

Quincy Bog Notes

A twice-yearly newsletter of information, announcements, and news about the Quincy Bog Natural Area and Pemi-Baker Land Trust

Spring 2009

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President's Perspective Quincy Bog, Home of Champions

Betty Jo Taffe

Walking the trail at Quincy Bog, I've always admired the large Red Oak on the back side of the Bog near the stone wall, the tall straight White Pine near the ledges, the stately Tamarack next to the northwest sedge meadow, and several large Birch trees. The fallen Black Cherry next to the Barnes' tree farm often provokes a touch of sadness as I imagine its imposing presence in earlier days. So an email from Dave Falkenham, the new Grafton County Forester, announcing a "Big Tree Workshop" in mid-April caught my interest. "Identify, Measure, and Meet some of our Champs!" proclaimed the attached brochure. When I realized the workshop would include an afternoon field session at Quincy Bog, I couldn't resist signing up.

After fine tuning our winter tree identification skills and learning the basics of tree measurement, we headed for the Bog to practice. Big Trees are assigned points based on the circumference at four and a half feet above the ground (level with the tip of my nose) as well as vertical height and average crown spread, both of which can be measured from the ground using simple tools and techniques.

The workshop organizers had chosen Quincy Bog Natural Area for the field session in part because it was home to a Grafton County Champion Black Cherry reported in 1975. After practicing our newly learned skills on the White Pines around the parking area, we tried to find the champion. Unfortunately, the only tree that matched the champ's almost three-foot diameter was the long dead, fallen Black Cherry. Since dead champions are delisted, we sadly acknowledged that Quincy Bog had lost its champ.



But wait! Further along the trail we found two new county champions: the stately Tamarack at Trail Station 10 (TS 10 - see the Quincy Bog Trail Guide) and a fine Pitch Pine at TS 13. If the birch at TS 12 is a Paper Birch (identification will be verified when the leaves and catkins appear), it may also be a county champion, since the previous record-holder was reported in poor condition in 1986 and is most likely dead.

The New Hampshire Big Tree Program was started in 1950 to find "the most outstanding examples of the various tree species" growing in the state, to encourage landowners to "protect and preserve specimens as landmarks for future generations to enjoy", and to encourage "appreciation for trees a natural resource." Volunteer Community Tree Stewards identify, measure and report champions, which are recorded in a registry of New Hampshire Big Trees. County Big Trees are also listed, and nationally competitive NH Big Trees are submitted to the National Champion Big Tree Registry.

(Continued on page 2)

Why Quincy Bog Is Special A Visitor's Perspective

Frank Mitchell

Last August, I led a walk around Quincy Bog titled, *Explore a Natural Treasure*. At the time (and still), I was contributing to work on a revision of the "New Hampshire Method" for evaluating wetland functions and values, so, in preparation for the public walk, I decided to try the draft procedures by evaluating the functions and values of Quincy Bog. The process involved collecting information about the wetland from maps and other sources and observing the wetland and understanding its watershed setting.

Functions and values, which are ecological, societal or both, are measured through a series of questions about factors that influence that particular function or value. The answers are used to determine a score for each function and value. Below, I describe how Quincy Bog fared in the evaluation and why. The results illustrate why Quincy Bog is indeed a special place, what its strong features are and how it is affected by external influences. The *NH Method* revision is still in progress and its final form will be different from the draft version I used. Here is a summary of what I concluded, organized by wetland functions and values:



ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY Quincy Bog has several characteristics that support its ecological integrity (or how natural or pristine the wetland is). It appears to have, for example, high water quality (no signs of degradation), little human disturbance, no road crossings and no artificial dams (there is the beaver dam). Through land conservation and property management, these conditions can be maintained, supporting the ecological functioning of Quincy Bog and the surrounding area. Factors that lead to an assessment of Quincy Bog as less than pristine are the fact that there is regular human use and some developed land use within 500 ft. of the wetland. The 500 ft. distance is used in the *NH Method* as a zone of influence within which to evaluate potential or actual wetland impacts.

WILDLIFE HABITAT Quincy Bog is a high quality wildlife habitat according to my evaluation results. Reasons include the high degree of ecological integrity described above, the presence of a stream and several wetland habitat types, proximity to other wetlands nearby to which animals might travel and the apparent absence of exotic invasive species. Limiting Quincy Bog's habitat value is its limited size, limited open water and some developed land use within 500 ft. of the wetland.

EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL This is why I was invited to Quincy Bog! The area obviously functions regularly and functions well as an outdoor education site. Contributing to its capacity for this are its relatively natural condition, that it's

(Continued on page 3)

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Please send to: Editor, Quincy Bog
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(Continued from page 1, Taffe)

New Hampshire has over 200 state and county champions and two national champs.

