



The Newsletter of the Francestown Land Trust, Inc.

Fall 2017

Announcing ... Crotched Mountain West!

The Francestown Land Trust (FLT) is very pleased to introduce its latest land protection project, Crotched Mountain West. FLT has the opportunity to acquire approximately 120 acres on the west face of the mountain. The property fronts along the Class VI unmaintained Mountain Road in Bennington for over 1,400 feet and rises easterly, up the slope of Crotched Mountain to the Francestown town line, at an elevation near the mountain summit.

The property is highly visible on the mountainside, from Bennington and Hancock in particular, as well as across the region. The "Bennington Trail," a popular hiking trail from Mountain Road to the mountain summit, is very close to the property.

The property directly abuts over 2,000 acres of protected land area on the mountain. According to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, approximately 67% of the property is identified as highest ranked wildlife habitat in the state, with an additional 25% identified as highest ranked wildlife habitat within the biological region. FLT will own the property outright and will continue to keep it open to the public for traditional uses. Scenery, wildlife, recreation, forestry... What's not to like?

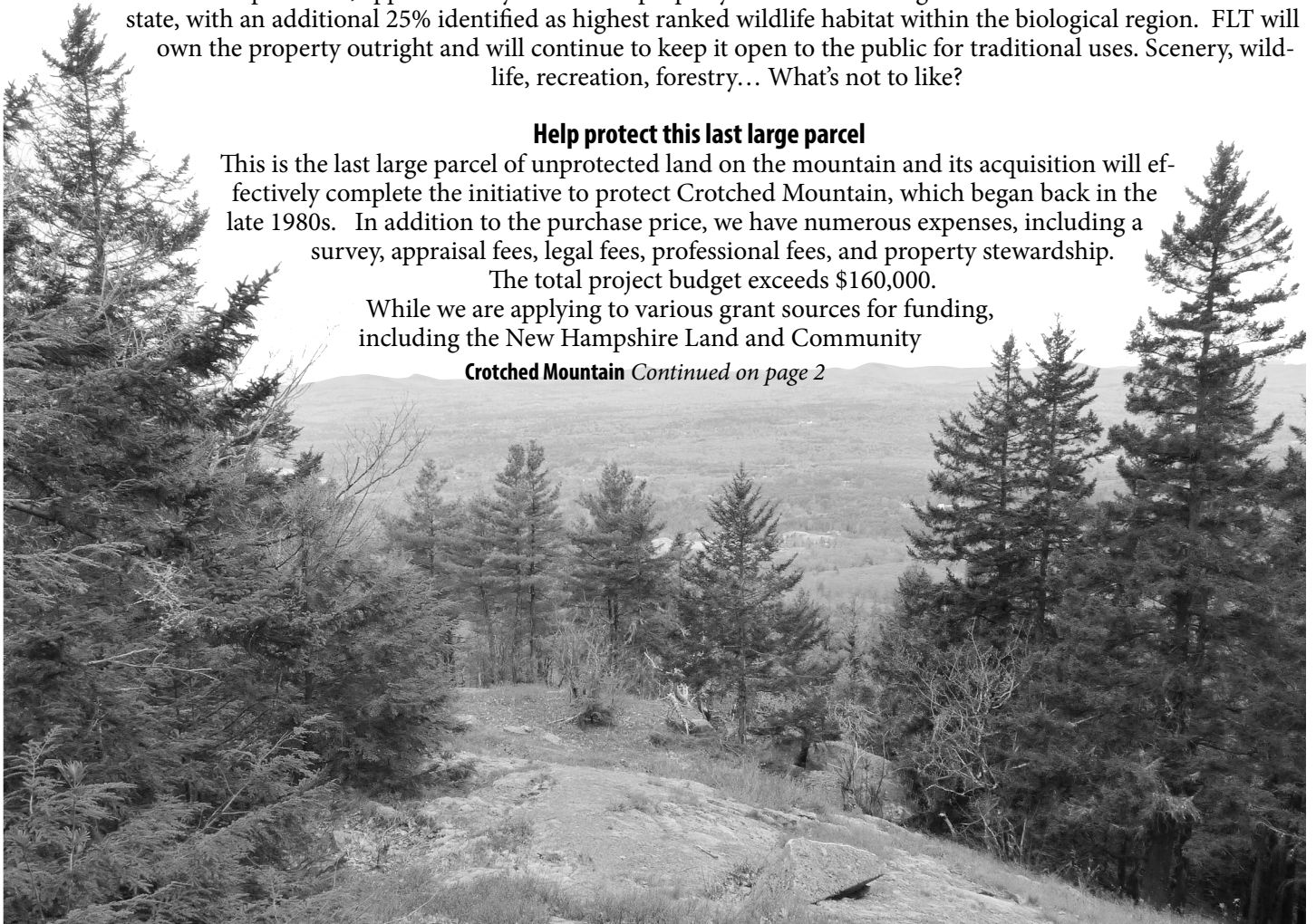
Help protect this last large parcel

This is the last large parcel of unprotected land on the mountain and its acquisition will effectively complete the initiative to protect Crotched Mountain, which began back in the late 1980s. In addition to the purchase price, we have numerous expenses, including a survey, appraisal fees, legal fees, professional fees, and property stewardship.

The total project budget exceeds \$160,000.

While we are applying to various grant sources for funding, including the New Hampshire Land and Community

Crotched Mountain *Continued on page 2*



The Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends and Supporters of FLT,

It's the middle of September – the Fall is here and the best is yet to come. It will probably be the middle of October when you read this. The forest should be at its peak color. There is no better time to explore our woods and fields. I sincerely hope that you are able to get outside and enjoy our lovely town. I particularly hope that you can explore some of the land protected by the Frankestown Land Trust.

One place to consider visiting is the Collins Brook Headwaters property off Wilson Hill Road (north of the golf course). You may recall that FLT, with the help of several grants and a few generous local contributors, purchased this land last spring. There is limited parking and a small sign just outside the cabled off woods road. The well maintained woods road ends after about a quarter mile at the “yard area,” just past a very attractive beaver pond with active lodge and Great Blue Heron nest. As always, land owned by FLT is open to the public.

If you would like to explore further, FLT can oblige. We have a fee interest in 996 acres of conserved lands in Frankestown. Please check our website at www.frankestownlandtrust.org for directions and maps for properties, such as the Rand Brook Forest, the Dorothy & Herman C. Miller Family Memorial Forest, and the Schott Brennan Falls Reserve. Whether you are looking for a quiet brook (Collins Brook in the Miller

