

# Annual Report



July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014

**HARRIS CENTER**  
FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

## Director's Report

**W**hat an eventful year for the Harris Center – new strategic plan, new programs, new properties, new staff, new pellet boiler, and a still newish director!

The reports that follow provide insight into the extraordinary number and range of programs and activities that the Harris Center fits into each year. We are a **land trust** focused on protecting large blocks of connected conserved land, and responsible for conserving over 21,000 acres in seven towns. We are an **environmental education center** sending naturalists to 30 area schools, collaborating with classroom teachers to offer innovative environmental education that gets kids up from their seats, out of school buildings, and into their local surroundings. Our **community education programs** provide diverse environmental learning experiences for students of all ages in a packed, year-round calendar of events, including lectures, films, workshops, outings, and more. We also conduct and coordinate **conservation research** through citizen science programs and collaborations with professional scientists to increase understanding and foster improved stewardship of local landscapes.

Harris Center program areas support and build upon each other. Education programs get people outside and promote stewardship of the environment, protected lands ensure a wide variety of local outdoor experiences for learning and recreation, and research on conserved lands provides the basis for education programs and stewardship of those protected lands. The Harris Center is a dynamic and multifaceted organization, and throughout all of our programming, we remain deeply committed to our core mission of promoting understanding and respect for the natural environment – a lofty goal that has only become more crucial since our founding in 1970.

How does a small nonprofit nestled in the highlands of the Monadnock Region accomplish so much? A talented and dedicated staff, a wide network of extraordinary volunteers, and wonderfully inspiring supporters! My heartfelt thanks to all for working to shape a positive future for the people, wildlife, and landscapes of the Monadnock Region.

Here's to many more years of successful collaboration!

**Jeremy Wilson**  
Executive Director

*Our new, three-year strategic plan – crafted with input from Harris Center board members and staff, and already beginning to be implemented – focuses on sustaining our innovative land and education programming while cultivating new opportunities in conservation research and teacher training. For a more detailed accounting of the updated plan, visit [harriscenter.org](http://harriscenter.org).*



**Keene State College interns get forest inventory training**

Photo: Bill Fleeger

## Outings and Events

In the past year, we offered more than 120 outings and events – most at no charge and open to the public – including owl prowls, slide shows, paddles, hikes, award-winning film showings, and much more. We are grateful for the numerous volunteers who led the majority of these events, sharing their love of the natural world with others. ♡

# Land Conservation

Eric Masterson, Land Protection Specialist

Thus far, the Harris Center's land program has protected 16 hills and mountains greater than 1,500 feet in elevation, shorefront surrounding or abutting 5 large lakes and 14 smaller water bodies, 59 miles of rivers and streams, more than 1,600 acres of diverse wetlands, and 13 miles of scenic hiking trails – all on over 21,000 acres of conserved land concentrated in large patches. Wow!

## New Acquisitions

In 2013-2014 the land program added almost 500 acres of newly-conserved land, including easement and fee-owned properties in Stoddard, Hancock, Peterborough, and Harrisville.

In Stoddard, thanks to extraordinary donations, we purchased 360 acres, adding to the 1,170 acres of contiguous conserved land in Nelson and Stoddard on either side of Bailey Brook Road. This new

**Autumn view from  
East Pinnacle on  
the new Kulish  
Ledges Trail.**

*Photo: Brett Amy Thelen*



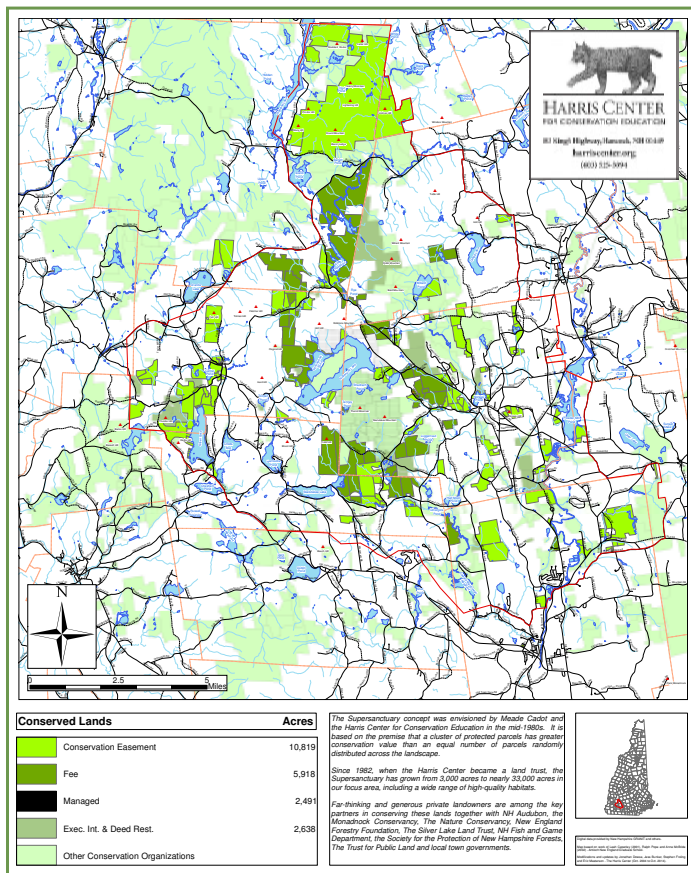
parcel has been named Wilson Tavern, after the inn whose foundations can still be found in the heart of the now-wooded property.

