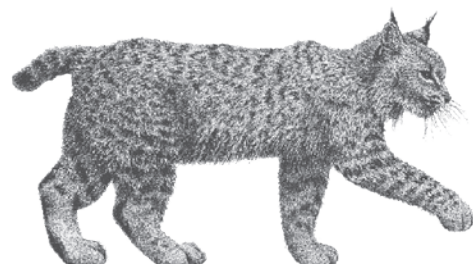


FALL 2020

Harris Hearsay

News of the Harris Center and Our Work in the Community



VOL. 43, NO.2

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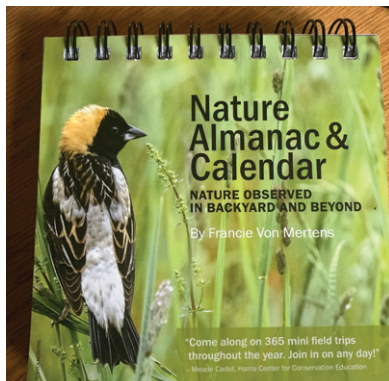
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Nature Every Day

Deepen your knowledge of the natural world with this treasure trove of daily insights — brought to you by longtime nature columnist and Harris Center field trip leader Francie Von Mertens.

It's a perpetual calendar, so there's no best starting day: November 8 works just as well as January 1 — which makes it a perfect gift any time of the year!

\$15 each. To order, contact Miles at (603) 525-3394.

Now Available for Purchase. Learn more at harriscenter.org/calendars.

harriscenter.org

50th Anniversary Photo Contest Honorable Mention

A chipmunk dining on a mushroom along the Dandelyon Trail in August 2020.

CATEGORY: Wildlife

Donna Keller



Nuts About Squirrels

by Jenna Spear, Teacher-Naturalist

It's a chilly, drizzly autumn day, as I lead a group of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders into the woods behind the Wells Memorial School in Harrisville. We're on the hunt for signs of squirrels — perhaps we'll find chewed acorns, pine cones pulled apart for their seeds, or if we're lucky (and quiet) a squirrel itself. Enthusiasm is evident as we walk along the trail, our eyes scouring the surroundings. "Evidence!" hollers a student from the back of the line, pointing to a pile of acorn shells atop a flat rock a few feet away.



▲ **Squirrel Feeding Experiment**
Students set up a feeding station to determine the fall food preferences of schoolyard squirrels.

