



THE WREN

September 2026



Farmers as Land Stewards, Page 4

Wayne Hall

Accelerating the Pace of Land Protection

Protecting land from development is one of the best ways to create a healthier planet, mitigate climate change, preserve wildlife habitat, and help communities thrive. This is why SVT has ramped up our pace of land protection – and we aren't slowing down.

Thanks to the support of our partners in conservation, members, and community, we have protected just as much land in this past year as the previous four years combined. Since 2022, we purchased 4 properties and 11 conservation restrictions, totalling 585 acres of permanently protected land. And in the spring of 2026 alone, we helped permanently protect 150 acres in our region:

Ellis-Walker, a 34-acre property in Westborough, with the Town of Westborough

Forty Caves Expansion, 11 acres in Berlin with the help of our supporters

Forest Heights, 105 acres in Upton, with Metacomet Land Trust and the Town of Upton

Read more about these newly protected spaces on page 3.

But there's more work to do and more land to protect. We have identified over 45,000 acres of unprotected open land in our region that is the highest priority for conservation. These lands provide critical habitat, preserve natural infrastructure, maintain essential farmland, and protect public health. SVT prioritizes protecting lands that will have the biggest benefit for nature and people, using the four following criteria:

Habitat for Biodiversity: wildlands where a rich diversity of plants and animals still thrive and blocks of open space that provide safe passage between habitats.

Natural Services: open lands that give us all a healthy place to live by trapping carbon and slowing climate change, providing shade that cools our communities, directing stormwater away from homes and roads, and keeping our water safe to drink.

Community Conservation: public greenspace that addresses inequities in access to nature, because we all belong outside and we all deserve to benefit from the services nature provides.

Farmland: working farms that feed our communities and strengthen the local economy.

Now we have our sights on additional priority properties, but we can't do it alone. You can help SVT continue our lightning pace of conservation by advocating for land protection projects at your Town meeting; reminding Town officials that protecting land is a wise investment in the health, safety, and financial well-being of their communities; donating to SVT so we can continue this work; and joining us to celebrate and care for our natural world together. We can all have stronger communities and a healthier planet – and conserve land a lot faster – when we work together to protect our open spaces.

Stewarding the Land We Protect

SVT's work doesn't end once the land is protected. In December 2025, we purchased Miscoe Woods, a 108-acre property that spans the Upton-Mendon town line. But our work is far from over. If we were to just walk away, the bittersweet and other invasive plants would take over and deer would eat the small tree seedlings that are regenerating the forest.

So, we are starting a major habitat restoration project at Miscoe woods this fall. We will control invasive plants, protect native tree seedlings, and continue allowing deer hunting to keep the population at an ecologically sustainable level.

SVT is committed to stewarding the lands in our care forever. See the center spread for updates on our other stewardship projects.

Turn to page 6 to learn more about SVT's efforts to connect people with nature.

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youtube.com/SVTsightings

SVT is committed to being an equitable and inclusive organization that works in partnership with the full diversity of people in the region to ensure everyone feels welcome to enjoy local natural areas and participate in the efforts to care for these lands.

Sudbury Valley Trustees

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Resourceful and Ready

Davnet Conway, Executive Director

Summer is transitioning to fall and squirrels are busy collecting and caching nuts. Their winter survival depends on planning ahead for easy access to these stores.

As we approach the mid-point of our 2024-2029 strategic plan, we are reviewing our plans and, most importantly, our exceptional work accelerating the pace of land protection.

Our approach to identifying land for protection remains the same. We prioritize land for biodiversity protection and wildlife corridors, farmland protection, nature's services, and conservation supporting healthy communities.

But our tactics have shifted. Moving quickly on land protection projects depends on available funding sources. Over the past few years, several generous bequests have provided a pool of funds for land protection, helping us dramatically increase our pace. But waiting projects in our pipeline far exceed even these significant resources.