In Hancock, Annie Brewster and Rick Weyerhaeuser donated an easement on an 18-acre forested parcel they own. This easement adds to a connected corridor of conserved lands extending north from Norway Pond.

In Peterborough and Harrisville, the Harris Center purchased 109 acres on Brush Brook Road (Route 137), much of which is ranked by the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan as “highest value” wildlife habitat. This mostly-forested acreage includes modest slopes from the road down to Nubanusit Brook, as well as 9 acres of open wetland and 2/3 of a mile along the brook. Additionally, the land is contiguous with 1,384 acres of conserved land in Peterborough and a 7,142-acre conservation corridor running between MacDowell Reservoir and Nubanusit Lake. The property was formerly owned by Hiroshi Hayashi, the well-known chef and restaurateur, who long sought to conserve the land. The land purchase was made possible by very generous donations from friends of the Supersanctuary and from Peterborough's land conservation capital reserve fund. Materials from the large house and barn, both of which were in very poor condition, have been salvaged. The barn frame, after some repair, will be erected on another site by its new owner.

## Stewardship and Monitoring of Conserved Lands

Our annual monitoring of approximately 100 conservation easements was conducted by hard-working undergraduate and graduate student interns. Adriana Casillas from Antioch University New England, Lizzie Grasafi from Marist College, and Nikki Leeman from Keene State College worked with landowners to monitor easements throughout the Supersanctuary through the spring and summer. A seasoned corps of volunteer monitors will be visiting additional properties this fall. A huge thank you goes out to these adventurous interns and volunteers for helping us achieve this enormous and critical task in our work as a land trust. 🍂



## Partners and Cosponsors

We work with many others each year to bring you a rich, varied calendar of outings and events. Our partners and cosponsors this year included Antioch University New England, the Grapevine Family Center, the Hancock Town Library, Horatio Colony Nature Preserve, Keene State College, the Keene State College Film Society, the Monadnock Center for History and Culture, the Monadnock Conservancy, the Nature Conservancy, the Nelson Conservation Commission, the Nelson Trails Committee, NH Audubon, NH Fish and Game, the Peterborough Conservation Commission, the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, the UNH Cooperative Extension, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. 🍂



# Conservation Research

Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director

In March and April, nearly 80 volunteers participated in our Salamander Crossing Brigades. This program aims to protect local amphibian populations by training volunteers to identify, count, and safely move salamanders and frogs across local roads during the spring amphibian migration. This spring, we crossed 4,875 critters, bringing our eight-year total to nearly 20,000 protected amphibians. With support from the Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation, we also conducted a pilot pitfall array survey at the North Lincoln Street amphibian crossing site in Keene, where we found that as many as 90% of the amphibians successfully crossing the road were moved across by our volunteers.

Our citizen scientists also searched for and documented vernal pools – which serve as specialized breeding habitat for those migrating amphibians – as part of our Vernal Pool Project, a partnership with the Peterborough Conservation Commission and the Monadnock Conservancy. 29 volunteers documented 33 vernal pools in 10 towns in 2014, bringing our project total to over 160 documented vernal pools in the Monadnock Region. To see photographs and data from vernal pools on public lands, visit our interactive, illustrated, online map at our citizen science webpage. We're grateful for the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's continued support of the Peterborough Vernal Pool Project.

Over the summer, we again partnered with NH Audubon to monitor the state-endangered Common Nighthawk in Keene, one of the last places in the state where this aerial insectivore still breeds. Our Project Nighthawk volunteers identified four individual birds (three males and one female) in Keene, though we were unable to confirm successful nesting this year.

