



Creating healthy habitats

*Game cameras and other technology provide a window into the lives of wildlife.*

## A world-class balancing act

### Teaming up for wildlife & trails at Adams Camp

It's 6 o'clock on a humid June morning and University of Vermont Field Naturalist graduate student, Dave Moroney is standing in the woods looking at the tree canopy and listening.

*"Zee, zee, zee, zee, zee!"*

"That's a black-throated blue warbler. I love those guys," whispers Dave. "That makes at least 15 types of forest birds who are all nesting right here at Adams Camp." As Dave jots some notes down in his field book, he hears another set of sounds: a whirl of wheels, click of gears, and call of voices.

*continued on page 4*



## How will we rise when the floods recede?

I don't know about you, but I'm finding it hard right now to believe the statistic that says that Lamoille County is the safest place in the nation to escape the damages and stresses of climate change.

After the historic and catastrophic "Flood of 2023" that hit Lamoille and Washington counties especially hard this July, the Stowe region does not feel safe. Too many neighbors lost their homes and businesses. Too many roads and trails were torn up. Too many towns were submerged, then clogged with toxic mud and left with no safe water for drinking or bathing when the floodwaters receded.

And yet. So many neighbors showed up to help each other. So many roads and buildings and trails survived the storm because they had been rebuilt smarter and better after Irene. And so many places were spared because the land and waterways upstream had been protected and restored so that they could soak up and slow the two months of rain that fell in two days.

Like you, I am daunted by the challenge and cost of the long road to recovery that lies ahead. And I am worried that those who can least afford it will bear the brunt of that challenge and cost. Yet I am buoyed by the notion that this is an opportunity to think and do things differently than we have in the past.

This is a call to action. A call to community. Now is the time to rise together. And we have no time to waste. Let's take care of the land, water and each other now so that they can take care of us and the generations that will come after in the future.

You make this work possible. Thank you for helping.

Kristen Sharpless  
Executive Director



connect  
to something  
more

(continued from cover)

He's more than 100 feet from the nearest trail so he can only hear—not see—the friends passing by on Kimmers trail enjoying a morning ride through the woods. It's a familiar back and forth at Adams Camp—the sounds of nature mixed with the sounds of play.

Hired by Stowe Land Trust to survey and map wildlife habitats at Adams Camp this summer, Dave still has a lot of ground to cover and no time to lose. Bushwhacking over to the trail, he heads toward the location of the first of eight game cameras he placed in key spots around the 513-acre parcel. So far, he's documented black bear, porcupine, coyote, and white-tailed deer in addition to the growing number of birds he's witnessed.

