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**A New Conservation Project:
 Leary Field & Forest in
 Farmington**

In early Spring 2017, MMRG began to work with Bob and Debbie Leary who own a farm along Hornetown Road, a rural section of Farmington. The Learys look forward to conserving 60+ acres of field and forest, forever, to honor the three generations of family who have farmed, sugared and forested this land on the Farmington Ridge. Bob Leary's passion for this land was passed down from his father who had once said that he hoped that the farm would continue to grow crops forever. Bob and Debbie Leary are not strangers to land conservation as



Virginia Long watching bobolink in the Leary's Upper field, with Hussey Mountain in the background.

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**MMRG Rolls out its
 Conservation Plan**

MMRG introduced the final Conservation Plan: "Our Home Our Land Our Tomorrow" and maps to a gathering of approximately 70 people on July 18. The event was held at the Pinckney Boat House at Brewster Academy in Wolfeboro on a picture-perfect summer evening.

Patti Connaughton-Burns, Executive Director of MMRG opened the program, sharing how MMRG had asked itself how it could best serve the region. Then for the past year, MMRG asked those who live work and play in the region to help identify the places and natural resources that are

most important to them and how they hoped that the community would look in the future. With gathered information, we set out to create a plan with maps that captures the collective community vision and will guide us for the next 20 years, one project at a time.

The plan authors are two of New Hampshire's most reputable conservation planners, Dan Sundquist of GreenFire GIS and Steve Whitman of Resilience Planning and Design. At the roll-out, Dan and Steve

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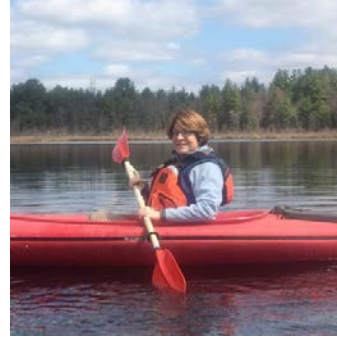
Public Relations Coordinator
Virginia Long

Education Coordinator
Kari Lygren

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Executive Director's Corner

At MMRG, we will soon complete a 5-year Strategic and 20-year Long Term Plan that uses the new Conservation Plan and maps as a foundation. With the maps laid out at last month's strategic planning meeting, our facilitator, Steve Whitman asked: *Who are We?*



*Patricia Connaughton-Burns,
Executive Director*

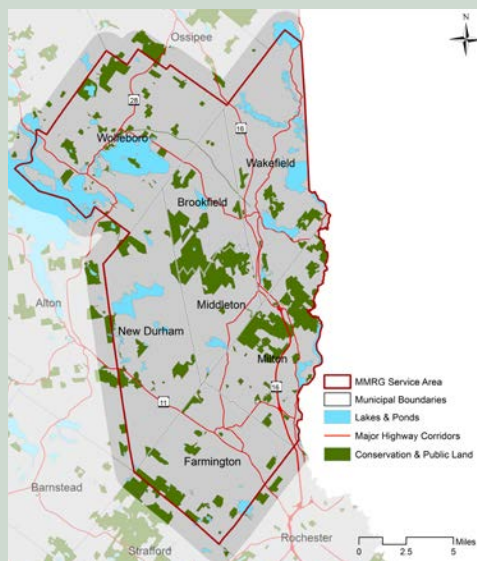
To answer the questions we studied the maps that showed Moose Mountains rising from the center of the 7 town service area, surrounded by critically-important natural resources, with small tributaries streaming "like tendrils" from the mountains, as one of the team pointed out. Then followed the first response: *"We are headwaters!"*

During conservation planning, stakeholders and survey responses also emphasized the importance of water resources first, followed by top tier wildlife habitat, working landscapes (forest and farms), wetlands and riparian areas, connectivity of conserved lands and recreation trails.

Stakeholders also highly ranked climate change resilience, indicating that this newer concept is understood by a diverse group.

