

2024 Tudor Richards Award

Presented by Margaret Watkins at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 14, 2024.

Each year since 1983, NH Audubon has presented the Tudor Richards award to an individual or individuals who have worked tirelessly and effectively for conservation in the Granite State.

I am delighted to introduce this year's Tudor Richards award recipient, Betsy Hardwick who, as several people have described her, is "an amazing woman". Betsy is one of those quiet, understated volunteers whose deeds may fly under the radar since she works collaboratively and with humility.

Through her passion, knowledge, and skill she has transformed her community of Franconstown and inspired volunteers and professionals throughout the state.

Betsy has chaired the Franconstown Conservation Commission for 25 years, is vice-chair of the Franconstown Land Trust, and serves on the Planning Board. Betsy was the force behind passage of a \$1 million town conservation bond and championed the "2010 by 2010" campaign that resulted in conservation of 25% of the land in town. She remains

actively engaged in both conserving and managing the 3,000+ acres of conservation lands owned by the Town and/or the Franconstown Land Trust. As a land trust volunteer, Betsy not only serves on the board, but also writes the fundraising grants, drafts the conservation easements, and manages each projects through to completion. She was responsible for creating the town's first Natural Resources Inventory to help inform conservation and land use planning.

Cooperative Extension staff who help coordinate the annual, Saving Special Places conference see Betsy as "one the most respected voices for grassroots, collaborative, community-focused conservation in the state, particularly related to wildlife and habitat stewardship on town lands."

Betsy's work is not limited to on-the-ground conservation, and she is equally recognized for her dedication to teaching both children and adults about the natural world around them. When she created the town's first Natural Resources Inventory, Betsy included a special section for aquatic resources. Recognizing that not everyone may read the town master plan, Betsy created videos about the importance of riparian buffers for the Town's website. She also wrote a series of articles for the local Franconstown News.

She has led field trips for elementary school students, and her annual moonlight snowshoe hikes in January are legendary. On daytime expeditions Betsy shares not only her forestry expertise but also her knowledge of plants, birds, and wildlife signs. She helped establish and continues to help coordinate a Speakers Series program in Franconstown designed to help young and old alike to better understand, appreciate, and steward their environment.

Within New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Betsy is recognized as someone whom others, including Extension staff, look to for advice and inspiration. She has not only taken Cooperative Extension's



*Betsy Hardwick accepts the 2024 Tudor Richards award.
Photo by Zoe Dawson*

flagship volunteer program, the New Hampshire Coverts Project, but has herself helped train many of Extension's 475 Coverts volunteers. In southern New Hampshire, those trainings have often included visits to a Frankestown community forest, where Betsy relates how she, and others, engage the community to support their town forests, raise the money to acquire them, create management plans, and recruit people to help out on workdays. She has also served on the New Hampshire Coverts Advisory Board and presented at the NH Association of Conservation Commissions' annual training. Betsy consistently reports to the Coverts program between 200 to 500 hours of volunteer time annually for her wildlife and forest conservation and stewardship work across the state and in her community. Given Betsy's fierce dedication and commitment, I suspect that the "real" time she contributes is even more impressive.

In support of Betsy's nomination for this award, Karen Bennett, retired Cooperative Extension Forester and last year's Tudor Richards Award recipient, wrote, "I knew Tudor Richards best as a forester – one who keenly appreciated the value of forests for wood, water, wildlife, recreation, and the many other amenities and services they provide. He believed in forest management as a means to provide for people and for nature. He took an integrated approach to management. As I write this about Tudor, I can just as easily replace his name with Betsy's."

Forester, educator, conservation spark plug, and steady, reliable conservation activist, I am honored to present Betsy Hardwick as the 2024 Tudor Richards Award winner.

