



Judy Record Conservation Fund

Stewardship of the Natural Landscape

Trustees: Roger Wrubel, *Executive Director* • Eugene Record, *Treasurer* • David O'Neill, *President, Mass Audubon*

Judy Record Conservation Fund 2023 Annual Report

The Judy Record Conservation Fund (JRFund) awarded four new grants in 2023 totaling \$85,950. Projects included conservation properties in Belmont and Waltham. Additionally, the Fund continued to support ecological restoration and tree planting projects at Lone Tree Hill Conservation Area in Belmont (\$5,598). The Fund made a \$2,000 donation to the Belmont Citizens Forum to support their unique monthly conservation supportive newsletter.

Below are updates on the four new and two continuing projects the JRFund supported in 2023. There is also a final report on a three-year Japanese knotweed control project at the Belmont Public Library and a year-end financial report.

1. Biodiversity Builders Pilot Program (\$18,480).

In its second year, Biodiversity Builders expanded from 8 internships in 2022 to 15 in 2023. They came from Arlington (5), Belmont (7) and Cambridge (3) to learn the importance of: biodiversity; landscape restoration; native plant landscaping; business and entrepreneurship; and invasive plant identification and removal.



The JRFund paid the salaries of the 12 students from Belmont and Arlington, while the Cambridge interns were paid by the city's Summer Youth Program.

From July 5 - August 11, students worked 3-4 hours per day for a total of 16-20 hours a week. Locations included local conservation areas such as Alewife Reservation, MAS Habitat, Mt Auburn Cemetery and Rock Meadow and public

greenspaces included Spy Pond and the grounds around the Ed Burns Skate Park. Biodiversity Builder students used a teaching garden in the Alewife Reservation to collect biotic data, identify plant native species and control invasive plants plus



aggressive native plants (*Solidago* spp.). Each week students devoted time to research and create independent projects, which they presented at the end of the session. They also organized and ran a successful native plant sale during week 5 of the program.

During the summer the students planted four native plant gardens, cleaned up and labeled eight existing native plant gardens, participated in seven invasive plant pulls, learned how to design native plant gardens and generated templates for two scenarios: a full sun sidewalk strip and part shade garden. They designed three home gardens, as part of independent projects, and sold 201 plants at their native plant sale.

2. Land Stewardship Internships, Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, Belmont (\$19,470)

Kaeleen Chen as a first-year student at Wellesley College, started her internship in January 2023 and finished up her 500 hours in mid-August. Megan Schestag is a rising sophomore at the University of Vermont who started in June and completed her commitment in August. They participated in ecological restoration projects, removing invasive plants and planting natives. They learned how to care for the Habitat goats and supervise goat volunteers, assisted with multi-generational volunteer groups in a variety of stewardship projects including tending Habitat's gardens and trail maintenance. Both Kaeleen and Megan played integral roles in the Habitat community, acquiring valuable skills and connections, and affirming their long-term interest in conservation and environmental education. Please read their reflections on their Habitat experiences in Appendix A. There are funds remaining from 2023 internships, which will be used for internships in 2024.

3. Waltham Land Trust, Western Greenway-Mass Central Rail Trail Connection (\$8,000)

The Western Greenway is a popular seven-mile off-road hiking and biking trail in Belmont, Lexington, and Waltham. The current terminus of the trail in Waltham is at Beaver and Lyman Streets adjacent to Bentley University and the Lyman Estate, owned by Historic New England. The Waltham Land Trust (WLT) has been working with Bentley and Historic New England to continue the Trail through those properties to connect with the Mass Central Rail Trail, a partly completed 104-mile multi-use trail from Boston to Northampton, MA. The JRFund grant adds to funds already raised by WLT through the Mass Trails Program for engineering work needed to determine the best location for a pedestrian bridge crossing Chester Brook, survey the trail location on the Lyman Estate, identify required permits, and ensure ADA compliance. Actual construction of the trail and bridge will be completed as the next phase of the project.

4. Pine Allee Tree Maintenance, Belmont, Lone Tree Hill, Belmont (\$40,000).

The Fund issued our largest single grant, ever, to the Land Management Committee for Lone Tree Hill for maintenance in the Pine Allee. The work entailed: crown reduction of 45 trees to prevent storm damage, pruning back and/or removal of smaller encroaching trees to maintain the original footprint of the Allee and to ensure that newly planted trees have sufficient space and light to develop; removal of the tops of trees with significant structural decay, while the lower part of the trunks are left as snags with wildlife habitat value.



5. Meadow and Pine Allee Restoration at Lone Tree Hill, Belmont (\$5,598)

In Year 4 of this ecological restoration project, the JRFund, as we had in years 1-3, agreed to provide a 1:1 match for expenditures made by the Land Management Committee for Lone Tree Hill (LTH). In 2023, Parterre Ecological Services performed the necessary follow-up invasive plant treatment in the project areas.

