includes projects both worked on by Kevin alone and with Board Members and Volunteers joining in.)

***Old Trolley Line*** - Trails revamped under the direction of Gerrit Stover, our Land Protection Consultant. An impressive steel footbridge was erected over a wetland section at the far end.

# Report continued

---

**John Bator Park** – Robert and Nance MacDonald from the Compassionate Friends re-stained the wooden benches and picnic table and installed a granite bench. Kevin re-stained the gazebo and did some repairs to the roof.

**Bridge Repairs** – Steps and railings were replaced and erosion control tackled by Kevin at various Trust properties.

**Mutter Field** – East Street parking lot paved by M.J. Loomis Inc. Two native red cedars were added to the plantings along the north borderline.

## **Miscellaneous Projects & Activities:**

- We are very happy to announce that Bex Zumburski has agreed to be our new Data Base Manager. Welcome Bex!
- We held a Grand Re-Opening ceremony at the Old Trolley Line Conservation Area on October 19, 2019. John Bator led a tour of the newly revamped trails at this site.
- We produced new Pascommuck Conservation Trust brochures in January.

## **Future Projects:**

1. We plan to continue with the needed infra-structure repairs to our properties.
2. All of our trail maps are being revised and placed at the entrances to our properties.
3. Border walks will be conducted to check all boundary pins at our properties.
4. We will continue to work with the Kestrel Land Trust and the City to complete the Mt. Tom North Entrance Project off East Street.
5. In regards to the Park Street Solar Project, the Trust will be partnering in the planning stages of designing a trail system through the solar field to connect the nearby neighborhoods to the schools and Nonotuck Park.



## **Annual Meeting**

As you know, due to the pandemic we were unable to hold our Annual Meeting at the Lathrop Retirement Community this February. We are in the process of determining if we can hold the Annual meeting this fall. We will notify you by newsletter and our Facebook page or website if and when it will be held if possible.

## **Membership in the Trust**

We mailed membership forms out with our previous newsletter in January. If you have not yet completed the form or mailed in your membership information and fee, please do so now. Due to the cancellation of our regular Spring Plant Sale, keeping our trails open during the pandemic has put a strain on our finances. A little extra will go a long way. We thank you for your continued support of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust.

*Sincerely, John Bator, President*

# A Walk in the Woods (with Tools)

---

construction

Have you wondered what goes into a season of trail maintenance for a conservation group? It all starts in the early spring with walking each of the PCT properties to assess the conditions after another New England winter. I try to visit all of our properties but rely on John Bator, caretakers and other members and friends for their updates. From this, a report with repair estimates is generated for the Board to assess and decide which repairs need to be done. Most of the tasks fall into two groups. First, there are bridge, steps, and railing repairs. These can be difficult as I have no electricity in the woods so I must take measurements, cut the wood at home, and return to assemble the pieces. The hardest part is hauling the lumber to the site. Assembly is a piece of cake compared to that. Second are the erosion control problems, usually at trailheads and parking areas. The Mutters Field parking lot on East Street has seen the worst of the erosion problems, but the new paved surface (thank you, thank you, and thank you) should help to resolve that problem.

I try to finish repairs before the hot weather arrives as I spend most of the summer mowing and weed whacking our trail system. The amount of time spent on this part of trail maintenance depends on how much moisture we are getting, so years like our very dry 2020 are less busy. Coordination with John and his son Scott are important so we aren't performing the same task. In general, Scott handles the big open spaces like Old Trolley Line and Pomeroy Meadow and I do the less accessible properties. I also report back to John and Gerritt Stover on invasive species making new headway on our properties while I'm performing trail maintenance.

In addition to this, I also handle most of the tree work for the PCT with John's help. This can be a year round problem depending on storm activity. I either encounter problem trees on my walks or hear from John and others. I will visit the site to determine if I can handle the situation. If not, I report back to John and he contracts with the tree company.

Occasionally, I will perform liaison with other construction contractors when the job is too big for me. Working with Loomis, the paving company for the Mutters Field parking lot, would be the latest example. I also reached out to the DPW Highway Division on that project and they graciously helped with painting the new lines on that parking lot, based on my design.

Probably the most important part of my job is interacting with park users and explaining the mission of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust and the rules for using the parks. When people express interest in helping, I refer them to our web site or Facebook page for more info. I also update them on upcoming work parties which are always looking for volunteers. I never miss a chance to tell them that the PCT can always use new members and financial support.

Sometimes things can get busy as I run a construction business too, but it's always worth the extra effort to me. We live in a wonderful community and helping to preserve its open spaces and wildlife refuges is a great way to give something back. It's a pleasure to be a resident of Easthampton and a member of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust.



*Kevin Mulligan, PCT Properties Caretaker*



## Old Pascommuck Conservation Area: A long, long history-- and not just with the Trust

---

The story of Pascommuck Conservation Trust -- and, indeed, our very name -- began in 1981 with the land now known as the 'Old Pascommuck Conservation Area.' In the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, William C. Carroll, a founder of our Trust, described these five acres as "Of interest to both the conservation and historical commissions, lying next to the Manhan River and also at the west end of the original Easthampton settlement of Pascommuck in the late 1600s, and adjoins the *Daughters of the American Revolution* historical marker, the Pascommuck Boulder."

