

SPRING LUNCHEON

The Egremont Land Trust's 10th Annual Spring Luncheon was graciously hosted once again by Egremont's fabulous Terry Moore at the Old Mill on May 2, 2010. Sixty-three guests attended the event on a warm Sunday afternoon. After a brief cocktail hour offering Bloody Marys, mimosas, wine and passed hors d'oeuvres, the lunch began with a puree of wild mushroom soup, followed by a choice of roast tenderloin of beef or roast day boat cod, including wonderful vegetables, and concluded with a rhubarb and ginger bread pudding. Wines were a delicious '07 Olivier Leflaive Bourgogne Blanc and a wonderful '05 Cotes du Rhone. Terry generously donates all the profits from the lunch to the Egremont Land Trust.

Kathy Orlando of the Sheffield Land Trust and Jenny Hersch of ELT were our guest speakers. They described the initial successes of the Sheffield-Egremont Corridor Project, and the goals for Phase II. They highlighted the farms that have been saved so far, through the combined efforts of local contributions and the Massachusetts APR Program. Kathy announced the upcoming artists' program, in which local artists would be painting landscapes of the vistas along the corridor, to be presented and sold at a special art show in the fall. (See page one.) This would bring additional visibility to the project and involve the broader community in an awareness and support of the preservation of our local environment.



Jenny Hersch describes the Corridor's achievements.

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.

P.O. Box 132, 71 Main Street
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NEWSLETTER
WINTER 2010-2011

Autumn Art Exhibition Stars the Corridor

To help ELT and the Sheffield Land Trust (SLT) increase awareness of the Corridor Project, the Housatonic Valley Art League (HVAL) this spring scheduled a series of painting sessions or "paint-outs" for its members at several different properties that lie within the corridor. The result was a two-day art show and sale, "Images from the Field", held at the Sheffield VFW building the weekend of October 16, 2010. A total of 71 original pieces of art created by 42 artists (only one of whom was not a member of the League) were included in the show. All the art was available for purchase, with the artists generously agreeing to donate 40% of any sale proceeds to the joint fund created by ELT and SLT to underwrite



First prize winner: "Limelight" by Ann Getsinger

the costs of the Corridor Project.

A panel of four judges, consisting of one member from each Land Trust, a corridor property owner and a Sheffield farmer, assisted by two HVAL members, awarded First, Second and Honorable Mention

designations in three categories: Agrarian, Flora and Fauna, and Landscape. Ann Getsinger's oil painting, "Limelight", pictured at left, was awarded first prize in the Landscape class. In addition to the prizes awarded by the panel of judges, the members of the public attending the reception voted for People's Choice. That award went to Frank D'Amato for his piece, "Country Road Panorama".

The art celebrated the beauty and diversity of the properties that lie within the Corridor Project, and the artists were toasted at a public reception. A total of 11 paintings were sold, with a net income realized by the Project of \$1,286.80.

PROGRESS ALONG THE CORRIDOR

The Sheffield-Egremont Corridor project has protected two sites in Egremont during the past year. First, and part of Phase I, was the 120-acre Quarry Hill Farm, which includes 30 acres in Egremont, made up of fields, forage and stream, and abutting the Egremont Country Club. The farm is now protected by an APR, paid for in part by the local contribution raised through the Corridor project.

Now the project is in Phase II, and has so far conserved 85 acres of forest land belonging originally to the Curtiss family, who acquired much of this corner of Sheffield and Egremont under a colonial land grant. As a result of a death in the family and the subsequent equal distribution of ownership, the heirs, who wanted to protect as much of the property as possible, worked with the Corridor project to facilitate the sale of 86 acres of mountain land, half of them on Jug End Road in Egremont, to the Commonwealth's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. (Celebration pictured at left.)



But twelve acres of farmland along Route 41, bordering Harmon Marsh Pond and forming a very scenic part of the southern approach to Egremont, remain to be conserved. As was the case with the first part of this project, the Corridor project has paid for the appraisal and for legal fees, and an APR designation is in the works. But the local contribution to the APR funding remains to be obtained, and the Egremont and Sheffield land trusts are currently working feverishly to raise \$400,000 from local donors to protect these fields.

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Wildflower Walk

After several postponements due to weather, the ELT Annual Wildflower Walk took place on July 11. Led by Stephanie Bergman and her infant daughter Mara, we again marveled at Stephanie's knowledge of the beautiful plants growing in our area. Our path took us across the field off Route 71 and down to the banks of the Green River. This is the property that ELT purchased in 2008 to be used, in part, by those wishing to fish in the Green River.

