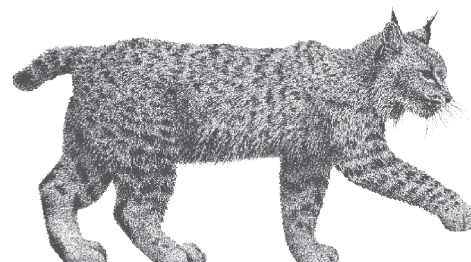


FALL 2024

Harris Hearsay

News of the Harris Center and Our Work in the Community

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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Eleanor Briggs Open Lodge &
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Adopt an Owl

The Harris Center's saw-whet owl banding program offers extraordinary opportunities for both science and education. You can support this *awwww*-inspiring project by "adopting" an owl for yourself or as a fun, unique gift for a loved one!

To learn more, visit harriscenter.org/adopt-an-owl.



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, the Bobcats Forever Legacy Society. Anyone can make a bequest, and no amount is too small.

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

For more information, contact
Jeremy Wilson at (603) 525-3394
or wilson@harriscenter.org.



▲ **Martha's Pennant** A small skimmer dragonfly considered a rare species in New Hampshire © Kate McCay



© Tom Momeyer

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MESSAGE

by Sandy Taylor

The profile of the Mountain is like two reclining figures,
head-to-head.

One gazes at the mottled sky above, intrigued with what's beyond —
the mystery, infinity.

The other feels the solid earth below, content with what is known,
grounded and secure.

Two perspectives from the same vantage point.

~ ~

News comes about the baby on its way,
the couples' first.

New job, new house, new stage of life. "It is time,"
my nephew says.

We hear those words again, but from another.

The drive is long but we have time to sit and sing
and try to say good-bye.

She tells us we should head for home. "It is time.
I am ready to go."

These poems were written by participants in the "Transitions" nature poetry workshop with Brian Evans-Jones, which was offered through the Harris Center's Environmental Studies Institute (ESI) in the spring of 2024.

JUMPING SPIDER

by Anna Leversee

Wizened woman
you visit me,
your back a woven basket,
patterned,
a Persian carpet.
Your eyes are Indian pottery
burned black — a split for the soul to come out —
the kind she would collect.

Springing toward me,
you gift me all at once
with the careful geometry of her love
made miniature,
somehow contained
in your perfect, impossible body.

Will there be at least one goddamned picture of me in this house?
you said to me
the day before you died.

How to have known that I will see you always,
to soothe you with this knowing,
small spider,
as you take your leap
away from me now
into the wild and indifferent business of this field,
brave, beloved, and alone.

To see more poems from students in this class, visit harriscenter.org/nature-poetry-workshop. ➡



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS with NATURE: Diary of an Intern

by Kate McKay, Easement Monitoring Intern

photos © Kate McKay

My summer with the Harris Center as a conservation easement monitoring intern was the perfect fit for me as an avid naturalist. Having already fallen in love with the rich biodiversity of the Monadnock Region from earlier summers spent in the area, I was thrilled to return again and continue my explorations of New Hampshire's woods and wetlands. Come along with me as I walk these protected lands and share some of the experiences that made my time so memorable.

A Day in June

At a large, mostly wooded easement, I stumble upon a small beaver meadow. A dragonfly zips back and forth over the grassy clearing, its brilliant blue eyes catching my attention. I realize it's a species I've never seen before in my five years as a dragonfly enthusiast. To my delight, it lands on a nearby twig, where I can admire its beautiful colors up close. Known as the **Spatterdock Darner**, this uncommon and spectacular species prefers wetlands containing yellow pond lilies.

Late July

Walking along the edge of a small, lively brook bordered by hemlocks, I pause to admire the sunlight sparkling on the surface of the water. I notice a dragonfly drifting slowly downstream, fluttering feebly. I extend a stick, offering it rescue. She climbs aboard, and I draw her in to safety. I'm excited to discover that it's a **Martha's Pennant**, a small skimmer dragonfly considered a rare species in New Hampshire. She cleans her face and dries her wings in the wind, while regaining her strength and rewarding me with photo opportunities. Eventually, she takes off gracefully and alights on a nearby hemlock branch. Delighted that she has fully recovered, I continue along the brook to finish my easement monitoring.

