

# Observing the Land One Tree at a Time

by John Moores

It was a lovely sunny morning when we met Trustees Michelle Ruby and Susan Hughes at the Bates Land parking lot on Old Ayer Road. They had invited us to join them in this year’s **Tree Identification Walk**.

Tree identification began just over the brook, at the edge of the parking lot, with one of the most prevalent invasive species common to our town, American bittersweet, a woody vine with colorful yellow/orange pea-sized berries this time of year, and colorful orange roots. Bittersweet harms other plants by tightly winding around them, but does not extract nutrients.



Michelle Ruby demonstrates how leaf structure can help with tree identification.

Michelle pointed out the value in noting whether the leaves are opposite (two leaf stems on opposite sides of a branch at the same point along the branch, sharing a “node”), or alternate, where only a single leaf is attached at a node, with leaves alternately on different sides of the branch. Trees with opposite leaf arrangement are in the minority. Michelle provided a mnemonic “MADCap HORSE,” to remind us that the predominant trees in our area with opposite leaves are the Maple, Ash, Dogwood, Caprifoliaceae family (including viburnums and honeysuckles), and HORSE chestnut. Although not many tree species have opposite leaves, a greater number of shrubs have them.

When we came to the Harvey Whitehill Memorial picnic area, a short distance from the

trailhead, we encountered some large white pines and droopy Norway spruce, where Michelle explained the differences between bark and needles among our numerous Grotonian evergreens.

Burning bush, another plant now considered an invasive, was one of our next discussion topics. With its early spring leaves, it has become a popular choice for nesting by songbirds. Unfortunately, the low branches of the bush expose these songbirds to increased predation. We observed the distinctive stem that splits out to appear flattened. Burning bush, genus Euonymus, is another member of the bittersweet family.

At several points in the walk, the trustees pointed out “wolf trees,” which are trees with low, wide branches, or multiple trunks, that seem unusually large and out of place in the forest. This is because they once thrived in pasture land, and were allowed to broaden to provide shade for animals.

Michelle explained how to distinguish hickory from ash, which both have pinnately compound leaves. Hickories have alternate leaflets, and three terminal leaves, with the center leaf being considerably larger than the others, and the three terminal leaflets often collectively being larger than the others. Hickory nuts are another clue, as is the shaggy bark. Ashes have opposite leaflets, with terminal leaflets that are more uniform in size than hickory.

We discussed many more of our local trees, including maples, birches, hop hornbeam, witch hazel (which happened to be blossoming), and how to distinguish the various species, observing bark, leaves, flower, and fruit and also noting how the maturity of the forest influences the prevalence of different species (white birches being pioneers, for example).

The trail on Bates Land is quite diverse, including field, wetland, and a hill. Our walk concluded at the top of the hill, where we collectively enjoyed a lovely view and took photographs. We’re already planning our first solo Tree ID walk to test our new knowledge!

Michelle brought field guides for us to use.



SUSAN HUGHES PHOTOS

## Our Members

Patti Aha  
Chris Allen  
Robert and Judy Anderson  
Jean Armstrong  
Richard Atkins  
Audrey Ball  
John Ball  
Bank of America  
Kevin and Cindy Barrett  
James and Margaret Bellew  
Kurt Benedict  
Benevity Community Impact Fund  
C. Leonard and Patricia Bennett  
Brian Bettencourt  
Kristin Bey  
Camilla Blackman\*  
Anne Bohan and Jim Luening  
Jeffrey and Olga Box  
Ed Bretschneider and Joanne Cotter  
Richard Brockelman  
Steve Brunelle and Stephanie Salem  
Laura Bruno  
Pete and Diane Carson  
Dann and Becky Chamberlin  
Michelle and Stephen Collette  
Joseph Comuzzi  
Andrew and Rachel Connerty  
Anthony Corsetti  
Joanne Cotter  
Richard Curtis  
Kirsta and Chris Davey  
Tessa and Mike David  
Heidi DeGrazia  
Robert DeGroot  
Charles and Constance Detwiller  
Alan Donald  
Bob Dragon  
Erik and Alissa Duerr  
Anne Dunbar  
Kim and Dave Eiselen  
Patti Thompson and John Ellenberger  
Colby Elliott  
Monique Faucher  
John Feeoney  
Ursula Flury and David Boyle  
Carolyn and Phil Francisco

