

BERKSHIRE NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL

Spring 2021

# LANDKEEPERS

## REPORT



Painting Berkshire Magic En Plein Air  
Land Donation Expands Old Mill Reserve  
StoryWalks®: Outdoor Fun for All Ages  
Fleeting Gifts of Springtime  
Not the Last of the Mohicans



# LANDKEEPERS REPORT

## Spring 2021

### Board of Directors

Jenny Hansell, President  
Tim Crane, Chairman  
Pat Callahan, Vice Chairman  
Kim Seward, Secretary  
Tom Curtin, Treasurer

Stephen Alsdorf  
Jeffrey Belair  
Walter Cliff  
Susan Crofut  
Brian Fairbank  
Henry Flint  
Ellen Hand  
Caroline Holland  
Eric Katzman  
Larry Lane  
Wendy Linscott  
Tim Lovett  
John Mancina  
Karen Coy Ross  
Ron Shaw  
Brian Tobin  
Elena Traister

### Staff

Mariah Auman  
Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator

Tyler Fogg  
Trails Coordinator

Adam Galambos  
Conservation Associate

Roxanne Gawthrop  
Donor Relations Manager

Mackenzie Greer  
Director of Public Programs

Josh Hopmans  
Stewardship Associate

Rich Montone  
Development Director

Nicole Pyser  
Stewardship Coordinator

Narain Schroeder  
Director of Land Conservation

Caitlin Sullivan  
Grant Writer

COVER ARTWORK: Thor Wickstrom

LANDKEEPERS REPORT  
is published by the  
Berkshire Natural Resources Council



**BERKSHIRE**  
Natural Resources Council

**THE LANDKEEPERS**

20 Bank Row  
Pittsfield MA 01201

413-499-0596  
bnrc.org



A winter moment captured en plein air by Jenny

## STORIES TO BRIGHTEN YOUR DAY

If I ever feel a moment of worry about our world, I just have to look at the energy, creativity and pluck of my colleagues at BNRC, or the generosity of you, the people who make their work possible. This Landkeeper's Report is full of stories that will brighten your day.

In the last year, you all together have conserved hundreds of acres of essential habitat. One landowner had a long-cherished dream of conserving the beautiful woods near his home. By donating it to BNRC he expanded the beloved Old Mill reserve and protected the home of bears, bobcats and fishers (see page 10).

You've found new ways to help children learn about nature, even when in-person walks and workshops are not possible. The article on page 3 about StoryWalks will warm your heart, I'm sure.

Another form of creative energy is abundant in the artists inspired by our Berkshire landscapes. I took up plein air painting this past year, and some of my favorite spots to paint are Parsons Marsh, Hollow Fields and Thomas & Palmer Brook. I'm not alone—the Berkshire Artists Guild hosts plein air painting groups every day, beginners welcome. See page 6 for some tips on getting started.

Finally, BNRC lost two people who were very dear to us in 2020. Laury Epstein and Don MacGillis both served the BNRC board and the cause of conservation for many years and their contributions to the Berkshires are incalculable. We miss them terribly as friends, and will always be grateful for their service.

  
—Jenny Hansell, President  
jhansell@bnrc.org





BNRC Trail Crew Member Jon Lueken with daughter Patience and son Beniah.



Animal Mouths by Mary Holland at Housatonic Flats.

## WORD'S EYE VIEW

If you've walked at Thomas & Palmer Brook or Housatonic Flats in the last year, you may have noticed children exploring the trails with a new sense of excitement and discovery as they follow signposts with pages from children's books about nature.

StoryWalks® present an innovative approach to encouraging people of all ages to get out and walk while enjoying engaging children's books. Pages of a children's book become stops along a family-friendly trail. As you walk, you can read the book one page at a time, all while enjoying being in nature. This activity provides readers with a new way to see, learn, and experience the outdoors. Since March of 2020, BNRC has installed ten StoryWalks®, with each book featuring an environmental theme.

Naturalist Mary Holland writes many of the books that BNRC has offered. Her children's books *Animal Mouths*, *Ferdinand*

*Fox's First Summer*, *Otis the Owl*, and *Animal Tracks and Traces* use real photos to tell educational stories about local wildlife. She also has many books translated into Spanish, which is an important addition to these family-friendly walks.

