

## A Picture of Success

White Oak is pleased to announce the winners of our first-ever photo contest, held this fall. We received a number of high-quality entries, though the standouts were beautiful nature images shot by prizewinners Doris O'Keefe, Zabelle D'Amico, Stephanie Santoro, and Brendan McManus.

Winning photographs were displayed at Holden's Gale Free Library throughout December, and are also on our website, [www.whiteoaktrust.org](http://www.whiteoaktrust.org). The library display included about a dozen photographs, in addition to biographical information about the photographers and a description of the White Oak properties from which the images came.

Photos were taken at White Oak properties, at any time prior to or during the photo contest, through November 2010.

We expect to hold another contest in 2011—so get a head start on the competition, and begin your photographing now! 🍂



Doris O'Keefe  
Grand Prize - Green Leaves



Zabelle D'Amico  
1st prize 18 and over - Beaver Damage



Stephanie Santoro  
1st prize professional - Pretty Poison



Brendan McManus  
1st prize 11-17 - Hanging Out

## Sprucing up The White Oak Trail

Several months ago, local Boy Scout Jon Staruk approached Colleen Abrams at the Wachusett Greenways to offer his assistance as a volunteer. Jon needed to complete a substantial project to attain his Eagle Scout rank, and he had noticed that the North Street parcel could use some TLC. Since the North Street property is owned by White Oak, Colleen put Jon in contact with us. Jon proposed that he

upgrade the parcel's parking lot and work on the White Oak trail.

With approval from White Oak's board, Jon proceeded to remove brush around the parking area. He then graded and leveled it, and added stone base material for greater stability in inclement weather. Jon installed a bench and a picnic table at the parking area. After clearing the White Oak trail out to the eponymous white oak tree, he installed an-

other new bench there for hikers seeking rest. All of this hard work took Jon and volunteers roughly 80 hours, over the course of two months.

White Oak's lands off North Street were acquired in the 1980s. Today they function as an extension of the Trout Brook Conservation Area, which is owned by the town. The White Oak trail traverses these lands, and is a great

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# The White Oak: *Quercus alba*

The white oak, or *Quercus alba*, has an extensive native range in eastern North America, from southern Quebec west to eastern Minnesota, and south to northern Florida and eastern Texas. The name is not entirely accurate; the white oak's bark is more of a light gray, though can appear white from a distance. White oaks are valued for their strong, rot-resistant wood, and can often be as wide as they are tall.

Recently, a white oak in Queens, New York was cut down after its interior rot began threatening the safety of the residents who lived nearby. Neighborhood lore held that the tree was over six hundred years old. Though this age cannot be verified, it is known that the tree was 70 feet tall, with a canopy more than 100 feet wide that dominated the street.

Another famous white oak, the Wye Oak of Wye Mills, Maryland, was estimated to be over 460 years old when it was toppled during a 2002 thunderstorm. It is believed that the acorn that became the oak germinated around 1540. This tree was 96 feet tall and had a 119-foot

crown spread. The Wye Oak was the honorary state tree of Maryland, and, after its demise, wood from the fallen tree was used to make a desk for the governor of Maryland. Seedlings from the tree have been propagated, so the Wye Oak lives on in its successors.

The Charter Oak, a white oak in Hartford, Connecticut, was thought to be around six hundred years old when it came down in 1856. Early visitors to the Connecticut colony made references to this large oak tree, believed to have been used as a hiding place for the colonial charter, and paintings from the 1800s show its grandeur. The desk of the Governor of Connecticut, as well as the chairs for the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President of the Senate in the state capitol



**Top:**  
"The Charter Oak"  
Charles De Wolf Brownell  
1857

**Left:**  
"The White Oak"  
Stephanie Santoro  
2009

were made from wood salvaged from the Charter Oak, and its image is featured on the back of the Connecticut quarter.

White Oak Land Conservation Society is named for a large white oak tree located on our North Street parcel. Holden natives, George Dresser and Huck Truesdell, were inspired by this tree in the late 1970s, and subsequently founded White Oak in 1978. "Our" white oak stands approximately 75 feet tall and has a crown spread of around 50 feet. It is estimated to be approximately 160 years old. We strive to preserve the white oak and all native species found in our community, and expect that, like the white oak itself, we will continue to grow strong for hundreds of years. 🌱



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Karen Eisenhauer	Nancy Wilson
George Hamilton	

White Oak is a member of the Land Trust Alliance and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

# The New Year Brings New Board Members



## David Driscoll

I grew up in Westford, Mass. and spent a good portion of my childhood catching frogs in a swamp across the street from my house. I don't catch frogs

anymore, but I still spend as much time as I can outside, whether I am rock climbing, hiking, skiing, fishing or gardening.