To ensure we can sustain this momentum, SVT's Board of Directors established a new Land Protection Fund, to support land acquisition when these bequests are fully depleted. We have preliminarily funded this with over \$2M from investment earnings and small bequests. We have also been working with the Nature for Mass Coalition to help pass the Protect Water and Nature ballot initiative. This would secure as much as \$100 million each year for land protection, clean water, healthy forests, and local parks **without raising taxes**. **We encourage you to vote YES this November!**

Our work doesn't end once land is protected. In this issue of *The Wren*, we highlight several recent stewardship projects. As we bring more land into our care, our stewardship needs will continue to grow. Planning ahead for growth allows this important work to continue.

Like squirrels with the foresight to bury nuts for winter use, ensuring we have resources at the ready is a vital part of our strategy to rapidly protect and sustainably manage land.

**NATURE SIGHTINGS****Hummingbird Clearwing Moth**

With its thick body, olive green back, rapidly beating wings, and fan-shaped tail, it's easy to see why this moth was named after a hummingbird. The Hummingbird Clearwing Moth (*Hemaris thysbe*) is a common visitor to gardens and wildflowers. The moths emerge from an overwintering cocoon found in leaf litter in late spring and early summer – an example of why it's helpful to leave areas of fallen leaves on your property. In the warm months, the moths feed from a variety of flowers like this native Bee Balm that Norm Levey photographed at a Lincoln Land Conservation Trust native flowering plant installation.



Norm Levey

Celebrating Land Protection Successes

Forty Caves Expansion, Berlin

Thanks to your support, SVT purchased an 11-acre parcel in Berlin from the Matthews Family in April. This parcel expands the 256-acre Forty Caves Conservation Area, which includes lands owned by SVT and the Towns of Berlin and Clinton. Forty Caves is a beloved natural destination known for its striking rock formations, quiet forests, and wildlife habitat. It is part of the watershed of the North Brook, which is classified as a cold-water fishery that supports native brook trout, an indicator species. Though small in size, this newest parcel plays an important role in supporting habitat for forest-nesting birds and other wildlife, and its upland habitat is critical to the survival of amphibians that rely on vernal pools for breeding.

Ellis-Walker Property, Westborough

In another April success, SVT closed on a Conservation Restriction (CR) on the Ellis-Walker Property in Westborough, permanently protecting 34 acres of open meadow, forest, and wetlands. Footpaths from cattle and people traverse the gentle slopes, stone walls, and streams that crisscross the property. As the small streams flow northwest, they combine into one larger stream that feeds into the Sandra Pond Reservoir, providing nearly one-third of Westborough's drinking water. This property sits in a corridor of open space that includes the Bowman West Conservation Area and the Upton State Forest. Together, these lands provide habitat for wildlife, important water resources, and hiking trails.

Forest Heights Property, Upton

In June, through a partnership effort with the Town of Upton and the Metacomet Land Trust (MLT), the Town purchased the Forest Heights property, and it was permanently protected with a CR, co-held by SVT and MLT. This 105-acre property connects to Bonner Natural Area, Whitney Conservation Area, and Warren Brook Watershed Conservation Area, creating an extensive corridor of open space that includes over 550 acres of permanently conserved land. The permanent protection of Forest Heights provides unfragmented wildlife habitat, enhances climate resiliency, ensures nature services for the surrounding communities, and safeguards water resources within a critical watershed.



Setting Our Sights on Three Penny Farm

SVT, in partnership with the Town of Harvard, is working to purchase a Conservation Restriction (CR) for the property known as Three Penny Farm. The CR, to be co-held by SVT and the Town, will permanently protect approximately 34 acres adjacent to the town-owned Shaker Spring House conservation land.

Three Penny Farm is located within an extensive corridor of ecologically rich lands and is part of the High Ridge Initiative. The area of the "High Ridge" is a span of thousands of acres of ecologically important lands across the towns of Harvard, Littleton, and Boxborough. It provides essential wildlife habitat, protection to rare species and water quality, access to locally grown produce via local farms, many miles of public trails, and natural services to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The landowner of Three Penny is committed to collaborating with SVT and the Town to develop a vision for public access by creating a picnic grove, as well as a trail loop connected with the surrounding trails. Stay tuned for more news on this project and how you can support its protection this fall!

