



NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Managing Forests for Today and Tomorrow

by Pete Ingraham

The 30-acre Ahl Memorial Forest in Kingston – donated to the Southeast Land Trust in 2006 – is a classic mix of pine, oak, and hemlock forest dotted with swamps and vernal pools. A few small ridges run through the otherwise flat property, probably created by retreating glaciers 12,000 years ago. Stone walls cross here and there – remnants of 19th century pastureland now reclaimed by the forest. It’s the sort of southeast New Hampshire woods you see everywhere... except for the paint. This past January, blue slashes, dots, and arrows on some trees (which will eventually fade) marked this as the Land Trust’s first timber harvest. This was one part of a comprehensive management strategy set by the Land Trust that will enhance wildlife habitat, promote forest health, and provide native and renewable timber to local markets while protecting wetlands and water quality.

If you’ve visited the Ahl Forest before, you’ll notice a difference on your next trip. Most of the old trail is still there, but some temporary skidder and harvester tracks were carefully laid out to facilitate the harvest. New sunny spots have appeared – openings that will benefit wildlife. Yet, all in all, this was a light harvest. Charlie Moreno of Moreno Forestry Associates was hired by the Land Trust to facilitate the timber sale and oversee forestry and logging operations at the site. He tells me that it was an “improvement cut”, with only about one in ten trees removed – conservative for a property like this one. The object of the game here was not to maximize short-term profits but to bring the forest into a more “natural” condition where, over time, the forest will start to look more like pre-European settlement woods. Moreno said, “The property was cleared probably in the

Special upcoming opportunity
to walk the Ahl Memorial Forest
with forester Charlie Moreno!
(See ‘Get Out & About’, page 2)

early 1700s. It was abandoned about 100 years ago, maybe in the early 1900s. There have been no major disturbances to the forest since then.” As a result, the forest is fairly even-aged giving it a strong man-made character despite its seemingly-natural appearance. The Land Trust’s goal here was to craft a forest where natural disturbance is replicated to some extent. This will diversify tree ages and enhance forest structure for wildlife.

Karin Rubin, the Land Trust’s Conservation Land Stewardship Manager, administered the harvest from the Land Trust’s side. “Our objective is to promote ecosystem function, while also growing a source of periodic income that will increase in value over time. For the current harvest, Charlie basically weeded,” she explained. As Moreno considered each



Forester Charlie Moreno marks each tree to be cut on the Ahl Memorial Forest in preparation for a harvest this past January.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PETE INGRAHAM.

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GET *Out & About*

The following programs are free and open to the public. Registration is required – please call Karen McCormack at 603.778.6088 or e-mail info@seltnh.org. Directions and additional details will be provided to registrants.

Second Annual Birding Walk at the Piscassic Greenway Saturday, May 8 ▪ 7-11a.m. ▪ Newfields

Join avid birdwatcher Patience Chamberlin and past President of NH Audubon’s Seacoast chapter Roger Stephenson for a morning of exploration. The 380-acre Piscassic Greenway and Cole Farm were conserved in 2006 by the Town of Newfields and Southeast Land Trust. Featuring hardwood and soft-wood forests, open fields, and extensive wetlands, the land is a haven for wildlife and an important stopover for migrating birds. This will be during peak migration, so we will observe breeding plumage and behaviors of migrants and residents!

Post-harvest Tour of Ahl Memorial Forest Saturday, June 12 ▪ 9-11a.m. ▪ Kingston

What does good forestry look like? Come see at this guided tour of our recently-harvested property! (See related article.) Consulting forester Charlie Moreno of Moreno Forestry Associates will highlight various management goals and practices, showcase results, and answer your questions.

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Trails as the Silent Companion: The Importance of Planning

by Mariah Keagy, Trails Supervisor, Appalachian Mountain Club

Close your eyes and think about your favorite part of your favorite trail...

For each of us, images may range from trails behind our houses to the far reaches of the world, from boggy boardwalks to high elevation trekking. Whether you are an alpine plant buff, a birdwatcher, an accomplished trekker, or whether you prefer to walk your dog on a natural surface, trails are a common factor. For many, our best trail experiences do not highlight the trail itself. The ideal path is a silent partner that allows us to move through and enjoy the natural setting that surrounds us. A well-designed trail is not noticed, but elegantly sits on the contours of the land, allowing us to enjoy everything else.

