Our featured speaker at this year’s Annual Meeting will be Jessica Murray of The Nature Conservancy, with added input from a representative of the US Department of Agriculture. Jess is the local coordinator for the Weed It Now program, sponsored in the tri-state area by TNC and funded by the federal government. This is a program working to help landowners remove invasive species such as Japanese bittersweet, barberry, honeysuckle, and multiflora rose, which tend to overwhelm our land and overpower our native species. Jess and the USDA representative will also offer a workshop after lunch, to answer questions and to help with applications for grants available to individual property owners through the National Resources Conservation Service.

Members and non-members are welcome!
ELT CATCHES THE EARLY BIRD

Our annual bird walk took place a little earlier this year, on April 24, to see if we could spot a different group of migrants passing through. And, in fact, we did, although the chilly weather may have discouraged some birds as well as humans. A group of 16, led by Kay Sanfilippo of The Nature Conservancy and Kai Reed, Egremont’s own young ornithological expert, gathered at Jug End State Reservation, and at the end of a couple of hours of hiking through fields and woods, came up with a list of 29 sightings, of which 15 were new. Last year and nine had never been spotted on previous ELT walks. The list, now with follow-ups in bold.

Turkey Vulture 
Swamp Sparrow 
Eastern Meadowlark 
American Kestrel 
European Starling 
Northern Flicker 
Northern Cardinal 
American Robin 
Red-tailed Hawk 
Red-winged Blackbird

Sharp-skinned Hawk 
Common Raven 
Downy Woodpecker 
American Crow 
Mourning Dove 
Field Sparrow 
Black-capped Chickadee 
Common Grackle 
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 
American Goldfinch

Tufted Titmouse 
Eastern Towhee 
Wood Duck 
Kilkdeer 
Song Sparrow 
Eastern Phoebe 
Eastern Bluebird 
Blue Jay

Tree Swallow

ELT CATCHES THE EARLY BIRD

On Sunday, May 23rd, ELT held its fourth annual benefit lunch at the Old Mill in South Egremont. For a crowd that packed the room (see photo on left), ELT board member Chef Terry Moore created a sumptuous three-course menu featuring "The Bounty of Berkshire Grown." The finest products from local growers included Rawson Brook Farm goat cheese tart, roasted Blue Moon mushrooms, Matfriski Farming mushrooms, Heritage Farms grass-fed beef, Moon in the Pond organic chicken and Turner Farm maple syrup spice cake.

THREE REASONS NOT TO JOIN A LAND TRUST, BUT...

1. I don’t even own land in Egremont, BUT...most people enjoy the views, even and clean natural resources in Egremont, whether they own property here or not. Supporting a land trust helps preserve those scenic vistas and natural resources and benefits all those who enjoy Egremont.

2. I don’t want the land trust to own my land, BUT...the land trust works only with landowners who wish to protect their land for the benefit of themselves, their families, and future generations. Many landowners care about their land and its future and want to protect the land, whether they plan to continue to own it or not. The land trust can offer help in either situation. The land trust offers sound planning opportunities which may offset income taxes and may keep land from having to be sold because of high estate taxes.

3. I don’t even know anyone in the land trust, BUT...the Egremont Land Trust offers a great opportunity to meet your neighbors, get involved in community projects, and join together in a common interest. And it doesn’t really cost much to join. Any donation will make you a member, even though listed membership categories start at $20. Your enthusiasm and time help the land trust to grow also.

WHY NOT START BY ATTENDING OUR ANNUAL MEETING OR JOINING THE MEMBERS BELOW BY SENDING IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION.