This summer I encourage you to stroll along the path at Quincy Bog, admire our big trees and look at the Tamarack and Pitch Pine at Trail Stations 10 and 13 to meet our new county champions. As seedlings these giants were blessed with the full sun of open pasture. They watched the abandoned fields grow into forest, survived timber harvests, and thrived as the forest matured. Worthy of protection and appreciation, they invite you to visit the Quincy Bog Natural Area. ✨



Trail Update Bob Bulkeley

As any visitor to the bog over the past two years is well aware, beaver activity at the inlet and a very high water table has put significant portions of the trail underwater for long periods. This spring we are elevating the trail by the inlet on the far side of the Bog by raising the boardwalk in areas where it is often wet. Using tamarack, which is long-lasting when wet, we are confident that the improvements will solve the problem and walking the trail without getting your feet wet will be possible. ✨

Bob Bulkeley is on the Board of Directors of Rumney Ecological Systems and the Chair of the Trails and Lands Committee.

Yard and Garden Tips

In the Winter edition of Quincy Bog Notes the new editors promised an article featuring helpful tips for the garden and yard. Here are some ideas:

Watering seedlings: Using a spray bottle with a spray and stream setting is effective in watering seedlings. Use the spray setting to provide a mist to the leaves of the seedlings and the stream setting to supply more water to the roots and soil. The sprayer is easy to control when watering small seedlings.

Securing mulch: To hold mulch secure, huge staples can be helpful. With strong wire nippers and pliers, staples can be fashioned from wire coat hangers. Staples that are about 5 or 6" long on each arm and about 3 or 4" across the top allow you to poke the arms through plastic or paper mulch and step on the top to secure into the soil. The staples are easily retrieved at the end of the season and stored for another year.

Cutworm protectors: When planting tomato, broccoli, or pepper sets, tin cans with the bottoms and tops removed make excellent cutworm protectors. Coffee cans, cans from Italian tomatoes, or any can with a diameter of about 4-5" works well. Once the planting hole is prepared in the garden, the plant can be dropped through the can root ball first and planted at the correct height. Then the height of the can is adjusted to stand about ¾ of an inch above the soil line. The cans may be recycled from year to year and will last about three years before the rust begins to form holes in the can. Another option for homemade protection against cutworms is to cut collars from a waxed cardboard milk or juice carton. Each 2-qt. carton yields two collars, with a little extra left for row markers (see below).

Bird seed storage: To keep mice and larger rodents from bird seed, store the seed in an old metal or plastic (not styrofoam) cooler. It's easier than a metal ash can, has less volume and is easier to store. A cooler holds about a 20lb bag of seed. The seed can easily be scooped out of the cooler.

Row markers: Simple row markers can be made from empty plastic milk containers.

(Continued on page 4)

Announcing the Junior Naturalist Program

Betty Jo Taffe

Quincy Bog's new Junior Naturalist Program is an excellent opportunity for young people ages 4 to 12 to explore the Quincy Bog Natural Area and learn about this special place. The Junior Naturalist Activity Book presents a variety of activities that introduce children to the plants and animals found in the wetlands and surrounding forest. A parent or other adult must sign each page to show that the child has completed the activity.

Participants also complete a service project such as picking up five pieces of trash, removing branches from the trail, or giving a brief talk about something they've seen during their visit. Or they may create and complete an original Quincy Bog service project.

Upon completing the required number of activities for their age group, children aspiring to be Junior Naturalists will meet with the Bog Host on duty at the Nature Center to talk about what they have learned. They will take the Junior Naturalist Pledge, promising to do all they can to protect special places like Quincy Bog, to keep on learning about the world of nature, and to share that knowledge with family and friends, and will receive a Junior Naturalist Pin.

The program will begin in July. Junior Naturalist Booklets will be available at the Nature Center during July and August when the Bog Hosts are on duty (seven days a week from approximately 9:30 or 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 or 4:00 p.m.). 🌿

Betty Jo Taffe has developed the Junior Naturalist Program as a member of Quincy Bog's Research & Interpretation Committee.



(Continued from page 1, Mitchell)

publicly accessible, has trails, has several wetland vegetation types and is generally quite scenic (see next section). Limiting educational potential at Quincy Bog are the development nearby, limited parking (which is, however, also a limit to over-use) and no apparent access for disabled people.

VISUAL & AESTHETIC QUALITY The visual quality of Quincy Bog is excellent, with, from various points, views across marsh and shrub wetland areas, open water, a stream, forested edges and mountains beyond. This layered view is, in the *NH Method*, considered a high quality one. From almost all parts of the wetland edge, the scene is natural, without visual detractors. This, coupled with assured public access, results in a high visual quality wetland as interpreted using the *NH Method*.

RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL Here again, we know people regularly visit Quincy Bog and enjoy it - recreation. The relatively high functional value I describe in the sections above contribute to the recreational potential of the area. The fact that there is some parking available is a plus. The lack of easy boat access, however, inhibits that use. (This may be desirable for other reasons, though. One cannot expect any one wetland to function at a high level for all functions and values, as some functions and values can be incompatible in the same place at the same time.)



