

Annual Meeting 2013



The 2013 annual meeting was preceded by a wonderfully informative and very well attended talk and demonstration of wild birds of prey, presented by Tom Ricardi, who operates a rehabilitation center for a variety of raptors at his home in Conway, MA. Peregrine falcon, red-tailed hawk, great-horned owl, and the bald-headed turkey vulture (his favorite) were but a few of the birds he brought (in custom-made boxes) to show us (see photos). The large audience was enthralled by his knowledge and his passion.

Afterward, ELT members held their annual meeting. Ursula announced that she and Walter will relinquish their officer roles with ELT but will remain active members of the Board. Chuck Ogden, Walter Cliff, and Susan Shapiro were re-elected to the Board of Trustees. The following officers were elected: Peg Muskrat, president; Lois Ginsberg, vice-president; Maureen Steiner, treasurer; and Chuck Ogden, clerk.

Maureen Steiner reported that ELT has about 200 memberships, with 350 individuals supporting our mission.

After the meeting, members enjoyed socializing over lunch provided by ELT.

The 2014 Annual Meeting will be on Saturday, September 6. Program to be announced.

*Photographs by Paula Ober.
Clockwise from top left: Screech Owl, Turkey Vulture (center), Peregrine Falcon, Great Horned Owl*

WILDFLOWER WALK

Once again, on May 11, Egremont wildflower lovers followed Stephanie Bergman along the banks of the Green River and across the bordering meadow on ELT's conservation property in North Egremont. The goal was to identify as many spring wildflowers as possible, and Stephanie gave the amateur naturalists an encyclopedia's store of botanical knowledge.

They learned a new word: myrmecochory, which means seed dispersal by ants, and they saw the word in action. (This is the main reason wild violets were so profuse this year.) When they reached the river, Stephanie held up a rock covered with invasive algae called rock snot that looks almost as repulsive as its name and can, potentially, affect the river's health. She searched for and found a macroinvertebrate, the family that is the basis of the river ecosystem. (This particular macroinvertebrate was a mayfly nymph.)



Many of the wildflowers were familiar: the dandelion, the northern white violet (spread, as readers now understand, by myrmecochory), the multiflora rose, and the buttercup. Other, less familiar plants were motherwort, cypress spurge, false hellebore, and blue cohosh. Stephanie pointed out that almost all of these plants, including the beloved jack-in-the-pulpit and the trillium, were used in folk medicine to treat a variety of ailments. Participants resolved to treat their next earache with thyme-leaved speedwell and to refrain from giving their enemies, no matter how greatly disliked, a dose of highly toxic false hellebore. A complete list of the wildflowers seen is available on ELT's website.



Threatened Native Rhododendron Found in Egremont

by Dr. Bryan Hamlin, President, New England Botanical Club (and son-in-law of ELT member Bev Almond)

Egremont is noted for the variety of its topography (e.g., Baldwin Hill, Prospect Lake), and its extensive areas of undisturbed wetlands are of particular interest to botanists. In fact, the State Ecologist told me that she has a soft spot for Egremont. The Commonwealth runs a Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, listing, monitoring, and attempting to protect the rare and endangered plant and animal species throughout the state. The program has four categories: Endangered, Threatened, Special Concern, and Watch Listed, in descending significance. This list is periodically renewed.

A few years ago, I came across an impressive stand of Great Laurel in Egremont—*Rhododendron maximum*—and, as required, I reported the particular location to the Endangered Species Program, which lists this plant as Threatened. The Rhododendron bushes many of us have in our gardens are horticultural varieties, often based on the Catawba Rhododendron that grows wild in the mountains of North Carolina. Great Laurel is our New England native species. It is tall and somewhat straggly but with beautiful large pink flowers. This striking bush is now rare throughout much of New England, with the exception of Rhode Island, where it is a bit more common.



Rhododendron maximum

Dr. Bryan Hamlin



PLEASE JOIN US!

If you're already a member, pass this envelope to a friend who's not yet a member.

If you haven't yet joined ELT and love Egremont, use the envelope to become part of the good work.

