

# Annual Report



HARRIS CENTER  
FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021

## Director's Report

In the pages that follow, you will get a sense for how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the nature of how the Harris Center works and, more importantly, supports our community. From dramatically increased use of our trails and lands to the remarkable popularity and volume of our remote programming, from growing numbers of volunteers to our expanding library of online resources and videos, the Harris Center is reaching many more people than we did in pre-pandemic years. Online programming has also allowed us to feature presenters from much further afield and from more diverse backgrounds.



Throughout the school year, our teacher-naturalists provided remote, in-person, and hybrid lessons for more than 3,000 students, helping them discover the wonders of the natural world in their own schoolyards and backyards. We also offered professional development workshops to help local classroom teachers feel more comfortable bringing their students outside, where the risk of virus transmission is much lower.

Our community education programs provided an astounding array of offerings for learners of all ages. All year long, people contacted me to thank the Harris Center for adapting so quickly and continuing to be such a remarkable resource for the community.

On the conservation research front, we enjoyed huge numbers of community science volunteers, the start of exciting new migration monitoring projects, and the happy return of the conservation internship program with Keene State College.

In addition, despite a pandemic and ballooning real estate market, our land staff worked on land protection projects in Peterborough, Hancock, Antrim, and Nelson that should be finalized in the coming year.

An enormous and heartfelt thank you to our volunteers, supporters, and staff, who have allowed the Harris Center to adapt and thrive during such trying circumstances. It is not clear how, when, or if things will “return to normal,” but I have no doubt the Harris Center will creatively address the challenges ahead and continue to ensure a grand future for the people, wildlife, and landscapes of the Monadnock Region.

**Jeremy Wilson, Executive Director**

## Partners and Co-sponsors

We work with many others every year to connect people to the natural world. Our 2020-2021 community partners and event co-sponsors included:

Antioch Bird Club  
Antioch University New England  
Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee  
Avenue A Teen Center  
Birdability  
Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center  
Camp Brantwood  
Cheshire County Conservation District  
Chesterfield Conservation Commission  
Chesterfield Public Library  
City of Keene  
Connecticut River Conservancy  
Dublin School PTO  
Electric Earth Concerts  
Flying Gravity Circus  
Francestown Land Trust  
Francestown PTO  
Franklin Pierce University  
Friends of the Chesterfield Public Library  
Hancock Conservation Commission  
Hancock Town Library  
Hancock Recreation Camp  
Harrisville Conservation Commission  
Harrisville Public Library  
Harrisville Trails  
Hawk Migration Association of North America  
Hawk Mountain  
Historical Society of Cheshire County  
Horatio Colony Nature Preserve  
Inside-Outside Advisory Group  
Jaffrey Historical Society  
Jaffrey Public Library  
Keene Public Library  
Keene State College  
Local Girl Scout Troops  
Loon Preservation Committee  
McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center  
Machina ArtBar  
Miller State Park  
Minorities in Shark Sciences  
Monadnock Conservancy  
Moosewood Ecological LLC  
Nature Groupie  
Nelson Conservation Commission  
Nelson Trails Committee  
NH Audubon  
NH Department of Environmental Services  
NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
NH Environmental Education Association  
NH Fish and Game  
NH State Parks  
Northeast Motus Collaboration  
Northern Woodlands  
Norway Pond Commission  
Nubanusit Lake Association  
Olivia Rodham Memorial Library (Nelson)  
Peterborough Conservation Commission  
Peterborough Town Library  
Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership  
RiverMead  
Scott-Farrar at Peterborough  
Seaver Silver Lake Farm Trust  
Silver Lake Land Trust  
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests  
Southwest Region Planning Commission  
SPARCnet  
Stoneridge Art Studio  
The American Chestnut Foundation  
The Caterpillar Lab  
The Grapevine Family and Community Resource Center  
The Nature Conservancy  
Toadstool Bookshop  
UNH Cooperative Extension  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Vermont Institute of Natural Science  
Virtual Learning Academy Charter School

