

ANNUAL PRESENTATION:

Tom Tynning: Why Frogs & Turtles Love Egremont

About 45 people came to French Park to hear Tom Tynning, herpetologist, talk about turtles and frogs, his passion since the fifth grade. After studying wildlife biology and organismic and evolutionary biology at UMass Amherst, where he focused on the timber rattlesnake, Tom went to work for Mass Audubon. Since 1999, he's been a professor of environmental science at Berkshire Community College.

Turtles are reptiles. The musk turtle, at about 3 inches long, is one of the smallest turtles and perhaps the rarest in Berkshire County. Only one has been sighted in Egremont, which may be its northern-most habitat.

Tom brought Larry, a wood turtle rescued after being hit by a car 16 years ago. Larry loves earthworms and will sit still for 4 to 5 days after eating. In the wild, he would have spent the winter under leaf mold (decayed leaves), despite the freezing temperatures. Turtles need a clean healthy area to live in, but it need not be larger than a couple of acres.

A 125-year-old box turtle was found in CT. Turtles have two shells, the top (with the pyramid-like scutes) and the bottom (the carapace). Growth rings on the scutes reflect the turtle's age, but this is reliable only up to age 25 or 30. The carapace of the box turtle is hinged, which means he can defend himself by pulling his head and limbs into the shell, and he can hide like that for 10 days. Tom says, "Turtles have a long outlook on life." The snapper turtle's carapace isn't hinged. Amphibians are major contributors to our ecosystem. Thousands cross our roads toward the end of March, especially at night. Evolution led to their survival, but it failed to foresee cars. Please drive with care.

The red-backed salamander is the most abundant amphibian in Egremont, in biomass and in number. Its biomass is easily twice that of all the birds in this area.

The spotted salamander lives underground for 11 months of the year, coming out only in early spring. We don't know what they eat underground, but they live up to 30 years. They mature at 6 to 8 years and can then reproduce, which happens in March through May, in vernal pools where there are no fish predators. Vernal pools, which exist only in the spring, don't last long enough to support a fish population. However, in dry years,



ATTENDEES OF THE PRESENTATION



RED EFT



TOM WITH THE TURKEY VULTURE

spotted salamander mortality is 100%.

The familiar red or orange eft, now called the red-spotted salamander, is very sensitive to its environment because it has no scales or fur to protect it, so its presence is a sign of a healthy ecology. Its color warns birds not to eat it — they will get sick from a toxin in its skin — but this doesn't work for racoons, which are colorblind. The eft spends 10 to 12 years on land and then heads for a beaver pond, where it turns green and lives for another 25 to 30 years. It is said that 40 or 50 efts will form a "mating ball," but Tom hasn't seen this.

The American toad, formerly *Bufo* but now *Anaxyrus americanus*, has a 25- to 40-year lifespan. It breeds in shallow vegetated wet areas, including vernal pools, where the thousands of hatching tadpoles can swim. In winter, adults dig down 3" to 4" to survive the cold. Their bumpy skin contains bufotoxins, which may irritate but are not highly toxic.

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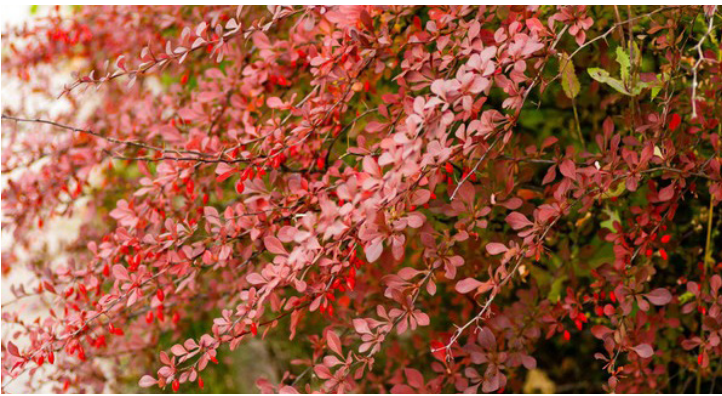


TREE FROG

Tom Tynning: Why Frogs & Turtles Love Egremont *(continued from page 1)*

The young gray tree frog's skin is green, but the adult's skin mimics lichen, thus providing excellent camouflage. Furthermore, the underside of this frog's legs is yellow, so when it jumps, it frightens predators; this is called a startle pattern. The gray tree frog's rounded toe discs probably help it climb trees. It can be heard singing on any day of the year.

