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# Forest Notes

NEW HAMPSHIRE'S CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

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By Ian Aldrich

*The behind-the-scenes story of how eighth-generation lumber mill owners chose legacy over profit to conserve 500 acres of family timberlands in southern New Hampshire.*



*On our cover:*

Tom Wilkins surveys the logs that will soon be turned into lumber at his sawmill in Milford. Photo by Jarrod McCabe.

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# The Increasing Importance of Land Stewards

*Whenever possible, share your knowledge with others. It is something you can give without losing anything. In fact, you will gain from it.*

— The Land Steward Manual, 9th edition, Spring 2014



The *Land Steward Manual* is the go-to guide for the Forest Society's premiere volunteer program. Celebrating 20 years this year, the Land Steward Program started modestly with about a dozen people who volunteered for an in-depth, year-long training in exchange for helping Forest Society staff steward the organization's reservations (the properties we own).

Today that group is 140 strong, and I mean strong! These are not people who shy away from sometimes intense, dirty but rewarding outdoor work. They clear trails, remove buildings (see article on page 22), move rocks, build bridges, observe wildlife and pick up trash. They lead field trips, report damaged signs, prune apple trees for wildlife and check boundaries. In return, land stewards meet others who share their interests and values, interact with Forest Society staff, learn about forest and recreation management on conservation lands, make new friends, get exercise and enjoy their time outdoors.

The training has evolved over time (to better suit busy lifestyles), but the camaraderie, the work and the good-natured

ribbing have not. Land stewards take their roles seriously and help the program grow and change.

The Forest Society couldn't do what it does without volunteers, and land stewards are our longest running volunteer program (although the "Stuff It Club" was a fairly long-lasting group that helped us stuff envelopes for mailings).

In 2013 the Forest Society became an accredited land trust. This lends new significance to the work that stewards do, as we are required to monitor each of our reservations—all 174—on an annual basis, and we are required to document that monitoring. There is no way we could accomplish that without the help of the land stewards who are willing to share their time and their knowledge!

*Jane Difley is the president/forester of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.*

**Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests**

A non-profit membership organization founded in 1901 to protect the state's most important landscapes and promote wise use of its renewable natural resources. Basic annual membership fee is \$40 and includes a subscription to *Forest Notes*.

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The Forest Society proudly supports the following organizations:



**Forest Society Welcomes Barbara Russell to Board**

The Forest Society’s Board of Trustees elected Barbara Russell of New Boston to the board at its Feb. 5 meeting.

Russell has been a Forest Society member since 1972. For the past 11 years, she has been involved in conserving thousands of acres of New Hampshire land through the Russell Farm and Forest Conservation Foundation, which she and her husband Gordon formed in 2003. The foundation provides grants to accelerate the pace of important farm and forest land conservation projects and is a frequent Forest Society partner. Russell currently serves on the foundation’s board and as its secretary.



*Barbara Russell*

After beginning her professional career as a sixth-grade teacher, Russell entered the educational publishing business. She worked for nearly 20 years at Curriculum Associates in Billerica, Mass., then started her own company, Options Publishing, based in Merrimack. She sold the company in 2004 and in 2006 was awarded membership in the Association of Educational Publishers Hall of Fame.

Russell is an active member in many education and environmental organizations, including the Association of the Supervision of Curriculum and Development, National Council for Teachers of Mathematics, the Nature Conservancy and Mass Audubon. She is also a trustee at Lesley University in Cambridge, Mass.



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**French family honored with Outstanding Tree Farm Award**

Congratulations to Bob French and the French family for being honored with the 2014 Outstanding Tree Farm Award by the N.H. Tree Farm Program at the Farm and Forest Expo in February. French, a longtime supporter and former trustee of the Forest Society, was one of the first N.H. landowners to start placing conservation easements on his property and is a true conservation pioneer.

**Anderson honored with Fred E. Beane Award**

Dave Anderson, Forest Society director of education and volunteers, was given the Fred E. Beane Award for achievement in reporting on agriculture and forestry at the Farm and Forest Expo in Manchester Feb. 8.



*Dave Anderson*

Now in his 23rd year at the Forest Society, Anderson was honored for his skill at telling stories and conveying the rhythms of rural life. “His energy and enthusiasm come through in all of his communications. He is widely recognized by his peers as a superb writer and communicator and spokesperson for land conservation,” said Lorraine Merrill, N.H. commissioner of agriculture, when presenting the award. ♪



*Jane Difley, Forest Society president/forester, congratulates Bob French at the Farm and Forest Expo in Manchester Feb. 8.*

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Tom and Sally Wilkins

A photograph of a winter forest. A snow-covered path winds through the trees. The sun is shining from the upper right, creating a bright glow and long shadows. The trees are mostly evergreens, with some deciduous trees showing brown leaves. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

# ANYTHING BUT RUN OF THE MILL

**FOR EIGHTH-GENERATION SAWMILL OWNERS  
TOM AND SALLY WILKINS, PLACING MORE THAN 500 ACRES  
OF FAMILY LAND UNDER CONSERVATION EASEMENTS WITH THE  
FOREST SOCIETY SATISFIED A DREAM 20 YEARS IN THE MAKING.**

**By Ian Aldrich Photography by Jarrod McCabe**

**IT'S JUST PUSHING PAST ONE IN THE AFTERNOON ON** a late December day, 2013, when Brian Hotz, the Forest Society's vice president for land conservation, enters through the front door of Tom and Sally Wilkinse's home in Amherst. On this overcast, drizzly day, just two days before Christmas, Hotz is bearing gifts. In his arms he clutches a box filled with blue folders stuffed with documents, a packet of signs, and a plaque. Not your typical holiday presents to be sure, but then most people haven't waited 20 years for this moment like the Wilkinse's.

Over the last two years in particular, the couple has worked closely with Hotz and the Forest Society to place conservation easements on more than 500 acres of longtime family land scattered throughout the Amherst-Mont Vernon area. It's a move that means a lot of things. It means the continuation of responsible land ownership that began in Tom's family some 200 years ago. It means permanent land protection in a part of the state overrun with development. It also means lower market values and lower taxes so Tom and Sally can more easily pass down their property to their four grown children.

But getting to this moment, to this day when the first three of five easements will be finalized, hasn't been an easy journey. There have been title and boundary issues to sort through, a down-to-the-wire fundraising campaign, even some misunderstanding by a few local residents over what the Wilkinse's donations mean, for themselves and the state.

"They're literally donating more than half a million dollars in this process," Hotz says. "That tells you something about their values, their willingness to sacrifice for something that means more to them than money."

Sally, who wears her long brown hair in pigtails and packs an easy laugh, beams at the sight of Hotz entering the house. "Brian!" she says. "Let me get you some coffee."

Hotz shakes his head. "No thanks," he says, setting down the box on the dining room table. "I've already had too much. I'm hovering."

Standing nearby is Tom, who is tall with a strong, athletic frame, and a long graying ponytail. He's managed to cram in a longer than usual break from his sawmill, which is located just a few miles away. He extends his right hand. "How are you, Brian?"

The room's friendly, familiar atmosphere is augmented by the home's holiday fervor. A Christmas tree in the nearby living room blazes with colored lights and the Wilkinse's talk excitedly about having all four of their grown children home for a few days. Near the Christmas tree the couple's oldest daughter, Becky Herrick, who lives in Vermont, sits on a couch, trying to knit a scarf while holding her 11-week-old daughter, Windsor.

As Windsor coos and the family dogs bark, Tom, Sally and Brian sit down to business. Over the next hour, documents are shuffled around the table, as Tom and Sally slap their signatures on them. The mood is jovial, more a sense of accomplishment than loss. "We're just relieved to have made it this far," says Sally. "We've been saying for so long we need to protect this land."

**"IT'S ABOUT PROTECTING PROPERTY, BUT ALSO SETTING SOMETHING UP TO MAKE SURE THE FOREST SOCIETY CAN PROPERLY STEWARD THAT PROPERTY."**

— BRIAN HOTZ

About halfway through the closing, the Wilkinse's oldest son, Aaron, who lives in Charleston, South Carolina, and just flew into Manchester steps in through the front door.

"Welcome home!" Sally bursts out, pushing herself back from the table to greet him. "I'm so glad you're here."

"It's great to be here," he exclaims, a wide smile enveloping his face as he takes in the whole scene before him.

Sally gives Aaron a long embrace and then directs him to Brian. "We're signing away your inheritance," she says with a big laugh.

"Yeah, sorry about that," Brian says, smiling. "But there will be a little left over for you."

Aaron shrugs his shoulders. "It's alright." The room erupts in laughter.

