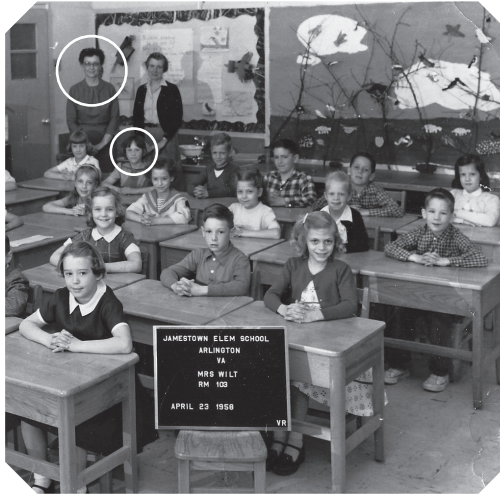




A Note From the Editor: I was inspired by reading this year's writing entries of the 6th grade class at Blanchard Elementary School. The theme this year was: "NestED: A Safe Place to Land," with a focus on birds and their habitats. See pages 4-5 for more about the contest, and enjoy reading the winning entries, as I did. Their writing reminded me of my own experience in grade school, the impact of a remarkable teacher—and the origins of my appreciation and observation of nature, and the desire to conserve it.

Where Little Bluebirds Fly

A Primary Connection with Nature—by Lynn Horsky



In late November of this year, three pairs of

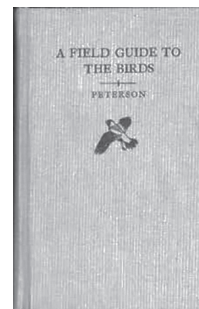


photo: Eastern Bluebird, by Scott Dresser

bluebirds fluttered about my suet feeder, flashing topcoats of bright cobalt blue, with cheery, deep orange-colored ascots, the females' wings a duller, blue-gray camouflage. Are they really wintering over here, I ponder each year, climate change disrupting their migration? There's only a partial migration now to the southeast. This is the third or fourth year they have come to spend the winter in my

backyard. We posted a bluebird box at the edge of my field in the back of the garden, and make sure the suet feeder is filled during the season. Recently a hungry bear attacked, completely bent over one of my feeders, and broke another. Naturalists recommend landscaping with native berry and seed bearing plants for year round feeding in your yards as wild animal raids become problematic. I'm hoping the bear ate its fill and will soon be settling into hibernation mode.

I have a fondness for bluebirds from childhood. They flocked to my schoolyard's feeder outside the long picture windows of my second grade classroom. The feeder was set by an exceptional teacher and a mentor of my early life, Mrs. Betty Wilt. Mrs. Wilt encouraged us to observe, draw, and paint the birds at her feeder, and displayed our paintings on our class billboards. I begged my mother to invite her to dinner. Mrs. Wilt came to dine and brought me the best dinner gift, ever: "A Field Guide to the Birds", by Peterson, which became my closest book companion for decades to come. I learned all the names of my local birds. Now, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a free app you can download to your phone for bird identification by photo and song called **Merlin**. It's a great accessible tool, as sentimental as I am about my first green linen-covered bird book.



Mrs. Wilt took us on a field trip to a famous local birder who lived on a large forested tract of land in our county and taught us about bird counting. He would net migrating birds and band them to track their travels, and provide counts to the Audubon society and government

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Common Ground

is published twice a year and mailed free to every residence

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bctrust.org/email/

The Boxborough Conservation Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are fully tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

agencies. His knowledge and skillful, sensitive banding was impressive. Since the 1950's, when I was in elementary school, we have lost 50% of the bird population on the East Coast flyway due to loss of habitat by environmental degradation and over-development. Environmental threats due to climate change to all wildlife propels my interest in conservation efforts.

A few months ago, climate change hit home in my yard. Super high winds abruptly tore through the woods and my backyard, and seemingly blew the birds from the trees. I found a number on the ground, that had smashed on windows or in trees. Suddenly, most were gone. To eliminate variables, we changed the food, and thoroughly cleaned the feeders. We do not use any pesticides or chemical fertilizers on our yard or in the garden. With winter coming in now, more birds are returning to the feeder, but not as many as before that event. I wonder if others in town have noticed this flux and drop in the bird population? The Christmas count should reveal more about climate change impact this year. * * * * *



photo: American robin, by Valerie Burdette

The success of annual migrations for songbirds is greatly affected by habitat quality at stopover sites, particularly in relation to food needed for rapid refueling. The abundance and nutritional quality of important food resources can be linked to the presence of native deciduous shrub species that provide seasonal fruits in the fall and support insects in the spring. Native berries provide a much higher nutritional content than invasive plant berries.