And the Work Continues...

Stewarding the Lands We Protect

After we permanently protect land, it is our duty to care for it forever. But even before a land protection project is completed, SVT's stewardship team collaborates with the land protection team to plan for the future needs of the land. During site visits we identify any potential threats to the conservation values of the property and compile baseline documentation reports to capture the conditions of the land and water at the time of conservation.

Once we celebrate the closing of newly protected land, the stewardship team gets busy to ensure the land is well cared for. We spend more time on the land to learn about the habitat condition as we craft management plans for future land care. Whenever possible, we install or improve a trail system that will be rewarding for visitors, while minimizing natural impacts to habitats and wildlife. Many thanks to the volunteers who help build trails, bridges, kiosks, and sign posts!

Sometimes we find that the ecosystem needs help to recover from disturbances. So, extra work goes into developing habitat restoration plans that may include mowing, forestry, invasive species management, native plantings, and prescribed fires. This also requires fundraising, communication, collaboration, and specialized expertise. Stewardship is a long-term process of observing the land and how it changes over time to understand what it needs to be a healthy ecosystem. At SVT we employ adaptive management practices, the continual process of monitoring outcomes and making adjustments to the stewardship plan.



Stewardship team from left to right: Samantha Rogers, Kristin O'Brien, Laura Mattei, Dan Stimson

Monitoring isn't just limited to these more complex projects. Each and every one of our 96 SVT-owned conservation areas and 109 Conservation Restrictions receives an annual inspection. Staff or volunteers visit the boundaries and interior of each property and complete a report documenting the conservation values of the property. SVT now also subscribes to an aerial imagery service, allowing us to order, review, and compare very recent aerial imagery of hard-to-reach areas so we can monitor issues across the entire property.

As you can imagine, stewarding the land takes a lot of resources, hard work, and careful planning. But thanks to our talented and committed group of staff and volunteers, and the many donors who make this work possible, we can ensure that our lands are cared for well into the future.



Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)

Farmers as Land Stewards

Providing Resources for People and Wildlife

Farmers sustain life. The intense labor of farmers provides fresh, local, and healthy produce, meat, and other goods. However, farmers can also act as land stewards to support wildlife. Active farms create a diversity of habitats that introduce opportunities for species that thrive in edge and early-successional forests.

At SVT's Baiting Brook-Welch in Framingham, 10 acres is dedicated to agricultural use by Stearns Farm and Hanson's Farm. The special habitats created by these farms provide an abundance of naturally growing berries, like Virginia Creeper, and a plethora of insects and caterpillars. These are an essential part of a balanced diet for migratory birds, providing food for Indigo Buntings, Eastern Bluebirds, and baby Killdeer. Woodpiles and other structures provide refuge for wrens, small mammals, and reptiles evading hungry hawks and foxes. Thanks to our local farmers, we can all thrive and reap the benefits of the ecosystem functions.

From an Abandoned Field to a Native Meadow

At Smith Conservation Land in Littleton, SVT is conducting experiments to learn more about how to manage invasive plants. Our first goal is to transform an abandoned field dominated by invasive Bittersweet into a beautiful, vibrant meadow, alive with the sounds of native wildlife. Through this experiment, we hope to learn how to manage similar habitat restoration projects more effectively and efficiently in the future.

When managing Asiatic Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), we typically spend hundreds of hours digging out thick, extensive roots. When mechanical control is not feasible, we will cautiously and strategically apply herbicide if deemed necessary. This technique is in alignment with accepted best practices for wildlife habitat rehabilitation and invasive species management. However, the area that we are restoring at Smith is close to multiple neighbors' properties, making conventional herbicide application undesirable.

Drawing on methods from the Middlesex Conservation District's Lawn to Meadow Program, we tested non-chemical, mechanical methods for invasive species control. Our stewardship team, with the help of Weed Warriors and a generous neighbor, Martin Schramm, who donated his time and equipment, have conducted a two-phase experiment over 4 years.

