

Quincy Bog Notes



Winter 2004-2005

Volume 12 Number 1

The President's Podium by Bill Taffe

I just got in from a walk around the Bog. The pond is ice-covered almost everywhere and snow lightly blankets the woods and the Nature Trail. We weren't the first to walk the trail since the snow only two days ago. Several sets of footprints preceded ours. The Nature Trail is open all winter and is wonderful walking and snowshoeing. Several people "walk the Bog" regularly, so it's rare that you have to "break trail". (In fact, I think there are a couple of people who almost compete to see who gets to make the first tracks in newly fallen snow!)

In the last issue of Quincy Bog Notes, I mentioned that "the Board has been exploring the question 'What is our proper role in land protection activities?' " and promised to address this question more fully in the Winter issue. I'd like to keep that promise and explain what the Board is doing and why, and what it implies for our future activities. In the 1970s Rumney Ecological Systems formed as a non-profit organization focused on land conservation and nature education. The founders expressed broad interest in land conservation in the Baker River Valley but had to immediately focus on protecting Quincy Bog, which was being threatened by development. So for the first twenty years, the fledgling organization concentrated on purchasing the land surrounding the Bog, beginning nature education programs, and building a nature center to house those programs. In the late 90s, we did the first formal reorganization since our founding, filing new by-laws with the NH Secretary of State making the broader mission explicit. As we entered the new century, many of the initial goals had been met. RES now owns and protects all the land surrounding the Bog and even a bit of buffer land. Our Nature Trail is in good shape (the beaver notwithstanding!), we have excellent interpretative materials, school groups regularly take guided visits, the Fisher Lecture Series is very well attended, and we offer a series of popular nature walks.

Just over a year ago, we were asked to become the stewards of a conservation easement on a parcel of land in the Baker River Valley. Although we protect three parcels by fee ownership, we had not previously taken the step of protecting land by holding an easement. Several Board members felt this was an appropriate next step, pointing out that we have had the broader mission from our beginning and have the

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What is a Conservation Easement by Catherine "Cappy" Hahn

One of the best ways to permanently protect land while retaining private ownership is through the donation of a conservation easement. You retain the ability to sell or convey the property, by deed or will, sale or gift, to a family member or to anyone else. The property will be permanently protected subject to certain terms, or restrictions, that are spelled out in a conservation easement deed.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between the landowner and a conservation organization or agency. As a landowner you have certain rights to your land and through this agreement, some of these rights are separated. The rights to more intensive land uses, such as subdivision, construction, and mining, are then conveyed to the organization or agency through the conservation easement deed. The organization cannot use these rights, but agrees to hold onto them and also ensure that they are not used by anyone else. Conservation easements are granted in perpetuity and apply to the land regardless of who may own it in the future.

If landowner values certain features or qualities of their land, they may find themselves asking certain questions. What will happen when someone else owns the property? Will your children want to hold onto it? Will they be able to? If it is developed, will the land's unique characteristics be respected? Unless you take action to protect your land, the odds are in favor of its eventual development or subdivision.

Land under an easement can be used for watershed protection, agriculture, forestry, wildlife habitat improvement, recreation, education, or to maintain scenic views. The appropriate land uses are agreed upon by the landowner and organization and are specified in the easement deed. A landowner may wish to place restrictions on a portion of the land while retaining the balance of the land without restrictions.

Typical land uses that are prohibited are those uses that would harm the land features or qualities worthy of protection. Examples of prohibited use are the mining of sand and gravel, commercial uses such as a golf course, and any industrial use. Easements also prohibit the draining or filling of a wetland, disturbing habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered species, removing topsoil, or constructing residences. (Structures typically

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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.
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Birding on the Internet

by Jody and John Williams

One of the best places to get started collecting birding information on the internet is at www.nhauubon.org. On this site you will find a list of opportunities. When you open this page, you will find this list: Birding information; Research; Environmental Policy Issues; Nature and Conservation Information; Programs and Field Trips; Centers, Sanctuaries and Chapters; and Join Us.

Birding Information tells about birding ethics, weekly rare bird alerts, the New Hampshire Bird List Serve. This site has information about birding opportunities in New Hampshire, including sanctuary locations (in some cases with maps), and weekly rare bird alerts.