Family Memorial Forest) or a lovely, peaceful field (Driscoll Hill in Rand Brook Forest), it's waiting for you, right here in our town.

While at our website, please take a few minutes to read about the Frankestown Land Trust. It is a great way to learn in detail about what we do and how we do it. In addition to directions and maps, it describes our history, and explains what easements are all about. You'll also find brief biographies of our board of directors, events (check out the pictures from a very snowy snow shoe hike!), and back issues of our Newsletters from 2007 thru 2017. I love to read the back newsletters because they show how far we have come. A lot of people and a lot of organizations have worked very hard to bring us to where we are today. Finally, it tells you how you can donate to FLT. A good thing!

The Frankestown Land Trust currently protects 2,442 acres of land in Frankestown and the surrounding towns. It takes a lot of work to maintain the land that we own, to monitor the land upon which we hold easements, and to pursue opportunities to protect additional land (like the Crotched Mountain West parcel described on page 1!).

Why do our board members and other volunteers donate so much time and effort? It's to keep these beautiful places open to all of us... and for all who come after.

So please continue to help with your interest, encouragement, and financial support.

And, please, get outside and enjoy FLT conserved lands! You'll be very glad you did.

Chris Rogers

Crotched Mountain *Continued from page 1*

Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), we need your assistance to complete this important purchase.

The first donor was none other than Hancock's Meade Cadot! Please consider making a donation to FLT for the “Crotched Mountain West” project. Donations of all sizes are important. Even small donations help show broad public support to our grant funders. Thank you!

Scot Heath

Frankestown Land Trust, Inc., is a registered 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. You may make a donation in any amount through PayPal using a credit card at frankestownlandtrust.org, or with a check mailed to Frankestown Land Trust, PO Box 132, Frankestown NH 03043.



Frankestown Land Trust, Inc. Board of Directors

Chris Rogers, Chair
crogersnhcpa@aol.com
547-2133

Betsy Hardwick, Vice Chair
blhardwick1@hotmail.com
547-8773

Greg Neilley, Treasurer
neilley@comcast.net
547-2856

Larry Ames, Secretary
lames@worldpath.net
547-8809

Barry Wicklow, Director
bwicklow@anselm.edu
547-9904

Ben Haubrich, Director
bph03043@gmail.com
547-2075

Ted Graham, Director
graham.ted@gmail.com
547-2548

Martine Villalard-Bohnsack, Director
mwillbohns@comcast.net
547-8810

Hannah Proctor, Director
hqproctor@gmail.com
547-2816

Frankestown Land Trust, Inc.
PO Box 132
Frankestown NH 03043

frankestownlandtrust.org
info@frankestownlandtrust.org



Founded in 1986

Anna Sarkisian was chosen the scholarship winner of the Francestown Garden Club's 2017 essay contest. Reprinted with the author's permission.

