

Annual Report

HARRIS CENTER **50** YEARS
FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION
Making Tracks Since 1970!

July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019

Director's Report

Each year, as I sit down to write this note, I'm amazed at the long list of new Harris Center accomplishments. Last year, three land conservation projects were completed in Harrisville and Stoddard. Together, they protect nearly 600 acres, preserving water quality, wildlife habitat, and trail access for generations to come.



During the school year, our team of extraordinary teacher-naturalists traveled throughout the Monadnock Region, immersing 3,000 students in explorations of nearby nature. Meanwhile, thousands of learners of all ages enjoyed our diverse calendar of over 120 lectures, workshops, films, outings, courses, afterschool programs, camps, and other events.

Last fall, we joined with New Hampshire Audubon to continue the important data collection and education activities at the Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory. The fall hawk migration is one of the great wonders of the natural world, and the Observatory's raptor counts provide important insight into the status of raptor populations across two continents. We're proud to be a part of it all.

You can read more about these achievements and many others in the pages that follow. In all that we do, we strive to ensure that Harris Center programs build on and support one another. Our education programs promote understanding and respect for the natural world; protected lands ensure a wide variety of local outdoor experiences for wildlife, education, and enjoyment; and research informs both education and stewardship of protected lands.

In addition, we are celebrating a major milestone: the Harris Center is turning 50 years old! The celebrations kick off at the 2019 annual meeting, and we'll continue to offer special outings, events, and activities throughout the year, culminating at our next annual meeting in October 2020. Please join in the fun!

As always, I want to send out a tremendous thank you to our volunteers, supporters, and staff, who help the Harris Center accomplish so much each year. Together, we're building a grand future for the people, wildlife, and landscapes of the Monadnock Region. Thank you!

Jeremy Wilson, Executive Director

Partners and Co-sponsors

We work with many others every year to connect people to the natural world. Our 2018-2019 community partners and event co-sponsors included:

American House	Nelson Conservation Commission
American Steel	Nelson Town Library
Andorra Forest	Nelson Trails Committee
Antioch University New England	NH Audubon
Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee	NH Department of Environmental Services
Avenue A Teen Center	NH Department of Health and Human Services
Cheshire County Conservation District	NH Fish and Game
City of Keene	NH Humanities
Connecticut River Conservancy	Northern Woodlands
Dublin School PTO	Norway Pond Commission
Francestown Land Trust	Nubanusit Lake Association
Francestown PTO	Peterborough Conservation Commission
Franklin Pierce University	Peterborough Recreation Center
Hancock Conservation Commission	Peterborough Town Library
Hancock Town Library	Pierce School PTO
Harlow's Pub	Post and Beam Brewing
Harrisville Conservation Commission	Piscataquog Land Conservancy
Harrisville Public Library	Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership
Harrisville Trails	Ray Cilley
Historical Society of Cheshire County	Rindge Conservation Commission
Horatio Colony Nature Preserve	RiverMead
International Conservation Fund of Canada	SALT Video Productions
Jaffrey Historical Society	Scott-Farrar at Peterborough
Dr. Jon Atwood	Seaver Silver Lake Farm Trust
Jupiter Hall	Silver Lake Land Trust
Keene State College (KSC) School of Sciences, Sustainability, and Health	Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
KSC CALL Program	Southwest Regional Planning Commission
KSC Film Society	SPARCnet
Local Girl Scout and Boy Scout Troops	Squam Lakes Natural Science Center
Loon Preservation Committee	St. Joseph's Regional School
Miller State Park	Stoddard Conservation Commission
Monadnock Conservancy	Surry Village Charter School
Monadnock Region Harvard and Radcliffe Alumnae Chapter	The American Chestnut Foundation
Moosewood Ecological LLC	The Caterpillar Lab
Native Geographic	The Grapevine Family and Community Resource Center
Native Plant Trust	The Hancock Inn
Nature's Green Grocer	Town of Surry
Nature Groupie	Trout Unlimited
	UNH Cooperative Extension
	US Army Corps of Engineers
	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Thank you to all!