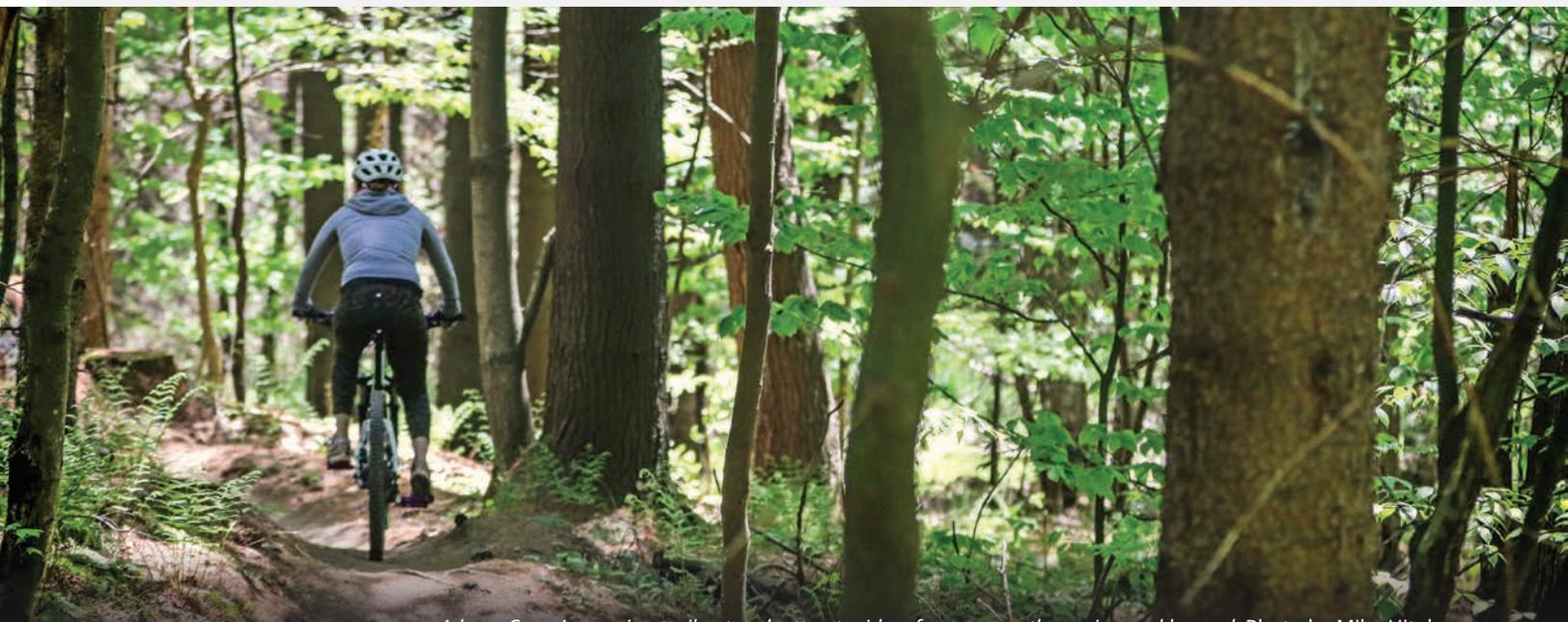
### **A place where both people and wildlife can thrive**

Adams Camp is part of an internationally important 722,000-acre area of connected forest that runs along the spine of the Green Mountains from south of Mount Mansfield north into Quebec. Zoom in closer and it is locally a corner of 46,000 acres of protected wildlife habitat that includes Mount Mansfield. What happens here matters for local wildlife, and impacts the big picture—especially as animals and plants are on the move in response to climate change.

But Adams Camp isn't just a standout for wildlife. It has also been a regional recreation destination for more than a century. It is home to some of Stowe's oldest backcountry skiing trails and has been a community hub for generations for skiers, hikers, walkers, hunters, mountain bikers, and more.

Adams Camp is privately owned by the von Trapp family, but a community-led conservation effort in 2006 allowed Stowe Land Trust, the Town of Stowe, and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) to purchase a conservation easement on the property, ensuring that the land would remain forested and open to the public forever.

When Adams Camp was conserved, it was envisioned to be part of a future Vermont Mountain Bike Ride Center connecting multiple trail networks and led to the construction of the first multi-use mountain bike trails: Hardy Haul and Kimmers.





Since then, as the popularity of mountain biking has skyrocketed, Adams Camp has become a living laboratory on how to balance the creation of popular mountain bike trails with other types of recreational uses, and important ecological spaces in the same place—especially as more people want, and need to, connect with nature.

### **A challenging balance**

Trails offer opportunities to exercise, to explore new places, and to connect with families and friends. They also allow visitors to step outside their everyday lives of home and work, and into a world shared with countless species of plants and animals.

Research has consistently shown that regular experiences in nature are also central to building a life-long conservation ethic. And for many people, including kids, trails offer a range of benefits in improving mood, physical and mental health, and well-being.

We love trails, yet no matter how familiar you are with a trail's twists and turns, you spend your time there as a visitor, and time on the trail has an impact on the wildlife who call it home.

According to Dave, the global effort to understand the effects of recreational trails on wildlife is gathering steam. "The impact of trails varies by species, location, and trail use, and there is a lot of research still to come." But so far, Dave says the science appears to be clear on one thing: trails can create stresses for wild animals that may result in sustained negative impacts for local populations.

Birds like the black throated blue warbler and the shy wood thrush face a changing climate, and with it extreme weather, and challenges finding adequate shelter, food, and appropriate places to raise their young.

