

# Dunstable Rural Land Trust

D.R.L.T. News

Issue No. 8

April 2004

## Trail Updates

### Alex Hopke, future Eagle Scout

During this past year, Troop 28 Boy Scout, Alex Hopke, son of DRLT Members Robert & May Hopke, completed the trail from Robbins Farm to River Street. He did this with the help of other Troop Members who put in 202 hours clearing brush and building two footbridges along this trail. He raised the funds for this project. This was done to complete the requirements for his Eagle Scout badge, which he will receive on May 2, 2004. Our trail system now connects from the 1076 Main Street entrance all the way thru to River Street. This gives access to the Rail Trail and to the Nashua River. Thank you, Alex and your fellow Scouts, for a job well done!!

### DRLT Director, Reid Pepin

Reid has put up trail markers thru the beautiful trails of our newest section of the wildlife preserve and thru to the Robbins Farms – River Street connection. All of these trails open onto the main trail, which is accessible from the 1076 Main Street entrance. We hope many people will take advantage of these lovely areas to hike, bird watch & cross-country ski.

### Calendar Sales

2004 Calendar sales have reached just over \$3,700! This year's calendar features prints of Lucy Kennedy's original watercolors. These prints of familiar Dunstable scenes are suitable for framing. The calendars are still available at the library and will be sold at the annual meeting as well. A very special thank you to Jeff Pallis and, DS Graphics in Lowell, for printing this marvelous calendar!!

### Winterfest 2004

A very cold day, yet beautifully sunny. Special thanks to the Boy Scouts of Troop #28, under the leadership of Bob & May Hopke – we couldn't do it without them! Thanks to Mabel Tully for making corn chowder and minestrone soup for everyone – very welcome on this very cold day! We are also grateful to the Dunstable Cultural Council for their financial support.

## DRLT -NEW TRAILS



**Robbins Farm- River Street Trail**

### Dust of Snow - Robert Frost

The way a crow  
Shook down on me  
The dust of snow  
From a hemlock tree  
Has given my heart  
A change of mood  
And saved some part  
Of a day I had rued.



**Please find the annual renewal form on page 5.**

DRLT News is produced for its members by the **Dunstable Rural Land Trust**, 401 Hollis St., Dunstable, MA 01827. Written by Elaine Basbanes and Judy Larter. Edited & Produced by Grace Jeanes.

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**In Memory**  
Written by David Tully

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The Dunstable Rural Land Trust lost 5 of its original members and supporters within the past 3 years. Each has been an active contributor both financial and otherwise since 1974, the year the initial property was acquired. For 30 years, their contributions of time, expertise, property and finances have benefited the Trust and the Town of Dunstable.

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**Arthur Holmes**

Mr. Holmes and his wife Muriel have been members and supporters of the Trust since its beginnings in 1974. Mr. Holmes was a community leader since he moved to Dunstable. Being a long-time School Committee member, he was instrumental in defining the educational process for the Town. He was one of the persons responsible for the transition from the Union School – 4 classrooms – to the new Swallow Union Elementary School. Mr. Holmes left the School Committee to become a member of the Board of Selectmen for several years. Upon retirement from the Board of Selectmen, he continued to feel the need to contribute to the Town. To aid the Town, Mr. Holmes offered his services and became a member of the Advisory (Finance) Committee, where he continued to assure that Dunstable students were provided with the best educational opportunities possible. Although not generally known, it was Arthur Holmes who provided and funded the annual “Ice Cream Day” at Swallow Union School.

**Lucy Kennedy**

Lucy and her husband, A. Donald Kennedy, contributed to the Trust annually and were active members in the support of the Town. Lucy provided music for many years to the children of Dunstable thru her weekly programs at the Public Library. For as long as most of us can remember, Lucy painted and donated paintings to the Dunstable Grange to be auctioned at the Annual Grange Fair. The Trust recently honored Lucy by the dedication of its 2004 Calendar that featured many of her paintings. This calendar, a fundraiser for the Trust, annually raises in excess of \$3,000 that is used by the Trust for land protection and acquisition.