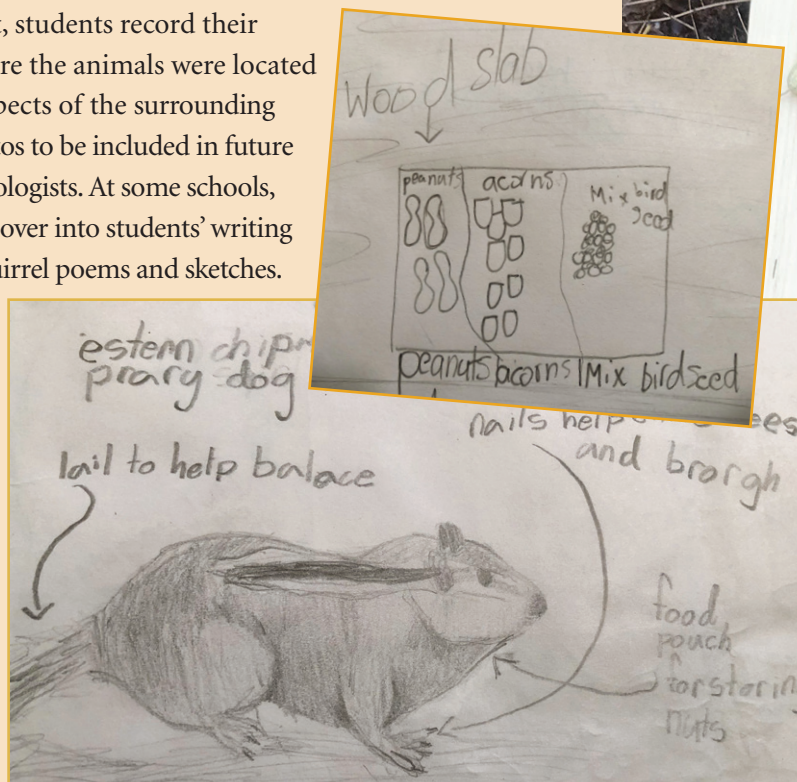
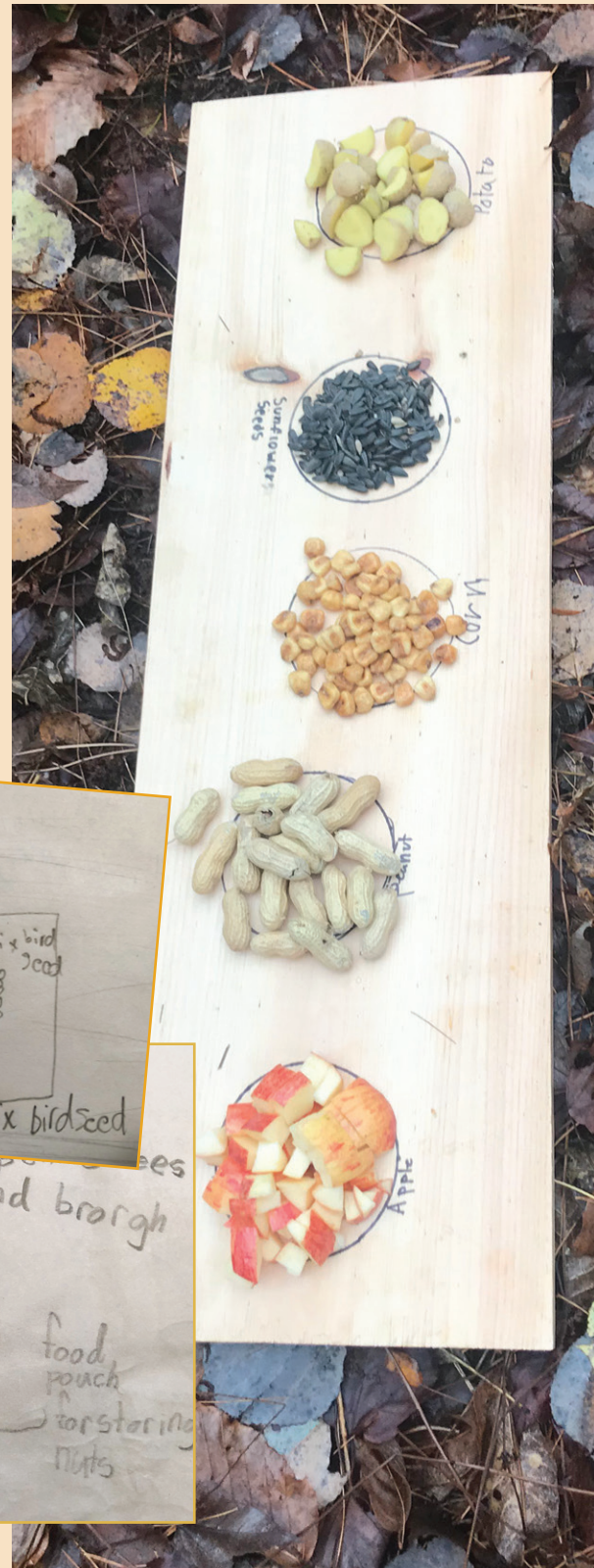
photos © Kate Washburn

I circle back, taking a photo and allowing others to file past and see the scattered shells. As we walk down the trail, the students also notice squirrel nests high in the trees, leftover from summer. Back at school, we map the locations where we found squirrel sign, and wonder aloud about what we might find near our own homes.

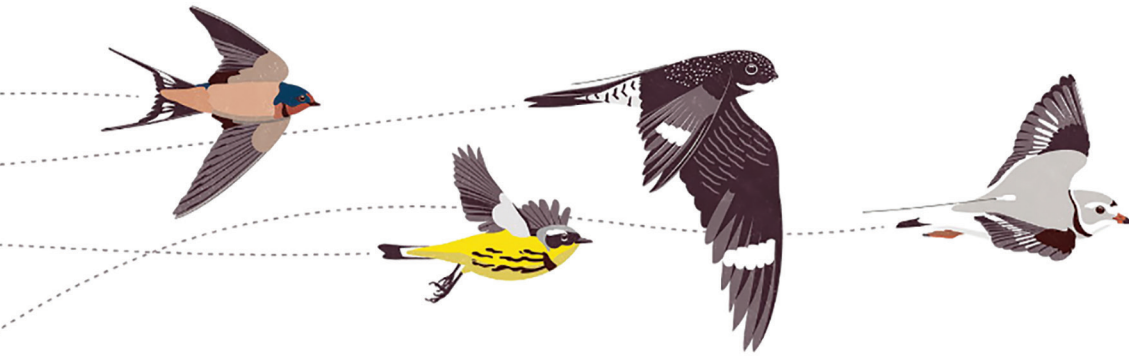
Walks like these are happening at many schools throughout the Monadnock Region this fall. From red and grey squirrels to flying squirrels and chipmunks (a type of ground squirrel), Harris Center teacher-naturalists are learning about these backyard mammals and sharing our enthusiasm with curious elementary school students.

