

Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust

Winter 2016 Newsletter



"Weary" on the summit of Katahdin in 1993.

Maine Mourns Passing of Bob Cummings, Consummate Conservationist

Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust founding director and nationally-known conservationist, journalist and civic leader Bob Cummings passed away at eighty-six on January 21st after a lengthy illness. The news has been widely reported already, but the land trust would like to reprint remarks made by board president Bill Plouffe on behalf of the land trust at a recent memorial service. Bill's remarks are as follows:

I first met Bob 35 years ago when he was reporter covering the environment beat and I was a lawyer/lobbyist for the Maine Audubon Society. Our professional paths crossed regularly but – aside from listening to his occasional stories about a hike he had recently taken – I really did not get to know Bob or the depth of his dedication to the outdoors. That would come 20 years later when Tom Lewis, a long-time MATC volunteer and member of the Appalachian Trail Conference Board of Governors, called together a group of folks that included Tony Barrett, Milt Wright, Bob, me and several others who had an interest in protecting the lands surrounding the 283 mile long Appalachian Trail corridor in Maine, most of which is surrounded by privately owned land at risk of development. By protecting the corridor from development we hoped to protect for future generations the multi-faceted experience of hiking the AT. That was the beginning of the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust.

Bob was the Land Trust's second President and an active Board member until his passing. During our years of service together on the Land Trust Board – including hours

of traveling together by car to meetings in Augusta and elsewhere – I came to know a man with an enduring appreciation for the beauty of the natural world – the views from the summits of Avery Peak, White Cap, Katahdin, the colors of the painted trillium, mountain cranberry, diapensia, the songs of the white throated sparrow, the hermit thrush.

Bob had the courage and determination to do all he could to protect that beauty. Two examples of this regard stick with me. When the Land Trust was in its formative years, the Board debated a fundamental issue: What distance either side of the Trail should be the limit of our concern. Some of us thought one mile was reasonable. A few brave souls suggested five miles either side of the Trail. Then came Bob. Apparently channeling Benton MacKaye – spiritual founder of the AT – who said: "... a realm and not merely a trail marks the full aim of our efforts." – Bob boldly pronounced that the Land Trust's efforts should extend ten miles either side of the Trail. In the end, we all agreed that, as with so many things in life, "it depends," but there is no question that Bob had expanded out our thinking.

My second example concerns the first major wind power battle in Maine. In 2006, a multi-national energy company proposed a thirty-turbine project in the heart of the western Maine "high peaks." The 400 foot high wind machines, set atop three to four thousand foot peaks and, in some cases, one mile from the AT, would be plainly visible for more than three days of hiking from Route 4 to Route 27. This 50-mile plus section is generally regarded as one of the three most beautiful stretches of the entire Appalachian Trail.

Virtually every newspaper in the state editorialized in favor of the project. Bob, on the other hand, felt strongly that this project would "industrialize" an area of outstanding natural beauty. Bob gave his time and energy to the MATC's efforts to defeat the project. But, when the project came before the Land Use Regulation Commission for public hearings – a crucial step in the permitting process – Bob was in the hospital. In a scene that I will not forget, Bob pretty much came from his hospital bed in Brunswick all the way to the hearings being held at Sugarloaf. Bob stood at a lectern in front of the LURC Commissioners and eloquently – albeit with a weakened voice and wobbly enough that two of us stood beside him in case he began to fall – told the Commissioners that they must protect the beauty of the western Maine mountains and deny the project. The project was defeated. As I said, Bob not only appreciated the beauty of the natural world, he had the courage and determination to defend it.

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Community Calendar



- The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust is pleased to announce that we will be the featured non-profit for **Portland Greendrinks** in September! Greendrinks is an informal, volunteer-managed social networking group built around a common interest in the natural environment. It occurs on the second Tuesday of every month, starting at 5:30 pm.
- After a hiatus in January, our **monthly hikes** are back up and running! We have already had two in February (including one for the **Great Maine Outdoor Weekend**). Please check our website for more info.
- Maine A.T. Land Trust volunteer **Deb Carroll** served as trip leader for our Great Maine Outdoor Weekend hike (and she even wrote a wonderful trip report you can read in this newsletter). Deb will be completing her SOLO Wilderness First Aid course in the spring and will continue to help the land trust with trips in the future!
- We will once again be participating in the **Portland Sea Dogs U.S. Cellular Community** program at Hadlock Field in Portland. The Sea Dogs organization embraces the role of non-profits in Maine communities and features a different organization at their minor league baseball games throughout the summer. **The Maine A.T. Land Trust day at the ballpark will be on Sunday, June 12th at 1pm.** We might have extra tickets to share so if you want to attend, please contact us at 207-808-2073 or by email at info@matlt.org.