Add to that the impact of increasing development pressure as more and more land in the region is cut into smaller parcels, and it's increasingly difficult for these animals to move across roads and through human neighborhoods to find what they need to survive.

(continued from page 5)

## Finding synergy

Managing public access on private land comes with unique challenges, and requires innovative strategies. In this case Stowe Land Trust, the Town of Stowe, and VHCBC are tasked with overseeing recreation management at Adams Camp to ensure a balance between recreational uses, wildlife, and the health of the forest over the long run.

To do so, we collaborate with lots of partners, including Stowe Trails Partnership, who manage the multi-use trails at Adams Camp and on other conserved lands around town.

A Master Naturalist, birder, and forager, in addition to an avid mountain biker, Stowe Trail Partnership's executive director, Carolyn Lawrence, is an enthusiastic partner in planning for the future of trails and wildlife at Adams Camp.

"Trails are a way for more people to connect with wildlife and the natural world," says Carolyn. "It's well-worth the effort to make sure the trails at Adams Camp are built and managed in a way that supports important habitat while allowing responsible recreation on and growth of the trails."



Photo by Tom Rogers.

Part of what is also needed is to conserve additional land to take pressure off existing areas and conserve larger areas for wildlife and people alike. And we know that designing trails to handle extreme weather, increased wear, and more crowding at trailheads and parking areas is a long-term effort that is worth investing in.

After completing his survey this summer, Dave will help Stowe Land Trust, Stowe Trails Partnership, the Trapp Family Lodge, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and the Town of Stowe facilitate the creation of an updated recreation management plan for the property which carefully considers how to weigh these important needs.

Balancing a wide range of community and ecological needs isn't easy—but with input from experts, partners, trail users, landowners, and community—we will continue to protect and care for places like Adams Camp where both people and wildlife can thrive.

Want to learn more? UVM Field Naturalist Dave Moroney will lead a guided walk of Adams Camp this fall, presenting the findings of his research, and sharing some of his favorite memories from his time on the land. Join us for this family friendly walk at one of Stowe's favorite places.

**Save the date: Saturday, September 16.** More information at [stowelandtrust.org](http://stowelandtrust.org).

# Protecting the places they share

**“Including Stowe Land Trust in our will was an easy way to make a real difference.”**

When Sam Gaines moved to Stowe in 2011, it was a chance to reconnect with his Vermont skiing roots.

“Growing up in Connecticut, I was surrounded by nature. Formative trips to Vermont as a child reinforced my affinity for wildlife, forests, and farms,” Sam says. “I moved out west for college, and then back to the east coast, and when the chance to settle in Stowe came up, I jumped at the opportunity.”

A Vermont wedding to Molly Triffin followed soon after, and in the past decade three children—Theodore, Lois and Beatrice—have joined the family.

“Since my first day as a Vermonter, my experience has been largely shaped by properties conserved by Stowe Land Trust—from morning runs in Kirchner Woods, to family hikes in Wiessner Woods, to backcountry ski outings in Brownsville Forest.”

“This place was important to me when I was young and learning to love the outdoors, and now our children have the opportunity to grow up right in the heart of it,” says Sam.

For Sam and Molly, getting involved and giving back to the community was important. The couple serves on a number of area boards, volunteering their time and talent for causes close to heart and home.

Making a planned gift to Stowe Land Trust was another way to strengthen their commitment to a place that has given them so much.

“It is vital we do what we can to make sure these amazing places are here for not just our kids, but future generations of people who will live in and visit the area. Including Stowe Land Trust in our will was an easy, straightforward way we can help protect the places our family loves.”

“We know some of our kids’ earliest memories will be from being together with us on conserved land,” says Molly. “We want to do everything we can to make sure they have the chance to have those same experiences with their own kids one day.”

Planned gifts to Stowe Land Trust’s Legacy Society directly support our long-term stewardship efforts, making sure we have the resources needed to help our conserved lands stay healthy, accessible, and welcoming to future generations.

