GREAT POND MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION TRUST

Newsletter & Annual Report Fall 2024

Listening to the Mountain

The Last Ash Trees?

by Ella McDonald

Three species of ash trees occur naturally in Maine: white (Fraxinus americana), green (F. pennsylvanica), and brown or black (F. nigra). All three are threatened by the invasive emerald ash borer (EAB). EAB feeds on the inner bark and phloem during its larval stage, disrupting the tree's ability to move nutrients, water, and carbohydrates, and typically causing death within 2-5 years of infestation. Left unchecked, EAB causes upwards of 99% mortality.

EAB likely came to the U.S. in shipping pallets sent from Asia to Michigan in the 1990s. Over the last 20+ years, EAB spread across North America, mostly by human transport, decimating trees across the Midwest, New York, Vermont and, since 2018, Maine. Currently EAB is in 14 of our 16 counties. It has not yet reached Hancock County, but it is in neighboring Penobscot and Waldo Counties. This underscores the importance of sourcing firewood hyper-locally: merely bringing wood across the Penobscot river could introduce it here.

All ash serve major ecological functions. Their bark is slightly less acidic than other trees and supports an array of fungal biodiversity and there are 98 herbivorous species specialized in feeding on ash leaves. Brown ash plays a key role in water levels and aquatic food webs; its leaf litter is nutrient-rich and preferred by many invertebrate species in riparian forests; lack of brown ash leaves significantly slows an ecosystem's decomposition rates.

White and green ash are important economically and aesthetically to Maine, as valuable timber species and common municipal street trees. Their loss will change the landscape of these places and create major costs for cities and towns.

Brown ash is especially important to Wabanaki people who have been living in the region for thousands of years. It is an integral component of each tribe's variation of their creation myth, as well as numerous other tales and stories.



Ella with EAB trap

Gluskabe created the Wabanaki when he fired an arrow into a brown ash tree, and the people emerged from its bark.

Brown ash is also the primary material in Wabanaki basketry, its structural qualities making it ideal for pounding, splitting, and weaving. There are about 200 Wabanaki

Continued on page 4



Richard Silliboy basket
Photo by Nate Siegert

Conserving Land, Water and Wildlife Habitat for the Communities of Western Hancock County, Maine

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2024 Newsletter
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New Board Member

In 2024, the Trust welcomed **Isaac Bray** to the Board of Directors. Isaac lives in Bucksport with his wife, Katelyn, their young son, and Lily, a black lab. Isaac was a backpacking guide in Colorado and has climbed twenty-six of the 14,000-foot peaks there. He holds a master's degree in Opera Performance and is on the music faculty at the University of Maine. A professional opera singer, Isaac performs around the country and has just returned from performing in Vatican City, Rome. He currently serves on the land committee and, with his family, maintains the Stuart Gross trail.



Isaac burning it up in the 2024 Wildlands Summit Trail Run

Thank you



VOLUNTEERS!

We want to acknowledge the many friends of GPMCT who donate their time and talent in a variety of ways – from trail construction and maintenance, to Board and committee service, to representing the Trust in the community. Thank you all!

From the President

This September, my wife, Mary, and I traveled to the Sanctuary of Machu Picchu, the 'Steps of Death' at Huayna Picchu, and the Ausangate trail in the Peruvian Andes. At altitudes of up to 16,800 feet, the hike was very challenging, but the breathtaking views made it very worthwhile.



Denise Smith, Carl Derian, Emily Hawkins at the 2024 Annual Meeting

Our success on the hike was no accident; it required serious preparation, and we were fortunate to have the GPMCT Wildlands Stuart Gross Trail nearby, which ascends about 1,000' from the elevation of our camp on Alamoosook.

In June and July, we began hiking the trail about twice a week and by early August, we were up three or four times a week. Each roundtrip from our camp to the summit is about 5.5 miles. On our rest days, we hiked the Fish Hatchery Trails, covering about 3.5 miles. In total, we hiked more than 168 miles in preparation for our trek.

We had never spent so much concentrated time on the Wildlands trails, and I was amazed by the number of hikers. I took the opportunity to talk to as many of them as I could. While many were local, others came from out-of-state or even abroad, often visiting Acadia as well.

These conversations reaffirmed for me that many of our users believe the Wildlands is government property, funded by tax dollars. In fact, taxpayers have subsidized a small percentage of the purchase price of some of the land through the Land for Maine's Future program, as well as road and timber stand improvement through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. But, by far the largest share of the money to acquire land, build and maintain trails and the associated infrastructure is raised from private foundations and contributed directly by people like you, our supporters.