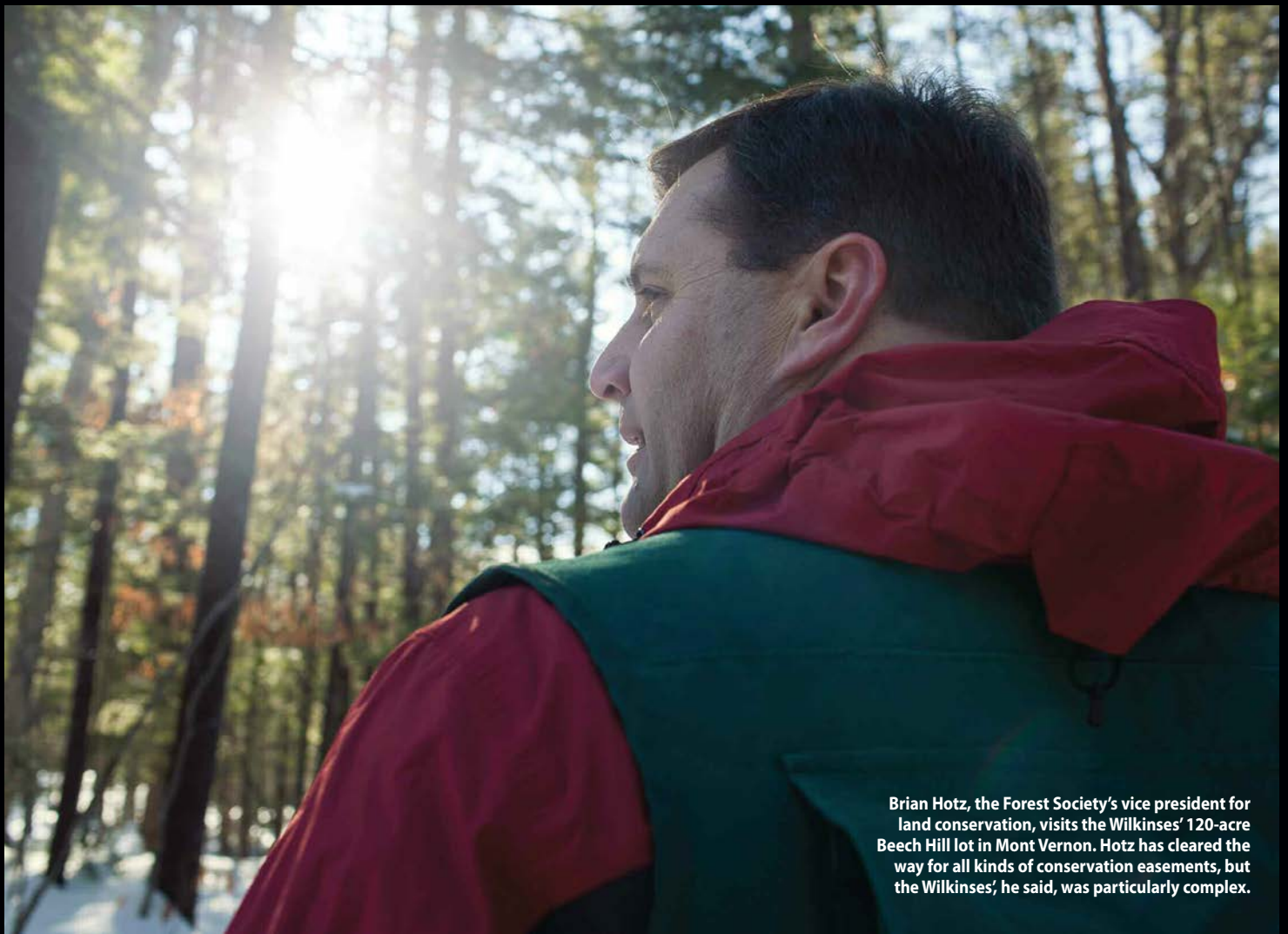
**T**O GET A SENSE OF JUST WHAT THE WILKINSE'S and the Forest Society have worked so hard to protect, a visit to the family's 120-acre lot in Mont Vernon is well worth it. Named after the road it's tucked behind, Beech Hill is a forest of young oaks, tall birch, and thick hemlocks. Deer and moose are frequently spotted.

There's a big beaver lodge, a wide swamp with an overlook that makes for a nice camping spot, and cutting through the heart of it, a wide, looping trail that caters to dog walkers or anyone who wants to stretch their legs for a good 20 minutes without hitting pavement.

Most importantly, though, it's just quiet. Located just 10 miles north of busy Route 101A, there are no cars or horns. No cell-phone chatter or blinking lights. And certainly, no buildings. In this area of the state, where development pressures have chewed up large tracts of farmland and forest and spit out condo developments and retail space, this land marks an important anomaly, a reminder that not all property is valued by how many housing lots can be squeezed inside it.

"There just aren't that many places around here where you can get out and not see a house," says Sally. "Where you can just look up at a dark sky."





**Brian Hotz, the Forest Society's vice president for land conservation, visits the Wilkinsons' 120-acre Beech Hill lot in Mont Vernon. Hotz has cleared the way for all kinds of conservation easements, but the Wilkinsons', he said, was particularly complex.**

Four months before their conservation easements were finalized, I met up with Sally and Tom on a late August day and walked the Beech Hill lot with them. It was a pristine afternoon, free of humidity or any hint that the snap of fall was just around the corner. With us was the Wilkinsons' other daughter, Rachel Martus, a recent mother, and the family dog, Sancho, whom Tom stayed tethered to with a leash tied tightly around his right hand.

Tom knows this land better than anyone. His family made up some of Amherst's earliest settlers. And for over eight generations, this lot and other pieces like it have sustained a way of life for farmers, loggers and sawmill owners that over the last few decades has become increasingly difficult to maintain. As a boy, Tom frequently walked these woods with his grandfather, Harold Wilkins Jr., the owner of Wilkins Lumber Company in Milford. Then, when Tom took over the family business, he returned to steward the land just as his granddad had.

Spend even just a few minutes out here and you'll find that the property is defined both by what it features and what it doesn't have. Missing are "No Trespassing" signs and warnings about

unwelcome visitors being arrested. If you've got a car with enough clearance to take on the road to access the trail, the Wilkinsons reason, you're a welcome guest.

"We do allow hunting," said Sally. "We'd just prefer they get permission."

Ten minutes into the walk, the trail bent slightly to the left, curling back into the heart of the parcel. In the distance, tree frogs gave the afternoon a steady soundtrack. Tom stopped, pulling Sancho to a halt as well, and wheeled around. "Who's up for seeing the swamp?" he asked.

Getting the answer he wanted, he veered off-trail. Sancho led the way, blazing through a series of low-lying branches before picking up a path. Before long, the land opened up, giving way to a small clearing on the outer edge of a peaceful swamp.

"I love this area," said Tom, looking out toward the water. Then he spotted a nearby fire pit. "Apparently some others do, too."

By putting an easement on this property, the Wilkinsons are ensuring that walks like this can continue, for them and for others. But it also means they will have willingly forfeited their one chance



Tom and Sally at the Beech Hill lot with their son-in-law Steve Martus, grandson James, and daughter Rachel.

to cash out; to ease the financial pressures they've had to stare down these last few years; to not have to put in 12- to 14-hour days at the sawmill just to break even.

"I was at a wedding last year and I told a friend of mine what we were doing," Tom later said. "He said, 'What's it worth?' And I told him, probably around \$3 or \$4 million. He just looked at me and then finally said, 'You're not going to cash it in?' He couldn't believe it. I told him, I don't believe in selling it. I want it to stay open. He didn't get it. He just said, 'I'd sell it.'"

**I**N MANY WAYS THIS STORY BEGINS IN THE MID 1700S, when the Hartshorns, an early wing of Tom's family, migrated north from Massachusetts to southern New Hampshire. For the next century the Hartshorns, like so many New England families, bumped along, raising a few dairy cows here, several vegetable plots there, basically doing their best to scratch out a decent life from the bony landscape.

Their fortunes and land holdings changed in the mid-1800s with Tom's great-great-great grandfather, Frank Hartshorn, a

shrewd businessman with a taste for buying land. With the help of his son-in-law, Aaron Wilkins, Frank turned the family farm into Hartshorn Farm and Mill. He expanded the dairy and vegetable productions, built a box factory, and ramped up the sawmill, which dated back to 1808.

Over the next several generations business expanded, retracted, and grew again. In 1948 lightning struck the box factory and the subsequent fire killed the business. Ten years later the Hartshorn side of the family split off with the farm. But as the homebuilding business took off, so did Wilkins Lumber.

By the time Tom Wilkins was born in 1959, the family business was part of a thriving group of southern New Hampshire lumberyards that turned out local boards for local builders. At that point, Tom's grandfather, Harold Wilkins, a kind man with a penchant for storytelling, was overseeing the operation. Tom's own father, Gerald, Harold's son, had chosen high school teaching over the mill, but young Tom couldn't get enough of it.

He started working for his granddad at the age of 12. He sorted boards, delivered stock to the lumberyard, did cleanup, whatever

low-level tasks Harold needed. Tom worked full time in the summer, and then on Saturdays during the school year. On those weekend days, after the mill closed up, grandson and grandfather continued their work by walking the land, double-checking property markers and pruning hemlock. The woods told stories, and Harold knew many of them. He pointed out the old cellar holes and reminisced about the big spruce that once prevailed.

At the insistence of his grandfather, Tom went to college, earning a business degree at Bentley University in Waltham, Massachusetts. But as soon as he could, he returned to New Hampshire and began working at the mill for \$160 a week.

“I met him when he was 15, and he knew then he was going to come back home and go to work at the mill,” said Sally.

“I couldn’t help it,” explained, Tom. “I got sawdust in my veins.”

Tom and Sally married in 1981 and settled on a remote piece of family property in Amherst that Harold had given them as a wedding present. They built a house, raised five kids, and started a small farm. After Harold slowed, Tom took over running the mill. When his kids needed to see him, they cut along the short forest path that runs between their home and the sawmill. Everything the Wilkinses did, how they lived, how they worked, emanated from the land they owned. And in increasingly upscale Amherst, with a booming community of Boston commuters with big new houses, they stood apart.

“I had friends who lived in Bedford on a hill in mansions with giant swimming pools,” said Tom and Sally’s daughter, Rachel. “They’d go to St. Barths every summer and you know, the novelty of milking goats and farm chores wore off pretty quickly. It was a little embarrassing because in school we’d actually go on field trips to our house to see our farm animals.” She laughed. “I think in winter we were the only kids in school who didn’t want snow days because that meant we’d have to stay home and work.”

But like her other siblings, Rachel came around to seeing the value in what her parents provided. Today, she lives in Wilton with her husband Steve and their 13-month-old son, James. Both young parents work—Rachel in finance for a defense contractor, Steve as a teacher at an elementary school in Brookline—leaving James in the care of his grandmother, Sally.

“Even before he was born, we thought that growing up on a farm was great and wanted him exposed to it,” said Rachel.

But none of the Wilkins kids want to take over the mill. And Tom, who’s watched as the economy and big building supply stores have wreaked havoc on local sawmills, can’t much blame them. But their land is something else entirely. With a legacy that doesn’t include much cash, Tom and Sally have decided to put all but 100 of their 620 acres into conservation so that when the time comes for their kids to inherit it, they won’t be forced to sell a good



**FROM TOP: Tom with his grandfather, Harold Wilkins Jr., in 1987; the Wilkins box factory sometime around 1900; back side of the mill/factory around the same time, with Aaron Wilkins (left), an unidentified family friend (center), and Levi Hartshorn, whose great-grandfather built the mill in 1808. Photographs courtesy of the Wilkins family.**



chunk of the property just to pay the estate taxes. It also means that the forests Frank Hartshorn first purchased and Harold Wilkins later timbered, will remain as they were when they owned them.

