



Quincy Bog Notes



Winter 2007-2008

Volume 15 Number 2

The President's Podium

by Bob Berti

A few weeks ago, after a long and difficult workday, I stopped at Quincy Bog to take a few minutes to relax and drop my stress level a few notches. Standing on the deck watching the last rays of fall sunlight reflect across the Bog, I had a chance to reflect upon how fortunate we are to have the Bog and what might have happened if Joe Kent and others had not taken the time to preserve this unique area for generations to come.

With Joe's foresight, the financial support of many individuals, the help of volunteers and finally the energy of our directors, the Bog remains as it has been for several millenniums—a natural area—serene, tranquil, and restful.

The efforts of all of those to maintain the Bog are not only noted in the record number of visitors to the area, but also noted by the comments written in the visitor's logbook.

This year, Rumney Ecological Systems added to properties now under conservation easement. Roger and June Winsor's 130 acres of land, located on the slopes of Stinson Mountain, were added to lands placed under permanent protection. The directors and I thank Roger and June for the most appreciated and generous gift to present and future societies.

In closing, I want to thank all the board of directors for their assistance and diligence in making this a most productive year. Also a special note of thanks to retiring board members, especially Nory Parr, who has served as a board member for the past 23 years.

Dr. Sidney Paly (1926-2007)

Sid Paly, a founding director and Director Emeritus of the Rumney Ecological Systems, and a long-time and ongoing Friend of the Bog, died on September 24, 2007. He and his wife Elizabeth lived in Marblehead, Massachusetts and have a home in Rumney.

Backyard Sugarin' *

by Widge Kent

There's that messy time in late winter when you want to be outside but there's little to do. The downhill and cross-country skiing are poor, there's little snow for snowshoeing and hiking is much too wet. Yet the days are getting longer, the sun is higher, there are occasional warm breezes and the urge to be outside is strong. Happily this weather coincides with the run of sap in maple trees. Consider Backyard Sugarin' as the solution.

Let me propose that sugaring provides a great opportunity to be outside and productive from late February and early March to late March. Of course you need reasonable access to sugar maple trees, but it takes fewer trees than you may think. At our house, we tap six maples with nine taps and make about a gallon and a half of syrup each year.

Collecting the sap. Taps are inexpensive and can be obtained at the local farm store. There's the old fashioned metal taps with an S hook to hold the collector, or there are the newer plastic taps that accommodate a plastic pipe. Over the years we have slowly transitioned to the plastic models. To insert the tap into the tree, you need a strong drill with a bit to match the diameter of the tap. We use an old brace type drill that is only used once a year for this purpose. Taps are inserted in the tree about waist high taking into account the depth of the snow.

You need containers, sap buckets, to collect the sap. We started by using gallon very clean milk or water jugs. By tying twine between the tap and the handle of the jug and widening the mouth with a box cutter, you can position the jug to catch the drip from the end of the tap. With the plastic tap and a short length of pipe, run the pipe down the existing mouth of the jug. You will be surprised during a good run how quickly a gallon bucket fills with sap and you will be disappointed when you find sap running over the top. We've seen folks who use clean construction and kitty litter pails as sap buckets. Whatever is used, the sap bucket needs a cover or a narrow opening to keep out snow, debris and, late in the season, insects. As with the taps, over the years we have purchased official spun aluminum buckets that hold a couple gallons of sap.

In addition to the sap buckets, you need pails and a large storage container. Matching pails for collecting is

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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.

RES/PBLT

by Bill Taffe

Rumney Ecological Systems (RES) is the "parent" organization for two different but closely related activities. We are the "Quincy Bog Natural Area", well known for over 30 years as a wonderful place to take quiet peaceful walks year-round, look at flowers, observe birds and other small wildlife, see beaver at work, or occasionally watch a moose graze in the marsh. We are also the "Pemi-Baker Land Trust" (PBLT) with a mission to help residents in the Baker and portions of the Pemigewasset River valleys protect land for conservation purposes. The Pemi-Baker Land Trust is a newer effort, about 5 years old, with a related but broader mission than the Quincy Bog Natural Area. "The Bog" focuses on protecting this specific, important natural area, and creating natural history education programs based on and around the location. The land trust covers a broader region but focuses less intensity on any one parcel.

Land trusts function at different geographical levels, national, state and regional. Nationally, the "big players" are The Nature Conservancy, the Trust for Public Lands and a few others. On a State level, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and New Hampshire Audubon are the major forces. Regionally there are "local land trusts" such as Lakes Region Conservation Trust, Squam Lakes Conservation Society, Upper Valley Land Trust and of course, the Pemi-Baker Land Trust.