Environmental Education in the Schools

Janet Altobello, School Program Director and Teacher-Naturalist

During the 2018-2019 school year, Harris Center teacher-naturalists explored nearby nature with **3,000 students** from **28 Monadnock Region schools**. Some highlights include: helping Antrim 3rd graders set up a long-term salamander study plot in McCabe Forest as part of a large-scale regional research network; supporting Harrisville 5th and 6th graders who chose to educate their community about native pollinators by writing a book, making a display for the town library, and creating a game; and guiding South Meadow and Great Brook School 8th graders through water quality monitoring in Norway Pond, MacDowell Lake, and local streams.

As a team, the Harris Center teacher-naturalists declared “more time outside!” as a faculty teaching goal. We questioned how we could reduce indoor teaching time, and dug into the expanding body of research that documents the benefits to children of spending schoolday time in natural settings.



▲ **Hawk Watcher at Blueberry Hill** A Pierce School student uses binoculars to search for fall-migrating raptors.

schoolyards. At Jaffrey Grade School, we led workshops to help teachers gain comfort using their new outdoor classroom, which was created by an Eagle Scout in the school’s front yard. We also helped them create curriculum based on the Contoocook River, and led science experiences at the river that they could share with their students. In Keene, we led practice bird walks for 3rd grade teachers, where it became apparent that after three years of working with Harris Center naturalists on the “**Birds in Our**

We also investigated how we might support classroom teachers who wish to spend more time outside with their students when we’re not at their side. To that end, we started a pilot “**More Time Outside**” study group for Kindergarten through 2nd grade teachers, who met monthly to swap ideas and gain inspiration while exploring each others’



▲ **Animal Sign Scavenger Hunt** Temple Elementary School 2nd graders search for signs of wildlife in the woods near their school on an outing with Harris Center naturalist Karen Rent.

Neighborhood” project, they had gained significant confidence and competence to lead their own bird walks with their students.

In 2018, we also honored Claudia Dery, 5th and 6th grade teacher at Wells Memorial School in Harrisville, as our **Educator of the Year**. Claudia was our colleague at the Harris Center from 1989 to 1994, when she launched the beloved *Owl Moon* program and the lively Rot and Roll Festival, celebrating decomposition. Her zest as a nature-based teacher is contagious.



▲ **A Day of Ponding** A Wells Memorial School kindergartener discovers the life aquatic with Harris Center naturalist Jenna Spear.

Offering these experiences to our public school children is more urgent than ever. They are hungry for adventure, for feeling at home in the natural world, and for time and space to explore and discover how things work. To learn more about this vitally important work, visit harriscenter.org/school-programs. 🐾

photos: Ben Conant

The Harris Center for Conservation Education partnered with the following schools in 2018-2019:

Antrim Elementary School
Benjamin Franklin School, Keene
Chesterfield Elementary School
Conant High School, Jaffrey
ConVal High School, Peterborough
Dublin Community Preschool
Dublin Consolidated School
First Friends Preschool (in three towns)

Francestown Elementary School
Fuller Elementary School, Keene
Great Brook Middle School, Antrim
Greenfield Elementary School
Hancock Elementary School
Harrisville Children’s Center
Jaffrey Grade School
James Faulkner Elementary School, Stoddard

Keene Middle School
Marlborough Elementary School
Nelson Elementary School
Peterborough Elementary School
Pierce Elementary School, Bennington
Rindge Memorial School
Robin’s Nest Nature Preschool, Peterborough

South Meadow Middle School, Peterborough
Symonds Elementary School, Keene
Temple Elementary School
Wells Memorial School, Harrisville
Wheelock Elementary School, Keene

Thanks for exploring nature with us this year!

Community Programs

Susie Spikol, Community Programs Director and Teacher-Naturalist

For 50 years, the Harris Center has been reaching out and offering an amazing array of educational programs for the Monadnock Region community. 2018-2019 continued this tradition. Participants in this year's programs ranged from just a few weeks old to more than 100 years



▲ **LAB GIRLS** This afterschool program connects middle school girls with high school mentors and women working in science, technology, engineering, and math.

public libraries, including Hancock, Harrisville, Keene, and Peterborough; a **nature-focused parenting course** at the Grapevine Family & Community Resource Center in Antrim; and the popular **Nature on Tap** series at the Hancock Inn and Post & Beam Brewing.

