

**INSIDE**

River Walk	3
Lake Mansfield	4
Winter Snowshoe Clinics	5
Riverside Trails	6
New Board Members	8
Pfeiffer Trail Repair	9
Business Supporters	10
Volunteer/ Membership	11



# FIELD NOTES

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

## Broadening our Land Conservancy Community

Carol R. Noble

“If you look after the land, the land will look after you.” This Australian Aboriginal piece of wisdom seems particularly urgent at this time. With the recent elections



4 year old Natanya, *Run for the Hills* kids fun runner, congratulates her Dad, David Noble, who ran the 5K

creating a climate unfriendly to environmental concerns, we need to work harder on both the local and national level to preserve our precious land and its resources. Multiple generations, grandparents, parents and even, young children, are volunteering and participating in GBLC events. You can play an important role in helping us. If you are not already a GBLC member, become one! We also need volunteers, donations and advocacy. Not only will you be helping us, you, too, will benefit by creating a legacy for future generations.

This has been an exciting year for building greater community awareness of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy (GBLC). Last spring we put together a calendar of summer events to engage the community in a broad variety of activities sponsored by GBLC, its projects, River Walk, GB Trails and Greenways, and the Lake Mansfield Alliance as well as our partner organizations.

Enhanced media exposure via the GBLC Facebook page and postings on the Calendars published in the Berkshire Edge and the Berkshire Record was very successful in achieving our goal of increasing participation in our many activities. If you are on Facebook, please make sure to friend us!

More than 80 people celebrated with us at our annual fundraising event, Hullabaloo, on Sunday, September 11. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our mission and our successes in conserving the beauty and extraordinary natural resources of this area.

**Continued on** next page

## Message from the President

Continued from page 1

Among our summer highlights were opportunities for learning about birds through morning and evening guided birding tours led by Christine Ward and Sharon Siter along River Walk, early morning yoga at Lake Mansfield led by Senta Reis all through July as well as many opportunities for hikes and kayaking along the Housatonic. These opportunities to interact with and enjoy treasured natural resources, intentionally

conserved, heighten awareness of how we benefit from the conservation and stewardship efforts of GBLC and its projects.

As you read this edition of FIELD NOTES you will learn about some of the new initiatives that your Land Conservancy is undertaking through a grant awarded for Pfeiffer Arboretum, 2016 CPA awards and CPA grant applications being made for 2017,

Our dedicated, all volunteer Board is committed to continuing the daunting work needed to conserve our valuable resources. But, we cannot do it alone! Now more than ever we need your support.

All good wishes for 2017,



Carol R. Noble

2



*GBLC brings kids and their families up close and personal with a rescued Eastern screech owl at the Lake Mansfield Birds of Prey Program, with Wildlife Rehabilitator Tom Riccardi, in May 2016*

PHOTOS: KRISTIN SANZONE

# Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk

Rachel Fletcher

Conscientious stewardship is ensuring that the benefits of River Walk are available to 10,000 visitors each year. The busy downtown setting can be a challenge where overuse and single acts of vandalism can create havoc. Caring for River Walk is not simple or easy. It requires that we maintain a hand-crafted riverside trail in a busy central location, while protecting it as a refuge, an ecological restoration in progress, and a unique demonstration of our local and national history.

More and more, River Walk is becoming an outdoor classroom and laboratory. For a fourth year, River Walk contracted its day to day care to our young Greenagers, who, along with other volunteers, train in the skills they need to care for River Walk's reclaimed native landscape. River Walk's landscape gardener, Heather Cupo, and Greenager Trails Director, Elia Del Molino, offered onsite kinetic learning programs for middle school students and an orientation for Greenagers. Topics encompassed interpreting River Walk's ecological, historical and cultural significance and included: the industrial engineering accomplishments of William Stanley, the contributions of civil rights pioneer W.E.B. Du Bois to river advocacy and environmental justice, water pollution, and an overview of temperate deciduous forests. Participants received onsite training to implement native landscape improvements at the River Walk site—composting, planting native flora,

controlling invasive species, weeding, watering, mulching, and reinforcing the riverbanks using bio-engineering techniques.