# Environmental Education in the Schools

Jenna Spear, School Program Manager and Teacher-Naturalist



▲ **Taking Teaching Outside** This year, with the Harris Center's help, thousands of local students discovered nearby nature as a source of solace, inspiration, and fun. photo © Ben Conant

We began the fall of 2020 with our creative juices flowing! All of our teacher-naturalists were hard at work before school even started, developing and implementing workshops to help more than 300 local teachers learn to teach outdoors safely and creatively during COVID. We also developed a **nature journaling curriculum** and made the materials available on our website, with the goal of helping teachers near and far establish an outdoor routine with their classes.

NATURE JOURNALING  
Getting Started with My Class

HARRIS CENTER  
FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION  
harriscenter.org

Nature Journaling Curriculum

Getting Started with Nature Journaling

Slideshow: Introduction to Nature Journaling

Nature Journaling Observation Form

Weather Observation Form

Resources & Equipment

Journaling Prompts for Autumn

Journaling Prompts for Winter

Journaling Prompts for Spring

◀ **Nature Journaling Curriculum**  
Download these materials and other resources for teachers and homeschoolers at [harriscenter.org/teacher-resources](http://harriscenter.org/teacher-resources).



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

photo © Kate Washburn

## We're Nuts for Squirrels (Still!)

Over the winter, most schools went to a fully remote model of instruction as COVID cases surged, and the Harris Center shifted our focus accordingly. For many of our students, that meant Zoom lessons and “assignments” from our teacher-naturalists to go outside their homes, look outside their windows, and observe nature in their neighborhoods. What would normally have been a winter full of 4th grade mammal tracking changed to a season spent observing a common local animal: the grey squirrel. Students dove into this topic with gusto — from watching squirrel behaviors out the window to investigating squirrel food preferences using kits created by the Harris Center and sent home via their schools.

As winter turned to spring and students returned to school part-time and then full-time, we adjusted to the constantly changing classroom schedules and met kids in fields, forests, and streamside to study nature in person again. We were thrilled to be back together outdoors, and it was clear that the students were too.

## Professional Development

Throughout the year, we also continued our monthly “**More Time Outside**” professional development study group for elementary school teachers, with a renewed emphasis on daily outdoor routines. We were able to meet in person for our final session in May, celebrating the successes of the year, from amphibian studies to nature journaling and more.



▲ **More Time Outside** Through workshops and a monthly study group, the Harris Center helped classroom teachers learn to take their teaching outside, where learning outcomes are improved and virus transmission is dramatically reduced. photo © Claudia Dery

Our creativity and flexibility were surely put to the test this year — but it's clear that the joys and wonders of nearby nature, and the Harris Center's experience with teaching outdoors, have never been more vital. ↗

## The Harris Center for Conservation Education partnered with the following schools in 2020-2021:

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*  
Marlborough Elementary School  
Nelson Elementary School

Peterborough Elementary School  
Pierce Elementary School, *Bennington*  
Ridge Memorial School  
Robin's Nest Nature Preschool, *Peterborough*  
South Meadow Middle School, *Peterborough*  
Surry Village Charter School  
Symonds Elementary School, *Keene*

Temple Elementary School  
The Well School, *Peterborough*  
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*

▲ **Babies in Backpacks and Toddlers in Tow** Harris Center community programs help people of all ages — including the very young — fall in love with the natural world. photo © Ben Conant

Whether we gathered online to solve natural history mysteries during our monthly “Ask a Naturalist” series or walked in small family groups along the Hiroshi Trail while listening to Schubert, this year our community programs found innovative and inspirational ways to connect people of all ages and backgrounds to each other, and to our natural world. Many people told us that our offerings were a lifeline during these lonely times.