Bird Count, by Susan Edwards Richmond, with fun, full-color illustrations by Stephanie Fizer Coleman. Find it at the library or bookstore, *The Silver Unicorn*, in West Acton, or online.

A wonderful introduction to bird-watching and the concept of observing nature... Parents be warned: this book is so appealing that, come next December, you may find yourself out in the cold, counting birds. —Booklist

The main character, **Big Al**, featured in her *Bird Count* book is based on a *Boxborough Birders* member, Al Sgroi.

Susan wrote, “My inspiration for writing *Bird Count* was the many years I had participated in the Christmas Bird Count in Area X of the Concord Circle (East Acton). Al Sgroi was—and continues to be!—the fearless leader of our little team, sometimes just the two of us, and sometimes joined by one or two others. It was a natural that the team leader of Ava and her mom’s birding team would be named **Big Al** in honor of him.” Here’s **Big Al**, to the left, a featured character in *Bird Count*.

BOOK REVIEW:

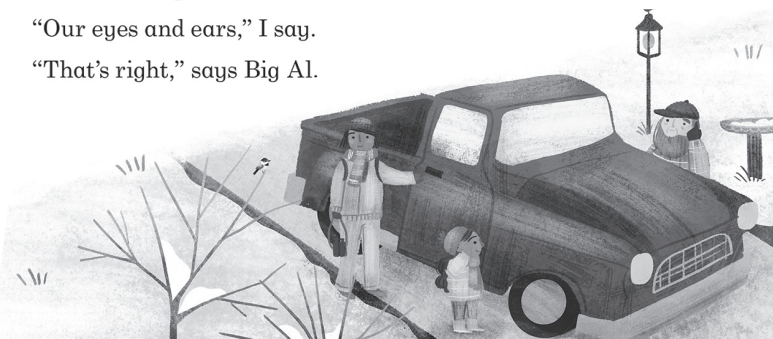
A local naturalist, teacher, and poet, Susan Edwards Richmond, recently published a children’s book on observing and recording bird sightings during the famous Christmas Count.

This book encourages children and adults to participate in activities in nature, introduces the use of observation tools—binoculars, field guides, and recording notebooks--and can inspire interest in science and the arts for their lifetimes, kindling a new cadre of next generation conservationists.*

detail, not in scale of pages in *Bird Count*



“Hey, Ava,” says Big Al. “What are the rules again?”
He knows I know them, but he tests me every time.
“Count every bird you see or hear,” I tell him. “Make sure at least two people see or hear it. And don’t count any bird twice.”
The last one is hard, but we do our best.
“Did you bring the scientist’s most important tools?” asks Big Mom’s got our binoculars, I’ve got the field guide, and Big Al has a notebook and pencil. But that’s not what he means.
“Our eyes and ears,” I say.
“That’s right,” says Big Al.



Letter from the President

by Rita Gibes Grossman

A vibrant, fair, and regenerative future is possible—not when thousands of people do climate justice activism perfectly but when millions of people do the best they can.” — Xiye Bastida

As a small, all volunteer land trust, our accomplishments are possible because of our members and donors. Preserving the Sargent Road property would not have been possible without your support. Whether \$30 or \$300, everyone made a difference. Thank you! Given the current crisis created by the warming climate and changing weather patterns, our collective and incremental protections of habitat, forest and natural resources, and specifically water, contributes to support resilience and enables nature to mitigate the impact of these changes. Being in nature is not only good for our health but conserving the forest sequesters carbon, enables cooling, protects water resources and reduces the consequences of development. And the wildlife residents share the benefits as their habitat has been secured. In total, in addition to the many logistical contributions as previously described (See *Common Ground Summer 2022*), in 2023 the BCTrust transferred \$42,210 to the town towards the acquisition of 95 Sargent as a final contribution for a total of \$242,210.