Thank you for your continued support, your gifts, large and small, and for the many volunteer hours you contribute. We also appreciate the organizations that contribute to our efforts, as well as our local business partners and suppliers who help keep the Wildlands a thriving place for the bald eagles, bobcats, beavers, loons, alewives, turtles, raccoons—and for you, our supporters.

I am proud to be a part of the Trust, and work to make it better every day.

— Carl Derian





The Last Ash Trees? (cont.)

basket makers in Maine, who continue the ancient practice that helps preserve their culture and provides income to their families.

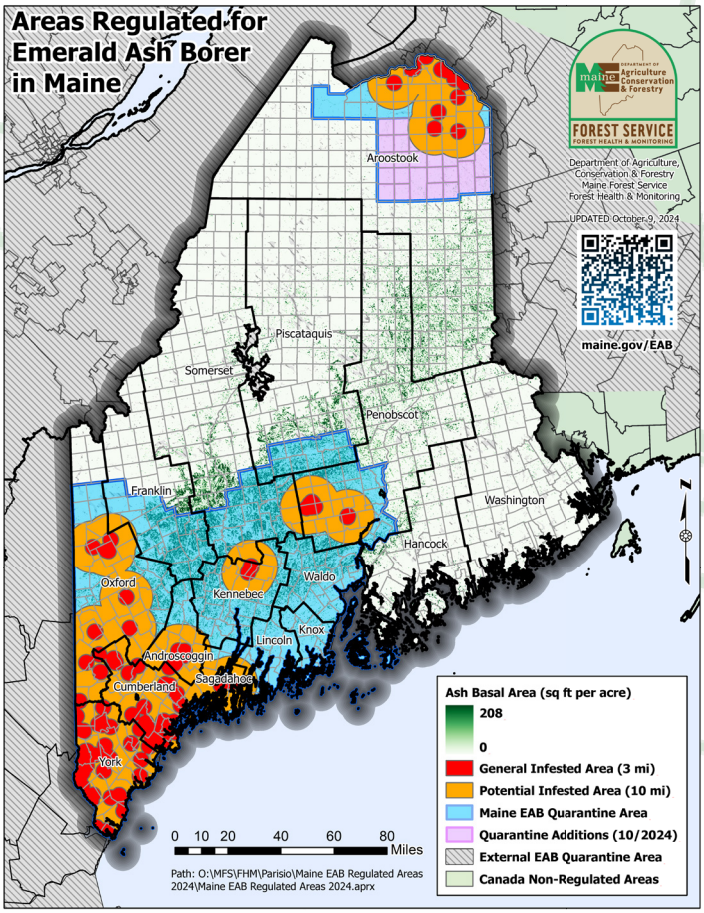
Protecting ash is a shared priority of Wabanaki Tribal Nations, basket makers, the Maine Forest Service, conservation organizations, including 23 land trusts, and University of Maine researchers. These groups worked together on the Brown Ash Task Force for 20 years and have now broadened the work of outreach and education through the Ash Protection Collaboration Across Wabanakik (APCAW), online at: www.umaine.edu/apcaw/, to empower people across Maine to safeguard ash.

Recognizing that 94% of Maine is privately owned, APCAW organizes citizen scientists, private landowners, and conservation groups to engage in monitoring trees and seed collection. As of 2024, most ash in Maine has not been impacted by EAB: we have the last healthy population in the country. Thus, we are in a critical period before overstory ash is lost, during which we can inventory and collect seed for long-term preservation of ash genetic diversity.

This summer GPMCT began to inventory their ash, with all three species present on their properties. They are currently making plans to monitor for EAB, consider inoculation of specific trees and collecting seed.

More info at: www.greatpondtrust.org/forest-management/

Ella is an Ecology & Environmental Science Master's Student at UMaine, studying cross cultural partnerships to protect brown ash trees from the invasive Emerald Ash Borer. Photos courtesy of Ella.



Ash Management for Landowners

Tyler Everett, Mi' kmaq, forester for the Passamaquoddy tribe, and UMaine PhD candidate, outlines options for the management of ash, many of which should be done with the guidance of a forester.

(Low cost/easiest to higher cost/more complex)

- **Silviculture:** thin less vigorous trees that attract EAB and release small ash in the understory.
- **Access:** connect basket makers to trees on your property to help sustain this cultural practice. Contact APCAW for more information.
- **Early detection:** participate in Maine Forest Service monitoring programs using insect traps or girdled trap trees.
- **Seed Collection and Storage:** Collected seed can be stored for rematriation efforts later, assessed for potential genetic resistance to EAB, and/or propagated to produce seedling stock. Contact APCAW.
- **Biological Controls:** The Maine Forest Service can determine if your forest qualifies as a release site for parasitoid wasps, which kill the larva of EAB.
- **Insecticide Treatment:** Chemical injections are effective, if expensive. Initially thought to have practical application only to important street and residential trees, they can be used in a forest setting: treating mature, seed-bearing trees can buy us time.

