



# DAVIDSON NATURE PRESERVE



©Jym St. Pierre

## Kennebec Land Trust

*Conservation Across Generations*

## KENNEBEC LAND TRUST

The Kennebec Land Trust was formed by local citizens who wanted to work with landowners and communities to protect the natural features, working landscapes, and fragile ecosystems of the Kennebec River and Lakes Region of Maine. KLT is dedicated to preserving the natural attributes that make our region a great place to live, work, or visit.

Protected properties include Vaughan Woods in Hallowell, Curtis Homestead in Leeds, Mount Pisgah in Winthrop, Parker Pond Headland in Fayette, Vassalboro Wildlife Habitat, and Webber-Rogers Farmstead in Litchfield. Most KLT conservation lands offer public access for hiking, paddling, bird watching, skiing, and just enjoying nature, in all seasons.

A full listing of Kennebec Land Trust properties and recreational uses, and an interactive map with directions, can be found at our website: [www.tkl.org](http://www.tkl.org)

Please join us!

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Preserve Sign: David Kah; installation: Ian MacKinnon (in photo) & Patrick McGuire

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## WETLAND

### FEN OR BOG?\*

The beaver flowage at the west end of the Preserve path supports an impressive great blue heron rookery. The edge of this biologically rich fen is dominated by cattails (*Typha latifolia*) and sedges (*Scirpus* spp.). The herons nest in trees that died after the beaver impounded the stream and flooded the surrounding upland. Eventually, when food resources dwindle, the beaver will move to another area, the dam will fall apart, and the stream will return.

*\*Fens, like the wetland at the Davidson Preserve, have streams running through them, while the only source of water in a true bog is the atmosphere.*

### BIRDS

Over seventy species of birds have been identified at the Davidson Preserve. Listed below are a number of priority species - birds that have been identified in breeding bird surveys (BBS) as having declining populations.



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- Fen**
- great blue heron
- American bittern
- marsh wren
- American black duck
- rusty blackbird
- Field**
- field sparrow
- brown thrasher
- eastern towhee
- bobolink
- American woodcock
- Forest**
- wood thrush
- veery
- eastern wood-pewee
- rose-breasted grosbeak

## FIELD AND FOREST

As you walk in the fields and forests and to the wetland's edge, you will have the opportunity to see many species of wildlife and plants. We hope you enjoy your visit!

### FIELDS

The path at the Preserve winds through lowbush blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.), white and gray birch (*Betula* spp.), sweet fern (*Comptonia peregrina*), dogwoods (*Swida sericea* and *rugosa*), and many seasonal wildflowers. Creating splashes of brilliant orange amid the blue of the berries, showy wood orange lilies (*Lilium philadelphicum*) bloom just as the blueberries ripen.



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The fields would revert to forest in a short time if they were not mowed. Mowing occurs on a rotating basis so the blueberry bushes can be pruned to the ground. In the growing season immediately following fall mowing, plant growth occurs and flower buds are formed. In May of the following year (the crop year), flower buds open and bloom and berries develop.

### FOREST

The Preserve includes a white pine-mixed conifer forest which has been a source of timber and firewood for many years. Look for large eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), red and white oak (*Quercus rubra* and *alba*), and American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), as well as beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*) shrubs. Often secretive, wildlife forage and breed in this woodland habitat all year long.



## WELCOME TO KENNEBEC LAND TRUST'S DAVIDSON NATURE PRESERVE

This 97-acre conservation land protects ecologically important wetlands, including an active heron



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rookery; approximately 75 acres of woodland; and over 10 acres of blueberry fields. The Preserve features tremendous biodiversity within a relatively small area. Moose have been sighted, and sixteen species of warblers have been identified during spring migration. KLT manages the Davidson Nature Preserve for blueberries and for wildlife habitat.



© Joe Pichon, Kennebec Journal

### CONSERVATION HISTORY

The Davidson Nature Preserve has noteworthy connections to Maine's settlement and agricultural history. About twenty years after the Town of Vassalboro was incorporated in 1771, early settlers moved to one of the highest points in the town, Hussey Hill Road, which is adjacent to today's KLT Preserve.

For 200 years this land has stayed undeveloped, as landowners have raised sheep, apples, and blueberries and harvested trees for lumber and firewood. KLT land donor Elizabeth Davidson purchased the property in two parcels in 1991 and 1994 and deeded 97 acres to KLT in 2005.

## WHY ARE WE CONTROLLING INVASIVES AT THE DAVIDSON PRESERVE?

After loss of habitat, invasive species are the second greatest threat to global biodiversity. They have few natural control agents, they compete with native plants and reduce habitat and food for animals, and they can threaten the stability of entire ecosystems.