In the second year of an innovative partnership with the Keene State College (KSC) Environmental Studies Department, four KSC undergraduates participated in a seven-week summer conservation internship program with the Harris Center. Under the guidance of KSC professors and Harris Center staff, the students documented 11 vernal pools, sampled 20 forest community inventory plots, pulled hundreds of invasive plants, conducted weekly monitoring of the Harris Center's Spoonwood Pond campsites, assisted with educational events and easement monitoring, and collected a second year of data for our wildlife road mortality study on Route 123, which bisects Supersanctuary lands. For this survey, the students

**This spotted salamander successfully crossed North Lincoln Street in Keene this spring.**

*photo: Brett Amy Thelen*



walked 5 transects (totaling 4 miles) 14 different times, recording 1,125 roadkilled animals of at least 19 different species. In the coming year, we hope to install wildlife crossing signs at the road mortality hotspots identified by these surveys.

Under the direction of Dr. Denise Burchsted, a river ecologist and professor in the KSC Environmental Studies Department, another team of KSC students conducted research on three streams on Harris Center conserved lands. The students walked the streams, quantifying the shape of the river channels and collecting water quality data, with the ultimate goal of assessing the impacts of beaver dams on river processes. This research also included the installation of ten sets of sensors, which are recording water level, temperature, and conductivity multiple times every hour. Two of the students will attend a state-wide meeting this fall to present their findings.

We are so grateful for the dedication, enthusiasm, and generosity of all of our citizen scientists and research partners, and we look forward to seeing you for more conservation research with the Harris Center in 2015! ♡

## Thank You, Harris Center Volunteers!

Diana Jacobs, Membership Coordinator

This year the Harris Center benefited more than ever from tremendous volunteer support. In addition to our board members – who all serve as volunteers – and our volunteer outings leaders, we've had a vast array of others helping us reach our diverse goals. Conducting conservation research, assisting our educators, helping with mailings, manning amphibian road crossing sites, providing legal counsel, overseeing Harris Center displays at local events, monitoring and clearing trails, working on grounds cleanup, providing food and flowers for events, and establishing gardens, are just some of the many ways we've been supported by our wonderful volunteers. We appreciate their efforts more than words can tell. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to all! ♡



**The 2014 Keene State College conservation intern team with the impressive pile of invasive plants they removed from a wooded site near the Cadot Trail.**

*photo:  
Brett Amy Thelen*

# Environmental Education in the Schools

Janet Altobello, School Program Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist

**D**uring the 2013-2014 school year, the Harris Center's school programs reached 3,000 grade K-12 students in 30 schools in the Monadnock Region. Guided by Harris Center naturalists, students recorded the flowering time of red maple trees, designed and built coldframes to extend the growing season, experimented with wind dispersal of seeds, made a wildlife habitat mural, watched worms eat lunch scraps, and built confidence and competence as field ecologists.



**Planting in a handbuilt coldframe**

*Photo: Janet Altobello*



**Harris Center teacher/naturalist Jenn Sutton works with Antrim Elementary School students on a mural depicting local wildlife.**

**Students in Carol Young's ConVal biology class collect soil samples beneath an invasive bush.**

*Photo: Laurel Swope*



efficiency. ConVal 10th graders surveyed their campus for invasive plant species, and made recommendations for managing those plants. At the Otter Brook Farm agricultural site, they investigated how soil chemistry and root structure relate to plant growth.

In the Keene School District — where funds for Harris Center programming had been eliminated from the district budget — we received a “bridge” grant from the Henry L. and Patricia J. Nielsen Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. With this generous gift, we were able to continue Harris Center programming in three grades, offer professional development workshops to elementary school teachers, and provide family programs in each of the five Keene elementary schools. We’ve crossed the “bridge,” and the Keene School District has funded a Harris Center initiative for the 2014-2015 year to design and teach a citizen science project called “Birds in our Neighborhood” in all twelve of their 3rd grade classes.

In 2013, we also celebrated our Teacher of the Year, Laura White, a wonderful 4th and 5th grade teacher from James Faulkner Elementary School in Stoddard. Laura was honored for her creative work using local cellar holes to help students study New Hampshire history. Her partnership with Harris Center naturalist Dori Drachman culminated in an informative, student-created display for the Stoddard Historical Society.

