Donors to the Rescue!
Saving Flagg Mountain and other special places

PLUS
“THE PLACE WE CALL HOME”
DEERFIELD ACADEMY STUDENTS ON THE HUNT FOR INVASIVES
HELP WITH A WOODLOT OR BIRD HABITAT
WINTER ARMCHAIR EXPLORATION
There is nothing like staying at home for real comfort.

—JANE AUSTEN

FLT’s new home in Shelburne Falls at 5 Mechanic Street

FLT has been thinking about the future as well. When Hurricane Irene struck, we were flooded out of our rental offices in downtown Shelburne Falls. We had a few hours to move furniture, files and computers before the building was condemned. We found temporary space at PALM Electric on the Mohawk Trail in Shelburne. But as we worked in openings among the piles of packing boxes, we wondered whether FLT, entrusted with the care of beloved lands in perpetuity, could find a permanent home for itself.

For 26 years, we have moved from one rental to another. As we grew in response to increasing demand for our services, our space diminished in functionality and comfort. Irene forced us to recognize that our permanent responsibility to this region requires a permanent home, one with privacy for our clients and sufficient space to conduct our land conservation work forever.

Along came 5 Mechanic Street. It wasn’t the only building we considered while searching for a home, but something about it resonated. It was appealing to remain in Shelburne Falls, to bring new life to a 1940’s auto repair garage, and to gain more than 3,000 square feet of functional office space that allows for some growth—but not too much: the building fits the lot it sits on. Or maybe it was the beautiful and massive interior stone walls that so strikingly represent permanence.

We jumped at an offer from long-term FLT friend and building owner Michael Cohen to enter into a one-year option to purchase at a generous “bargain sale” price. Then we began a capital campaign to raise funds for a home of our own.

We tend to stay home more often, grateful for a place where we find some comfort and even inspiration. We look for winter birds and the occasional hungry coyote. We think about the future—what we might accomplish next year.

In the Pioneer Valley, it’s impossible to ignore the impact of seasons on the land and our own habits. Woodpiles have been growing since September; it takes extra time to get up for going outside; and the true shape of our hillsides is revealed, then slowly covered in snow.

From childhood to their current life in the Ashfield hills, Ron and Nina Coler have deep roots in Franklin County.

“I grew up in Buckland and Ron in Ashfield. We met in high school,” Nina says, “and lived in the same dorm at UMass, Amherst. We had such a connection to the land: summer Sundays at Catamount Pond, skating and cookouts on the snow on other people’s land.”

Work took them to Norwell, Massachusetts, outside Boston, where Ron started an engineering and consulting firm. “Our home was near an old farm with an orchard,” Nina says. “We lived there seven years. But by the time we left, all that was gone—developed, congested and unpleasant. We’ve seen what happens when land isn’t protected, which is why we conserved our land.”

For 20 years, Ron worked three days a week in Norwell and the remainder in a local office. He recalls his reaction to the commute: “As soon as I got to 116, I felt immediate relief. Boston is great, but I love leaving it. For me, this home is pure peace.”

The Colers have built a spacious, light-filled, off-the-grid house and maintain a sustainable lifestyle. Their driveway leads through an orchard, several garden plots, past beehives surrounded by an electrified fence. A small array of solar panels tucked behind a shed connects with 24 batteries, supplying electricity to power their computers, television, radios, lights, hot water heater—all they need. Rows of wine bottles lie sideways in the space. “People come here to learn about bee-keeping, wine-making and living well off the grid,” Nina says. Area snowmobilers benefit from their land as well. Walking along a wide swath cut through a mix of hardwoods and evergreens, Ron notes, “We are on a skimoile trail the public uses. We don’t mind the noise,” Nina adds. “We can see lights at night. There is some comfort knowing someone is there, enjoying the land.”

The Colers heat with wood, and as they harvest it, they expand their trails, one of which hooks up with an old cart path, once a road between Ashfield and Buckland.

While managing their home and land, the Colers find time for their community. Ron is a selectman in Ashfield. Nina is a member of the Franklin Land Trust board of directors, and both Colers trained as volunteer monitors for FLT, visiting other conserved properties annually.

With Ron, Nina manages the Ashfield Park lake and surrounding property. She organizes the book sale for the town’s fall festival, is a skilled watercolor artist, knits, hooks rugs—and is renewing an old interest by taking dance classes again after a 28 year hiatus.