HYDROLOGIC FUNCTIONS

The hydrologic functions section examines the wetland's relationship to the watershed system, its ability to handle water flowing through it and its ability to maintain water quality. In the case of Quincy Bog, the absence of roads nearby, a mostly natural watershed and the presence of a mapped sand and gravel aquifer around the wetland all support a high capacity to handle flood waters. Limits to the hydrologic functions of Quincy Bog are the nearby development and the beaver dam, which could fail at some point, changing the capacity of the wetland to hold water.

SHORELINE EROSION PROTECTION The relatively wide wetland buffer between the open water and the forested edge of the wetland supports a high degree of shoreline erosion protection. Quincy Bog has a gradual or "soft" edge, and limited open water, so it's not surprising to find little or no evidence of erosion at the wetland edge.

NOTEWORTHINESS This part of the *NH Method* is meant to capture any special wetland features that might have been missed in the other sections. For Quincy Bog, my conclusion that it could qualify for prime wetlands designation (a status of recognition and protection within the town and the NH Department of Environmental Services) is one noteworthiness factor. Quincy Bog also contains Critical Habitat as defined in the *NH Wildlife Action Plan* (marsh & shrub wetlands), is in a designated conservation area, is locally biologically significant and is hydrologically connected with a river of regional significance (Baker River). Other factors used in the noteworthiness section include whether the wetland is in a habitat area designated as highest statewide quality in the *NH Wildlife Action Plan* (it isn't) and whether there is a historic or archeological site present (not that I'm aware of).

In summary, the high level of ecological quality of Quincy Bog and the human benefits it offers make the wetland complex a special place locally and regionally. With continued conservation and sustainable land use in the area, it should remain indefinitely as a key part of the fabric of the local landscape. I'm looking forward to my next visit there! 🌿

Frank Mitchell recently retired as the Land and Water Conservation Specialist with the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension and is also on the Board of Directors of Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, a regional land trust in southeast New Hampshire.

Black Bears Are Scent-sational!

Excerpt from *The Bear Necessities* by Dave Anderson
(used with permission from NHFG © 2008)

A decade ago, U.S. Forest Service biologists studying black bear habitat preferences determined that in autumn, bears prefer to feed in beech forests located on more remote hillsides and along ridges. With a highly developed sense of smell and relatively limited eyesight, black bears rely on air currents flowing up forested hillsides and over ridges to provide strategic olfactory "views" of their surroundings. If there's a food source nearby – beechnuts, a corn field, birdfeeders, a barbecue grill or a dumpster – bears smell it. If hunters or hikers with dogs approach a bear feeding area from one side of a ridge, a bear will flee down the opposite side before being seen or heard. Mountainous topography provides a strategic advantage, because bears rely on air currents as their "CNN of the forest," conveying up-to-the-minute news headlines in Smell-O-Vision. The topographic "scent-scape" has a big influence on bear travel corridors and preferred feeding and resting locations. 🌿

Want to learn more about black bears? Join us at the Quincy Bog Nature Center for our Wednesday evening program on June 24 at 7pm, when Dave Anderson will tell us all about these fascinating creatures!



Become a Friend of Quincy Bog

The Friends of Quincy Bog support the programs and maintenance of the Bog and the Nature Center with annual donations. If you have not made a contribution in 2009, or if you would like to provide additional support, we would welcome your generosity. The Quincy Bog has no paid administrators so your entire contribution is used to support the Bogs' projects, programs, and upkeep. Please make out your check to Rumney Ecological Systems and send it to PO Box 90, Rumney, NH 03266.

Quincy Bog Notes
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(Continued from page 2, Editors)

With a box cutters and scissors, strips of plastic the desired size can be cut from the sides of a milk jug. An indelible marker writes on the strip. The writing will last the season before fading. Cardboard milk and juice cartons work as well.



Paper mulch: If you have ever tried to lay garden mulch on a layer of newspapers, you know how frustrating it can be to get the mulch down before the breeze blows the newspaper across your garden. Before trying to lay single sheets of newspaper, staple together long rows of newspaper and roll them into manageable lengths. Office weight staples rust quickly and disappear into the soil. A few stones will hold the roll of newspaper down until you can get the mulch on top. 🌿

Editors' Hall of Fame

Widge Kent and Christine Perron, Editors

If you noticed changes to this issue of Quincy Bog Notes, it is because this is the first edition of the Notes with new editors. In recent history, Al Ports has ably served as our editor, publishing bi-annual newsletters like clockwork. For his dedication to duty and long-standing exemplary efforts, we would like to nominate him to the Newsletter Editors' Hall of Fame – if there is such an institution. Al has promised to continue to advise the current editors, a commitment that hopefully he won't regret. When you are "out and about" and you bump into Al, thank him for his service. 🌿

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<http://www.quincybog.org>