

FALL 2022

# Landkeepers

## REPORT



BERKSHIRE NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL

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# LEADERSHIP TAKES MANY FORMS

Investing in BNRC's Future

As a leader at BNRC, my job has two parts. One is to focus on the future: see around corners—to hold the vision of where we're headed, what's important, where BNRC can have the most impact, and to share that vision with you and everyone in the BNRC community.

The other is to focus on the present: to make sure staff and volunteers have the resources they need to do their work—the tools, the skills, the support. (Focusing on the past isn't a bad idea either—history always has something to teach us.)

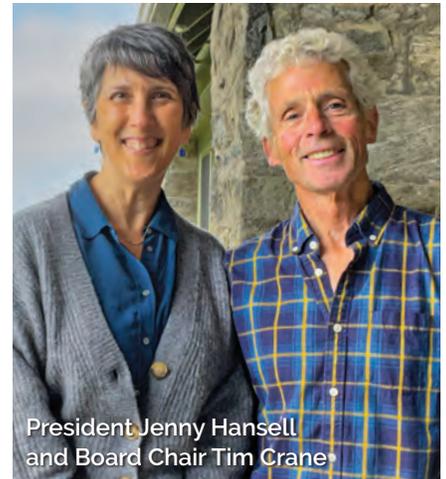
Tim Crane understands leadership. As the Chair of BNRC's board, he has the same two jobs as I do—guide BNRC toward its vision for a better Berkshires, and ensure the organization has the resources to get the job done, both through board members' expertise and their financial support.

Tim and his wife Patty have made BNRC stronger in a really important way, with an extraordinarily generous financial commitment via their estate. They are using an interesting and fairly unusual tool, called a charitable lead annuity trust. **See the profile on page 8 to learn more.**

A few years back, Tim challenged my predecessor, Tad Ames, to dream up something big that could be transformative to the organization, and to the Berkshires. Tad came back with the blueprint for The High Road, the network of trails to connect the Berkshires from town to town, from end to end.

Tad knew it would take years—decades—to bring this vision to life. Eight years after he first thought of it, we are now celebrating the completion of the first glorious leg of The High Road, appropriately along Yokun Ridge, the first major property that came under BNRC's stewardship.

Over the next few months, we'll be giving you a peek around the next corner, to see where The High Road goes from here. I am so glad to share it with you.



President Jenny Hansell  
and Board Chair Tim Crane

Warmly,

  
—Jenny Hansell, President  
[jhansell@bnrc.org](mailto:jhansell@bnrc.org)



## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Protecting wildlife, expanding access, engaging volunteers

What does a typical day for BNRC stewardship look like? The answer . . . there isn't one! While upkeep of the more than 50 miles of trail is a consistent part of the workload, the list of projects the team undertakes in any given year can vary widely.

Many stewardship projects support the visitor experience. Just this summer, four new kiosks were installed at the far corners of **The Boulders in Dalton**. Kiosks provide hikers and visitors with important trail details. A 17-foot bridge was replaced, and 120 feet of boardwalk was installed at **Steepletop in New Marlborough**. And at the **Saddle Trail in Alford Springs** a 40-foot drainage ditch, culvert, and associated stonework were completed. Both projects provide safe trailways to visitors.

Other stewardship projects focus on preserving land and protecting wildlife and habitats. At **Steadman Pond between Monterey and Tyringham**, the stewardship crew, with assistance from volunteers, restored the meadow by managing the growth of young trees. Early successional habitats, like this one, provide food and coverage for many declining grassland bird species, along with other species. *Read more about invasive plant removal on page 10.*

Creating new trails to expand recreational opportunities on BNRC reserves is yet another task for the stewardship team. **The Whale Rock Trail at Thomas & Palmer Brook in Great Barrington** was recently completed with support from Greenagers, the Student Conservation Association (SCA), and BNRC volunteers. This brand-new trail navigates around steep and challenging sections of land and includes a sizeable stone staircase onto Whale Rock itself. A connector trail was also constructed this summer, joining the **Hoosac Range Trailhead in North Adams** with the Wigwam Western Summit parking lot— giving hikers safer access to the final section of the Mohican-Mohawk Trail.

The work of the BNRC stewardship team is far-reaching—this is just a small glimpse. Be sure to say hello to any members of the team you see while out on a trail and check out upcoming volunteer opportunities at [bnrc.org/volunteer](https://bnrc.org/volunteer) to see how you can participate! 🌲



Autumn in its glory, as seen from Sunset Rock on the Hoosac Range trail.

People of all ages benefit from peacefully taking in the sights, sounds, and fragrances in nature.