To learn more about how you can include Stowe Land Trust in your will through gifts of property, stock, life insurance policies, or other assets, contact Metzi Anderson at (802) 253-7221. Your gift can make a lasting impact on the lands you love!

*Experiencing unforgettable views with family.*



**legacy  
society**

# Keeping it Local

## Valcour and Ricketson Farms continue to strengthen community

It's been said that everything is connected. That is certainly true for Vermont's agricultural land and the family farms that depend on it. What happens to the farm down the road can have ripple effects that spread through a community. When a working farm is lost, an entire farming ecosystem is damaged.

For two recently protected farms, there is another side of the story. After being conserved in 2021 and 2022, the Valcour and Ricketson Farms have continued to play a vital role in supporting the region's family farms.

Now actively being worked by a new family, land that was once at risk of transitioning out of agricultural use entirely is creating a stable, sustainable future for the next generation of farmers.

### A farm's—and a family's—future

There aren't many local businesses that run on faith, strategic business design, and resilience quite as much as farming. With weather extremes on the rise, including erratic frosts, periods of heavy rain and flooding, and then drought for weeks on end, farming is not for the faint of heart.

Add the cost of land, with skyrocketing development pressure, and farming becomes even more tenuous. Jesse and Marlene Hursh live this reality.

The Hurshes have leased land to run a small dairy farm on Lyle McKee Road off Stagecoach Road in Morristown for decades. Their family farm hosts a farmstand that's been a popular spot for locals and visitors to pick up everything from raw milk and beef to eggs and vegetables for more than 20 years.

"The challenge with leasing is that unless it's a 99-year lease, it's difficult to make long-term investments pencil out," explained Marlene. "That's hard when you want to invest in soil health that takes years to improve, or upgrade milking facilities that could take 10 years to pay off."

For years the family had looked for a farm they could call their own, but paying development prices for land they only intended to farm on didn't make sense.

### Conserving two farms, strengthens another

That changed when the neighboring Valcour family conserved their 175-acre dairy farm across the valley on Randolph and Goeltz Roads with the assistance of the Vermont Land Trust, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and with community support through Stowe Land Trust.

Now, over the next several years the Hurshes will be streamlining farming practices on the two farms, including investing in the Valcour farm they now call the "home farm."

As part of this transition, Jesse and Marlene plan to relocate the farmstand to a new, permanent home

farm location. They already have a small farmstand operating there from July to September.

And in 2022, the Hursh family, and the area's agricultural legacy, received another boost.

Working with Stowe Land Trust and Vermont Land Trust, Stowe farmer Ken Ricketson conserved the property his family had farmed for more than a century. After selling his dairy herd in 2020, Ken leased his farmland, more than 100 acres of prime agricultural soil, to the Hursh family, who continue to farm the property today.

These conservation agreements ensure the vitally important agricultural land at the Ricketson and Valcour Farms will remain available for this and future generations of farmers.

"Farming is now something our entire family can be part of, including our sons and their families. It's a real blessing. Without conservation, there's no way we would have been able to afford our own farm, and the future of farming in our family would have been increasingly uncertain," said Marlene.

### **More family farms at risk**

There are more than 30 other local family farms in the region, like the Hursh Farm, that sell directly to consumers. These farms produce berries, cheese, eggs, fruit, honey, maple, meat, milk, vegetables, compost, firewood, flowers, hay, and more.

Farmers are asking for help to conserve their land, or to find conserved land for them to purchase. We are now in the process of looking for funding to expand our team so we can support more farm families and the community at large. We know we have to be there to pick up the phone and help, just like when the Valcour family called. With your help, we will answer the call.



*Farming is a family affair at the Hursh farmstand.*

# A choice that changed us all

## How one family's gift created a community treasure

More than 30 years ago, Muriel “Moo Moo” Wiessner and her children Andy and Polly made an extraordinary gift that would impact generations.

Long-time residents of Stowe, Muriel and her husband Fritz knew their 104-acres of forest and meadows off Edson Hill Road was a special place.

After Fritz died in 1988, Muriel worked with Stowe Land Trust to conserve the land as a tribute to his life and accomplishments, and in 1992, she donated 72 acres of the property to the land trust to become a community conservation area open for the public to enjoy.