At some schools, students have set up feeding experiments to discover which types of food squirrels prefer. They've also contributed to "Project Squirrel," a citizen science project that collects data about tree squirrels to better understand their ecology. For this project, students record their squirrel sightings, logging where the animals were located and documenting various aspects of the surrounding habitat. They also submit photos to be included in future research by Project Squirrel biologists. At some schools, these studies have even spilled over into students' writing and artwork, as they create squirrel poems and sketches.

Squirrels are so common that many of us don't even notice them, except perhaps when they've devoured all our birdseed — but a closer look at these everyday mammals reveals that they're adaptable, acrobatic, and entertaining enough to drive you nuts...in the best possible way. 🌰



Conservation Research NEWS



A Revolution in Migration Research – Right in our Backyard...

by Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director

For more than 100 years, scientists have been using bird banding — in which individual birds are captured, fitted with a lightweight metal band containing a unique number, and released back into the wild — to learn more about our feathered neighbors. Banding has provided vital insight into bird behavior, survivorship, longevity, reproductive success, and migration patterns, but it has one significant limitation: in most instances, banded birds need to be recaptured in order to yield these data, and the chances of re-sighting a banded bird are incredibly low. Since 1960, more than 40 million songbirds have been banded in North America, but only 1% were ever encountered again.

In the last few decades, the development of GPS and satellite transmitters has led to more detailed and nuanced data on bird movements and, in some cases, allowed biologists to retrieve data without recapturing individual birds. However, these technologies can only be used with larger species, who can safely support the added weight.

Then came Motus, a new research initiative that is revolutionizing the study of winged migration. Motus (Latin for “movement”) is a network comprised of tiny, lightweight radio transmitters (“nanotags”) that are affixed to shorebirds, songbirds, small owls, bats, and even large butterflies and dragonflies, along with a system of receiving stations that detect the radio signals whenever a tagged animal flies within range.

Though it’s only existed since 2012, Motus has already revealed intimate, never-before-seen details about migration routes, timing, flight speed, stopover behavior, the locations of critical migratory and overwintering habitat, and more. From 2014 through 2017, for instance, Motus collaborators discovered that nearly the entire population of the federally-threatened Red Knot (a shorebird species) passes over Pennsylvania en route to their Arctic breeding grounds each spring, and returns south via an entirely different route in the fall. Another project focused on Gray-cheeked Thrushes documented a remarkable 2,200-mile non-stop flight from Colombia to Ontario in just 46 hours.

The Harris Center’s involvement in this cutting-edge research collaborative was made possible with support from our 50th Anniversary Fund. **Thank you** to everyone who donated to this fund, which will spur conservation research programming well into our next half-century.



With 340 projects encompassing 230 different species (and counting), the conservation potential of Motus is enormous.

Initial efforts focused largely on Atlantic, Gulf, and Great Lakes coastlines, but the newly-launched New England Motus project aims to establish a series of east-west receiving station “fencelines” that will detect tagged wildlife as they migrate north-south through interior New England. The goal is to establish 50 stations across Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire in the next three years. .

In exciting news, the very first of these New England Motus stations was installed in early November on the Harris Center’s Granite Lake Headwaters property in Stoddard! It’s sustainably powered by a solar panel, and will transmit data via cell phone signal. Starting next spring, you’ll be able to see which tagged species passed by our station — and when — at motus.org. We’re also exploring ways to share these findings with the community via our website and school programming. Stay tuned! ♡

Meade Cadot Honored as 2020 Educator of the Year

by Lisa Murray, Outreach Manager

The Harris Center celebrated the conclusion of our 50th Anniversary Year and recognized several extraordinary partners at our **50th Annual Meeting** on Friday, October 23. This past year has been filled with special 50th Anniversary events — many of them online as the world came to terms with the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this was our first online Annual Meeting, with Board members, staff, supporters, and friends smiling at each other from Zoom boxes. In addition to reviewing highlights of the past year and enjoying a brief slideshow “walk” down our 50-year memory lane, we also announced the winners of our 50th Anniversary Photo Contest.

