

Middlebury Area
Land Trust



Spring
Newsletter



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MALT's Beginnings, Honoring Karl Neuse

By Emma Schneider, ECO Americorps Member

Why is MALT so important? The MALT staff often reflect on our history as we navigate our day-to-day work and set visions and goals. With the recent passing of former board member Karl Neuse, it feels especially timely to honor one of his many contributions, the founding of MALT.

The story starts in 1987 with the founding board: Karl Neuse, Peg Martin, Arthur Safford, Bud Smith, Gail Smith, Al Stiles, and Betty Wheeler. The Middlebury Land Trust or MLT (before we had enough support to expand!) was born to protect the rolling fields, forests, and riverbanks of Middlebury. At the time, Karl Neuse was the town lawyer and very up to date on regional development trends. **With population increases all over America, land was being purchased and developed for infrastructure improvements and housing. Neuse was concerned future generations of Middlebury residents wouldn't have access to the same natural areas, so he aimed to conserve as much land as he could.**

But how do you decide which land should be conserved? In 1988, Donna Goodman revised her thesis work from Middlebury College to become the "Land Protection Study of Middlebury Vermont," MALT's original conservation plan. To write it, she drove around and took note of important land parcels, then overlaid all those points onto a single map. This was quite a feat considering how easily we can do this with today's GIS technology! Land can be conserved for a host of reasons. Some parcels contain special ecological habitats and species that are hard to find elsewhere. Some lands provide habitat connectivity for migrating species or species with wide habitat ranges. Some land parcels are important for human industry as well, such as the hay fields that feed Vermont's iconic dairy cows.

Using this plan and his town network, Karl and the rest of **the board conserved their first land parcel, the Seeley Farm, in 1990.** The Seeley Farm is a 631 acre parcel that consists of farmland and some forested swamps. It's adjacent to many other conserved parcels, which increases habitat connectivity. Seeley Farm's conservation is not only ecologically significant, but significant to MALT's roots. It's difficult to represent the hard work and passion I read about in four years of founding board minutes. I heard about it in my interviews with Amy Sheldon who was MALT's first

Executive Director and with Bud Smith who was a fellow founding board member of Karl's. I learned that what MALT did in 1987 is just as important as what MALT does now. Today MALT has more programs, trail miles, and acres conserved than ever before but our mission is just the same. We want to connect people with the lands we protect. Thank you to Karl and all the other founding figures who set us on our way!



Karl Neuse
First President of MALT

Welcome Community Scientists!

Every year, MALT staff and AmeriCorps members must check on the land we have protected. Currently, MALT holds about **3,800 acres of conserved land**. For a single staff and ECOAmeriCorps member this can be a lot of work, and rarely do we have the time to visit every single property and landowner in a single year! This past fall and winter **MALT started its first-ever community scientist monitoring program**. Emma and I coordinated three community members to help us monitor eight properties in Addison County. Ted Cotton, Andrew L'Roe, and Charlotte Tate all expressed an interest in helping MALT's stewardship work improve. They visited lands with us, met landowners, and all hope to continue monitoring those lands next year.



Charlotte enjoys volunteering for many aspects of MALT's work including TAM Trek, as a trail steward, and in our new community science monitoring program.

Through this program, we hope to more frequently visit the land we have protected and establish deeper relationships with landowners. **This coming fall we'd like to onboard three more community members to join this volunteer monitoring team.** If you're interested, email info@maltvt.org. Thanks to Ted, Andrew, and Charlotte for helping us work out the kinks of this new program!

By Caleb Basa



Ted Cotton monitoring the Cobble Rd easement.



Andrew and Emma check the easement map at Sessions-Neil.

New afterschool program at Cornwall

By Simon Schreier



A student gazes into the sunset. Photo taken by Simon Schreier

This Spring, MALT began delivering afterschool programming in Cornwall. Eighteen students are joining MALT staff and exploring the fields and forest around Pink House Farm. For one day each week we navigate through the woods, engaging in games and activities that invite learners to take a deeper look at the natural wonders that surround them. At our first gathering, students worked together to build incredible snow forts.

Once we had established a home base, we took advantage of the recent snowfall to do some tracking and find out what creatures had shared the very same space we were now enjoying. A moment later, we watched a flock of over 30 wild turkeys cross the field no more than 100 feet from where we were standing.

With this new program, **MALT now serves 37 students through our afterschool programs**. Over the past two years demand for outdoor learning opportunities has grown, and MALT has worked to help strategically meet those needs. We offer opportunities for learners to connect to the beautiful landscapes and ecosystems right in our backyard, and in doing so develop their critical thinking and social/emotional skills.