As always, it is amazing to walk through our habitats with someone as knowledgeable as Stephanie. Last year's walk took place in May. This July we were able to see a whole different variety of wild plants. Some of the plants we viewed included tansy, helleborine, false solomon's seal, blue cohosh berries (used in earlier times to induce labor), enchanter's nightshade, Chinese knotweed (an antibacterial plant), coltsfoot, great angelica, native wild basil, chickweed, wood sorrel, motherwort (taken after childbirth) and many others. In addition to identifying these plants, Stephanie also educated us about the ways these plants were used by Native Americans and early settlers.

Along with the good comes the bad and Stephanie pointed out many of the invasive plants that have become so problematic in our world today and which we are all too familiar with. Bishop's goatweed, wild mustard (which is phototoxic on contact with skin), cypress surge, and honeysuckle were some of the plants we noticed. We also saw fringed loosestrife which is yellow and is not invasive like the purple loosestrife that abounds along roadways.

Our walk brought us to the cool banks of the Green River where we paused to enjoy the beautiful foliage along the side of the river.

We look forward to another walk next spring, led by Stephanie. Every adventure shows us different plants and gives us a better understanding of our habitat.



bishop's goat weed



honeysuckle



blue cohosh berries



tall meadowne



coltsfoot



false solomon's seal

ONWARD AND UPWARD

This year ELT embarked on a self-improvement (or, rather, site-improvement) program. First came work on our Baldwin Hill Fen, for which we received a UDA grant five years ago. Eventually we hope to make it an educational site, with a nature trail around the small pond in the center of the property, but meanwhile we have been working on eradicating the multitudes of invasive species that have crowded in. In February of last year we sent out a call for volunteers to bring clippers, chain saws, and other instruments of destruction to cut down vines, bushes, and the smaller branches of larger, unwanted, trees. Slogging through the snow, under the professional guidance of Tom Ingersoll and Lee Ann Malahan of Webster-Ingersoll, and fueled by hot coffee and doughnuts from our tailgate refreshment stand, the volunteers, of all ages and expertise, cut broad swathes through the invaders and cleared several paths among the trees.

And in early 2010, ELT contracted with Joe Wilkinson Excavating to work on our property on Route 71, along the Green River in North Egremont. The contractors enlarged the small parking lot, making it possible for a car to turn around and come out head first. Egremont's Highway Department had previously, at our request, erected a "Hidden Driveway" sign on Route 71.

Wilkinson laid out a path through the cornfield and improved the path through the wet area at the far side of the field. They also built two small foot bridges across the small oxbows that in wet weather run parallel to the Green River, making it possible to reach the river itself with dry feet. This land, on which the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife holds a conservation restriction, is open to the public and is available to fishermen and nature lovers alike.

Last fall, while board members were checking out the trail, they met a young man from Lee who told them that he visits the property frequently and loves it: immensely cheering the board members.

Clockwise from top: Volunteers brandishing weapons, Younger members pitched in, New track through the cornfield, New foot bridge, The Green River



Birds of a May Morning



Is that a scarlet tanager?

ELT's ninth annual bird walk, led once again by our long-time guide Professor Brian Kane of UMass, took place on May 29, late enough in the season for an impressive total of 37 species to be observed in the course of a couple of hours. As usual, the walk took place at Jug End State Reservation, on Jug End Road in South Egremont, and led through the meadows and up the wooded hillside of the state park. Participants were both veteran and neophyte bird watchers. Another advantage of the timing of this year's walk was the sight of birds fighting over territory and mating and the sound of lots of birdsong. A scarlet tanager seemed to follow the walk, posing often to be photographed.