Visit: youtu.be/HG80_XgHCTw

From the Executive Director

Short History of the Wildlands

The Trust and the Wildlands have grown and evolved but we are still a small piece of the history of the land we manage. A few milestones:

7,000 - 500 years ago: The Wabanaki and their ancestors inhabitated the Penobscot and Narramissic Rivers because of the smelt, shad, alewife, salmon, and eel runs. They located several cemeteries and accompanying village and camp sites on Alamoosook Lake, Dead River, and Hothole Pond. Two canoe routes led from the Hothole stream north and west, back to the Penobscot River.

1760: Wabanaki tribes moved north as more Europeans arrived in their homeland. In 1755 the Massachusetts governor imposed a scalp bounty on them, and in 1760 Bucksport and Orland were first settled by Europeans. Dams, seizure of land, outright murder, and especially European disease, killed 90 per cent of an estimated Wabanaki population of 20,000 in what is now Maine.

1800: Town of Orland is incorporated, with an economy based on fishing, wood products and farming. The alewife and elver harvest continue today.

1900: Two sawmills operating on the Dead River.

1930: The new paper mill dams Alamoosook Lake to enable piping the water Bucksport.

~1955: Diamond International bought about 3500 acres of what is now the Wildlands to provide wood for a variety of uses.

1995: Diamond land was purchased by a logging contractor/developer. He cut and chipped nearly all the trees above 4 inches for the Bucksport paper mill.

2005: GPMCT purchases the original 4200 acres of Wildlands.

2015: Emphasis on the re-establishment of the late succession Northern Forest that existed before 1900.

2023:

- The Wildlands is now 5137 acres
- 2,000 acres of forest have been thinned, moving toward more uneven-aged stands of trees
- 35 miles of trails and gravel roads, 170 culverts, 6 major bridges
- ~20,000 visitors annually

This year, as we continue our conservation mission, all is not well in the Wildlands, but there are still many reasons for optimism:

- American Beech is under attack by a second invasive species; smaller trees are dying.
- All Ash species are within 6-8 years of extermination by Emerald Ash Borer.
- Extirpated American Chestnuts are returning: about 300 trees were planted this year. Trees planted in 2012 are about 20 feet tall.
- Natural resources in the watershed continue to be important to the 8,000 Wabanaki in Maine, including blueberries, elver, alewives, and brown ash.
- Alewives return to Hothole Pond and Stream.
- Memorial grove of species native to our south is planted.
- Several new and rerouted trails are created in concentrated use areas, avoiding undisturbed, large interior areas.

– Landon Fake



Logging impact, 2004

Ogden in the Wildlands

by Hannah Johnson

Ogden pointed to the sky (or maybe it was a tree) and said, "Ga." It was a sunny, brisk day in October as we approached the view near the top of Condon Hill in the Wildlands. "Sky," I confirmed, pointing straight up, too. Ten months old, he has recently taken to pointing and "naming" objects of interest as we walk.

I found a flat spot just off the trail and took Ogden out of the baby sling. He sat down, looked at his right foot, and took off his thick, red, wool sock. I didn't protest. Then he crawled over to an old log, picked some moss, and put it in his mouth. "Moss," I told him; "does it taste good?"

And so this went on: Ogden crawling, pointing, standing, putting things in his mouth, doffing clothing, and jabbering— for the next hour and a half. It was our every-other-day routine (I work every other day, otherwise it would be a daily routine), and I love it. I feel so grateful to live near a place like this, that's open to the public and has remote places to be entirely in the environment; it has afforded our family so much awe and wonder. Thank you GPMCT for preserving beautiful areas and habitat! Oh, and, if anyone finds a thick red baby sock at the top of Condon Hill, you know where it came from.

Hannah is on the GPMCT board of directors. She and her family's property abut the Wildlands. She was named Volunteer of the Year at GPMCT's Annual Meeting in August for her outreach efforts and success of our Monthly Meetup programs of group hikes, family walks, group paddles, and more.



Have you seen my sock? Ogden Johnson-Peake on Condon Hill



Hannah Johnson receives the Moose, as Volunteer of the Year, from Ex. Director Landon Fake



Come out and enjoy the Wildlands this holiday season! Socks optional...