### Online & Further Afield

Our online programs took on a life of their own, often drawing far more people than we could have accommodated in our building. They also broke down barriers of distance, location, and time, and enabled us to bring speakers in from as far away as Vera Cruz, Mexico, and Toronto, Canada. Harris Center audiences went national and even international, with people Zooming in from all over the country and as far away as Germany, Sweden, and Canada.



Many of our programs were co-sponsored with exceptional partners, who helped amplify our work and bring diverse voices and experiences to our community. Whether it was local libraries who co-sponsored our **Women in Science** series for Women's History Month or **The Venture Out Project**'s film and panel discussion on LGBTQ+ experiences in the outdoors, this year was full of forward-thinking creativity from our many community partners.



▲ **Birding the Nighthawk Migration** Participants in one of the Harris Center's "pop-up" outings — designed to take advantage of outstanding, last-minute opportunities to observe natural phenomena — search for migrating nighthawks from the Brenner Bridge in downtown Peterborough. photo © Brett Amy Thelen

venture forth with a new and broader approach. Online opportunities are now part of our work, balanced with in-person, boots-on-the trail, paddles-in-the-water experiences. Our hope is to make falling in love with this place we call home more accessible and diverse, with more opportunities than ever before. ☺

▼ **Avenue A Teen Hiking Club** Over the summer, the Harris Center teamed up with The Grapevine's Avenue A Teen Center in Antrim for a hiking club, with participants ranging from 13 to 16 years old. We could tell they were smiling, even through their masks. photo © Ben Conant



## In-Person & Close to Home

In the spring and summer, we began gathering once again for limited-capacity in-person outings, doing things together that felt so special after our long isolation — like watching Short-eared Owls at the Keene airport or searching for dragonfly nymphs along the edge of Norway Pond.

## Looking Forward

As life returns to normal (we hope), the Harris Center's community programs



photo © Jaime Hutchinson

## Camp

**Jenna Spear, Camp Director and Teacher-Naturalist**

What a wonderful year of adventure! We were all thrilled to be back at camp this year, exploring the outdoors with 125 campers over the course of four weeks in summer, as well as one week in late winter. Things looked a bit different, with smaller groups and masks when campers and staff were close to one another, but there was no difference in the enthusiasm among campers and staff alike. In fact, it's possible we were all more excited for camp this year. The best part, as always, was exploring the woods and fields together, sharing our discoveries and imaginations, playing games, and making new friends. ☺

photo © Jaime Hutchinson



► **Woodland Magic** Winter campers discover one of Jack McWhorter's enchanting creature carvings during a hike along the Harriskat Trail.

# Conservation Research

Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director



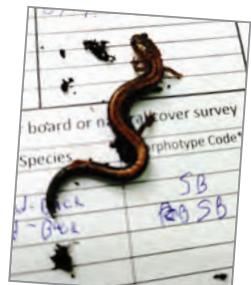
▲ **Motus** This station was the first of 50 to be installed as part of the **New England Motus** project — and one of more than 1,200 worldwide.

Together, they're revealing never-been-seen details about migration routes, timing, flight speed, and more. photo © Brett Amy Thelen

This was the year we learned to live in a world changed by a global pandemic. For the first time, we offered our Salamander Crossing Brigade volunteer training via Zoom, welcoming participants from 10 different states and all across New Hampshire. Community science and internship programs resumed, with new precautions in place. And, despite the lingering shadow of COVID-19, we launched two new and hugely exciting research collaborations focused on better understanding long-distance bird migration. Read on for highlights.

## Research on Our Lands

In both spring and fall, community volunteers, undergraduate interns, and graduate students from Antioch University New England surveyed six study plots in the Harris Center woods as part of **SPARCnet**, a landscape-scale research effort aimed at understanding the effects of climate change on red-backed salamanders.