Paul and Donnie Funch  
Sean Gaines  
Andrew George  
Mark Gerath and Sheila Julien  
John and Judy Giger  
Pamela Gilfillan  
Ruth Goldenberg & Jim Fraser  
Wendy and Carl Good  
David Gordon and Barbara Murray  
Robert Gosselin\*  
Thomas Gulick & Carole Greenberg  
Robert and Ellen Hargraves  
Kate Harper  
William and Karen Harte  
Paul and Geraldine Harter  
Kenneth Hartlage  
Andrew Hawes  
William and Roberta Hayden  
Cathy & Stephen Henderson  
Richard and Diane Hewitt  
Bob Hill  
Linda Hoffman and Blase Provitola  
Susan Hughes and Gregg Baker  
Mary Jennings  
Joan Johnson  
June Adams Johnson Charitable Fund  
Steve Kalter  
Jack and Elizabeth Keddy  
Don Koski  
Ben and Lisa Krywucki  
Steve and Marie Lane  
Ted Lapres and Connie Keeran  
Judy Larter  
Olin Lathrop  
Stephen Lieman and June Johnson\*  
Mary Livingston  
John and Grace Llodra  
Ralph and Linda Loren  
Bob and Sue Lotz  
Jeff Lunt  
John Madigan  
Jessica Madoc-Jones and Justin Fry  
Daniel Manning  
George Marsh  
Jean Mason  
Paul & Mimi Matisse

John and Pepe Maynard  
Karen McCarthy  
Brittainy McKinley  
Brian McNeil  
Ed and Kate McNierney  
Gregory and Lynne Mendes  
Matthew Miller  
Mary Minifie  
David Minott  
Robinson and Laura Moore  
John Moores  
Richard Muehlke and Martha McLure  
Raymond Murphy and Beth Lindstrom  
David Gordon & Barbara Murray  
Peter and Andrea Myette  
John Myette  
John O'Brien  
William O'Neill  
Steven Onishi and Dawn Alling  
Robert Ordemann  
Kirja Paananen  
Linda Papadopoulos  
Erik and Krishna Paulson  
Douglas Pease  
Roberto Pellizzari  
Gina Perini and Peter Benedict  
Carolyn Perkins  
Andrew Petterson  
Kathleen Phelps  
Bob and Becky Pine  
David Pitkin and Kristin Barr  
Richard Pitkin  
Dennis Poulsen  
Sally Reed  
Jason Remillard  
Joan Reynolds  
Sarah Richardson  
David and Karen Riggert  
Tom and Katherine Rosa  
Peter Rowden  
Doug and Pat Ruby  
Stephanie Salem & Steve Brunelle  
Edythe Salzman  
Charles Schneider and Adriana Alvarado  
Susan Randazzo & Stuart Schulman  
Barbara Seeber-Wagner

Harvey and Judith Serreze  
Amy Severino  
Jason Shamberger  
Katherine and Jason Shamberger  
Robert and Elizabeth Shaw  
Susan and Paul Shay  
Betty Shea  
Kim and Janet Sheffield  
Matthew Shiely  
Owen and Stuart Shuman  
Daniel and Diane Sierra  
Tony Silva  
Daniel Smith  
David Snodgrass  
Eric Spada  
David and Bobbie Spiegelman  
Christine and Gerard Stelzer  
Paul Stevens  
Marion\* and Hugh Stoddart  
Al Stone  
Victor Stremekus  
Cornelius Sullivan  
Jennifer Sweeney  
Marcia Synnott & Edwin Sharp  
John and Glenda Tabaczynski  
Virginia B. Taplin Revocable Trust  
Sarah Thibault  
Uwe & Sandra Tobies  
Nancy Todd  
J Toulmin  
Jodi Valenta  
Charles Vander Linden and Pat Hartvigsen  
Ginger Vollmar  
Alfred and Kristen von Campe  
Dick and Judy Wells  
Casey and Kate Whicher  
Scott Wilson and Amy Kilham  
Tobias Wolf  
Dan Wolfe  
Henry and Dorothy Woodle  
Michael and Jennie Woods  
John Wortman  
Elaine Yellen and Michael Yellen  
David and Julie Zeiler  
Melanie Zibit

\* Honorary Lifetime Member



Large tracts of conservation land provide the ideal environment for training search and rescue dogs.

## Rescue Training at Shepley Hills

By Susan Hughes

On a late October Sunday, I spent a few hours as a lost hiker in the woods with a group of volunteers from Massachusetts Rescue and Recovery K9 Unit (MARK9) volunteers on the Shepley Hills property. The MARK9 group uses Shepley, in partnership with the GCT, as training for their search and rescue dogs.

MARK9 group assists law enforcement agencies and fire and rescue agencies in finding lost persons. Their specialty is live rescues, and most often centered on wayward hikers, wandering elders, or persons who become confused and are reported missing. On this day I met Paul Morris of Harvard, with his dogs Ditto and Arwen; Dale Chayes of Acton, with Frodo; and Tyler Bresse of Auburn with Pippa.