In 2007 I started doing research as a graduate student at UMass Medical. In 2008 my wife Marci and I bought a house in Holden and moved in two weeks before the Great Ice Storm. We began exploring the local trails and open spaces shortly thereafter. Our neighbor Nancy Wilson introduced us to White Oak about a year later. By taking an active role I hope to support land conservation and environmental education in our new town. As a board member I look forward to working with members of the community to maintain White Oak lands and preserve open spaces in Holden for our children.

## George Hamilton

Ten years ago, I moved to Holden with my wife, Connie, from Worcester. The mountain laurel along Causeway Street was especially beautiful that May, and we moved here primarily to enjoy the country, field, and forest.

Walking in the woods has long been a means of relaxation and spiritual renewal for me. One of my favorite childhood memories was riding bikes with my friends from Worcester to the cliffs beside Holden Reservoir #2. My buddies and I took some rather insane chances there, even for 14-year-olds!

In 2010, I retired from Sun Life Financial, and was immediately recruited by White Oak boardmember Nancy Wilson to join the White Oak board. I don't mind getting my hands dirty swinging an axe or using my brush or chain saw, and I am happy to help out in any new project that comes along, especially if it involves spending time outdoors.



## Marci Driscoll

I began working for the Wachusett Regional School District as an occupational therapist in August 2008, and soon afterward my husband

David and I began to look for a home in the area. We purchased and moved into our home in Holden in November 2008, and quickly began to explore the conservation spaces in our new town.

I have always had a passion for bird watching, and as a young child, I would beg my parents to take me to the local wildlife refuge near

my hometown in New Jersey to look for birds. It was important to me that our home was located in a town with places to explore nature, and that valued open space and land conservation. Through a combination of our neighbor Nancy Wilson, and our own explorations, we discovered the work and the properties of the White Oak Land Conservation Society.

My favorite White Oak property is Porcupine Hill, with its varied habitats, view of the reservoir, and amazing show of mountain laurel in the spring. As a member of the White Oak board, I am excited to encourage a love of nature and the outdoors in the young people of Holden, to educate others on the importance of land preservation, and to help people better relate to the beauty and value of the outdoors. I believe that if people feel a connection and sense of ownership to natural places, they will be more motivated to preserve and care for them.

Personally, my favorite outdoor activities are bird watching and hiking with my husband David and our black lab Brewster. In addition to participating in the White Oak board, I am also a volunteer at the Joppa Flats Bird Banding Station, and a volunteer on the Breeding Bird Atlas for Mass Audubon. I am grateful for the opportunity to volunteer with White Oak, and hope that I may have a positive impact on the Society's work. 🍃

## Sprucing up The White Oak Trail

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way to start exploring the wild areas of Holden. It begins on the eastern side of North Street, just south of the parking lot, looping around to the north and west. Other trails to the west of the parking lot connect with the trail system in Trout Brook.

Thanks to Jon Staruk, his crew of volunteers, and "matchmaker" Colleen Abrams, visitors to the North Street parcel can maximize their enjoyment with a hike, a rest, and a picnic. Congratulations to Jon on his impending Eagle Scout award! 🍃



North Street parcel before



North Street parcel after

Photos by Jon Staruk



Photo credit USFWS

# Got a Bear Tale?

**Saturday, March 19**  
**11 a.m.**  
**Holden Senior Center**  
**All ages welcome – FREE!**

Come learn about the fascinating life of Massachusetts' black bears at this free public presentation. Our presenter will be Laura Hajduk, the Furbearer and Black Bear Project Leader for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Laura has been with the agency for almost three years, first working on the Furbearer Project and then taking over the Black Bear Project a year ago. We'll follow a black bear through the seasons, while discussing the biology and ecology of this very interesting and often misunderstood creature. This is a family-friendly program, appropriate for all ages. Bring your own bear tales and photos.

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