Making a Living in the Wildlands: Scale, Connectivity, and Redundancy

by Cathy Rees

In the Wildlands, wood frogs are an indicator species. They provide insight into the long-term forest and ecosystem health of the preserve. Adults mate, and lay eggs in vernal pools, or glorified puddles, that dry up later in the season. Eggs hatch, tadpoles feed, grow legs, and if all goes well, mature frogs hop out of the pool about 6 weeks later. They travel varying distances to live in cool, moist woods before hibernating in rotting stumps, logs or under rocks, moss, or leaf litter for the winter. After 2 – 3 years of feeding and hibernating in multiple habitat types, they return to the same pool to breed and repeat the cycle.

With 5200 contiguous acres, the wildlands have varied topography, geological history, and human use that have created the multiple habitat types that wood frogs and many other organisms need at different life stages. Butterflies need the nectar of certain flowering plants and other specific plants on which to lay eggs for larvae to feed. They also need places to winter over as larvae or adults. Those places could be in the soil, a bark crevice, or a hollow plant stem. Birds need nesting habitat, a variety of foods throughout the seasons, water, and cover for roosting. Each species has its own needs. Bobcats need space: anywhere from 12 to 78 square miles are used by each individual to make a living (the Wildlands is about eight square miles). Larger, diverse parcels are simply more likely to provide all of what an organism needs.

Organisms also need land area that connects their various habitat and resource needs. The need to effectively and safely travel without obstacles that are either dangerous (like a road or highway), and/or inhospitable, with no protection from the elements or from predators (like a lawn, parking lot or gravel pit). If juvenile wood frogs can safely get to their terrestrial habitat, they stand a better chance of living to maturity. Providing organisms a life with fewer unexpected stresses as the effects of climate change play out will promote better health and fitness for us all.

Redundancy is also a component of habitat health more likely on a large parcel. If we protect only one population, or one vernal pool, the impact of disease, predation, or unusual weather can cause a species to disappear. Multiple populations and resources afford additional layers of security.

Large tracts of forest land also provide benefits to the surrounding area in the form of carbon storage, erosion protection, water regulation and even climate control on a local scale. Trees are champions of all these tasks and other services we are still learning about.

The Wildlands, without fragmentation caused by roads, houses, parking lots, and agriculture, is a collection of dozens of different habitats. The diversity, connectivity, and redundancy needed to accommodate the astounding variety of interdependent organisms enables the Wildlands and the associated ecosystems to be resilient in the face of change. The scale of our conservation effort does matter.

Cathy is a landscape designer, author, artist, and ecological consultant to GPMCT and several other organizations.



Cathy Rees and a brown ash tree in the Wildlands

Views

Views From Great Pond Mountain

Last February we started a series to present speakers on a range of topics about recreation and conservation in Maine and in the backyard. They included:

Carey Kish, author of *Maine Mountain Guide, Appalachian Mountain Club's Best Day Hikes Along the Maine Coast* and *Beer Hiking New England.*

Lauri Gorton, Program Manager, Greenfield Penobscot Estuary Remediation Trust, discussing the mercury remediation plans for the lower Penobscot River.

Aislinn Sarnacki, host of Maine Public's "BOREALIS," Registered Maine Guide, Journalist, Guidebook Author, and University of Maine Writing Teacher.

Cathy Rees, author, artist, ecological consultant and executive director of Blue Hill Native Gardens, with a presentation on how to create a beneficial garden using native plants.

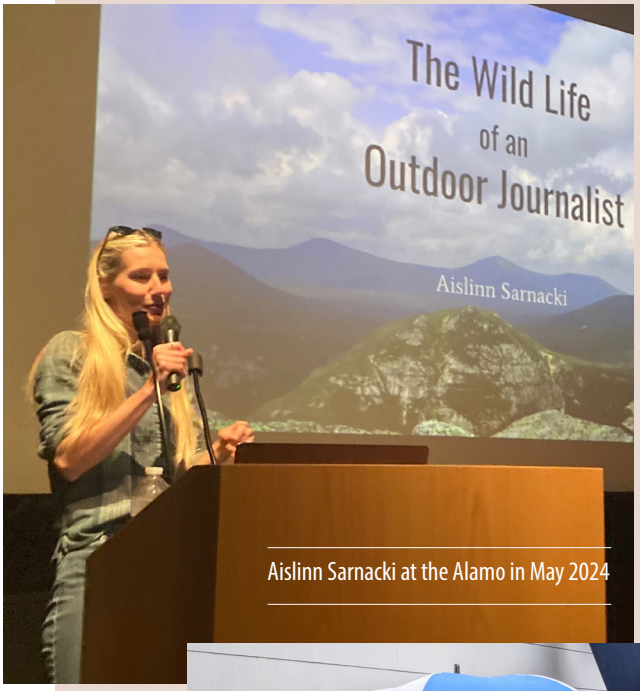
Russell Kaye, Maine cinematographer and photographer: *Capturing the Wild: Technique, Patience & Getting Lucky*, followed by a screening of PBS Nature's *Sex, Lies and Butterflies.*

Rebecca Goldfine, creator of *Maine by Foot*, the online trail guide to Maine's walking and hiking trails.