## CELEBRATE AUTUMN WITH BNRC

Fall can be the most beautiful—and pleasant—time to explore the outdoors. Here's a quick run-down of what BNRC has planned for you.

**September 17 – October 24.** Learn how plants and animals get ready for winter on this self-guided **All About Autumn** walk along the easy Old Mill Trail (Dalton and Hinsdale) in English and Spanish.

**October 1 – 30.** Read an inspirational story about the power of friendship on a **self-guided StoryWalk for families** on the ½-mile Healthy Heart Loop at The Boulders (Pittsfield) in English and Spanish.

**October 2, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.** Enjoy the fall foliage on the **Autumn Appreciation Nature Walk**, a 1.6-mile guided hike along the Sunset Rock Loop at the Hoosac Range (North Adams).

**October 15, 10 a.m. – 11 am.** A **Mindful Family Nature Walk** at The Boulders (Dalton) will encourage children (and their grownups) to slow down, relax, and de-stress by observing and appreciating nature with all their senses.

**October 23, 4 – 5 p.m.** Go on a not-too-scary **Haunted Family Hike** through the woods at the Old Mill Trail (Hinsdale).

Keep an eye out this winter for more self-guided and guided opportunities including beginner snowshoe events for the whole family and getting to know what animals are active in wintertime.

*For more information and to register for guided hikes, visit [bnrc.org/upcoming-hikes](https://bnrc.org/upcoming-hikes).* 📱

## CELEBRATE URBAN BIRDS AS A COMMUNITY SCIENTIST!

Next spring, BNRC will become one of many organizations taking part in Celebrate Urban Birds, a project led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to bring attention and appreciation to birds in urban environments and celebrate the many ways to be involved in bird conservation.

One facet of this project, the CUBs Data Study, is easy to do. Anyone can participate, and all resources will be provided in English and Spanish. First, you'll learn to identify sixteen species of local birds (with the help of BNRC!). Then pick a spot to visit in your backyard, a park, or anywhere outdoors. Spend ten minutes on three different days writing down what birds you see there. You'll submit your results, and that's it!

*For more information, please email Volunteer and Outreach Assistant Charlotte Hood at [chood@bnrc.org](mailto:chood@bnrc.org).*

# THE BERKSHIRES: CONNECTED, RESILIENT, ESSENTIAL

It's our time to care for a truly special region of the world

The Berkshire landscape is at the heart of a much larger ecosystem, from the Hudson Highlands to Canada. Land protection here helps wildlife through the larger landscape.

These protected lands, open to the public for recreation and the pure enjoyment of nature, offer sweeping views of forested ridgelines, diverse wetlands, streams, and rivers that abound and make up the signature landscape of the Berkshires.

While we all want to enjoy the outdoors in spaces like this as much as possible, there's another aspect of BNRC's conservation work that is critical to the landscapes we love.

In recent years, research led by The Nature Conservancy has demonstrated the important role the Berkshire landscape plays in the ability of plants and animals to adapt to our changing climate. Animals, like moose, don't acknowledge boundaries—they wander across state and county lines. Plants and trees, like sugar maples, are shifting their ranges as temperatures warm.

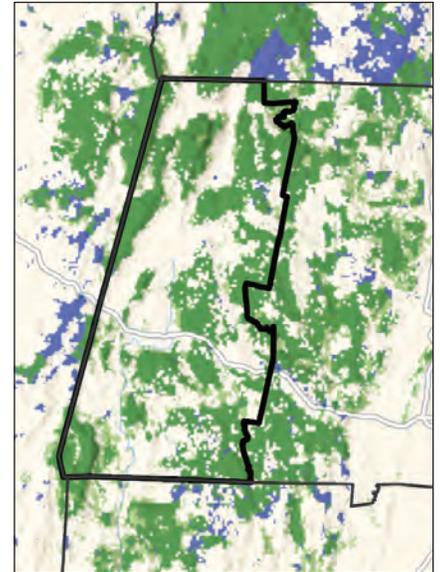
In fact, the Berkshires are a critical part of the forested corridor that stretches north along the Appalachian Mountain chain, from the Hudson Highlands, through New England, and into Canada.

The 23,000 acres BNRC stewards in its reserves and conservation restrictions, along with the lands

protected by the many state forests and local land trusts, all contribute to creating this connected and resilient landscape. It is the diverse topography, bedrock, and the soils that underlie these protected lands that enable

plants and animals to move to new territory in response to climate change. This landscape also provides benefits such as improved air and water quality, carbon sequestration, and better soil health.