Project Update



- **Redington Forest Conservation Easement.** At the most recent LMF board meeting, the members voted unanimously to approve the Redington Forest project structure that has been in place for the past year: the U.S. Navy / Department of Defense will co-hold the easement with the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, who will have stewardship responsibilities. With this approval from the LMF board, we have surmounted a major hurdle on the road to getting the Redington Forest property conserved. It is a little like taking a certification test – while there was never any doubt that LMF would approve, it is still something the land trust had to prepare for and be involved in to ensure that there were no issues. We are glad to be able to proceed with the project and get it closed in the next half-year or so. As we move towards the summer, we will have further updates on Redington.
- **Longley Property Easement.** The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust is pleased to announce that we will be accepting the donation of a conservation easement in The Forks, adjacent to the Kennebec River. This easement will total about 17 acres in area, about half of which will be protected by a “forever wild” easement. The Appalachian Trail borders the property on the south and the east. Because Route 201, the busiest road in the county, lies on the western edge of the property, this easement will help to buffer the trail corridor from development incompatible with the values wilderness and remoteness that essential to the Appalachian Trail experience. Look for more info in our next newsletter!

Board Member Profile: Aaron Paul



- **How did you first hear about the Maine A.T. Land Trust?** *I learned about the Maine A.T. Land Trust through my friend and fellow board member Claire Polfus.*
- **What made you want to get involved?** *MATLT's mission of protecting the lands around the Appalachian Trail immediately appealed to me. Maine's open spaces are powerful and often undervalued assets. Nature gives people the chance to be their best selves and Maine has a huge amount of nature to offer. I'm also a Mainer, and outdoor recreation is central to Maine's identity. Protecting the natural experience is a very worthwhile goal.*
- **How are you involved?** *I sit on the land trust's board and the conservation committee. I work with the team to advance our land transactions.*
- **What is your background - where are you from?** *My background is land conservation and finance, with a couple of stints in consulting. In my day job, I structure natural capital investments at the Nature Conservancy of Washington State, so my board work is close to my day-to-day job. I grew up in Brunswick, Maine but have lived in Portland, Oregon, Washington DC, Charlottesville, Virginia, New Haven, Connecticut, Portland, Maine, and Seattle, Washington since then (in that order).*
- **Where did you work prior to working in conservation?** *Prior to working in conservation, I was a finance and strategy consultant.*
- **What made you decide to work for conservation organizations in Maine?** *Maine's natural resources are one of its greatest assets. I have spent as much of my life as possible along the Maine coast and in the Maine woods. Both have given me incredible and rewarding experiences. I want to preserve that experience for future generations.*
- **What kinds of work do you do for different conservation organizations?** *The work I do for different conservation organizations is all of a similar transactional nature. The goals differ somewhat between organizations. MATLT is focused on preserving the experience of the Appalachian Trail in Maine. At the Nature Conservancy, I work to provide natural benefits to people and communities, which is much broader. This might include protecting a community's forest resource to provide multiple benefits including recreation, sustainable timber, and water purification. It also might include working with a coastal community to protect its access to a fishery and port infrastructure or working to reduce pollution in estuaries with rain gardens.*
- **What do you see as the most important issues in land conservation in Maine today?** *There are many. We need new and different forms of finance to support our work. This includes new markets that value the benefits that nature provides and rewards people for protecting them. Attracting a new generation to the land is critical to our longevity. Young people are spending less time outside than previous generations. This is a challenge everywhere, but particularly in Maine where our demographics age more each year. Economic health in the Maine north woods is another issue for conservation. Our work does best when our host communities thrive and Maine's northern communities have struggled with a new, less natural resource-dependent economy for decades. Open space will be part of the solution to this, but only as part of vibrant, entrepreneurial-driven development.*

Bob Cummings and the Appalachian Trail

The Trail is a community of hikers enjoying the beauties of nature, and sharing concerns, blisters, adventures, sore toes, sprained knees, and the wonders of a wild country. It's two 20-year-olds jogging to catch Solo Sal, a 62-year-old retired school teacher who had left her tent poles behind. It's an 80-year-old retired grocer in North Carolina offering a hiker from Maine "a ride to the top of the hill." Some hike alone, others with friends, lovers, relatives – or strangers met a few moments or a few days earlier on the Trail. All share a common experience, a common adventure. All join in each other's successes and tribulations, share meals when supplies run low, and lament the mishaps and illnesses. Trail registers are filled with words of encouragement for those left behind. Like the hay mowers on Robert Frost's New England hill farms, the people who hike the trail, hike together, "whether together or apart." – **Bob Cummings on the experience of the Appalachian Trail**

Bob was a tireless champion for protecting and maintaining the Appalachian Trail in Maine, and he served in multiple roles to achieve that. He was a maintainer, long distance hiker, founding member of the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, officer and newsletter editor for the Maine Appalachian Trail Club. His insight was highly valued, whether at meetings, on the trail, or on paper. Perhaps most notably his adept reporting on the Maine Public Lot system led to the permanent protection of not only of some of the most iconic lands along the A.T. in the mighty Bigelows and spectacular Mahoosucs but also in smaller state lots scattered through the state. In 2005 ATC recognized these and Bob's many other contributions to the Appalachian Trail by granting him an honorary membership, one of our highest awards.