Whether we're leading hikes for babies in backpacks or teaching middle school students how to read a compass in the

young, demonstrating that the Harris Center is truly a lifespan organization.

Highlights include: **LAB GIRLS**, a STE(A)M club for middle school girls with high school mentors; nature talks at all the Peterborough-area **retirement and assisted living communities**, and several in Keene, too; programs at many

Summer Adventures

Jenna Spear, Camp Director and Teacher-Naturalist

In our 44th year of offering hands-on, nature-inspired summer camps, 130 adventurous kids joined skilled Harris Center naturalists for six different adventures. Our youngest campers, the preschool **Explorers**, explored rock caves, searched for insects, and let their imagination lead their play as they created forts, fishing poles, castles, boats, and a special "home base" in the woods that they returned to every day. Elementary-school-age **Woodlanders** spent hours in the woods and fields playing predator-prey games like "Bobcat," building forts large and small, and learning about local wildlife by dissecting owl pellets and searching for salamanders and frogs. Older **Rovers** and **Voyagers** spent their days hiking and swimming, learning map and compass skills, and becoming more at home in the woods. **Wanderers** and **Paddlers** slept under the stars for two nights, exploring the wilds of the SuperSanctuary by foot or canoe during the day. We were lucky to have several former Harris Center campers come back as assistant counselors, sharing their enthusiasm with another generation of kids. Once again, camp was full of discovery, adventure, and the joys of seeing old friends and making new ones in the great outdoors. ➔



photos: Ben Conant



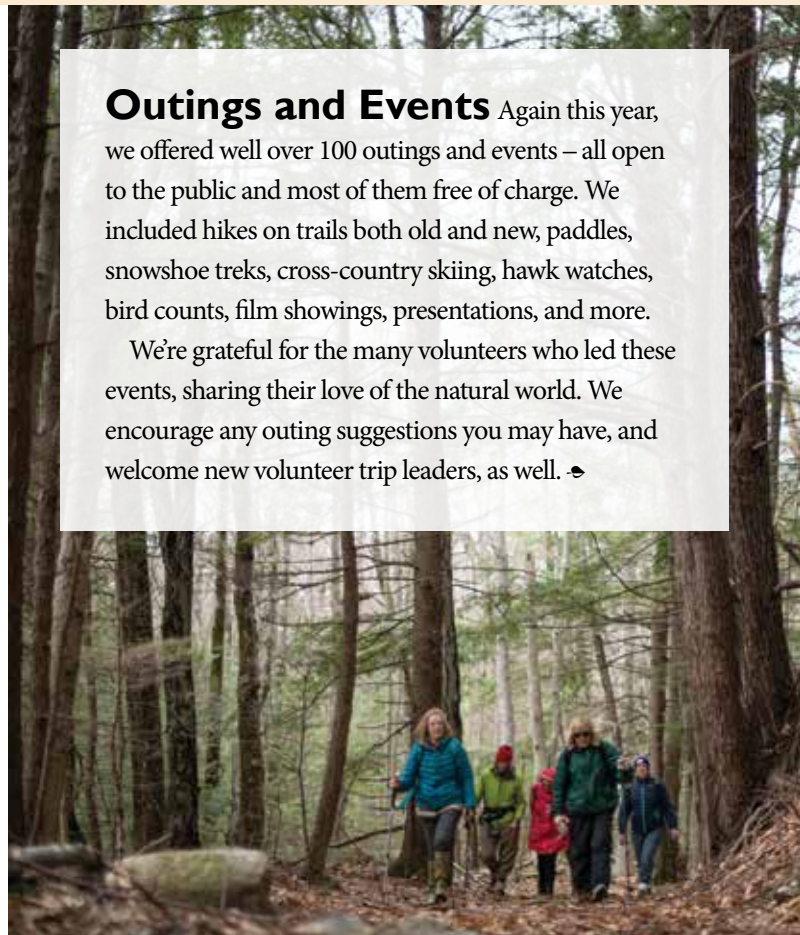
▲ **Babies in Backpacks and Toddlers in Tow** Slow rambles – specially designed for babies, toddlers, and their caregivers – introduce our youngest naturalists to the wonders of the wild world.

afterschool "**Yeti Club**," the Harris Center continues to build partnerships with area organizations like town libraries, family resource centers, retirement communities, assisted living facilities, school districts, PTOs, local businesses, universities, and other non-profits. New program opportunities in new places with new participants helped 2018-2019 become one of the most successful years for the Harris Center's community programs.