A poorly laid out trail does the exact opposite. Exposed roots and rocks provide unstable footing, as unchecked erosion battles for our attention. Inappropriate water crossings carry sediment to streams. Avoiding unsure footing and mud, we trample vegetation and widen the trail into a scar, damaging and bringing us away from the nature we’re there to experience. Trail users, land managers, waters, vegetation, and wildlife all feel the sting of the well-meaning but inexperienced trailbuilder.

A well-planned and designed trail may appear to have “just happened,” but that appearance belies a fair amount of scouting, design, layout, construction, and maintenance. Though such design isn’t rocket science, it is more than simply cutting trees. It involves careful and thoughtful planning long before

the construction phase. Some aspects can be taught, but sustainable layout and design takes experience. It begins with considering the project in relation to other property management goals, answering a multitude of questions, accounting for as many factors in design and function as possible.

What are the property’s natural resources and how are they best protected? Should recreational trails be present? Who are the users? How many users will there be in the future? Is there safe, adequate parking? What kind of experience do you want to provide? From the answers to these and other questions, a trail vision forms, followed by a plan, and finally with the creation of a sustainable trail or trail system using good practices. It is a process that is neither fast, nor simple. Harmonious design is critical to the full success of any trail, to avoid extensive, expensive, or unsightly trail issues and resource degradation in the future. So, do your planning – and you can keep the trail as the silent partner to your enjoyment of nature and movement.

Are you responsible for any trails?

Find helpful information in *The Complete Guide To Trail Building and Maintenance* by the AMC Trails Staff, and other publications (www.trailbuilders.org/resources/books1.html). Since good design is a tough art to learn from any book, experienced trail contractors are available. Come to our *upcoming free workshop* hosted by AMC (see ‘Get Out & About’). ■



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Spotlight on Wildlife: Black Racers

by *Brendan Clifford*

Often confused with northern water snakes and timber rattlesnakes, the racer is a threatened species at risk in southeastern New Hampshire. This glossy black snake is 30-60 inches in length, and generally prefers early successional habitats such as overgrown fields or shrublands. They can also be found along forest edges, rocky outcrops or human-disturbed sites (e.g., sand and gravel pits). However, their large home range requirements and high mobility limit their distribution in areas with high road densities or large developments. Therefore, the remaining unfragmented lands across the southeast likely have the highest potential suitability for the species in this region of the state.

This spring, the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG) began a project to monitor the habitat use of the northern black racer. Biologists will be using radio-telemetry to track individual snakes at

multiple sites and collect habitat data that will aid in future conservation planning for the species. Although the distribution of racers in New Hampshire is somewhat unclear, records exist that give a fairly good indication of the snake's occurrence across the southern parts of the state and as far north as the lakes region. The multi-year study will focus on monitoring habitat use throughout these different regions where habitat type and availability are likely to differ.

You can help by reporting any sightings of black racers, including historic or anecdotal reports, to NHFG via the Reptile and Amphibian Reporting Program at RAARP@wildlife.nh.gov. New reports, particularly in the southeast, will be instrumental in identifying future survey sites. Check the Reptile and Amphibian page at www.wildlife.state.nh.us to learn more about racers and other species of conservation concern in New Hampshire. ■

The slender northern black racer is a thrill to see, but look quickly, because as its name implies, it is a speedster.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRENDAN CLIFFORD, NH FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT



GET *Out & About*

Trail Planning & Assessment Workshop: Good Trails that Last

Friday, June 25 ■ 1-4p.m. ■ Newfields

Experienced professional trail managers from the Appalachian Mountain Club will introduce recreational trail issues and the importance of thorough planning. (See related article.) Ideal for anyone with responsibility for trails – particularly those accessible to the public – this workshop will walk you through the process of planning new and assessing existing trails.