The Solitude and Joys of Nature

No sound exists in the universe as breathtakingly pure and wild as the sound of a rushing river. Water tumbles wildly, frantically over rocks on its hurried way to nowhere in particular. This sound fills my ears as I sit quietly by the South Branch Piscataquog River. In order to reach this fantastic spot, I walk down the dirt covered Clarkville Road, a softly winding lane shadowed with regal pines. A simple wooden bridge stands just ahead as I turn towards a tree lined path. A simple sign, fastened to a tree, states "Property Conserved by Town of Francestown Conservation Commission". The sign is a diamond shape, symbolic of the natural treasure just beyond. In summer, emerald moss covers the path in thick velvet carpets. However, presently the forest floor still bears the semblance of days past. Brown leaves cover the path in scattered bunches. Beyond the path is the river. The water swiftly runs towards the south, foaming white as rocks break the flow. The roar of the water permeates the air, obliterating the melody of the birds and the harmony of the breeze. A carefully constructed rock wall divides the river, channeling a smaller, quieter stream beneath a stately arch. Flowing gently beneath the rock, this modest tributary starkly contrasts the frenzied roaring of the river. Across the water, a steep hill, sparsely marked with trees, rises towards the east. Pale, thin birches reach for the sun as it quickly drops behind the hill. Weeping hemlocks faintly sway in the evening breeze. Even on a gray spring afternoon, this site is magnificent,



Anna Sarkisian, essay winner.

a contrast of the screaming and the silent, the fluid and the fixed, the shifting and the still. This juxtaposition is what makes this site so enchanting. The stately stillness of the rock structure against the backdrop of the fluctuating stream of water boasts a contradictory unity, the marriage of two complimentary forces of nature. Amid the chaos and the calm of creation, I content myself with silence. In the midst of this thrilling beauty, words are superfluous.

This is wonder of nature, the indescribable splendor of rivers and trees and rocks and mountains. Such wonders are a gift to humankind that we need to preserve and protect. Thankfully, many people have recognized the importance of preserving the grandeur of these natural wonders and are taking action. The Francestown Conservation Commission's goals are to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, preserve cultural and historical features, and preserve wetlands, surface and subsurface waters, watersheds and mineral resources, among other goals. This commission and other commissions like it are essential in protecting the natural resources we enjoy for future generations. In order for these

indigenous forests and rivers to thrive, we must be careful to keep them healthy and prosperous. Nature is the purest sanctuary. The joys that it provides are immeasurable. Therefore, we preserve it so that our children and grandchildren may feel what the poet William Kean Seymour felt when he wrote:

*"In a cool solitude of trees
Where leaves and birds a music spin,
Mind that was weary is at ease,
New rhythms in the soul begin."*

Anna Sarkisian, April 14, 2017

PROTECTING NATURE MAKES GOOD FINANCIAL SENSE

Health: People who engage in moderate exercise outdoors can save an average of \$1,100 in medical costs annually. In the city, trees can make you feel 7 years younger and \$10,000 richer.

Local Economies: Proximity to protected lands, like National Wildlife Refuges, can increase urban home values by 3-9%. Nationally, bird watching supports more than 660,000 jobs and \$31 billion in employment income.

Clean Water: Treating drinking water from an unprotected watershed can cost 10 times more than treating water from a protected watershed. Trees can provide urban communities over \$3.6 million in stormwater benefits annually.

Storm Protection: Coastal wetlands provide storm protection valued at \$23.2 billion per year by helping to reduce the severity of impacts from hurricanes in the United States. An acre of protected land can save local communities an average of \$380 in stormwater treatment costs annually.

Sustainable Fisheries: One acre of mangroves can be worth more than \$15,000 as a nursery for commercial fish.

From "Investing in Nature: The Economic Benefits of Protecting Our Lands and Waters" by the Land Trust Alliance and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Coastal Program

Be on the Lookout for Black Swallowwort – or the “Dog Strangle Vine” (*Cynanchum louiseae*)

By the time our New England autumn is upon us, many of the invasive plants we’re familiar with have already displayed their most showy features; Japanese knotweed’s stately white flowered plumes will have dried; Purple Loosestrife’s familiar purple spires will have passed and turned to seed; and Dame’s Rocket’s pink, white and lavender flowers, which have spotted field and roadside edges, will have disappeared.