As we appreciate and enjoy the Berkshires for all the natural beauty surrounding us, it is inspiring to think of how connected we all are to a larger landscape; one that provides for the health and adaptation of ecosystems and people in our rapidly changing world. 🌍



## BERKSHIRES ❤️ NYC

Many BNRC supporters and friends live in NYC.

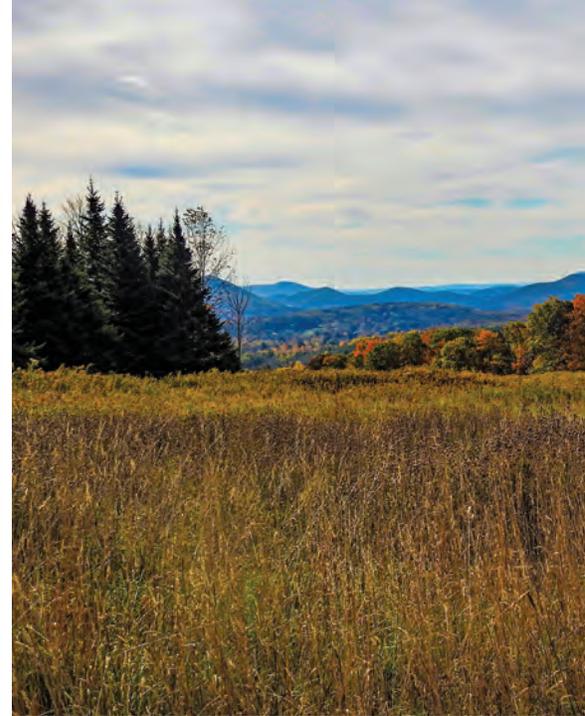
So, **November 10 is BNRC Night in the Big Apple!**

Join others who love the Berkshire outdoors for a party and reception on the Upper West Side from 6 – 8 p.m.

Craft food and beverage from the Berkshires will be featured. President Jenny Hansell will be on hand to briefly share news and learn what means most to you about BNRC.

The party is free. Register to attend at [BNRCNYC2022.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/bnrcnyc2022). See you there?

Questions? Contact Kathleen at [kmosher@bnrc.org](mailto:kmosher@bnrc.org).



## AMAZING AUTUMN OUTINGS

It's hard to beat the crisp comfort of the Berkshire autumn! Each week of the season, the outdoors looks different as wildlife and flora alike prepare for colder, darker days. Here are a few places where you can enjoy the Berkshire fall, for free, thanks to donors and volunteers.

**PARKING LOT FULL?** Please don't park on the road. Try the BNRC Trails App to find a nearby hiking alternative!

### Steepletop | New Marlborough/Sandisfield



Steepletop's 1,230 acres make it BNRC's largest reserve. Its 5 miles of marked and maintained trails plus 3 miles of wood roads, all on easy grades, are ideal for hiking, bird-watching, hunting, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. The reserve's woods range from an unusual patch of old-growth forest to young forest, managed for wildlife that require that habitat. A great spot to see the best of fall! *Near the Old Inn on the Green in New Marlborough, turn onto North Road. Follow for 1.6 miles. Turn right at the steep driveway marked "648" and find BNRC parking at the top of the hill.*

### Parsons Marsh | Lenox



Saunter through forest and wetlands near the heart of Lenox Village. The hard-pack and boardwalk of this 2/3 mile round-trip, out-and-back path make it possible for everyone to get some crisp fall air, see the season's colors, and look for wildlife—especially birds. This trail is flat and without obstacles, accommodating strollers, walkers, or wheelchairs. *From the center of Lenox, head south on Main Street. Turn right at the 1st cross street onto MA-183 S/West Street and follow for 1.4 miles. Turn right onto Under Mountain Road. The trailhead is 0.9 miles down the road on the right.*



### Hollow Fields | Richmond



These 660+ acres of linked hayfields and forests offer the Berkshires' best view of Yokun Ridge. Bobolinks and Savannah sparrows nest in the grasslands. Trails are moderately difficult due to gradual, but sustained elevation change. The Hollow Fields reserve was created through a partnership between BNRC, the Richmond Land Trust, and the Town of Richmond. *On Route 41 in Richmond, just north of Route 295 and south of Route 20, turn onto Perry's Peak Road. **Find BNRC parking on the left next to a red barn. Please do not park directly on Perry's Peak Road, and please respect our neighbors.***