Last week, while catching up on reading, lakeside, a recent article in the SPNH Forest Notes caught my eye. It referenced a 2011

USDA technical paper called *"Forests on the Edge: Housing Development on America's Private Forests"*. The article identified the nations' top four watersheds that were expected to see the most dramatic change in water quality caused by housing developments and noted that three of those watersheds are in New Hampshire. In fact the MMRG region provides headwater tributaries to all three of the listed NH watersheds: Salmon Falls/Piscataqua, Saco River, and Merrimack Rivers. This reinforced to me our opportunity and obligation to help mitigate against threats by conserving land in these three vulnerable watersheds.



MMRG's Mission

To identify and conserve important natural resource areas, including water resources, farm and forest lands, wildlife habitat, recreational areas, cultural and scenic areas. To educate others about these efforts. To join together protected lands to form greenways.

Serving: Brookfield, Farmington, Middleton, Milton, New Durham, Wakefield & Wolfeboro

Map prepared by D. Sundquist, GreenFire GIS

Volunteer Focus: Cheryl Giguere, MMRG's 2017 'Volunteer of the Year'



Cheryl Giguere (Photo by Kate Wilcox)

MMRG Public Relations Coordinator Virginia Long interviewed Cheryl a couple months before our annual Woods, Water & Wildlife Festival on August 12. As this newsletter went to press, Cheryl was busy coordinating Festival volunteers and hoping to experience it in a new way this year, with her grandson!

V: How did you first hear about MMRG needing volunteers?

C: MMRG's Kari Lygren was an old high school friend of mine and she asked me to help out at the WWW Festival. That personal touch was important, for me to really learn about the need. And my time had freed up so I was looking for ways to make a difference, to be involved in something important. We moved back to NH in 2004 because we wanted to be around nature and we loved the land and natural resources here. It felt like home. So MMRG's mission of conserving land and educating people and kids is the perfect fit for me.

V: You do a LOT for MMRG: serve on two committees, register people at events, organize our silent auction, and organize volunteers for the WWW Festival! What's your favorite volunteer job?

C: The Festival. Especially now that I'm a grandmother with a one-and-a-half-year-old grandson. I've become even more aware of the need to teach youth about taking care of

wildlife and nature. I believe in all that MMRG stands for and the Festival is one place we do that for children. I hope my grandson will come up this August. We make a point of giving Festival volunteers time to go to the day's activities, but I've never made it to 'Let's Go Fishing' or on a hayride. If he's here, I'll be sure to go with him.

V: Is there anything hard about volunteering?

C: For me, saying 'no' can be hard. I don't want something to not get done! But I'm getting better at it.

V: We love you and don't want you to burn out! Sustainability of our volunteers is important, as it is in everything we do.

C: It's important to have lots of help. If other people can pitch in just a little, nobody will get burnt out. It's a lot of work but it's fun and you reap more than you sow! Plus, I get to be around a great group of people, like-minded people.

Spring Issue "What's That Bird" answer

MMRG Board Member Bruce Rich correctly identified the species in the Spring Newsletter's "What's That Bird" Challenge as the **cedar waxwing** and, as promised, this newsletter provides a bit about the species and its habitat and some keys to its identification. We could not describe the cedar waxwing as well as the Cornell Ornithology Labs' website "All About Birds": A treat to find in your binocular viewfield, the Cedar Waxwing is a silky, shiny collection of brown, gray, and lemon-yellow, accented with a subdued crest, rakish black mask, and brilliant-red wax droplets on the wing feathers.

In fall these birds gather by the hundreds to eat berries, filling the air with their high, thin, whistles. In summer you're as likely to find them flitting about over rivers in pursuit of flying insects, where they show off dazzling aeronautics for a forest bird. The cedar waxwing photo was taken during the MMRG annual Branch River Paddle by Kate Wilcox in reeds where the Branch River spills into the Salmon Falls River. You can see the photo at http://www.mmr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Final-to-website-Spring-2017_MMRG-Newsletter_5-17-2017_B-and-W-photos_Final.pdf

“Conservation Plan” from page 1

described details of the year-long process to collect and analyze the data and shared stunning maps of natural resources, conservation focus areas and possible greenways. The maps show the Moose Mountains rising up like a centerpiece of our 7-town region with “tendrils of mountain streams” that flow down to create many of the lakes that are signature landmarks of the region. So it was no great surprise to us that the votes from the community stakeholders, who participated in our co-occurrence mapping tasks, favored the protection of watersheds around lakes.