Gabe Perkins, Executive Director of Inland Woods + Trails, on the importance of trails in Maine and Ballot Question 4, the Maine Trails Bond.

We are lining up more great speakers for the coming year and will be publishing a calendar soon.

The Trust also organized Monthly Meetups for activities in the Wildlands that included babywearing, stargazing, sunrise, and pride hikes, as well as one with American Sign Language interpreters. We will continue to organize these through most of the winter.



Aislinn Sarnacki at the Alamo in May 2024


Leslie and Blaise making the best of a rainshower at a Views from GPMCT presentation at Verona Wine and Bistro


Baby-wearing hike last May

2023 - 2024 Annual Report

Revenue, Expenses, Allocations

for FYE June 30, 2024

Support & Revenue

Donor Support	$175,099
Endowment Income	$72,950
Grants	$289,405
In-kind Contributions	$51,877
Merchandise Sales	$2,315
Events	$3,768
Interest & Dividends	$23,939
Unrealized Appreciation of Investments	$138,354
Funds Released from Restrictions	$421,614
Miscellaneous Income	$639.00
Total Support & Revenue	**$1,179,960**

Expenses & Allocations

Land Protection and Stewardship	$377,800
Education & Outreach	$2,542
General & Administrative	$84,168
Fundraising	$59,267
Total Expenses	**$523,777**

Change in Net Assets

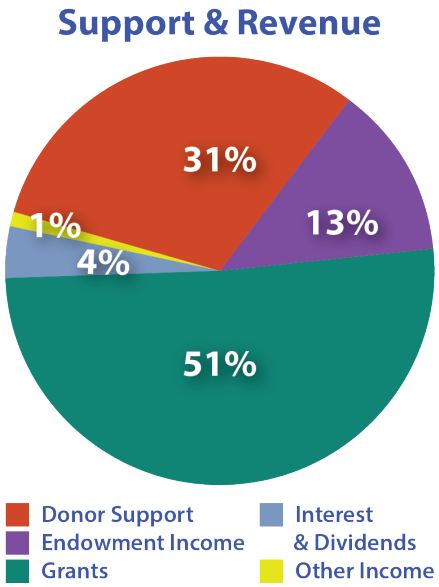
Net Assets – June 30 2023	$7,275,625
Net Assets – June 30 2024	$7,679,812
Change in Net Assets	**$404,187**

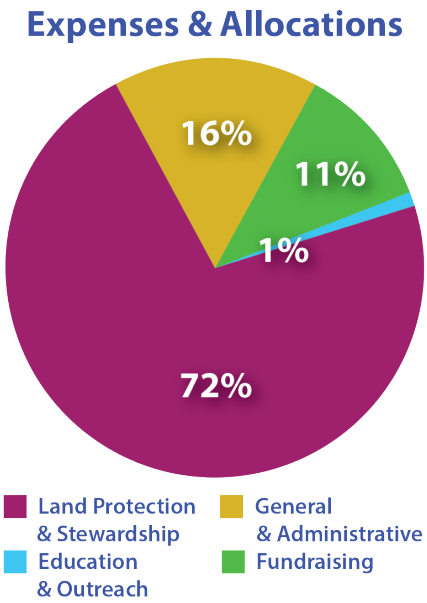
Major Reserved Funds By Type

Donor Restricted Endowments	$244,341
Wildlands Stewardship	$1,058,230
Land Acquisition	$182,502
Total Major Funds	**$1,485,073**

Change in Net Fixed Assets (Excluding Land and Depreciation)

Fixed Assets - June 30, 2023	$405,575
Fixed Assets - June 30, 2024	$575,401
Change in Fixed Assets	**$169,826**





Thank you for your generous support of GPMCT

The following made donations between July, 2023 and June, 2024. We are grateful for all gifts, and apologize for any errors or omissions!

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Alamoosook Lake Association
Astbury Trucking
Bangor Beer Company
Blue Hill Hydraulics, Inc.
Blue Oceans Fund
Bray Family Fund
Brown Family Charitable Fund
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Derian Arts, Education and Conservation Charitable Trust
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