An Example of Why ELT is Important

My family and I drive past Egremont's wetlands daily. We observe a great variety of animals: birds, reptiles, rodents. In different seasons, we see otter, beaver, muskrat, weasel, and smaller rodents. There are frogs, snakes, salamanders, newts, and at least four species of turtle: box, wood, painted, and the prehistoric snapping turtle. For years, we have watched a huge snapping turtle, 35 to 40 pounds, estimated

to be 125 to 150 years old. The bird population is the most diverse of all. American bald eagles and osprey fish in the pond, and we watch other birds of prey, several species of duck, Canada geese, grebe, merganser, kingfisher, and, of course, smaller birds. Our wetlands area local treasure—a gold mine worth fighting for.

—by Ari Zorn, whose favorite wetland is Smiley's Pond

AUNT ROSE'S COLUMN



This is Aunt Rose's last column. She says she's been hearing that Egremonters want more sophisticated journalism: they say they can't take advice from a country bumpkin. Her feelings were a little hurt, but she's found a solution: read on.

Well, I'm off to law school! Three years from now you won't know me. Much, much longer words, more complicated sentences, better grammar, and of course greater authority. Ezekiel says folks will pay more attention to what I say, although basically I'll be saying the same thing.

Before I go, here's one last, very important thing. Of course everyone knows that conservation gifts to land trusts like ELT can be deducted from their federal income tax. But did you know that since 2011 you can also deduct it from your Massachusetts state income tax? AND (sit down when you hear this) the tax credit, for the year in which you make the gift, is up to \$50,000 or the appraised value, whichever is less, and, if your tax bill is less than that, you get a check for the difference.

If your donation (gift of the land, gift of a conservation restriction, etc.) is appraised at \$120,000 and you owe the

Commonwealth \$10,000 income tax, the tax is wiped out and you get a check for the remaining credit; in this case \$40,000. If your donation is appraised at \$30,000, and your state income tax is \$5,000, your tax is similarly eliminated and you get a check for \$25,000.

There's always paperwork, of course, and the people at ELT can help with this. The Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs must certify that the land to be preserved is significant for the protection of drinking water, wildlife habitats, agriculture, forestry, recreation, or scenic or cultural values of regional importance. The vacant lot next door won't cut the mustard.

Now, quite a few of our neighbors in Egremont pay no Massachusetts income tax (because they're from out of state, of course---no tax dodgers here). That means they *get the whole tax credit in cash*. So, if they make a conservation donation worth at least \$50,000, they get a check from Boston for \$50,000. And with the price of land these days so high, it's not hard to donate a piece of land worth \$50,000. (There's always a catch. The feds and the state say this is taxable income.)

Who knows how long this happy state of affairs (checks from Boston) will last? So take Aunt Rose's parting words of advice: *Carpe diem*. (I'm starting to learn a little Latin. Will it help with the LSATs?) Anyway, act now.

Arrivederci. (It's not Latin but it's what they say in Rome.)

Egremont Land Trust 2013 Membership

Bev Almond	Sarah & Timothy Eustis	Rachel Kaufman & Jeremy Gage
Eunice & Warren Anson	Marian Faytell & Joel Friedman	Barbara A. Kelley
Susan Bachelder	Edith Ferber	Franziska Kenney
Peggy & Peter Barrett	Rachel Fletcher	Alice Kessler-Harris & Bert Silverman
Amy & Lester Bart	Brigid Flynn	Joan & Larry Kleinman
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Marcia & Leslie Berglass	Helen Friedman	Carole & Robert Landau
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 Carol Wilson & Charles Stuart
 Elizabeth Wilson

Egremont Land Trust Coming Events for 2014

See the ELT online calendar for more information:
www.egremontlandtrust.org/calendar.php

- Saturday, May 10, 10:00 AM, **Wildflower Walk**
- Sunday, May 18, 12 noon, **Annual ELT Luncheon**, at the Old Mill
- Saturday, June 7, 7:30 AM, **Birding Walk** led by Brian Kane
- Saturday, September 6, 11:00 AM, **Annual Meeting**
- Saturday, September 13 – **Fall Walk** led by Dave Johnson, chair of Egremont Conservation Commission (details to be announced)
- **History Walk** – to be announced!

