

A black salamander with bright yellow spots is curled on a bed of brown, dried leaves. The salamander's body is glossy and its spots are arranged in a pattern along its back and sides. The background consists of various shades of brown and tan leaves, some with visible veins and small holes.

NORTHEAST
WILDERNESS
TRUST

2020 Annual Report



What a year! In 2020 we saw political norms upended and stress tests on our democracy. COVID-19 dramatically altered and harmed the lives of so many, while laying bare the fragility of our hyper-connected, modern lifestyles. Long past due, issues of racial inequality became the focus of national and global attention. Of course, global warming continued and the biodiversity crisis worsened. Through all of this, Northeast Wilderness Trust remained steadfast in our mission to protect forever-wild landscapes while working to spread the message about rewilding the Northeast far and wide.

Last year, the Wilderness Trust began the long journey of meeting the lofty goals set forth in our strategic plan. We formally launched the Wildlands Partnership and protected four new forever-wild places. More than a number or a spot on a map, each of these now-wild landscapes is a promise to the future. To our wild cousins, it is a promise that their homes will be given the time and space necessary to heal. To you, friends of Northeast Wilderness Trust, it is a promise that there will always be land across the Northern Forest without development, resource extraction, and motorized or mechanized recreation.

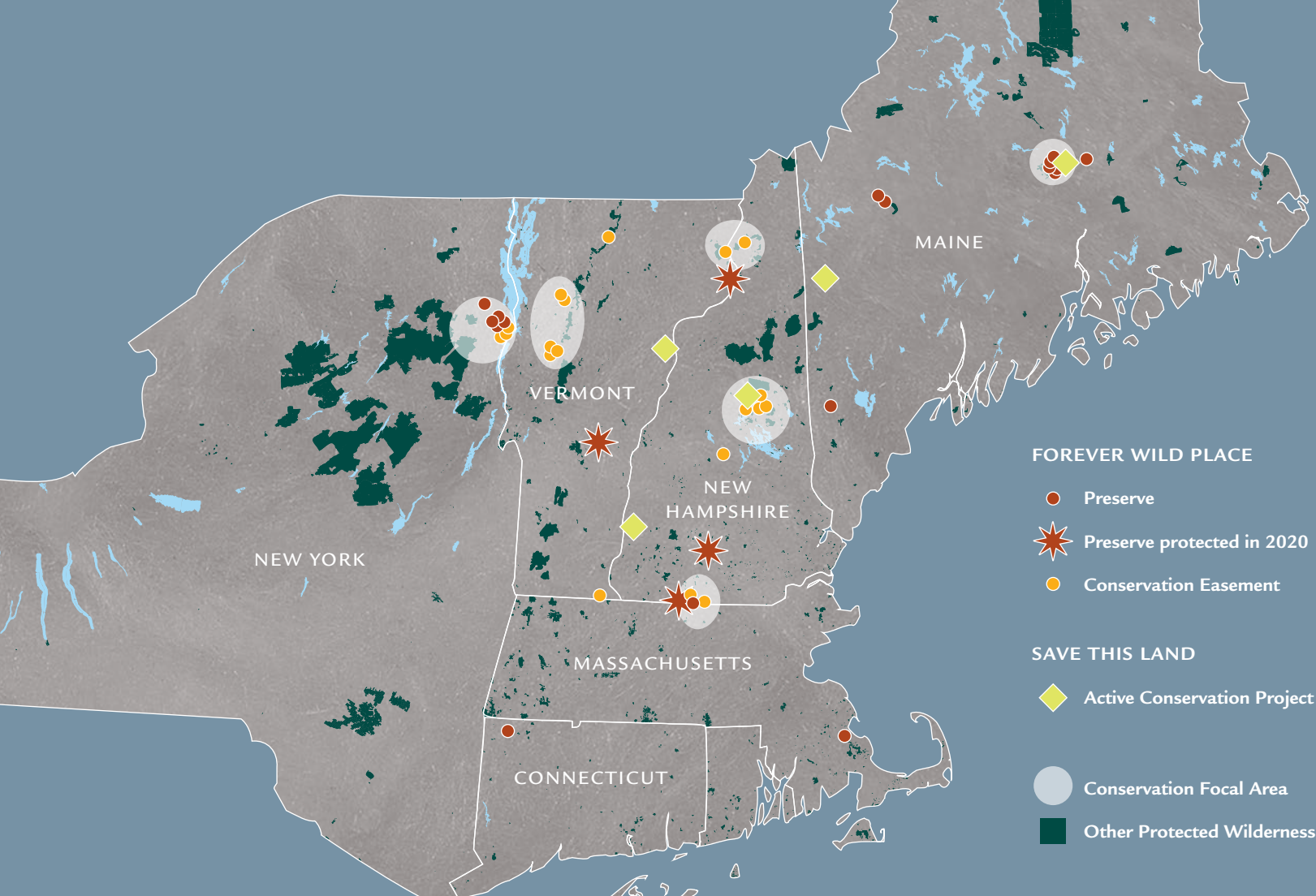
While focusing on conserving wild landscapes in our backyard, the Wilderness Trust joined global efforts to rewild the world. We helped write, and were an initial endorser of, the Global Charter for Rewilding the Earth; became a member of Nature Needs Half; and joined the Global Rewilding Alliance. As our advocacy efforts for wild nature expand, we move forward with the support, coordination, and backing of these important global initiatives.