Two new programs made hands-on training especially vital to River Walk this year. These challenging three-year field programs along River Walk's downstream will ensure the continued rehabilitation of the riparian habitat and support river health. A riverbank stabilization program, generously funded by the town's Community Preservation Act, will utilize soil bioengineering to reinforce 130 linear feet of especially steep and vulnerable riverbank. And in partnership with The Berkshire (the redevelopment project for Searles School) we have undertaken extensive riparian habitat improvements on 17 individual areas. Both projects provide unique learning opportunities for River Walk, requiring new levels of expertise and accountability on the part of our young interns and increased mentoring from our professionals.

River Walk is perfectly located to engage and encourage visitors and community volunteers to appreciate and bond with the natural world. Come explore and learn more: Visit our website, enjoy new media features and archival material, pick up our newly published 4th edition of River Walk's 60-page guide, or sign up for one of our many guided tours. <http://gbriverwalk.org/>

3



*Help Greenagers care for the trail! Join us for our Earth Day workday, Sat. April 22, 2017 or book a special workday for your group.*

# Sometimes the best work takes a long time....

Christine Ward

The health of Lake Mansfield and the connected forest are carefully planned for within the detailed improvement plan that was approved by the Select Board (September 26, 2016) as the best way to preserve the health of the lake while providing safe access and recreational opportunities.

4

After a 10 year effort by the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, the town is moving past the planning phase and is committed to lining up the funds necessary for the engineering, permitting and construction that will solve long term storm water issues that are degrading the health of the lake, and bring much needed safety and recreational improvements to the entire Lake Mansfield area.

Town Planner Chris Rembold has submitted a CPA application (\$106,000.00) for the engineering required to provide the base engineering plans for Lake Mansfield Road and the outlet area. He will also be seeking a 319 MA Department of Environmental Protection grant to

implement storm water improvements on Knob Hill road. At the same time, Mr. Rembold will work with MA Boating Access to provide for the improvements at the boat launch area.

The Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force will meet in March to determine its 2017 membership and define its role in the next phase of improvement Implementation. A Lake Mansfield Improvement (LMA) representative from Great Barrington Land Conservancy has been and will continue to be essential to this ongoing process. You can help – email [info@lakemansfield.org](mailto:info@lakemansfield.org) to find out how.

Though improvements are expected to take several years to implement, fueled by a deep commitment to the overwhelming value of a healthy lake to all, we can move forward with a greater certainty that a vibrant Lake Mansfield will be there to support and inspire the children of tomorrow.



1963: Family Fishing Day at Lake Mansfield



2016: Young Lake Mansfield Forest Explorer

# Let's Explore!

## 2017 Winter Snowshoe Clinics and Wildlife Tracking

A perfect way to enjoy exercise on a winter's day! Sign up for a guided snowshoe hike this winter. This collaborative series is offered through GBLC's GB Trails & Greenways project and is being provided in partnership with MA Parks, Community Health Program (CHP), Berkshire Natural Resources (BNRC), Mass Audubon, and Berkshire South Community Center (BSRCC). Bring your own snowshoes or try out a pair generously provided by Berkshire Bike & Board. We'll have snow snowshoes for kids too. Pre-registration is requested: [info@gbtrails.org](mailto:info@gbtrails.org) or call (413) 528-4061. 24 hour advance reservation required for loan of snowshoes. (No snow? We'll skip the snowshoes and go for a winter hike instead!)