Meade Cadot was honored with the **Educator of the Year Award**, a fitting distinction for a man who has spent

more than four decades giving his talents to the Harris Center, first as Executive Director and now as Naturalist Emeritus. Meade also taught in Antioch University New England's Environmental Studies Department for 30 years, inspiring countless students and naturalists along the way. His knowledge of birds, mammals, and winter tracking is legendary, and his land protection know-how is invaluable. He's a true Harris Center treasure.



The **2020 Laurie Bryan Partnership Award** — honoring former Harris Center Executive Director Laurie Bryan's achievements in working with community partners — was presented to **Chris Conroy** of **Heartwood Media**, who donated his time and creative talent to produce five short videos that tell the Harris Center's story, beautifully commemorating our 50th Anniversary milestone. These videos give testimony to the Harris Center's expansive work and were a tremendous gift.

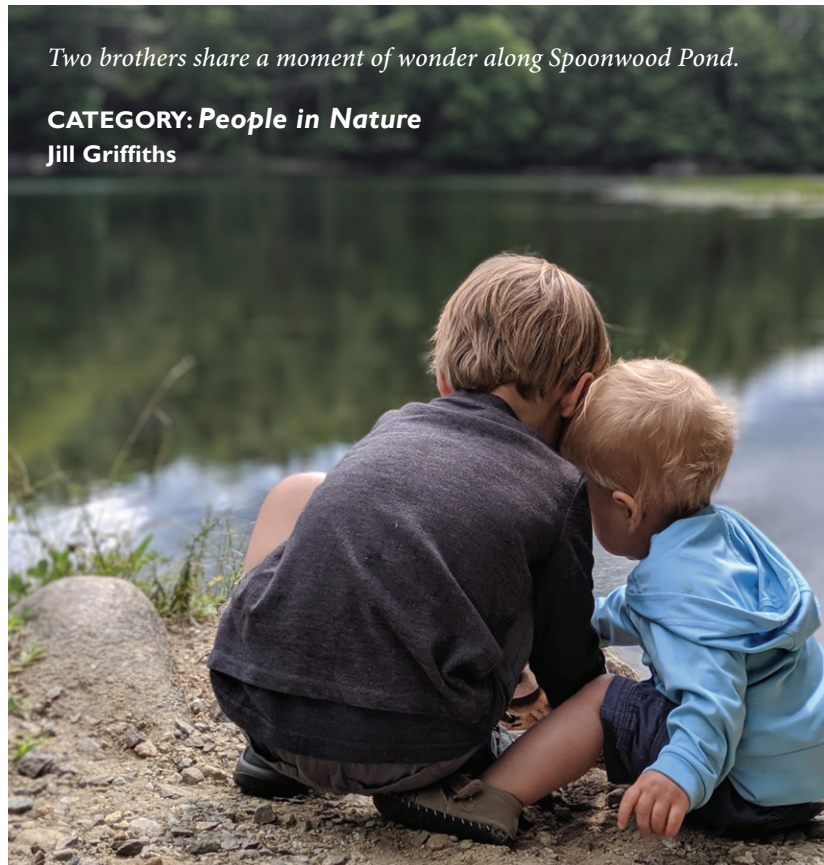
Richard Haskins and **Peter Harrison** shared the **2020 Volunteer Extraordinaire Award** for their intrepid dedication to maintaining Harris Center trails. Harris Center Land Program Manager Eric Masterson said, “Their service is of even greater value now as the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a spike in trail use. The next time you are hiking a trail in the area, please give a tip of the hat in gratitude to Peter and Ric for their tireless volunteerism on all our behalf.”

In addition to these awards, the Annual Meeting also included a brief business meeting, in which outgoing Board Chair **Richard Pendleton** was thanked for his years of excellent service, and three new Board members — **Daniel Henderson**, **Karrie Kalich**, and **Denise Zimmer** — were voted in.

The meeting concluded with an announcement that the Harris Center had surpassed our goal for our **50th Anniversary Fund**.