Large land trusts often focus on specific goals for their conservation efforts. For example, the Nature Conservancy usually concentrates on land with rare and endangered plants or animals, while the "Forest Society" looks for large parcels such as their current effort to create a "Quabbin to Cardigan" wildlife corridor. Regional or local land trusts are often more responsive to individual landowners, giving more weight to individual landowner goals than organizationally-developed ones. They are also more limited in the geographical area they serve. The Pemi-Baker Land Trust works

with landowners in the watersheds of the Baker River and the Middle and Upper Pemigewasset River which includes Benton, Campton, Dorchester, Ellsworth, Groton, Holderness, Lincoln, Orford, Piermont, Plymouth, Rumney, Thornton, Warren, Wentworth, and Woodstock.

Thus far the Rumney Ecological Systems / Pemi-Baker Land Trust has three parcels under "fee ownership" (one of which is the Quincy Bog) and two parcels on which we hold conservation easements. One easement protects 136 acres in Dorchester, and another 130 acres in Rumney. Currently we're working with local landowners to help protect two other parcels along the Baker River. Both are smaller in acreage but each has significant river frontage. We're also in preliminary discussions with three other landowners.

Fee ownership is a process whereby a landowner gives a parcel of land to a land trust. The land trust owns and manages the land for conservation purposes. An easement, on the other hand, is a process whereby the landowner keeps ownership of the land, but gives development and mining rights, the primary conservation aspects, to a land trust. The owner can still use the land, sell it to someone else, retain the right to conduct forestry and/or agriculture (if they want to), and sometimes maintain a single family home on the parcel. But development rights to the parcel and uses that would be detrimental to conserving the land belong to the land trust and remain with the land trust whenever there is a change of ownership. A land trust enters into a partnership with a landowner, promising to protect the land "forever". It is the way landowners who recognize significance in forest or field or riverbank or other valuable natural resource, can preserve this resource for future generations.

If you have land in the Pemi-Baker Valley you think has important values to preserve for future generations, please contact us. Perhaps we can assist you!

Quincy Bog Volunteers, 2007

by Pat Barker

This was an outstanding year at Quincy Bog, which started in late April when the first Mayflowers bloomed. About that time, Jane Timson and Phil Carr put up a sheet of Jane's lovely colored photos at the lower kiosk to match the attractive display at the upper site

Phil cut branches and trees that had fallen across the trail during the fierce windstorms in April. He and Jane pulled out the debris from the little dam on the causeway that the beavers had erected last year, and after that the beaver activity faded.

Other animal spotting included moose, otters, turtles, red efts, frogs, and a large selection of birds. Sally Kenison disturbed a red fox that was apparently stalking a clutch of ducklings at shore's edge.

Inside the Nature Center the old cocktail bar was removed. Those parties were great fun, but that era has passed. Now the room looks more spacious and provides more space for seating at lectures and for tables at workshops. The new composting toilet with fan has proved to be odor-free. Bob would have approved.

We started the volunteer season minus four regulars. This threw the burden on the "fillers-in" who rose to the occasion nobly, and David Converse and Dorothy Kimball are now full-time volunteers. Thank you Wendy for introducing Dorothy to The Bog. David Converse, Anna Wilken, and Wendy Bogen took on two days a week! Faith Mattison came way over from Hanover to fill some time slots.

In July, David made eight handsome walking sticks numbered and labeled "Quincy Bog Promenade Staff: use, enjoy, return." These were very popular with visitors.

Some very un-wild wildlife visitors included a red squirrel and a chipmunk that discovered a hole in the screen door and startled volunteers with their casual run-throughs. Anna, Dorothy, and Faith especially noted these brash visitations.

Bird sightings were outstanding in 2007. Everyone saw the pair of majestic Great Blue Herons. Both Dorothy and I saw them very up-close and personal. Phil, Leonard, and Anna noted the flash of blue of the diving kingfisher. I was thrilled to see a mommy bittern and her three babies, while others saw goose and duck families. Dina Brodis spotted a tree frog and convinced it to stay still until she photographed it. Jackie and Ray Correaux identified the frog as well as a couple of colorful beetles Jane had found.

"Walt" rode out a sharp half-an-hour long thunderstorm at the Nature Center. She reported that she enjoyed the "Show."

Many photographers were spotted in The Bog this year. Keren and Dave Hepworth walked around the trail and had some plant identity questions. David Seavy (maybe a volunteer next year?) caught that wonderful moose picture on the bulletin board. Jane captured that remarkable late winter sunset with beavers, that picture is also on the bulletin board.

