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SUSAN FRY PHOTO

Wildflowers at The General Field are at their peak in June.



WENDY GOOD PHOTO

The Old North Bridge Hounds Association held a mock hunt in October, displaying the fine horsemanship characteristic of earlier hunts at Surrenden Farm.

The General Field

In 2006, the GCT worked with the Town of Groton to purchase 144 acres known as The General Field on the Groton/Ayer line to help protect the entire 320-acre Surrenden Farm from development.

With the headline "No new taxes will be required" the presentation at a Special Town Meeting that year made the case for such a large purchase. This was a one-time opportunity to permanently conserve 327 acres of prime farmland and with it the most beautiful entrance into Groton. Surrenden Farm had long been a top conservation priority because:

- This historic farm has been in continuous agricultural use since 1680.
- It has great ecological value along its 2.5 miles of Nashua River frontage.
- It completes a 1,525-acre tract of conservation land.

The General Field is so named because it was used communally by local farmers in colonial times.

The land is now under permanent agricultural restriction and is leased to Laurie and John Smigelski of Excalibur Farm. They plant hay and rye grass.

The Groton Trails Committee, working with the Trustees, built a loop trail along the edge of the property offering a scenic tour that includes panoramic views from the new visitor area.

Trustees have begun to develop the visitor area by planting a field of wildflowers and installing informational signage. The wildflowers came on strong and promise to be even more spectacular next spring.



Trustees Scott Wilson, John Llodra and Chuck Vander Linden install an informational sign on the new loop trail where it intersects Shirley Road.

Conservation Works Thanks to You!

Your membership helps our all-volunteer board acquire and maintain over 30 properties in Groton. This last year we completed critical field work to protect sensitive habitats, and we continued valiant efforts to remove invasive species throughout our properties. 2016 also saw the creation of trails and a wildflower garden at The General Field. Trustees also repaired property signs and trails.

If you aren't a member yet, now is the perfect time to join our efforts. Not only are you protecting beautiful open spaces, you will receive invitations to special events like the vernal pool walk featured in this letter. If you are already a member, now is the time to renew your commitment. Use the enclosed reply card and envelope to send a check, or you can join and give online at gctrust.org.

We are grateful to our generous supporters. Thanks to you, conservation works in Groton!

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ED MCNIERNEY PHOTO

Restoring Blackman Field and Woods

As part of our ongoing field restoration effort, the Trust engaged Harris Farm again to work on our Blackman Field and Woods properties. They've had great success on our Bates Land and Blackman Land, and have worked for the Town of Groton as well. The large field area along the end of Indian Hill Road and the start of Nate Nutting Road had not been mowed for several years, and the inexorable process of forest succession had begun. Hardwood growth, especially poplars and birches, was substantial enough to make ordinary mowing impossible. The Harris Farm team worked full-time for over a week on the project, and the results are spectacular. Although the work was only done in July, we've already seen the results this fall in increased goldenrod and aster growth. They also cleared the brush from along the Indian Hill roadside so the fields are again visible. Even the notorious roadside poison ivy was knocked back significantly, although we know that will be a very short-lived gain. If you haven't visited lately, head down to the end of Indian Hill Road and take a look!



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SUSAN HUGHES PHOTOS

Vernal Pool Experience

Spring is in the ... water!

On April 16 our community was treated to an exploration of a vernal pool ecosystem on the Throne Hill. We were joined by a Massachusetts Fisheries and Wildlife team who helped us find all sorts of creatures! If you missed it, look for this hike again next April. It was a hit!

Trustees

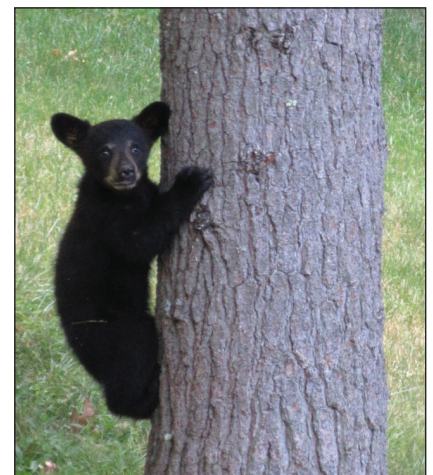
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Invasives Removal Study

At our annual meeting in May trustee Michelle Ruby presented the results of an experiment to remove invasive plants using three types of treatment: foliar spray, mechanical removal and cut-stem herbicide application. This project was funded by a grant by the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts. The results were also presented at the Land Trust Alliance annual meeting in April. You can find a copy of the entire presentation on our website gctrust.org.

Conclusions:

- Approach must be flexible
- Repeated treatments of a targeted area necessary
- Eradication impossible; goal is reduced invasives density to give natives opportunity to thrive
- Initial treatment most labor & cost intensive
- Foliar spray most efficient; trained people working with herbicide applicator critical
- Mechanical removal leads to soil disruption, up to 160 man-hours to clear 1 acre of heavily infested shrubs
- Subsequent treatments easier
- Trained volunteers could cover upwards of 1 acre/day with mechanical treatment
- Hybrid strategy probably best
- Specific techniques dependent on structure & composition of community
- Minimize herbicide use in environment
- Limit soil disturbance in sensitive areas



DAVE MINOTT PHOTO

We are One of Only Ten Accredited Land Trusts in Massachusetts!

