



Quincy Bog Notes



Spring 2006

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The President's Podium

by Bob Berti

First, I would like to respond to past president Bill Taffe's kind words. Bill, you're a difficult act to follow. Now that Betty Jo and you have returned from the Southwest....get back to work!

I am a strong advocate of conserving our natural resources through conservation easements. Approximately 19 years ago, an easement was placed on property I was purchasing in Wyoming. This conservation easement between myself and the Wyoming Game and Fish was the first of its kind in Wyoming. The easement accomplished the following:

- Eliminated grazing on over 6,500 acres of land and thus provided critical winter habitat for elk and mule deer.
- Reduced development to three remote sites approved by Wyoming Game wildlife biologists.
- Provided limited public access to property which had no previous access.
- Allowed biologists to improve game and non-game habitat for several species.

Easements allow for protection of wildlife habitat, water quality and retaining open space. I was dismayed recently to hear the reasons by a few New Hampshire communities to preserve land and even worse the principle reason some support conservation easements is for enhancement of their property. Other important factors such as farming and forestry were listed in importance below categories such as property tax reduction and school population control.

As I watched a town meeting on a community channel, one elderly gentleman who was born and has lived his entire life in that town, spoke directly to the issue. I'll paraphrase his statement, "I was educated in this community, my friends were educated in this community, our children were educated in this community and now some of our grandchildren are being educated in this community, but I see there are people who feel this community should buy land so we do not have to educate children. This is wrong."

I share his sentiments and concerns. Easements or outright land purchases whose sole or major reason is to stop growth so a community does not have to face the responsibility to educate children or enhance their own property, simply does not resonate with me. The intent of conservation easements should be to provide society with a prudent and responsible management tool for protecting natural resources. *****

Do You Make Lists? I Do!

by Al Ports

For such things as butterflies in my backyard, turtles in Quincy Bog, trees in various places, animal tracks, etc. Most of these lists are nothing more than slips of paper or marginal notes in field guides, but there is one list, my bird list, that I nurture and protect as if it were my offspring. I am not an ornithologist, I am not a field naturalist, I don't believe I even qualify as an "avid birder", one of those folks who drop everything and head out (called "chasing") to find a rarity that has shown up in some distant state. In Britain avid birders are called "twitchers", and they rank right up there with some of the more balmy "avid birders". My bird list is only about twenty-five years old. Long lost, or perhaps never noted, are the birds I saw while living in Italy and England, or traveling through Europe, the Mediterranean, and Australia during my pre-birding life.

My interest in birds began as a youngster when an aunt showed me her Peterson's Field Guide to Eastern Birds. I remember looking at that book whenever we visited and thought how wonderful it would be to actually see those birds in real life. Still, today, my favorite bird is the gray catbird, a species that was always in my grandmother's back yard and would venture out while she and I were in the garden.

Keeping records of bird sightings became much easier with the advent of computers and it wasn't long before enterprising and computer savvy birders began writing software that would allow one to keep track of bird sightings in a way that could never have been done by hand unless you were an ornithologist, or one of those wacky English "twitchers". With a few keystrokes I entered the Virginia rail I heard at Quincy Bog recently. That sighting, or in this case not a sighting, but heard (and that counts), was automatically added to my Quincy Bog list, Rumney list, Grafton County list, New Hampshire List, United States list, Lower Forty-Eight list, ABA list, North American list, and of course, my World list. Now this is getting to be interesting! If I wish to get fancy I can add all kinds of information such as habitat where the bird was seen, e.g., salt water (rocky shore, sandy shore, marsh mud, open water, flats, tide pools), urban, over flight, feeder, desert, courtship, nesting, photographed, banded, and much more, along with many sub-categories of data. By hitting a few keys on my computer I can



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A twice-yearly newsletter of information, announcements and news about the Quincy Bog Natural Area and related concerns. Editorial submissions are welcome. Please send to: Editor, Quincy Bog Notes, P.O. Box 90, Rumney, NH 03266.

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spew out reams of sightings from around the world, not just for those birds I've seen for the first time, but all the birds I've seen on any given day, or month, or year, or forever, in any location, and under any circumstances - and I can do it alphabetically, chronologically, with Latin names, and I am sure in other ways I haven't even learned yet. Now "listing" is really getting interesting, maybe even a bit obsessive/compulsive!