“It’s about legacy,” said Sally. “It’s about habitat and wildlife and open space. And it’s about keeping the lands open for passive recreation so we can give people a chance to experience the woods who’ve never really had the chance to do that. We think that’s important. And our kids will be okay. They’ll earn a living like everyone else.”

**C**ONSERVATION DEALS OFTEN AREN’T SIMPLE. And since theirs involved multiple tracts of land, the Wilkinses’ was more complex than most. Hotz likened putting these kinds of deals together to pushing a bunch of ping pong balls up a long hill. Land owners change their minds, land prices go up, property conditions alter. There may be surveying issues to contend with, or title problems, not to mention the capital and outreach campaigns that need to be juggled.

“This is no small decision,” Hotz said. “I think landowners come to that as they go into the project. We try our best to make sure they understand the issues, the complexities, the ramifications. We’re not trying to scare them upfront, but sometimes what these easements mean can be quite shocking for landowners. You may be doing something good, but it can still be a pain. So we do all we can to solve challenges as they come up and shield the landowners from a lot of them.”

It’s not uncommon for landowners to initiate talks with the Forest Society. It’s also not uncommon for various roadblocks or caveats required by the landowner to prevent a conservation deal from being finalized. Sometimes the ramifications of the deal—a commercial harvest, for example, that requires a detailed forest management plan—give them pause. Other times, a family just needs more time to get their affairs in order.

“A conservation easement is a flexible tool,” said Hotz. “It’s about protecting property but also setting something up to make sure the Forest Society can properly steward that property. If someone comes to us with a 100-acre property with a pond in the middle of it and wants three home sites around that pond, are we really accomplishing our mission?”

The Wilkinses came into the project with more awareness of the process than most. For years, Sally and Tom have been entrenched in local land preservation work. Tom once served on Amherst’s Conservation Commission and Sally, in addition to volunteering on the local planning board, has put extensive time in with the Amherst Land Trust. Over the years the family has donated land throughout their home region to various towns and conservation groups.

In fact, the couple’s decision to seek out easements for much of the family property goes back to the early 1990s. For years, there

**“I DON’T BELIEVE IN SELLING IT. I WANT IT TO STAY OPEN.”**

— TOM WILKINS



were repeated conversations with Harold Wilkins, trying to convince the family patriarch that his parcels—14 in all—needed to be protected. Harold, a charter member of the Amherst Land Trust, had no desire to see the property developed, but the old timber man in him couldn’t be convinced that its value was anything more than the worth of its trees. Millions? That was unfathomable.

“Because the land was never worth that much when he was growing up, he had a tough time believing it,” said Tom. “He really didn’t think it was worth anything.”

The Wilkins project was unique in other ways, too. Because so much of the land had been family owned for more than a century, considerable work needed to be done to clean up the land titles and sort out boundary lines that in some cases had never clearly been marked.

One of the most pressing issues revolved around a four-acre piece of land in the middle of a larger piece of property in Mont Vernon. For years the Wilkinses weren’t exactly sure if they owned the smaller parcel, and when Sally and Tom sat down with Hotz to initially discuss the easements, the couple pointed out the possible problem. Over several months, beginning last summer and going into the fall, Hotz worked to resolve the situation. Money was doled out to a title abstractor as well as a surveyor to figure out if maybe another family could claim the land.

“I was sweating it,” said Hotz. And that’s because this small piece was part of a prized parcel of land. It’s where the Forest Society had led prospective donors on a spring hike; it served as one of the highlights when the non-profit talked publicly about the project. Without those four acres, the Wilkinses wouldn’t have been able to put an easement on the land.

All that summer of 2013 Hotz sorted through the possibility of having to negotiate a deal with a new set of owners, or worse, redrawing the outlines of the entire Wilkins project and going back to donors and explaining that this crucial Mont Vernon lot had to be subtracted from the project. Finally, however, in early autumn, it was determined that the Wilkinses did indeed own the land.

“I’ve learned to expect this stuff,” said Hotz. “It happens with every single project and you don’t really know what you’re up against until you get into it. You uncover things as you go and it’s a tightrope to make it work under the cost you committed to. But we’ve been through this hundreds of times. It’s our responsibility



Even though the easements put tighter restrictions on how Tom Wilkins can use his land, he's relieved that the property will forever be protected from development. "That's my biggest thing," he says.



While a changing market has certainly impacted orders for Wilkins Lumber Company, the Milford sawmill still stands at the center of the family business, just as it has for more than 200 years.

Photo courtesy of Earle Rich.

to solve all these issues. Some landowners think it's just too complicated, but this is what we do. Yes it costs money, and yes it costs time, and some don't work, but 99 percent of the time it does work."

Even in the weeks leading up to the closing in December, issues continued to arise. In late November Hotz was out doing a baseline study of the properties. The work serves as a thorough documentation of a land's structures and issues, like boundary conditions, before an easement is put into place. It includes mapping, on-the-ground-images, and aerial photos. From one of the aerials, Hotz noticed a neighbor had extended his yard several hundred feet into the Wilkinses' land. Sure enough, when Hotz hoofed it out there on a late November day, he found a section of lawn and a buried propane tank clearly situated in the soon-to-be conserved property.

"It didn't mean the project couldn't do go forward," Hotz said. "The land will grow back, but the tank will have to be removed. It's something Tom and Sally will have to address."

Even though the Wilkinses were essentially donating the easements to the Forest Society, more than \$190,000 needed to be raised to pay for the title and surveying work. The amount also

included \$50,000 to defray the family's own legal costs. But the campaign proved slower going than anticipated. The original deadline of late September was pushed back to the end of the year, and by early October the Forest Society was still \$40,000 short of its goal.

Much of this, explained Hotz, stemmed from the very nature of the project. There was no big-bad developer knocking down the door to carve out house lots. The money needed was simply to pay for behind-the-scenes work. Crucial, but not exactly the kind of material that makes for an attention-grabbing campaign for the public to rally around. The real threat to these lands, in fact, was still at least one, maybe two generations away when Tom and Sally's kids or grandkids might have to sell off certain chunks in order to avoid paying the inheritance or property taxes.

In mid-October, as the project moved into its crucial final few weeks, Sally was still optimistic the money could be found, but conversations had already started about maybe doing just four easements instead of five. Then there was the matter of the appraisal. It still hadn't happened and she was worried that without it, they'd have no adjusted land values to offset the \$50,000 from the Forest Society.

"We're getting close to the end of the year and we're going to



need that come tax time, otherwise the IRS is just going to see that money as some big windfall,” she said.

In the end, a last minute spurt of small gifts helped close the gap in the final two months. The donations spoke to the community’s broad support for the family’s actions. The only serious objection, in fact, came last May when, in a published letter to the editor in the *Milford Cabinet*, a Mont Vernon couple expressed concern that if the Forest Society failed to raise enough money to pay for the project, their town would be on the hook to make up the difference. Their proposal: The Wilkinses should just donate the Mont Vernon parcels to the community.

A week later, Sally’s published letter to the editor refuted the assertion that Mont Vernon residents might be liable if the Forest Society fundraising campaign failed. She also shot down the idea that the family should donate the land.

“It’s very generous of them to give away our children’s inheritance,” Sally wrote. “Perhaps it has not occurred to them,” she added, “since they are concerned about taxes, that donated land to the town takes it off the tax base, while land that the family continues to own will pay both property taxes and yield taxes on timber harvests in perpetuity.”

**J**UST HOW LONG TOM WILKINS IS HARVESTING timber off that land for the family’s sawmill is uncertain. On the day of the Forest Society closing, Tom put in a long morning at the mill. Even though he had shut business down for a week during the holiday season, he was running behind. Earlier that summer, Tom’s longtime foreman, a man he’d worked with for nearly 30 years, was killed in an accident at the mill. Besides being a huge personal loss for Tom, his friend’s death had also pushed more of the work onto the owner’s shoulders.

“He was like my brother, and you just don’t find someone with the kind of experience he had off the street,” Tom said.

The tragedy was followed by a slow July and August. Business hadn’t come close to rebounding from the economic downturn and the bad summer had prompted Tom to start thinking that the coming winter “might be my swan song.” Maybe it was time to sell off his equipment and eliminate as much debt as he could, he told himself. But then the fall had seen a good bump in sales, and Tom was already thinking ahead to the spring and his need for more hemlock. Little of it was coming his way, which meant he’d have to get it off his own land. When I spoke to him before the closing, he talked enthusiastically about a whole lot of hemlock on one of his Mont Vernon properties that needed to be thinned out. “It needs to be cut down to *about* the 12 inch stuff,” he said.

Under the basic agreement with the Forest Society, Tom, because of his experience, has been named the forest manager of his properties. It means he’ll still have authority over what happens in those woods, but if he wants to do a commercial harvest for say, a bunch of hemlock, he’ll have to follow a forest management plan and consult with the Forest Society before a single tree is felled. That’s a change for Tom, and he was still trying to adjust to what the easements would mean for business.

I asked Tom if there’s a part of him that has some misgivings after all these years of owning and managing these parcels, of suddenly ceding some control over them to somebody else. We were outside his house. A steel grey sky stretched out above and as a soft rain fell, Tom leaned against his truck.

“The picture they painted to me,” he paused, then continued. “If I end up having to jump through hoops, I will be a little bit peeved.” He took in a deep breath. “I don’t know. We’ll see what happens. My biggest concern is that it won’t be developed in the future. That’s my biggest thing.”

A few minutes later Tom headed into the house, sat down at the dining room table with his wife Sally and the two began putting their names on the documents they had waited nearly half their lives to sign. ¶

## Mark your calendars for these upcoming events!

Visit [www.forestsociety.org/ThingsToDo](http://www.forestsociety.org/ThingsToDo) for more details about these events and more!

TUESDAY, MAY 6 | 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

### Lost River Workday

*N. Woodstock*

Join Forest Society staff at Lost River Reservation for a day of spring cleaning: trail clearing, native garden pruning and other assorted tasks.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7 | 7 to 8 p.m.

### Avoiding Bear-Human Conflicts

*The Rocks Estate, Bethlehem*

Nancy Comeau, a wildlife technician for the USDA Wildlife Services who specializes in nuisance bears, will discuss bear habits and ways to avoid bear-human conflicts.