MALT thanks Janet and Churchill Franklin for generously sharing access to their land for MALT programs. If you're interested in learning more about MALT's education programming, or if you'd like to help expand access to these opportunities with a gift to our scholarship fund, please contact Education Manager, Simon Schreier at simon@maltvt.org.



Team work makes the dream work!



Meet the MALT Team!

Did you know MALT has a youtube channel? Over the years staff has made a ton of education videos. The newest addition is this **"get to know you" video that Simon made** and its now up on our channel! Click [here](#) to watch it.

Band birds with MALT and Audubon

By Simon Schreier

Bird Banding is Back with Otter Creek Audubon Society (OCAS). MALT and OCAS are excited to announce the return of our public Bird Banding program! We hope you'll join us on **Saturday, June 4, from 7:30 AM – 10:30 AM at Hurd Grassland** in Weybridge VT to help Mark LaBarr from Audubon Vermont capture, band, and release birds. This is a drop-in event; feel free to come and go as you please. See our [website](#) and our FaceBook page for more details about this program.

We're happy to host this event at Hurd Grassland for the first time. This area was conserved by MALT in 2019, with the intention of protecting and encouraging native bird, animal, and plant species. This land was also conserved with the hope that learners of all ages would visit and engage with the incredible diversity of living creatures who depend on the land. As landowner Gale Hurd said, **"I am... an enthusiastic supporter of educational outreach and am pleased that the Hurd Grassland habitat and trails welcome everyone, from novice birdwatchers to expert naturalists and those who just want to enjoy the outdoors."**



Mark LaBarr gently holds a Blue-winged Warbler (Photo: Allaire Diamond)

Bird banding is a practice for tracking individual birds by attaching aluminum and colored bands to birds' legs. This non-invasive process helps scientists record their movement and migration. By tracking these birds, we can better understand what habitats they visit throughout their lifespan. Conservation organizations – including MALT – can take this information into consideration when deciding where and how to protect the landscape. When you help MALT and OCAS with banding, you're contributing to the protection of bird species here and abroad. Not to mention, it's a rare opportunity to get up close and personal with these lofty creatures. So come join us, get hands-on with birds, and enjoy a beautiful day outside.

Take Flight - Intro to Birding with OCAS and MALT

By Simon Schreier

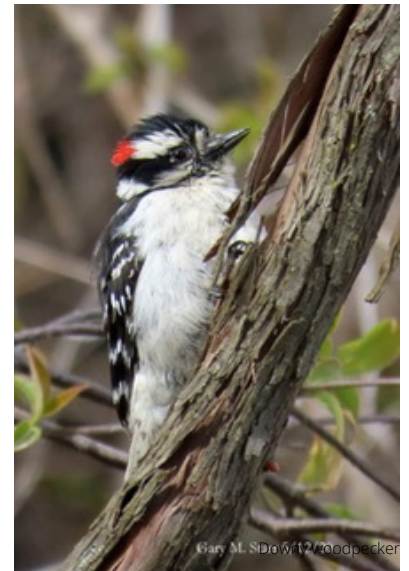
WHEN: Saturday, June 18th from 9:00 - 11:00 am; guided birding hikes will leave soon after 9:00 am, so please arrive promptly. This event runs rain or shine and is for ALL AGES!

WHERE: [Wright Park](#), at the parking lot north of Pulp Mill Covered Bridge on Seymour St. Extension.

COST: Free, [register](#) at this link, registration is helpful but not required.

WHAT: They're everywhere, but so often overlooked. They come in all colors, shapes, and sizes. Some travel thousands of miles to arrive in our backyards, and others are constant companions, even through the cold winter months. Join Otter Creek Audubon Society and MALT for this **intro to birding**. Take a roughly 1.5 hour walk through Wright Park. We'll break into small groups and work our way down to Otter Creek, discovering the myriad feathered creatures along the way.

Appropriate for families and people of all ages – due to the rough terrain, strollers are not recommended. Light refreshments provided by MALT and OCAS. Loaner binoculars will be available to those who don't have them. Contact **(802) 989-7115 for questions**.



Gary M. Sidorowicz/woodpecker

Discount for TAM Trek 2022!

TAM Trek 2022 takes place on September 18 and has a race for every trail lover. The whole 19-mile challenge, a gorgeous 10K in Wright Park and Otter Creek Gorge, and a 2-mile fun run in Wright Park. Join the celebration and help us raise important \$\$ for the TAM! Use **discount code RUNTHETAM for \$5 off every registration!** Visit our [website](#) to learn more and register.

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Want more information? Visit maltvt.org, call, or email at (802) 388-1007 / info@maltvt.org