Quincy Bog is a dynamic wetland shaped by several natural processes - most significantly, beaver activity and, increasingly, frequent periods of flooding rains. Beaver dams have greatly enlarged the pond compared to twenty-five years ago when the trail was created. The Bog’s loop trail runs close to our property boundary, so relocating the trail further from the water’s edge isn’t feasible for many stretches along the northern and southern borders. Beaver eradication - a method some use for handling beaver dam flooding - also removes all the ecosystem benefits that beavers bring, so we’ve chosen to adapt our trail to these natural changes.

Boardwalks serve to elevate trails above water level, and we’ve used this approach at the Bog. Our first boardwalk had 16’-long planks. Some of these are still in use but have been slowly rotting and breaking over the past ten years. More recently, we have replaced broken sections with puncheons, 24-30”-wide sections laid over 8’-long hemlock, tamarack, or cedar planks resting on 6”x6” cross pieces. Despite this, as the Bog has expanded from beaver activity, we’ve often had to raise the walkway even more, overlaying puncheons with additional planks. Much of this labor has been done by our Board members with assistance from many volunteers, neighbors, and students from nearby schools and colleges. Many Bog volunteers also help with trail maintenance, cutting back encroaching grasses and shrubs, removing downed trees from the trail, and opening the various dams each time the trail is flooded anew.

In 1993, the New Hampshire Conservation Corps created a log boardwalk over the main beaver dam, extending the trail into a loop that included the “lower kiosk” and a short walk along the road to the Nature Center. In 1999, we purchased a strip of land along the southern border, bypassing the road, and creating a trail around the entire Bog. In 2001, beavers rebuilt an abandoned dam, within a year flooding the log boardwalk over the main dam. In response, we installed a beaver baffle with a siphon to lower the water level. As perhaps we should have expected, the only creatures baffled were humans! In 2002, the trail detoured around the main dam thanks to a by-path on private property that, once again, allowed a loop walk around the Bog. In 2003-2004, Eagle Scout Jonah Serfass built an elevated bridge below the dam. This project allowed the original trail to be reopened and created a safe and attractive pathway past the dam.

As if destined to thwart our trail efforts, beavers then built a dam at the culvert on the Sanborn property below the Bog. That dam flooded the access to the Eagle Scout Bridge in a rather dramatic fashion, creating a 30’-long stretch of floating walkway on either side. This contest of humans versus beavers continued as Board members and volunteers opened the dam at the culvert, at times using a chain saw to cut through the 3-6’-tall, well-woven dam. Working early in the morning, volunteers would encounter beavers slapping their tails and, sometimes, making more aggressive displays.

In 2011, Tropical Storm Irene shifted the Eagle Scout Bridge off its foundation. Board members winched it back, using three come-a-longs and several lengths of chain. In so doing, we saw that the foundation and bridge structural components were deteriorating and needed replacement. I had just been to Prince Edward Island where I saw permanently installed pontoon bridges that were able to survive freezing and ice. The Board of Directors adopted this solution and held a fundraising campaign to finance a pontoon bridge at the Bog, as well as a ramp to facilitate access to the Nature Center and ledge pack to harden the pathways leading from both kiosks to the Bog Trail.

Past the Nature Center, new construction this year will extend the elevated walkway and dramatically improve the trail, especially by the inlet where beaver activity and rotting boards have made the path difficult to traverse. The entire section of boardwalk by the inlet will feature decking height that is adjustable using durable, dock-like fittings and design. An example of this walkway style - built by the same person we have contracted - can be seen on the Zealand Trail in the White Mountains.

During construction, the existing walkway will remain in place, allowing continuous trail access. We will re-purpose the timber

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President’s Perspective

Gino Infascelli

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”  
-  John Muir

This favorite quote reminds me that many who visit Quincy Bog find solace and inspiration within this quiet and refreshing space, and leave expecting to return soon.

When I visit the Nature Center and walk the trails, I often meet families with children. It is so very satisfying to hear the children’s excitement and see their beaming faces. They share with me what they learned from our volunteer hosts about identifying animal tracks and bird songs. It seems they can hardly wait until their next chance to explore the Bog!

As you may be aware, this year we’ve focused on trail repairs at the Bog. We recently hired a contractor to replace approximately 500 feet of boardwalk over the next six months. The new sections will be slightly wider and partially elevated, allowing us to adjust their height over the water in response to beaver activity. To help stretch our funds to benefit the trail, we plan to reuse much of the existing lumber to make improvements in other locations. In the upcoming year, another goal is to establish a new loop on the north side of the trail, to provide visitors with a unique perspective from above the Ledges.