MMRG Board member Dan Coons, who co-chairs the conservation planning committee and is also a



A gathering around printed Conservation Area Plan maps at the Pinckney Boat House. (Photo by Emily Lord)

Conservation Commissioner for Wolfeboro, was enthusiastic about the maps as a tool for local land-

use and conservation planning. MMRG will be sharing the plan with local conservation commissions, land trusts, and other conservation-minded organizations. The plan and maps will also be available on our website. Emily Lord, MMRG Board member and the other co-chair of the conservation planning committee shared that the Conservation Plan is a living document that is already informing MMRG’s 5-Year Strategic and 20-Year Long Term Plans.

Local teacher, Dianna Serrano of Wolfeboro summed up her evening’s experience saying that she thought the presentation reflected the “extensive research and created voluminous materials” that were presented in a way that was “easily understood”. She added that this work “makes a difference on this earth”.

MMRG thanks the following who sponsored the event: Wentworth Watershed Association, Parkers Accounting of Bowe, NH. We greatly appreciate the hospitality provided by Brewster Academy at the Pinckney Boat House. Foundations/Grants that Support Conservation Planning:

- NH-State Conservation Committee (Moose Plate)



- Adelard A. Roy and Valeda Lea Roy Foundation
- Davis Conservation Fund
- Jack & Dorothy Byrne Foundation

thank you!

Thank you to the Year 4 (of 5) donors to the MMRG’s **Help us Become a Land Trust** Campaign! The gifts are matched dollar to dollar by Board Member Cynthia Wyatt. The purpose of the fund is to support conservation work and to ensure that we have the resources we need to conserve and manage the wetlands, wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, forests, and recreational areas that are so important to all of us.

Cynthia Wyatt

Nancy Spencer Smith

Philip Zaeder & Sylvia Thayer

Gene Hays

Jonathan & Anne Nute

Ann & Charles Robbins

Steve Panish & Virginia Long

Dottie Bean

David Levin & Marty Conant

Merrymeeting Lake Association

Art & Lynne Slocum

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Cyndi & Mark Paulin

Lorraine Drake & Brad Helfer

John & Pam Siemon

The C&C Family Revocable Trust

Janet Wyatt

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Jack Slosky

Jane Cooper Fall

MMRG Focuses on Permaculture

By Virginia Long

What if our farms produced more healthy food each year, our cities became more pleasant to live in, and our wilderness areas protected more native species? These are some of the big dream goals of permaculture. Permaculture originally meant 'permanent (i.e. sustainable) agriculture' but the meaning quickly expanded to 'permanent culture' as it recognizes that human social and cultural activities are inherently connected to growing food.

At MMRG's Annual Meeting speaker Steve Whitman talked about permaculture's basic tenets and we find that they resonate with our land protection mission. Our members' enthusiastic responses to the presentation confirmed that permaculture reflects their values. Permaculture is a problem-solving system based on an understanding of agriculture, ecology and land stewardship. It relies on people to help solve local problems by making use of the ecosystem services that nature provides.

MMRG created a permaculture garden to use as a demonstration at our annual Woods, Water & Wildlife Festival. Sheehan Gardens, an organic heirloom vegetable business in Milton Mills, installed the permaculture

garden in raised beds with the help of MMRG volunteers. This new WWW Festival event was designed with pleasing alleys to wander between beds of heirloom vegetables and herbs that were raised from organic



Volunteers amend the soil at the BHF Permaculture beds.

seeds. If you attended the Festival you may also have learned that the seeds of heirloom plants produce reliable seeds for planting next year. If you missed this year's WWW Festival, plan to come next year to learn

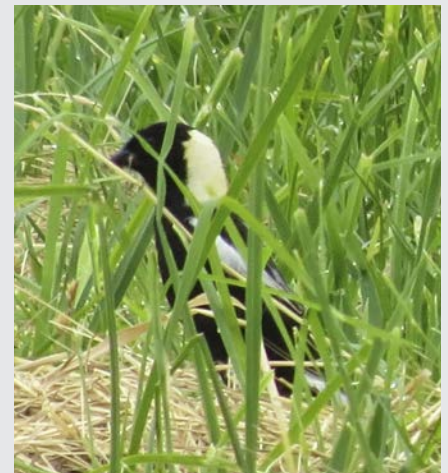
about the process of creating your own raised bed with layers of reused, organic materials.

