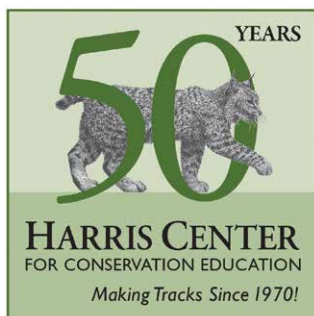
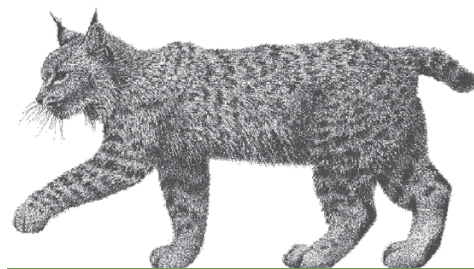


WINTER 2019

Harris Hearsay

THE HARRIS CENTER FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION



Our Mission

A donor-supported nonprofit organization, the Harris Center for Conservation Education is dedicated to promoting understanding and respect for our natural environment through education of all ages, direct protection and exemplary stewardship of the region's natural resources, conservation research, and programs that encourage active participation in the great outdoors.

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(...well, almost!)

▼ Sharpshinned Hawk at Feeder photo: Meade Cadot

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who has made a donation
to our Annual Fund!**

We depend on your support to
do the work we do. For more
information or to donate directly,
visit harriscenter.org/donate.



“MEADE’S TALL TALES”

by Meade Cadot, Naturalist Emeritus



▲ **Eleanor Briggs’ beloved cat, Harris** Eleanor said she felt he “represented a certain wildness, humor, savvy, and strong instinct, all elements needed for a successful environmental education center.”

Editor’s Note: If you’ve spent any time with the Harris Center over the last 50 years, then chances are you’ve run into Meade Cadot – tracker, teacher, adventurer, Harris Center Executive Director from 1975 through 2009, and now our much-beloved Naturalist Emeritus. He’s collected more than a few stories over the last five decades, and we’ll be sharing some of them throughout our 50th Anniversary Year in a website feature we’re lovingly calling “Meade’s Tall Tales.” Here is the first one.

The Harris What?!

Mr. or Mrs. Harris, where art thou? In truth, we were incorporated in 1970 as the Harris **Foundation** and named after founder Eleanor Briggs’ beloved cat at the time. As I recall, “Harris” was a stray cat Eleanor had found in an abandoned brownstone in New York City and subsequently adopted. The name stems from his coat, which resembled Harris Tweed. And so, in roundabout terms, we were named for an island off the coast of Scotland!

What’s in a Name?

In the early years, while I was still working for NH Audubon and living at Willard Pond, Cecil Lyon was volunteering as Director. Quoting Cecil, in an early issue of the *Harris Hearsay*:

Not long after I retired from the foreign service, Eleanor asked me to be a director for the Harris Foundation. I was actually flattered and pleased. However, when I realized that she meant THE director, I felt slightly stunned and totally inadequate.

Actually, Cecil did a fine job of getting the Harris ship underway. One way he did so was to bring in experts in their fields to speak

on behalf of the Harris Foundation. The most notable of these was Dr. Margaret Mead, in the Spring of 1974. Here’s another quote from Cecil:

I had considerable difficulty tracking her down, but eventually did so by telephone in New York. Her schedule was so full that it was about a year before she could fit us in. When she did, she arrived clutching a shepherd’s long crook, rather like an ancient prophet. Eleanor met her at the airport and escorted her to our house. We were having a pre-luncheon sherry in the warm spring when [Dr.] Mead says, ‘I don’t know who arranged this lecture. My secretary, I suppose. However, you are a foundation. Foundations give away money. I know, I have one. So I’ll have to charge you.’

At this point, Eleanor, knowing that Dr. Mead’s customary fee was in the thousands, turned pale. I knew our annual budget was less than such a fee and felt my heart miss a few beats. I explained that we were a small foundation, just starting out, and didn’t have much money, and you said as you were in Hancock, you wouldn’t charge us anything. This I thought at the time because Dr. Mead’s daughter had a house in Hancock. After a long agonizing pause, Dr. Mead said, ‘Oh, did I? Then I won’t.’

