

MACDONALD CONSERVATION AREA

LAND DONORS: JESSIE AND DOUGLAS MACDONALD
OWNED BY: KLT, READFIELD



Macdonald woods (Jym St. Pierre)

In 1965, Douglas Macdonald needed a change. An author and English teacher, he was living in New York City. "I was tired of New York, tired of the crowds." Douglas hit the road and drove to Maine. "I wanted to start a farm. I had no experience, and I'm not sure where I got the dream." He was drawn to the "rawness" of living up north. "I just liked the idea of Maine," he says.

Douglas stopped in the town of Wayne. "I was impressed right away with the area and thought it was particularly beautiful." He met a landowner who was willing to sell him 100 acres of woodland and fields on the Readfield town line. The property had no house, only an old foundation. Needing somewhere to live, Douglas also purchased a small camp on Lake Androscoggin.

Several decades and a career change later, he and his wife, Jessie, now summer at the Androscoggin camp. "I never really got around to farming," Douglas admits. "I just let it go wild." He studied horticulture and became a landscape designer. "I realized that nature has the best design." Since farming was no longer part of their plans, Douglas and Jessie decided to keep the property as woodland.

In 2002, the Kennebec Land Trust approached the Macdonalds about conserving their property. Since the Macdonalds' land was adjacent to a town forest, there was added benefit

to conserving two large wooded parcels. "I thought the idea of preserving forestland was a very good one," recalls Douglas.

On a walk with KLT staff and board members, the Macdonalds gained new appreciation for their property. "They pointed out all these wonderful plants" recalls Jessie. "And we just thought, 'Wow!'"

In 2004, Jessie and Douglas Macdonald donated their hundred acres to the Kennebec Land Trust. Several years later, KLT volunteers developed a path that connects to the Readfield Town Forest trails and features wooded views of Jones Brook. A registration box with maps and brochures now welcomes hikers to the trail. "We were not really using the land, and to open it up to the public in some way was a great thing. Just preserving land isn't enough," says Douglas. "You have to have people walk through it and enjoy it in some way."

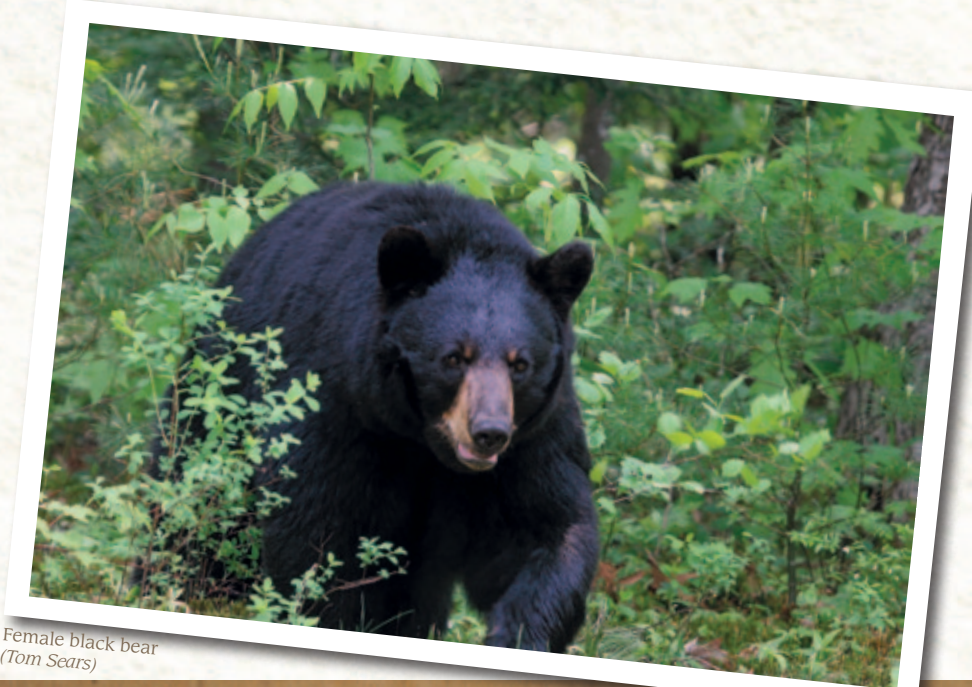
The Macdonald Conservation Area joins the Readfield Town Forest to create a 210-acre conservation area.

The two areas contain several loop trails. In turn, these parcels are part of a much larger undeveloped forest that is habitat for a variety of species with extensive home ranges, like black bear, moose, and goshawk.

The Macdonalds try to walk the trails every time they visit. Donating their land helped them forge a deeper connection with an area they love and appreciate. Jessie says, "We've always cared what happens to the town, but now we feel really connected."

Bears are all about food. Their lives revolve around the search for and consumption of various foods that change with the seasons. It's forested habitat that provides that food and lots of it. Since bears eat a wide variety of foods, they require large tracts of undeveloped land with diverse habitat types included.

— Randy Cross, Bear Biologist,
Maine Department of Inland
Fisheries and Wildlife



Female black bear
(Tom Sears)



Jessie and Douglas Macdonald
(Stan Macdonald: 2009)

