



Quincy Bog Notes



Spring 2004

Volume 11 Number 2

The President's Podium

by Bill Taffe

There's a lot happening at Rumney Ecological Systems. In addition to stewarding two new properties near the Quincy Bog which have been described in previous issues of Bog Notes (the Baker Forest and Quincy Pastures Forest properties) the Board has been exploring the question "What is our proper role in land protection activities?" The winter edition of Quincy Bog notes will have a full review of our deliberations.

Meanwhile, we've been planning activities at the Quincy Bog for Summer 2004. The Ruth V. Fisher Summer Lecture Series, ably planned and implemented by Jody Young, has several very enticing offerings. They're described later in this issue. I hope to see you at one of the programs.

We've reached a "state of accommodation" with the resident beaver family so they get the use of the pond but we still get use of the trail! Jonah Serfass and his fellow Scouts built a wonderful new bridge below the former beaver dam so we can easily walk the complete trail, full circle without detours. We had the bridge dedication on May 2. Thank you, Jonah.

School groups continue to use the Bog for Natural History field trips. Board member Betty Jo Taffe, assisted by teachers and students' parents, has led several groups.

Scott Bailey and the Bog Interpretation Committee have been developing new interpretative materials which Scott describes below.

Taking Stock

by Scott Bailey

Just as a storekeeper or factory foreman periodically takes stock of his inventory to keep business running smoothly, we have begun the process of inventorying the natural diversity of Quincy Bog. Not only does this project tell us much about the environmental quality of the lands where we practice stewardship, it opens our eyes to the presence of floral and faunal neighbors that we may have walked past dozens of times without noticing. It is amazing to see what can be learned just by looking!

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Writing a Book

by Allan R. Keith

For the second time in 30 years, a major attempt is being made to write and publish a modern annotated checklist of the birds of New Hampshire. The first effort, which began about 1968, was initiated by Bob Smart, formerly a science teacher at New Hampton School, a resident of New Hampshire for over 10 years, and a past President of Audubon Society of New Hampshire. Bob began by collecting field notes published in *New Hampshire Bird News* beginning in 1950-1951. He asked me to help with the research and writing aspects since I had made many birding trips with him to all parts of the state at all seasons of the year. In 1972 I took a sabbatical from my job and began doing the literature search which resulted in a bibliography of New Hampshire ornithology that exceeds 1,000 references. We then decided that we should take a different approach from the rest of the state checklists we were familiar with. The usual format presents the status and distribution of each species as a "snapshot" at a single point in time with relatively little history. The habitat of New Hampshire has undergone radical changes since the publication of the first known list of birds for the state in 1792. Therefore, we decided it would be more valuable to present as much of a "moving picture" of each species as we could, showing how the number and distribution of each species changed in the last 200 years, to the extent the available data permit. Along the way, we planned to include extreme dates for migrants, peak spring and fall migration periods, maximum counts, breeding distribution and trends, location and specimen number of important specimens in collections, and all the other data usually found in a good state bird book.

Actual writing began in 1973 and species accounts for about 200 species were written. But soon after that Bob moved out of the state, I had to go back to work, and then Bob passed away. So there was no one I knew who could do the absolutely critical job of correcting any misstatements of status or distribution that were made due to lack of intimate knowledge of the birds of the state. But then in 2001 in conversation with my good friend Bob Fox, we decided to resurrect the project, update the species accounts already written, and prepare accounts for species not already covered. In addition, we want to include chapters written and signed by New Hampshire residents knowledgeable about the history of Christmas Bird Censuses, hawk-watching, the history of New Hampshire forests, and banding records. But most importantly, we plan that all

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Quincy Bog Notes

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*A twice-yearly newsletter of
information, announcements and news
about the Quincy Bog Natural Area
and related concerns. Editorial
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Building a Bridge at Quincy Bog by Jonah Serfass

To obtain the highest rank in scouting, Eagle, a scout must demonstrate leadership by organizing and carrying out a large service project. That was the main requirement for me to accomplish before I could get my Eagle. It turned out to be the hardest requirement as well.

The first step was to find a non-profit organization that would allow me to do a service project for them. I narrowed it down by deciding to do the project in Rumney. Around that time, my mom had become a volunteer at Quincy Bog, and we would go there often. When we hiked the trail before, we had hopped across the remains of the old bridge. Eventually, the beavers took over the old crossing for a dam, and we were unable to hop across anymore, and from then on we had gone around. This gave me the idea for my project, a bridge that would cross further downstream, across a narrower section of water. I submitted this idea to the troop council, and they approved it.