**SATURDAY JANUARY 28 / 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. / Free**  
CHP Walking Loop Trail Winter Snowshoe Hike  
**Sponsors:** CHP / GBLC / MA Parks / BNRC / BSRCC / Mass Audubon



5

**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 25 / 3 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. / Free**  
Snow Shoe Clinic @ Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest  
**Sponsors:** GBLC / Mass Audubon

**SUNDAY FEBRUARY 26 / Noon – 2:30 p.m. / Free**  
Winter Snow Shoe Walk / Wildlife Tracking / Birding at  
Housatonic Flats  
**Sponsors:** BNRC / GBLC / Mass Audubon

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## Grab your binocs! Let's go birding!

Learn more about spring and summer birding walks at River Walk, Lake Mansfield and the Pfeiffer Arboretum. We will be sharing great birding resources and helping beginning birders to develop field skills to identify and enjoy our migratory and nesting feathered friends.

To join our GBLC Birders email group, email us at [info@gbtrails.org](mailto:info@gbtrails.org).

*Our migrant birds begin to return in March like this female redwing blackbird captured by Greg Ward.*



# Building Collaboration for a Community Riverside Trail

Janice Kabel & Dale Abrams

6



*A southward riverside trail is envisioned between Bridge Street and Brookside Road to connect walkers with the beauty and nature of the Housatonic River and to enhance community health and walkability.*

The Great Barrington Land Conservancy (GBLC) is excited to champion a collaborative vision for a community trail that extends along the riverfront from Bridge Street to Brookside Road.

GBLC has requested funding from the Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee to complete survey and design work for the proposed Riverfront Trail, which will extend along the west bank of the Housatonic River. The creation of a community trail in this corridor supports the goals of the Town's Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan, by providing an important public recreation and alternative transportation amenity

and by reconnecting the community to a part of the Housatonic River that has been inaccessible for many years.

GBLC has worked with five landowners and town representatives over the past several years to build support for the trail along the proposed route. As envisioned, the trail will traverse the properties now used by the Railroad Street Youth Project, the Dewey Academy, the ballfields at Olympian Meadows, the Great Barrington Fairgrounds, and proposed senior housing east of Bostwick Gardens. All the property owners provided letters of support to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC).



*River Walk Director, Rachel Fletcher, chats with trail visitors. The Riverside Trail would be a continued walking route from River Walk to the south. Separate from River Walk, the new trail would be well-informed by the 25 years practices and principles developed there.*

The preliminary concept of this trail is a recreational footpath approximately 1.25 miles in length. A 6-8 foot wide path is envisioned to provide sufficient space for passive recreation such as walking, hiking, or snowshoeing during daylight hours. The trail width will be determined by local conditions. Views of the river will be an important part of the trail route, with ample opportunities for birdwatching and nature study. Closer to the senior housing complexes at the southern end of the trail, the trail width and surface will be designed to accommodate assistive devices.

GBLC's application for community preservation funds

was approved during the CPC's December meeting. The final step for approval is a vote at the annual Town Meeting in May. Approval would provide funds for surveying and trail design, permitting and estimate of a construction budget. GBLC will be seeking both private and CPA funds to cover legal expenses, and the costs of construction, project management and maintenance.

Surveying and design of the proposed trail route could begin next summer, with construction as soon as permits and funding are secured.

# New GBLC Board Members Get to Work

Carol Noble

The Great Barrington Land Conservancy Board of Directors is very excited to have two new Board members: Rabbi Liz Hirsch and Janice Kabel, Esq. Each offers a unique skill set that promises to expand our Board capabilities and to help us address new challenges. Although both Liz and Janice are relatively new as full time residents, they have years of familiarity with the area and along with their spouses, they are avid hikers.



*New Board members Janice Kabel and Liz Hirsch*

Barrington: River Walk, the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest trails and Pfeiffer Arboretum.” I look forward to joining these efforts.”

**What projects are you looking forward to getting more involved in?**

**Liz:** I’m excited to be helping with volunteer engagement, conservation, and our webpage/social media

presence. And I can’t wait to getting outside with people and do some more hiking.