Other invasives are just gearing up: Oriental Bittersweet will produce its distinctive orange-red fruits; Burning Bush leaves will turn brilliant red—and Black Swallowwort is getting ready to put on a seed pod show!

The plant’s paired dark, glossy-green, 3-4-inch-long, lance-shaped leaves continue to remain green late into fall, but its fragrant, dark-purple-to-black summertime flowers—so small to almost be missed—are gone. Now the Black Swallowwort seed pods are ripening, starting to dry, and getting ready to split open and burst seed in all directions.

Beware of the pods!

An herbaceous perennial vine in the milkweed family, the plant has similar, but smaller, seed pods than milkweed. They are winged and readily spread by the wind. In winter, stems may be found tangled in small shrubs with remnants of old seedpods still attached. The plant dies back to the ground each year.

Black Swallowwort is listed as a New Hampshire invasive. It threatens native plants in fields, forest edges, woods, and open disturbed areas. With a non-branching stem that grows up to six feet in length, the vines typically twine and sprawl over other vegetation and are difficult to control. Dense leafing blocks light from reaching the plants it scrambles across, strangling them.

The plant is tolerant of a range of light and moisture

conditions and spreads long distances by seed and rhizomes. Thick infestations in full sun can produce 2,000 seeds per square meter. Rhizomes can form extensive patches in clumps of several to many stems that crowd out native species.

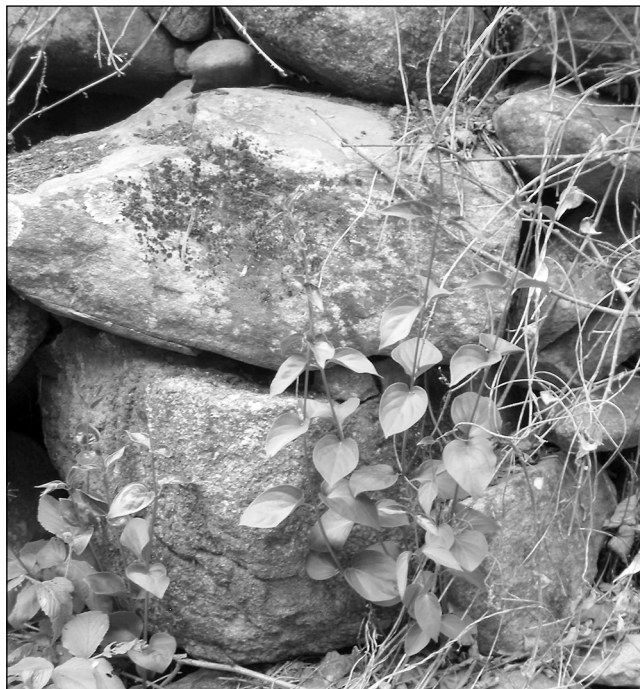
This plant is toxic if ingested by humans, equines, or canines. Monarch Butterflies can mistake this invasive plant for common milkweed. When Monarchs lay eggs on Black Swallowwort, the larvae do not survive because they are not able to ingest the toxin. Black Swallowwort threatens one of America’s best-known pollinators.

As with all invasive species, early detection and removal is the best approach for preventing the establishment and spread of this plant. To control Black Swallowwort, the ground based crown must be removed by careful digging. Pulling the plants by hand generally leads to re-sprouting, but can prevent seed production, if repeated during the growing season. Plants bearing seeds should be bagged and disposed of responsibly. Mowing several times during the season, just as the pods are beginning to form, will not eradicate Black Swallowwort, but can also prevent seed production. Clean all machinery that has traveled through plant patches.

Herbicide use has the potential to cause adverse effects to the environment, so applications must be carefully planned and implemented. By law,

herbicides may only be applied as per label instructions.

As with all of our invasive plant species, there are native alternatives. Pipevine, swamp milkweed, butterfly weed, trumpet creeper, trumpet honeysuckle, and passionflower are all candidates for native alternatives to the invasive Black Swallowwort.



Above: Black Swallowwort’s paired dark, glossy-green, lance-shaped leaves continue to remain green late into fall.

Below: Black Swallowwort seed pods are ripening, starting to dry, and getting ready to split open and burst seed in all directions.