Now that the dominance of invasives species has been relieved, native species including Pennsylvania sedge, tall, Canada and rough goldenrods, chokecherry, Virginia creeper, false Solomon's seal, common wood sedge, blackberry, wild sarsaparilla, Jack in the pulpit, Solomon's seal, and staghorn sumac are making a comeback.



On Earth Day 2023, the Belmont Citizens Forum (BCF), in conjunction with the Judy Record Conservation Fund, held its ninth annual Lone Tree Hill Volunteer Day. Several dozen volunteers rolled up their sleeves and planted 350 plugs of young native plants in the Great Meadow

and in reclaimed meadow areas of Belmont's Lone Tree Hill Conservation Area. The volunteers planted slender leaf mountain mint, short-toothed mountain mint, wild bergamot (bee balm), white



wood aster, blue wood aster, New England aster, and butterfly weed—50 plant plugs of each species.

Volunteers also planted 40 white pine saplings as part of the multi-year tree replacement restoration project, which started, with JRFund support, in the Pine Alle at LTH in 2017. The 2024 planting marked the completion of the replacement of all the missing mature trees in the Allee. Future plantings will be needed as mature trees succumb or saplings fail to take.

6. Belmont Public Library Japanese Knotweed Control Along Wellington Brook (2022 grant; work started in 2021)

This was the final year of a three-year project of repeated removal and herbicide treatment of a Belmont town-owned property at the rear of the Belmont Public Library that borders Wellington Brook. The results have been dramatic. Areas at the rear



of the library that were blocked by knotweed are now open. The library has provided chairs, benches and tables for library users to enjoy the shaded area along Wellington Brook.

Financial Report: Judy Record Conservation Fund 2023

Payments made on Behalf of the Judith K. Record Fund

Activity:	Amount		From 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2023	
		Date	Vendor	Amount
Beginning Balance 1/1/23	\$959,047	1/24/2023	TOWN OF BELMONT-1/2 CHARGE	\$250
		4/30/2023	FY23 HABITAT INTERNSHIPS	\$19,470
Gifts Transferred to Endowment	\$800	5/19/2023	TOWN OF BELMONT-NORTH CREEK 50% LTH PLUGS	\$350
		5/19/2023	GREGORY GOLDSMITH-EAGLE SCOUT PROJ(2022)	\$1,635
Dividends & Interest :	\$8,549	5/19/2023	BELMONT CITIZEN FORUM-DONATION	\$2,000
		5/19/2023	ROGER P. WRUBEL-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STIPEND	\$5,000
Endowment Management Fees:	-\$1,334	6/30/2023	BIODIVERSITY BUILDERS YOUTH PROGRAM	\$18,480
		6/30/2023	TOWN OF BELMONT-50 % OF PARTERRE ECOLOGICAL	\$1,728
Transfer for Expenses: (see list)	-105,182	8/8/2023	TOWN OF BELMONT-TREE WORK PINE ALLEE	\$40,000
		11/15/2023	TOWN OF BELMONT-JR FUND 50% LTH	\$3,270
Market Change:	\$95,685	11/30/2023	WALTHAM LAND TRUST: WESTERN GREENWAY-MCRT CONNECTION	\$8,000
		11/30/2023	ROGER P. WRUBEL-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STIPEND	\$5,000
Ending Balance 12/31/23	\$957,564		TOTAL EXPENSES thru 12/31/23	\$105,182

The Judy Record Conservation Fund began 2023 with a balance of \$959,047. The Fund had income from donations, interest, and dividends and investments of \$105,034, expenses of \$106,516 which included endowment management fees. The ending balance was \$957,564 on December 31, 2023.

The Judy Record Conservation Fund (JRFund) was established in 2001 by family, friends, and members of the McLean Open Space Alliance and the Belmont Land Trust, who wished to honor Judy's contributions to land conservation. The JRFund provides grants to support maintaining, restoring, and acquiring conservation lands in the Town of Belmont and the neighboring communities of Lexington, Cambridge, Waltham, Watertown, and Arlington. In addition, the Fund considers projects, within conservation lands, that further the development of multi-use paths, off road hiking and biking trails and universally accessible trails. The JRFund also supports environmental education programs, internships, and fellowships. Visit our website: <https://www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/wildlife-sanctuaries/habitat/judy-record-conservation-fund>.

To apply for a grant, submit a one-page letter of inquiry describing the project to the Fund's Executive Director, Roger Wrubel (roger_wrubel@msn.com). Applicants will be notified whether the Directors feel the proposal merits further consideration and invite you to submit a full proposal. You may email Roger to discuss your proposal ideas.