Thanks to a combined effort of town volunteers, including BCTrust members, the trails have been cut on the Sargent Road conservation land and a ribbon cutting is being planned by the town for the spring of 2024. I look forward to celebrating the success of this collaboration between the BCTrust, all the town stakeholders, and the Sudbury Valley Trustees. Thank you to Dave Barnett for taking on stewardship for the town and the BCTrust.

Congratulations to all of the winners of the BCTrust sponsored writing contest at Blanchard Memorial School whose entries are featured in this issue. Thank you to all of the students who participated!

IN GRATITUDE

Stewardship: Thank you the volunteer stewards for each of the BCTrust's five properties and to everyone for hiking responsibly.

Blanchard Contests: Thank you to Becky Harris for coordinating this year's writing contest, and to Megan Connor, Becky Harris, and Tim Lundy for judging the entries, and to sixth grade teacher, Danielle Fredericks, whose work makes these contests a success.

And, thank you to editor, Lynn Horsky, both editor and writer for this issue, Brad Gray, editor, and to editor/production manager Becky Harris. Their volunteer time make this publication possible. ✨



photo: Winter field, view of Idylwilde fields, on Sargent Road, across from newly acquired conservation land.
by Lynn Horsky

We Hiked the Boxborough 30!

If you walk every mile of trail in Boxborough, including all Town land and Boxborough Conservation Trust trails, it's over 30 miles of trails! Challenge yourself and earn a patch or a button and bragging rights!



Fill out the form here:

<https://bctrust.org/2021/08/06/i-hiked-boxboroughs-30/>. Forms are available at the Sargent Memorial Library. Return filled out form to the library to receive your patch or button.

We started this challenge in 2021 and the following hikers have completed the challenge to date:

Michael Campbell, Boxborough
Lisa St. Amand, Boxborough
Liz Markiewicz, Boxborough
John Markiewicz, Boxborough
Susan Kenney, Somerset
Brian Kenney, Somerset
Stephen Kiley, Somerset
Janel Paquin, Somerset
Marjorie Kamp, Boxborough
Mary Sullivan, Boxborough
David Oliva, Boxborough
Jeff Barrus, Boxborough
Karen Coopriider, Boxborough
Anthony Cuoco, Boxborough
Alicia Colley, Boxborough
Tom Colley, Boxborough
Sharon Garde, Boxborough
Sarah Donovan, Littleton
Michael Harrison, Boxborough
Patricia Harrison, Boxborough

CONGRATULATIONS, HIKERS! Please share your experiences. Which property impressed you most? Do you have a favorite hike? Any problems following the trails? Sight any wildlife? Interesting flora and fauna? Share on [facebook.com/bctrustorg](https://www.facebook.com/bctrustorg), or email newsletter co-ordinator, bharris@bctrust.org. ✨

BCTrust Annual Writing Contest Awards Winning Entries

Every year, Blanchard Memorial School sixth-grade students are invited to compose an original piece (fiction, non-fiction, or poetry), based on a chosen conservation theme. Themes from past years have included animal habitats, climate change, the importance of recycling, and protecting our water resources.

The 2023 Theme: Birds and Their Habitats

There are birds flying, swimming, running, diving all around us in Boxborough and beyond. This year the theme at Blanchard is "NestED: A Safe Place to Land." In the waters, fields and forests around Blanchard, in conservation areas around town, and in your own backyards there are habitats that are "safe places to land." Think about what makes different habitats good for birds, especially during the Spring/Summer nesting season. Some birds come back from a long migration from South America and find Boxborough as a safe place to build a nest and lay their eggs. At Blanchard, we often see killdeers running around in April-May trying to find a safe place to nest on the playground or parking lot, and hopefully they can find one that doesn't get stepped on or run over. Behind Blanchard, wood ducks and hooded mergansers are looking for hollow trees or large nest boxes where they can lay their eggs. In your backyards and the woods around Blanchard you'll see songbirds using twigs and other materials to build nests. These habitats have to have the right structure, safety from predators, and food resources. Think about what makes good habitats for different birds, and why birds rely on us conserving land, not using pesticides on our properties to make sure they are able to nest and raise their chicks safely.