Some of the lists I mentioned above are obvious, but something like the ABA and Lower 48 List, where did they come from? From an organization called the American Birding Association. The ABA had its start in December 1968 when a birder in Texas proposed to twelve birding friends that they form a group to share birding information and exchange sighting list totals. The recipients responded with a flood of suggestions and long lists of names and addresses of other birders from across the country. Out of that initial suggestion came the American Birding Association.

Also out of that proposal, eventually came the sport of "listing". A sport one might ask, yes a sport; and under some circumstances could be considered a blood sport. One only has to read *The Big Year* by Mark Obmascik, Free Press/Simon & Schuster (2005), a true story of three individuals who, unbeknownst to one another initially, set out in 1998 to set a record for the most species of birds seen in the ABA Area in one year. This is a contest with few rules and no referees, and once the participants learn there are others out on the same task, the competition becomes one with no holds barred. Listers like to keep ahead of other listers, especially when they know each other. After all there is such a thing as bragging rights.

The ABA set the parameters for listing with a Code of Ethics and sorted out the areas that would count! During slow moments of a birding trip, if you see two birders conversing in low voices, they're most likely not talking about the trip, but rather are sizing each other as to what their list counts are. The ABA is the culprit

in this competition because every year they publish an Annual List Report that shows all the categories of lists and the names of those individuals, from the highest *down* to those who have just reached the minimum required to be on the list. There is a list for everything from each state through various regions of the world. And then there is the ABA Area list; the holy grail of birding in the United States and Canada.

The ABA Area comprises the 49 continental United States, Canada, the French Islands of St. Pierre et Miquelon and adjacent waters to a distance of 200 nautical miles from land or half the distance to a neighboring country, whichever is less. Plenty of geography in which to go birding! Excluded by these boundaries are Bermuda, the Bahamas, Hawaii, and Greenland. The American Birding Association is located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The Rumney Ecological Systems tie to the ABA is Allan Keith, (an early director, and Director Emeritus of the RES), who is a two-term past president of the American Birding Association.

To get your name included on the ABA Area list one must see a minimum of 500 species in the ABA Area (there are different minimums for each the lists, e.g. the minimum species for New Hampshire is 194). To move up on the list one does not have to be highly skilled, rather, it's being in the right place at the right time. Trips to Alaska can add all kinds of new birds and those at the top of the ABA Area list have spent considerable time on the Aleutian Islands and other Alaskan islands that are closer to Siberia than the Alaskan mainland and benefit from regular Eurasian visitors. The current leader of the ABA Area list with 873 has done just that. My own totals are modest compared to many, but I qualify to be on a number of lists including two states, Arizona and New Hampshire. My totals, (with ABA record number in parenthesis), as of this writing are: Rumney Residence-72; Quincy Bog-137; Rumney-150; Grafton County-200; New

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2005 Visitor Log-Comments

Compiled by Betty Joe Taffe

The mosquitos are crazy! (H.M., Everett, MA)

CA mosquitos R worse...maybe not. (B.S., Carmel, CA)

Very peaceful—no moose! (C. & K.D., Saratoga, NY)

Nice, quiet & peaceful, friendly staff. (T. & J.W., Northfield, VT)

Beautiful dragonflies! (K.T., Campton, NH)

We were lucky enough to see 3 beavers working on the dam. One even came as close as 20 ft. from us. It was wonderful! (Q. Family, Milford, NH)

Thank you-great place. (R. & G.K., Thonotosassa, FL)

I ♥ N.H. (K.N., Greenwood, IN)

Thanks for the plant ID signs! BEWARE THE MOSQUITOS! (even in the rain) (T.V., Bala Cynwyd, PA)

Yet again! An excellent adventure! Truly a wonderful walk!! (C.R., Campton, NH)

Saw a beaver working on the dam- then heard him chewing a tree down the path – then he saw me & slapped his tail. (S.H., Plymouth, NH)

...We saw young moose @ 8:10 PM across bog. Big Beaver spotted us. (J. & D.N., Columbus, OH)

Wonderful! Loved the Beavers!! (N. Family, East Granby, CT)

...lecture on ferns – very very good. (M.B., Plymouth, NH)

Saw great blue heron, several red-wing blackbirds, and swamp sparrows. Trail under water at start so could only do 60% of trail. Host showed way around pond. (D. & C.B., Venice, FL)