All of us at ATC are forever thankful for the impassioned volunteer spirit that makes the Appalachian Trail possible and Bob's work and dedication will leave a lasting legacy on the A.T. in this beautiful state. Current and future visitors, maintainers, managers and protectors of the A.T. in Maine will be the recipients of all of Bob's efforts, and for that ATC would like to submit a heartfelt thanks to Bob and his family for his years of dedication, service, and success. - **Appalachian Trail Conservancy on the passing of Bob Cummings**

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Great Maine Outdoor Caribou Mountain Snowshoe Hike

By Deborah Carroll



In spite of warnings from friends and family regarding forecasted cold temperatures, a decision was made to move forward with our hike up Caribou Mountain the day prior to our trip. The understanding however, was that if the weather did in fact prove to be too cold, even a mile into hike, the group would turn back.

Dressed in multiple layers of our favorite hiking duds, our happy herd of hearty hikers met at the trailhead at 9:00 in the morning on Saturday, February 13. Though the temperatures were indeed hovering in single digits, the sun was shining, spirits were high, and we were all well equipped for a day of wandering in snowy woods.

Given the lack of significant snowfall, decisions were made to leave the snowshoes in the car and make the trek using just Microspikes. A decision that, except for a few very short sections where blowing snow had filled in previously shallow or packed areas of the trail, proved good.

Unlike a previous hike, we were able to park at the gate located about a half mile up the road past Pooh Corner Farm. Our hike began with a relatively flat and short walk along a forest service road before the trail veered to the right and into a forest of mixed evergreen and birch, and our group fell quickly into a really nice pace.

After a mile or so of multiple, mostly frozen, stream crossings, and a few brief pauses to layer down, we began a mostly gradual ascent which took us to the "Caribou Speckled Mtn. Wilderness, WMNF" sign and, a little further on, to a trail junction in the Caribou-Gammon col where the trail turns sharply left and the final push to the summit begins.

Though the temperatures continued to hover in single digits, as per the thermometer dangling from one pack, the sun and lack of wind (combined with exertion and being well prepared) made for warm wanderings. Still, we paused a few hundred yards from the summit to put on warmer layers.

As one member of our party put it: "Walking onto the summit was like getting sand blasted with tiny ice particles." Though we didn't check the thermometer, the temperature at the summit dropped drastically and the gusts of winds whipped us about. Needless to say, after snapping a few quick group selfies that left us with frigid fingers and USGS marker group boot photos (a tradition with members of this group) we headed back down to the quiet stillness of the col to eat our lunch, make snow angels, and do a headstand (another tradition).

After the wildly windy and super chilled summit, the walk out of the woods felt positively balmy and, as we did on the way up, we stopped a few times to admire ice flows and vistas, chat, and play at pretzel tree.

No trip up the north side of Caribou would be complete without a post-hike visit to Carol in her flower and gift shop at Pooh Corner Farm, and so we did before saying goodbye to the old and new friends who had shared a cold, snowy, and memorable Great Maine Outdoor Weekend adventure.

Deb Carroll is a volunteer for the land trust whose specialty is leading amazing hikes on amazing A.T. terrain. She's also the Director of Events & Member Relations for the Lewiston Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, and a features writer for the Sun Journal.



Maine Appalachian
 Trail Land Trust
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We need your help! The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust is currently working on *four* different projects to conserve over 27,000 acres of land along the Appalachian Trail. We are taking on stewardship and land management responsibilities to ensure that these lands remain open to public use! Please consider giving today - \$10, \$50, \$100 – because every bit helps and we provide real conservation value for your donation.

To make a donation, please send in this form with your check or head over to <http://matlt.org/support-our-work/> to make your contribution online. **We also accept gifts of stock and can work with your financial advisors.** Please call us at 207-808-2073 or email us at info@matlt.org if you'd like to discuss giving options with our staff.



Thank you for your continuing support of the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust! Your donation supports our ongoing project work and allows us to continue operations, fund stewardship activities and protect land along the Appalachian Trail.

___ \$1,000 ___ \$500 ___ \$100 ___ \$50 ___ \$25 ___ \$10 \$_____(other amount)

Please make checks payable to: **"Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust"**

Name: _____

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Your donation is tax deductible. Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.