In November 2020, the book *Buzzing with Questions: The Inquisitive Mind of Charles Henry Turner* by Janice N. Harrington was on display at Thomas & Palmer Brook reserve in Great Barrington. When the StoryWalk® was removed, BNRC staff discovered that someone made the effort of translating much of the book into Spanish on a sheet

of paper in the brochure holder. This effort reinforced the need for more diversity, equity, and inclusion in StoryWalk® offerings.

To address this need, in February of this year, BNRC partnered with Berkshire Family Hikes, Berkshires Macaroni Kid, and the City of Pittsfield to offer an English and Spanish StoryWalk® at Wild Acres Conservation Area as part of the 10x10 Upstreet Winter Arts Festival.

BNRC will continue to offer StoryWalks® in Spanish and English throughout the year. Check out [bnrc.org/upcoming-hikes](http://bnrc.org/upcoming-hikes) for upcoming StoryWalks®. 🐾



## BNRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS —NEW MEMBERS!

### Brian Fairbank

Brian, who was recently inducted into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame, is Chairman of The Fairbank Group, which operates ski resorts in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont—including Jiminy Peak in the Berkshires. Brian has been recognized for lifetime achievement by the National Ski Areas Association, where he served as a member of its board from 1990 to 2004, including a term as board chairman. He is known for leadership in sustainability and green energy within the ski industry.

### Ellen Hand

Ellen has family roots in the Berkshires and divides her time between Lenox and Brooklyn. She is particularly interested in establishing wildlife corridors between conservation lands. Ellen has served previously on BNRC's board of directors, and is now returning to the role. She was part of the leadership team that made The BNRC High Road vision, and campaign, a reality.

### Eric Katzman

Eric, who is Co-Chief Investment Officer of Rockingstone Advisors, brings additional expertise in finance and economics to the BNRC Board of Directors. Eric also has experience serving on the New York State Board of The Nature Conservancy. A Chartered Financial Analyst, Eric is recognized as an expert in consumer packaged goods, and serves on the Board of Trustees for Oberlin College, and its Endowment Investment Committee.

### Brian Tobin

Brian lives in Mount Washington, where he serves on the Board of Selectman and as the Acting Chief of Police. He is an executive coach, and former chairman of the board of the Railroad Street Youth Project. Like Ellen above, Brian too has previously served on the BNRC Board of Directors, helping to forge its High Road vision and drive its fundraising.



PHOTO: GABRIELLE K. MURPHY

## On Earth Day, Give Back To The Land

This April 22, five Massachusetts land trusts are encouraging everyone to help make the new 30x30 national climate initiative a reality.

This new federal executive order calls for conservation of at least 30 percent of the United States by 2030.

**We cannot solve the climate crisis without solving the nature crisis.** In Central and Western Massachusetts, we are fortunate that outstanding opportunities still exist to protect land and water that remains in a natural state.

This Earth Day (or sooner), **you are invited to Give Back To The Land** by donating to fuel the conservation work of Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Franklin Land Trust, Hilltown Land Trust, Kestrel Land Trust, or Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.

**You can always donate easily to BNRC at [bnrc.org/contribute](https://bnrc.org/contribute).** Learn more about *Give Back To The Land* day and BNRC's regional partners at [givebacktotheland.org](https://givebacktotheland.org)

Thank you for all you do to care for a thriving environment, which supports the health of all who live, work, and play in this special region of the world.







Full access to Steven's Glen will be restored this year with the bridge repair and reroute of the trail.

## 2021 PLANS: BRIDGE REPAIRS, IMPROVED PARKING, AND, AT LONG LAST, THE HIGH ROAD!

The 2021 BNRC Trail Crew is looking forward to completing several major projects this building season along Yokun Ridge, Stevens Glen, and the Old Mill Trail.

Once trail signage is in place later this spring, the first section of The High Road, along Yokun Ridge from Lenox to Bousquet Mountain, will be open at last.



At Stevens Glen in Richmond/West Stockbridge, we'll work with Peter S. Jensen & Associates to restore one bridge and decommission two others that have become compromised. A section of trail will be rerouted, and a new bridge installed in a more sustainable location to service the upper loop section of the trail.