I was among the invited guests at this reception and heard that exchange. So when I was hired the following fall, one of the first things I suggested to the board was a name change! But change to what?

“Environmental Education” was a buzzword back then, but the word “environmental” was being greatly overused. I mentioned at least one example – an advertisement for a household cleaner, great for “environmental surfaces.” Without much further lobbying, everyone agreed on the “Harris Center for Conservation Education.” And though it took a generation for Harris “Foundation” to fade into the past, the new name stuck!

Getting it Right

An afternote: For the rest of the century, I kept a running list of all the erroneous names we were given in correspondence. This list is long, but here are an illustrative few – from “close” to “not even close”!

- The Harris Center for Nature Conservation
- The Harris Center for Conservation Ethic
- The Harris Center for Conversation Education
- The Harris Center for Continuing Education
- The Harris Center for King’s Highway
- The Harris Center for Conservative Education
- The Harris Center for Construction Education
- The Harris Education and Treatment Center

The Harris Center is turning 50, and we’re celebrating for a whole year!

There are many exciting things going on, including special events, art shows, a photo contest, more of Meade’s Tall Tales, profiles of people who hold a special place in the Harris Center’s history, and more. Find it all at harriscenter.org/50-years – and check back often, as we’ll be adding new content weekly during our Anniversary Year.

Trails Don't Work Without Trail Work

by Eric Masterson,
Land Program
Coordinator



▲ **Restoring the View on Skatutakee** (l to r) **Peter Harrison, Nina Pollock, Ric Haskins, Brad Geer, Alivia Acosta, Ben Aldrich, and Jeremy Wilson** pause to rest during a volunteer workshop atop this iconic peak.

The Harris Center protects land to safeguard habitat for wide-ranging wildlife species and provide recreational opportunities for people. Last year, we protected 582 new acres across three properties in Harrisville and Stoddard. As the ink dries on the deeds, one chapter – land acquisition – is coming to a close, while another – land stewardship – is just beginning.

A growing component of our land stewardship work is maintenance. The Harris Center maintains 21 miles of trails, many of which are being impacted by the increasing frequency of extreme weather events associated with climate change. For example, in August 2018 a powerful evening thunderstorm moved

through Dublin, Harrisville, and Hancock. In just one hour, six inches of rain fell onto already-saturated ground, with the most intense rains tracking along the old route of the Manchester-Keene Railroad – now home to several popular rail trail segments. The flooding that followed caused substantial damage. Thanks to terrific support from friends of the Harris Center and an amazing volunteer effort, we finally completed all the necessary repairs in September 2019. This included: lengthening and improving drainage ditches along the Eastview, Jaquith, and Eaton Rail Trails; covering the gap that was confounding hikers, bikers, cross-country skiers, and horseback riders near the beaver dam on the Eastview Trail; and raising the trail bed and repairing erosion damage along all three sections of trail.

Trail maintenance at the Harris Center is truly a team effort, involving staff, interns, and most importantly, volunteers. We're so grateful to the many volunteers who have helped with trail work this year, including Ric Haskins, Peter Harrison, Scott Neary, Lee Baker, Kylie Mitchell, Jim Mitchell, Jim Farrow, Nina Pollock, Ben Aldrich, Alivia Acosta, Tom Weller, Brad Geer, Marc Olshan, Kelly Dodge, Don Page, Ben Haubrich, Rich Taylor, and David Robins, as well as Harrisville Trails and the Nelson Trail Group, including Rick Church, Kathy Schillemat, and Al Stoops. 🐾



▲ **Jim Farrow, Barbara Watkins, and Lee Baker** clean ditches and smooth the surface of the **Eastview Trail**.

photos: Eric Masterson



◀ Harris Center naturalist **Jaime Hutchinson** (left) presented **Morgan Cooper** (right) with the Harris Center's "Educator of the Year" Award for 2019.

photos: Molly Ferrill

◀ **Matthew and Liz Myer Boulton** of the **SALT Project** (left) received the 2019 **Laurie Bryan Partnership Award**. Here, they stop for a smile with Harris Center Community Programs Director **Susie Spikol** (center), Executive Director **Jeremy Wilson** (right), and founder **Eleanor Briggs** (right front).