In addition to Quincy Bog, we hope you have the chance to explore both of the loop trails at Quincy Pasture Forest. If you feel up for a moderate to strenuous hike, then I encourage you to check out the beautiful Loon Lake overlook along the Red Trail. You’ll want to wear stable footwear and bring snowshoes or micro spikes for traction in winter conditions.

We wish to thank John Richards, a retiring board member, for his years of service and especially for bringing us a new way to explore nature through the lens of our recently acquired microscope.

We wish all of you a peaceful and happy new year.

Gino Infascelli was recently elected to his second year as President of the Board. He is also active on our Trails and Pemi-Baker Land Trust Committees.

Show Your Support for Quincy Bog

We can all use help from our friends, and Quincy Bog Natural Area is no exception! Our trails, nature talks and walks, programs for schoolkids, and land conservation efforts all rely on the hard work of dedicated volunteers and the generosity of friends like you. Please consider supporting our work in 2020 by sending us a donation in the enclosed envelope. Many thanks from all of us!

An Update to the “State of NH’s Birds”

Pamela Hunt

This past fall, bird declines made big news with an article in the journal Science concluding that we’ve lost some three billion birds since 1970 in North America. Here in New Hampshire, this was, unfortunately, not terribly surprising, since we’ve known for some time that populations of many species have been declining. The new piece was that scientists finally had an actual number of birds lost rather than just information on the trends in terms of percentages.

Back in 2011, New Hampshire Audubon produced “The State of New Hampshire’s Birds: A Conservation Guide,” a publication that summarized all the available trend information, discussed the threats birds faced, and proposed actions people could undertake to help them out. Before the Science paper came out last fall, I had already started the process of updating our State of the Birds report, and the overall conclusions at our local scale are quite similar to those from the continental analysis. Of the roughly 180 species that breed in the Granite State, 42% are in decline—some of them quite strongly. Based on data from the Breeding Bird Survey, even some common species like Common Grackles and Bank Swallows have lost 70% or more of their New Hampshire populations in the last 50 years. And while a similar number of species are increasing, the magnitudes of these increases are far smaller by comparison, mirroring the continental conclusion that there has been a net loss of birds.

There are some clear patterns at both scales. Waterfowl and raptors are on the increase, largely the result of concerted conservation efforts in years past. Species like the Wood Ducks that frequent Quincy Bog were quite rare a century ago, but have rebounded thanks to nest box programs and habitat protection. Similarly, the Peregrine Falcons that nest on nearby Rattlesnake Mountain began a slow but steady recovery with the banning of DDT and subsequent release programs. Even many of New Hampshire’s forest birds are doing fairly well, although those that migrate farther away for the winter are more likely to be declining—highlighting the importance of conservation across the entire annual cycle.

Declining species in New Hampshire tend to be concentrated into three categories: grassland birds, shrubland birds, and aerial insectivores. The first two groups are clearly tied to their respective habitats: as these habitats have declined on the landscape, so have the birds that depend on them. Some grassland birds like Eastern Meadowlarks are now listed as “threatened” in the state, and even familiar species like the Bobolink are less than half as common as they used to be as large fields have slowly given way to forest or human development. Declines of aerial insectivores, especially species like nighthawks, swifts, and swallows, are the most disconcerting, at least in part because we still don’t really understand the causes. Pesticide use, the widely noted declines in insect populations, loss of nest sites, and factors operating during migration or winter are all possibilities.

Although the causes of all bird declines are not fully understood, there are still some simple things you can do to help birds out. Aside from habitat loss, the two largest threats to birds in North America are cats and windows, which together kill billions of birds a year. Keeping cats indoors is an “easy” step (yes, the cats might not agree!), and there are also lots of things you can

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Did you know that beavers (*Castor canadensis*) are one of the few animals able to change the environment so dramatically that they are called **ecosystem engineers**?

**How can beavers do that?** They change landscapes by dam-building! Beaver dams actually make different habitats by:

- changing water pathways,
- flooding forests, and
- creating wetlands

**Cool Fact**—Today, there are about 6-12 million beavers in North America, compared to an estimated hundreds of millions of them before Europeans settled here and started making their own changes.

**Are beavers changing Quincy Bog now?** Yes! Beavers recently moved into a forested area between a neighboring field and the Nature Center. They chewed down several trees, dammed a small stream, and created a little pond. This area now provides new habitat for insects, plants, and wildlife—**biodiversity**! The growing pond also floods the neighbor’s land, so we try to keep it small by letting water out, but the beavers repair leaks almost immediately.

**Cool Fact**—A beaver dam in Alberta, Canada, under construction since the 1970s, is believed to be the largest beaver dam in the world. It’s in a remote area, not accessible by road, which protects the dam and the beavers from people.