SATURDAY, JUNE 14 | 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### Heritage, Flowers and Birds Tour

*The Rocks Estate, Bethlehem*

Take a behind-the-scenes, guided tour of The Rocks Estate.

FRI.-TUES., JULY 11-15 | 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### Monadnock Trails Week

*Jaffrey*

Join the Forest Society and N.H. State Parks in restoring hiking trails on Mount Monadnock.

TUESDAY, JULY 29 | 7 to 8 p.m.

### Secrets of Black Bear Society with Ben Kilham

*The Rocks Estate, Bethlehem*

Noted bear researcher and author Ben Kilham will present a slideshow on social interactions among black bears, based on his decades of work raising orphaned bear cubs and releasing them into the wild.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 26

### Save the Date: 113th Annual Meeting

*Londonderry Country Club*

Look for details in the next issue of *Forest Notes*.

SATURDAY, MAY 3 | 8 to 11 a.m.

### Field Trip: The Birds of Creek Farm

*Portsmouth*

Creek Farm provides key bird migration habitat in the coastal region of New Hampshire along the Piscataqua River. Join us for a guided hike to view spring bird migration.



*Greater Yellowlegs.*  
Photo by Lauren Kras.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11 | 7 to 8 p.m.

### Meet Author Tom Ryan

*The Rocks Estate, Bethlehem*

Tom Ryan, author of *Following Atticus: 48 High Peaks, One Little Dog, and an Extraordinary Friendship*, will discuss his adventures and sign books with some help from Atticus, his miniature schnauzer.

**WILL POWER!**  
Will Lange's hiking mountains, trekking trails, paddling waterways and exploring New England.  
**DISCOVER WILD PLACES WITH WILL!**

**WINDOWS to the WILD**

**WEDNESDAYS 7:30 PM**  
NHPTV PRIME  
WATCH ONLINE  
NHPTV.ORG

**NH**  
NEW HAMPSHIRE  
PUBLIC TELEVISION

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube icons



# “There Is No Reason...”

## Petition opposing Northern Pass attracts comments in defense of New Hampshire

By Jack Savage

A new petition commending New Hampshire Gov. Maggie Hassan for her efforts to date in defending the state’s natural heritage from the proposed 187-mile Northern Pass overhead transmission line and asking her to bury the entire line or stop it altogether got off to a fast start this spring.

The Forest Society is working with the Appalachian Mountain Club and the non-profit Conservation Media Group (CMG) to promote the petition online. The effort includes a series of videos to heighten awareness of the threat Northern Pass poses to New Hampshire landscapes. The videos are produced by CMG, a group of experienced filmmakers and conservationists who specialize in informing the public about important conservation initiatives. In the first video, which can be viewed by visiting the Forest Society’s website, seven-year-old Tucker expounds on his love of trees. The video then links to a copy of the petition.

Within 24 hours more than 1,000 people had signed the petition. The Conservation Media Group website, [www.conservationmediagroup.org](http://www.conservationmediagroup.org), also invites visitors to email Gov. Hassan directly ([GovernorHassan@nh.gov](mailto:GovernorHassan@nh.gov)) or post their own comments on the site. Many have done so, and it’s interesting to note that the comments come from all across New Hampshire and beyond.

A sampling of the comments:

“There is no reason why they can't bury the lines. This beautiful state should not have to look at these monstrosities. Our wildlife and beautiful forests will be changed forever. Do not do it, please.”

— *Andria, Lempster*

“As a vacationer in New Hampshire, I am dismayed at this possibility. We can be smarter about what we do with energy—bury or re-route the transmission line!”

— *Laurel, Lawrenceville, NJ*



*New Hampshire 7-year-old Tucker takes to video to tell us about his favorite tree at [www.forestociety.org](http://www.forestociety.org).*

“As an avid hiker of NH's 4000 footers, I can't imagine the need for the destruction of the pristine beauty of the intense wilderness that is the NH Whites. I look forward to my reward... the view! Bury the lines.”

— *Julia, Dover*

“The Northern Pass project as proposed has marginal benefit for New Hampshire, but compromises the scenic beauty of our state...a major ingredient in our economic foundation.”

— *Clint, Grantham*

“I believe future generations deserve the same opportunity to see the beautiful forests and mountains that I had as a child.”

— *Carol, Freedom*

“I spent summers on Newfound Lake and am blessed to return every year still, hopefully to instill the same wonders and love of the outdoors in my twin boys.”

— *Cacia, Petoskey, Mich.*

“Because the need is not there and none of this truly benefits NH. Another greedy corporation selling electricity as cheap as possible and leaving a wake of environmental destruction.”

— *Kathleen, Peterborough*

“Open wild space is a rare commodity. We must care for it as for any other rare and

irreplaceable resource. Conservation is our first step. “Keep all the parts.”

— *Skye, Portsmouth*

“New Hampshire’s natural and scenic beauty is our greatest and, hopefully, most enduring asset. And like Tucker, I LOVE TREES!”

— *Linda, Newport*

“If a private company is permitted to use our state as a way to transport electricity for their profit the least they should be required to do is minimize the harm to NH. A large ugly foot print down the spine of our state should not be permitted.”

— *Naomi, Concord*

“I moved to NH from Mass 14 years ago to escape the mindless development and lack of protection of Natural Resources. Please don't let an outside corporation forever ruin the scenic beauty of our state. There are alternatives!!”

— *Tammy, Campton*

“The White Mountains National Forest is a national treasure. People who experience this area can't help but become aware of the reasons why we should do everything in our power to preserve the natural splendor of this place. Please do not scar it.”

— *William, Newtown Square, Pa.*

“It's obvious. The initial additional cost to the power company to bury the lines is fleeting and recoverable. The destructive cost to New Hampshire's outdoor beauty will be permanent and irreversible.”

— *Marie, Andover*

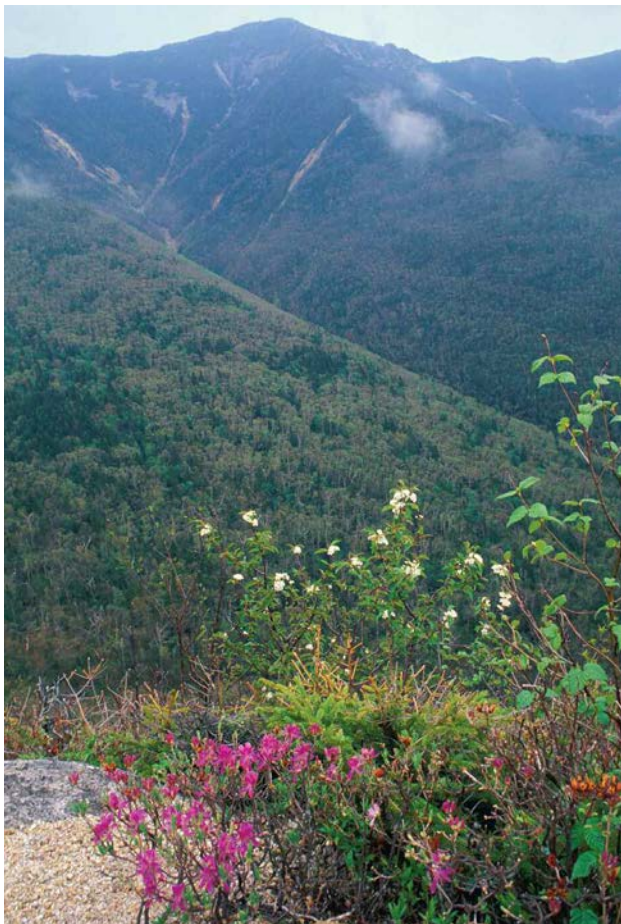
Additional videos are planned and the fight against Northern Pass as proposed continues until Northeast Utilities and Hydro-Quebec relent and see fit to bury their private transmission line. ♪

# Obama's Budget Proposes an End to Congress's Raids on Conservation Fund

By Will Abbott

Fifty years ago, the federal government created a pool of capital to invest in the conservation of land and water resources called the Land and Water Conservation Fund. If America's national parks are one of our nation's greatest ideas, the LWCF provides the oxygen to sustain the great idea.

The LWCF has added millions of acres of land to our nation's parks, public forests, wildlife refuges and state and municipal recreational areas. When an important inholding within the White Mountain National Forest comes on the market, the LWCF is the bank that funds the acquisition. When the State of New Hampshire has the opportunity to permanently protect a 40,000 acre watershed like Nash Stream or 146,000 acres that form the headwaters of the Connecticut River, the LWCF is the source of the federal dollars that bring these conservation projects to the goal line.



When New Hampshire municipalities want to secure recreational resources for the local community, the LWCF is the source of matching grants that often make success possible.

One cornerstone of the LWCF is its funding source. Each year the federal government receives billions of dollars in lease revenues from offshore oil and gas contracts with private energy companies. The federal law creating the LWCF requires the first \$900 million of these revenues each year to be deposited into the LWCF. The idea is quite simple: Part of the money received by the government for the exploitation of oil and gas resources will be re-invested in the permanent conservation of land and water resources.

The dirty little secret within the DC beltway is that over the 50 year lifespan of LWCF, the federal government has rarely kept the promise it made when it created the set-aside from oil and gas revenues. Only twice in the 50 years has the \$900 million set-aside been fully funded. In the other 48 years, more than \$18 billion has been redirected by Congress to fund other things.

President Obama's 2015 budget aims to put an end to this artful dodge. Not only does he propose fully funding LWCF at \$900 million, but he also seeks to make permanent the dedicated stream of revenues on an annual basis.

The idea behind LWCF has had strong bi-partisan support in Congress over the years. But the dedicated fund

created for LWCF keeps getting raided in the Congressional appropriations process no matter which party is in control. New Hampshire's congressional delegation has consistently supported the idea of LWCF; it's time they encouraged their colleagues to stop raiding LWCF's dedicated fund. Please call on Sens. Shaheen and Ayotte and Reps. Shea-Porter and Kuster to team up with their colleagues in Congress to end the raids on LWCF. Ask them to celebrate the golden anniversary of the Land and Water Conservation Fund by permanently protecting its oxygen supply.