▲ **Red-backed Salamander**

photo © Michael Bullen

In November 2020, with support from our 50th Anniversary Fund, we joined a cutting-edge research network with the installation of a new **Motus Wildlife Tracking System** station on our Granite Lake Headwaters property in Stoddard. Motus is comprised of tiny radio transmitters that are affixed to shorebirds, songbirds, bats, and butterflies, along with a network of antennas that detect the radio signals whenever a tagged animal flies within range. Our station was the first of 50 to be established through the multi-state New England Motus project, and we detected our first migrant — a Semipalmated Plover originally tagged on its breeding grounds in Churchill, Manitoba — on July 30, 2021.

In June, our new **Broad-winged Hawk tagging** collaboration with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary took an exciting leap forward, as Hawk Mountain biologists attached lightweight satellite and cellular transmitters to three adult Broadwings in and around the SuperSanctuary — the first of this species to be satellite-tagged in the Granite State. Data from these transmitters will shed new light on the lives of these hawks, and help determine habitat conservation priorities along their migration routes to Central and South America.

After a pandemic-related pause in 2020, summer also saw the return of our **conservation internship program with Keene State College**. This year's team of hard-working undergraduate interns conducted forest inventory, surveyed and pulled invasive plants, and constructed "snake hotels" for future monitoring efforts, among many other tasks. A team of KSC students also initiated a capstone research project documenting mammal diversity on Harris Center-conserved lands in Harrisville, and a graduate student from Antioch University New England surveyed bee diversity at Rye Bog as part of her master's thesis research on wild bee assemblages in New Hampshire peatlands.

## Research in the Region

In the fall of 2020, the Harris Center and NH Audubon completed the 16th consecutive season of hawk migration monitoring at the **Pack Monadnock Raptor Observatory** in Miller State Park in Peterborough. Despite visitation restrictions imposed by COVID-19, the Observatory remained fully staffed, tallying 12,032 migrating raptors — including record-high totals for Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, and American

Kestrel, as well as evidence of continued declines in Osprey and Northern Goshawk populations.

We also partnered with the Norway Pond Commission for a third summer of **cyanobacteria monitoring** at Norway Pond in Hancock, and provided outreach and education on cyanobacteria for several other local lake associations.



▲ **Hawk Watch at Pack Monadnock** Seasonal raptor biologist Levi Burford (pictured) and a hearty team of Hawk Watch volunteers tallied 12,032 migrating raptors from the summit of Pack Monadnock over the course of nearly three months, finishing the fall with an impressive 557 hours of monitoring. photo © Phil Brown

## ► Tagging Along with Broad-winged Hawks

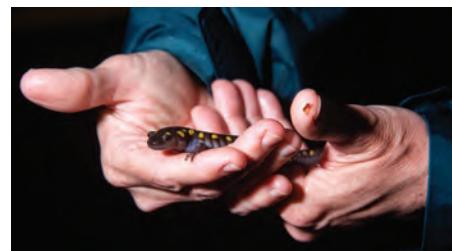
"**Monadnock**" shows off her new satellite transmitter, which will track her journey from New Hampshire to South America.

photo © Brett Amy Thelen



## Community Science

More volunteers participated in our **Salamander Crossing Brigades** than ever before, with 450 people attending our Zoom training and/or heading out on rainy nights in the spring of



▲ **Helping Hands** In the spring of 2021, our Salamander Crossing Brigade volunteers moved more than 1,000 migrating spotted salamanders to safety. photo © Tim Briggs

2021. Collectively, we provided safe passage for nearly 8,000 frogs and salamanders, bringing our project total to more than 61,000 amphibians since 2007! We also worked with the City

of Keene to close the North Lincoln Street crossing site to vehicles on migration nights — still the only place a road has been closed to protect migrating amphibians anywhere in New Hampshire.

Over the summer, we again partnered with NH Audubon's **Project Nighthawk** to monitor the state-endangered Common Nighthawk in Keene, where our volunteers kept close watch over a rooftop nest with one chick.