In summary, there is more biodiversity in Egremont and Mt. Washington than anywhere else in Massachusetts, and it's important that we do all we can to preserve it. ♦



JAPANESE BARBERRY

Invasive Plants Walk 2018

On June 3, 2018, 12 people gathered at French Park with local resident Patrick Riordan, to learn about invasive plant species that are turning our landscape from a forest into a jungle. Patrick, a 2018 graduate of the Berkshire Botanical Garden Level I Horticultural Certificate program, has a wealth of knowledge about invasive plants, and he offered advice about how to keep our sanity while combatting them. He stressed that getting rid of these plants is a multi-year effort: you may never completely eradicate them but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try, focusing on one invasive at a time.



PATRICK WITH PULL BEARER



GARLIC MUSTARD

Tools and gear to have on hand: Felco hand-pruners, a small pruning saw (and a telescoping pruning saw is nice to have, too), telescoping loppers, a flame thrower, work gloves (those with cuffs are a good idea when dealing with poison ivy), garbage bags in which to dispose of garlic mustard tops, and a serious up-rooting tool called a Pullerbear (uses lever action to pull up roots).

An exotic invasive plant usually came from another country, and it inhibits native plants. Some examples of invasives in our area: garlic mustard (a biennial that you can attack with the flame thrower, using a tiny flame on a wet day in early spring), Japanese barberry (where mice and their deer ticks like to hang out), Oriental bittersweet (first arrived in U.S. in 1860 and in MA in 1906), buckthorn, multiflora rose, wild grape, euonymus (in particular, burning bush), and Japanese knotweed.

Tips for dealing with specific invasives:

- Japanese barberry – a good time to pull it out is winter, when the ground is wet and the roots are loosened. Burn it after removing it.
- Bittersweet – trying to pull it down from a tree when it's alive may damage the tree and allow harmful insects to move in. Cut the vine and then remove it when it's dead and brittle. It's easier to uproot it when the ground is wet.
- Garlic mustard – when digging it, you can cut off the top where the seed heads are and dispose of them in a garbage bag. This biennial survives through its first winter, so killing it in its first year will prevent its going to seed.

If you missed this walk with Patrick last spring, you're in luck. He will lead another study session in 2019!

Links: Identifying invasive species: www.misin.msu.edu/species-training/

Native alternatives to plant: www.newenglandwild.org/images/protect/Invasive ♦

Birding Walk **SPRING 2018**

On a chilly but lovely May 5 morning, about a dozen of us gathered at Jug End Reserve for Brian Kane's spring bird walk. As always, he inspired us with his ability to identify, by sight or call, all the birds in the area. In many cases, he found them with his telescope, and then we could see them, too.

In a discussion of how the phenotypes differ between the sexes in many species, Brian taught us a fascinating fact: phalaropes (a genus of slender-necked shorebirds) are the only group of birds in which the female is larger and more colorful than the male. We wish we had seen some of those!

Join us this coming spring for this educational and exhilarating walk!

SPRING BIRD WALK

Birds seen and heard:

- Mallard
- Black vulture
- Turkey vulture
- Cooper's hawk
- Red-tailed hawk
- Mourning dove
- Red-bellied woodpecker
- Yellow-bellied sapsucker
- Downy woodpecker
- Northern flicker
- Least flycatcher
- Eastern phoebe
- Warbling vireo
- Blue jay
- Tree swallow
- Barn swallow
- Black-capped chickadee
- Tufted titmouse
- White-breasted nuthatch
- Blue-gray gnatcatcher
- American robin
- Gray catbird
- European starling
- Ovenbird
- Louisiana waterthrush
- Blue-winged warbler
- Black-and-white warbler
- Common yellowthroat
- Yellow warbler
- Black-throated blue warbler
- Yellow-rumped warbler
- Prairie warbler
- Black-throated green warbler
- Chipping sparrow
- Field sparrow
- White-throated sparrow
- Savannah sparrow
- Song sparrow
- Swamp sparrow
- Eastern towhee
- Northern cardinal

- Rose-breasted grosbeak
- Baltimore oriole
- Red-winged blackbird
- Brown-headed cowbird
- Common grackle
- American goldfinch



SIGHTING



RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER



BLACK THROATED BLUE WARBLER



LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH



VIEW FROM BALDWIN HILL, PRESERVED FOREVER

About ELT **OUR HISTORY**

As with many other environmental organizations, the Egremont Land Trust was formed in response to a threat. Egremont is a small Berkshire town, made up of two villages, North Egremont and South Egremont, with a total population of about 1100, and an area of approximately 12,000 acres. In 1985, a resort hotel called Jug End in the Berkshires, which occupied a 1200-acre valley a tenth of the area of the whole town was in bankruptcy. Its buildings were dilapidated and its grounds overgrown. A group of developers bought the property and proposed to erect 605 housing units in the valley, which was by far the largest block of undeveloped land left in Egremont.