Blueberry Picking Day for Members

Saturday, July 31 ■ 9a.m. start ■ Epping

Land trust member and conservation easement donor Isobel Parke has graciously agreed to host a member-only blueberry picking day at her farm in west Epping! Participants will pick blueberries and receive one pint each for free. Each additional pint picked will be at market price. You are welcome to bring a picnic and spend the day walking her land or nearby conservation properties. Space is limited so reserve your spot soon! (Participants must be current members of the Southeast Land Trust.)



The First 30 Years and the Next 30 Years

2010 marks the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Rockingham Land Trust, one of the parent organizations of the now Southeast Land Trust. It is amazing what has been achieved since that small band of Exeter citizens joined together to protect dwindling open spaces in the Exeter region. Today the Southeast Land Trust has protected more than 6,000 acres throughout southeastern New Hampshire and we continue at a pace that is faster than ever.

As we celebrate, we are focusing on the future, and planning a vision for land conservation and our organization for the next 30 years. By 2040, what will become of Rockingham County and greater southeastern New Hampshire? What role should we play when all the land that should be protected is *protected* and what does that mean for our work today? Who will support our mission and what will they expect from protected land? Over the next few issues of *This Land* we will share our thoughts on these questions and the implications for our work. We'd welcome your insights, questions, and ideas on these big questions. Feel free to e-mail us at info@seltnh.org. And thank you for your tremendous support!

Brian Hart
Executive Director

Member Cookout and Conservation Celebration

Saturday, June 5, 2010 ■ 10a.m. – 2p.m. ■ Tributary Farm, Epping

Join with your friends, neighbors, and other supporters of the Land Trust for our Member Cookout and Conservation Celebration! This year we will be in Epping on Isobel Parke's beautiful (and conserved!) Tributary Farm. Located near our Pawtuckaway River corridor conservation project, the 109-acre Tributary Farm was conserved by Isobel in 2007. Our day will celebrate

the special places conserved by the Southeast Land Trust, our plans for 2010, and include a reflection on the past 30 years and the next 30 years! **Guest speaker Jeffrey Bolster**, associate professor of history at the University of New Hampshire, will share his thoughts on what we can learn from the social and environmental history of the Piscataqua estuary as we work to conserve land within the region in which we live. Following a delicious barbeque served by the Board of the Land Trust, you are welcome to choose a field trip to visit nearby conservation lands. More details to come by mail shortly! The cost is \$10 per person and includes the barbeque. To reserve your spot, call Karen McCormack at 778.6088 or e-mail info@seltnh.org. ■



Whoops!

We apologize for mislabeling the Ruffed Grouse pictured in our Winter 2010 issue as an "American Woodcock." Thank you to Mr. Patterson, Charlie Bridges, and Davis Wells Finch and others for gently noting our oversight.

The Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), a NH Species of Concern, is a chicken-like year-round resident of New England that requires multiple habitats. Although often called a "partridge" this is a misnomer as it's unrelated to true partridges. Its populations are declining along with the large forest tracts and young forest-shrubland patches it requires. Virtually invisible due to its cryptic coloration, many people first encounter a grouse when it explodes from the forest floor in a flurry of wings. Listen for the male's courtship ritual, in which he stands on a log and beats his wings to produce a low-frequency drumming.

The American Woodcock (*Scolopax minorstands*), also a NH Species of concern, is a forest inhabitant belonging to the shorebird family. Requiring multiple habitat types, it feeds on the earthworms that comprise most of its diet in dense, shrubby forests with moist soils. In spring, look for the usually-secretive and well-camouflaged males performing dramatic dawn and dusk courtship displays at their field "singing grounds." ■



Ruffed Grouse. PHOTO COURTESY OF HUNTER BROWNLIE.



American Woodcock chick. PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN MCCORMACK.

Managing Forests for Today and Tomorrow, continued...

tree to mark for removal, he skillfully envisioned its impact on the forest well into the future. He primarily removed lower quality trees to make room for higher quality trees. By removing trees that have lower growth potential (and therefore less potential to increase in value), adjacent trees of higher wildlife and economic value will be able to take advantage of increased sunlight and soil nutrients due to reduced competition with their neighbors. This harvest also generated some modest income for the Land Trust to support land management for its properties.