▲ **Project Nighthawk** In the summer of 2021, our community scientists monitored the Monadnock Region's only known nighthawk nest, which produced one adorable chick, seen here with its mother.

photo © Brett Amy Thelen

In July, our community scientists also collected

monarch caterpillar data at a Harris Center-conserved milkweed patch for the national **Monarch Larva Monitoring Program**.

## Thank You

Huge thanks to all of our project partners and community scientists. Here's to more science in the SuperSanctuary and beyond in 2022! ➔

# Land Conservation

Eric Masterson, Land Program Manager



▲ Jackie Pendragon Hancock wood carver Jack McWhorter spent the summer and fall artfully carving creatures out of downed trees along the Harris Center's Harriskat Trail. Keep your eyes peeled for Jack's creations on your next hike! photo © Brett Amy Thelen

This year, we've been working on six new land projects totaling more than 450 acres across Hancock, Antrim, Peterborough, and Nelson — but land protection takes time, especially during a pandemic. We hope to complete all of these projects in the upcoming year.

Protection is only one piece of the conservation puzzle. Once a property has been conserved, monitoring and management are required for ensuring that the land retains its ecological and recreational value. This ongoing stewardship is an essential part of our work.

## Land Protection

Harris Center land protection efforts focus on enhancing a network of large conservation blocks, which ensure connected habitats for wide-ranging species like otter, bobcat, and moose; plentiful recreation opportunities for humans; and protection for many of the region's ponds, lakes, and streams.

The total acreage protected by the Harris Center now stands at more than 24,000 acres, as follows:

- Antrim – 2,275 acres
- Greenfield – 91 acres
- Hancock – 6,360 acres
- Harrisville – 1,970 acres
- Nelson – 4,100 acres
- Peterborough – 1,460 acres
- Stoddard – 7,200 acres
- Windsor – 664 acres



► Sunrise over Robb Reservoir photo © Swift Corwin

*“It makes me proud and grateful to be a longtime Harris Center supporter, to see what you all have been able to accomplish in land and habitat preservation.”* — MIKE D.

## Stewardship

The majority of our conserved lands are protected through conservation easements — 123 in all. Each of these easements must be monitored annually, a process that includes conversations with landowners, reviewing aerial photography, drone flights (in some cases), and site inspections with GPS, mapping, and report writing. Interns **Alivia Acosta** and **Ian Aldrich** monitored the bulk of our easements this year, with a few completed by staff and volunteers. Happily, no violations were found.

## Trails and Campsites

In addition to stewardship and monitoring of our conserved lands, the Harris Center also maintains **24 miles of hiking trails**, which require constant maintenance. We are fortunate to have a committed crew of experienced volunteers who keep the trails in good condition, a task made more challenging by the increased frequency of extreme weather events. This year, these same volunteers also finished restoring the view from the summit of Skatutakee — which, in addition to views of Monadnock and Crotched Mountains, now offers a winter glimpse of the tip of the church steeple in Hancock Village!

In early summer, staff and volunteers also built **tent platforms** at two of the Harris Center’s campsites on Spoonwood Pond, which until now were notorious for their uneven ground and plentiful rocks. In addition, a dedicated team of Keene State College interns worked to keep the drainage ditches cleared of debris on the rail trail from Hancock to Harrisville, and helped with the construction of **bog bridges** on the Thumbs Down trail.

## Thank You to Our VOLUNTEERS

Many people volunteer their time and talent to the Harris Center throughout the year. While the past year brought fewer hands-on volunteer activities than usual due to the pandemic, there was still much to do. We are grateful to the volunteers who continued to maintain our trails, care for our pollinator garden and grounds, help publicize our events, and more.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Lisa for a volunteer application at [murray@harriscenter.org](mailto:murray@harriscenter.org). ☺



▲ **New Tent Platform at Spoonwood** Camping at the Harris Center’s remote campsites on Spoonwood Pond has been made more comfortable with the addition of tent platforms at Sites #1 and #2.

