MALT is proud to announce that we have accepted a conservation easement on the property of Michael Katz and Mary Dodge in Cornwall. The easement transaction was completed on November 3rd, and permanently protects approximately 55 acres of important wildlife habitat, water resources, and beautiful scenery.

Michael and Mary came to MALT with a vision of providing a sanctuary for the animals and plants that live in and pass through their property. This land is located at the heart of the Beaver Brook watershed, an important tributary to the Lemon Fair River. It is also part of the largest forested block in central Cornwall and forms a critical link between the wild lands of Cornwall Swamp to the southeast and Snake Mountain to the northwest.

For a parcel of 55 acres, the land is remarkably diverse. Its northern border is contiguous with the forested portion of the Foote Farm, which MALT conserved in 2006. This area is primarily wet clayplain and valley clayplain forest, which are endangered natural community types in Vermont. When we visited last winter, we found ample evidence of porcupine and pileated woodpecker using this area.

South of the clayplain forest, an abandoned beaver meadow drains eastward into Beaver Brook. These openings in the forest are currently being used by muskrats and provide habitat for a variety of birds and reptiles. The beaver meadow is fed by two dramatic gorges lined with hemlock that lead west and southwest. At the foot of the gorges it’s easy to forget that you’re in the Champlain Valley. Between the gorges is an extensive area of high-quality mesic maple-ash-hickory-oak forest that is home to deer, bear, and other mammals. This summer we observed extensive turkey signs in these woods, and found the distinctive birch caches of a yellow-bellied sapsucker.
BEAVER BROOK, con’t

Just south of the beaver meadow is an extensive area that Mary and Michael have managed as shrubland. This beautiful place of dogwood and other native plants is a perfect breeding location for migratory bird species such as American woodcock, brown thrasher, eastern towhee, willow flycatcher, golden-winged and blue-winged warblers, field sparrow, and Baltimore oriole, all of which have been identified as priority species for conservation in the Champlain Valley.

Mary and Michael have agreed to allow MALT to occasionally bring visitors to the site to educate them about the natural history of this special place. It has an amazing variety of things to teach us, and we can’t wait to get to know it in different seasons.

But as important as it is to conserve this habitat for animals and for future generations of budding naturalists, we’re even more excited by Mary and Michael’s vision to protect important places throughout the Beaver Brook watershed. Along with their inspiring gift of this easement, they have sponsored a study (along with neighbors Charlie and Sue Grigg and the State of Vermont’s River Management Program) that identifies areas throughout the watershed that feature core habitat and wildlife corridors; rare, threatened, and endangered species; wetlands; and perennial and intermittent streams. After working with Amy Sheldon from Landslide, Inc. on the study, we now understand the most critical conservation priorities in the region and we are developing a plan to reach out to property owners. With a plan in hand, we can encourage owners to manage their lands in ways that protect the watershed and the plants and animals that live there. In many cases, the best management practices for their land may include a permanent conservation easement, as it did for Michael and Mary.

Thank you Mary and Michael, for your vision, perseverance, and inspiration!

Special Thanks for Volunteer Work During the Summer and Fall Months go to:

Michael Blust, Dragonfly Hike leader
Kathy Boyer, Woods of Fall Hike leader
Katherine Branch, TAM Trek 2010 Coordinator and Hike Series Liaison
David Brynn, Annual Meeting keynote
John Derick, TAM Trail Coordinator
Nita Hansen, Annual Meeting Greeter
Dave Hallam, Office Volunteer
Brad Koehler, Mushroom Walk leader
Ron Payne, Wildlife Walks leader
Ruth Penfield, Collaborative Hike with Green Mountain Club
Mike Mayone, TAM Trek Poster Art
Nancy Morgan, Collaborative Hike with Green Mountain Club
Gary Starr, Otter View Park Mowing and Wildlife Walks leader
Helen Young, Bumblebee Hike leader
Kathy Boyer and Ruth Penfield  Woods of Fall Hike. Co-Sponsored with the Bread Loaf Section of the Green Mountain Club in Wright Park. October 2.


Helen Young leads Bumblebee Hike at Middlebury College Organic Garden July 17.

Michael Blust leads Dragonflies and Damselflies Hike at Johnson Pond on the TAM in Weybridge. August 7.

THANKS to THESE SPONSORS for their SUPPORT of our HIKES & OUTINGS SERIES for 2010
Over a hundred Cub Scouts, college students, cross-country runners, hiking enthusiasts, two Canadians, and a few accompanying dogs previewed fall foliage at the 7th annual TAM Trek held on Sunday, Sept. 26th. This year’s trek focused on a four-mile trail segment that passes through fields into the picturesque Battell Woods and Means Woods, and then concluded at the highest point in Middlebury, Chipman Hill.