Earlier and again after the walk, Brian looked for birds in the neighborhood and in a nearby pond, and found an additional 23

species, for a total of 60 species of birds visiting one small corner of Egremont on one spring morning. Here, for the record, is what was observed:

On the walk:	least flycatcher	tufted titmouse	rose-breasted grosbeak
belted kingfisher	alder flycatcher	eastern bluebird	scarlet tanager
ruby-throated	eastern wood pewee	veery	chipping sparrow
hummingbird	eastern kingbird	american robin	field sparrow
mourning dove	red-eyed vireo	gray catbird	song sparrow
yellow-bellied sapsucker	warbling vireo	cedar waxwing	brown-headed cowbird
downy woodpecker	blue jay	yellow warbler	red-winged blackbird
pileated woodpecker	tree swallow	common yellowthroat	baltimore oriole
northern flicker	barn swallow	louisiana waterthrush	american goldfinch
red-bellied woodpecker	black capped chickadee	northern cardinal	

Before and after the walk:

great blue heron	eastern wood-pewee	yellow-rumped warbler
wood duck	american crow	indigo bunting
red-tailed hawk	tree swallow	savannah sparrow
wild turkey	white-breasted nuthatch	common grackle
chimney swift	house wren	bobolink
hairy woodpecker	wood thrush	house finch
pileated woodpecker	american redstart	purple finch
eastern phoebe	ovenbird	

*Many thanks to our
Newsletter photographers:
Walter Cliff,
Wendy Linscott,
Chuck Ogden, and
Kathy Orlando.*

ANNUAL MEETING 2010



The 2010 Annual Meeting of the Egremont Land Trust was held on September 11th at the French Park pavilion. The weather was cooperative and attendance was excellent. After a moment of silence for those who had lost their lives during the terrorist attacks on this date in 2001, Kathy Orlando from the Sheffield Land Trust spoke at some length about the Sheffield-Egremont Agricultural, Ecological and Scenic Corridor. This project, a collaborative effort of both land trusts, involves the preservation of about 2,000 acres of farm, forest, and open land.

ELT's treasurer reported that ELT has about \$360,000 in cash and equivalents on hand. Three board members were re-elected at this meeting: Ursula Cliff, Walter Cliff, and Susan Shapiro.

At the conclusion of the business meeting, attendees enjoyed lunch, with dessert, cider, and apples, all provided by ELT.



Aunt Rose's Column

Aunt Rose is devoted to her family, as long as the family does what she says. Here is one of her schemes: let's just hope Seth and Heather do the right thing.

My hippy great-grandson, Seth, has been a real problem for me: That motorcycle! That loud music! That hair! But now, thank the Lord, he seems to have straightened out and I want to encourage him along those lines. He is finally going to marry his long-term girlfriend Heather, and I want to help them get started right here in Egremont.

I own a 40-acre lot left me many years ago by that old-rascal husband of mine, Ezekiel, who bought it in 1953 at a laughably low price. Laughable now, of course, when that lot is currently appraised at its weight in gold. So this is the plan I worked out with my cousin's husband Beauregard who is from some outlandish place like South Carolina, but is now a respectable tax lawyer so I don't hold it against him.

I will give the 40-acre lot to Seth and Heather, once they are safely married. But first I will put a conservation easement on all of the 40 acres except for a 5-acre envelope in the northwest corner. I will give the CR to the Egremont Land Trust, which will, under the new Massachusetts law give me credit against my Mass income tax. (Under the old law I would get no credit at all.)

Also, under the new federal tax law I won't have to pay any gift tax because the lifetime exclusion has been raised to \$5 million for gifts made by the end of 2012. (The 40 acres are worth a lot, but not \$5 million, especially after the imposition of the conservation restriction.) The only negative part of this scheme is that if Seth and Heather wanted to sell the land, they would have to pay the then-current capital gains tax. (They received a property with a low value; they are selling that property at a high value.) But, and this is the beauty part, this will discourage them from selling the property, which I like. Our young people should stay in Egremont.

Finally, Beauregard advises me to hold off executing the papers (there were times when I wanted to execute Seth) until closer to the end of 2012, since the feds have a nasty habit of putting out interpretations of new legislation that bear little relationship to the words of the statute. You can't be too careful.

THE GONDOLIERS BENEFIT THE CORRIDOR

Last June, area Gilbert and Sullivan fans had a rare chance to enjoy an operetta by that clever duo when ELT and the Sheffield Land Trust (SLT) together presented the famed Blue Hill Troupe of New York in *The Gondoliers*. The production was part of an ongoing effort by the two Land Trusts to publicize the Corridor Project and to raise funds for preservation of lands that lie within that corridor.