**DRLT Board of Directors**

Robert Kennedy, Alan Chaney, Frank Cover, Peter Georges, Judy Larter, Elaine Basbanes, Reid Pepin, George Tully and David Webber

**Hugh Gregg**

Although Mr. & Mrs. Gregg did not live in Dunstable, they own considerable property on Main Street at the Dunstable-Nashua line. One and half years ago, the Greggs donated to the Trust, property adjacent to their home in an effort to preserve & protect an area they have enjoyed for over 50 years. The only thank you acceptable to the Greggs was that the Trust promotes land protection for future generations and provides a mechanism to educate our children about the need for protection of our land. To that end the Trust, thru the Swallow Union School, has scheduled a program for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students with the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

**Margaret O. Larter**

Mrs. Larter was an original member of the Dunstable Civic Associates that purchased the first parcel owned and now held by the Trust. Mrs. Larter’s efforts and contributions to the long-term well being of the Town are immeasurable. She has protected over 150 acres of farmland on Hollis Street, site of the Elm Haven Dairy. Another more visible and highly utilized contribution is the property known as the Larter Field on Groton Street. Several hundred children and adults from Dunstable and Groton use these fields every year. Mrs. Larter’s background includes involvement in the establishment and preservation of the Wannalancit Textile Museum in Lowell. Her contributions recognize not only the past, but also more importantly, recognition that the future must be preserved now; it cannot wait for someone else to take responsibility.

**Bertha Davis**

Mrs. Davis was a very quiet individual, generally preferring to remain in the background of her extremely visible husband (Archer) and her two children. Her mark was clearly visible and effective by the guidance provided to her family members in their community efforts. Her family was her life. Mrs. Davis worked for the Dunstable Post Office for many years, always with a warm smile and hello. Mrs. Davis was very active in her church in Nashua. The Davis Family have been long-time members of the Dunstable Rural Land Trust.

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The Dunstable Rural Land Trust and the Town of Dunstable have lost five major benefactors who contributed of themselves for the benefit of others. There is more than one commonality amongst the above individuals; that is, their family has and continues to promote their ideals.

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# Scavenger Hunt

*Turkey vultures (affectionately known as TVs) have invaded New England*

LATE DAY IN MARCH, A NEIGHBOR called to report two turkey vultures – hulking black birds with small, bald, red heads-perched on a nearby chimney. Why was this carrion eater of southern backcountry roads and western deserts hanging out in suburban Massachusetts?

Turns out, our visitors were migrating. TVs, as their fans call them, have been expanding their range from the southern states northward as far as Canada for the past 20 years, even earlier to southern New England. Massachusetts bird-watchers recorded turkey vulture nests and roosts as early as 1954. In Connecticut, they've appeared on the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count since 1976. More recently, they've been spotted as far north as South Portland, Maine, and over Manchester and Nashua, New Hampshire. According to Herb Wilson, Merrill Professor of Biology at Colby College, the TV population in the Northeast is growing by about 1.5 percent a year. "As the New England landscape is altered by clear-cutting and commercial development," Wilson says, "the North Country has opened up, giving the vulture easier pickings."

"It's exciting to see birds expand their range," says Mark LaBarr, conservation director for Audubon Vermont. "It means there is enough food for them here."

Patrick Comins, director of bird conservation for Audubon Connecticut, traces the TV's expansion into Connecticut to an explosion in the white-tailed deer population. Deer, like turkey vultures, find plenty to eat at forest edges and on suburban lawns. Deer carcass is a favorite TV dinner.

Norman Smith, director of the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Blue Hills Trailside Museum in Milton, notes that turkey vultures are important to the ecosystem. TVs, he says, "take care of dead animals that could infect other creatures, and they don't hurt or kill other animals."

Turkey vultures are superbly outfitted for their scavenger's role, with a featherless head for poking into a decaying carcass and stomach juices so acidic that the vulture can survive eating animals infected with hantavirus, botulism, and anthrax.

Though many cultures, from ancient Greek to Native American, have honored the vulture's role and its peaceful ways, in the U.S. the TV is often the butt of corny jokes. Mark LaBarr blames Hollywood: "In Western movies, the last thing a cowboy sees before he dies is the circling vulture."