The other major project set for 2021 will take place along the Old Mill Trail in Dalton. This excellent riverside trail, the first section of which meets US Forest Service accessibility guidelines, will benefit from upgraded parking, rehabilitated gravel tread,

and an expanded terminus at the end of the accessible section of trail, featuring seating that will overlook the East Branch of the Housatonic River.

BNRC's Trail Crew will also be tackling trail improvements at Bob's Way in Monterey/Sandisfield, Basin Pond in Lee (to improve stream crossings), as well as continuing to identify areas in need of reconstruction or maintenance. The crew spent a large part of the 2020 season engaging in reconstruction maintenance including trail tread, drainage features, and corridor redefinition. Those efforts will continue this season. Helping us in that effort this year, we're involving Student Conservation Association Crews in some North County maintenance along the Hoosac Range and Mohican Mohawk Trails.

We're also looking forward to the return of our awesome cast of stewardship team volunteers. Those buckets of dirt don't carry themselves, folks! 🇺🇸





Walter Pasko, *Parsons Marsh*



Anne Smith, *Night Walkers*

## PLEIN AIR PAINTERS FIND MAGIC IN BERKSHIRE LANDSCAPES

Artists have been inspired by the vistas and views in the Berkshires for hundreds of years. If you've ever walked a trail and thought, I'd love to paint this scene, you are not alone. And it's never too late to start.

Anne Smith took up painting after a long career in the film business. After studying for a few years, she discovered plein air painting, which is done on site in nature. She has taught workshops for the Berkshire Artists Guild, and offers advice to the novice landscape painter: keep your gear simple, and bring a sketchpad to plan your composition before you start painting. (Anne's work is online at [good-hue.com](http://good-hue.com)).

Karen Carmean, a past president of the Guild, is also enamored of plein air painting. "I love being outside," she says, "watching the breezes move the grasses in the fields and seeing more and more and more as the beauty of what I see is revealed. Being outside, on even the coldest day restores me." Carmean (@karencarm on Instagram) is leading a workshop

in June on how to paint with a limited palette—with just a few well-chosen colors, she says, you can recreate all the hues in nature.

Painting goes hand in hand with a conservation ethic, says Pittsfield-based painter Keith Emerling ([keithemerlingfineart.com](http://keithemerlingfineart.com)). "I teach people that everything you bring in, you take out: make sure you have a trash bag with you and a tightly sealed mason jar to carry your liquids back so you don't dump anything." Emerling returned to painting after many years, having worked as a chef, cookbook author and photographer.

"I've met a whole new group of friends through plein air painting outings with the Guild," Emerling says. "Everyone's really supportive." He loves





Karen Carmean, *Richmond*

getting into that creative space—"a moment where you're not wrapped up in everyday life, you're just connecting with the moment."

Thor Wickstrom enjoys urban scenes as much as green expanses. The Bronx-based artist has been coming up to North Adams, where he rents studio space in Beaver Mill, since 2007. His Instagram (@Thorwick) is filled with village streetscapes as well as rolling farm fields and mountains. Unlike many landscape painters, Wickstrom paints only on site, never from photographs.

"I've tried working from photos," he says, "but it's dull, even painful. When you're outside, you have the light, the air, the shapes, the freedom to distort and change things." Like Monet, he brings several canvases with him to a site, switching among them as the light changes from sun to clouds

and back again. He does use his camera as a viewfinder, using it to frame the composition.

Favorite sites for all four painters include Tanglewood, The Mount and Hancock Shaker Village as well as BNRC sites like Parsons Marsh and Thomas & Palmer Brook.

"I recently discovered Alford Springs," Smith adds. "I can't wait to hike up to that field where the birches are—that really knocked me out." To see her paintings and those of many other local artists, and find a wealth of classes and workshops, visit the Guild's website at [berkshireartists.org](http://berkshireartists.org). 



Keith Emerling, *Crabapple in Bloom*





Hepatica



Trillium

## THE FLEETING GIFTS OF SPRINGTIME

Fringed Polygala. Golden Alexanders. Dutchman's Breeches. Cutleaf Toothwort.

These fanciful names, attached to the wildflowers that appear ever-so-briefly in spring, evoke a long-ago past when explorers in the woods could only record their discoveries with a sketch pad and carefully wrought descriptions.