**What happens to stream critters when beavers build a dam?** Stream animals that need fast-moving water will eventually die out in a new beaver pond, or else move to another part of the stream where water still flows freely.

**Cool Fact**—Beaver ponds provide slow-moving water for aquatic insects and other invertebrates, frogs, turtles, muskrat, and mink!

**Above:** Opening a hole in a beaver dam in an effort to control water levels.

**Below:** A beaver swimming in the Bog (Photo: Sue Buttrick)

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**Books We’re Reading at the Bog**

**Seasons at Eagle Pond**

*A review submitted by Mark Runquist*

When a friend handed us a copy of Donald Hall’s *Seasons at Eagle Pond* shortly after my wife and I moved to New Hampshire, I tucked it neatly onto a bookshelf. Evidently it needed some seasoning. A year later, we decided to read it to each other. Like the passing of seasons, the book also came to an end. While it lasted, though, we relished sitting around the woodstove guided through the year’s changes by Hall.

Hall’s prose brings the seasons to life in brutal and beautiful honesty. Few locals could argue with his assessment of spring as “the least of our seasons, and it has built no constituency in New Hampshire.” Furthermore, he echoes with some resignation an observation many of us still hold true today, “The greatest crop in New Hampshire’s July and August, for the last one hundred and forty years, is the summer people.”

The book, published in 1987, contains rich language and evocative images of New Hampshire. From the perspective of his farm in the shadow of Ragged Mountain, Hall chronicles spring mud, gardens, pesky woodchucks, summer people, community suppers, first snows, and a fall unrivaled anywhere on the planet.

Donald Hall passed away in 2018. He recounted this thought about his life as a writer: “When I was eleven or twelve I daydreamed living here year round, a lonely trapper on the hill like all the bachelor solitaires who lived cramped into tumbledown shacks. By the time I was sixteen I daydreamed of living here as a writer; in my twenties, I learned that this was impractical; in my forties, I did it.”

The grace of old age did not dampen his love of the beauty around us. “Even people who have lived their whole lives here never become bored with this looking. When I was young I thought maybe the old didn’t see, didn’t relish the beauty they lived in. Then I learned: for more than a hundred years, anybody willing to leave this countryside has been rewarded for leaving it by more money, leisure, and creature comforts….I live among a population, extraordinary in our culture, that lives where it lives because it loves its place. We are self-selected place-lovers. There’s no reason to live except for love.”

I’m quite sure Donald would be pleased that his words outlived him, and perhaps even more pleased that the beauty in this place he called home will outlive even his words.

**Mark Runquist**, a resident of Campton, joined the Board of Directors in 2019 and serves as Chair of our Communications Committee.
Quincy Bog Notes

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replaced by the new boardwalk to enhance the trail between the Ledges and the stone wall in the northeast corner. We also plan to reroute part of the trail between the inlet and the Ledges to avoid wet areas that often flood. We eventually plan to establish a side spur to the top of the Ledges, where an easement will allow us to place an observation platform. Last fall we also began spreading ledge pack to harden the trail between the main dam and the pontoon bridge. Volunteers helped tote these heavy loads, bucket-by-bucket, from the parking area at the lower kiosk.

By the end of next summer (2020) we expect to have a dry, safe trail around the Bog. We thank everyone for their help and their patience in this undertaking.

Bob Bulkeley has served on the Board of Directors for 15 years and is the Chair of our Trails Committee.

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do to make your yard more welcoming, from reducing the risk of window strikes to providing native plants for food and cover. Further afield, you can make buying decisions with indirect benefits to birds, and even advocate for local, state, and national policies that protect birds and their habitats. More information will be coming out in early 2020 when New Hampshire Audubon releases our updated State of the Birds report. In the meantime you can find additional recommended conservation actions at these websites: www.3billionbirds.org or www.nhaudubon.org/the-state-of-the-birds

Pam Hunt is a Senior Biologist in Avian Conservation at NH Audubon. This summer, she will lead a nature walk focused on dragonflies at Quincy Bog.

Save These Dates for Upcoming Bog Events!

Winter Wildlife Prowl – A Guided Investigation of the Ecology, Behavior & Identification of Quincy Bog Wildlife with Matt Tarr:
• Saturday, March 7 (9:00 to 11:30 AM)

Spring Bird Walk with Iain MacLeod:
• Sunday, May 31 (7:00 to 9:30 AM)

Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants and Fungi Workshop with Rick Van de Poll (Limited to 20 people, with $20 fee required).
Registration will open in late April with Marguerite Crowell):
• Sunday, June 7 (9:00 AM to 1:00 PM)

These programs will meet at the Nature Center. As the dates draw nearer, check our website (www.quincybog.org) and our Facebook page for more information and updates.

An example of the type of new walkway planned for the inlet

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