## N.H.'s Congressional Delegation

Carol Shea Porter (D), Dist. 1  
[www.shea-porter.house.gov](http://www.shea-porter.house.gov)  
 Manchester office:  
 33 Lowell St.  
 Manchester, NH 03101  
 641-9536

Ann McLane Kuster (D), Dist. 2  
[www.kuster.house.gov](http://www.kuster.house.gov)  
 Concord office:  
 18 North Main St., Fourth Floor  
 Concord, NH 03301  
 226-1002

Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R)  
[www.ayotte.senate.gov](http://www.ayotte.senate.gov)  
 Manchester office:  
 1200 Elm St., Suite 2  
 Manchester, NH 03101-2503  
 622-7979

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D)  
[www.shaheen.senate.gov](http://www.shaheen.senate.gov)  
 Manchester office:  
 1589 Elm St., Suite 3  
 Manchester, NH 03101  
 647-7500 ♯

*When an important inholding within the White Mountain National Forest comes on the market, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is the bank that funds the acquisition. Photo by Jerry and Marcy Monkman, EcoPhotography.*

# Forest Society Acts to Encourage a Hold on Wind Project

New projects shouldn't be considered until the SEC has established guidelines

By Chris Wells

In early 2014, the Forest Society intervened for the first time in the permitting of a proposed wind power facility in New Hampshire: the "Wild Meadows" project in Danbury and Alexandria. Proposed by a subsidiary of the Spanish-based energy giant Iberdrola, the Wild Meadows project would place 23 wind turbines that are 492-feet high along forested ridgelines a few miles south of Mount Cardigan. The turbines are expected to be visible from Cardigan State Park, Newfound Lake, and other scenic viewpoints in the surrounding area, including several Forest Society properties. The Forest Society owns or holds conservation easements on 22 parcels totaling more than 7,200 acres within a 10-mile radius of the proposed project.

After several years of preparation, in late December 2013, Iberdrola filed its permit application for Wild Meadows to the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee (SEC). The SEC is the inter-agency panel with jurisdiction over large energy generation and transmission projects in New Hampshire. On Jan. 10, 2014, the Forest Society, through its attorneys BCM Environmental & Land Law, petitioned the SEC to be an "intervener" in the proceedings related to the Wild Meadows Wind Project, and simultaneously filed a motion to suspend the project's application.

The motion asked the SEC to suspend consideration of the application until after completion of a process, now underway, that will better equip the SEC to make decisions regarding the siting of large-scale wind projects such as Wild Meadows. This review of SEC structure, process and siting criteria was mandated by the state legislature in 2013 (SB99) and requires new rules be in place for siting energy projects by January 2015. The motion to suspend consideration of Wild Meadows is in keeping with a policy approved by the Forest Society's board of trustees to intervene in opposition to any and all projects proposed to the SEC



*The "Wild Meadows" project in Danbury and Alexandria would install 23 turbines along forested ridgelines a few miles south of Mount Cardigan.*  
PN Photo/Dreamstime.com

while new siting guidelines are developed.

"New Hampshire's landscapes are a critical part of our state identity and economy, and our permitting processes are inadequate," said Jane Difley, Forest Society president/forester. "Our board of trustees believes that there is a role for wind power in the state's energy future, but that we should not be permitting new large-scale wind projects before establishing siting guidelines as well as other changes to the way the SEC handles applications and accommodates community values and input."

On Jan. 15, the SEC determined the Wild Meadows application was incomplete and gave Iberdrola 10 days to update the application. At the same time, the SEC summarily denied the Forest Society's motion to suspend proceedings. In the days that followed, the Forest Society weighed its

next legal move and waited to see whether Wild Meadows would meet the 10-day deadline for completing its application. Ten days came and went without further information being supplied by the applicant, meaning the project will need to be re-submitted in its entirety if and when Iberdrola is ready to do so.

On Feb. 21, Iberdrola announced it was "pausing" the Wild Meadows project while it works on outstanding issues at an existing 24-turbine wind farm it operates in Groton. As this issue of *Forest Notes* went to press, the Wild Meadows project was on indefinite hold. The Forest Society remains engaged and ready to respond to new developments as they happen on Wild Meadows, or any other new commercial wind project proposed for New Hampshire before improved siting criteria are in place. ♣



*Left: The Merrimack Riverfront Project includes about ¾ of a mile of river frontage close to I-93 and Route 3, where development pressures are high. The property also features a two-acre island, a diverse mix of wetlands, hay and corn fields, floodplain forests and former railroad beds. Photo by Kevin McManus.*

*Right: A bald eagle flies above the Merrimack River, near the newly conserved Hooksett riverfront property. Photo by Geoffrey Niswander.*

## A Place to Soar

The Forest Society helps Hooksett save its riverfront ‘jewel’ for recreation and wildlife

By Brenda Charpentier

Steve Couture had just trekked across a field on snowshoes and come into full view of the Merrimack River in Hooksett when he stopped to look up, joking that it would be a perfect time for a bald eagle to fly over.

None did.

Not for about five minutes, anyway. Then, suddenly there it was, flying purposefully upstream as if it knew it was late.

“There’s its white tail!” Couture said, squinting up into the blue sky.

The moment was particularly exciting to Couture, chair of the Hooksett Conservation Commission, because protecting bald eagle habitat is one of the plethora of reasons the town has partnered with the Forest Society to conserve ¾ of a mile of undeveloped Merrimack riverfront. So far, the town has purchased 116 acres of land abutting the river (including a two-acre island) and has donated a conservation easement on it to the Forest Society. A similar arrangement on

about 15 more acres is still in the works.

This project has engendered widespread public and private support for the abundance of conservation and cultural values inherent in the mix of fields, floodplain forests and—most importantly—frontage on the magnificent Merrimack.

“It’s our jewel,” Couture said. “There’s nothing like it—this is riverfront!”

The successful conservation of the land, situated fittingly enough off of Merrimack Street, rewards at least 10 years of effort that started, as most successes do, with a targeted vision written into the town’s master plan of 2004.

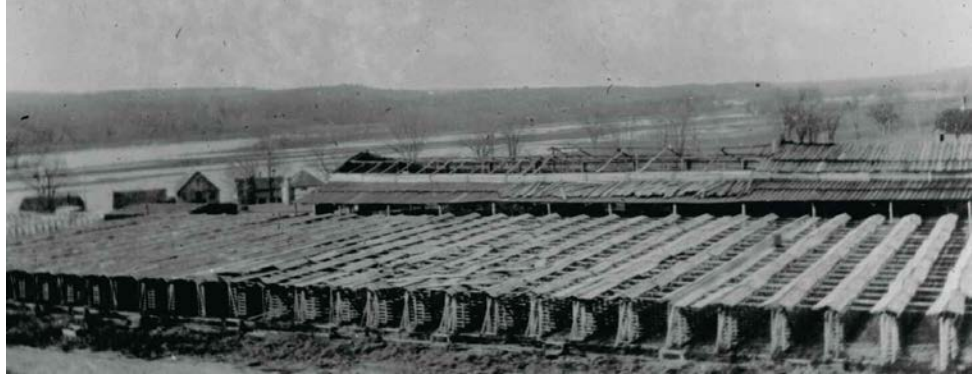
“We surveyed the entire town and found five specific areas deserving of conservation, and this was one of our top five priorities,” said state Rep. Dave Hess, a member of the conservation commission who has been a driving force behind the project. Hess said the location of the land, within half a mile of both Hooksett Village and Suncook

Village, is ideal for conserving a community open space for recreation as well as education.

What first drew the attention of the conservation commission, however, were the fertile corn and hay fields still being farmed—a rarity in this highly developed area neighboring Manchester. The thought of losing these prime agricultural soils to development gave community members the “little kick” to get moving on the project, Couture said.

“This is agriculture’s last stand in Hooksett,” he said. “When people walk out here, they’ll be able to see some agriculture and have that connection to their food.”

The vision for the land includes new hiking trails that would connect to regional trail networks. The local Kiwanis Club has offered to help the conservation commission create and maintain the trails much as it did at the popular Heads Pond Trail previously. “For years, we wanted to link



*Above: An industrial past: From 1842 to 1930, brickyards churned out millions of bricks on the site of the newly conserved property in Hooksett. The Head & Son Brickyard put 100 men to work in its heyday, digging clay, hand-forming the bricks and baking them in a vast network of drying sheds and wood-fired kilns. Photo courtesy of the Hooksett Heritage Commission.*

*Left: A horned grebe swims in the Merrimack. Photo by Geoffrey Niswander.*

the N.H. Heritage Trail that goes north to south. Right now there are only a couple of places where it's not linked, and Hooksett is one of them. We would love to see that land become part of the Heritage Trail," said state Rep. Frank Kotowski, who serves on the Kiwanis Club's board of directors as well as on the town's planning board.

Someday, someone walking those trails or exploring the woods might come across evidence of the land's historic relevance: old, half-buried bricks. The land is the site of the once-bustling Head & Son Brickyard, where mainly immigrant workers harvested the clay soil along the river and baked it in massive networks of wood-burning kilns and drying sheds between roughly

1850 and 1930. Hooksett bricks built Manchester's Amoskeag Millyards and City Hall, and further built the Head family's wealth and influence. Natt Head was governor from 1879 to 1881, and his mansion (brick, of course) still stands above the newly conserved land on Merrimack Street that was settled by his ancestors in the 1700s.

"When you think of the town's development, first the mills, then the brick industry, and the immigrant population that came from Canada and put their roots down in Hooksett—it's where we came from and it's what built the town," said Kathie Northrup, chair of the Hooksett Heritage Commission.

Old photos of the brickyards show the downside of the early industry, too. Few trees can be seen along the river, where instead wooden structures stretch far and wide. In the decades since, trees have reclaimed the land that isn't still used for agriculture. Wildlife has returned to find a niche—wildlife that includes the recovering bald eagle, a species that depends in New Hampshire on rivers like the Merrimack that hospitably offer an open-water fishery all winter.

Bald eagles also depend on tall trees along the river to use for perching, roosting and nesting, and volunteer monitors have documented bald eagles roosting in white pines across the river from the newly conserved land. There may be reason to believe that a pair may actually nest nearby in the future, according to N.H. Audubon senior biologist Chris Martin. Martin has been working with state and federal counterparts for more than 25 years on recovery efforts that have grown the breeding population from a single pair in 1989 to 20 known breeding pairs today.