In 2022, we began Phase 1 and used two main methods to kill the Bittersweet: solarization and smothering. With solarization we used clear plastic to create an intense greenhouse effect that heated the soil. For smothering we used cardboard to block sunlight and reduce oxygen. In spring of 2026, we began Phase 2 to restore native plants. We chose warm-season native grasses that have a good chance of outcompeting Bittersweet because they have deep and robust root systems, require limited watering, and germinate quickly. We tested two different methods of treatment: 1) distributing native seeds and 2) covering the plots with a cardboard weed barrier and loam, then distributing native seeds.



To test the effectiveness of these mechanical methods, we established four plots to compare different treatments:

Phase 1	Phase 2
Plot 1: Solarized	Only seed distributed
Plot 2: Solarized	Cardboard, loam, and seed
Plot 3: Smothered	Cardboard, loam, and seed
Plot 4: Untreated	Cardboard, loam, and seed

This project will provide an opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of using mechanical, versus chemical, methods to create healthy, native habitat in areas that were heavily disturbed by ecologically damaging invasive plants. We will keep you posted as we continue the experiment and learn the outcomes.

Land Stewardship 101

Kristin O'Brien, Conservation Restriction Manager

Just because a plant is green doesn't mean it's a 'good' plant. Asiatic Bittersweet, an invasive vine, is one of our worst offenders. It can climb mature trees and fully encase the canopy, preventing photosynthesis and eventually killing the tree.

There are two effective ways to remove Bittersweet. The first is to dig up the roots. The roots run laterally under the soil, so find where the stem goes into the ground and carefully dig out the roots to the smallest point possible. This method is effective, but time consuming upfront. The second method is to cut the plant a few inches above the soil and paint the stump with a triclopyr-based herbicide. This method is also effective, but may require follow up applications. Be sure to properly identify the plant and follow application directions on the herbicide label.

Hopefully this will pique your curiosity to learn more about the natural world and maybe even to take action. If you would like more information on identifying invasive plants, visit cisma-suasco.org/invasive.





The All Persons' Trail



The All Persons' Trail at Wolbach Farm is now open!

Come visit this gently graded, smooth and wide path, designed with wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers in mind. Beginning at the parking lot, it wraps behind SVT's farmhouse, traverses the pollinator meadow, and dips into the beautiful native woodland. With many places to sit and rest along the way, the All Persons' Trail is the perfect place to watch birds or introduce children to the wonders of nature.

Soon the beloved Storybook Path will be relocated so that the entire children's book can be read along the All Persons' Trail. We are also planning to begin construction on an accessible Nature Play Area at the picnic grove in 2027. Visit svtweb.org/APtrail for more information about:

- Naming opportunities for benches, rest points, and more;
- A feedback survey for additional trail improvements;
- A survey about what you want to see at the Nature Play Area;
- How to support the project, maps, and more!

Thank you to all that made this project possible, including The Manton Foundation; John and Molly Beard; The Gordon and Marjorie Osborne Foundation; Highland Partners Charitable Fund; The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation, Public Lands Fund; The Sudbury Foundation; Athletic Brewing Company; SuAsCo Wild and Scenic Rivers, River Stewardship Council; Lemon Brooke, LLC.

All Persons' Trail Grand Opening Celebration

Join us for the Wolbach Farm All Person's Trail Grand Opening Celebration!

Sunday, October 4, 2026. 8am – 11am

Come enjoy the All-Persons' trail with activities for all ages including sensory friendly quiet time, story time, forest bathing meditation, live music, and light refreshments. Details at: svtweb.org/APtrail

Advancing Land Protection by Inspiring the Future

Mike Perrin, Conservation Coordinator



As a TerraCorps alumnus, I truly believe this program allowed me to gain the skills, experience, and confidence I needed to become SVT's Conservation Coordinator. SVT recently re-entered the TerraCorps program and in September, we will welcome a new member — Andrew Temmallo, a recent UMass Amherst graduate.