Carroll observed that, though the Town's 10-year old master plan recommended preserving 2000 acres, the Town of Easthampton at the time owned only 20 acres of land for "hiking, relaxing, and nature study" (newly described as 'passive recreation'). And though a second wave of intense development was devouring land, Proposition 2-1/2 had already throttled municipal budgets. The Trust's founders felt "the formation of an environmental trust seemed to be the most appropriate alternative." As Carroll cautioned, "In the long run, it's a lot more healthy for the town to preserve a good bit of this open space because it's something that can't be replaced -- once you've lost it, you'll never get this back again. Who can buy back the Plains area and reforest that?"



Bob Pinkos and Terry Blunt

But land acquisition couldn't happen until the trust was formally created, which took organizers Carroll, Paul Kuzeja, Charles Conner, Mike Tautznik, David Kennedy, and Frank Galat another year. In the meantime, there was a competing buyer for the East Street parcels, which were zoned for industrial use (considered, in fact, as a site for an asphalt plant), presumably because of the railroad line.

Fortunately, the Connecticut River Watershed Council, in the incarnation of its executive director Terry Blunt, purchased the land and held it for Pascommuck. Blunt had already earned his own place in history as the first land acquisition specialist for the Nature Conservancy, and went on to become one of our Valley's unsung heroes: Working for the Department of Conservation and Recreation and Valley Land Fund, he accounted for a major share of special places protected along the Connecticut River including, of course, Old Pascommuck Conservation Area.

Looking much further back, past the 1871 railroad (evolving from a local line, into a branch of the Boston & Maine Railroad, and finally, the Manhan Rail Trail), past ownership by the Clark family (owners also of the site of the Civil-War era Eyrie House on Mount Tom), and past the colonial settlement whose destruction is memorialized by the DAR Boulder, we come to the original inhabitants of this area, the source for the area's and the Trust's name. Referred to as the Nonotuck by the English interlopers (there was a reason the colonial settlement was destroyed...), they called the great bend in the Connecticut, 'Pascommuck': 'where it bends or branches'. So said our own historian, the late and lamented Edward Dwyer. NOTE: Fourteen years after the conservation area was protected, the DAR Boulder, along with its 0.01 acre site was donated to Pascommuck by the DAR. Perhaps this, too, made history as one of the smallest land conservation deals ever?

# Birds of Our Paradise

---

While birds have been of interest to me for decades, it took a springtime pandemic to kick my bird-sense into high gear. When the COVID-19 lockdown hit and my work transitioned from office to home, I found that I craved outings that got me out in Nature. This led to daily walks in the Broad Brook Meadows Conservation Area, which happens to be next to (and surrounding) our house, and for which I am the property steward. I normally make it a point to walk the property at least a few times a month (or after a storm) to make sure no trees or limbs are blocking the trails, etc., but now I was spending much more time there and I was discovering new things every day. And I learned that the slower I walked, the more I saw.

I think my REALLY slow walks started when I looked up once and saw a large brown shape perched on a high branch. Could this be a Barred Owl, whose call I hear so often from our house? Sure enough, it was. The call of “Who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all?” was pretty telling and the size was right. But, next time I would definitely bring my binoculars to get a better look! And, when I brought my wife back with me the next evening, there it was again.

And then, on other walks, I would spend many minutes just standing and staring up at the tree branches in hopes of finding the owl. This led to hearing and seeing many other birds, like a Great Crested Flycatcher, which I had never heard of before. It was in this way that I learned my first new fact about birding, namely: “If you watch and listen, you will find birds.” In fact, for me, being so new to it, I was finding a new bird nearly every day - birds I had never heard of before, like a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a Carolina Wren, an Eastern Towhee, or ones that I had never seen, but were very familiar to me as a child from a round jigsaw puzzle of birds my family had, like a Scarlet Tanager, an American Goldfinch, and a Tufted Titmouse.

This PCT property has a unique advantage for some birdwatching. Entering along the path from the end of Brittany Lane, you will soon bear right and then come along-side a steep drop-off on your left that affords you a good look out over a wetland area near Broad Brook, some 30 feet below. You are near eye-level with some prime bird-nesting habitat and this can save you from severe neck cramps. For instance, there is the hole in a dead tree where the Great Crested Flycatcher lives. And, there is what looks to me like an owl’s nest.

The second new fact that I learned about birding is: “The first new fact is really only true prior to the trees leafing out.” It all seemed so easy before there was dense foliage everywhere. I could just stand and watch and eventually a bird would appear. But once the leaves start filling in, you can’t see a thing. You can hear them singing away, or calling to each other, but it’s just really hard to find them. And, as it got warmer, the bugs came out and really tested my patience.