EGREMONT LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIP 2004

Harry & Kathy Adams 
Sharon Gamson 
Harvey and Bonita Ganot

Jane Green

William G. Mayer

Donna & Martin Miller

Paul & Shirley Montgomery

Terry Moore

Marvin & Evelyn Moster

Jay Melnick

Michael A. Nachman

Natalie Newman

Pat & Jean Nicolino

Roberta Nussbaum

Sandra & Peter Gold

Charles P Ogolin

John & Silvia Ogilvie

Landis Olson & Sandi Frank

Brenda Ostrill

Jack Orlando

Kasha & John Petri

Al & Carolyn Piccini

Fonsie

Oskar Perron

Rusell Perron & Constance Hamilton

Steven Peltz

Frank & Hillary Pringle

Franklin & Anita Powell

Dorothy Prushehker

Leonard & Barbara Pratt

Michael & Sharon Rebek

Roger Rose & Mark Nicholson

Edward & Brenda Regan

Deborah Reich

Norma & Barbara Reitman

Rick & Nancy Richardson

Donald & Mary Roberts

William & Maureen Rose

Arthur & Euel Rothenberg

Harvey & Barbara Rothenberg

John & Mimi Rowan

Murray & Patricia Liebowitz

Fred & Karen Langmeyer

Marian & Robert Linscott

Elliot & Helen Krancer

Larry & Joan Kleinman

Joan & Michele Horton

Heather & Kevin Kirk 

Kim & Don Kirk 

Hollis & Rick Kerman

Mary & Michelle Houseknecht

Walter & Muriel Houseknecht

Janet & Bob Holway

Reuel & Keila Sheldon

Mary Jane & David Howard

Leonard & Jodi Verebay

Colette Vanderveer

David & Lisa Tillinghast

Gail Smallridge

Richard & Gun Stanley

Mary M. Sposeto

Arthur & Anita Spencer

Nancy Sue 
Marjorie Wexler

Dean & Susan Voight

Gabriele Van Zon

Kim & Lucinda Vermuelen

Jennifer & Viviana Vinciguerra

Dean & Susan Voight

Blicen Coyote Wagner

Daniel & Anne Wallace

Ron & Marilyn Walter

Judith & Barry Wagoner

Maryane Wolter

Carol & Lisa Wilson

Susan Witt

Charles & Marilyn Wolf

Bernard & Henriette Wolfsztein

If we have inadvertently omitted your name, we apologize. Please let us know about it by leaving a message at (413) 528-6626.
For many years, Egremont Land Trust has been involved in the conservation of several parcels of land in Egremont. But ELT is doing more than conserving individual parcels of land — it’s helping to preserve the landscape so precious to many of us.

Many organizations and government agencies have worked for years in Egremont to identify and protect our valuable open space and natural resources. ELT is proud to have arrived on the scene and been able to fill in many of the missing pieces, like a giant jigsaw puzzle. We are especially grateful for the support of our Partners for Land and Water Conservation: Land Trusts and Water Suppliers. Our thanks to all of the government and private conservation agencies, as well as Chapter 61, 61A and 61B parcels which the town has a right to purchase before such land can be developed. All these parcels are shown with diagonal stripes. The pieces which are cross-hatched and numbered have been conserved by ELT and its partner conservation organizations to fit in the puzzle pieces. (Please note that the information on this map came from several Geographic Information System [GIS] sources. ELT apologizes for any inaccuracies.)

Referring to the parcels as numbered on the preceding two pages, the photo shows just how we’ve filled in the missing pieces:

1. **The former Bradford property**: The last remaining piece of one of Egremont’s oldest farms was purchased by ELT to protect the purity of drinking water for many of our neighbors.

2. **The former Neumeyer property**: A gift from The Nature Conservancy, this 7/10 acre tract near the town’s water supply helps to protect the purity of drinking water for many of our neighbors.

3. **The former Edwards property**: This conservation project by the Appalachian Trail Conference Land Trust preserved a scenic vista while still allowing a house site in an area of the property which won’t interfere with the scenic view. ELT assisted with funding, as did the Commonwealth, the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, the William E. Weiss Foundation, and generous neighbors to protect it. The property is now privately owned with the view site conserved, augmenting the scenic protection and recreation opportunities of the Appalachian Trail nearby.

4. **The former Friedman property**: This 213 acre mountain top watershed property is now owned by the Town of Egremont, after a very complex series of transactions initiated and coordinated by ELT and The Nature Conservancy. Grants and loans from the government and TNC funded the project. The Commonwealth now holds a conservation restriction on the property. The land is adjacent to the Jug End State Reservation and will be available for passive recreation. The adjacent town water supply is protected and the Jug End fen is further protected. This property is a keystone piece between state- and town-owned lands.