photo © Brett Amy Thelen



### ◀ Bog Bridge Building

When your feet stay dry on the hike up Thumb Mountain, you can thank our team of dedicated volunteers and KSC interns for the new bog bridges!

photos © Ric Haskins



## Thank You

None of our land protection, stewardship, or trailwork would be possible without the time, energy, and talent of our dedicated volunteers and interns. Thank you, one and all. ☺



## Jack McWhorter: Volunteer Extraordinaire

This year, we are recognizing **Jack McWhorter** with a special Volunteer Extraordinaire Award for his artful additions to our Harriskat Trail. As a “pandemic project,” Jack has sculpted enchanting animals out of fallen trees along the trail, to the delight of all who hike by!

▲ **Jack at Work** photo © Susie Spikol

# The Year in Giving

Lisa Murray, Outreach Manager

For many of us, time took on new dimensions this year, as we watched weeks and months tick by without seeing family or friends. The pandemic forced us to hunker down, allowing for more introspection and for reflecting on what we value most. Fortunately for the Harris Center, it appears that our community still counts us among the things they highly value.

## Annual Giving

Thank you to the 932 individuals and families who donated to our Annual Fund in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, which runs from July 1 through June 30. The Annual Fund is the lifeblood of the Harris Center, providing essential support for everything we do – from land protection to environmental education, camps to conservation research.

Thank you too to those who have been donating monthly, using our online donation option ([harriscenter.org/donate](http://harriscenter.org/donate)). Some people like the convenience of having an amount (however large or small) assigned to their credit card each month, and we appreciate the steady income these recurring gifts provide.

## Bobcats Forever Legacy Society

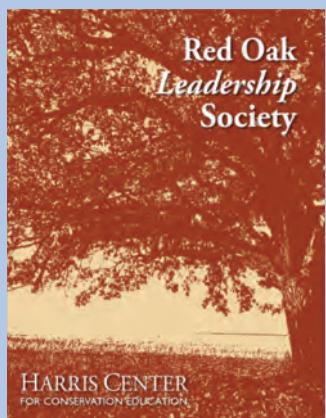
We thank those who have joined the Bobcats Forever Legacy Society this year by notifying us of their intentions to include the Harris Center in their estate plans. Naming the Harris Center as a future beneficiary can be as easy as adding a bequest to your will, among other options. If you're interested in learning more, please contact Jeremy Wilson at [wilson@harriscenter.org](mailto:wilson@harriscenter.org) or (603) 525-3394.



## Red Oak Leadership Society

We are deeply appreciative of the generosity of our Red Oak Leadership Society donors, who have supported the Harris Center at the \$1,000 level or above.

These gifts go a very long way in supporting the work we do.



## Business Partnerships

Our Business Partners recognize the value of the Harris Center's work in the communities where they do business. We are so grateful for their support:



## 50th Anniversary Fund

Though our 50th Anniversary celebrations have officially concluded, pledge fulfillments and donations to our 50th Anniversary Fund continue to come in. We are indebted to the 289 donors who have contributed to this special fund, which has more than \$850,000 in donations and pledges. You are sending the Harris Center soaring into the future! The 50th Fund has already enabled many innovative projects to happen; visit [harriscenter.org/category/50th-anniversary](http://harriscenter.org/category/50th-anniversary) for more information about these exciting new initiatives.



**THANKYOU** to one and all who have “shown up” this year!

We may not have had much opportunity to actually see each other in person, but your commitment to creating and sustaining a healthy environment in the Monadnock Region — and to educating and inspiring future generations to care for our natural world — has been truly moving. We are so very grateful to all of you. **A heartfelt thank you to all our loyal donors. ☺**

[harriscenter.org/donate](http://harriscenter.org/donate)

[harriscenter.org/business-partners](http://harriscenter.org/business-partners)



*The Harris Center has been given a four-star rating by Charity Navigator, America's premier independent charity evaluator.*