So, now I don’t stand around in the woods quite so much, but I am thrilled to have seen over 25 different birds close up recently, including a Northern (yellow-shafted) Flicker, Wood Thrush, Eastern Phoebe and Pileated Woodpecker. I hope you can find some, too. Or just stand, watch and listen and enjoy being surrounded by nature.



conservation

*Fred Andresen*

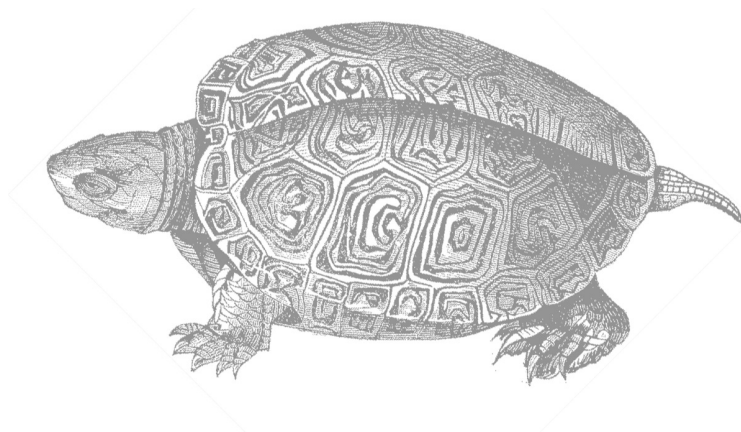
## Pascommuck Conservation Trust Scholarship Award

This year's recipient of the Annual Pascommuck Conservation Trust High School Award went to Lauren Bongiovanni, who plans to study Biology at Salem State University. Here are her words.

"My name is Lauren Bongiovanni and I received the PCT Scholarship this year. In the fall I will be attending Salem State University majoring in Biology. I have always loved Science, especially Biology and Chemistry. Science is one of the subjects that made it a pleasure to go to class. I want my future to be full of interesting and enjoyable challenges.

At first, before I learned about the different fields of Science, I was really interested in Animal Sciences. I wanted to be a veterinarian or someone who would fight for animal rights or the protection of endangered species. That is still something I want to pursue however, now that I've discovered Chemistry and Forensics, having taken both of these classes in my senior year, I'm more interested in lab work.

Going into my first year of college, I'm planning to stay with a Biology major and then deciding on the concentration that would fit best for me. Science, to me, is really interesting and amazing. Without it, we would not be living in the world we are. I want to be a part of something that helps the planet and the organisms living on it. I can't wait to start my journey to something I actually enjoy learning about."



### Amazon Smile -

support PCT when you shop through Amazon.

Here's how to shop AmazonSmile:

1. Visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)
2. Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials.
3. In the search field under "Or pick your own charitable organization:" type in "Pascommuck", hit the search button, and select Pascommuck Conservation Trust.
4. Start shopping!
5. Add a bookmark for [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile

## Pascommuck Conservation Trust Board

### *Officers*

John Bator, *President*  
Dianne McLane, *Vice President*  
Chris Zagar, *Treasurer*  
Dawn Ackley, *Clerk*

### *Board Members*

Fred Andresen  
Claire Baker  
William Burgart  
Michael Caron  
Molly Goodwin  
Martin Klein  
Tom Lautzenheiser  
Bobbe O'Brien  
Shirley Smith  
Susanna Walz

### *Coordinator of Volunteers*

Molly Goodwin

### *Land Preservation*

#### *Consultant*

Gerrit Stover

### *Database Manager*

Bex Dumbruski

### *Newsletter*

#### *Design & Layout*

Beverly Wodicka

### *Webmaster*

Michael Caron  
[pctland.org](http://pctland.org)



# PASCOMMUCK CONSERVATION TRUST, INC. MEMBERSHIP DRIVE 2020

## PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

- Name \_\_\_\_\_
- Street \_\_\_\_\_
- Town/City \_\_\_\_\_
- State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_
- Phone \_\_\_\_\_
- Email \_\_\_\_\_

## PLEASE CHECK YOUR DESIRED MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter (\$6)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron (\$75)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$15)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate (\$100) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$25)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Steward (\$100)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor (\$50)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor (\$150)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member (\$1000) |  |

## MAKE AN ADDITIONAL DONATION FOR:

Unrestricted \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mutter Field Stewardship Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Property Stewardship \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## PLEASE INDICATE VOLUNTEER INTERESTS

- ☐ Donate plants for plant sale
- ☐ Prepare plants for plant sale
- ☐ Setup/take down at plant sale
- ☐ Monitor a Trust area near me
- ☐ Grant Writing /Fundraising
- ☐ Land Conservation  
(Landowner contacts, Planning, etc.)
- ☐ Trail/Property Maintenance
- ☐ Social Media Coordinator



***Pascommuck Conservation  
Trust, Inc.***

*Preserving our past . . .  
protecting our future*

**THANK YOU!**

## MAIL THIS FORM WITH YOUR CHECK TO:

**Pascommuck Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 806, Easthampton, Massachusetts 01027**

Pascommuck is a 501 (3) (C) non-profit charitable organization. Your gift is tax deductible.





**Pascommuck Conservation Trust**

P.O. Box 806

Easthampton, MA 01027

*pctland.org*

*Return Service Requested*

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO.8  
EASTHAMPTON, MA

## *Swallowtail*



*Marty Klein*