This engaging story of two gondoliers includes all the plot complications of mistaken identity, secret loves and political muddle of the best Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. The show was a near-sellout of the Mahaiwe Theatre, as Blue Hill cast members transported the audience to a Venice of an earlier era and a delightful evening of lively music, tongue-twisting lyrics, colorful dancing and witty dialogue. Many members of both Land Trusts provided housing for Troupe members, hosted gala pre-performance dinner parties, and devoted hours of volunteer time to making the evening a success. Their generosity, and the financial support of local contributors and sponsors, resulted in the net contribution to the Corridor Fund of \$21,000, and a wonderful evening's entertainment.



Benefit committee members appropriately attired. Left to right: Sally Cook, Wendy Linscott, Jenny Hersch, Kathy Orlando, Ursula Cliff, Pat Elsbach

ELT ON LINE: www.egremontlandtrust.org

Look for our calendar of events and a link to local resources. Keep current—fill in your e-mail address for instant ELT event updates, or print out a membership and donation form. We do not share membership information with anyone, no matter how worthy the cause.

ELT MEMBERS 2010

Many, many thanks to everyone listed below. Our loyal members are what make the land trust. To renew your membership for the coming year, please use the enclosed envelope. And if you are not yet a member, please join us by filling our and sending in the envelope. You won't regret it!



The Egremont Inn in its glory days.

The Inns of South Egremont

As the hub of an early transportation network, Egremont was a natural place for an inn, said Nic Cooper at the start of last summer's ELT history walk. While many villagers opened taverns in their own homes (after obtaining a license), the only purpose-built inn was the now-vanished Egremont Inn. Participants in the walk stared sadly at the ruins of the inn while Nic related its history. Built in 1780 by an Irishman, a Mr. Hare or Heare, who had married into the Karner family, it stood originally 200 feet south of the present site. It was moved in 1803 when the Turnpike was built.

Much later, in the 1850's, it became a Temperance hotel, but this virtuous phase was short-lived. Later in the nineteenth century, it was renamed "Mt. Everett House" and run by a New Yorker (Mr. Peck), catering especially to other New Yorkers. This signaled the start of Egremont as a resort, a project to which, later, Major Smiley devoted so much energy. Because the building that is now Kenver's looked so suitable, Major Smiley invented a wholly fictitious past for it as a posting inn. Mrs. Durfee Brown, still remembered by Egremonters, owned the Egremont Inn from 1966 to 1970, making it the center of a group of old houses still referred to as Durfeeville. There was a succession of owners until the inn was destroyed by last year's fire. Happily, there is talk of rebuilding.

The other inn in South Egremont is the Weathervane, where the walk ended and where the group enjoyed the Lomes' hospitality. The core of the inn is an old house, built in the 1780's and owned by John Benjamin, one of the early town fathers. The classic federal façade facing the street was added about 1815, and it remained a private house until it was turned into a B & B in the mid 1940's. Now, added to, it has become a full-fledged inn.

Next summer, Nic promises, the walk will trace industry in South Egremont.



A house across the street, now missing its pillared porches, used for overflow guests.

ELT Buys and Sells

As we announced in our last newsletter, the land trust bought two parcels from the Town of Egremont: land which the town had acquired in tax takings. Both were on Mt. Washington Road and abutted other conserved land. One, known as the Young tract and comprising 2.3 acres, was then sold to The Nature Conservancy, which later conveyed a conservation restriction on it to the Department of Fish and Game. It now forms part of an 80-acre tract that, like all that department's sites, is open to the public for hunting and general recreation. ELT's other acquisition, 6.6 acres known as the DeSilva tract, situated just at the town line where Egremont abuts Mt. Washington, was also sold to The Nature Conservancy and forms part of a larger parcel owned by TNC. ELT sold both these parcels for the same price it had paid the town.

ELT Gets Around

The land trust participated in a couple of local events this year as part of its mission to actively support the community. First was the popular Egremont on Parade on July 25 last summer, where we had a booth where ELT board members spread the good word of conservation in Egremont.

Two months later, on September 26, another ELT booth appeared at the Route 7 Grill in Sheffield, the scene of a special Bike-a-thon. ELT was one of eleven non-profit local partners. BerkShares, the local currency program created to help build community, celebrated its fourth birthday at the Grill with the bike race and a barbecue. The 10-mile bicycle triangle took about 50 riders through Sheffield, Egremont and the southern edge of Great Barrington. The bikers got a good look at the landscape around the Sheffield-Egremont Road, which, as it happens, is a central piece of the Sheffield-Egremont Corridor project. Board members took turns sitting at the ELT information booth and cheering on the bikers.

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