**Janice:** I’m looking forward to joining the ongoing Board efforts to create and maintain our beautiful spaces and, most especially, to help to plan the new Riverfront trail and other projects.

Liz moved to Great Barrington a little over a year ago but has spent many summers in Great Barrington at the URJ Eisner Camp, first as a camper and then on its staff. She grew up in a small town outside of Boston “with conservation land in my backyard”. Liz and her husband, Rabbi Neil Hirsch, moved to our area where he serves as the Rabbi at Hevreh and she serves as Eisner’s Camp Rabbi and one of the full time Assistant Directors.

Although both Liz and Janice officially joined the Board as of our September Annual Meeting, both had already begun to make contributions during the summer. Janice has been making a significant contribution to the major revision of our website as we seek to make it more user friendly and interactive. Thanks to Liz, Eisner campers got involved in volunteer projects at Lake Mansfield and River Walk.

Janice has been a part time resident of Great Barrington for many years. She and her husband, Rik, became full time residents recently now that they are both retired. After college Janice worked as a journalist and then became a lawyer. She retired from her position as Deputy Counsel for the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation in 2010.

We enthusiastically welcome them to our Board of Directors.

What led these two busy women to dedicate their time to our community efforts? I asked them two questions:

**What interested you in getting involved in GBLC?**

**Liz:** “I have always been passionate about the environment and preserving natural places. When I learned about GBLC, I saw it as a way to give back to a community that has meant so much to me, particularly its outdoor and natural spaces. I was an environmental studies major in college, and hope that some of what I learned will be applicable in this work, too. I was also excited to get involved, to connect with people with a shared interest in the environment and our community.”

**Janice:** “The GBLC Board has done a wonderful job in helping to create and maintain some of the most extraordinary natural and recreational spots in Great



*GBLC board members plan for future conservation*

# Every Trail Needs Strong Stewardship

Christine Ward

There is a special trail within a quiet woodland, where birds sing and the glistening sunlight can be seen on Long Pond Reservoir. But every trail needs strong stewardship and at the Pfeiffer Arboretum bog-bridging and boardwalk structures, originally installed by Peter Jensen in 2001, are decaying and need urgent repair. We are excited to be gathering grant support, matching GBLC funds and the volunteer labor needed to restore this trail system to excellent condition.

In late 1996, the Pfeiffer family donated 38 acres on Long Pond to GBLC. This unique property holds extensive frontage on the water, which, unlike most Berkshire ponds and lakes, has remained undeveloped over the years due to its designation as the water supply for the village of Housatonic. With Tom Ball Mountain as a backdrop, the pond's 113 acres and nearly 1500 feet of shoreline offer a remarkably serene setting. The woodland is home to a diverse and impressive population of tree species including black ash, tulip poplar, butternut, hemlock, shagbark hickory, and large sugar maples along with abundant understory shrubs and wildflowers. This rich habitat sustains many nesting



2012: Berkshire School students transport new lumber to worksites. Volunteers will be important again in 2017.



Surprise! A Veery's nest is discovered at the Pfeiffer.

and migratory birds and is visited by fox, beaver, bobcat, white-tailed deer, coyote and other mammal species.

The 2017 Trail Rehabilitation project will build on work begun in 2012 funded by Housatonic Heritage. Volunteers will be essential to the project in the early stages to remove the decrepit

structures and carry in new locally harvested lumber. A Greenager trail crew will be hired to build and install the replacement structures. All work will be within the original trail footprint and will proceed only with approval from the Great Barrington Conservation Commission. Grant support is being sought from the Massachusetts Recreational Trail Program, Housatonic Heritage, The Berkshire Environmental Endowment Fund and Fields Pond Foundation as well as private individuals.

You can be a part of this great work! Become a Friend of the Pfeiffer Arboretum and volunteer or provide a dedicated donation to help fund this ambitious project. If all goes according to plan, we will invite GBLC members and the community to a trail celebration in September 2017.