The Wilderness Trust has bold plans in the coming years and we are going to need your help. Our shared vision for a wilder world only happens with you. Together, we'll continue doing everything we can to ensure that the Northeast is anchored by an interconnected network of wildlands where nature thrives, carbon remains in the trees and soil, and people and wildlife find peace and respite. Thank you for being a part of this wild legacy.

For the Wild,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Jon Leibowitz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Jon Leibowitz, Executive Director



2020 IN REVIEW

Four landscapes were protected as forever-wild by Northeast Wilderness Trust. Read their stories on pages 6–13.

The Wildlands Partnership launched. The program primarily engages local land trusts in wilderness conservation with staff support, technical expertise, and funding. Partners are eligible to enroll in Wild Carbon™—the nation’s only wilderness-exclusive carbon credit initiative. Learn more at newildernesstrust.org/wp

“Rewilding the Northeast,” a short film about the Wilderness Trust’s impact, was released and viewed by thousands. Visit newildernesstrust.org to watch.

Three Ambassador Preserves had kiosks installed at their entrances—Muddy Pond (MA), Binney Hill (NH), and Eagle Mountain (NY). With artwork of rewilding ecosystems, the kiosks serve to educate the public about wilderness and inspire reciprocity with nature. Learn more on page 20.



The team grew with the addition of three new staff members: Erin Meiman as Operations Manager, Tom Butler as Senior Fellow, and Bob Linck as Conservation Director. Long-time staff members Shelby Perry and Cathleen Maine stepped into new roles—Shelby as Wildlands Ecology Director, and Cathleen as Development Director.

The role of Senior Fellow was created when Tom Butler, co-founder and former board member of the Wilderness Trust, retired from Tompkins Conservation and wanted to dedicate his time to rewilding his home region, the Northeast. As Senior Fellow, Tom acts as an ambassador for rewilding efforts by developing partnerships and writing.

With an anonymous planned gift, the Wilderness Trust launched an operating endowment, moving the organization towards the goals of its 2020–25 Strategic Plan.

BY THE NUMBERS

Forever-Wild Places

37,382
Total acres

721
New acres in 2020

44
Total protected properties



Save This Land

20,000
Acres we're working to protect



The Wildlands Partnership is an initiative of Northeast Wilderness Trust that engages local land trusts in forever-wild conservation, with options to enroll in the Wild Carbon™ market. More information at newildernesstrust.org/wp



Carbon

3,199,474

*Metric tons of carbon stored
on forever-wild lands**

Equivalent to annual energy
use of 1.3 million homes



Ecology

92

*Beaver-influenced
wetlands or ponds*

59

*Known rare, threatened,
or endangered species*



People

71

Volunteers

886

Event attendees

* The Nature Conservancy Resilient Land Mapping Tool

FOREVER-WILD PLACES



Bramhall Wilderness Preserve

BRIDGEWATER HOLLOW, VERMONT 359 ACRES

The Chateaugay No-Town Conservation Area—one of the highest ranked “habitat blocks” in Vermont—is nestled in the Green Mountains of south-central Vermont. The conservation focus area includes Wildlife Management Areas, the Appalachian Trail corridor, and conserved woodlands, but like much of New England it was lacking forever-wild landscapes.