# Harris Center Financial Report

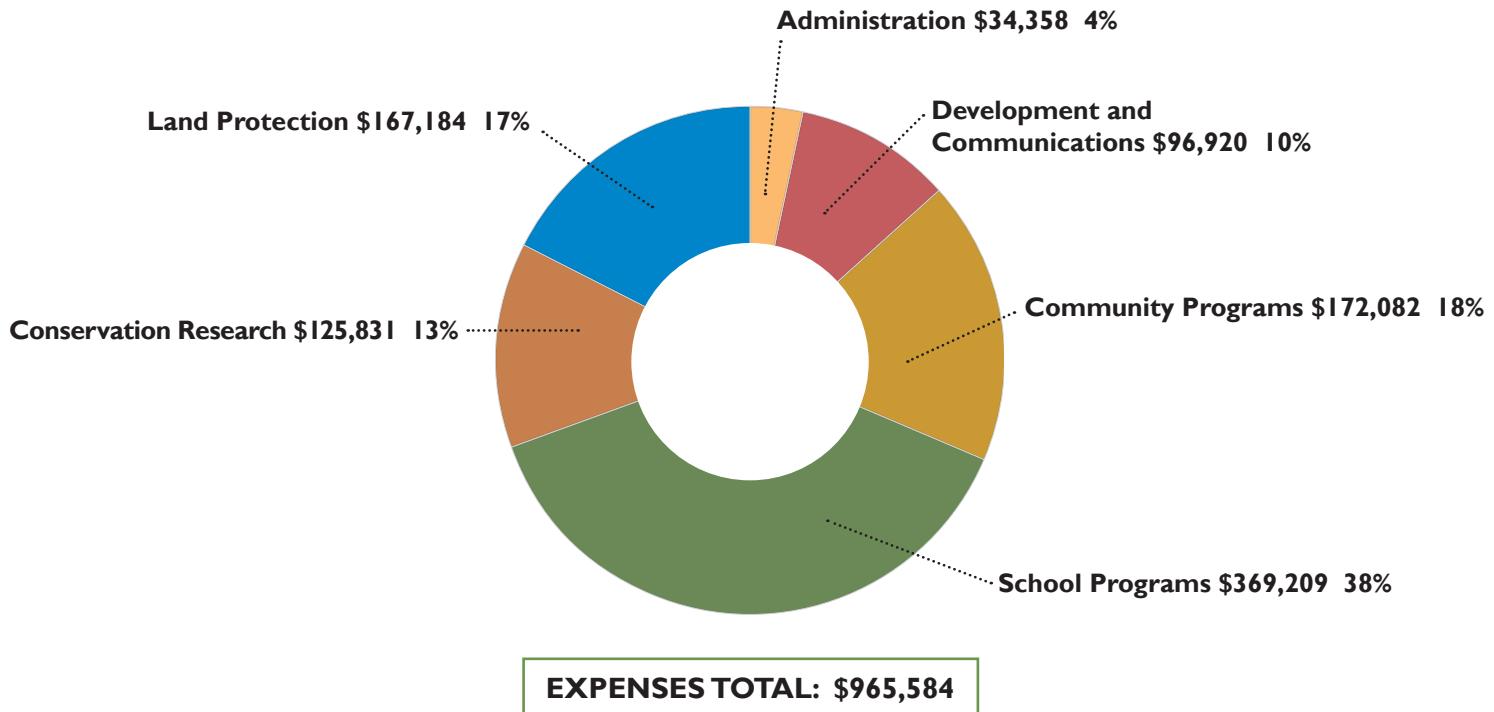
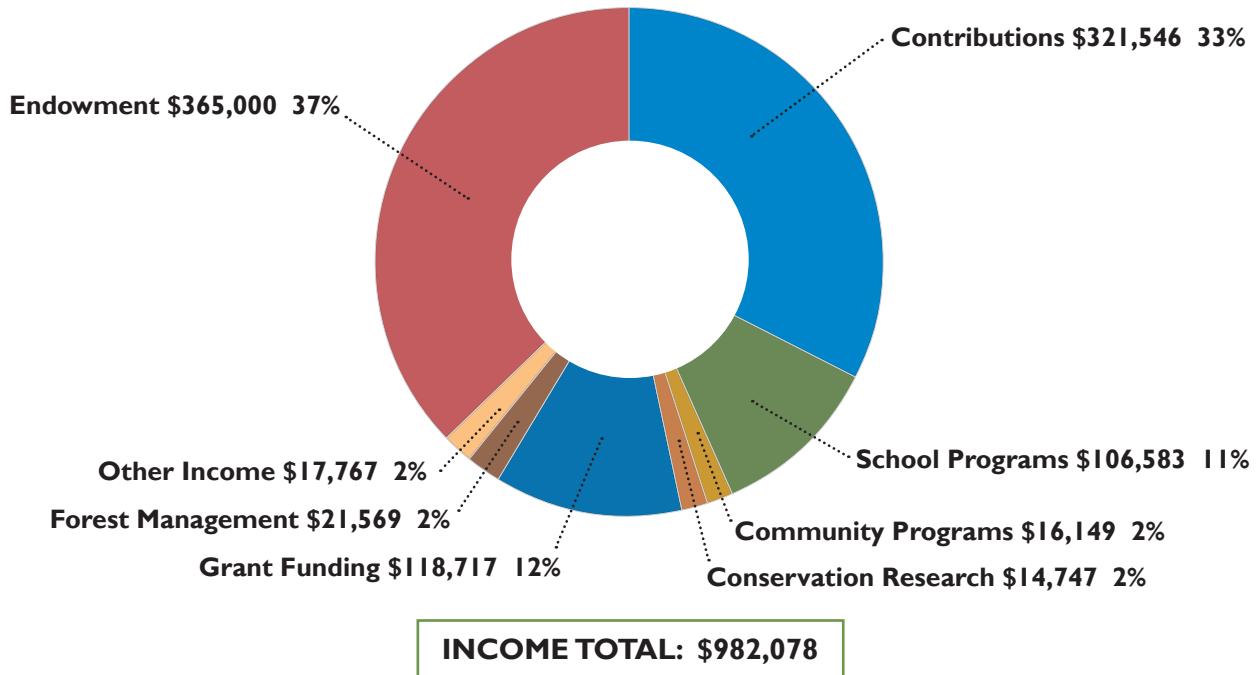
Operating Budget – July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