All across the Monadnock Region, students demonstrated curiosity, enthusiasm, engagement, and inventiveness as they explored the land outside their schools. ♻️

## The Harris Center for Conservation Education worked with the following schools in 2013-2014:

Antrim Elementary School  
Benjamin Franklin School, Keene  
Chesterfield Elementary School  
Conant High School, Jaffrey  
ConVal High School, Peterborough  
Dublin Community Preschool  
Dublin Consolidated School  
Faulkner Elementary School, Stoddard

Franchetown Elementary School  
First Friends Preschool (in four towns)  
Fuller Elementary School, Keene  
Great Brook Middle School, Antrim  
Greenfield Elementary School  
Hancock Elementary School  
Harrisville Children's Center  
Jaffrey Grade School

Jonathan Daniels School, Keene  
Keene High School  
Keene Middle School  
Marlborough Elementary School  
Nelson Elementary School  
Peterborough Elementary School  
Pierce Elementary School, Bennington

Rindge Memorial School  
Robin's Nest, Peterborough  
South Meadow Middle School, Peterborough  
Symonds Elementary School, Keene  
Temple Elementary School  
Wells Memorial School, Harrisville  
Wheelock Elementary School, Keene



# Community Programs

Susie Spikol Faber, Community Programs Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist

**H**ow do we connect people to nature? This is the essential question that frames all the Harris Center's community programs. For adults, we offer lectures, courses, and field excursions. For young adults, we provide mentorship and opportunities to physically and mentally engage in the natural world. Children discover playful outdoor adventures, while the very young explore the seasons outside with their parents or caregivers.

## Preschool Programs and Afterschool Clubs

Over 1,500 people participated in more than 30 different Harris Center community programs during the 2013-2014 year. These included monthly offerings in area preschools, afterschool clubs



### Mud is fun!

photo: Jenn Sutton

at elementary and middle schools, work with pre-service teachers from Keene State College and Antioch University New England, Elderhostel's Road Scholar programs, and seasonal visits to adult care facilities. Like the streams and rivers that link our communities together, these programs are about connection – connecting children to their backyards, schoolyards, and local protected lands; connecting emerging adults to the complex environmental issues they may one day solve; and connecting adults to nature, place, and history.

One of this year's highlights was Great Brook School's Young Birders Club. This group, generously supported by funds from Monadnock Paper Mills, gave middle school students an opportunity to explore the fascinating world of local birds with expert guidance from the founders of the NH Young Birders Club, Henry Walters and Cynthia Nichols. Students developed bird identification skills, learned how to use field guides, and came to understand the crucial role that habitat plays in bird life. Working with the NH Young Birders Club also connected these middle schoolers with adults who are engaged in the real work of conservation. The Harris Center is investing in our future when we work with these students, planting the seeds of future stewards of the natural world.

Another highlight has been the growth of our preschool programming. In the ten years that the Harris Center has been working with area preschools, we've grown from working with just the Dublin Community Preschool to, this year, partnering with six other local preschools, as well. Working with these young naturalists – whose connection to the world around them is heartfelt and dynamic – inspires us all.

### Rainy days make for fine eft watching.

photo: Joyce Carroll



## Collaboration with the Scott Farrar Home

Though I could go on about the power and wonder inherent in each and every one of the Harris Center's community offerings, I'll share just one more: this year, we were honored to develop a new partnership with the Scott Farrar Home in Peterborough. Since some residents of this senior housing facility are not mobile enough to attend our other programs, we brought the natural world to them. They learned about the tracks and sign of some of New Hampshire's common mammals and the life story of the red fox. They observed winter birds at their feeder, and shared stories of the natural world right outside their window. This new and inspiring collaboration helped bring our community programs full circle, and made it clear that nature has the power to move us throughout our lives.

## Harris Center Summer Camps

Jenn Sutton, Camp Director and Teacher/Naturalist

**T**his year, as always, our summer camps were filled with adventure, friendship, and learning for children ages 4 through 14. In Wol's Nest tradition, campers built forts, explored caves, swam and canoed in Lake Nubanusit, and played multiple rounds of the popular game of *Bobcat*. Children were excited to be here, and ready for adventures old and new. Gavin Codman of Wee Wols woke up on his first day of camp and said, "I have been waiting ALL YEAR for this day!" When you ask him how old he is, he responds, "I am finally Wee Wol's age!"