Both Dave H. and Dave S. wondered about the lovely arrowhead flowers so unusually common this past summer. Also in the botany department, Sarah Schwaegler's Wild Flower Walk in June was much enjoyed. The rest of the summer, she tried to keep me honest by re-identifying Indian Tobacco Lobelia and Marsh Skull Cap, both of them right out front on the causeway. She also kindly but firmly discouraged me from contending that we had three kinds of arrowhead (we have only one).

We had 18 amateur naturalists on the very popular "Beaver Walk" (minus beaver) led by Dr. Judy Silverberg. About 30 attended Rick Van de Poll's Mycology Walk which came right after a series of rains, so that we were literally tripping over mushrooms! Bill Taffe's Dragonfly excursion was great fun and very educational for the enthusiastic attendees. Sadly, the day was cold and rainy for Dr. Kerry Yurewicz and Melissa Greenawalt Yelle's excellent Bog Aquatic Insect Walk.

I want to thank the seven volunteers who continued to come to open the Nature Center in September when we had a great many visitors. Thanks to Betty-Jo Taffe for helping with the opening organizational gathering in June and the Wrap-up Party in September and for her support all year. We all wish Leonard Sawyer a speedy recovery after his serious accident in September.

Good news! Volunteers Amé and Sam Dixon have a baby boy, Griffin Seavey born July 8th.

Over the summer Eric Knuffke was inspired by his volunteer time at The Bog to write a Haiku:

The Bog
Flashes of dragonfly
Break the stillness, sunny log
Old pond, turtle time.

Faith Mattison, Director Emeritus

Faith Mattison of Hanover has been elected as a Director Emeritus. During her tenure as a director (1989-2004) Faith served in every office of the board and was instrumental in making the acquisition of the Steckmest property happen. Faith continues to make the trip from Hanover to help as a volunteer during the summer.

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suggested. It can be quite a challenge to transport several gallons of sap from the trees to the house/barn/shed, thru melting snow, without spilling. Two pails of the same design help to balance the load. Once collected, the sap needs be stored in a cool place until it is boiled off. A plastic 30-gallon clean trash barrel with a cover works well. The fresher the sap, the clearer and better grade syrup it produces. As sap ages it begins to get cloudy and eventually sours and is no good.

Boiling the sap It varies slightly from year to year, but generally it takes 40 parts of sap to make one part of syrup. That's a lot of evaporation and not something that you want to do in the house unless you want yellow ceilings. Boiling off inside would make a sticky mess no matter how well ventilated your stove. An outside heat source makes more sense. Large syrup producers, of course, use a wood fire. That requires storing more than 30 gallons of sap, careful attendance to the fire and a source of wood. As an alternative, a single burner gas stove placed in an aluminum barrel to protect the flame from wind works pretty well. We use a fair amount of propane alternating between the two small tanks that we use with our gas grill. With this arrangement we can leave the sap to boil while we go about our business in the house. How long you can leave the sap to boil is a function of the boiling pan. You want a boiling pan that is heavy and not too deep. A large surface area increases the rate of evaporation. The boiling pan will get pretty yucky from soot and messy boil-overs, so don't spoil one of your kitchen favorites. We found an old cast aluminum pot at the recycling center that we have used for years.

Because of the scale of the operation, you need to boil continuously, rather than in batches. As evaporation occurs, sap is added to the boiling pan until the contents begin to thicken. There is a point when the consistency changes from watery to thin syrup and the bubbles shrink in size and begin to last longer. Determining this point is the trick. We tend to set our kitchen timer for

an hour when we are boiling and add sap or check the boil when it reminds us. As the consistency begins to change, we shorten the time period. It seems, however, that each year we lose some syrup because we didn't time it correctly and the syrup boils over in the pan and that batch is ruined. As the thin syrup stage approaches, we bring the contents into the kitchen for the final boil. The contents are strained through a piece of boiled wool held in a sieve. This removes most of the debris that has accumulated. We continue the boil using a candy thermometer to indicate that "syrup status" at been attained, approximately 218 degrees at our altitude.

Bottling the syrup is much like making jam or jelly. Glass containers and their caps are boiled in water and the syrup is poured while both are hot. We find that 8 to 12 oz glass juice bottles work well. A narrow neck seems to preserve the syrup better than a wide mouth jelly jar.

The syrup produced in this manner is not as pure or high grade as syrup that is produced in large batches. It also is not a source of cheap syrup. By the time you fill the propane tanks several times and gather your initial equipment, the cost per quart is nearly as high as purchasing professionally made syrup. The unintended consequence of Backyard Sugarin' is the fun and ability to be outside in March and having homemade syrup for the next year.

* Backyard Sugarin' (Rich Mann; The Countryman Press, VT; 1976) is the publication that inspired us to pursue this adventure.

please!

Be a Friend
of Quincy Bog

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See us on the web at:
<http://www.quincybog.org>