These perennial woodland plants begin to sprout from the ground as early as February, and by April, there are treasures by the score to be discovered. They are called ephemeral because they bloom and go to seed before the canopy leaves out. When the forest floor is deeply shaded, the leaves of the plants wither away, leaving just the roots, rhizomes, and bulbs underground.

The spring ephemeral flowers play a crucial part in the lifecycle of many pollinators, providing an important early source of nectar and pollen for insects and birds just returning from migration.

Hepatica is among the earliest spring ephemerals to keep an eye out for. Hepatica blooms late winter to early spring and can be identified by the kidney shaped, leathery leaves, (which turn red in summer). The fine hairs on the stem are also notable. These hairs provide warmth

during colder temperatures. Hepaticas, like other spring ephemerals, have evolved an incredible seed dispersal relationship. An extra appendage on their seed, called an elaiosome, functions as a rich, nutritious treat for ants. The ants gather the seeds and return to their home. After the elaiosome is eaten, the ants discard the seed in their "trash pile" of nutrient-rich soil.

Trillium, bloodroot, Dutchman's breeches, trout lily, wild ginger, and violets are some of the other plants that rely on ants for seed dispersal.

So as the days continue to get longer and the temperatures are warming, venture out and enjoy these early spring gifts! Check out our spring ephemeral checklist at [bnrc.org/spring-ephemeral-checklist](https://bnrc.org/spring-ephemeral-checklist), and be sure to share your photos and experiences with us by tagging them with @BerkshireLandkeepers. 🌿





Dutchman's Breeches



Fringed Polygala

# TRY THE BNRC Berkshire Trails App

“You could spend a wonderful week wandering Berkshire County’s back roads, using this app to guide you from one secluded wonder to the next.”

—*New York Times*

The BNRC Berkshire Trails app for Android and iOS is a great way to plan outdoor adventures in the Berkshires—in advance or on the go.

- Trails and info on BNRC reserves, and other locations too
- Save and share your favorite hikes and outings
- 100% Berkshire, and **100% free**, thanks to donors!

[bnrc.org/app](http://bnrc.org/app)







Land owners like Richard Clapper are a crucial part of BNRC's efforts to protect the most important land in the Berkshires—his vision and generosity have protected a wildlife corridor for generations to come.

## A VISION TO PROTECT WILDLIFE—A LAND DONATION EXPANDS THE OLD MILL RESERVE

Richard Clapper's life has changed in many ways since he purchased a home and wooded land on East Street in Dalton in the late 90s. On one of his walks in these woods, Richard met Peg White, a neighbor at the other end of the street. Later, after many walks together, they married. Richard took up beekeeping, and retired from his job with Pepperidge Farm. He envisioned conserving the land, even after he and Peg found a quieter spot in the woods of nearby Peru, writing this wish into his will.

This land is special to Richard, not just because he met his wife there, but also for the wildlife he regularly observed: bear, bobcat, deer, moose, and fishers. He wasn't sure how to go about protecting it until he attended an estate planning workshop

*"After living most of my adult life in Pittsfield, moving to Dalton gave me the chance to live near the woods and nature I so loved. I soon came to realize what a gem this land is by offering a wildlife habitat and corridor. I am so pleased it is going to be preserved and shared."*

—Richard Clapper

focused on conservation, sponsored by the Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT). There he learned about BNRC's work with landowners to conserve their properties.

Richard has generously donated this property to BNRC out of his own desire to protect the land, and with financial

support from the Massachusetts Conservation Land Tax Credit (CLTC) program. CLTC has provided a financial bridge for landowners donating land to conservation organizations in Massachusetts. While relatively small, the property joins the adjacent Old Mill Reserve, opening access to it from the west.