There's more to a timber harvest than deciding what trees to cut. The trees left behind, and their health, are equally important. Greg Morse, his wife, Carol, and their two sons ran the logging operation and sold the wood to local buyers on behalf of the Land Trust. Morse has a reputation for taking great care in avoiding injury to the trees he leaves behind and preventing soil erosion. Fred Borman, Rockingham County Forester, commented that Morse "did a good job in terms of not damaging remaining trees. You can't avoid damaging some trees,

particularly along skid roads, but I saw very little damage when I was out there." Morse's team maneuvered boulders into place to protect valuable trees on the inside corners of skid tracks. He laid out temporary bridges on small streams – rather than fording – to protect stream banks. In felling trees he was very careful to minimize the impacts to standing trees, leaving healthy crowns to grow until the next harvest.

In his role as forester Moreno designated a no-cut buffer around each stream and wetland to reduce impacts to wetland function and wildlife, particularly vernal pool species like wood frogs and spotted salamanders. Part of the property is infested with invasive plants (non-native species that can push out native ones). By specifying areas not to harvest around these plants, Moreno avoided encouraging their spread.

So what happened to the felled wood once it left the lot? Part of the take was what you might expect: about 55,000 board feet – roughly enough to build five houses – went to nearby mills in Maine. The bulk of the wood – about 600 tons – was chipped and sent to the PSNH Northern Wood Power Project at Schiller Station in Portsmouth where it will provide enough energy to power the electrical needs of 175 homes for one year. The chip wood, in combination with the ten cords of firewood produced by the harvest, will offset about 1,300 barrels of oil. Mitigating climate change and producing local energy is another benefit of this project. An intact, healthy forest will continue to sequester carbon in trees, offsetting the carbon released from burning its wood for energy and reducing the need to burn fossil fuels. As Moreno put it, "Our forests produce energy that is native and renewable. We're pulling carbon out of the air, rather than out of the ground." ■

Trees cut from the Ahl Memorial Forest were sold to local mills in Maine for lumber and other wood products.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PETE INGRAHAM.



Windstorms & Salvage Harvests

by Phil Auger, UNH Cooperative Extension

On a landscape scale, windstorms that topple trees are generally minor disturbances that often improve wildlife habitat. However, humans are driven by a need for order, and consequently many react with urgency to wind damage in their forests. Unfortunately, what landowners encounter is that removing downed trees usually costs money rather than generating income, and harvest results can be unsatisfactory. Why? Usually too few trees are blown down to justify bringing in equipment, or the risk associated with untangling the downed trees is too high, or the trees aren't marketable. Careless harvests can damage soils and good trees. Consider contacting your County Extension Forester or a licensed forester to help assess the situation.

(See extension.unh.edu/Forestry/FORFWP.htm.)

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Summer House Furnishings supports Land Trust through Reusable Totes

Bags with Benefits runs May through July

Summer House Furnishings has chosen the Southeast Land Trust as the beneficiary of its "Bags with Benefits" community partnership throughout this May, June, and July. During those months, the Land Trust will receive \$10 of the \$20 purchase price of each Summer House Furnishings tote bag sold. When carrying one of these tote bags, you will be entitled to special monthly savings at Summer House. To kick off the partnership, during the month of May, Southeast Land Trust donors will receive 10% off their total purchase when they shop with their Summer House tote bag (excludes custom orders, jewelry, art, and sale items). For more information, contact Summer House at 319.1655 or the Southeast Land Trust at 778.6088.

Summer House Furnishings is located at 25 Sagamore Road in Rye (at Foye's Corner).



Land Trust board members Terry Coyle (left), Tom Chamberlin (center) and Annie de Cossy (right) show off the *Bags with Benefits* with Stephanie Saltonstall (second from left) and Andrea Checovich (second from right), owners of Summer House Furnishings.



Questions, Comments, Concerns?

To contact the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire, please call 603.778.6088 or e-mail info@seltnh.org.

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*Member Cookout and Conservation Celebration
planned for June 5 • Details on page 4*

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