2012: Greenager Trail Crew members carefully installed bog bridging. The 2017 Trail work will again employ local youth to repair local trails.

# Local Businesses make our work possible!

Great Barrington Land Conservancy wants you to know about the work we are doing. Each year we bring folks together at community events to raise awareness and the necessary funds for the work ahead.

On September 11th, alongside the Housatonic River behind Riverbend Cafe, an exuberant crowd of over 80 GBLC members came out in support of local farms, community trails, and land conservation at the first annual GBLC Hullabaloo. The event was a smashing success: a noisy hubbub as folks voiced support for the ongoing effort of the land conservancy and talked about a community vision for future conservation efforts.

Over 200 runners, walkers and volunteers gathered together to support GBLC the 6th annual Run for the Hills 1K/5K/10K Run Walk. Smiling people of every age came from near and far to race in support of our special places.

These two events allow us to raise over \$10,000.00 to fuel the many projects ahead.

10

## Thank you to our generous Business Sponsors:

Jane Iredale (\$1,250 plus)

Berkshire COOP Market (\$500 plus)  
Ward's Nursery & Garden Center  
Windy Hill Farm, Inc.  
Wheeler & Taylor  
Carr Hardware

Kwik Print (\$250 plus)  
Bard College at Simon's Rock  
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Dr. Carol Noble, Psychologist  
Lennox Jewelers  
Matthew Berg Acupuncture  
Berkshire Bark  
Native Habitat Restoration  
Edwards, Krol & Nazarov, Family  
Dentistry



Left: Run for the Hills  
Right: Hullabaloo  
For more photos from these two events  
please go to the Great Barrington Land  
Conservancy Facebook page

# Support your Land Conservancy Sign up to volunteer!

Take action! You can make a difference when you share your talents and energies with your community. email us at [info@GBLand.org](mailto:info@GBLand.org) and let's talk about the right job for you.

## SAVE THE DATES!

### GBLC 2017 Events

- April 22 River Walk Earth Day Clean Up
- April 29 Lake Mansfield Work & Play Day
- July 22 Great Barrington A.T. Community Day
- Sept 10 GBLC Hullabaloo
- October 1 Run for the Hills 1k, 5k, and 10k

#### Like us on Facebook:

Receive reminders of these and many other GBLC events!

<https://www.facebook.com/GreatBarringtonLandConservancy>



#### Thank you GBLC Volunteers!

This year volunteers taught yoga, guided bird hikes, co-led Appalachian Trail hikes, helped at clean-up days, took powerful photos, baked much needed workday snacks, loaned equipment, set up tents, attended important town meetings, organized for events, helped with Run for the Hills... and we all had a great time. Join us!



Sophie Banks, Antonia Taylor and Michael Symons work together to sort out recyclables from trash after at the 2016 Lake Mansfield Clean-up Day.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership contribution to GBLC to support efforts to preserve and enhance the community's natural resources and special places.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student    | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Guardian    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Steward     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Family     | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Sustaining |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Conserver |  |

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## GBLC Membership

In addition to my membership, I would also like to support my favorite projects:

- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Future Riverside Trail
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Conservancy Endowment Fund
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Housatonic River Walk
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Friends of Pfeiffer Arboretum
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Lake Mansfield
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Great Barrington Trails and Greenway

**MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: GBLC**

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# GREAT BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVANCY

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Rabbi Liz Hirsch

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Peter Jensen

Ira Kaplan, Esq.

Ethan Culleton

Rose Tannenbaum

**GBLC is dedicated to conservation and stewardship of our community's natural resources and special places.**

We work to protect open space for ecological, recreational, agricultural, and scenic purposes.

We organize community volunteers on behalf of land conservation and stewardship.

We partner with local, regional, and national land trust organizations.

We support sustainable agriculture as a means of preserving our farming heritage.

We support neighborhood initiatives that align with our mission.

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*GBLand.org*

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GBLC logo courtesy of Michael McCurdy

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