For Ron, every stone wall and foundation connects him to others who worked and lived on this land.

“Each farmer could only accomplish so much in a lifetime—it took several generations to clear the land and scotch out a living. The old walls and foundation remnants are history, to be respected and preserved. One of my projects is to clear out those foundations. I wonder what kind of treasure I might find; the structures go back to Revolutionary times. I feel a certain awe in working on it.”

Walking through a meadow near the house, Nina explains “You never need to be alone or people who dislike winter. The changing seasons make it wonderful; when spring comes it’s exciting. I covered this hill with hundreds of daffodils, and they have multiplied.”

She points through now-bare trees to distant hills. “In summer it’s a green tunnel,” she says. “When it snows, we can see fields in Hawley.”

Near their orchard, Ron has three large organic gardens where he rotates vegetables that he uses year-round. “He’s an expert on canning,” Nina says. “I’m his prep chef.”

The Colers will always remain on this land they love. Disdained by the energy used in cremation, they have decided on a simple solution: their land is one of the first places in Massachusetts permitted for natural burial, in which the body is wrapped in a simple shroud and covered with four feet of earth, located a minimum distance from any public well. “We selected our sites,” Ron says, “and will mark them unobtrusively with a gravestone laid flat on its side.”

But now, there is much to do every day. “I enjoy the combination of working hard, then sitting down to enjoy what’s around me,” Ron says. “I love being busy, constructing. I’m very involved with all that work; that’s how I relate to the former owners.”

Ron recalls cutting firewood, then sitting quietly on a stump, listening to the honking of birds, and looking up to see snow geese high above him. “Their white forms seem almost translucent,” he says, “unbelievably beautiful and inspiring.”

High up on a trail, the Colers built a fire pit and are working on a lean-to—a place to invite friends and spend quiet time. “Late one afternoon,” Nina says, smiling, “I took my sandwich up there. As I sat quietly, I watched a procession of coyotes, and they passed through the woods without even looking at me.”
**Donors to the Rescue!**

Donor support played a major role in allowing FLT to successfully conserve these very special places.

**Flagg Mountain Saved**

Conway

If you’ve driven on Route 2, the Mohawk Trail, you’ve seen Flagg Mountain, looming above the road near Shelburne and visible from Conway, Ashfield—and even the Bridge of Flowers. The mountain was slated for 25 building lots, forever altering the scenery, closing public trails and disrupting wildlife. Thanks to multi-year efforts by FLT, the 160 acres is now owned by the MA Department of Fish & Game and will remain a familiar landmark, open for hiking and recreational access.

**Far From Their Ancestral Home and Flourishing**

Charlemont

Norwegian Fjord horses are raised on Blue Heron Farm’s 108 acres in Charlemont. Portions of the land were conserved through an Agricultural Preservation Restriction held by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR). Their sugar bush to the east of Warner Hill Road has been conserved through an Agricultural Restriction on 53 acres of forest and fields located along scenic Cooper Lane in Shelburne. Charlie is FLT’s board treasurer and an avid fly fisherman on the Deerfield River. This land’s conservation ensures that the property will be left in private ownership and actively managed for timber and agricultural products, now and in the future.

**Historic Dairy Site Conserved**

Colrain

From the founding of Colrain, the Elwell property has been a working farm. Now the Devine property, its 120 acres of forest, 60 acres of fields, and land along the Green River remain preserved as an extension of the MA Department of Fish and Game’s Green River Wildlife Management Area, open for passive public recreation and hunting.

**53 Acres Conserved**

Shelburne

Charlie Cohn and Catherine Smith have donated a conservation restriction on 53 acres of forest and fields located along scenic Cooper Lane in Shelburne. Charlie is FLT’s board treasurer and an avid fly fisherman on the Deerfield River. This land’s conservation ensures that the property will be left in private ownership and actively managed for timber and agricultural products, now and in the future.

**Town Center Parcel Saved**

Shelburne

An iconic property in Shelburne Center has been protected for future generations thanks to nine generous neighbors who worked side-by-side with FLT. This 18.9 acre historic property, previously owned by Madeline McKinnon, had been on the market since 2009 and was slated to be sold as 4 house lots. Nearly all of the land is hayfield, and features a view across the village, to the steeple of the First Congregational Church of Shelburne on Route 2. “This was a true neighborhood conservation effort. We couldn’t have done it without the support of the local community”, says FLT Executive Director Rich Hubbard.