A mini-uproar ensued, as many townspeople pointed out that such development would double the town's population at one blow and destroy the ecology of the valley. These opponents formed an organization called Egremont Environmental Action, whose slogan was "Keep Egremont Small and Beautiful." The battle was long and fierce, but became moot when the developers themselves went bankrupt.

The story had a happy ending for Egremont when the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife jointly bought the 1200 acres, demolished many of the buildings, and established the Jug End State Reservation and Wildlife Management Area, encouraged and aided by several environmental organizations, including Egremont Environmental Action, as the land trust was then known.

Now that the struggle and drama were over, and the goal achieved, EEA paused to draw breath and then, in 1998, changed its name to the more descriptive Egremont Land Trust. First steps were tentative: EEA had in 1993 succeeded in purchasing nearly 10 marshy acres of fen on Baldwin Hill Road, and this remained for some years the land trust's only acquisition. Then in 1999, the land trust, with the help of The Nature Conservancy, a frequent partner in our conservation efforts, bought a 27.5 acre parcel, the last remnant of what is alleged to be Egremont's oldest farm. That same year, The

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FARM ON BALDWIN HILL



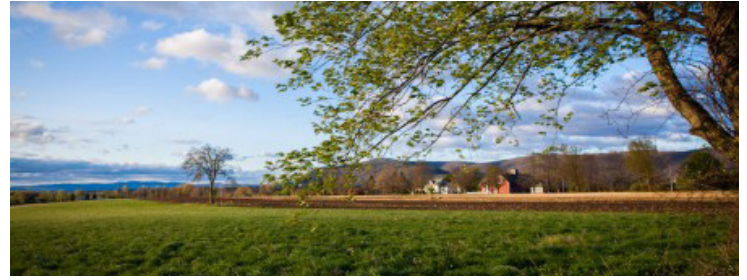
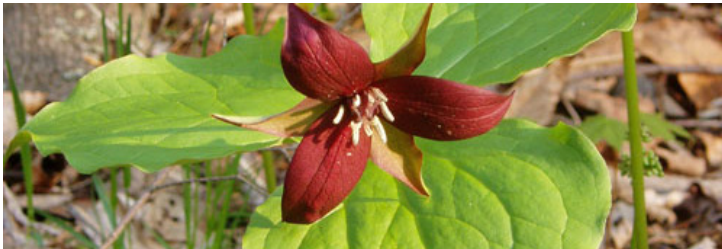
PILEATED WOODPECKER

About ELT **HISTORY** *(continued)*

Nature Conservancy gave us five acres on Mt. Washington Road.

Another of our conservation partners has been the Appalachian Trail Conference, with which we worked to preserve a critical parcel of 10 acres which formed part of a beautiful vista from Route 41 overlooking valley and hills in Sheffield and extending on into Connecticut.

We have not rested on our laurels. Visit our website, (www.egremontlandtrust.org/projects.php) and see Projects Accomplished for a list of our efforts since the Egremont Land Trust was founded in 1998. ♦



In Memory of Priscilla Burdsall

Members of the Egremont Land Trust were deeply saddened to hear that Priscilla Burdsall died on Thursday, May 31, 2018. She will be greatly missed. The Burdsall family generously named ELT as a recipient of contributions in lieu of flowers, and we are truly grateful. We received more than \$2000 in her memory from the following donors. Thank you, Burdsalls and donors. ELT was honored to be remembered in this manner.

Eunice & Warren Anson

Edward Cobden

Egremont Garden Club

Marie Erwin

Robin & Peter Goldberg

HNTB Corporation

Kathryn & Timothy Hocter

Marion Jansen

John Kellogg

Zoe Lewis

Candida & James Logan

Miriam & Russell Longyear

Paul Murphy

Kathy & Nick Newman

Hilary & Frank Penglase

Ellen & Charles Proctor

Savage Property Holdings

George Smith

Cynthia & James Snyder

Rebecca & Sheri Staples

Nina & Robert Stratton

Leta Tully

Linda & Robert Warner

Marj Wexler

Lynn Wood

ELT Annual Meeting, **September 2018**

After enjoying Tom Tynning's presentation, the Land Trust and community members gathered at the French Park Pavilion for lunch provided by ELT (desserts brought by Board members). The Annual Meeting was then held, chaired by our president, Peg Muskrat, who introduced the Board.