Visionary Founder and Extraordinary Partners Honored at 2019 Annual Meeting

The Harris Center celebrated our founder, **Eleanor Briggs**, and several extraordinary partners at our 49th Annual Meeting on Sunday, October 20. At the meeting, Eleanor kicked off our yearlong 50th Anniversary celebrations with a special conversation recounting the organization's beginnings and her now-realized dream of turning her grandmother's old estate into a conservation education center.

Morgan Cooper, 4th and 5th grade teacher at Jaffrey Grade School (JGS), was named **Educator of the Year**. A teacher for more than 30 years, Morgan works with Harris Center teacher-naturalist **Jaime Hutchinson** to provide outdoor learning opportunities for her students, including a study of the Contoocook River and its flood history. Morgan was chosen for this award because of her exemplary commitment to incorporating outside time in her everyday classes. In addition to her work with the Harris Center, Morgan has created monthly Outdoor Workshop and Learning (OWL) activities for her students at JGS. OWL activities may happen at the JGS outdoor classroom, on the playground, in snow piles in the parking lot, or even in a local cemetery. Morgan said, "Living here with so many wonderful options within walking distance and fantastic resources has caused me to push more to be outside... I also am motivated by the research that says our children need more time outside with free play and investigation. Given the time and opportunity, they never cease to amaze me."

The 2019 **Laurie Bryan Partnership Award** – honoring former Harris Center Executive Director Laurie Bryan's achievements in working with community partners – was given to **Elizabeth and Matthew Myer Boulton** of the **SALT Project** for donating their time and talent to create a compelling short film about the Harris Center. Their Emmy-award-winning production company is dedicated to telling stories that matter, and they told the Harris Center's origin

story with grace, skill, generosity, and beauty. (You can view it on our website at harriscenter.org/50-years.)

Hancock resident **Lee Baker** was presented with the 2019 **Volunteer Extraordinaire Award**. Lee co-led his first Harris Center outing – a "learn to ski" program – on January 1, 1982 and has been volunteering to lead hikes, paddles, cross-country ski treks, and other outings nearly every month since. In addition to his contributions as a volunteer outing leader, Lee has helped build and maintain many miles of Harris Center trails, regularly helps with work on the Harris Center grounds, and has recently taken on the task of mowing the growing number of fields we're trying to maintain on our lands. We're immensely grateful to have him in the Harris Center family.



▲ **Lee Baker** — recipient of the Harris Center's 2019 **Volunteer Extraordinaire Award** — has led more than 300 outings for the Harris Center since 1982. photo: Meade Cadot

Finally, we announced a new award, the **Eleanor Briggs Medal**, to be given to a person who in their work, whether professional or volunteer, embodies outstanding leadership in any or all of the following areas: land conservation or stewardship; environmental placed-based education for people of all ages; and/or conservation research. The first winner of this award will receive a medal and an honorarium at our 50th Annual Meeting in 2020. In addition to these awards, the

Annual Meeting included a review of Harris Center highlights from the year and a champagne toast in celebration of our 50th Anniversary. Thanks to all for an inspiring afternoon! ☘



▲ The hawk watch crew celebrates the 10,000th migratory raptor of the season – a Sharp-shinned Hawk – to fly past Pack Monadnock.

A SENSE OF PLACE ON PACK

by Phil Brown, Hawk Watch Coordinator

Pack Monadnock is among the most beloved places in the entire Monadnock Region, thanks in no small part to the Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory. For me, the mountain holds deep personal meaning and has come to define a large part of my life. It was on the hawk watch platform in late fall of 2006 where I first met my wife, Julie, who was then the seasonal raptor biologist for New Hampshire Audubon's relatively new hawk watch. On that, my first-ever visit to Pack, I came in search of a Golden Eagle – which we *did* actually see together that day! But I came away with a treasure even greater than gold. Our children, now ages 7 and 4, are growing up at the hawk watch during our frequent fall visits. They can spot birds well and identify many of them to species. As we watch the sky for hawks, though, they're happier to be exploring the nearby woods in search of critters and other earthbound treasures.