That changed when Northeast Wilderness Trust established the first forever-wild property within the “Chateaugay” by purchasing the 359-acre Bramhall Wilderness Preserve in Bridgewater Hollow through a bargain sale from longtime landowner Paedra Bramhall. Just south of the Appalachian Trail, the Preserve’s steep ravines and dense hemlocks shelter nearly two miles of pristine cascading brooks, including the North Branch of the Ottauquechee River. These cool waters support prime habitat for native brook trout.

For decades, Ms. Bramhall kept this forest largely unmanaged while pursuing permanent protection for her family’s land.

Thanks to her efforts, the ecosystem is well on its way to becoming an old-growth forest. Its towering trees, downed logs, and patches of rich soils offer habitat for wildlife, from bears to bees to spring beauties.

The Preserve is already connecting people with the intrinsic value of wild nature. In 2019 the Wilderness Trust hosted a BioBlitz on the land; participants catalogued more than 200 species who live there. Local high school students have toured the land and discussed wildlands conservation with Wilderness Trust staff. Most recently, the Preserve was featured in the short film “Rewilding the Northeast,” reaching audiences far beyond Vermont.

The Vermont River Conservancy and the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) co-hold a forever-wild easement on the land. Bramhall Wilderness Preserve was made possible with generous support from VHCB and many foundations and individual donors. | newildernesstrust.org/bramhall

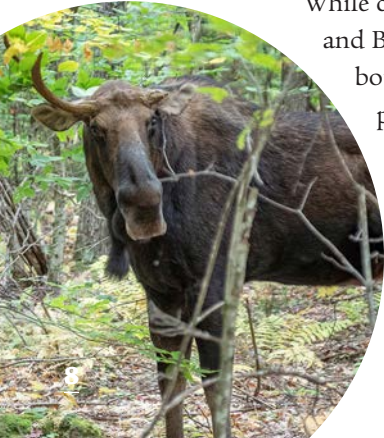


Sawtelle Addition to Binney Hill Wilderness Preserve

NEW IPSWICH, NEW HAMPSHIRE 47 ACRES

The landscape surrounding the 21.5-mile Wapack Trail in southern New Hampshire is one of Northeast Wilderness Trust's focal areas, in partnership with Friends of the Wapack—an organization dedicated to preserving the namesake trail and its natural setting. In 2007, the Hampshire Country School conveyed a forever-wild easement to the Wilderness Trust on 1,428 acres. In 2016, the Wilderness Trust acquired Binney Hill Wilderness Preserve, a 488-acre property that had been extensively logged and was threatened by residential development.

While close to one another, the Wapack and Binney Hill Preserves did not share a boundary. With the Wilderness Trust's purchase of 47 acres from Shirley Sawtelle last spring, these properties are now connected.



This landscape constitutes a narrow area through which species are moving in response to climate change. Game cameras confirm that moose, bobcats, coyotes, and other mammals use this travel corridor regularly. Furthermore, New Hampshire's 2020 Wildlife Action Plan identifies this area as the highest ranked habitat in the region.

The Sawtelle Addition to Binney Hill also safeguards a short but critical section of the Wapack Trail, where it affords a beautiful view of Binney Pond from a boardwalk built by local Boy Scouts. Until recently, the only unprotected stretch of Binney Pond's shoreline was on the Sawtelle property—now the entirety of the Pond is safe from development.

The Sawtelle Addition was made possible thanks to many generous donors. Northeast Wilderness Trust continues to work with the Friends of the Wapack to expand forever-wild protections within this landscape. | newildernesstrust.org/binney





Duren Mountain Wilderness Preserve

GUILDHALL, VERMONT 184 ACRES

In Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, just across Route 102 from the Connecticut River, Duren Mountain Wilderness Preserve is home to an impressive range of wildlife. Trail cameras have captured moose, bear, bobcat, and coyote roaming the land. At the base of Duren Mountain, a two-acre beaver pond offers spring breeding grounds for waterfowl such as Mallard, Black, and Wood Ducks. The Preserve includes the summit of Duren Mountain and an extensive Northern White Cedar Swamp—a globally uncommon wetland ecosystem.

The 184-acre property was conserved in 2020 as forever-wild when Ducks Unlimited transferred the land to Northeast Wilderness Trust and retained a conservation easement on it. The Preserve adds to a sizeable protected corridor near the Connecticut River, which is considered a critical wildlife area.