"We have seen steady use by a pair of adults in that area, suggesting we might see nesting in the future," Martin said. "It's very promising. It's a very good time to be conserving riverfront on the Merrimack." ♪

## STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE MERRIMACK RIVERFRONT PROJECT

The Merrimack Riverfront Project has engendered strong and broad support in recognition of the land's value for recreation, wildlife habitat and cultural heritage. More than \$300,000 has been raised to date to be combined with money from the Town of Hooksett's conservation fund for this project. Major donors include the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), and the Aquatic Resources Mitigation Program (ARM) administered by the state Dept. of Environmental Services (DES), the Hooksett Heritage Commission, The McIninch Foundation and the Samuel P. Hunt Foundation, as well as a major anonymous donor and other generous individuals.

"We're very grateful to all the donors who have made this possible, and we're glad to partner with Hooksett community members to help protect a great property, said Jane Difley, Forest Society president/forester. "The conservation easement we hold adds a permanent layer of protection for the property, ensuring that people will always be able to access it and enjoy it."

# Piece by Piece, Fremont’s Town Forest Has Grown into a Conserved Landscape

It all started with a leap of faith and a strong partnership

By Mike Speltz

We don’t want to look at the map of conserved lands and see little green measles. We want to see great green blobs that form landscapes. The problem is that, given our fragmented ownerships, we can’t be sure which little green measles will expand into great green blobs of conserved land. So, we have to take risks—justified risks.

Decades ago, the Forest Society took a risk and purchased land on the west side of the 800-acre Spruce Swamp in Fremont (the “swamp” is actually a fen, fed by groundwater, home to many uncommon species adapted to its calcium-poor habitat). The land purchased was a remarkable complex of wetlands holding water for the Spruce Swamp, separated by sinuous glacial gravel deposits—eskers—that sped more water into the wetlands. Thus, buying this land was a justifiable risk, even though at the time there were no abutting lands available.

Some years later the Town of Fremont, using the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, purchased the land from the Forest Society to establish the Fremont Town Forest. In 2006 the town worked with the Forest Society to purchase 318 acres plus a 30-acre conservation easement on the opposite, eastern side of the Spruce Swamp. They donated easements on both to the Forest Society. The deal was based on an option agreement funded by the town, private donors, and the Forest Society—another “justifiable risk” made good by voters at the Fremont Town Meeting.

Two years ago the Forest Society helped the town purchase an additional 86 acres that abutted the eastern portion of the Forest, and last year the next abutting parcel was conserved by the federal Wetlands Reserve Program. At this point, the blob was getting bigger, and the risks were getting smaller. Throughout this time, local trail wrights created one of the best maintained and marked trail networks in the state.

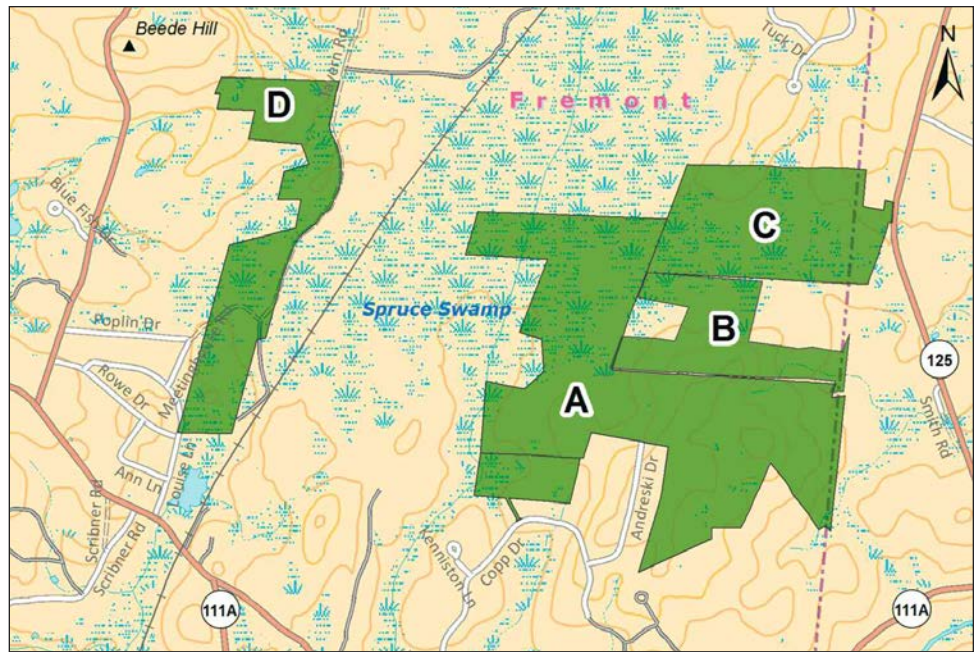
*The land purchased was a remarkable complex of wetlands holding water for the Spruce Swamp.*

And most recently the town has added the original western portion of the Town Forest, known as “Oak Ridge” to its easement held by the Forest Society, making the town and Forest Society joint stewards of nearly 500 acres. Since the swamp itself is held by Phillips Exeter Academy, we have created a 1,300-acre conserved landscape for the benefit of both uncommon and

common species—including Homo sapiens.

The risk we took in getting involved with the Spruce Swamp has been both justified and rewarded! ♪

*Mike Speltz, now retired, was the Forest Society land agent who worked on Fremont Town Forest projects for many years. He is still a big fan of fens.*



### Fremont Conservation Lands

- Parcel A Spruce Swamp, 2005
- Parcel B Addition to Spruce Swamp, 2012
- Parcel C NRCS-Wetland Reserve Program, 2012
- Parcel D Oak Ridge

*The areas in green show connected conservation land in Fremont that has expanded over the years to reach 1,300 acres. Map by Karen Rose.*

## Skiing Enthusiast Steps Forward to Protect Land and Trails

Having competed 14 times in the annual Birkebeiner 50 km cross-country ski event in Norway, octogenarian George Bates places a high value on great ski trails. Old woods roads around Young Mountain in Sandwich had provided a favorite glide for Bates and his wife Nancy for years, so when they heard that a 58-acre property hosting those trails was threatened by development, Bates decided to buy the parcel.

“It’s a neat trip we can take from our house on trails, and it’s a beautiful piece of property. But the primary reason to buy it was to make it possible to continue to ski on the property,” said Bates, who lives in Weston, Mass., but has a second home in Sandwich.

But the story doesn’t end there. The Bateses also donated a conservation easement on the land to the Forest Society, ensuring that the land will never again be vulnerable to development. What’s more, the easement keeps the land open to the public for pedestrian uses, so others may



*George Bates stops for a photo during a walk at the 58-acre property in Sandwich that he conserved through a conservation easement with the Forest Society. The land is adjacent to the White Mountain National Forest. Photo by Tom Howe.*

continue to enjoy the trails as well.

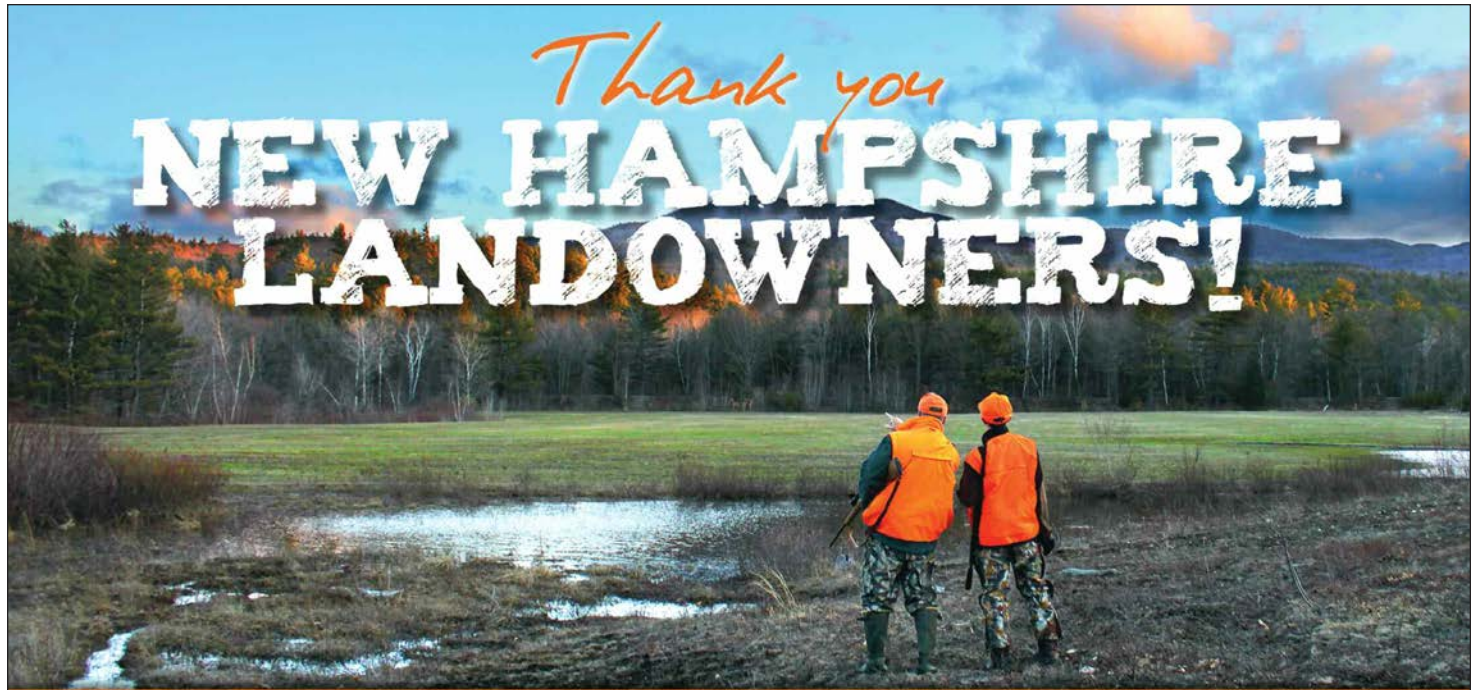
“Absolutely I want to keep them open to the public,” Bates said. “I like for people who are interested in doing these things to have the opportunity to enjoy the woods and the countryside, skiing and hiking.”