None of our community program offerings would have been possible without our volunteers, our partners and, of course, our participants. Let us know if you have an idea for a new program for the next year. We welcome your suggestions! ➔

Outings and Events Again this year, we offered well over 100 outings and events – all open to the public and most of them free of charge. We included hikes on trails both old and new, paddles, snowshoe treks, cross-country skiing, hawk watches, bird counts, film showings, presentations, and more.

We're grateful for the many volunteers who led these events, sharing their love of the natural world. We encourage any outing suggestions you may have, and welcome new volunteer trip leaders, as well. ➔



Conservation Research

Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director

Citizen Science

In the spring of 2019, 250 **Salamander Crossing Brigade** volunteers moved 4,635 amphibians to safety at 30 different sites, bringing our project total to nearly 1,150 citizen scientists and 47,500 amphibians since 2007! We also worked with the City of Keene to close the North Lincoln Street crossing to vehicle traffic on migration nights – the only place a road has been closed to ensure the safe passage of migrating amphibians anywhere in the Granite State.



▲ Salamander Smiles

A Salamander Crossing Brigade volunteer lends a spotted salamander a helping hand on a “Big Night” in 2019.

photo: Abigail Touchet

In April and May, our **Vernal Pool Project** volunteers documented 26 new vernal pools – which serve as specialized breeding habitat for those migrating amphibians – for a project total of 335 vernal pools in 16 towns.

Over the summer, we once again partnered with NH Audubon’s **Project Nighthawk** to monitor the state-endangered Common Nighthawk in Keene, where our citizen scientists documented three individual nighthawks – but, sadly, no successful nests.

Research on Our Lands

This spring and fall, we worked with community volunteers, 8th graders from both Great Brook and South Meadow Schools, and graduate students from Antioch University New England to monitor six study plots in the Harris Center woods as part of **SPARCnet**, a collaborative research effort aimed at understanding the effects of climate change on woodland salamanders.

In the seventh year of an innovative partnership with Keene State College, four undergraduates participated in a two-month summer **conservation internship program** with the Harris Center. Together, the team documented vernal pools, inventoried



▲ Forest Inventory

KSC conservation intern Julia Yates records tree data on a newly-conserved Harris Center property.

photo: Brett Amy Thelen

forest communities and invasive plants, and surveyed road-stream crossings for fish passage and flood potential, among other tasks. Several KSC students also conducted **capstone research** projects investigating mammal diversity on our Granite Lake Headwaters and Robb Reservoir properties.

In addition, independent researchers Eric Aldrich and Dallas Huggins continued to track **bobcat activity** in the hidden corners of the SuperSanctuary.

Research in the Region

In 2018, the Harris Center entered into an exciting new partnership with NH Audubon to provide research and education staffing for fall hawk migration monitoring at the **Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory** in Miller State Park in Peterborough. Staff and volunteers tallied nearly 9,000 fall-migrating raptors, documenting declines in Osprey, Northern Harrier, Cooper’s Hawk, Northern Goshawk, and Red-tailed Hawk numbers – strengthening the case for more



▲ Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory

2018 was the 14th consecutive year of hawk migration data collection and education atop Pack Monadnock in Peterborough. photo: Scott Hecker



▲ Norway Pond Water Quality Monitoring

Tom Shevenell of the Norway Pond Commission collects a water quality sample as part of a pilot cyanobacteria monitoring program on Norway Pond in Hancock. photo: Brett Amy Thelen

research and conservation efforts on behalf of these species. where findings from these and other projects – including water quality and paleolimnology studies – were shared with the community.

We also partnered with the **Norway Pond Commission** on a series of ecological research projects focused on Norway Pond in Hancock. In 2018, our interns collected and analyzed tree cores from the conserved lands surrounding the pond.