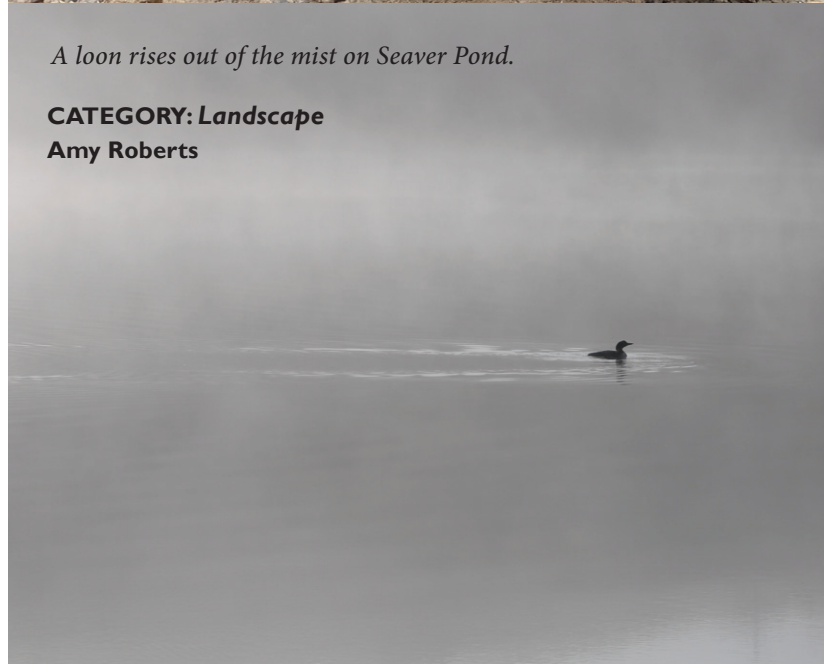
Two brothers share a moment of wonder along Spoonwood Pond.

CATEGORY: People in Nature
Jill Griffiths



A loon rises out of the mist on Seaver Pond.

CATEGORY: Landscape
Amy Roberts



This fundraising campaign was launched earlier in the year to support innovative education and conservation research programs, and to ensure seamless stewardship of our lands and trails in response to extreme weather events. Hundreds of Harris Center supporters donated to this fund, ensuring very solid financial ground for the Harris Center as we look ahead to our next 50 years. *Thank you!* 🐾

50th Anniversary Photo Contest Winners

We're delighted to share the top winners of our 50th Anniversary Photo Contest, featuring images taken at Harris Center programs or in our SuperSanctuary of conserved lands.

► To see all the winning photos, visit harriscenter.org/50th-anniversary-photo-contest.



An assassin bug waiting in ambush, photographed in the field on our Hiroshi Land.

CATEGORY: Wildlife
Bruce Boyer



The release of a rehabilitated Broad-winged Hawk at the Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory in September 2019.

CATEGORY: Best in Show
Kim Nagy



Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Earlier this year, members of the Harris Center staff and Board of Trustees convened a working group in response to the national dialogue around racial justice. From those discussions, the following statement was crafted. Some of the initiatives described below are already underway, while others may take months or years to bring to fruition. We still have much to learn, but we share a renewed commitment to celebrating both natural and cultural diversity and to cultivating a sense of belonging — to the land, and to one another.



mural © Ocrez; photo © Terence Faircloth

For fifty years, the Harris Center has worked to connect people of all ages and backgrounds to the natural world. In that time, it's become clear that just as biodiversity leads to healthy, robust ecosystems, so too does human diversity lead to healthy, robust communities. Systemic racism, sexism, classism, and ableism rob all of us of the opportunity to learn from and alongside each other, and to work together toward a brighter and more inclusive future. At the Harris Center, we are committed to ensuring that our trails, conserved lands, educational programs, and conservation research projects are welcoming spaces for all, regardless of racial or religious background, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic means, or range of physical ability. Toward that end, we pledge to:

- provide diversity, equity, and inclusion training for our staff and trustees
- highlight the knowledge, research, and importance of naturalists, scientists, and educators of diverse backgrounds in our school, afterschool, and community education programs
- amplify the voices of naturalists, scientists, and outdoors-people of diverse backgrounds via our communications, including social media
- ensure that our teaching library includes books by diverse authors and illustrators, as well as books that center the experiences of people of diverse backgrounds
- acknowledge the ancestral Indigenous lands where our work occurs
- explore partnerships with outdoor recreation and nature organizations led by — and centered on the experiences of — people of diverse backgrounds
- improve access to Harris Center trails, lands, and programs for people with disabilities
- examine our outreach and employment practices with the goal of building diversity throughout our organization — including volunteers, interns, staff, and trustees
- hold regular meetings of our newly-established Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Working Group, comprised of staff, trustees, and community members, in order to move these and other initiatives forward

This is just a start. We are listening and learning. We invite you to join us.

— *The Staff and Trustees of the Harris Center for Conservation Education*

**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.