The Bird List Serve: This option under the "birding information" rubric is a special service for New Hampshire birders, an exchange of sightings that is ongoing. This is provided by the University of New Hampshire. You may want to enroll in this free program by using the bird list serve option on the nhauubon site if you are an active birder. You need to consider whether or not you want up to 100 messages a week concerning the location of sightings of birds around the state. It is possible to get a daily mail digest of all the postings.

New Hampshire Birding Information is essentially a "Where to find birds in New Hampshire", (including the possibility of downloading a 400+ page breeding bird atlas). There is also information on the backyard winter bird survey, New Hampshire bird records, and last, but not least, links to other internet sites. The other items on this page are self-explanatory.

Let us surf over to www.pwrc.usgs.gov. This is the U.S. Geological Survey Patuxent Wildlife Research Site. On this site there is a great deal of wildlife and nature information, including bird

information. There are various identification quizzes that may or may not work, depending on the state of the new server, and various compilations of past counts and also huge amounts of information on other natural concerns, such as biodiversity, if you go to the bottom of the page and hit "our partners".

For a national overview, and some fun and games, go to www.virtualbirder.com. There is a fee for some games, but if you check out "birding break", you can take a virtual walk through any one of several real habitats: the Ding Darling preserve on the west coast of Florida, or the Mount Auburn Cemetery, for example, and try to identify the birds shown. Also available on this site are some good photo guides of waterfowl and raptors and links to the rare bird alerts for every state in the union.

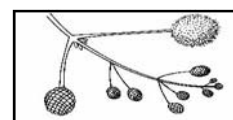
If this isn't enough for the interested surfer, just search Google using "bird information" and you will come up with thousands of sites. Some are in foreign lands, some are in foreign languages, and some have a specific focus, but they are all about birds. There is a world of information on the internet for finding and identifying birds throughout the world.

Funding for this newsletter is
provided by the

Woodsville Guaranty
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organizational capacity to hold conservation easements. They noted that the Baker River and Upper Pemi Valleys are currently not covered by existing regional land trusts, creating a need for a land trust that can work with parcels that should be protected but are too small to attract the interest of state or national organizations. We spent considerable time last winter and spring educating ourselves about land trust activity and in May voted to accept the challenge and take the steps needed to accept and be good stewards of appropriate conservation easements. The summer was spent developing policies and procedures, and this fall we began to work with the landowner who initially asked us to hold an easement on his land.

It is a major step for Rumney Ecological Systems. As we have in the past, we will continue to protect Quincy Bog and offer nature education programs. Our decision was to take on an additional task, that of protecting land by holding and monitoring conservation easements designed to protect the natural values of the property. To do this, we are restructuring some Board tasks, developing mechanisms to evaluate, accept and monitor conservation easements, and recruiting people with strong interest and background in land trust activities to fill some vacant Board seats. It won't be easy, but important work seldom is. We will have ups and downs, successes and "wished we'd done it differently" situations, but we are confident that overall we will do all our tasks well. We appreciate the strong support we've received for many years from volunteers, donors, Friends of Quincy Bog, visitors and myriad others. We hope you'll continue that support as we expand our activities, adding this important role in land protection to our continuing work in protecting the Quincy Bog

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associated with farming or forestry, such as culverts, bridges, barns, or sheds can be permitted.)

Although easements are donated and enforced for the benefit of the public, they do not give the public the right to use the property in any way, unless the easement language specifically allows for public access or use. Such use is usually granted when the land has traditionally provided access to a public pond or lake or has been used as part of a trail corridor.

The donation of an easement can constitute a charitable gift, which may be deductible for federal income tax purposes. A qualified appraiser determines the value of the easement. To be deductible, an easement must meet certain minimum conservation objectives established by the federal government. Easements can also help reduce estate and inheritance taxes.

Easements can be accepted and enforced by certain conservation organizations and government agencies. A conservation easement is not only a commitment on the part of the landowner, but is also a commitment for the organization accepting the responsibility for annual monitoring and enforcement of the easement language.

If you are thinking about a conservation easement, your strategy must contain a level-headed assessment of your situation, your available options, and your own goals and objectives for the future of your land. A local land trust, such as Rumney Ecological Systems, can help you make this assessment and can suggest other sources of information. Conservation planning weaves together the most appropriate and effective techniques to suit the land, the needs and wishes of the landowner, and the abilities of the organization accepting the conservation easement.