### Alford Springs | Alford



This big-woods reserve allows for short to all-day adventures. Trails vary from moderate to difficult and all feature vistas—on the Father Loop one can see out to Greylock Mountain on a clear day. Several intermittent streams tumble down to feed Alford Brook and the Green River. Abundant white birch trees make this reserve even more magical. *Driving directions are complicated, but worth it! Visit [bnrc.org/alfordsprings](http://bnrc.org/alfordsprings).*

### Hoosac Range | North Adams



A 3-mile-long ridge trail (6 miles round trip) atop the Berkshires' northeastern wall, Hoosac Range passes several dramatic vistas before reaching, the trail's Spruce Hill destination, with its 180-degree view into Vermont. A much shorter hike, 1.6 miles round trip, leads to Sunset Rock, which also has spectacular views, overlooking North Adams. Spruce Hill is a strenuous hike due to length and terrain; the Sunset Rock portion is moderate due to elevation change. *Take Route 2 east from North Adams. Find the parking area on your right, just past the Wigwam Cabins after the hairpin turn.*

### THAT'S NOT ALL!

These are only five of the 50+ BNRC reserves across the Berkshires that are free and open to everybody, thanks to donors. See all BNRC reserves at [bnrc.org/reserves](http://bnrc.org/reserves). Or download the BNRC Berkshire Trails app at [bnrc.org/app](http://bnrc.org/app). 📱





## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Tim and Patty Crane use thoughtful gift planning to protect the Berkshire outdoors

Tim and Patty Crane, of Windsor, are champions of Berkshire conservation. They value free public access to the outdoors for everybody and are longtime supporters of BNRC. Tim is also the chairperson of BNRC's Board of Directors.

In many cases, donor-advised funds can increase one's capacity for generosity—especially for folks who have variable income from year to year. You can set up such a fund with your financial advisor or community trust. Contributions to your fund provide current-year tax benefits. The committed funds can then be disbursed to nonprofits at any point in the future. In the meantime, often, the fund grows in the market.

"I was immediately attracted to the opportunity to use that kind of giving tool," said Tim. "You can make a gift to your fund when you have a high-income year, and then figure out who to give it to later."

More recently, Tim and Patty took their generosity planning to a completely new level by creating a charitable lead annuity trust. The trust

will provide significant, predictable funding on an annual basis to support the mission of BNRC for twenty years. Following this period, the balance of the fund will pass to Tim and Patty's daughters in a tax-advantaged way.

"There is no more powerful an entity than BNRC to deliver many thousands of acres of conserved land that aren't conserved today. I value that. Particularly in light of the fact that the Berkshires is so susceptible to the kind of development that, in my opinion, would be sad to see," remarked Tim. "There's a threat, and there's an opportunity."

Many other gift planning vehicles exist—charitable remainder trusts, retained life estates, donating appreciated stock or from one's IRA

required distribution—many of which provide observable benefit to a nonprofit mission during a donor's lifetime. Different people will choose different methods for different reasons. Much like a family working on a land conservation project, philanthropic planning can be thoughtfully specific to one's particular circumstances.

Collaborating with your legal and financial advisors about options that suit your personal scenarios—and help you achieve or further your family's goals—is a great way to create a gift that does good and takes care of those who mean the most to you.

We're fans of  
doing gifting in a  
well-structured way,  
and a smart way.

—TIM CRANE

For some, making the endeavor a family discussion can enrich the experience, and embolden the generosity of future generations. Tim noted his daughters' influence on his own generosity plan; they remarked, "We know this is giving away our inheritance and we are all for it. We're doing this because we can and we'll be just fine."

Through it all, when one engages in generosity planning, they can often accomplish more than they originally thought they could, doing remarkable things that make a lasting difference.

For Tim and Patty, the abiding effect is conserving the Berkshire outdoors—for everybody. Tim is convinced that BNRC is "on a path that will continue to make a big difference in having this livable Berkshires with a conservation emphasis. I just have a ton of respect for this organization." 🍂

*To learn more about savvy ways to support Berkshire conservation via BNRC, visit [bnrc.org/donate](https://bnrc.org/donate). Also, consider having a discussion with your financial and legal advisors about your wildest dreams for making a lasting difference. You may be surprised by what you can accomplish with gift planning.*

## HUNTING SEASONS AND CONSERVATION

All BNRC reserves, except for Parsons Marsh and Roosevelt, are open to hunting, subject to Massachusetts state regulations. Sunday hunting is prohibited in Massachusetts.

### During hunting seasons, BNRC recommends:

- Wear blaze orange outerwear
- Stay on existing trails
- Keep dogs under your immediate control (consider blaze orange outerwear for your dog)

In 2021, Massachusetts anglers, hunters, and others contributed over \$7.5 million to land conservation, land stewardship, wildlife management and research, outdoor skills programs, and education via the sale of fishing, hunting, and related licenses and fees.