Treasurer Maureen Steiner reported that the ELT raises about \$18,000 to \$20,000 per year from dues, donations, and the annual luncheon in May (thanks to The Old Mill). Program expenses include our nature walks and the special program at our annual meeting. We also contribute to the Massachusetts Land Trust, the Audubon Society, and Greenagers. Our expenses are of two types: program expenses and basic operating expenses. Our assets consist of the properties we own and our bank accounts.

Robin Goldberg, membership chair, reported that ELT added 13 members in the past year, and two more today.

Wendy McCain named the Board members whose terms were up and asked for any further nominations from the floor (none were offered). Peggy Barrett, Robin Goldberg, Peg Muskrat, Marj Wexler, and Heidi Zorn were reelected by unanimous voice vote

for 3-year terms. Peg encouraged anyone interested in becoming a Board member to contact her or another member.

The meeting ended at about 1:00 PM. We enjoyed meeting members of the community, and we were delighted that some joined ELT. ♦



FALL Birding Walk 2018

On September 22, 2018, Brian Kane led about 17 people on the Land Trust's Fall Bird Walk on the forest trail at Jug End Reserve. The very windy day discouraged the appearance of smaller birds – usually there's an abundance of them hopping about in the undergrowth – and if it hadn't been for Brian's sharp eyes and ears, we would surely have missed most of those in the list below.

However, it was a great day to see the raptors soaring high above us, especially the turkey vultures (known as TVs by birders), but also kestrels and ospreys (the latter catch and eat fresh as well as salt-water fish).

Brian was hoping to catch sight of a Connecticut warbler, which had been reported recently in our area, but no luck today. Regardless, we thoroughly enjoyed being out with Brian and Noel, and we're very grateful that they make the trek here from the Pioneer Valley. ♦

Birds seen and heard:

- Canada goose
- Wild turkey
- Black vulture
- Turkey vulture
- Osprey
- Sharp-shinned hawk
- Cooper's hawk
- Broad-winged hawk
- Red-tailed hawk
- Belted kingfisher
- Northern flicker
- American kestrel
- Eastern phoebe
- Blue jay
- American crow
- Common raven
- Black-capped chickadee
- American robin
- Gray catbird
- European starling
- Cedar waxwing
- American goldfinch
- White-throated sparrow
- Song sparrow
- Tennessee warbler
- American redstart
- Black-throated green warbler
- Rose-breasted grosbeak



OSPREY SOARING



TURKEY VULTURE SOARING



Aunt Rose

As my faithful readers remember, I am constantly complaining about the shenanigans the folks in Washington and Boston get up to when they get their hands on taxes. In the case of all ELT members, of course, our principal worry is about our tax deduction for our contributions to the conservation cause. This year they have outdone themselves down in Washington, and I don't feel qualified yet to explain the new rules about charitable deductions. (Give me a few more years and I'll pontificate with the best of them.) Anyway, talk to your own tax professionals about this.

But looming mistily in the future, there are a couple of bright spots. The new legislative session is about to start, and there are two bills to be considered. The first would raise the cap on Conservation Land Tax Credit. That means that you'd get even more of a tax deduction when you give ELT (or any other conservation organization) a conservation restriction to ensure that your land will always be open. (You should certainly consider this.) And for farming families, the good news is a proposal to lower the estate tax valuation for agricultural land. Presently, the inheritance tax can weigh so heavily on a farmer's heirs that families find they can pay it only by selling their farmland at a price too high for any farmer to pay.

So, watch the news, folks. There's nothing to do until these bills are actually proposed and enacted. But when they are (and we'll try to keep you informed) write, call, and generally pester your representatives. Our power is the vote, and they know that.

ELT Members & Supporters 2017-2018

Many thanks to our loyal supporters, listed below. Without you, our accomplishments would simply not exist. To renew your membership for 2019, please use the enclosed envelope. If you are not yet a member and like what we're doing, please join us. You'll be glad you did.

Egremont Land Trust Membership & Supporters

Steve Agar
Bev Almond (deceased)
Warren & Eunice Anson
Ron & Sandy Ashendorf
Susan Bachelder
Corinna Barnard
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Heidi & Ari Zorn

ELT

Annual Luncheon

On Sunday, May 20, the Egremont Land Trust hosted our annual spring luncheon. As always, it was a wonderful way to bring our members and guests together for an enjoyable afternoon. It is also our major fundraiser for the year, and we thank the 65 supporters who attended.