In 2019, we piloted a volunteer cyanobacteria monitoring project, which we hope to expand next summer. We also hosted a one-day symposium

Thank You

Heartfelt thanks to all of our citizen scientists and project partners. Here’s to more science in the SuperSanctuary – and beyond – in 2020! ➡



▲ **Camera Trapping at Robb Reservoir** A moose saunters past a trail camera placed by KSC student researchers on Harris Center land near Robb Reservoir in Stoddard. photo: Jackie Lundsted



Land Conservation

Eric Masterson, Land Program Coordinator

Land Protection

The Harris Center's land protection program places a high priority on protecting land in clusters, rather than in isolated parcels. This year, we added three properties to our network of connected, protected lands, which now spans 23,200 acres across eight towns.

In December 2018, the largest remaining undeveloped parcel on **Silver Lake in Harrisville** was permanently protected via a conservation easement with the Harris Center, in close collaboration with the Silver Lake Land Trust and the Seaver Silver Lake Farm Trust. The project, which took more than a year to complete, protects 50 acres of forest and nearly 800 feet of shoreline, and adds to a block of approximately 6,000 acres of contiguous conservation land in the towns of Nelson, Roxbury, Harrisville, and Marlborough. An astounding 80 percent of the Silver Lake watershed, including 2.9 miles of shoreline, is now protected, preserving water quality in Silver Lake for generations to come. This project was made possible by generous donations from more than 100 individuals and families.

In May 2019, we purchased the last remaining unprotected parcel along the **Eastview Rail Trail**, also in Harrisville. This 17-acre wooded lot borders the trail for more than 0.3 mile, and its protection secures a bright future for one of the most wonderful and well-used trails in the SuperSanctuary.

In June, the **Granite Lake Headwaters property** became

▲ **Silver Lake in October Light** An astounding 80 percent of the Silver Lake watershed, including 2.9 miles of shoreline, is now protected, preserving water quality and wildlife habitat for generations to come.

photo: Brett Amy Thelen

the latest addition to the SuperSanctuary. The purchase and permanent protection of this 515-acre parcel in the Stoddard Highlands continues the Harris Center's recent work of creating a wildlife corridor stretching north from Spoonwood Pond in Nelson to Route 9 in Stoddard, with almost 2,000 new acres protected since 2011. This property abuts the already-protected Wilson's Tavern land, and includes two vernal pools and several headwater streams that feed into Granite Lake. This important land protection project was made possible by grants from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Fund and the Quabbin to Cardigan (Q2C) Partnership, as well as generous donations from individuals in the Granite Lake community and many Friends of the SuperSanctuary.

Stewardship

Placing land into conservation is just the beginning of our work. Good stewardship is vital to ensure that we remain true to the wishes of our many donors and that the land continues to serve the needs of both wildlife and people. **Easement monitoring** is key. In 2019, Alivia Acosta, our wonderful intern from Unity College, monitored more than half of the Harris Center's 112 conservation easements, with the remainder falling to staff and volunteers, including Peter Beblowski, Ted Braun, Hunt Dowse, and Janet Yardley. Thank you to all! 🐾

Thank You to Our Hard-Working Volunteers

So much of the Harris Center's success is due to the work of our fabulous volunteers. In addition to our board members — who all serve as volunteers — and our volunteer outing leaders, many others help us to achieve our important mission. Volunteers monitor and clear trails, assist our teacher-naturalists, document amphibian road crossing sites, care for gardens, provide food and flowers for events, help with mailings, provide legal counsel, keep our grounds safe and beautiful, conduct citizen science, and much more. We appreciate their efforts more than words can express. 🐾

The Year in Giving

Lisa Murray, Outreach Manager

Harris Center supporters have been generous this past year, as always. We plan to give back by offering extra-special programs and activities during our upcoming 50th Anniversary year, growing our popular citizen science programs, and of course by continuing to steward SuperSanctuary lands and trails for the enjoyment of all.

A New Model for Giving

What's in a name? Over the years, the lines have become blurred between being a "member" of the Harris Center and being a "donor." The truth is that there really is no difference, other than the nomenclature. So, to avoid confusion going forward, we'll no longer be using the words "member" or "membership." Anyone who makes a donation is part of the Harris Center family, and benefits associated with certain giving levels will remain the same as in the past.