**Critical Watershed Protection Increased**

New Salem/Wendell

The Overing land, at the corner of New Salem Road and Wendell Road, is a 20 acre scenic hayfield and woodland parcel now conserved for watershed protection. Two additional parcels totaling 46 acres of woodland were also purchased by the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for conservation. In addition to being important for the water quality of the Quabbin Reservoir, the Overing property surrounds the Wendell-New Salem Swift River Elementary School, so its conservation will protect the school’s drinking water well in perpetuity.

**Massachusetts’ Largest Potato Farm Forever Part of Scenic Route 47**

Hadley/Sunderland

Szawlowski Potato Farm was started by polish immigrant John R. Szawlowski in 1910. The farm has weathered changing economies to become the largest potato grower and packager in Massachusetts. Headed by four of John’s grandsons, the farm grows potatoes on 2,500 acres of land in Hadley, Northampton, and Whately, and is comprised of almost all “prime” agricultural soils. FLT assisted with the conservation of 182.5 acres of farm land on the Sunderland/Hadley town lines along Route 47 and Plumtree Road. Formally owned by Stk Land Trust, it is one of the largest properties under single ownership in Sunderland and Hadley, is located in a large farm block across Route 47 from the Kuzmeski and Tudyn APRs, and is as a critical component of the scenic character of Route 47.
Stewardship

A Special Walk in the Woods

By Larry Haber

During fall and into winter, the bare trees are fully exposed and there is more light through the forest: favorable conditions for field work. You may spot land stewards, wearing hunter orange clothes, walking along boundary lines and woodland roads within one of FLT’s 120 conservation restriction properties. Armed with a GPS unit and compass, they search for sometimes elusive boundary pins, take notes, and photograph significant natural features.

After completing most of this year’s monitoring with the help of FLT’s new volunteer stewards, the stewards are tackling the backlog of baseline assessments resulting from increased land protection. Baselines are an important document for every restriction held by FLT and the reference point for all future monitoring visits. Using field work and conversations with the landowner, stewards create a snapshot of the restricted property including a written description, related maps, and all the photos taken in their boundary walks. If you’re enjoying the woods and see people in neon taking azimuths, notes and pictures, say hello.

Students Study Invasives

In September 2013, Stewardship Assistant Josh Morse contacted Deerfield Academy Sustainability Coordinator Jeff Jewett about collaborating with his environmental science students on a range of stewardship projects. After discussing possible partnerships ranging from cataloging possible vernal pools to assisting with CR monitoring, the two decided to involve Deerfield Academy’s Science Research Methods students in surveying an FLT property for invasive plants. To bring the students up to speed on invasive species monitoring, Josh worked with Jeff in the classroom and the field to teach identification of such high-profile invaders as Asiatic Bittersweet and Multiflora Rose and familiarize the class with FLT’s field surveying protocol. FLT looks forward to incorporating the valuable data that Jeff’s class generated for a management plan for the property along Routes 5 and 10.

Help with Enhancing Woodlands & Bird Habitat

The Massachusetts Woodlands Institute (MWI), FLT’s organizational partner, was recently awarded the contract for the Forest Stewardship Program and a new Bird Habitat Assessment Program through the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). MWI will administer the two programs in concert with DCR. The Forest Stewardship Program provides cost-share assistance to landowners who own over 10 acres for the cost of hiring a licensed forester to prepare a Forest Stewardship Plan, which helps landowners plan for timber management, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities on their land. The Institute is a statewide organization dedicated to maintaining the environment and character of the woodlands of Massachusetts, conserving and enhancing forest resources, and fostering community economic development. The Forest Stewardship Program helps landowners take steps to enhance the many benefits that woodlands provide, such as clean air and water, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, scenery and privacy, and wood products and local employment. With over 80% of the landscape of western Massachusetts dominated by forest cover, the Forest Stewardship program plays a valuable role in helping landowners learn more about managing their land.

The new Bird Habitat Assessment Program will also provide cost share assistance to help landowners learn more about what types of habitat their land provides, and strategies for enhancing it for specific bird populations. As a new pilot program, it will initially be limited to land in the northern hilltowns and western Franklin County.