Early August

On my final easement visit of the summer, I'm exploring a peaceful forest in Nelson. It's a glorious summer day, the breeze blowing gently and sunshine filtering through the trees. I feel wistful on this last day and also incredibly fortunate to have spent time in these beautiful woods. The sudden chattering of a bird breaks the silence. I scan a rocky outcrop and am startled as a **Barred Owl** soars directly above me, its wings stretched wide as it glides through the forest. Two scolding vireos follow closely behind as the owl crosses the trail and disappears

into the woods. The forest is silent once more save for the trill of an insect, and I am left standing in awe.



Every easement outing offered these intimate encounters with nature, from watching young **Eastern Phoebes** snuggled together on a branch to observing stream banks covered in dazzling **red cardinal flowers**. By the end of each day, my camera was filled with dozens of photos capturing the many plants and animals I saw. Though I often worked alone in the field, I always enjoyed the time spent with welcoming landowners, walking easement boundaries together, exchanging knowledge about wildlife and the land. I also cherished the opportunity to meet some of the incredible people who work at the Harris Center.

I wish the world had many more Harris Centers to protect land and teach nature appreciation. The remarkable diversity I experienced flourished on a foundation of 26,000 acres of land protected by the Harris Center, including the many easements I had the privilege of monitoring. Natural wonders are everywhere, even in your own backyard, and I encourage you to go outside and look for yourself! 🌿

Kate McKay is in her senior year at Cornell University, where she is studying environmental biology and applied ecology.

© Lucy McKay



2024 ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Celebrating Our Extraordinary Community

by Michelle Aldredge, Communications Manager

On Sunday, October 20, the Harris Center hosted our **54th Annual Meeting** at the Peterborough Players, welcoming nearly 150 supporters for an afternoon of celebration, reflection, and recognition.

Honoring Local Educators, Volunteers, & Partners

Special education teacher **Patricia Glabach Boulle** from Rindge Memorial School was honored with the Harris Center's **Educator of the Year Award**, presented by teacher-naturalist **Jaime Hutchinson**. The first special education teacher to receive this award, Patricia was recognized for integrating outdoor learning into her teaching. Despite limited time with her students, her approach — which includes a three-day process of preparation, outdoor exploration, and reflection — has led to significant improvements in her students' observation, writing, and teamwork skills.

Community Programs Director and teacher-naturalist **Susie Spikol** presented the **Laurie Bryan Partnership Award** to **Erika Rosenfeld** from **Post & Beam Brewing** in Peterborough for her “generosity of heart, community consciousness, and dedication to the Harris Center’s values and mission.” Since its founding in 2018, Post & Beam has hosted the Harris Center for many nature-inspired events, including trivia takeovers and our popular **Nature on Tap** series. “Post & Beam might be one of the only breweries that can boast of a delicious beer called Cosmic Love,” Susie said, “as well as a pollinator garden, LED lighting, and a geothermal HVAC system.”

The **2024 Volunteer Extraordinaire Award** went to **Susan Masters**, a key figure behind the scenes of the Harris Center’s place-based education program. School Program Manager



Jenna Spear praised Susan for her precision and care in tasks ranging from creating curriculum kits and student certificates to compiling a massive email list of educators at 32 partner schools. Susan expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to be involved with the Harris Center after retirement, calling it “one of the great volunteer opportunities in the region.”

Honoring Staff & Board Milestones

Executive Director **Jeremy Wilson** celebrated **Susie Spikol** for her 30 years of service, praising her as the “creative genius” behind many beloved programs such as **LAB GIRLS+** and **Babies in Backpacks**. Jeremy highlighted Susie’s creativity and adaptability as two of her superpowers. Susie thanked her coworkers, former Executive Director **Meade Cadot** for his mentorship, and Harris Center founder **Eleanor Briggs** for exemplifying the “power and impact one committed and heart-centered, generous individual can have on a community.” “We are so lucky Susie found us!” Cadot commented after the event. “Her background and innate abilities as a talented and engaging writer and teacher (and an entertaining emcee too!) make her a natural for connecting children — and in fact all of us — with the natural world.”