Setting aside lands that will become tomorrow's old-growth forests is a primary goal of Vermont Conservation Design,

which calls for letting 9% of Vermont's forests grow old. Less than 1% of the Green Mountain State's forests have survived logging or development since European colonization. Protecting important wildlife habitat, like Duren Mountain, as wilderness is essential to achieving the goals of Vermont Conservation Design.

The last timber harvest on this land occurred in 2006. As this forest heals and rewilds, it will sequester and store carbon that will never again be lost to resource extraction. The niche habitats of mature and unmanaged forests will also help maintain biodiversity in the larger surrounding landscape, which includes conserved farms and woodlands.

People are welcome to experience this rewilding place on nature's terms. Visitors may hike, snowshoe, study nature, hunt by permission, and birdwatch. | newildernesstrust.org/duren



Jack & Margaret Hoffman Wilderness Sanctuary

FRANCESTOWN, NEW HAMPSHIRE 130 ACRES

In recent years, the Merrimac River Watershed has lost significant forested habitat. The new 130-acre Jack & Margaret Hoffman Wilderness Sanctuary in Franconia, New Hampshire represents a noteworthy conservation gain in a region facing increasing development pressure.

A deep personal connection to place, family, and conservation moved the children of the late John L. (Jack) and Margaret Hoffman to protect the land as a safe haven for wildlife. In honor of their parents, the siblings sold the property to the Wilderness Trust in November at a bargain-sale price.

“Northeast Wilderness Trust was wonderful to work with every step of the way,” said the Hoffmans’ daughter, Elizabeth. “I am so happy that the land is now in such good hands and I feel very enthusiastic about the forever-wild designation.”

Within the broader landscape, the new Sanctuary is considered an important part of the Quabbin-to-Cardigan wildlife corridor, and other conserved lands.

The Sanctuary includes the summit and southerly slopes of Campbell Hill, and at least four active vernal pools, where frogs and salamanders breed in the spring. Within the young forest, remains of stone walls and cellar holes reveal that a little more than a century ago, this land had been cleared and farmed and is slowly and steadily rewilding.

The land also supports two large beaver ponds that feed into Brennan Brook. According to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, which supported this conservation project through the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund, these wetlands are ranked among the highest quality habitat in the region.

The Oliver S. and Jennie R. Donaldson Charitable Trust also helped make this new Sanctuary possible through a generous grant. | newildernesstrust.org/hoffman





Putting the “Forever” in Forever-Wild



Do you ever wonder what happens to a property after Northeast Wilderness Trust protects it? We spend a great deal of time talking about why a property deserves to be wilderness when we are fundraising to protect land—but when the deal is done, what happens next? Can we sit back and relax, knowing that another slice of the wild has been protected?

Not a chance. The bulk of our work protecting land as wilderness happens once a property has been conserved. We cannot keep a property safe and wild merely by holding its deed; we must actively protect it from all that would restrict its freedom. The most important way we do this is with boots on the ground. With the help of an incredible team of volunteers and stewardship staff, we visit every single property at least once a year, and usually much more.

Northeast Wilderness Trust marks and maintains property boundaries to prevent neighbors who are clearing their views from straying over the line with their chainsaws or loppers. Well-marked boundaries also help keep people from building trails into the property, but even with clear signage, this occasionally still happens. In these cases, we act to block the trespass, especially if the trails are for motorized use (such as ATVs or dirt bikes).

Stewardship staff and volunteers remove, and properly dispose of, quite a lot of trash every year. From litter dropped on roadsides to intentional dumping, we have removed and disposed of everything from household appliances to moldy furniture to vehicle parts.

It may seem counter-intuitive, but it takes a great deal of effort to let wild places simply be wild. And thanks to Northeast Wilderness Trust’s community of supporters and volunteers, we are up to the challenge of “forever.”



Board of Directors

Welcome

Northeast Wilderness Trust's Board of Directors guides the overarching direction of the organization, and contributes expertise, ideas, and time to further the mission of conserving forever-wild landscapes. In 2020, the Wilderness Trust welcomed Carol Fox, Daniel Hildreth, and Brian Tijan to the Board of Directors.