Terry Moore, Ginny Filkins, and the staff of the Old Mill once again presented a terrific meal. The luncheon featured a choice of lobster bisque or a local mixed greens salad. Entrees were either a pan-roasted Atlantic cod with ratatouille or a roast rack of heritage pork with polenta and asparagus. Desserts offered were mascarpone cheesecake with strawberries and profiteroles with chocolate sauce. Wine, coffee, and tea complemented this great meal.

Our program featured two speakers. First was Jenny Hansel, the new president of Berkshire Natural Resources, who spoke about the mission and the activities of BNRC, and her enthusiasm for working with local organizations such as the Egremont Land Trust. Then we heard from Will Conklin, the Executive Director of Greenagers. Will described the wonderful work Greenagers does in bringing together young people who work on the raised vegetablebed projects that bring fresh vegetables to those who might otherwise be unable to buy them, as well as the trail maintenance work they do throughout our area.



HISTORIC 100 ACRES IN SOUTH EGREMONT BOUGHT BY GREENAGERS TO EXPAND THEIR MISSION

Thanks to everyone who works for and those who support BNRC, Greenagers, and the Egremont Land Trust, we have this beautiful and sustainable environment we call home. ♦

GOING GREEN

We at the Egremont Land Trust are going green! We continue to collect email addresses so that we can save paper (not to mention postage) when we send out announcements and notifications of events. Please send us your email address by clicking on the "contact" tab of our website (www.egremontlandtrust.org), or by contacting Marj directly (mwexler43@gmail.com). Thank you!

ELT COMING EVENTS - 2019

PLEASE CHECK THE ELT ONLINE CALENDAR FOR UPDATES:
WWW.EGREMONTLANDTRUST.ORG/CALENDAR.PHP

- **May 11**, Saturday, 10 AM. Wildflower and plants walk with Stephanie Bergman. Meet at ELT property on Route 71 (about ½ mi north of North Egremont store).
- **May 19**, Sunday, noon. Annual benefit luncheon, with speaker Lucinda Vermeulen. Old Mill Restaurant.
- Invasives walk and demonstration with Patrick Riordan. Details to come.
- Spring bird walk with Brian Kane. Jug End State Reservation. Details to come.
- **September 7**, Saturday, 11 AM. Annual event, with speaker to be named. French Park.
- Fall bird walk with Brian Kane. Jug End State Reservation. Details to come.

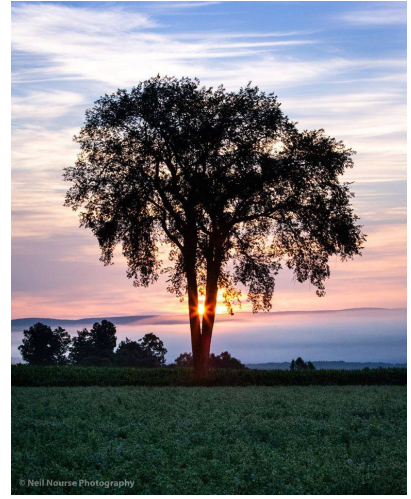
ELT Office

The Egremont Land Trust meets at Berkshire Veneer, Ben Barrett's veneer shop, off Pumpkin Hollow Road. We meet about once a month, usually on Friday afternoons, and we welcome visitors. Call our president Peg Muskrat for the date of the next meeting.

Egremont Land Trust Online:

www.egremontlandtrust.org

Look for our calendar of events and a link to local resources. Send us your email address to receive announcements, or print out a membership and donation form. We do not share membership information with anyone, no matter how worthy the cause.



PHOTOGRAPH BY: NEIL NOURSE

THE BALDWIN HILL ELM

PLEASE RENEW OR JOIN US!

THIS IS THE TIME FOR MEMBERS TO RENEW THEIR MEMBERSHIP IN ELT!

If you love Egremont but haven't yet joined ELT, please use the envelope to become part of our work. If you are already a member and don't need the envelope to renew, please pass it to a friend who might be interested.

Heidi Zorn
Susan Shapiro
David Seligman
Abigail Rogers-McKee
Chuck Ogden
Wendy McCain
Wendy Linscott
Robin Goldberg
Lois Ginsberg, member emerita
Peggy Barrett
Marjorie Wexler, clerk
Maureen Steiner, treasurer
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