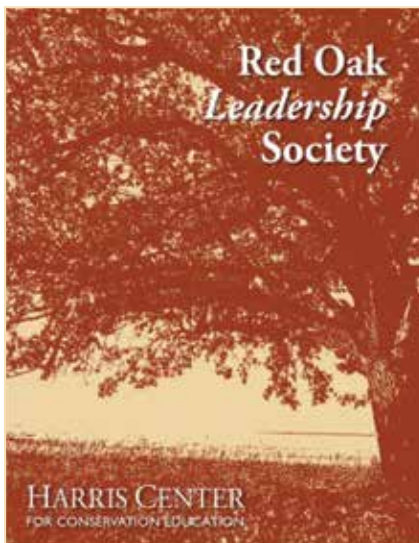
Red Oak Leadership Society

This year, we established the Red Oak Leadership Society to honor Harris Center supporters who've given at the \$1,000 level or above. We chose to name the Society after the red oak for its strength, adaptability, endurance, and protection. In late August, Red Oak members were treated to a cocktail party at the Harris Center. Jazimina MacNeil sang a few tree-themed songs, the Bobcat 'Tail cocktail was served, and the group got a sneak preview of the coming attractions planned for our 50th Anniversary year. **We're grateful to our leadership supporters.**



▲ **Jazimina MacNeil**
Renowned mezzo-soprano Jazimina MacNeil performed a selection of songs at a recent Red Oak Leadership Society event.

photo: Brett Amy Thelen



Bobcats Forever Legacy Society

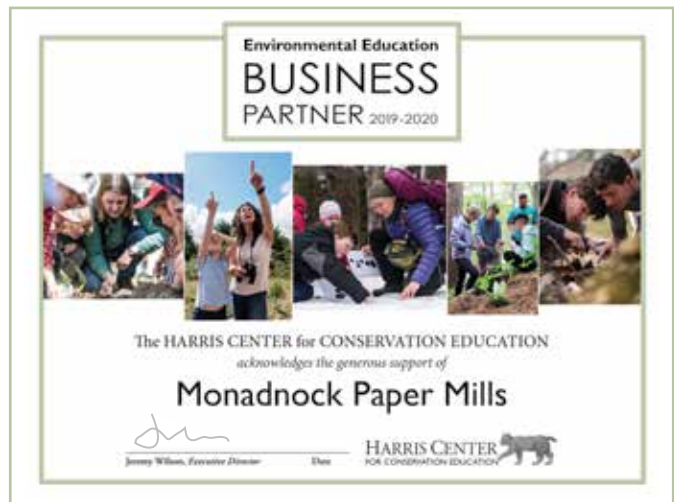
Be sure to check out the brand new **Bobcats Forever** plaque in the Harris Center lobby, honoring deceased supporters who left the Harris Center in their estate. Marquetry artist Craig Altobello created this beautiful tribute — do take a look! If you're interested in making the Harris Center part of your legacy, please contact Jeremy Wilson at (603) 525-3394. Any amount is received with gratitude.



A Business Partner to Celebrate

Special thanks to **Monadnock Paper Mills**, a business partner who has been supporting the Harris Center for many years. Monadnock Paper is celebrating its own anniversary this year: 200 years! With Richard Verney at the helm, this Bennington, New Hampshire company has been a key local employer and a generous community partner. We're grateful for all they've done for this region.

In related news, the Harris Center created an official **Business Partner giving program** this year, with special benefits for local businesses who support the Harris Center's important work. Interested businesses are encouraged to visit harriscenter.org/business-partners.



Harris Center Business Partners

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bar Harbor Bank & Trust | Nature's Green Grocer |
| C & S Wholesale Grocers | The New Hampshire Trust Company |
| Eversource | Timken |
| Fenton Family Dealerships | UNFI United Natural Foods |
| Harrisville Designs | |
| Monadnock Paper Mills | |

A heartfelt thank you to *all* our loyal donors.