Thanks for all the labeling; it is such a great learning/teaching tool. BRAVO. (S.H., Binghamton, NY)

The beavers didn't seem to mind visitors so it was interesting to see them behave as they normally do in their habitat. (T.L., Manchester, NH)

Beautiful! (North Hollywood, CA)

V. cool. Keep funding for care of Bog! (M.J., Brooklyn, NY)

C. Yellow Throat, E. Kingbird, Grt. Blue Heron, Wood Duck, Merlin on snag by sedge meadow. (R.& P.A., Exeter, NH)

Pleasant loop, quiet, lots of wildlife! (J.B. & R.T., Plymouth, NH)

Early morning...watch river otter play around Beaver Dam. Cool!! (D.P., Attleboro, MA)



Walked, explored, waited, waited, waited (2 hrs.) No beavers (lots of bubbles). (D.P., Pawtucket, RI)

Came back to draw at the Beaver Dam. (J. & B.B., Wakefred, RI)

Much longer hike than I expected. Enjoyed seeing kingfishers. (E.D., Southington, CT)

Descendents of Quincy family. Thanks for all your work. (R.K., Pembroke, NH)

Excellent program!! (mosses/liverworts) (M.G., Campton, NH)

Well maintained trail. Thanks for wonderful plant markers and trail guide!!! Beavers are active! Cormorants can't swallow frogs well. (R. Family, Laconia, NH)

We are impressed. Wonderful trail and facility. - Thanks so much. (D., E., B. & G., Mission Viejo, CA)

Absolutely loved it! Learned so much from the guide book –spent a lovely 5 hours walking the trail. Thank you!! (R. & C.F., Ballwin, MO)

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Hampshire-255 (350); Lower 48-630 (804); United States-662 (921); North America-663 (1,749); ABA Area-662 (873); World-994 (8,560)

But there is more to birding than just keeping numbers, which are valuable when claiming your birding turf. Because if that were the only attraction I could never get my spouse to join me on any of these trips. Some of my favorites include being on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea watching hundreds of thousands of migrating seabirds and waterfowl fly by with Siberia in the distance and the Yup'ik villagers bringing ashore the walrus they had killed that day. Standing on the west Kansas prairie watching lesser prairie-chicken in their elaborate courtship ritual as the sun is setting in the west, a coyote is howling in the distance, and the largest and orangest moon that I have ever witnessed, beginning its ascent in the east. Or, hiking above 12,000 feet in the Colorado snowfields looking for white-tailed ptarmigan as wilderness skiers and snowboarders zoomed by. Or, having three species of albatross feed from our hands off the coast of New Zealand. These and so many similar memories are such that I will treasure them forever. But there are other lovely and interesting places to visit, and there are always birds to see at those places. I know one area in the continental U.S. where, with the right timing and blessing of the bird-gods, I should be able to find nine new species in about a week. I need to get planning this trip, as I see from the latest ABA publication that one of my good friends, also a birder, is catching up to my ABA numbers. Can't let that happen!



Why Not Join Us This Summer?

Quincy Bog Notes
P.O. Box 90
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Musings

Watching from spring to fall a bull moose whose antlers had grown each time I saw him

"Turtle time" as painted turtles by the dozens laying their eggs in the sandy soil around the house. Big snapping turtle doing same only digging up the garden like a bear.

This year's beaver pup pulling little twigs to help parents shore up the dam.

A gray fox walking through the yard looking splendid in its gray coat with red trim.

Yellow-billed cuckoo calling and sounding like it was swallowing its Adam's apple. I wonder, do they have Adam's apples?

Cow and calf moose at one end of bog; bull at the other. Intrepid former RES president in safari outfit wading at another part of the bog cataloging dragon- and damsel-flies. All creatures oblivious to one another. Two adult moose eating water lilies; intrepid explorer, was not!

Red fox enjoying a noon meal of chipmunk and then laying down under a tree and taking a snooze.

Great-horned owl being mobbed by more than 20 crows and promptly leaving the area.

Male and female osprey in courtship displays over several days and possible attempts at nest building on site.

Annual extended visit of a male American bittern without evidence of him ever finding a mate.

Diving ducks and other diving waterfowl joining the dabbling ducks as the beaver raise the water level of the bog.