Using maps from our Conservation Plan as a guide to the region's best agricultural soils, MMRG will continue to conserve farms and promote sustainable agricultural practices that enhance soil quality. In fact we are doing just that in Farmington, as we work to conserve Leary Field & Forest! Do you have photographs or a story about a local permaculture and sustainable agricultural practices? You can share that with us on our Facebook page. If you have a project or a problem that needs a

permaculture solution, let us know and we'll connect you with folks who may be able to help. See Page 1 to learn about MMRG's goal to conserve 60+ acres of a working farm in Farmington!

What's that bird? Can you identify the bird in the picture? Be the first to send your response to info@mmrg.info (a colored photo is on the website version of the newsletter). In the next newsletter we'll reveal the name of the bird and tell you a bit about the species and its habitat. We'll also share the name of the individual who was first to correctly ID the bird!

(Photo by Jenn McKown)



“Leary” from page 1

they have worked with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to put the adjoining 73 acres into the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easement in 2010.

MMRG’s new Conservation Plan, especially the co-occurrence map, shows overlapping, high conservation values along the Farmington Ridge. Much of the land, including the Leary parcel, boasts the highest quality agricultural soils in New Hampshire and even nation-wide. That increases its conservation values especially as farmland to the south continues to be developed. This land also supports a valuable oak-pine forest, and when left undeveloped, it protects local drinking water resources, the Cocheco River watershed and wildlife habitat. The Nature Conservancy’s 2016 Climate Change Resiliency studies rate the Farmington Ridge as above average for protection against storm-caused flooding and of wildlife corridors that provide safe passage for native animals to migrate from threats like disease and habitat alterations.



(Photo by Rod Thompson)

The documented wildlife conservation values do not surprise the Learys, but simply confirm decades of their sightings of unique species like the bobolink and native brook trout. The Leary property contributes to an evolving greenway of nearly 1,000 acres extending from the Farmington and New Durham ridges, and south to Strafford and Barnstead. Neighbor Rod Thompson, who has conserved his 190 acres and his neighbor Victor Piekarski, of WidowMaker Farm applaud the Leary’s decision to conserve their land and extend the greenway. Conservationists value greenways that provide corridors for wildlife to migrate from threats and disperse

genetic code, which increases the species’ resiliency. Greenways can also provide trails for recreation. On the Leary parcel, over two miles of trails wrap around the hay fields, to hilltops with stupendous views of 7 peaks and even the sea coast, then extends into the shaded WRP that is etched with tributaries and quaint bridges that cross sections of the Clay Pit Brook. While the primary purpose of the trails is for farm and forest management, they also provide for delightful hikes. The Learys encourage trail use for those who are respectful of the land and will use it lightly for hiking, snowshoeing, birding or photography.

Moose Mountains has submitted several grant applications for partial funding of the easement. Recently, the Farmington Conservation Commission voted to make a generous donation to conserve Leary Field & Forest and they will hold an executory interest. **Please consider a donation to help match the grants to conserve Leary Field & Forest in Farmington. For more information, contact Patti at (603) 473-2020.**

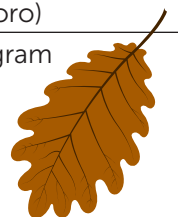
Calendar of Events

It is that time when we scuffle along trails hidden by fallen leaves.



Dates/ Times	Event and Location
Saturday, August 12, 10am–3pm	15th Annual Woods Water and Wildlife Festival at Branch Hill Farm
Wednesday, September 6, 6–9pm	Moonlight Hike at Leary Field and Forest, Farmington
Sunday, September 10, 12:30–3:30pm	Volunteer Appreciation Event
Thursday, October 26, 2017, time TBA	Annual Conservation Commission Mixer (Tentatively—Wolfeboro)
Friday, October 27, time TBA	Bonfire and Story Time (A MOOSE-ies) Families in Nature Program at McKenzie’s Farm

MMRG announces its events by email, our website, in newspapers, and Facebook. Announcements provide details about registration and directions. For additional information contact Education Coordinator Kari Lygren at **(603) 978-7125** or email **info@mmrg.info**. Please, no pets!