I'm fortunate to be coordinating the Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory for a second consecutive year as a Harris Center staff member, in partnership with founding partner **NH Audubon** and our host, **Miller State Park**. The Harris Center's involvement adds a local touch and deepens the personal connections of many visitors to the Observatory. This is evident during the near-daily school group visits during the peak of raptor migration. Harris Center staff and volunteer naturalists work closely with these students to help them understand what raptors are, how they migrate, and how they relate to their environment. Many of these school groups already interact with the Harris Center in classroom settings or have had students attend camp there. Now, their web of connection grows.

In running such a project, many hands (holding binoculars) make for light work. A coordinator, a lead counter, several volunteer counters, a cadre of observers, and naturalist-educators comprise this team.

During the 2019 migration season, seasonal raptor biologist **Levi Burford** contributed mightily to our tally of over 10,500 migrant raptors, a coveted benchmark that we reach not quite every year. Two days had flights of over 2,000 Broad-winged Hawks apiece, an amazing spectacle to behold! Favorable migration weather through the early part of the season yielded healthy counts of several other species as well, including a record count for Bald Eagles (180) and a record-tying total of Peregrine Falcons (64). Red-shouldered Hawks were also in abundance, with most flying in the latter half of the season. However, both Northern Goshawks and Golden Eagles – two of the Observatory's most thrilling late-season species – were recorded in much lower numbers than usual.

Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory is the only hawk watch in New Hampshire that contributes data to the Raptor Population Index, a tool used to assess population trends for 15 migratory raptor species. The numbers tell conservation success stories and also indicate challenges. We've learned much over the past 15 years, but there are always more questions. In an age when bird populations have declined precipitously, we must remain vigilant and keep science front and center. These "canaries in the coal mine" rely on us to help protect them. Perhaps our bird conservation actions will benefit our own species, as well. 🐾

An Appreciation of Polly Pattison

by Jaime Hutchinson, Teacher-Naturalist

For the past twelve years, I was lucky enough to share an office with Polly Pattison. During that time, Polly became both a mentor and a wonderful friend to me. Polly's talents have always amazed me. Not only is she a gifted naturalist, but she's also an artist, poet, and songwriter (...and she's been known to bake up a few delicious treats as well!) A quick glance at my desk or into my filing cabinet reveals her generosity; my lessons abound with songs, photographs, poems, and activities that she created and shared with me. And, of course, my bird identification would not be half what it is today without Polly's many quizzes at the Harris Center birdfeeder! Polly's genuine excitement and ability to see the beauty in everything in nature is contagious. I know that I am only one of the many, many people that she has inspired over the years. Thank you, Polly, for sharing your passion and talents with all of us. 🐦



▲ Polly Pattison, teacher-naturalist and birder extraordinaire, retired from the Harris Center this summer after 18 years of sharing her knowledge with students of all ages. photo: Ben Conant

Something for Everyone (...well, almost!) by John Benjamin, Teacher-Naturalist



▲ In celebration of our 50th Anniversary, the Harris Center is offering a variety of commemorative merchandise — apparel, books, tote bags, and a special bobcat sticker created by local artist Hannah Ellingwood — for sale throughout the year, while supplies last. See what we've designed for you at harriscenter.org/50-years.

**BOBCATS
FOREVER**
LEGACY SOCIETY
HARRIS CENTER
PLANNED GIVING

You can help ensure a grand future for the Monadnock Region by naming the Harris Center as a beneficiary in your will or estate plan through our planned giving program, Bobcats Forever Legacy Society. Anyone can make a bequest, and no amount is too small. For more information, contact Jeremy Wilson at (603) 525-3394 or wilson@harriscenter.org.