Before I had even started planning the bridge, I knew that I would need a wetlands permit. I printed one of the extensive applications out and started the long process of filling it out. It required letters to the site abutters, maps, pictures, and descriptions of the project. After mailing this in, I learned that it was often six months or more before a wetlands permit was granted. This was disappointing, but the permit was required, and after three months, it was approved.

The wetlands permit was just one of the many steps I took in planning. Before I could start the project, I needed all the plans approved by a district council in Laconia. I spent the next few months drawing plans, writing donation letters, and organizing maps. My dad knew about building things, so he drew the plans. Joe Robertie from Precision Lum-

Ber was able to make the arrangements for most of the wood for us, and a generator as well. The Bog Trails Committee had State grant money that covered the rest of the wood and all the hardware. I was then ready to submit my plan to the council. They liked the project and it was approved.



Before we started the building, a problem arose. The beavers had built a dam in the spot where the bridge was going to go. Since we couldn't move the dam, we changed the plans to build the bridge around the dam. This actually worked better, because the bridge was just below the dam and would now be in shallower water.

This was a huge project, and I decided to compact the work into one weekend. I made flyers and handed them out to my troop at one of the meetings. I also called and emailed the scouts, telling them about my workday on September 20th and 21st. I told them that Hannaford, McDonalds, and Wal-Mart had donated food, and that we had permission to camp out on the Taffe's property. The weekend was a great success, and more than 20 people stopped by to help with the project. We had people assigned to different tasks. These included: carrying wood to the site, laying wood in place, nailing, sawing, and clearing out connecting trails. A handful of us camped overnight, and some went home and returned the next morning. We were done by one o'clock on Sunday afternoon and people went home.

We have decided to plan for a dedication in early spring. I am in the process of doing a major write-up of the project, as well as creating a photo album. After I submit this, I will be ready to head down to Laconia for my Eagle Board of Review. I learned a lot about planning and organization by doing this project, and I think that it was an improvement to the Quincy Bog nature loop.

Conservation & Preservation Are New Hampshire's Key Legislative Priorities

by John R. M. Alger

In 1990 a co-sponsor of the fledgling "Shoreline Protection Act" said that then Governor Judd Gregg "tells us so many times that the lakes are the crown jewels of the state, it's time to post a security guard." Thus spake the governor noting the sparkling vantage for New Hampshire of its lakes which then needed a legislative guard to preserve their quality. And, that law has proven very worthwhile in the succeeding years even if enforcement has been uneven.

Another serious effort by state government at preservation came about when it appeared that developers, acting in the prosperity of the moment (1986-1989), would gobble up much of the open, beautiful scenery of the state. The result was passage of the "Land Conservation Investment Program" (LCIP) in 1987 funded with \$20 million from unexpended surplus followed by \$18 million in 1988 appropriated for the biennium ending on June 30, 1991. Another \$20 million was appropriated and borrowing authorized for the LCIP in 1991. This all led to purchase of the 39,000 acre "Nash Stream" property in the northern part of the state which constitutes the State's largest individual park and forest preserve having mountain climbs with handsome views, forest lands, trails for hikers, bikers, skiers, and off-highway-recreational-vehicle trails. It is a playground for both natives and visitors to the state as well as its second-home owners. Its lands are protected with a comprehensive joint management plan among various state and local agencies.

In total the state holds 201,513 acres of preservation lands consisting of 41 state parks, 117 state forests, and another 63 parcels including conservation easements, preservation of natural areas and some operated in connection with specific purposes (i.e. such as the Gorge Natural Area, the Nansen Ski Jump, the Frost Farm Historic Site, and the Urban Forestry Center). All these properties are designed to serve our residents with recreational and educational lands as well as serving to lure tourists and visitors to our beautiful state, creating our large and ever-growing recreation business for the residents of the state. These state lands are operated and managed by the Divisions of Forest and Lands and Parks and Recreation under the Division Commissioner of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) who reports to the Governor.

Starting about 100 years ago, in the era of President "Teddy" Roosevelt, (our first president to put land

conservation on a par with development) New Hampshire people rallied to the cause of rebuilding our ravaged forests and polluted streams. This came after some fifty years of uncontrolled logging and stripping of our forests to capitalize on exploding markets for forest products in our growing cities.