The financial statements of the Harris Center for Conservation Education are audited by Nathan Wechsler & Company, P.A. Certified Public Accountants, Concord, New Hampshire. The audited 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.



photo © Tianne Strombeck



During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Harris Center received an additional \$246,078 in donations to our 50th Anniversary Fund, and \$152,505 in bequests for our endowment. We're so grateful for this tremendous support.



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## Annual Report

July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021

Dinsmore Pond, as viewed from the Hiroshi Loop Trail photo © Tom Momeyer

### Harris Center Staff

*Jeremy Wilson, Executive Director  
Janet Altobello, Professional Learning Facilitator and Teacher-Naturalist  
Margaret Baker, Print Communications  
John Benjamin, Teacher-Naturalist  
Phil Brown, Hawk Watch Coordinator  
Levi Burford, Seasonal Raptor Biologist  
Meade Cadot, Naturalist Emeritus  
Jaime Hutchinson, Teacher-Naturalist  
Sara LeFebvre, Finance Administrator  
Eric Masterson, Land Program Manager  
Lisa Murray, Outreach Manager  
James Newsom, Land Protection Specialist  
Karen Rent, Assistant School Program Manager and Teacher-Naturalist  
Karen Seaver, Staff Ecologist  
Jenna Spear, School Program Manager and Teacher-Naturalist  
Susie Spikol, Community Programs Director and Teacher-Naturalist  
Miles Stahmann, Office Manager  
Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director*

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