Hannah Proctor

Caterpillars Fascinate at 2017 FLT Meeting

The 2017 FLT Annual Meeting was held on Thursday, June 8th, at the Old Meeting House in Franconstown.

After a short business session, Sam Jaffe, founder and Executive Director of the Keene Caterpillar Lab, gave a passionate and fascinating presentation on the “Caterpillars of New England.”

In addition to seeing beautiful photographs and learning about these often-overlooked, but amazing animals, attendees had the chance to interact with live caterpillars and moths. Silk worms (the only non-native discussed), the Hickory Horned Devil, and the Saddleback Slug were some of the examples examined.

Refreshments and an opportunity to talk with Sam and his assistant followed the program and both shared their enthusiasm and knowledge.

Who would have thought that holding a giant caterpillar would be such a treat! It was difficult to pick a favorite amongst the live caterpillars and moths crawling on branch displays or fluttering in cages. Some, no doubt were releasing pheromones and attracting Franconstown partners ...



Automeris io, or the “io moth” with a wingspan of 2.5–3.5 inches, perches on an attendee’s hand.

Martine Villalard-Bohnsack



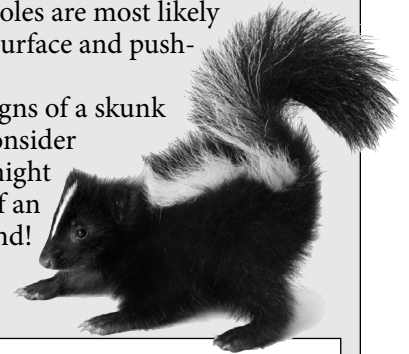
Who did this?

Did you ever wonder who makes those mysterious shallow holes that appear in your lawn overnight?

Most likely it’s your friendly neighborhood skunk, digging for a nourishing treat, such as an earthworm, grub or tasty insect. The skunk presses its nose to the ground to locate its prey, then uses its claws to excavate a shallow, nose-sized hole.

Other critters may also be using your lawn as a nocturnal hunting ground. Raccoons search for similar treats, then use their hand-like paws to rip and tear the sod. Piles of soil with no visible holes are most likely moles, tunneling below the surface and pushing the soil out.

If you notice the telltale signs of a skunk picnic, you might want to consider keeping your pets inside at night to avoid the consequences of an encounter with a stinky friend!



Larry Ames

DID YOU KNOW: Often it is assumed that very young skunks do not have the capability to spray, and for the first seven days of their life, they don’t. However, musk is present in a skunk’s anal glands at birth and can be emitted on day 8.

- Naturally Curious with Mary Holland

Franconstown Arts Fest alive with talent

On June 24th, the Franconstown Improvement and Historical Society (FIHS) Lodge came alive with the Franconstown Arts Fest, celebrating FLT conservation efforts through arts, crafts, and music. Among many other delights, we enjoyed the music of Suzanne McGettigan, the multiple talents of



the Marony family (pictured), the quilting of Jan Hicks, the weaving and spinning of Pat Thalhauser, and the watercolors of Betsy Hardwick. We also were treated to a performance of Celtic fiddle playing by Jamie Laval, who was in town for an Old Meeting House concert.

Ted Graham



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Don't Miss This Upcoming Event!

**Friday, October 27th • Joan Hanchett Nature Series presents
The State of The Loon -- The Natural History, Challenges, and
Successes of Loons in New Hampshire
6:30pm at the Francestown Elementary School
Free and Open to the Public**

Have you ever wondered why a loon's eyes are red? Why loon chicks ride on their parents' backs? What loons are saying with those eerie calls in the night?

Biologist Harry Vogel will describe this unique symbol of wild lakes and its special place in the hearts of New Hampshire residents. He will talk about the challenges facing loons and the work of the New Hampshire Loon Preservation Committee to safeguard our state's threatened loon population.

Harry Vogel has been studying loons for more than 20 years. Beginning as a researcher and project biologist for the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey, he is currently the Senior Biologist & Executive Director of the New Hampshire Loon Preservation Committee. He is also Co-Chair of the Northeast Loon Study



Photo credit: Kittie Wilson

Working Group, a consortium of government and non-governmental organizations from throughout the New England States and the Canadian Maritimes, which works on issues affecting loons and other wildlife in the northeast.

This event is co-sponsored by the Francestown Land Trust, the George Holmes Bixby Memorial Library, the Francestown News, and the Francestown Conservation Commission.

**Join our email list to learn about our upcoming events.
Contact us at info@francestownlandtrust.org to be added to this list.**