photo: Chestnut-sided warbler, by Scott Dresser



Lucy Haff
First Place

Forest of Birds

As you're walking outside on the trail behind Blanchard Memorial school you notice a goose fly over your head and land next to the pond, you see the goose drink some water and fly away. Listening to all the sounds that the birds are making, you decide to continue walking. As you stroll along the path, you see a woodpecker pecking at a tree. You take a deep breath in and smell the pine trees. You notice the hole that the woodpecker is making and wonder if it might become home to an owl soon. You realize that it's time for lunch and decide to turn back. All of a sudden you hear a noise that sounds like an owl. You remember that owls are nocturnal so carefully look around wondering what bird it is. You see a small grayish brown bird with a long tail, as you try to figure out what bird it is, you realize it's a mourning dove! You watch the bird fly around for a while and finally decide to keep walking. As you walk around a tree you see a song sparrow picking up twigs to build a nest. You watch it fly towards a bush and assemble its nest and somehow weaving the twigs together. You watch the bird work hard and fly away to find more materials. As you exit the trail you wonder what other birds might be in that forest?

photo: Red-shouldered hawk, by Scott Dresser





Satsuki Morita
Second Place



Isabelle Shailer
Third Place

Love, like a storm.
 Freedom, like the wind.
 Imagination and hope.
 Unlimited possibilities, and new beginnings.
 Homes full of memories, nests full of joy
 Peace, prosperity, birds symbolize them all.
 Through twinkling starlit skies
 And dark stormy days
 The birds will fly.
 Through the day, and through the night,
 Flying far far away
 To find a new home
 For when it gets cold
 To find a new home
 For tiny little hatchlings
 Stop for a break
 In search of a meal
 A great delight found
 Yum yum yum!

Starting the journey once again
 Keeps on going all year-round
 A cycle that never stops
 What a beautiful life to live
 Protection and guardianship,
 Love, and care
 Watching over the little fledglings
 Until they are ready to
 Spread their wings
 And launch into the air
 Exploring new horizons
 New beginnings, new worlds
 New encounters, possibilities...
 Soaring, far away

Bright and early out for food
Investigating territories that fit the mood
Rye, grass and so much more in
Divine nest, never seen before
Soaring high in the air

Imagine their new home, beautiful, with flair, they will
Never be back until next year

Time flies fast, when you're moving all year
Hence there is time for rest, on their long journey home
Every flap makes more space, for them to roam
It's finally time to end the trip,
Resting and nesting, time to take a sip

Hatching and loving
All their new kids
Beginnings and endings
Inconsolable for sids
Tasting new foods
And learning to fly
The cycle repeats, now
Say goodbye



photo: Golden-crowned kinglet, by Valerie Burdette



Aanika Phanse
Honorable Mention

Boxborough's Birds

When I was little, in India, there were a lot of birds. A wide variety too. Most of my great grandparents used to sit near the window and look outside. They admired the beauty, and we should too. Usually when you wake up, you hear the songbirds singing, or just some chicks chirping. But these little things are what start the day off, and they put you in a good mood. Just imagine our homes without the nature, the beauty, the birds. These days, birds fly low because of the electric poles, and get hit by cars. Their nests are taken down, because of people. I think we are doing great at keeping the natural beauty of Boxborough, but we can always do more. We should and can do something too, just a little thing like a bird feeder can help a bird feed their family. It is amazing how in our little town, we are able to have so much wildlife and nature to enjoy. We should savor it and keep it this way. If you can, try to do little things to help all of nature, not just the birds.



photo: wetland in Boxborough, a "safe space" to land, by LynnHorsky



Editor's note:

During the print production of this summer's edition '23 of *Common Ground*, we inadvertently left out some of our current members and/or misidentified Charter Members.

Our apologies to the following members who should have been listed:

- Anne Gardulski
- Cesar and Sharon Garde
- Gerry Gaebel
- Grant Garven
- Kristine Gatesman
- The Gebhardts
- Jack and Karen Geissert

...and to all the members previously identified as *Founding Members* who should have been noted as *Charter Members* (those who donated \$500 or more before the Annual Meeting of 1999):

The Founders were:

- Simon Bunyard
- Frank Coolidge
- Kenneth Fabian
- Samuel Fisk
- Norman Hanover
- David Koonce

In addition, our former *Charter Members*:

- James & Ingrid Gorman
- Christopher (m) & Deborah Joyce ^
- Jeanne Kangas ^
- George & Betsey Krusen ^
- Peter MacDonald
- Bunny Morse & Ernie Fournier ^

Tom & Mary Steele (m)
^deceased (m) moved

On p. 3 in 2023 Summer issue of CG for BCTrust (Land) Assists, the CR listed should be Steele Farm, not Walnut Farm.