In the years since, Wiessner Woods has grown into one of Stowe's most-visited natural areas. Friendly to families, pets, and people of all abilities, it's a place for locals and visitors alike. And much to the surprise of many, given that it's just off the busy Mountain Road, once you head deeper into the woods the sights and sounds of town feel miles away.

### Creating more inspirational places

As we care for the places we have already protected, the community has made it clear that our region needs additional places like Weissner Woods. To do so, we will need more people like Muriel.

Muriel was an optimist. She believed in the goodness of people and the healing impact of being in nature. Now as we work to expand nature's impact throughout the larger Stowe region, and create places that are welcoming for people of varying ages, backgrounds, and mobilities, we look forward to working with more visionary landowners who share this belief and dedication.



Muriel and her son Andy at the dedication ceremony.

“

Getting kids involved at a young age in caring for places like Wiessner Woods plants a seed in them that lasts a lifetime. No matter where they live, they'll take with them an appreciation for protecting the environment.

Deb Schoepke

Stowe resident and volunteer



*Hundreds of local youth have connected to the outdoors through volunteer projects at Wiessner Woods.*

## Making your mark

### How will you help pick up the pace of conservation?

**Can you help us create a community hub for conservation?** We are seeking our forever home—a permanent headquarters that can house our growing staff, host public events, and showcase the incredible impact conserved land has on a community.

There are a number of ways you can help. Direct donations of land, like Muriel Weissner made, are transformational. And there are other high-impact opportunities you can make, too. You can donate a cabin, house, or lot in a development to be sold to help establish new conservation areas or trails; or contribute with gifts of stock, through your Donor Advised Fund, or by check. There are often considerable financial benefits to these donations.

Are you interested in helping make this dream a reality?

Please call executive director Kristen Sharpless at (802) 253-7221, or email [kristen@stowelandtrust.org](mailto:kristen@stowelandtrust.org) for more information, or to share your ideas.

# Helping every kid be an outdoor kid

## Learning Landscapes collaboration comes to local schools

For many, the COVID era was a time to (re)connect with places close to home. Trail systems in Stowe and across the country saw an explosion of use, as more people than ever discovered the importance of spending time outdoors.

Unfortunately, these gains haven't been felt by the youngest generations, as school children are spending less time outside than ever before. Identified by researchers as "nature deficit disorder," this lack of time outdoors can lead to a range of physical, mental, and behavioral challenges for children of all ages. It also impacts their ability to learn.

Thanks to a newly expanded partnership with area schools, we will be building on our past commitment to community youth. This effort will continue our relationship with Stowe's public schools, after-school programs, summer camps, and more, as we work together to create new Learning Landscapes.

### A new model for area kids and community

Learning Landscapes is a national effort where land trusts work with local schools, outdoor education experts, and willing landowners to create dedicated places that are fun, interactive, and great places to learn.

As part of the Learning Landscapes program, we're working to create outdoor classroom spaces for use by schools and the community. Established within a 10-minute walk of local schools, these spaces will allow teachers to bring their lessons outdoors—deepening the connections between their students and the place they live, and providing numerous benefits for student learning, behavior, and development.

"I see how powerful learning outdoors is every time we go out," says Beth Bradford, a kindergarten teacher at Stowe Elementary School. Beth's class routinely ventures into the natural areas surrounding Stowe Elementary, but the lack of infrastructure and formal agreements with landowners means these outings to some of her classes' favorite spaces could be jeopardized in the future.

Establishing a Learning Landscapes program in Stowe will give all teachers at partner schools the tools, training, and resources they need to get their classes outdoors. "Creating these spaces will be game-changing for our students and staff," says Beth. "We'll have the resources we need to truly create a culture that connects our kids to this special place and help them thrive as students."

Did you know you can use a Donor Advised Fund to easily support programs like Learning Landscapes? For more information on how you can give more efficiently and support our work, visit: [stowelandtrust.org/support/donoradvisedfunds](https://stowelandtrust.org/support/donoradvisedfunds)



“

I see how powerful learning outdoors  
can be every time we go out.”