This is the fourth property the Bateses

have purchased and protected with conservation easements in the Sandwich area. The common theme? They’re all good places to ski, Bates said.

Bates’s passion for great recreation trails is felt at home in Weston, Mass., as well, where he has for decades been a mainstay of the Weston Forests and Trails Association.

The 58-acre property Bates has most recently conserved includes frontage on the Cold River, which supports native brook trout. The entire property is classified as Tier-1, or best in state, for wildlife habitat in the N.H. Fish and Game Dept.’s Wildlife Action Plan. It’s also adjacent to the White Mountain National Forest, where the Bateses’ treasured ski trail continues after leaving their property. ♪



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# Return to Nature at Wilkins-Campbell Forest

This pilot flew into action as a volunteer land steward

In 2012, the Forest Society's Land Management team faced an enormous task at the Wilkins-Campbell Forest in Deering.

The Forest Society had been leasing 11 of the forest's 269 acres on Deering Lake to a private school so it could continue running a summer kids' camp there, as it had before the Forest Society acquired the bulk of the acreage in 1999. But the school closed in 2010. The Forest Society was left with buildings and infrastructure that over time would become liabilities. The board of trustees directed the land management staff to remove the eight buildings and return the land to its natural state.

Meanwhile, Bob Macentee, an American Airlines pilot who lives in New Boston and has a cabin bordering the Wilkins-Campbell Forest, regularly walked the property and recognized the problems that come with shuttered buildings in an out-of-the-way location. Case in point: One day he arrived to find a group of local teens had broken into one of the buildings, helped themselves to several boats and had taken them out on the lake.

Macentee just as clearly saw how he could be part of the solution. "I said, the Forest Society needs to get rid of this camp, I'm here all the time, and the wheels started turning," he said.

If ever there was the right person in the right place at the right time, this was it. When not piloting airplanes, Macentee enjoys all aspects of construction. He has done extensive trail stewardship work for the town of New Boston and understands forest stewardship.

Perhaps most importantly for this particular challenge, however, Macentee is a guy with an aversion to sitting still.

"I'm a person that never stops. I'm not happy when I'm not working," he said.

So Macentee volunteered to become a



*Left: Volunteer land steward Bob Macentee and his dog Scout visit the clearing where some of the former camp buildings once stood at the Wilkins-Campbell Forest. Photo by Brenda Charpentier.*



*Right: Bob Macentee (middle) and sons Gavin (left) and Evan work on stripping the roof from one of the eight buildings that needed to be deconstructed at the Wilkins-Campbell Forest. Photo courtesy of Bob Macentee.*

land steward for the Wilkins-Campbell Forest and, in collaboration with Forest Society staff, accepted the Herculean task of deconstructing the camp.

From August through late October, Macentee's project list, too long to be detailed here, included dismantling the bathhouse, bunkhouses and dining hall, recycling what materials could be recycled, and hauling the rest away in dumpsters and dump trucks. He met with the utility companies to have the power pulled and gas removed. He found a local excavation contractor and worked with him to return the building sites to their natural state. He worked with many other volunteers and Forest Society staff to accomplish the enormous task of removing junk and old camp supplies.

Macentee is quick to point out that he had more much-appreciated help from his two sons, Evan and Gavin, his friends John Dupre and Russell St. Amand and Amand's two sons, Greg and Ben. Another neighbor and his kids from across the lake came over one day, talked for a while and ended up helping to demolish the old dock.

Razing buildings is always very staff-intensive and expensive, but this project promised to be particularly so, said Wendy Weisiger, the Forest Society's lead forester.

"This is one of the largest building removal projects we've faced, and it was certain to tie up staff time for several months. Bob took this job on as he does everything, full steam ahead! He kept staff informed and involved when he needed us, and otherwise took care of everything," Weisiger said.



Macentee is a great example of the kind of commitment and work ethic Forest Society land stewards show statewide, she added.

"I met with him on the property at the end of the project to remove the last of the junk and expected him to be excited that the job was complete. Instead, I was met with a bit of melancholy. Where would he put his energy next? I think he lasted a week before asking for a new assignment."

"For me it was a fun project," Macentee said. "You know in my work I either make a good landing or a bad landing and everyone forgets me. Here I can do something and it's lasting."

Today, visitors to the Wilkins-Campbell Forest will find the land in its natural state. The only evidence of its former use as a summer camp are woodland openings where the buildings once stood, openings that will soon fill in with saplings and shrubs to provide "young forest" wildlife habitat.

They'll also find Macentee's final touch, a new double-sided sign on the point of land that juts out into Deering Lake that tells visitors arriving by boat or on foot that they are on Forest Society land, which means that it's conserved and open to the public for responsible enjoyment. And they might even find Macentee himself, keeping an eye on things and greeting visitors.

"Having spent most of my life enjoying hiking, climbing, skiing, mountain biking and snow shoeing, I get a great deal of gratification doing work for an organization whose mission is the protection of forests," Macentee said. "For me it is a great way to give something back in return for all that I have enjoyed. When I walk through Wilkins-Campbell, now that the work is completed, I sometimes feel as if the forest quietly thanks me, and really that inspires me."

*The Wilkins-Campbell Forest in Deering can be best accessed by canoe or kayak from Deering Lake. You'll find car-top boat access off of Reservoir Road. There is currently no parking area for this reservation, so land accessibility is limited to local foot traffic.* Y

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# Collaboration Leads to Success in Newbury

By Beth McGuinn

East of Lake Sunapee in Newbury, there is an area rich in conserved land. Beginning at the lakeshore, the Fells, the Hay National Wildlife Refuge, the Forest Society's Hay Reservation and the Sunapee Ragged Kearsarge Greenway Corridor are adjacent to one another. A little ways away, N.H. Audubon's Stoney Brook Wildlife Sanctuary is protected with conservation easements held by the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust and the Forest Society.

Now, about that "little ways away...." Not so long ago, community members had an idea: What if we tried to fill in that missing piece of the puzzle and link all these conserved lands together?

The "missing piece" is a 144-acre property that runs along a mile of the SRK Greenway Corridor. It's located at the headwaters of both the Merrimack and Connecticut river watersheds, and the town conservation plan identifies an important wildlife corridor on the land.

The Newbury Conservation Commission and the Sunapee Hills Association, the local homeowners' association, approached the four conservation organizations already protecting land here to devise a way to conserve this land. The Stoney Brook Project, as it became known, seemed promising.

When we went into the field, we discovered brooks recently scoured by a heavy downpour, and a diverse forest of scattered large remnant trees—white pine, red oak, white spruce, and beech—along with a younger forest beneath. There was ice damage, but no stumps—the last harvest must have been at least 50 years ago. Maybe this had been a pasture—large low branches on many of the remnant trees were an indicator.

Cellar holes on the south end of the property would have been the homestead. Who could have survived farming this steep land? We saw lots of bear sign on the



*One of many headwater streams on the Stoney Brook Addition—some flow to the Merrimack River and others to the Connecticut. Photo courtesy Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust.*

beech trees and bear scat on the ground, wild turkeys in the trees and barred owls flying through the woodland. Songbirds sang, too, and the gurgling of rivulets of water flowing underground added to the symphony of sound. This was a special place—worth conserving!

All agreed that the land might be added to N.H. Audubon's Stoney Brook sanctuary, considering its shared 9/10 of a mile of boundary with the missing piece. Ausbon Sargent would hold the easement and lead the effort to conserve the property. After 19 months of fundraising and preparation, all the funding, the survey, the deeds and many other details were complete. Thanks to funding provided by the Conservation Commission, Sunapee Hills Association, Fields Pond Foundation, the State Conser-

vation Committee's Moose Plate grant program, Land Sunapee Protective Association, the SRK Greenway Coalition and dozens of private donors, we were able to purchase the land at a reduced price from landowners Lynne and Bob Bell.

In January of 2014 a jubilant group of staff and volunteers from these groups joined the Bells to sign and witness the documents to complete the conservation of the missing piece. Now 1,200 conserved acres reach from Lake Sunapee's eastern shore to the Newbury/Sutton town line.

Hard work and collaboration leads to success! ♪

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*Beth McGuinn is a land protection specialist with the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust. She is a former Forest Society staff member.*

# The Butternut: A Lament for the Tastiest Nut

By George F. Frame, CF

I've written several times in this column and elsewhere about change and how it upsets what we see as 'our' world. But there has been at least one significant change which, it seems to me, may not have been noticed by most. We are in a swivet about emerald ash borer and Asian long-horned beetle, and there are conferences scheduled on the next spruce budworm outbreak, and there are tomes being written on adapting to the changing climate and building resilience and resistance into the natural world, but whatever happened to our concern and outrage over the impacts of *Sirococcus clavigignenti-juglandacearum*?

Because of this little fungus, and a few tag-along friends, we no longer have the company of healthy, productive butternut trees (*Juglans cinerea*). The butternut canker is what we call the infection that began killing off the species sometime in the 1960s. The dying of the butternut has taken a long time. But there is no outrage, no quarantines, no front-page stories, and I wonder why. Maybe I just missed them. I know for many folks the rewards were never great enough to work that hard to find the fruit within the nut of the butternut, but for me there was no better tasting nut fruit, and it was worth every bang of the hammer or turn of the vice.

The butternut ranged from southeastern Canada down the Atlantic seaboard into north Georgia, west beyond the Mississippi River and north to Minnesota, and back again to the Northeast. It never held a position of dominance in most stands, occurring within the mix of hardwoods several at a time, but nearly all the old farmsteads had a few planted around both for the nuts in the fall and perhaps for some furniture later on.

Now I read that there are no more butternut trees in North or South Carolina, it is on the list of trees of "special concern" in

Kentucky, "exploitably vulnerable" in New York State, and "threatened" in Tennessee. With more than 90 percent of the butternut trees already dead and most of the others in trouble, we may be the last generation to see and know this beautiful and sometimes prodigious tree.

Anne Krantz, of the NH Big Tree Team, wrote in 2010 that more than 3,000 surviving butternut trees in New Hampshire had been checked for resistance to the fungal infection since 1996.



*The butternut is a member of the walnut family and is also called the white walnut. Its fruits are elongated, while the fruits of the black walnut are rounded.* Photo courtesy of Karren Wcisel/Treetopics.com.