If you wish to learn more about conservation easements or the process involved in putting an easement on your land, please call me at (603) 968-9544.

Feeder Hawks by Al Ports

When we set our feeders out for the winter, we also establish a buffet for the winter hawks. Here in New Hampshire and, more specifically, here at my home at the edge of Quincy Bog, the buffet is set for two of the three species of the family *accipiter* that are native to North America. All three species, the sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, and the northern goshawk, breed and nest in the immediate vicinity of the Bog.

The northern goshawk, more of a woodland bird, is seldom seen perusing the food selection at feeders, but the other two species routinely take the opportunity to check out the menus at the local eateries. Although I have had both sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks around the feeding stations, I've been fortunate this season to share the same breakfast schedule as an adult female Cooper's hawk. She will sit at the edge of the yard checking out what's available and make her move when appropriate. I've seen her take goldfinches out of the air and off branches, and then fly off to her breakfast nook; a blue jay she may take straight to the ground and consume it while I'm having my breakfast.

The *accipiter* family is fairly easy to identify, but the individual species are not! All three species generally have short rounded wings and long tails. The sharp-shinned hawk is the smallest of the *accipiter* family and the northern goshawk is the largest. Unfortunately size is not

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Bog Volunteer Notes 2004

by Pat Barker

2004 was not the greatest year for visitors to Quincy Bog. We had so many rainy days that Bog Ladies and Gentlemen sometimes had to give up and go home. Mary Barnes and Leonard Sawyer said that Thursdays were very quiet. Still the weekends were busy.

Thank you very much Faith Mattison for coming all the way over from Hanover to be at the Bog for Saturday afternoons, and thanks to the Kings for filling in. Dina Phillips said she had more visitors than she had ever seen before on July 24th. Jean Ray said that Wednesday afternoons were busy to.

On July 11th, a perfectly lovely day, we had 22 people attend our annual wildflower walk. Betty Jo Taffe took a group of 110 Pakistani exchange teachers, while Sarah Schwaegler had about 12 people, a nice number. A great day Sarah! There were several other groups at the Bog that day as well.

Jackie and Ray Carreaux, Sally Keniston, and Ann Kent saw and heard lots of birds. Roger Winsor commented on the many species he saw. I think everyone saw the resident great blue heron. What a silly noise it makes. I thought I saw a green heron. Alas, it turned out to be a cormorant. Had it extended its wings, I would have known-maybe!

No dead birds were reported on our deck, so I guess our feathers streamers at the windows are working well.

Ginny Hutchison and Dina Phillips were delighted with Al Ports' postcards of Bog scenes and sold many to visitors. My big excitement this year was seeing pink Indian pipes, and for the first time, bog peanut in bloom on climbing tendrils. It wasn't a busy summer, but it was a pleasant one!

Thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers!

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much help as the larger female of each species overlaps the size of the smaller male of the next largest species. Although the basic, adult coloration and markings of the family are the same, a lot of gray with darker cap, the northern goshawk has a finely barred gray breast, while the breast color of the other two species is reddish-brown. The juveniles of all three species pretty much look the same, so identification of young bird is tenuous at best.

Adult northern goshawks are reasonably easy to identify. Size will help set it off from its two smaller cousins, and the gray breast will seal the identification. An *accipiter* about the length of a blue jay, but far more streamlined, will most certainly be a male sharp-shinned hawk. A large, crow-sized bird, but way more streamlined, with a reddish-brown breast should be a female Cooper's hawk. Of some help, and what I use to help with the identification of the two smaller species, is that the tail of the sharp-shinned hawk tends to be flat across the tip and has distinctive corners, while the tail of the Cooper's hawk appears to be rounded and without corners. With all of the similarities in the field marks of the *accipiter* family, it's no wonder so many field notes of "birders" contain the entry "accip. sp." or "accipiter species". No one wants to commit themselves if the sighting is brief or not in the best lighting conditions.

Even though one may not be able to identify an "accip." when it appears at our feeders, we should learn to enjoy its presence; after all, we did invite it for a meal!



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