



Judy Record Conservation Fund

Stewardship of the Natural Landscape

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

Judy Record Conservation Fund 2025 Annual Report DRAFT

The Judy Record Conservation Fund (JRFund) awarded six grants in 2025 totaling \$ 290,763. Projects included conservation properties in Belmont, Arlington and Cambridge. In addition a \$2,000 donation was made to the Belmont Citizens Forum to support their monthly newsletter, which informs the public on local land use and quality of life issues.

Here are summaries of the 2025 grant funded projects:

1. Biodiversity Builders Internship Program (\$20,020):



In its fourth year Biodiversity Builders engaged 15 high school student interns: Arlington (3), Belmont (7), and Cambridge (5). The students worked through summer's heat and unpredictable weather to build biodiversity in our local landscapes, collaborate with peers and community members, and sell 359 plants (the most on record)

at their student sale. The students worked alongside two College Mentors and a Curriculum Assistant. The grant paid for most of the salaries of the 10 student interns as well as the salaries of two college mentors.

Interns worked 20 hours per week for 6 weeks at locations in Cambridge, Arlington, Lexington and Belmont. Highlights include: removing water chestnuts (by canoe) at Arlington Reservoir with the Mystic River Watershed Association; kayaking along the Charles River with Mass Audubon Magazine Beach staff; co-hosting the 2nd annual Cambridge Moth Ball with several environmental groups at night in

Fresh Pond's Kingsley Park; leading youth-engaging activities at Belmont Farmers Market; meeting with leaders of citizen science projects while touring research sites and native plant gardens at Mt. Auburn Cemetery; removing invasive plants at Mass Audubon Habitat Sanctuary and Belmont's Lone Tree Hill Conservation Area; relocating the Belmont High School Native Plant Garden to make room for a Miyawaki Forest); maintaining and labeling gardens at First Parish UU in Arlington; planting, maintaining and observing the gardens at the BB's Alewife Showcase Gardens; and organizing a successful, student-run plant sale.

2. Entrance and Accessibility Improvements at the Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, Belmont: (\$200,000).



This grant, part of a larger project to make entry for visitors to Habitat more welcoming, safer for pedestrians, and more accessible, funded surveying, design, engineering, and construction of a meandering pedestrian path, leading off the parking lot to a redesigned ACA-

compliant ramp and fully accessible entrance to the Habitat Visitor Center. The grant also funded native plantings along the path and around the front entrance. Additional funding, from other sources, allowed for the renovation of the landscaped circle, fronting the visitor center, making the Georgian-style mansion visible, as it had been when first install in the early 20th century.

3. Land Stewardship Internships, Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, Belmont (\$20,768)

This year, the Fund supported two interns, Ian Miller & Ethan Cohen. Having them on staff showed what makes this internship opportunity so special: with Ian, the ability to deepen an existing relationship with Habitat that he had fostered through camp; and with Ethan, the opportunity to introduce someone brand new to Habitat. With support from these two interns, we rebuilt the goat structures to be better suited for an aging herd, began repairs on our All-Persons Trail, pulled lots of invasive plants, while planting many native plant species, and hosted many volunteers, including weekly drop-in volunteers, one-off school and corporate groups, and long-standing individual volunteers.

4. Ecological Restoration and Tree Planting at Lone Tree Hill, Belmont (\$17,175)

In Year 6 of this ecological restoration project, the JRFund continues to provide a 1:1 match for expenditures made by the Land Management Committee for Lone Tree Hill (LTH). In 2025, Parterre Ecological Services performed the necessary follow-up invasive plant treatment mechanical removal and herbicide treatments in the project areas. The JRFund paid half the cost of this work (\$4,900) with the Land Management Committee for Lone Tree Hill paying the other half.

Some of the native species now observed in the areas cleared of invasive species include 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.



On Saturday, April 26, a cold, rainy day, the Belmont Citizens Forum (BCF), in conjunction with the Judy Record Conservation Fund, held its eleventh annual Lone Tree Hill Volunteer Day. With the assistance of Tree Specialist workers and some hardy volunteers 50 white pine tree and 10 red cedar trees were planted on a hillside along the Meadow Edge Trail. Before the event Parterre Ecological mowed and cleared the hill of invasive plants to make room for the new planting. The JRFund paid 100% of the cost of this project (\$12,275).