This Annual Report was prepared by Roger Wrubel, Executive Director and reviewed and approved by fellow trustees of the JRFund, Eugene Record and David O'Neill.

Appendix A:

1. Habitat Internship Reflections, Winter-Summer 2023: Kaeleen Chen

The first time I came to Habitat was when I started volunteering here in June of 2021. I started with the Thursday morning Garden group. There, I began to learn more about the sanctuary, and I fell in love with it immediately. Over that summer, I volunteered a lot and became a Goat Tender. In my free time, I would come and help out here, so I was overjoyed when I got the opportunity to start working as a Land Steward Intern in January of 2023.

During my time interning here at Habitat, I learned many valuable lessons and discovered more about myself as a person. It is my dream to become a veterinarian and working with Habitat's goat herd has been an invaluable experience, learning how to interact and take care of them. Working with them showed me that I want to work with farm animals.

Learning about the land and how a sanctuary is managed was a wonderful opportunity. I loved walking the trails in the mornings, making sure they were in good condition, and exploring the property on my own. Being able to watch nature around me was incredible, from seeing a red fox to ants milking aphids to a red-tailed hawk carrying a rabbit. I learned about invasive species such as bittersweet and buckthorn and their impact on the environment and helped in the removal of them. It was a great opportunity to learn about the ecosystems around me. Talking to others, whether it be colleagues or visitors, was always a highlight of my day. I learned so much from the others I worked with, from how to trim goat hooves to how the removal of the invasive tree of heaven is difficult because of the runners the plant sends out when cut.

My time at Habitat has brought me many valuable opportunities that widened my knowledge and gave me experiences that I would never have had. I loved my time here and hope to continue helping in the future.

2. Habitat Internship Reflections, Spring-Summer 2023: Megan Shestag

As someone who has always loved and felt very connected to nature, Habitat felt like home from the moment I first stepped foot on the property. This summer, I was looking for an opportunity to gain more experience in my field of study (Wildlife and Fisheries Biology), along with the chance to explore and learn the ecology of an area where I'd never spent much time.

Ever since my first day of work, the Habitat family welcomed me with open arms. The entire property team and even lots of summer camp/education staff quickly became a resource for me, both professionally and personally. It has been so impactful for me to spend the summer surrounded by down-to-earth people who also appreciate and value the things I find most important in life. Even though the people of Habitat come from a diverse array of backgrounds and different life stages, everyone is brought together by shared goals of caring for our natural

world and inspiring a deeper appreciation and respect for all things wild in the community and beyond. I've enjoyed tackling new challenges every day and working as a team to keep finding better and better solutions.

A look back on my internship would simply not be complete without a mention of the goats. Habitat's herd brings light to my life every single day, and it warms my heart to see how many volunteers dedicate their time to making sure our animals are happy and healthy. During this summer, I took on the responsibility of educating campers and visitors on our goats and what they do. These conversations led to many others about alternative practices for ecological management and cleaner solutions to environmental problems. As we worked our way through the summer with fewer goat tender volunteers than usual, I was actually grateful for the extra responsibility property staff took on in caring for the goats' daily needs. Building trust with the animals gave me more and more confidence in my position as time went on. Kudzu and I have an extra special bond, so when she got sick partway through the summer, I tried anything to help her feel better. I fanned her with a dustpan when she refused to leave the hottest corner of the hut, and I sang ABBA until she felt well enough (or bothered enough) to get up and walk around. The next day I collected all of her favorite fresh greens from the meadow and brought her a special salad to see if she would eat. I never mind waiting ages for Linus to finish his Ammonium chloride, either, because it makes me happy to know I'm keeping them healthy and comfortable. I will miss all parts of Habitat dearly, but I think I will miss the goats the most.

Nature is my safe place, my muse and my teacher. In my life, I hope to learn as much as I can about the world around me and the creatures who live in it. Considering everything, being outside provides for me one of the most important parts of my Habitat experience, giving back to the land. I have learned so much about what it means to manage natural space on a rapidly changing planet. There's nothing more gratifying than clearing an entire patch of bittersweet or wrestling a buckthorn plant taller than you out of the wet ground. Spreading native meadow seeds feels unmistakably like a new beginning. This summer was unusually hot and unusually rainy, an attempt by mother nature to humble us, that definitely worked on me. Though, no matter how sweaty or soaked I became, putting Habitat back together after a storm always brought me peace.

Finally, my favorite moments of all came when I got to share my love for the outdoors. After a morning at Weeks meadow with a few volunteers and a couple of goats, one volunteer said to me that I was like her own personal nature camp. By just pointing out exciting things when I noticed them and sharing whatever knowledge I had, I was able to change someone's world and provide an outlet for them to form their own connection and relationship with nature. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart to everyone who made my Habitat summer happen and everyone I worked with and learned from along the way. It was everything I could have asked for and so much more.