For a complete list of Massachusetts hunting seasons, visit [tinyurl.com/mahunting](https://tinyurl.com/mahunting).

BNRC wishes all hunters a safe, enjoyable, and fruitful hunt this autumn!



## FEELING GRATEFALL FOR MONTHLY DONORS

Autumn is an incredible time of year to be immersed in nature on BNRC reserves. Everybody can experience the local beauty of the season, for free, because of donors like you.

Donors who choose to give monthly provide continual support throughout the year. This provides free access to the Berkshire outdoors, and also preserves forests and wildlife, protects local farms, and enriches climate resilience.

Visit [bnrc.org/contribute](https://bnrc.org/contribute) and choose the "monthly donor" option. The Berkshires are grateful for your support!





Many of these workdays throughout the growing season are dedicated to the ongoing task of habitat restoration in the form of invasive-plant removal.

## BNRC VOLUNTEERS TACKLE BURNING BUSH

Helping protect native plants, birds, and pollinators

Invasive plants are ones that didn't evolve naturally in a habitat; they were somehow introduced, as beloved plants brought by immigrants, or as ornamental plants, or as stowaways in shipments, and then took over, out-competing native plants for limited resources.

This drastically reduces the availability of the food that insects such as caterpillars have evolved to depend on. Their spread can have other repercussions throughout nature. The presence of invasives is thought to be a factor in the dramatic decline in birds, which feed on the seeds and fruits of native plants, and of the insects that pollinate flowers and crops.

At The Boulders, the volunteer effort to remove a large grove of invasive burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*) is in its fourth year. This plant, native to Asia, was introduced to the Northeast around 1860 as an ornamental shrub. Though no longer sold in Massachusetts, it remains a common sight in residential landscapes, from where it can escape (via abundant seeds of its fruits, eaten by birds) into forests.

On organized workdays, volunteers team up with the BNRC Community Conservation crew at The Boulders to pull burning bush out by the roots, if the

plants are small enough. Year-to-year persistence is key; pulling plants up disturbs the soil around them and can result in the germination of seeds existing in the seed bank (the accumulation of years'-worth of viable seeds in the soil). *Read more Stewardship project updates on page 3.*

If the shrubs are too large to pull up, the branches are cut back to six inches, and the stumps are covered with thick black plastic bags and zip ties to the base of the stem for a year, which effectively kills the plant without using chemicals. All this work generates a large volume of refuse, which is piled on site with roots not touching the ground, so it won't re-root.

Every workday, we see the impact of the group's hard work, clearing room for red trilliums and other native plants next spring.

*If you'd like to help remove invasive plants (or with any other volunteer work), just call the office at 413-499-0596 or visit [bnrc.org/volunteer](https://bnrc.org/volunteer).* 🌱

# Savvy Ways to Give Generously

For conservation, wildlife, farms, outdoor access, and climate resilience in the Berkshires

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

Do you have a **Donor Advised Fund**? BNRC gratefully receives many DAF grant disbursements, especially at year-end. **Set up a disbursement with your fund administrator today!**

Donating **appreciated stock** is a high-impact, tax-advantaged way to protect the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the Berkshires.

**Get started at [bnrc.org/givestocks](https://bnrc.org/givestocks).**

If you are 72 or older, you can make a tax-free **donation from your IRA**, and even meet your required minimum distribution (RMD). **Inquire with your plan administrator or financial advisor!**



You can help conserve the Berkshires at ZERO COST today through a **legacy bequest**. BNRC partners with an online service that helps you create your legal will for free (or draft a will for review with an attorney). **See [freewill.com/bnrc](https://freewill.com/bnrc).**

**Donate cryptocurrency** and give from your gains! Crypto donors typically avoid capital gains tax, are able to deduct the full amount of their donation, and can then use fiat to repurchase standing in the donated asset if they choose. **Be part of BNRC's crypto team at [bnrc.org/donatecrypto](https://bnrc.org/donatecrypto).**

*None of the above is financial or tax advice. Always consult with a professional, certified, financial advisor before making any financial decision.*

Of course, most donors do donate cash, which is always welcome, and contributes enormously to everything we accomplish for the region through BNRC.



**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 x114.



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# Endless Discoveries Await

The Berkshire landscapes offer endless opportunities to discover and uncover nature in new ways. BNRC seasonal crew member Ethan made this incredible deer shed discovery while working on a BNRC reserve late this summer.

**LOOK INSIDE** these pages to discover more insights and surprises from BNRC!