**5. Granite Apron for the Judy Record Bench at Lone Tree Hill:
(\$5,800)**



Before



After

Heavy use the area in front of the Judy Record Memorial Bench at the Lone Tree Hill Conservation Area resulted in worn grass and compacted soil. Landscape architect Joe Hibbard designed a granite apron for protections and to improve the aesthetics of the bench, by drawing the

bench and surrounding boulders together. Joe worked with mason Ciaran O'Connor in choosing the stone and installing the apron.

6. Mass Audubon Sustainable Landscaping Certificate Program (27,000)

Mass Audubon's Sustainable Landscaping Certificate Program launched on January 13, 2026, with 110 participants. Thirty-eight participants received a partial or full tuition waiver from the JRFund grant. The students include individuals currently working (or aspiring to work) in landscaping businesses, representatives from local garden clubs seeking to update their practices, municipal employees looking to incorporate lower maintenance and healthier landscaping approaches, students and Terra Corps service members, and home gardeners looking to convert some of their lawn areas to support wildlife and be more climate resilient. The 10-month program is currently in the first phase, containing seven bi-monthly content presentations. The second phase offers hands-on experience and runs from April-June.

Judy Record Conservation Fund Financial Report 2025

		Payments made on Behalf of the Judith K. Record Fund		
Activity:	Amount	From 1/1/2025 to 12/31/2025		
		Date	Vendor	Amount
Beginning Balance 1/1/25	\$965,902	2025-03-31	JKR to Habitat Accesib Project	200,000.00
		2025-03-31	Internship at Habitat	20,768.00
Gifts to Endowment :	\$700	2025-04-18	TINY SEED PROJECT 2025 BIODIVBUILDERS	20,020.00
		2025-04-25	TOWN OF BELMONT FOREStMOWING	5,250.00
Dividends & Interest :	\$4,452	2025-05-07	ROGER P. WRUBEL-Director Stipend	5,000.00
		2025-05-09	BELMONT CITIZENS FORUM DONATION	2,000.00
Endowment Manage Fee:	-\$1,032	2025-05-21	LONE TREE HILL 4/26 VOIDay	7,025.00
		2025-11-24	ROGER P. WRUBEL-EXECUTIVE DIR STIP	5,000.00
Transfer for Expenses	-\$302,763	2025-11-24	TOWN OF BELMONT-50% OF PARTERRE INV # 24192	2,275.00
		2025-11-25	TOWN OF BELMONT-50% OF PARTERRE INV # 23158	2,625.00
Market Change:	\$108,504	2025-11-30	MAS Sustainable Landscaping Cert Prog	27,000.00
		2025-12-18	O'CONNOR MASONRY-BENCH FOR JUDY RECORD	5,800.00
Ending Balance 12/31/25	\$775,762	TOTAL EXPENSES thru 12/31/25		302,763.00

The Judy Record Conservation Fund began 2025 with a balance of \$965,902. The Fund had income from donations, interest & dividends, and investment gains of \$113,656. The Fund recorded 303,795 in expenses for grant awards, the director's stipend and an endowment management fee. The ending balance was \$775,762 on December 31, 2025.

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 and the Town of Belmont. The JRFund provides grants to support maintaining, restoring, or 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 the Trustees of the JRFund, Eugene Record and David O'Neill.

Appendix: Habitat Intern Reflections

Habitat: A Name, Place, & Community

Ethan Cohen, 2025 Land Steward



I have always wondered how Habitat got its name. I bet someone has the answer, but I left without asking. The name bears a story. Someone traversed its paths long enough until a burst of insight spoke a name that feels almost perfect.

Yet I wonder what led to the Habitat we know today, long before it received its name. A few hundred years ago, Habitat was called something else by the Indigenous societies that previously lived here for millenia. What Habitat meant to people for thousands of years remains lost, but its integrity as a natural system lives on.

As I neared the top of Belmont Hill on my first day at Habitat, its name began to speak to me. After rounds of bumper cars through seemingly endless urbania, I was spat out into a green oasis teeming with life. I parked, got out of the car, and slammed the door shut, its vigor instantly absorbed by the peace that engulfed me. I met Hannah, whose soul was warm and calm. She showed me the property with surprising modesty and the assistance of impromptu appearances by wild visitors.