MOOSE-ies Go Birding on New Conservation Lands

By Virginia Long

May and June are prime birdwatching season in New England so MMRG's newly-formed monthly birding group, the Members Only Outdoor and Social Events (MOOSE-ie) Birders headed out each month in search of spring migrants and breeding songbirds. Our outings explored two properties that MMRG is working to conserve, WidowMaker Farm in New Durham and Leary Field & Forest in Farmington.

Traditional wisdom is that the 'early bird gets the worm' and so one would expect that birdwatchers who rise at dawn increase their bird count. But an overcast morning can turn that logic on its head and many birds were still active and singing as we started our WidowMaker Farm visit walk at mid-morning. A variety of songs accompanied us in the woods, ranging from the melodic trill of pine warblers in the pine tree tops to the emphatic repeated 'teacher-teacher' call of the secretive ground-dwelling oven bird. In the orchard, we watched a tree swallow poking its head out of a nesting box and at the beaver pond, a pair of Canada geese calmly surveyed several fuzzy-goslings. In a perfect culmination of a delightful morning, a scarlet tanager atop a tree showed off its brilliant red and black garb.

At the Leary Field & Forest property, we went looking for bobolinks, which require several acres of uncut hay fields to nest in. As Bob Leary

informed us, deciding when to cut hay is a delicate trade-off; early cutting can destroy bobolink nests, whereas late cutting may allow invasive Smooth bedstraw to go to seed and spread. Fortunately we visited before haying and the birds were abundant. At the high end of the back field, male bobolinks clung to flimsy grass stems or burst into fluttery flight circles in groups of a half dozen or more, all the while vocalizing their characteristic bubbly song. The smaller drab females, very different from the colorful black, white and yellow males, were equally active protecting their nests hidden in the hay. Birder Lorrie Drake commented, "I never saw a bobolink before today, but the memory of seeing so many bobolinks will last me a lifetime."

The trails and habitat variety at both properties created an ideal setting for bird watching. We are grateful to landowners Victor Piekarski and Gloria Switalski and to Bob and Debbie Leary for their commitment to conserve their working land and provide public access.

See MMRG's Facebook page for photos and reports of the monthly MOOSE-ie Birders outings. New members of any birding experience level are welcome; the only requirement is that you join or be a current member of MMRG. Call staff member/group leader Virginia Long at (603) 652-9559 or email virginia.mmr@gmail.com.



Conserve WidowMaker Farm in New Durham!

Supported by the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) grant and private donations, fundraising continues in order to conserve 117 acres of working forests, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and historic treasures at WidowMaker Farm.

MMRG has raised more than 90% of the funds to conserve this special property. Please join 57 friends and neighbors who have recently contributed and help us raise the remaining \$4,875!!

Make a donation on our website by using the *Donate Now* button or by mail and add a note that your gift is to conserve WidowMaker Farm! You can contact Patti Connaughton-Burns with questions concerning donations.



PO Box 191 • Union, NH 03887

*Working to conserve
the special places of the
Moose Mountains region.*

MMRG thanks three terrific sponsors of our annual **Branch River Paddle** that was held on May 27. Over 60 people signed up to attend this popular event along 2.5 miles of the pristine Branch and Salmon Falls Rivers in Milton. Along the way at paddle stops, nature specialists, Charlie Moreno and Wayne Sylvester shared information about the birds that live along the waterway and the natural role of riparian forests in the protection of water quality. The event is co-presented with Branch Hill Farm and a yummy post-paddle lunch by Chef Gracie of Sheehan Gardens.

Sponsors: M&M Boat Storage of Sanbornville, NH; Land Bank of Wolfeboro–Tuftonboro; Access Sports Medicine, with offices throughout New Hampshire including Rochester



Branch River Paddlers including Conservation Planner Dan Sundquist (front), who is paddling with a wooden oar carved by MMRG Member Lee Prescott, which had been a 2017 MMRG auction donation. (Photo by Kate Wilcox)