In order to continue protecting land, SVT works to inspire youth to become our next generation of conservationists. SVT and the MetroWest Pollination Systems Action Committee worked with fifth-graders and their parents at Nixon Elementary School in Sudbury to create and maintain a native plant garden that provides habitat for at-risk pollinators. Every year, Lincoln-Sudbury High School seniors volunteer to help with landscaping at Wolbach Farm and with removing invasive Buckthorn at Memorial Forest. SVT also works with youth leadership projects, including Eagle Scout Projects and Gold and Silver Projects for Girl Scouts.

I look forward to providing these same opportunities to other aspiring land conservationists so we can continue protecting and caring for our region's most vital natural areas.



John Pustaver

Take a Hike: Forty Caves

Many striking features will catch your eye as you explore the Forty Caves Conservation Area that spans the Berlin-Clinton town boundary.



The geology of the site is spectacular, and the Clinton-Newbury fault is visible at several points. A view from the trail near Allen Road in Berlin looks toward the namesake of the area — “caves” created by tumbled boulders and rock slabs that lean together. North Brook rattles and gurgles, slipping under a flat slab of rock and widening into a quiet pool on its way to the Assabet River.

The trails at Forty Caves Conservation Area are accessible from parking areas on Allen Road in Berlin and on Francis Street in Clinton. Directions and a trail map are available at www.svtweb.org/40caves.

Save the date for SVT's Annual Gala!



March 20, 2027 | Hudson, MA

Business Partners Making a Difference for Conservation



DRM Design-Build, Inc. is a full-service, award-winning building contractor specializing in creative design and construction solutions for homeowners in Metrowest Boston. The company has a strong and special connection with SVT, as owner David R. Morgan is the son of SVT co-founder, Allen Morgan. An advocate of conservation in his own right, David formerly served as President of the Southborough Open Land Foundation, receiving their Elaine Beals Award in 2008. In 2006 he received SVT's Lewis Conservation Award for his leadership role in the protection of Chestnut Hill Farm in Southborough.

By supporting SVT at the generous Land Champion level, DRM Design-Build, Inc. is ensuring the preservation of natural areas and farmland in the booming Metrowest and Central Mass Region. Find them at drmdesign.com. Thank you, DRM Design-Build, Inc.!

Become an SVT Business Partner

Your business can support local land conservation and reach SVT's network of donors, volunteers, and advocates. Beginning this fiscal year, SVT launched a new business partnership program. Businesses that support SVT annually now receive year-round benefits including marketing online, in print, and at special events; tickets to our signature events; and employee perks. To find out more, visit svtweb.org/business or contact Cecil Hynds-Riddle at chyndsride@svtweb.org or 978-443-5588, ext.111.



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SVT Annual Meeting and Conservation Awards

October 6, 2026 | 6-8:30pm
Village Hall on the Common, Framingham

Join us for SVT's Annual Meeting and Conservation Awards

October 6, 2026 | 6:00 to 8:30pm | Village Hall on the Common, Framingham

Agenda

6:00 | Social Hour and Refreshments

7:00 | Business Meeting and Vote for Incoming Board Members
Board Member Nominees



Abigail Chan
Allston
Director of Strategy for the
Open Space Institute



Leora Mallach
Framingham
Entrepreneur

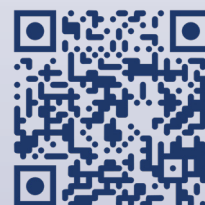


Shelley Trucksis, PhD, MD
Wayland
Executive VP and Chief Medical
Officer of Seres Therapeutics (retired)

7:30 | State of the Organization and Mid-point Review of the FY24 to FY29 Strategic Plan

8:00 | Annual Awards Ceremony:

Morgan Volunteer of the Year, Steward of the Land, Lewis Conservation,
Distinguished Public Service, Youth Steward, Trailblazer for Inclusion in the
Outdoors, Lifetime Achievement, Lifetime Membership



RSVP: www.svtweb.org/annualmeeting