

# ASHBY LAND TRUST 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

<https://ashbylandtrust.org/>

Ashby Land Trust  
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Hobblebush (*Viburnum lantanoides*) blooming in Ashby woods in the springtime

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Greetings to our members and friends! Another year has come and gone. Thank you so much for your generous support. A grateful thank you to our amazing Board members for the important work that they do.

Our new and updated website states: We are an accredited Land Trust and a 501(c) (3) non-profit dedicated to preserving the rural character of Ashby. In addition to our land preservation efforts, we sponsor educational, recreational and social events and activities that celebrate the natural world.

In 2024 we: Created and updated a new website.

Made available ALT "swag" online (see our website or Facebook site)

Had a showing of the inspiring Watatic Preservation movie as our annual meeting event.

Held an Animal Tracking class

Enjoyed our fabulous Duck Race

Held a Mushroom Hike

Provided a very informative Invasive Plants class

Many thanks to the Ashby Free Library for the use of their facilities.

The support of our membership and friends is truly appreciated. We hope that you will tell your friends and neighbors about the Ashby Land Trust, our work is more important than ever.

Gratefully,

Vicki Mickola, President



Tracking class

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the 2024 Annual Report of the Ashby Land Trust. We are an all-volunteer group dedicated to preserving the rural character of our town and providing our community with spaces and opportunities to connect with and learn about, and from, the natural world around us.

We live in a time of constant change, activity, and uncertainty. These forces can drive us away from what is important to us and separate us from the truest version of ourselves. Nature can teach us resiliency and patience, but we must nurture it and allow it room to share its lessons with us. This is what is at the heart of land conservation- ensuring space for natural processes and systems, and learning and teaching effective and responsible stewardship of the places we know and love.

We are pleased to look back on 2024 as a year of success in both our conservation and education work. Effective land conservation cannot happen without the support of the community, and we thank you for your continued support of our work.

Dan Ewald, Vice president



Mushroom walk

## LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION RENEWAL

At the end of this year, the ALT Board voted to pursue our second renewal of national accreditation, and our application will be submitted in June 2025. Accreditation is a mark of distinction, affirming that we meet national quality standards of sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance and lasting stewardship.

ALT was first accredited in 2015. This will be our second time to renew our accredited status and it represents our ongoing commitment to high standards and best practices in the land trust community.

Jeanie Lindquist



## LAND PROTECTION REPORT

The Land Trust continued work in 2024 on three Forest Legacy projects that were previously approved in two separate rounds of Forest Legacy Project funding. Two of the parcels are parts of a multi-property application involving many towns, and are proceeding slowly through the process. The third was a single-property application that is moving more quickly. We project that two will be completed in 2025 and the third may slip into 2026. Total acreage is about 230 acres.



The Land Trust has a long-standing partnership with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and provides local assistance as requested.

At the end of 2024 the Land Trust began work with the New England Forestry Foundation to place additional land under an existing Conservation Restriction on the north side of town.

## **PROPERTY MONITORING REPORT**

First, a reminder of the purpose of Conservation Restrictions and the Land Trust's responsibility: Property owners often desire to protect their land from future development. One tool that is available to them is the use of a Conservation Restriction (CR). An organization like the Ashby Land Trust can work with the landowner and the Commonwealth to place legally binding protections on their property to ensure that their desire to preserve their property is honored going forward in time.

It is the legal responsibility of the organization that holds a CR to ensure that the particulars written in the restriction are followed.

We do that by formally monitoring each property each year. The Land Trust monitors Conservation Restrictions on the following five properties: Wiita Conservation Land (Blood Hill), the Morrison Property, the South Road Fields (town-owned and privately owned), the Arnold Property and the Ewald Property.

Each property has individually tailored descriptions of its intended use, including whether or not the public has access to the property. Our town-owned protected properties (Wiita Conservation Land, and Morrison) do allow public access, while our privately owned protected properties do not (Arnold and Ewald). All properties are monitored to ensure there is no encroachment from adjoining properties and that activities, including development, that are not permitted by the Conservation Restrictions are not occurring.

All our monitoring responsibilities for the five properties the Land Trust protects have been successfully completed for 2024. None of the properties had any human caused violations.

There is, however, an ongoing and increasingly pervasive problem with invasive plants on all but one of the properties. The primary invasives are Oriental Bittersweet (a vine), multiflora rose & Japanese Barberry (both shrubs). The South Road Fields have an impenetrable barrier on its eastern wooded field. This vine is particularly destructive, crowding out native plants and strangling trees. Early identification and quick action are the best control method for all these invasive plants.



Bittersweet berries



Leaves



Vines



Bittersweet – cut this vine whenever you see it!

Methods accessible to the general public for removal and control of bittersweet include cutting and/or root pulling. Consistent cutting or (better) uprooting of vines can go a long way to controlling these invasives. The vines have a characteristic orange root. Large well-established infestations may require the use of controlled herbicide application over several seasons by licensed professionals for eradication, but cutting the large vines will prevent the berries from setting and being distributed by birds.

The Land Trust offered a presentation on invasive plants this year, and encourages you to remain on the look-out for bittersweet, Japanese Barberry, and multi-flora rose on your property.

### **RUBBER DUCK DERBY REPORT**

On May 5, 2024, 700 intrepid rubber ducks made their way down Willard Brook to Damon Pond for their eighth race.

The water was not high but the ducks, with help from our always reliable sweepers, all made it to the finish line. Great prizes were distributed to the lucky winners.

A big shout out to our sweepers and netters! Without you the race would not be possible. And a big shout out also to our partners who donate prizes.

The Duck Derby is an important fundraiser for the land trust as well as a good time on a fine spring day on protected land in Ashby. We thank all those who support the Ashby Land Trust by buying ducks for the Derby.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Derby will be held on Sunday, May 4, 2025, at Damon Pond. Come and enjoy some fun in the spring!



**TREASURER’S REPORT**

<b>FUND</b>	<b>BEGINNING BALANCE 1/1/24</b>	<b>INOME</b>	<b>EXPENSE</b>	<b>ENDING BALANCE 12/31/24</b>	<b>NET INCOME</b>
STEWARDSHIP TOTAL	\$17,430	\$325		\$17,755	
DEFENSE FUND TOTAL	\$5,228			\$5,228	
ACCREDITATION GRANT TOTAL	\$1,462		\$50	\$1,412	
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$15,648	\$6,623	\$6,041	\$16,230	
2023 TOTAL	\$39,768	\$6,948	\$6,091	\$40,625	\$857

**CLOSING**

2024 has been a busy and successful year for the Ashby Land Trust. We hope that you will continue your membership or join us in 2025, and participate in our efforts and events.