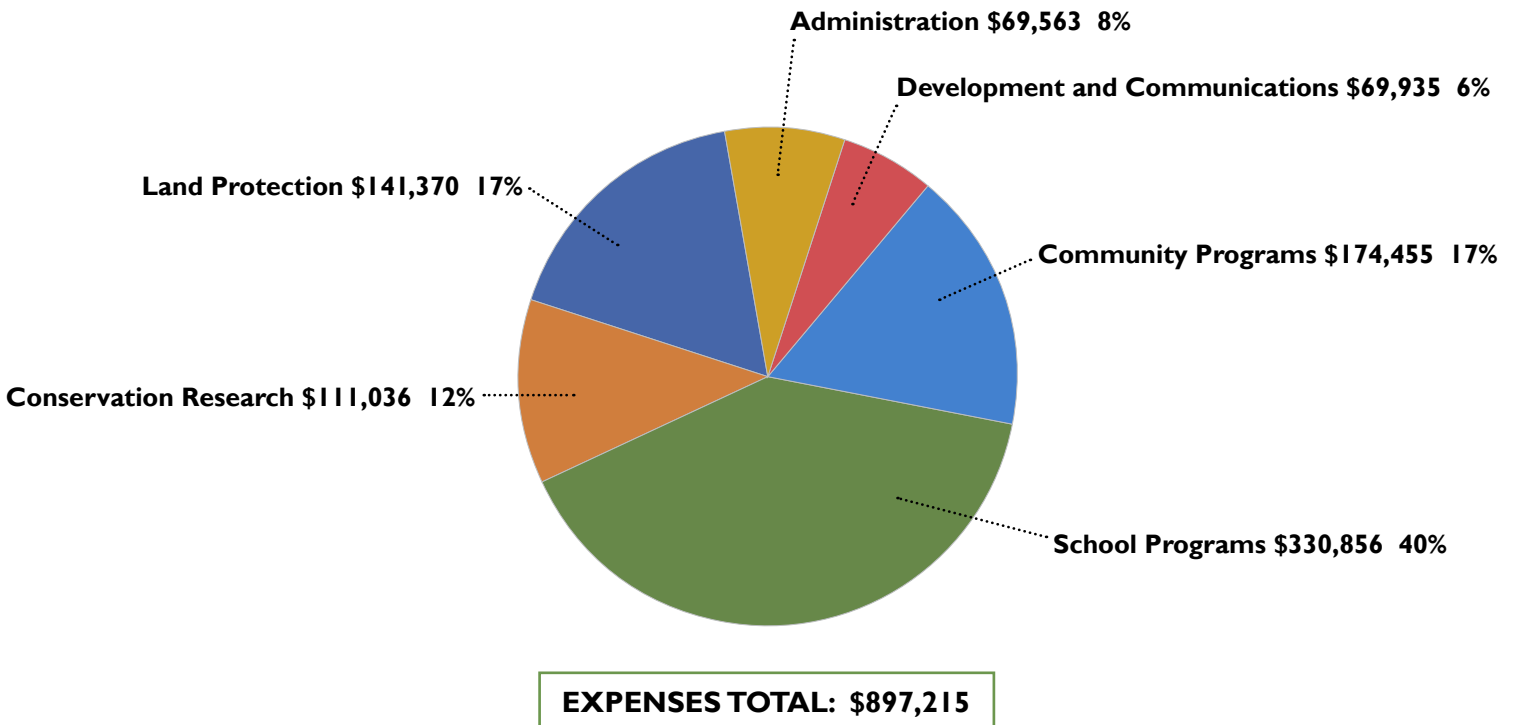
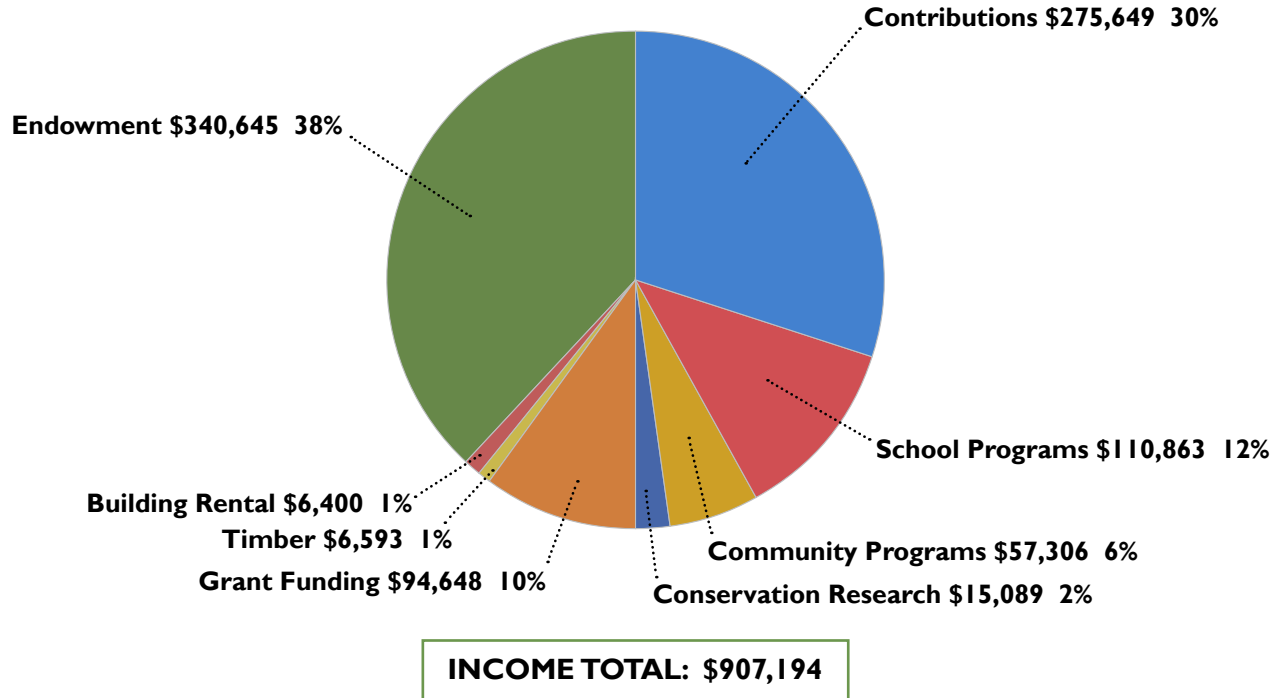
photo: Brett Amy Thelen