5. **The former Stehman property**: This 17 acre parcel at the top of the Jug End State Reservation is now owned by the Town of Egremont, following an initial purchase by ELT for conservation purposes. The Appalachian Trail Conference Land Trust assisted in exchanging the right to build a trail on the former Sabin property. ELT plans to dedicate about 10 acres of this property to a scenic vista while still allowing a house site in an area of the property which won’t interfere with the scenic view. ELT helps to protect the purity of drinking water for many of our neighbors.

6. **The former Sabin property**: Ownership of this 37 acre hillside parcel by ELT provides watershed protection for Karner Brook (the town’s public water supply) and protection for endangered species habitat. It also forms a link between public lands in New York State and Massachusetts, providing the possibility for the future of a hiking trail through the two states. This purchase was possible because of generous funding assistance from The Nature Conservancy.

**WAalk on the Wild --- and Tame --- Side**

I met Cora Brown coming out of our brand new South Egremont post office today. When she saw me she positively smirked and said “Well, Aunt Rose, I won’t have to read any more of your long-winded advice on how to use conservation restrictions to avoid estate tax.” I’ve met by someone who clearly knows about taxes that the Federal Estate Tax exemption has now been raised to $1,500,000, which just happens to be the value of my property.”

“Not so fast, Widow Brown,” I replied. (If she can call me “Aunt Rose”, and I know for a fact that she’s eight and a half months older than I am, although she was left back twice and pretends that she was so far behind me in school that I practically had grey hair while she was still skipping rope, well, then, I can call her “Widow Brown,” which happens to be the truth. “Long-winded” indeed! Anyway, “Not so fast,” I said, “The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has just imposed its own estate tax. It used to be that the Commonwealth got a share of the Federal Estate Tax, but not any more. So now they levy a separate estate tax computed using Federal Estate Tax rules, but the exemption for Massachusetts estate tax in 2004 is only $850,000.”

So I told Widow Brown that she will have a taxable estate of $650,000. Her heirs may be required to sell off her farm, and now, more from Aunt Rose...

“At your request, and now to see if I can come up with something more, I will try to help you with conservation restrictions or the APR program, she should call me at the ELT office: 413-528-0556. Leave a message, and when I come in from weeding the wild apple orchard at 2:45 p.m. Everyone welcome, no charge.

I told her, and I could see that she hates the idea of the land passing out of the family, even though she doesn’t hold with many of Young Tom’s new-fangled farming methods. If, however, she were to give a conservation restriction on all or part of her farm, she could eliminate this tax and the risk of a forced sale of the farm. A conservation restriction, I reminded her, is an agreement that precludes the development of the property in perpetuity. The agreement is between the landowner (here, Widow Brown) and a non-profit organization such as the Egremont Land Trust. The agreement is subject to the condition that the ownership of the land depends on the size of location of the property, it may be possible to exclude one or two building lots from the restriction. The value of the conservation restriction can be a deduction of income or estate tax purposes equal to the difference between the value of the property before the grant of the restriction and its value afterwards. For example, if Widow Brown’s farm is worth $1,500,000 before and $650,000 after, she would be entitled to an estate tax deduction of $850,000, which would eliminate any Massachusetts estate tax. The conservation restriction could even be given by Widow Brown’s estate, if the Commonwealth of Massachusetts can afford it. But if it is given by Widow Brown during her life, she would also be entitled to an income tax deduction for the same amount.

Given that her principal asset is a farm, it is also possible to apply for an Agricultural Preservation Restriction from the Commonwealth. Under the APR program, a conservation restriction can be sold to the Commonwealth for its appraised value. (And Young Tom could fix up the barn and buy the new equipment he keeps talking about.) If the sale price is less than the appraised value, a tax reduction is available. The APR program is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture.

I told Widow Brown (and I say to all my readers) that if she wants to know more about conservation restrictions or the APR program, she should call me at the ELT office: 413-528-6626. Leave a message, and when I come in from weeding I’ll call back.

**On your mark, get set, go!**
CONSERVING LAND --- PRESERVING A LANDSCAPE

An aerial view of portions of the southwest corner of Egremont and of neighboring towns, showing how individual ELT projects have added to our protected landscape. See next page for more about these ELT projects.

Our immense gratitude to Kay Sadighi of The Nature Conservancy for preparing this map.