KLT is working to control invasive species on many of our conservation lands, focusing finite resources especially on parcels where the ecological value is high and where, at the same time, we can expect to manage invasive populations with some measure of success.



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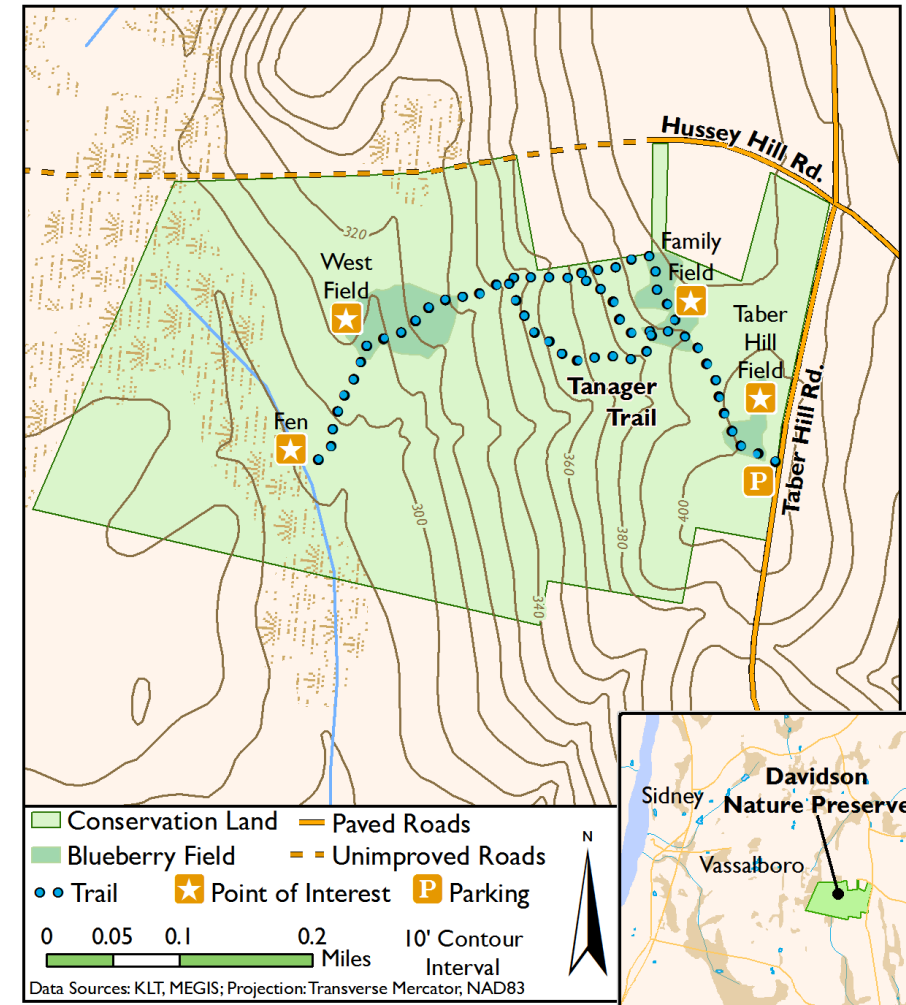
Bryan Prelogovsk, KLT Colby College intern, with invasive honeysuckle (left), near white oak (*Quercus alba*) (right)

The Davidson Nature Preserve is one of these properties. Here, KLT interns are working to control invasive honeysuckle, common buckthorn, multi-flora rose, and bittersweet.

### HOW DO INVASIVES SPECIES SPREAD IN FORESTS, FIELDS, AND WETLANDS?

Humans are primarily responsible for the introduction of invasives, which grow and multiply rapidly and can spread to unmanageable levels over short periods of time. Before their impacts were understood, invasives were often planted for ornamental and landscape purposes, for erosion control, and for wildlife cover. Once here, they were spread by birds or by their own rapid vegetative growth, or they hitchhiked on tires or boots or in transplant pots. Invasive plants often require direct sunlight, so they thrive along forest edges and in disturbed areas.

## Davidson Nature Preserve, Vassalboro



**Access and public use:** A KLT sign marks a small parking lot on the west side of Taber Hill Road. A mowed path begins at the KLT registration box and leads to the blueberry fields and the north end of the fen. A map identifies fields that are open for blueberry picking. There are no blazed trails. Boundaries are marked with small white KLT signs. **No ATVs or motorized vehicles** of any kind are permitted except on the designated snowmobile trail in the winter. Please respect all adjacent private property.

**Directions:** From Augusta take Route 201 north to Vassalboro. Turn east on the Bog Road for approximately 2.2 miles to the intersection of the Taber Hill Road. Turn left (north) on Taber Hill Road for approximately 1 mile. Look for the KLT sign, parking lot, and registration box at the wooden gate on the left (west) side of Taber Hill Road.