Harris Center Financial Report

Operating Budget – July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

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, NH.

The Harris Center for Conservation Education is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Harris Center received an additional \$836,343 in donations for land and easement purchases, and \$109,810 in bequests for our endowment. We're grateful for this tremendous support.



▲ **Autumn at Center Pond** Over the years, the Harris Center has protected more than 200 acres surrounding Nelson's treasured Center Pond. photo: David Flemming

Harris Center Staff

Jeremy Wilson, *Executive Director*
Janet Altobello, *School Program Director and Teacher-Naturalist*
Margaret Baker, *Communications Specialist*
John Benjamin, *Teacher-Naturalist*
Phil Brown, *Hawk Watch Coordinator*
Meade Cadot, *Naturalist Emeritus*
Jaime Hutchinson, *Teacher-Naturalist*
Diana Jacobs, *Donor Coordinator*
Sara LeFebvre, *Finance Administrator*
Eric Masterson, *Land Program Coordinator*
Lisa Murray, *Outreach Manager*
James Newsom, *Land Protection Specialist*
Polly Pattison, *Teacher-Naturalist*
Karen Rent, *Teacher-Naturalist*
Jenna Spear, *Teacher-Naturalist*
Susie Spikol, *Community Programs Director and Teacher-Naturalist*
Brett Amy Thelen, *Science Director*

Board of Trustees

Karen Bennett, *Antrim*
Michael George, *Jaffrey*
Nathanael Greene, *Peterborough*
Lois Haskins, *Hancock*
Jim Hassinger, *Vice Chair, Peterborough*
Timothy Jordan, *Keene*
Dan Langille, *Harrisville*
Gordon Leverage, *Keene*
Richard Pendleton, *Chair, Peterborough*
Tim Riley, *Peterborough*
Steven Roberge, *Peterborough*
David Sobel, *Harrisville*
Carol Young, *Hancock*

Honorary Trustees

Hunt Dowse, *Hancock*
Roger Sweet, *Sullivan*
Francie Von Mertens, *Peterborough*

HARRIS CENTER ⁵⁰ YEARS
FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION
Making Tracks Since 1970!

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