New this year: all campers and staff, from Wee Wols to White Mountain Wanderers, received Harris Center camp T-shirts. Seeing all the children and staff in their shirts helped create a real sense of community. Campers in the Snapping Turtle group from Wol's Nest wore their shirts as they hiked up Skatutakee and Thumb Mountains. When they arrived back at the Harris Center for their overnight campout, many fell asleep in those same shirts, the wildlife tracks on their back a fitting symbol of their own travels through the woods. ➡



**Spoonwood Adventure campers get ready for a day on Lake Nubanusit.**

Photo: Kim Bylancik

Harris Center for Conservation Education

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#### Harris Center Staff

Jeremy Wilson, *Executive Director*

Janet Altobello, *School Program  
Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist*

Margaret Baker, *Communications Specialist*

Meade Cadot, *Naturalist Emeritus*

Pete Carroll, *Maintenance*

Dori Drachman, *Teacher/Naturalist*

Jaime Hutchinson, *Teacher/Naturalist*

Diana Jacobs, *Membership Coordinator*

Sara LeFebvre, *Finance Administrator*

Eric Masterson, *Land Protection Specialist*

Polly Pattison, *Teacher/Naturalist*

Susie Spikol Faber, *Community Programs  
Coordinator and Teacher/Naturalist*

Jenn Sutton, *Teacher/Naturalist and  
Camp Director*

Laurel Swope, *Teacher/Naturalist*

Brett Amy Thelen, *Science Director*

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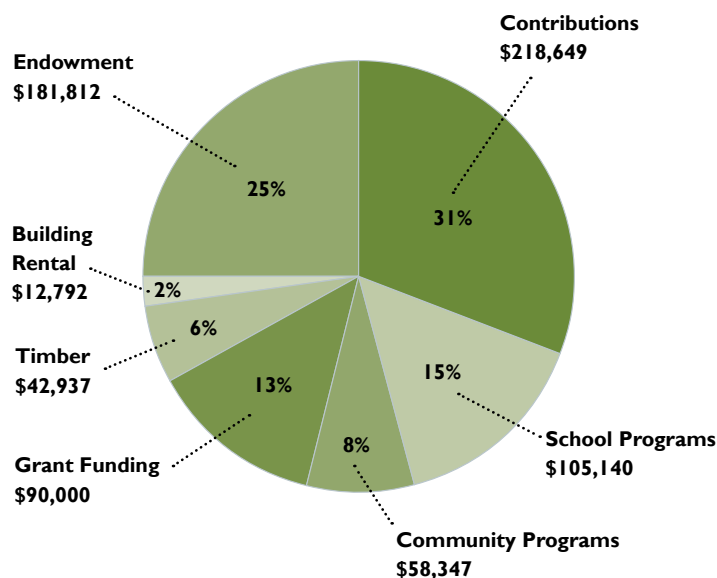
## Harris Center Financial Report

### Operating Budget – July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

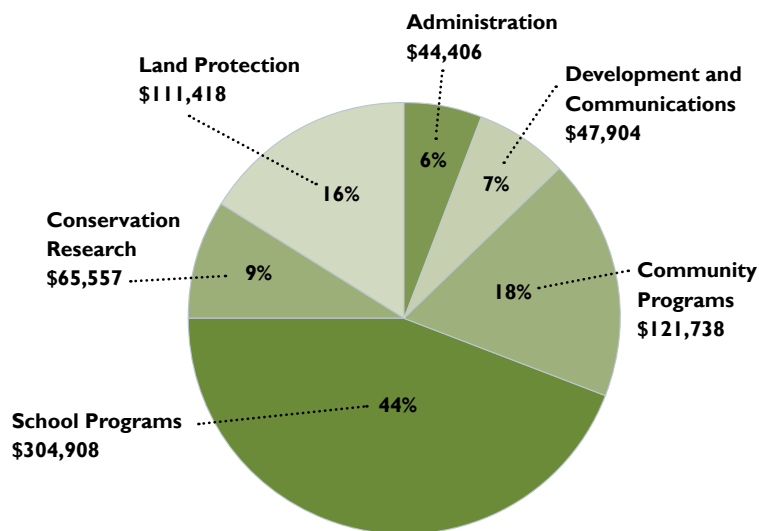
The financial statements of the Harris Center for Conservation Education are reviewed by Thomas S. Bates, Certified Public Accountant, P.C. of Keene, New Hampshire. The reviewed financial statements are available for public view at the Harris Center office in Hancock, New Hampshire.

Harris Center for Conservation Education, 83 King's Highway, Hancock, NH 03449, (603) 525-3394, harriscenter.org

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**INCOME TOTAL: \$709,677 (100%)**



**EXPENSES TOTAL: \$695,931 (100%)**