Carol Fox | *New York*

Carol is the General Manager for Global Accounting Firms at Thomson Reuters in New York City. She received a BA in Political Science from Yale University and an MBA from the Darden School at the University of Virginia. She is also a certified Master Composter. Carol spends much of her free time in the Adirondacks with her partner.



Daniel Hildreth | *Maine*

Daniel is board chair of Diversified Communications, a family-owned trade media company based in Portland. He serves on the board of Acadia Center, a clean energy non-profit, and on the Maine advisory board of the Conservation Law Foundation. In the past, he has also served on the board of Maine Audubon. He and his wife live in Falmouth, Maine.



Brian Tijan | *Vermont*

Brian is an entrepreneur in the hospitality and insurance industries. Previously, he worked for Deutsche Bank and Credit Suisse in their fixed income divisions, and for Latham & Watkins as a finance attorney. Brian lives in Underhill, Vermont with his wife and a menagerie of animals, and spends as much time as he can in the wilderness.



Giving Back

Seeing the Forest for the Trees

Just as healthy forests rely on a diversity of resources, support for an organization comes in many forms, all of which are essential. Annual and monthly gifts are like sunlight and water—they provide steady, reliable income that supports day-to-day functions. Planned gifts are much like soil and bedrock; they are a crucial foundation for long-term health and stability. And, they provide a lasting wilderness legacy for future generations.

The **Ancient Forest Society** is a growing group of community members who have committed a planned gift to Northeast Wilderness Trust. In making the Wilderness Trust the beneficiary of assets in a will, individual retirement account (IRA), life insurance policy, or charitable gift annuity, you too can leave an enduring legacy of wilderness in the Northeast.

In 2020, the Wilderness Trust received a generous bequest through an anonymous donor. The power of this gift enabled us to complete several conservation projects, launch an operating endowment, and grow our staff. This planned gift was transformational and ensures a wilder future for nature and people.

If you have included the Wilderness Trust in your planned giving, please reach out so we may thank you and formally welcome you to the Ancient Forest Society. For more information about making a planned gift, contact Cathleen Maine, Development Director, at cathleen@newildernesstrust.org or at 802.224.1000.

Thank you, Ancient Forest Society!



Northeast Wilderness Trust's **Forever-Wild Circle** provides steady support through monthly donations. Join the Circle today to receive our custom 2021 bandanna, featuring a wood frog, red eft, and eastern newt by Vermont artist Rachel Sargent Mirus. *Already a Forever-Wild Circle member?* Increase your gift by \$5 and we'll send you a bandanna in gratitude.

Rewilding from Local to Global

“Rewilding means helping nature heal. Rewilding means giving space back to wildlife and returning wildlife back to the land, as well as to the seas. Rewilding means the mass recovery of ecosystems and the life-supporting functions they provide. Rewilding means restoring and protecting specific places—on land and in the ocean—where nature is free to direct the ebb and flow of life. Rewilding is about allowing natural processes to shape whole ecosystems so that they work in all their colorful complexity to give life to the land and the seas. Such wild lands and waters are critical to sustain ecological vitality by supporting intact food webs and natural processes. Rewilding is also about the way we think. It is about understanding that we are one species among many, bound together in an intricate web of life . . .”

—from the “Global Charter for Rewilding the Earth”

Northeast Wilderness Trust is a co-author and initial endorser of the Charter, which was adopted by the 2020 World Wilderness Congress.



Grand, aspirational ideas can become reality through myriad small actions. Democratic governance at a national scale, for example, depends upon millions of individual decisions by citizens.

Likewise, conserving at least half of Earth in interconnected systems of protected natural areas will come to life through the grassroots, bottom-up actions of people, groups, and communities. Acre by acre, parcel by parcel, rewilding happens when people who love the land work to create the conditions in which nature may rebound.

Acts of ecological citizenship are available to almost everyone. This work manifests in habitat set aside for shy and sensitive

wildlife to be free and secure; in initiatives to restore missing species or strengthen natural processes; in movements to grant legal personhood to nature; and in conversations that open hearts and minds to the promise of rewilding.

Northeast Wilderness Trust's participation in international conservation frameworks such as the Nature Needs Half network and the Global Alliance for Rewilding is not merely lip service. Our tangible, on-the-ground successes demonstrate how engaged citizens can advance the cause of beauty, resilience, and integrity in a particular place, thus benefiting people and all our wild kin in the community of life.