Preserving and Protecting Boxborough's Undeveloped Land

New Member Registration Form

The **Boxborough Conservation Trust** is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We are actively seeking new members to join in the effort of preserving and protecting Boxborough's undeveloped land. Anyone may join. Regular (voting) members must be 18 years of age or older and must be Boxborough residents. All others are honorary members. Membership is on an annual basis.

There are several membership levels. All donations are tax deductible, to the extent allowed by law.

<input type="checkbox"/>	\$30	Member	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$250	Patron	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$2500	Preservationist
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$60	Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$500	Sustaining	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$_____	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	\$100	Associate	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$1000	Sponsor			

Name(s) _____
(please print)

Address _____ (street) (_____) - _____ (telephone)

_____ (town) (state) (zip)

Date ___/___/___ e-mail _____

Please indicate how you would like your name(s) to appear in our membership listings, such as 'The Jones Family,' or 'John and Jane Jones,' or if you prefer, you can just say 'anonymous.'

Membership Listing: _____

Please make your check payable to **The Boxborough Conservation Trust**, and mail it with this form to:

**Treasurer
Boxborough Conservation Trust
650 Massachusetts Ave.
Boxborough, MA 01719**

We will mail you a donation acknowledgment suitable for tax reporting purposes. Please contact your employer to see if they will match your contribution.

Your comments and suggestions would be very much appreciated:

Thank you for your support!
You can find BCTrust at **bctrust.org** or on Facebook.
650 Massachusetts Ave. Boxborough, MA 01719; email: president@bctrust.org

The Boxborough Conservation Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are fully tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.



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Q & A: Get to know your Neighbors on the BCTrust Board



Rita Gibes Grossman, President

Q. What makes BCTrust's mission powerful/meaningful to you?

A. Knowing that many years from now, our children and our children's children can walk the lands preserved by both the BCTrust and the Town and benefit from all the services these landscapes provide not only for us, but for the whole ecosystem. That is powerful!

Q. What interests you the most/what is your special interest in the work of the BCTrust?

A. From working with landowners to clearing trails I am interested in all of our work. The relatively rapid warming climate will have an impact on everything and all of us. How we strategically preserve open land that has the ability to be resilient to and support nature's adaptation to these climate impacts excites me the most.

Q. What are some of your gifts/prior leadership skills that you feel you bring to the board and the greater community?

A. Having managed a large newborn intensive care unit in a non-pediatric hospital required me to work with many professionals, administrators and staff to achieve a high quality of care for our most fragile patients and their families. Through this experience combined with my other frontline leadership roles in tertiary health care, I have a deep appreciation for the power of everyone working together through disagreement or conflict to achieve a common goal.

My passion for being engaged with nature, informed by an advanced degree in public health, makes it very clear to me that a strong foundation for human health is a healthy environment. During my past eighteen years as president, I'm honored to be working with a talented group of current and past board members to acquire Inches Woods, Shurtleff Woods, Elizabeth Brook Knoll and to assist with the permanent protection of Steele Farm and the Town's purchase of the Ashmore land.

As for gifts, I'm pretty good at birding. I've found birding to be a wonderful way to engage with nature and learn about habitat.

Q. What does success for the BCTrust look like to you?

A. I would like to see us maximize the permanent protection of the Town's open, developable lands that have natural and resource value for all of us; specifically for drinking water, agriculture and wildlife. This includes those properties that have historic significance and scenic views that we all enjoy and that define Boxborough's rural character. For those who are physically challenged, I would like to see more accessible trails and options to experience nature. This became personal for me a few years ago while attempting to hike a favorite trail on crutches with a broken foot.

Q. What motivates you to continue the work in your community?

A. Working with a very talented, passionate board and seeing the value of our work motivates me. I love seeing families engaged with each other and their surroundings while hiking the trails as I recently did at Shurtleff Woods. Recent studies show how nature leads to improved physical and mental health. During the pandemic, being able to walk through the woods and on the roads with great views of trees and meadows was a great source of comfort for many, including me! ✨