Contact Wendy Ferris
wendy@masswoodlands.org or (413) 834-4310

Why We Support FLT

The Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts

By Dan Gould, SAM President

The Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts (SAM) is all about trails. One of our biggest challenges is changes in land ownership, which makes access unpredictable.

As part of our strategic plan, SAM developed a trail preservation program that includes working with entities like the Franklin Land Trust on conservation projects, such as the Zimmerman Farm in Leyden and the Clappe property in Conway, both of which contain major snowmobile routes.

It’s a win-win situation when lands and trails like these are conserved forever. As outdoor enthusiasts, we realize that we have much in common, especially when it comes to preserving open space and recreational trails that serve people in all seasons. Our core beliefs are similar, and we are pursuing fundraising opportunities. We look forward to building relationships through future conservation projects.

Shape the future of places you love— and receive tax advantages!

✓ BECOME A MEMBER and enjoy information, events, access to hiking trails, and workshops designed to enhance your enjoyment of our area’s land.

✓ MAKE A MONTHLY OR ANNUAL GIFT. If you pay bills online, add us as a payee for the amount and frequency you choose.

✓ Benefit yourself, your loved ones and the Franklin Land Trust through LEGACY GIFTS such as an outright gift of assets (real estate, securities, retirement funds or life insurance policies); a gift of an annuity that provides income to you for the rest of your life; or a gift of a home or farm allows you to use the property for as long as you wish.

✓ Remember us in your WILL OR OTHER ESTATE PLANS.

✓ DONATE A CONSERVATION RESTRICTION on your land now, knowing FLT will provide stewardship forever.

✓ DONATE YOUR OLD CAR, which we convert to support for conservation.

✓ We can develop a GIFT PLAN that meets your needs and keeps a family farm working for future generations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Mary Lynn Sabourin: (413) 635-9151, mlsabourin@franklinlandtrust.org

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Naturally Curious

Naturally Curious by Mary Holland

Recommended by Will Sloan-Anderson, Land Steward

I recently received a copy of Naturally Curious by naturalist and photographer Mary Holland. It’s a spectacular field guide to New England, organized month-by-month, a format that corresponds to the way I approach the natural world. What was that mushroom found in September? What were those migratory birds I saw in March? Why were those moths emerging? The large format does not make it field-friendly, but while the cold winds blow, it warms the soul to read Mary Holland’s prose describing Spring ephemerals and see her excellent photographs of Dutchman’s Breeches. You can visit Molly’s wonderful blog to keep up with what is going on beyond the window pane. NaturallyCuriousWithMaryHolland.wordpress.com

Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival

By Bend Heinrich

Recommended by Carole Fuller, Volunteer Monitor

Readers can be grateful that Bernd Heinrich is not shy about cold—really cold—weather. As a boy, the stories of Jack London moved him to seek winter adventures. Now, prowling the woods of Maine and Vermont, he poses questions we might ask but could not answer: how does the Kinglet, scarcely the size of an adult’s thumb, spend days and nights in subzero weather while maintaining a body temperature of nearly 100°F? Why are crows increasingly roosting in our cities? Heinrich, award-winning author of 21 nature books and a biology professor at University of Vermont, provides fascinating, scientifically detailed explanations in a lyrical, accessible prose that demonstrates his enduring sense of wonder.
Events for Family & Friends

FEBRUARY 8
Family Fun at Guyette Farm with the Student Conservation Association (SCA)
1-4pm: Sledding, snowshoeing & games. Wrapping up with hot chocolate and s’mores by the bonfire. FREE for all ages.
Guyette Farm, Gloyd Street, Plainfield

FEBRUARY 9
Winter Frolic & Feast at Stump Sprouts
XC Ski Center
1-5 pm: Cross Country Skiing & Snowshoeing
5pm on: Live music, appetizers and buffet meal
$25 adults & $12 for children under 12
Stump Sprouts, 63 W Hill Rd, Hawley, MA (413) 339-4265

FEBRUARY 13
Open House Event & Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
Come celebrate FLT’s new office! Thursday, February 13, 4-7pm.
Ribbon cutting ceremony at 6pm.
Light snacks and beverages will be served.
Franklin Land Trust, 5 Mechanic Street, Shelburne Falls

Looking for that special gift?
Birthdays, holidays, no matter the reason, consider honoring a friend, family member or colleague with a donation to the Franklin Land Trust.
How often do you get to make a gift that lasts forever?
Give your gift today at FranklinLandTrust.org

Your support has made this possible!