MARK9 President Paul Morris who has been doing this since 1983, says wilderness training is key for dogs to earn their certification, and private land trusts often offer ideal training grounds. He explains, “We have four specific areas that must be mastered in order to certify a dog: trail search, a problem



Bates Land

SUSAN HUGHES PHOTO

on 40 acres, a problem on 40 acres at night, and a 160-acre search. So these protected properties enable us to secure permission and get the training needed.” In addition to becoming certified, each dog must also participate in at least 16 hours of training each month to maintain their skills.

Which is why Pippa and her human Tyler were here. While Tyler works in law enforcement and also is a MARK9 volunteer, you do not have to be involved with law enforcement to volunteer. “This allows me to combine my love for dogs and the outdoors and offer something useful to law enforcement. Most MARK9 volunteers are familiar with the areas they are searching and available on short notice, which is extremely helpful to law enforcement officials.”

As Paul and I headed into the woods for me to “get lost,” he explained how training works: “We hide a subject, then allow the dogs to search based on scent. Police K9’s are often trained on following footprints for pursuit, or for finding human remains. Our dogs (doing wilderness air scent) are looking for live finds

so they follow their noses to any human. They are monitored, in Pippa’s case with a GPS collar, belled so we know where they are and rewarded when a subject is found. The reward depends on what is exciting to the dog, treats or ball playing.” He also explained that half of all searches take 3 hours, which had me a little nervous this rainy, cold day.

Once I was placed, deep in the woods, Paul walked in the opposite direction and radioed Tyler to start Pippa. Her first “find” was Paul since he was closest. She was rewarded with meatballs, then sent onward. Tyler later explained this is key in live rescues. “This type of training is particularly useful when groups of people get separated and lost. Pippa can find the closest, report back, get her reward, and continue to the next scent.”

While lost, I heard Pippa’s GPS beep, indicating she had stopped. Soon she barked, indicating she was on to something. Eventually I was surprised to have her come up behind me. She circled, then barked and ran back to report to Tyler to report. He rewarded her, shouted “show me” and she led the way. Happily, this process took less than 20 minutes.

The MARK9 teams train twice a week all year long. They are on Shepley every other week from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, and yes visitors are welcome, both human and canine. You can even show up to be a volunteer. You do not have to have a dog to be helpful, hiding subjects are important if you are up for it. For more information about volunteering your dog, visit their website: [www.MARK9.us](http://www.MARK9.us). To find a schedule of training dates in Groton, visit our the GCT website at [www.gctrust.org](http://www.gctrust.org).



(L-R) Dale Chayes with Frodo, a Wire-haired Pointing Gryphon; Paul Morris with Ditto, a Sheltie; and Tyler Bresse with Pippa, a German Shepherd/Australian Cattle Dog mix. Frodo, the elder of the group, has been searching since he was 3.

SUSAN HUGHES PHOTO

## The General Field

The annual Sunflower and Sunset party was once again a feast for the eyes, ears, tummy and soul. Delicious food from Great Road Kitchen combined with lovely music by the Contra Banditos. And of course, wildflowers!



SHERY ANDERS PHOTO



### Our Mission:

To enhance the quality of life in our community through environmental conservation, and to engage residents in the enjoyment and stewardship of our remarkable natural landscapes.

© 2018 Groton Conservation Trust





## Creating Citizen Scientists with iNaturalist

By Holly Estes

What's blooming on these chilly autumn days? Take a stroll into your neighborhood forest and look in the understory for the spindly yellow flowers of the American witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) tree. Are your identification skills rusty? Well, we have the perfect tool to help you identify that witch hazel: iNaturalist.

Earlier this year we were introduced to a new app called iNaturalist and we think it's a useful tool for the identification of both plant and animal species. It's simple to use. Once you have an account, use the app to upload a photo from your phone. The iNaturalist app will list its top suggestions for the identification of the species.



We encourage you to use iNaturalist for a variety of reasons: knowing more about the ecological systems that make up our conser-

vation properties increases appreciation for the land, documenting plant and animal species creates an inventory that will help us learn more about the local impacts of climate change, and immersing yourself in the natural world has a positive impact on mental health for adults and children. It's a proven fact!

Over the course of the year, we incorporated iNaturalist in many of our events such as identifying tree leaves on the Tree ID Walk, looking for spring buds during the General Field party, finding signs of fall at Grotonfest or our first open challenge: Predators. Member Linda Loren won our prize for submitting the most predator photos during that August challenge. Be on the lookout for our future iNaturalist challenges. Next up: The Scavenger Hunt.