Beth Bradford

Stowe Elementary School kindergarten teacher

# 2022 Annual Report Highlights

## Thanking you—the chagemakers!

Last year, more than 1,000 people like you made a difference for the places you love

For more than 35 years, people like you, our members, volunteers, and partners have made the incredible possible. Your support has been instrumental in the protection of over 7,500 acres of land, water, and public trails.

Thanks to growing community support, last year we were able to increase our commitment to area youth, trails, and local efforts to enhance the quality of life in the region. Let's take a moment to celebrate all we have done as a community, including last year's monumental public effort to save the Ricketson Farm—Stowe's largest remaining working farm.



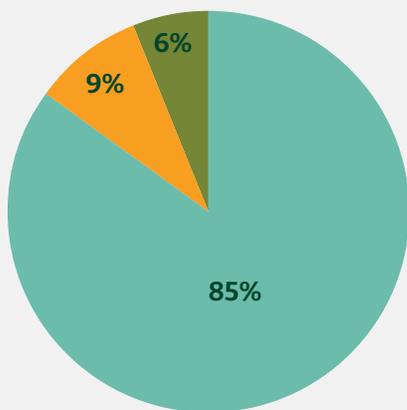
Scan this QR code to view our full member list  
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## 2022 Financial Report

More

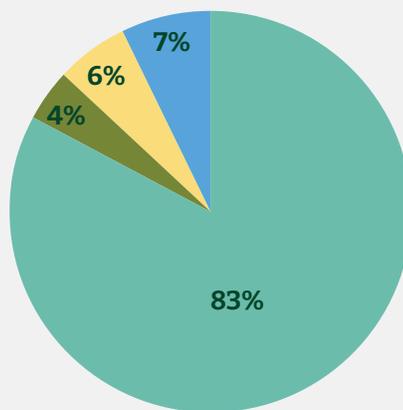
### Use of Funds

- Land Protection & Stewardship
- Management & Administration
- Fundraising & Membership Development



### Sources of Funds

- Individuals
- Grants
- Events
- Businesses



Ricketson Farm.  
Photo by Paul Rogers.

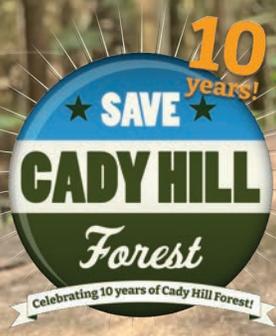
217 acres of farmland, forestland and wetlands conserved at the Ricketson Farm. Ensuring the next generation of farmers have room to grow.

**Financial Statement** Stowe Land Trust's fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30. We conduct an annual review of all financial data. This review and our IRS form 990 are available on our website and by request.

And there is still plenty more  
Your support is making incre



Photo by Willem Heydendael @teamlasercats



# More than numbers – measuring your impact

**100+ miles of public trails cared for.** *Securing a healthy, accessible, and sustainable future for public recreation.*

**700+ people participated in public events.** *Creating a community that cares for and values land, water, and each other.*



“

Woah! This place is from ancient times! We get to go inside?”

4 year old student  
Apple Tree Learning Centers

“Our students loved visiting the Mill Trail cabin. It was a magical destination that sparked their interest in Stowe’s history.”

Kendra McGuire  
Apple Tree Learning Centers

**More work to do.**  
Incredible things possible, in 2023 and beyond!

# STOWE LAND TRUST

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*Paddlers enjoy the peace and quiet of Joe's Pond.*

## Chances to Connect

Mark your calendars for these upcoming events



### Jam for the Land

September 23

Join us at Stowe Cider for a benefit concert supporting Stowe Land Trust and Salvation Farms. Enjoy great music for a great cause, and sample a new limited edition blueberry-infused cider.



### Annual Meeting and Celebration

October 1, 2-5 pm

Our Annual Meeting is your chance to come out and celebrate our community with your friends, family, and neighbors. Fun, games, and food for all ages. Everyone is welcome!

Visit [stowelandtrust.org/events](https://stowelandtrust.org/events) for our full fall calendar!