Unbelievably, of those apparently resistant trees only eight appeared to have significant ability to thwart the fungus. Cuttings from those trees were grafted onto black walnut root stock at two seed orchards in the state. There were a few glimmers of hope as some grafts lasted from year to year, but now it seems the infection has struck them all. Research dollars are gone as bigger issues in forest health take the public stage and divert the few dollars available.

There is little good news for the butternut tree, but strange and wondrous things can happen in nature. We need only look

*A healthy butternut tree is a beauty, offering nuts and, when harvested, wood with attractive color and grain.*

Photo by iStockphoto.

at the continued advances related to the American chestnut or the American elm to see that a comeback is possible. Is there enough concern for a tree that lacks the stature of the elm or the value of the chestnut? Will the money come to rescue the butternut? Perhaps another state impacted as greatly as New Hampshire will find a way to keep this species in our hardwood mix. Perhaps, even now a small butternut in Georgia, Tennessee, or New York is thriving in the fungal rich air. For that we can only hope.

Why didn't we notice sooner? Was the demise too slow? Was it economics? Aesthetics? Were there not enough of them to affect our view of the forest? Is it so hard to grab our attention these days? Was it just too much work to get the fruit from the nut?

What else might we not be seeing? ♪

*George Frame is the Senior Director of Forestry at the Forest Society. He can be reached at [gframe@forestsociety.org](mailto:gframe@forestsociety.org).*



Clockwise from left: Bellwort, lady's slipper orchid, fern fiddleheads.

# The Other Foliage Season

Ephemeral leaves and flowers reward those who look closely

Story and photographs by Dave Anderson

**T**ree buds burst into tiny flowers. Gauzy maple and oak stamens cascade from the twiggy tree canopy. Miniature, tender leaves unfurl, trembling like emerging butterflies, and seem too frail to aspire to shade a forest floor.

The short, unsung “other foliage season” is here.

Don't blink—you'll miss it!

For a few heartbreakingly short days, hours it seems, New Hampshire hills are veiled in soft pastels: light yellow, lavender, pinks and pale green. The spring “leaf-out” season arrives annually on the heels of mud season, just as female blackflies begin to bite. Perhaps this time should become a new tourist season? We might give it some

quaint name—“Pollen time” or “The neck welt days” to make the most of it.

Lasting a little longer is the ephemeral wildflower season. Spring's first wildflowers and fuzzy fern fiddleheads poke through dry mats of autumn leaves pressed paper thin by the weight of the vanished snow pack. The wildflowers bloom and die-back quickly in full sun beneath leafless hardwoods. These beauties are an elegant “vernal nutrient dam” that lock-up important soil nutrients that would otherwise wash away with snowmelt and April showers. As the wildflowers die back in late May, they release mobile nutrients back to trees that soon shade the forest floor.

I recommend taking a walk during cool

early morning hours, before clouds of hungry blackflies descend as the day warms. Look along roadside stone walls in sandy, wet culverts. Get really close to best admire the elegant details of flowers, fern fiddleheads and tree leaves. The spring-green landscape swells like a symphony with each passing day.

A few of the more common flower species include edible purple-and-white, dog-toothed violets often found on lawns amid dandelions. In the woods, look for pink-striped, white flowers aptly named “spring beauties.” These members of the Purslane family grow on rich, moist hardwood sites under white ash and sugar maple. By May, Canada mayflower or wild



Emerging red maple leaves.

lily-of-the-valley forms a carpet even in shade while growing in acidic soil beneath conifers like pine, spruce and fir.

Other wildflowers tolerant of low pH soils include starflower, pink lady slippers and blue-bead lilies. Stone walls and damp field edges are preferred by the red-and-green striped spadix of Jack-in-the-pulpit. Open, sunny woodlands feature white trillium and red trillium, also called “wake Robin.” Red trillium is also called “stinking Benjamin” because its rancid scent is designed to mimic rotting meat to attract specific carrion flies as pollinators. A frail woodland beauty is “bellwort” or “wild oats,” which features hanging lemon-yellow blossoms.

Near wetlands, watch for bright neon yellow “marsh marigold” with waxy, dark green foliage growing in full sun even in standing water at wetland edges.

Even roadside ditches and culverts are good places to seek emerging wildflowers. One very early, muscular spring wildflower

is “Coltsfoot,” which favors hot, sunny roadside ditches choked with silt and winter road sand. The shape of its leaves (which emerge later) gives coltsfoot its common name.

Tree flowers seem modest and understated. Tender green beech, birch, sugar maple and ash leaves, and magenta red oak and red maple leaves flutter above the remains of the waxy covers that encased the buds since late last summer. Miniature bud scales litter the forest floor just like their spent, fallen leaves will next autumn.

The poet Robert Frost described the spring wildflower season in his poem, “Nothing Gold Can Stay”:

*“Nature’s first green is gold, Her hardest hue to hold.*

*Her early leaf’s a flower; but only so an hour...”* ♪

---

*Naturalist Dave Anderson is director of education and volunteers for The Forest Society. He can be reached via e-mail at [danderson@forestsociety.org](mailto:danderson@forestsociety.org).*



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# Kid-Friendly Mt. Major: a Magnet for Environmental Education

How can we teach the younger generation to care about land conservation? For the Forest Society, the answer has become as obvious as the yellow paint on the school buses pulling into and out of the Mt. Major parking lot.

Thanks to many generous donors, we and our partners are within \$200,000 of our fundraising goal of 1.8 million to purchase and protect two properties directly on Mt. Major and two more on nearby peaks. Once we own these parcels, we will become a co-host (along with the State of New Hampshire and private landowners) the many schools that bring students to Mt. Major for annual field trips. Informal surveys have tallied at least 23 schools regularly using the mountain—a situation that presents us with fantastic educational opportunities.

The Forest Society is working to develop pilot partnerships with two schools—Little Harbour Elementary in Portsmouth and Mt. Prospect High School in Alton—in the Everybody Hikes Mt. Major Outdoor Classroom Initiative. Both schools have expressed enthusiasm for working with us as a resource for more information and suggestions for activities revolving around Mt. Major’s cultural history, natural history and conservation status. Resources developed as part of these partnerships would ideally be shared with other schools and community groups.

This project will rely on the successful completion of the Everybody Hikes Mt. Major campaign, and we are so close. Please consider donating, or increasing a prior donation, to this effort, and join with us in educating the next generation about the value of land conservation!



Fourth graders, teachers and chaperones from Portsmouth’s Little Harbour Elementary School celebrate reaching the summit of Mt. Major during their annual field trip. Courtesy photo.

## FOURTH-GRADERS PUT ENTHUSIASM FOR NATURE LESSONS IN WRITING

When fourth graders in Amy Kovick’s class at Little Harbour Elementary School in Portsmouth were asked for ideas on improving the school’s annual field trip up Mt. Major, they produced a stack of well-written, thoughtful proposals.

Jack wants to learn about animals, trees and Lake Winnepesaukee. Charlie is interested in knowing more about the scenery and the trails. Sophie wonders about Mt. Major’s history.

The successful completion of the Everybody Hikes Mt. Major campaign will lay the foundation for the Forest Society to get involved in making these children’s wonderful ideas a reality. Here are more of the fourth-grader’s thoughts:

“No matter what, I always think a guide makes it better. You learn more, you get a better feel. I also think scavenger hunts are always fun, and they help you pay attention.” — *Jackson*

“If a guide or expert had taught us about the wildlife and plants, we would have learned more during the hike.” — *Caden*

“I think it was a lot of fun getting to hike and eat lunch at the top. But it would be better if we got to know what type of trees and animals lived on the mountain and to know when it was built and when it was open to people.” — *Haley*

“I absolutely adored our magnificent trip to Mount Major! I love how we had big green forests around us, and I loved the fresh smell of the leaves and the air!” — *Brady, who went on to write that he enjoyed learning stamina and self-determination but would have also liked to learn about animals, plants and trees.*

# Help Keep Grafton Pond a Peaceful Place for Loons and People

Anyone looking for a pristine pond to paddle or fish need look no further than Grafton Pond. It's got largely undeveloped shoreline, nesting loons and plenty of other wildlife, and a Forest Society property protecting 930 acres of surrounding land—six miles of shoreline.

But there's another reason Grafton Pond is such a great destination. Over the years, committed volunteers and staff have helped keep the land and water clean and have protected the nesting loons so well that the lake now supports three successful nesting pairs.

We desire to continue this stewardship and are asking for donations to the Grafton Pond Recreation Management Fund. This fund will pay for seasonal rangers to care for the pond and property during the busy summer season, when thousands of visitors come to enjoy this special place. It will also pay for supplies, trash removal and for maintaining a portable toilet near the boat ramp.

The rangers will care for the property and trails and reach out to visitors with information about preventing the spread of invasive aquatic weeds and how to respect



*Grafton Pond offers peaceful paddling, angling and wildlife watching.* Photo by Carrie Deegan.

loons and other wildlife. The presence of rangers has proven to be very effective at protecting the beauty and peace of this place while discouraging inappropriate

activities. Please help us continue this valuable service by contributing to the Grafton Pond Recreation Management Fund. Thank you! ♪

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**Thank you  
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Photo by Jeremy Barnaby/www.picturenh.com.

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*Members since 1990*

“**W**hen the first highway crossed my grandparents land I was four. When the interstate went through I was 13. In the face of “progress” many things fell by the wayside, like crystal clear springs, hay fields, horse pastures, and the best raspberry patch around. What didn’t fall away was the love of land.

Years later, when Wendy and I first thought about conserving our 55-acre piece of ‘photo scenic’ New Hampshire, we naturally turned to the Forest Society. It had been in the business of land protection for nearly 100 years at that time, and offered the greatest expertise of any land conservation organization around. What we like is that the Forest Society not only protects land but is holistic in its approach to land conservation. It does this by managing tens of thousands of working timber land, protecting some of the best habitat in the state, and advocating a positive balance between progress and preservation. When it comes to its “LEAF” model (Land protection, Education, Advocacy, Forestry), we can’t imagine a better organization in the state to uphold that mission.” ♪

**MEMBERS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!**

*Rick and Wendy are among the 10,000 members who helped the Forest Society protect more than one million acres in New Hampshire. To join them, use the envelope in this issue or contact Margaret Liszka at 603-224-9945.*