Ambassador Preserves PLACES TO REWILD THE MIND

Many who care deeply about wilderness conservation face a paradox. How do we nurture a relationship with wild nature without “loving it to death,” as evidenced by crammed parking lots and busy trailheads in the Adirondacks, the White Mountains, and Acadia? How do we help foster a profound connection to—and compassion for—the larger web of life to which we belong, while still allowing sensitive species the freedom to live undisturbed by human impact?

While there are no simple answers, Northeast Wilderness Trust established Ambassador Preserves as a way to respond to this quandary. An Ambassador Preserve is a representative landscape for wild nature, where a small parking area, kiosk, and footpath allow for easier access—always designed with preserving the land’s wild character as the top priority. Currently, the Wilderness Trust has four designated Ambassador Preserves: Muddy Pond in

Massachusetts; Binney Hill in New Hampshire; Alder Stream in Maine; and Eagle Mountain in New York. In coming years, such Preserves will be established in Connecticut and Vermont as well.

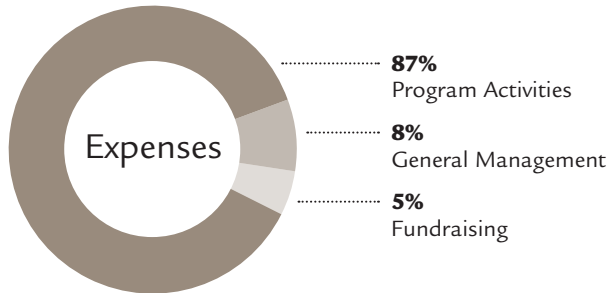
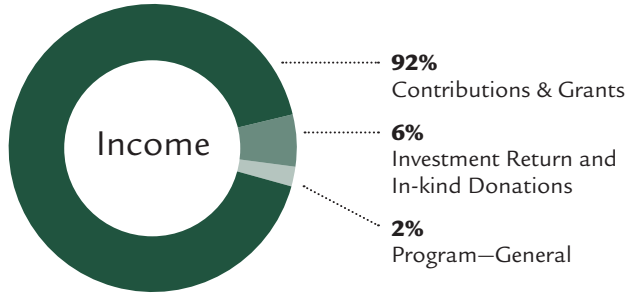
At Ambassador Preserves, in-person activities and interpretive materials engage people with the philosophy and experience of wild places. Kiosks welcome visitors and depict the process of a young forest maturing into an old-growth forest, or in the case of Muddy Pond, showcase a rare ecosystem. New ‘Rewilding Photo Points’ allow visitors to take photos to help capture and monitor how these wild landscapes naturally evolve over time.

In contrast, other Preserves and Sanctuaries owned by the Wilderness Trust are not designed for recreation, even though they are open to the public for respectful visitation. They are places where nature reigns, and people are mere visitors who must meet the steep slopes, buggy bogs, or thick ranks of spruce on the land’s terms, not theirs.

To learn more about Ambassador Preserves and other wildlands protected by Northeast Wilderness Trust, visit newildernesstrust.org/places



Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2019–20



Northeast Wilderness Trust Corporation was incorporated in 2002 in Vermont as a 501(c)3 organization. All contributions to the Wilderness Trust are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Audited financial statements available upon request.

Summary Statement of Financial Position *at June 30, 2020*

Assets

Cash	1,457,075
Pledges receivable	1,574,275
Conservation land	7,284,194
Investments	3,409,573
Other assets	1,243,731

Total Assets **\$14,968,848**

Liabilities & Net Assets

Accounts payable and accrued expenses 334,098

Net assets

Without donor restrictions	
<i>Undesignated</i>	9,007,103
<i>Board designated, stewardship fund</i>	3,109,559
With donor restrictions	2,518,088

14,634,750

Total Liabilities & Net Assets **\$14,968,848**



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Joe Falconeiri
15 (middle), 20

Maine Conservation Corps
15 (top)

Larry Master
3, 7, 14, 18

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Cover, 11

Shelby Perry
5 (rose pogonia), 6, 10, 13, 21

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12, 15 (bottom)

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19, back cover

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*Northeast Wilderness Trust conserves forever-wild
landscapes for nature and people.*

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Common Mergansers *Brendan Wiltse* | Yellow-spotted salamander (front) © Susan C. Morse