Not sure how to use iNaturalist? Here are some video tutorials found at [inaturalist.org/pages/video+tutorials](https://inaturalist.org/pages/video+tutorials), that can help you get started. Practice makes it second nature!



marbled salamander

notes

### Trustees

Ted Lapres, President  
Mark Gerath, Vice President  
John Llodra, Treasurer  
Scott Wilson, Clerk  
David Black  
Holly Estes  
Wendy Good  
Susan Hughes  
Ed McNierney  
Richard Muehlke  
Bob Pine  
David Pitkin  
Michelle Ruby  
Charles E. Vander Linden

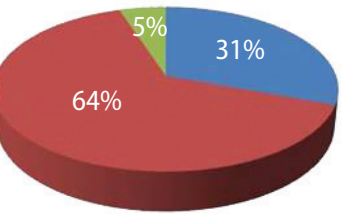


[gctrust.org](https://gctrust.org)

## 2017 Funding

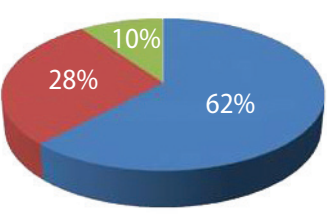
Where it came from, how we spent it

Revenue: \$32,339



■ Membership Dues  
■ Donations  
■ Income

Expenditures: \$16,468



■ Program Related  
■ Management & General  
■ Fundraising & Development

## Thanks to You

Your membership helps our all-volunteer board protect ecologically important areas and provide public access to over forty pristine conservation properties comprising 1,400 acres in Groton. These parcels are integral to a wider mosaic of contiguous habitat that benefits wildlife as well as hikers and bikers who relish the rich and diverse townwide trail network.

Your support not only protects special places, it ensures that you will receive invitations to all our events like the ones mentioned here. If you are already a member, now is the time to renew your commitment for the coming year. If you are not yet a member, now is the time to become one! Use the enclosed reply card and envelope to send a check, or go to [gctrust.org](https://gctrust.org).

We are grateful to all our generous supporters. Thanks to people like you, conservation is working in Groton!



Volunteers and Trustees work to clear a trail.

## Get Your Window Stickers Now

Show your GCT pride with one of these stickers on your car and let the world know you support conservation in Groton. These are available to all current members. If you are not yet a member, now is a great time to join and get your own sticker in the bargain. Please use the enclosed reply card and envelope to send a check or go to [gctrust.org](https://gctrust.org). Or email us at [info@gctrust.org](mailto:info@gctrust.org)



## June Johnson and Taplin Family Honored at May Annual Meeting

At our annual meeting in May we paid special tribute to veteran conservationists who have made exceptional lifetime contributions to the GCT.

President Ted Lapres led a commemoration of former Trustee June Johnson who died on April 18. June served the GCT tirelessly from 1980 until 2014, and was named an Honorary Trustee.

The Taplin recognition honored John and Virginia Taplin for their many generous gifts of land to the town of Groton over the years. Tom and Carl Taplin, along with their friend Noreen, were on hand to hear the many tributes and appreciations. Trustee Bob Pine noted that fully 15% of protected GCT land has come from Taplin gifts. He called them the quietest yet most influential conservationists in town.



## Planned Giving

The GCT was fortunate this year to receive two donations from two different planned giving bequests. Planned giving has long been a staple in the philanthropic tool kit, and it had us wondering how many people know of this important way of charitable giving. One of these gifts came from a retirement plan from former trustee, June Johnson, at the time of her death in the spring. Steve Lieman, June's husband, agreed to talk more about June's planned giving. We will explore different planned giving plans in upcoming newsletters.

**GCT:** June named the GCT as beneficiary to an IRA. Is this complicated?

**Steve:** It was almost effortless. All June needed to do was to make the GCT a named beneficiary of her IRA and assign a percentage of the total IRA that would be paid to the GCT. She was able to carry out the steps on-line with her financial institution in just a matter of minutes. Once in place, June did not have to give this another thought although she could have adjusted the beneficiary percentages at any time with the same simple steps.

**GCT:** What makes this an effective planned giving tool?

**Steve:** The beauty of naming your favorite charitable organization as a beneficiary of your IRA is that there is no need to make any changes to your will or any other estate documents that you have.

**GCT:** How does this differ from naming an organization in your will?

**Steve:** There is no need for the gifted funds to wait for the often lengthy estate probate process. And because these funds are part of your own retirement plan, you can use the funds until you move on. Also, for those of us inclined to make planned charitable gifts and who own both tax-deferred retirement and non-retirement accounts, we may wish to prioritize our tax-deferred retirement accounts as the source for our planned giving to qualified charities (such as the GCT) since these gifts would avoid the taxation that would otherwise apply.

*The GCT does not offer tax advice.*