That was also a time when New Hampshire was losing population from its hillside farms to western states. This caused Governor Frank Rollins to declare and create "Old Home Week," a celebration to this day, usually as "Old Home Day." Rollins sought to lure former New Hampshire residents back to the state. This effort also encouraged developers and the General Court to make a high priority of natural resource preservation to support tourism and recreation, a business development so very important to this day.

The General Court and the Governor have consistently served the interests of conservation and preservation for New Hampshire lands and waters, marked by regular efforts to bring more of the state into public ownership. The "current-use" tax law created especially for the preservation of our agricultural and forest lands in 1968 was followed by over two-thirds of the voters approving a state constitutional amendment allowing current use instead of market-value taxation for forests and agriculture lands. Now some 52% of New Hampshire lands are entered into current use. This law allows agriculture and forestry to remain as an important part of state activities even by those without large incomes.

Formation of conservation organizations such as the Society for Preservation of New Hampshire Forests and the Nature Conservancy were encouraged in the law. Also, in 1911 the Federal Government formed national parks and forests with the "White Mountain National Forest" created mostly in 780,000 acres of New Hampshire lands and mountains. Now it annually has the largest number of visitors of all Federal national forests.

Lake Tarleton in Warren and Piermont was "saved" from development in 1998 by a combined Federal-state purchase of lands around its shores. A large bipartisan majority of the General Court voted to raise \$950,000 in bonds to pay for the State part of the deal. This area is now one of the state parks under DRED.

This year, in January, we had the amazing spectacle of the Speaker of the House calling for a \$12 million bond (if needed) to purchase about 146,400 acres of northern New Hampshire forestland. This comes at a time the Governor is asking all agencies to "serve needs, not wants" while holding expenditures within

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of the most active New Hampshire field birders shall be asked to review the manuscript and be satisfied that it presents a true historical and current picture. We also want to make sure that no source of reliable records is overlooked since unusual birds can turn up almost anywhere. A prime example of this is the Long-tailed Jaeger that appeared over Quincy Bog on May 24, 1975.

We have been assured of publication if we can deliver a manuscript with the plan as described here. However, the job ahead is still a huge one even though much work has been done. For example, about 140,000 report slips have been filed with ASNH since 1980, virtually all of which will have to be reviewed. I estimate that it will take at least three more years to completion. The good news is that work is proceeding.

Allan Keith is a Director Emeritus of the Rumney Ecological Systems and a two-time past president of the American Birding Association. He and his family live in Chilmark MA.

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Among the products of our biological inventory is a series of checklists that will be available to bog visitors at the Nature Center. To date we have produced checklists of birds (141 species), and ferns and allies (24 species). Work is underway on lists of trees (22 species), shrubs (22 species) and wildflowers (38 species, so far). Draft lists of these groups can be viewed at the visitors' center. We also have a form available to visitors who would like to help with this project. If you see a species that is not included on our lists, or if you would like to report a sighting of an unusual species, please note it on an observation form and leave it at the visitor's center. The more eyes, the better. Maybe you will find the rattlesnake fern, which has not been seen at the bog since 1984? Or maybe you'll be the first ever to report a goldeneye duck at Quincy Bog? Or.... you never know until you get out and look!

(Alger, Continued from page 3)

existing taxes in a depressed economy! The Speaker's interest places top priority on conservation by legislation! Said the Speaker "We can't afford to take a chance this property falls into the wrong hands!" Preserving the land will save forestry jobs and protects the environmentally sensitive headwaters of the Connecticut River it was said. Even in this economically tough year, land conservation is a NEED not just a WANT!

Last year the legislature passed a law encouraging the preservation of historic barns. Immediately a "hue and cry" arose over barns whose owners proposed to sell them to out of state owners! We also saw the Concord City Council vote to take by condemnation the historic "Rolfe" barn for \$400,000 of taxpayers money. In 1994 the state committed to build the "world's strongest covered bridge" completed in June 2001 capable of carrying all legal loads and commencing on a bridge-life perhaps as long as its predecessor 1850 covered bridge whose in-service life extended for 140 years!

Are we preservationists or what? New Hampshire's rural and scenic charm of stone walls, white churches, and covered bridges remains its charm and legislative priority.

John Alger represents District 14, Grafton County, in the New

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