BNRC partnered with Crane & Company, MassWildlife, the Town of Hinsdale, and the Housatonic Valley Association to conserve the Old Mill Trail reserve along the East Branch of the Housatonic River, and open it for public access. The MassTrails program is funding a portion of upcoming work to improve parking at the accessible portion of the trail (located along the first .7 miles, with a trailhead located off Old Dalton Road in Hinsdale). 🌲





# Give generously to conserve the Berkshires— while saving on taxes!

Increasingly, BNRC donors are using these tax-savvy donation methods. **Is one of these right for you?**

- **Transfer appreciated stock.** Donating your appreciated stock is a high-impact, tax-savvy way to protect the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the Berkshires. Visit [freewill.com/stocks/bnrc/welcome](https://freewill.com/stocks/bnrc/welcome).
- **Give directly from your IRA.** If you are 70 ½ or older, you can make a tax-free donation directly from your IRA, and even meet your newly reinstated required minimum distribution (RMD). Donate at [freewill.com/qcd/bnrc](https://freewill.com/qcd/bnrc).
- **Protect the future of the Berkshires in your will.** You can help conserve the Berkshires forever at zero cost today through a legacy gift. This online service helps you create your legal will for free (or draft a will for review with an attorney)—and you'll have the option to protect the Berkshires for generations to come! Learn more at [freewill.com/bnrc](https://freewill.com/bnrc).

Of course, most donors do donate cash, which is always welcome, and contributes enormously to everything we accomplish together through BNRC for the region. **You can quickly donate cash anytime, or schedule an easy monthly contribution, at [bnrc.org/contribute](https://bnrc.org/contribute).**

**Thank you for everything you do to care for the Berkshire outdoors!**



Questions? Contact Rich Montone at [rmontone@bnrc.org](mailto:rmontone@bnrc.org), or 413-499-0596 x5.







**BERKSHIRE**

Natural Resources Council

**THE LANDKEEPERS**

20 Bank Row  
Pittsfield MA 01201

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



BNRC is donor funded.  
**Scan to donate!**

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Pittsfield, MA  
Permit No. 130

# Not the Last of the Mohicans

*BNRC continues its relationship with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community*



Heather Bruegl

Last month, Heather Bruegl, Director of Cultural Affairs for the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, discussed with BNRC supporters and community members the history of Mohicans in the lands now known as the Berkshires.

The Mohican people were forcefully displaced to lands in Wisconsin, near Green Bay, in the 1800s. All of the present-day Berkshires remain Mohican homelands.

Well over 200 people attended. Heather addressed the present and future presence of the Stockbridge-Munsee in the Berkshires, in addition to Mohican history and that of the region.

In a separate program several weeks later, Heather spoke with the staff and board members of Berkshire-area land trusts and conservation organizations, discussing conservation topics and concepts in light of Mohican care of the land.

Stay tuned for more opportunities to learn about the Mohican lands we love, conserve, visit, and call home.



Scan with your mobile device camera to watch event video



**HISTORIC HOMELANDS**

Thomas & Palmer Brook Reserve is now conserved, but, like all land in the Berkshires, is part of the original territory of the Mohican people. The lands in the Berkshires continue to be of great significance to the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican people. Though forced into diaspora and residing on their current reservation lands in Wisconsin since an 1856 treaty, the Mohican people have always returned to their homelands—to protect sacred places and resources, to remember, and to reconnect.

**Current Engagements**

The Tribe's Historic Preservation office consults on roughly 600 construction projects a year throughout its homelands in the Hudson and Housatonic River Valleys, to ensure that important Munsee and Mohican cultural sites are not disturbed. This includes homesites as well as burial places of ancestors—evidence that Mohicans have never really left the Berkshires. Mohican ancestors are all around.

The Stockbridge Munsee Mohican Nation continues to value its history and promote public educational opportunities such as historical trips, walking tours, and history events that promote the Tribe's presence and celebrate its heritage.

*Text Credit: Stockbridge-Munsee Language & Culture Center*

**You Are One Who Walked Yesterday**

You are one who walked yesterday  
Pulled from your place in time,  
And now I see  
That your feet once stood here  
Imprinting the earth  
where I stand,  
In occasions I will never see  
"Dancing"  
Singing in this same sun,  
To a song I will never hear  
The stories you would  
have told  
Were silenced by  
other tongues,  
Yet your blood is in mine  
A link over time  
I imagine your life  
from these feelings.  
Though I see  
You belonged undisturbed  
Covered with this dust  
we share,  
Now walk with those  
who are gone.  
**Apaachiw**

*By Ernest (Maurer) Boudreau,  
Member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community  
Band of Mohicans, June 10th, 1997  
Stockbridge, Massachusetts*