Annual Luncheon, 2013

The 2013 Annual ELT Luncheon was held on Saturday, May 18. Once again, Terry Moore, the proprietor of the Old Mill, and Ginny Filkins, the general manager, generously hosted this popular event.

Sixty-two guests were treated to the foods of local farms and vendors. The ELT luncheon is a wonderful way for new members to become part of the group and for old members to renew friendships.

Gracious servers presented the crowd with wine and appetizers. Terry's menu began with asparagus soup or baby greens with beets, followed by broiled Chatham grey sole, braised organic breast of chicken, or braised lamp ragout,

and finished with profiteroles au chocolat or strawberry shortcake. The wine selection included '11 Chardonnay, La Crema, Sonoma, or '10 Bourgogne Rouge Maison Roche de Bellene.

Jan Johnson, also known as "the beekeeper" and the founder of Berkshire Wildflower Honey, was our speaker. Jan talked about the life of bees and the mission of her organization, which is to advocate for children's need to experience growing and cooking food as part of their education in healthy, sustainable living.

We look forward to this year's luncheon, scheduled for Sunday, May 18.

Egremont Land Trust Online:

www.egremontlandtrust.org

Look for our calendar of events and a link to local resources. Fill in your e-mail address to receive announcements or to print out a membership and donation forms. We do not share membership information with anyone, no matter how worthy the cause.



Baldwin Hill History “Walk”

On July 20, Nic Cooper, our member and historian, led a walk (actually a stand-still viewing) on Baldwin Hill, very recently preserved through the joint efforts of ELT’s Fund for Baldwin Hill, BNRC, the Commonwealth’s APR program, the Burdsall and Proctor families, and several foundation grants. From the hilltop, Nic pointed out the rich agricultural

land spreading out before us: farms that have existed since the 19th and probably 18th centuries, and that will continue to be farmed forever. The fabulous views are some of the best in the county and they too will exist forever: one of Egremont’s greatest treasures.

ANNUAL BIRD WALK

Last year on April 27, Brian Kane, a professor at UMass, once again led ELT's annual bird walk. At this time of year, our summer residents (avian and human) are returning, and other birds are migrating through on their way to cooler breeding grounds. Brian's explanations of what his audience is seeing and hearing are fascinating for children, novices, and our faithful band of long-time birders, and Brian always sets up his scope so everyone can have a clear view of that elusive target bird. Birds are up early, so walks start at 7:30. Save June 7 this spring to come on the walk, which begins at the parking lot at Jug End State Reservation.

Here is the list of birds we saw and heard on the walk last April:

broad-winged hawk
red-tailed hawk
downy woodpecker
pileated woodpecker
Northern flicker
Eastern phoebe
blue-headed vireo
blue jay
American crow
tree swallow
tufted titmouse
black-capped chickadee
white-breasted nuthatch
brown creeper
golden-crowned kinglet
ruby-crowned kinglet
Eastern bluebird
American robin
hermit thrush
Louisiana waterthrush
Northern cardinal
Eastern towhee
song sparrow
swamp sparrow
white-throated sparrow
dark-eyed junco
red-winged blackbird
brown-headed cowbird
purple finch
American goldfinch



*Top to bottom:
Pileated Woodpecker
Golden-Crowned Kinglet
Northern Flicker*





The Solarize Massachusetts (Solarize Mass) Great Barrington–Egremont program is intended to increase the adoption of small-scale solar electricity systems through a grassroots educational campaign and a tiered pricing structure that increases the savings for everyone as more owners in town sign up.

Home and business owners who participate can purchase the solar electricity systems, or they can enter into a lease or power purchase agreement with RGS Energy, our installer. To sign up for a free solar assessment of your house, go to www.solarizeGBandEGR.com. Egremont’s local contact is Juliette Haas (email: solarizeegremont@gmail.com).

This is a limited time offer. Contracts with the installer must be signed by June 30, 2014.



P.O. Box 132, 71 Main Street
South Egremont, MA 01258

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