On August 26, 2014 the Land Trust Accreditation Commission recognized the Groton Conservation Trust for meeting national standards of excellence, for upholding the public trust and ensuring that conservation efforts are permanent.

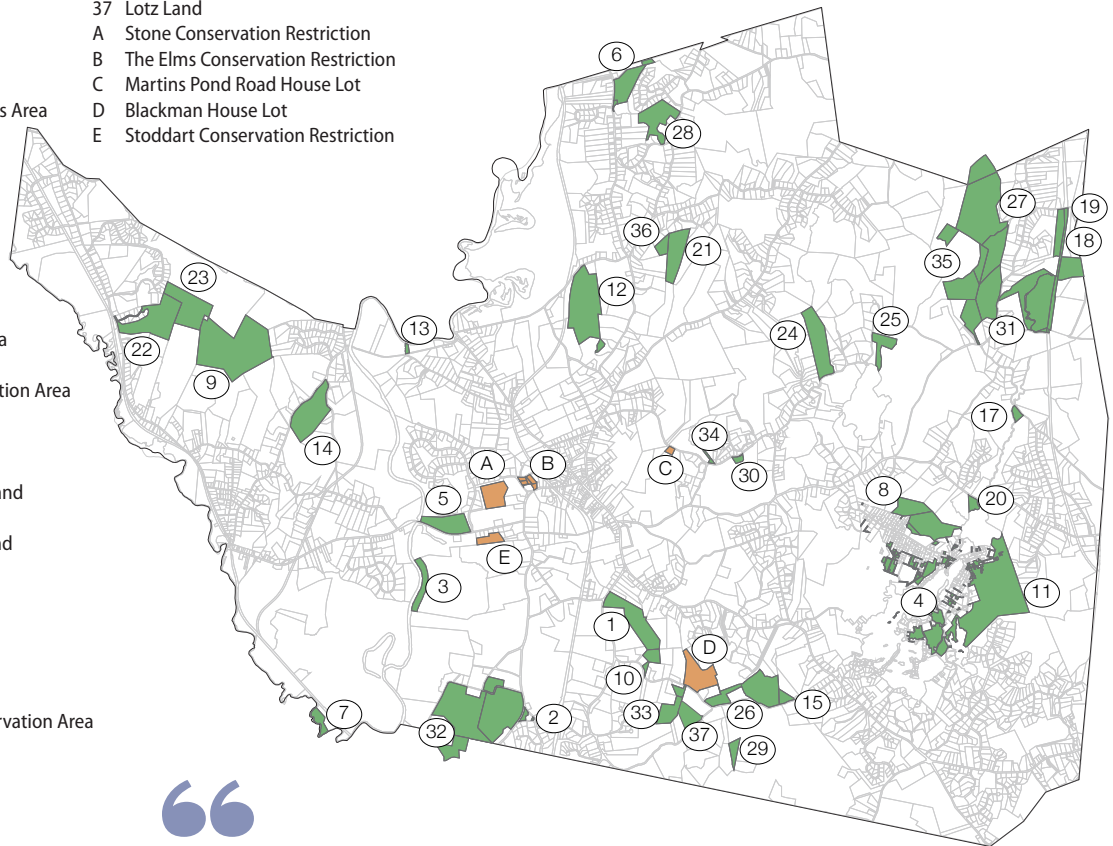
Groton Conservation Trust Properties

September 2014

1,400 Acres

- 1 Bates Land
- 2 Moors Schoolhouse Site
- 3 Sabine Memorial Woods
- 4 Lost Lake Recreation Area
- 5 Lawrence Woods
- 6 Wattles Pond
- 7 Valentine Hollingsworth Cons Area
- 8 Skitapet Conservation Land
- 9 Throne Hill
- 10 Blackman Land
- 11 Skinner Forest
- 12 Shepley Hill
- 13 Gamlin Picnic Site
- 14 Hayes Woods
- 15 Genthner Woods
- 16 Duck Pond Conservation Area
- 17 Cronin Land
- 18 Cronin-Massapoag Conservation Area
- 19 Red Line Path
- 20 Taplin Wildlife Sanctuary
- 21 Fitch Woods
- 22 West Throne Conservation Land
- 23 Lawrence Land
- 24 Baddacook Conservation Land
- 25 Macys' Fen
- 26 Blackman Field and Woods
- 27 Mason Back 100
- 28 Still Meadow
- 29 Riley Land
- 30 Angus Acre
- 31 Gamlin Crystal Spring Conservation Area
- 32 The General Field
- 33 Reynolds Tract
- 34 Martins Pond Brook

- 35 Bruner Land
- 36 Perry Land
- 37 Lotz Land
- A Stone Conservation Restriction
- B The Elms Conservation Restriction
- C Martins Pond Road House Lot
- D Blackman House Lot
- E Stoddart Conservation Restriction



Why we are members of the GCT

Groton is home to a vast array of natural treasures, from its various waterways to its drumlins and woods to its expansive fields and pastures. As long-time residents of Groton (Rob for 33 years and Laura for 49), we have come to cherish the beauty and serenity of our town. We give to GCT because we want to ensure that its treasures are preserved and protected for years to come.

— Rob and Laura Moore



Our Mission

"The Groton Conservation Trust enhances the quality of life in our community through environmental conservation, and engages residents in the enjoyment and stewardship of our remarkable natural landscapes."



The orchards are gone, but one of Groton's most beautiful places is still called Brooks Orchard

SCOTT WILSON PHOTO