Traditionally, turkey vultures were classified as raptors, along with hawks, falcons, and eagles. In fact, they can claim a closer kinship with storks, herons, and the endangered California condor. Like storks, TVs have weak legs and slightly hooked beaks; they're helpless to grasp live prey or rip it apart. On the ground, they resemble turkeys. Aloft, they are graceful fliers; with a six-foot wingspan held in a V shape, they soar for hours on thermals. Their sense of smell is the stuff of legends, reputedly the best in the bird kingdom. When turkey vultures see-or, more likely, smell-a dead animal, they dive with pinpoint accuracy.

New Englanders are just getting to know TVs. "When people see these creatures in our education programs, they are totally thrilled," says the Blue Hills' Norman Smith. "It's up to us, as stewards of the natural world, to protect them and help the public value the turkey vulture's role." \*

by CHRISTINE YOUNG.

[www.YankeeMagazine.com](http://www.YankeeMagazine.com)



**Some of you may have seen some of these large birds flying around town, there have reports of them roosting in backyard trees!**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Monday Morning Walks

May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>: Each week we'll explore a different DRLT or Town of Dunstable Conservation Area. There will be opportunities to walk a pre-existing trail or to blaze a new one. We'll leave town hall promptly at 9a.m.

### Winterfest 2005

Sunday, January 23, 2005 11a.m. – 3p.m.

## Seasons of Nature in New England - Early Spring -

Adapted from Nature of New England [www.nenature.com](http://www.nenature.com)

- Some Great Horned Owls have completed incubation by the middle of March. The clutch size is usually 2-3 eggs. Incubation begins after the first egg is laid and continues for approximately four weeks. After hatching, the young owls fledge in about 40 to 45 days but remain dependent upon their parents for food until they can fend for themselves.
- By mid-April, the black bears have begun to emerge from their winter dens. In some years, this will begin as early as late March. The male generally comes out of his den first. The female and her cubs leave their den a little later.
- One of the earliest spring migrants, the Eastern Phoebe returns to New England around mid-March. The males precede the females and begin immediately to establish their territories and sing their spring song. Nest building begins soon after the female arrives. She builds the nest using mud, grass and moss. Sometimes she will reuse an old nest of her own species - or another species. When this occurs, she will renovate the nest before laying eggs.
- Other early songbird migrants are the American Woodcock, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, and American Robin.
- By March, the spring migration of hawks and other raptors is underway.
- The female coyote gives birth in April or early May. The average litter size is six pups. The pups are raised by both adults and other adult coyotes may help out. The young coyotes will reach adult size in 9 to 12 months. They usually disperse to find their own territories within a year or less.
- In April, the male Wild Turkey begins his gobbling and courtship displays. After mating, the hen builds a nest in a small depression - usually in an area with some cover. She lays 8 to 15 eggs, which hatch within about a month.
- The mating sounds of the spring peepers and wood frogs begin to be heard during this early spring period.
- **Note:** The "early spring" period is the time from approximately March 1 through mid-April. Timing of events will vary depending upon your latitude and elevation.

# DRLT 2004 Membership

## 2004 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- Annual Family Membership \$25
- I would like to make an additional contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ towards future land purchases.

Remember, you will not save the Dunstable woods and wetlands, broad vistas and country roads for your children and grandchildren by doing NOTHING. Instead, please join us and apply for membership today.

**Please return FORM with 2004 Dues – Checks may be made payable to: DRLT.**

Please Send to: George Tully, DRLT  
401 Hollis Street  
Dunstable, MA 01827



**Annual Meeting**  
Wednesday, April 28, 2004  
Nashua Country Club  
25 Fairway Street Nashua, NH

6 p.m. Cocktails  
7 p.m. Dinner  
8 p.m. Business Meeting

**Dinner Reservations** (Please write number in box):

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed for \_\_\_\_\_ dinners at \$25 each.

- Roast Sirloin of Beef
- Chilean Sea Bass

Please return your reservation not later than April 23 to:

**George Tully, DRLT**  
**401 Hollis Street**  
**Dunstable, MA 01827**

**Thank You**