Fifteen year old Will Conlon was the youngest runner to complete the entire 16 mile Trail Around Middlebury. Conlon, who finished the course in just over three hours, might find the hectic pace of his run good training for when he begins serving as a United States Senate page in January 2011. Mia Allen, Bill Eichhorn, and Lisa Bernardin, all several decades older than Will, also polished off the full sixteen miles. Bill, as well as one of the Middlebury College cross-country runners, ran the sixteen miles in what looked like thick rubber gloves with five fingers, which simulate the feeling of being barefoot and promote a natural gait. Both men admitted that the “running gloves” do not prevent stones from jabbing the bottom of the feet. Three Middlebury College sophomores, Adrienne Matunas, Shannon Gair, and Hannah Spielberg, challenged themselves last year to run the entire TAM straight through and used the TAM Trek to finally meet their goal. Adrienne quipped at the end of their run, “We’re sweaty but happy.”

The Middlebury Muffintops swim team raised the most money, totaling more than $575. The Cub Scouts, led by Harty Heffernan, selected several different segments of the trail to complete, ranging from flat fields to the more challenging 360 foot elevation gain of Chipman Hill.

With more donations still rolling in, so far the event raised over $2500 in individual registrations and donations and over $5,000 in the form of business sponsorships and donations. TAM trail volunteers do the work of maintaining and repairing the Trail Around Middlebury; however, proceeds from the TAM Trek pay for gravel, mowers, saws, shovels, wood, and reinforcing rods.

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MIDDLEBURY RIVER CONSERVATION EASEMENTS IN RIPTON

While they are not completed as our Winter newsletter goes to press, MALT will soon be able to formally announce the acquisition of three new easements in Ripton. These easements will permanently protect approximately X feet of the Middlebury River, just upstream from Ripton village. By restricting the management practices in use along the its course, we will allow the Middlebury River to re-establish its natural slope and meander pattern, to stabilize its banks through a natural buffer of vegetation, and to access any floodplains it requires.

In the long run, these easements are part of an effort to reduce flooding and erosion, to improve water quality in the River and downstream, and to conserve both aquatic and upland habitats. MALT is currently working with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission, the State’s River Management Program, and other organizations and individuals to fulfill the restoration recommendations of a river corridor plan for the main stem and middle branch of the Middlebury River.

Keep an eye out for these transactions- it won’t be long!
HOLIDAY GIFT IDEA.....

We have found someone locally, Don Mason of Vermont Laser Products in Weybridge, who will engrave more planks for the board walk in Otter View Park. This is a great way to show your support of this in-town gem. You may choose to honor a family member, pet, civic group, or quote poetry on multiple planks!

25 character limit per plank.
Engraved planks are $250.

Please contact Joni at MALT for more information. 388-1007 or joni@maltvt.org

A new plank was added this fall to honor the birthday of Paul Meyer

FOR SALE at the MALT office! MALT organic cotton T-shirts and stickers. T-shirts come in two styles: TAM Trek or TAM, and are $17 each. The stickers have the TAM logo on them, look great on your car and are $1 each. Stop by sometime and see! Various other merchandise is available through our website, or at www.cafepress.com/malt.

Parking area at Otter Creek Gorge keeps cars off of Morgan Horse Farm Road. There is also a new trail running south—north along the edge of the pasture in the woods, connecting the TAM with the Otter Creek Gorge Trail, giving hikers an option of a loop without walking on Morgan Horse Farm Road. Thanks to a Vermont Forests, Parks, and Recreation Grant and summer trail intern Rachael Pentecost, Trail Coordinator, John Derick, and Counseling Service of Addison County Summer Program Students.
Marsh, Meadow, and Grassland Wildlife Walks

Middlebury Area Land Trust and Otter Creek Audubon Society invite you to join us as we survey birds and wildlife of Otter View Park and the Hurd Grassland.

All walks start at Otter View Park parking lot in Middlebury. Shorter and longer routes possible. The primary walking path at OVP is universally accessible.

Thursday, January 13, leader, Josh Phillips
Saturday, February 12, Tracking Expert, Greg Borah
Thursday, March 10, leader, Josh Phillips
Saturday, April 9, leader, Ron Payne
Thursday, May 12, leader, Gary Starr

“On the Backside” Twelve Spotted Skimmer Dragonfly