▲ **Susie Spikol**

© Ben Conant

Chairperson **Michael George** recognized the Harris Center’s Board of Trustees for volunteering their time and talents. He also thanked outgoing Vice Chair **Tim Riley** for his six years of service and welcomed new board members **Jim Rothnie** of Jaffrey and **Terry Martland** of Hancock.

Jeremy Wilson also shared highlights from the past year, including new collaborations with the Keene Vet Center and local memory care facilities, achieving a milestone of more than 26,000 acres of conserved land, and the retirement of teacher-naturalist **Janet Altobello** after 35 years of outstanding teaching and mentorship. (You can find more details in our Annual Report at harriscenter.org/reports-newsletters.)

▲ **Honorees (left to right) Patricia Glabach Boulle, Erika Rosenfeld, and Susan Masters** © Ben Conant



▲ Ben Cosgrove and Howard Mansfield

© Ben Conant

Contemplating Our Relationship to the Land

The afternoon concluded with a memorable performance of *A Journey to the White Mountains in Words and Music* by writer **Howard Mansfield** and composer **Ben Cosgrove**. Best-selling author **Sy Montgomery**, who introduced them, described how the project emerged from a shared love of landscape. She also noted their many performances of the piece and the New England Emmy awarded to the film version by the SALT Project, and added, “But none of these performances has meant more to them than today’s opportunity to share their words and music at this Annual Meeting of our beloved Harris Center — which we can largely credit for how our beautiful Monadnock Region looks today.”

The presentation that followed was a compelling blend of spoken word and music, which explored themes of awe and transcendence, expectation, loss, and the fraught connection between art, place, and tourism. In the end, Mansfield and Cosgrove’s performance served as a poignant reminder of the profound impact that both art and nature can have on daily life — a fitting conclusion to an event centered on the Harris Center’s goal of instilling a love of nature and the land within our community. ➡

© Ben Conant

A Fond Farewell

For 35 years, teacher-naturalist **Janet Altobello** dedicated her time, talent, and expertise to expanding the Harris Center’s school-based education and professional development programs. Along the way, she mentored hundreds of teachers and inspired wide-eyed wonder for nearby nature in both the young and young at heart. In 2024, Janet retired, leaving behind a legacy of passion, mentorship, and a deep-rooted connection to nature. We are immensely grateful for her decades of dedication and wish her many joyful adventures, on and off the trail, in her well-earned retirement. ➡



The Eleanor Briggs Open

The Eleanor Briggs Open Lodge & Grounds Revitalization project will improve accessibility of the Harris Center grounds and provide a spacious, open-air lodge for events of all sizes, intimately connected to the natural world. This new outdoor venue will offer flexible gathering space for Harris Center programs, community events, and private rentals, and will be equipped with AV technology for multimedia presentations, performances, and more. Construction will get underway in the spring.

The Plan Includes

- A **2,400 square-foot** open-air, pavilion-style lodge
- **Capacity for up to 250 people** to attend a wide range of events, from intimate gatherings and large lectures to workshops and weddings
- **2 new pathways and an expanded deck** that connect guests from our building to the lodge, pollinator garden, frog pond, and grounds
- **3 new accessible parking spaces**
- **2 new accessible unisex restrooms** with composting toilets for hikers and visitors
- **Landscape redesign** of five steep, eroding slopes to improve accessibility for visitors using walkers, wheelchairs, or strollers
- **1 new unpaved parking area**, which will accommodate up to 50 vehicles

The projected cost of this exciting project is \$1.5 million. Through a combination of grants and generous donations, we have already secured more than 85% of the funds — but we need your help to raise the remaining \$200,000.

► **For more information and to donate**, visit harriscenter.org/open-lodge-project.

Lodge & Grounds Revitalization Project | UPDATE