With time, my perception shifted, viewing the sanctuary as being a habitat for wildlife to a habitat for people too. This idea started with three coworkers who share my job: Kayleigh, Ian, and Erika. Each bear incredible interpersonal strengths when connecting with visitors. Through their actions, they taught me how to come out of my shell and open myself up to others. Through conversations, I realized that I did not live in isolation—a feeling that often followed me in the urban landscapes at home. I began to feel more interconnected to others, bonded by a passion and drive to protect the Earth.

While I may never know the story behind the name or the names that came before Habitat, Habitat—both as an utterance and place—continues to shape me. Habitat was a home, a family, a tutelage, and a refuge within the dense

urban matrix. As I advance my education and career in conservation, I am reminded of the value Habitat placed on human connection, listening, learning, attention, and stewardship of socioecological systems we take part in. Just as names encapsulate the legacy of place, place encapsulates the legacy of its dwellers. Thank you Habitat for letting me dwell and begin a new chapter.

About the author:

Ethan Cohen is a senior at Northeastern University studying Environmental & Sustainability Science. He worked as a Seasonal Land Steward at Mass Audubon's Habitat with an endowment from the Judy Record Conservation Fund. His work lasted from May to November of 2025 and focused on property upkeep, invasive species mitigation, goat husbandry, & volunteer assistance. He would like to pursue a career in conservation, following his interests in landscape restoration and wildlife medicine.

Ian Miller



2025 Land Stewardship Intern

My time at Habitat started as a camper way back in 2006 but my interest in working on the property staff really started at Fall Trails Day in 2024. It fell on the weekend before election day and I remember feeling existentially nervous for the state of the country and the world. As everyone gathered to kick off the day, Scott McCue made a brief speech that had a big impact on me. He acknowledged the anxiety in the air (which I thought was brave already) and went on to speak on the power of

working outside with like-minded people on tasks that make a tangible impact. The rest of that day we put those words to good use and for just a moment my fear was soothed. I knew I wanted to get more involved in Habitat.

Throughout the past year I have worked hard to put Scott's words into practice each day. I have worked outside in all kinds of weather. When I

was substitute teaching one of my biggest challenges was being inside all the time, especially when the weather started warming up. This year I really enjoyed getting to work throughout all four seasons. When I started my tasks included shoveling snow and chipping ice in the parking lot. I remember slipping and sliding down the path to the goat compost pile and having to bundle up every day. Next came the first signs of spring and with that the first invasives of the year; garlic mustard. I enjoyed plopping myself down on the warming ground and pulling every garlic mustard in reach. We also were able to start taking the goats out for walks and browsing which in turn allowed us to deconstruct the goats old house and start rebuilding. As June came around, I assumed my second role as a camp counselor for my tenth summer. Through summer rains and sweltering heat I led groups of children around the property I had gotten to know even better. Finally, after a week of camp cleanup I was back with the property staff to close out my hours. As temperatures cooled and leaves began to fall we worked to complete the goats housing, get plants in ground at the newly completed front circle, and smooth out the aging all-persons trail.

The next tenet of Scott's speech was working with like-minded people. This has been the most important part of the year for me. The team at Habitat has been hugely important to keeping my motivation and spirits up throughout a challenging year of news. They have been flexible and supportive of my needs and kind to me everyday. They have been a joy to work alongside and of course eat lunch with everyday. There is a real family atmosphere to the staff at Habitat. What should also be mentioned is the extensive community of volunteers Habitat has fostered over the years. Both the goat tenders and Garden Group have been great sources of joy to work with.

Lastly are the tasks with tangible impact. From pulling invasives, to building goat huts, to planting in the front circle, to woodchipping trails, the tasks the property team works on almost always have a visible impact on the area we work in. I also think of the less visible but just as tangible impacts we have. One that comes to mind is the corporate or school volunteer groups we host. It has been a pleasure to connect people to our work and the outdoors. I believe these volunteer sessions can have a ripple effect just like Fall Trails Day 2024 had on me.

Jane Goodall said that hope is critical because hopelessness leads to apathy which leads to inaction which leads to no positive change or worse. My year at Habitat both helped me ward off apathy and gave me a

roadmap to continue a career in this field. I am deeply grateful to Hannah for being flexible with my scheduling and giving me a great opportunity. I hope to work at Habitat again in the future, but if I don't I am proud of the work I've done, and I look forward to staying connected with the people who helped me do it.

Ian