

5 HIKES FINISHERS | MONSON'S ROCK-DATING DIG

Forest Notes

NEW HAMPSHIRE'S CONSERVATION MAGAZINE

The Essence of the Ammonoosuc

New Reservation Protects
Key Land and Water in Bethlehem

WINTER 2021

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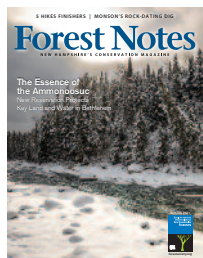
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Buoyed by the Forest Society's do-it-yourself hiking challenge, hundreds of hikers took to our reservations across the state in the fall of 2020 in search of some sanity and selfies.

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How a Manchester-based artist documented her hiking challenge experience using watercolors and canvas.



On our cover:

The Ammonoosuc River flows through the Forest Society's newly protected property in Bethlehem. For more details about the reservation, turn to page 4.

Photo: Ryan Smith

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A Most Meaningful Life

By now, many of you will have heard what we learned on January 26 of this year. Our long-time colleague, Tom Howe, died suddenly in an accident at age 64. We were unprepared to absorb the news, and it shook us.

Tom worked with determined joy for nearly 25 years on behalf of land conservation at the Forest Society, and for a decade before that with the Lakes Region Conservation Trust. He and his wife Sarah Thorne put an easement on their property in central New Hampshire through the Five Rivers Conservation Trust. Tom helped found the Gilmanton Land Trust. Nationally, he was a familiar voice on the means and matters of land protection, and a favorite sounding board among staff for his kindness and mentorship.

I turn to a few of the dozens of heartfelt comments and condolences we've received to express our dual sense of loss and appreciation for Tom and his legacy of conservation work:

"Tom was a special friend, not only to us personally but to the larger community of Gilmanton and the State of New Hampshire. His passion and dedication were infectious, and his relentless dedication to land conservation and environmental education led so many of us to go the extra mile to get a particular property protected. Gilmanton owes Tom a huge debt of gratitude for the many properties protected here, especially the Frisky Hill and Meetinghouse Road properties that help to make this such a very special place to live. We will miss him deeply. He loved his family, Sarah and his children, and all those who were privileged to know and work with him felt his love and energy in return."

– Richard de Seve and Sue Hale-de Seve, Gilmanton Conservation Commission

"I am so saddened by the horrible news of this tragic loss which, as someone who spends much time working in the woods, hits very close to home with me. I cannot imagine the deep loss felt by Sarah, his children, his family, and his colleagues spanning so many years of extraordinary dedication to New Hampshire and our natural heritage. Mabel and I send our condolences to the family and to our many friends at the Forest Society who share our grief in Tom's passing."

– Charlie Niebling, former Forest Society vice president of policy and land management

"Tom: Playful conservationist. Dedicated family man. Hard worker. Dogged detailer. Lover of life. Woodmeister. Passionate speaker. Born of campfire, forest, and trout. May you make your spirit whole again. Return homeward, leaving us with all of your gifts! We shall miss you!"

– Rick Van de Poll, wetland scientist

Among our Forest Society community today are landowners, partners, volunteers, members, and staff inspired by Tom who all carry forward his knowledge in their conservation work. With the Forest Society, Tom was involved in 158 land protection projects that protected some 33,000 acres. His legacy lives on in every one of those acres, including river and stream frontage, wildlife habitat, working forest, and farmland.

None of us are guaranteed a set amount of time on this Earth. But I believe that the time we spend caring for Her brings meaning to whatever our allotment may be. By that measure, Tom Howe led a most meaningful life.

Jack Savage is the president of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. He can be reached by email at jsavage@forestsociety.org.



Tom Howe



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"This was neat to get in the mail. A few months ago I volunteered to be a land steward for the @forestsociety and went through a little training. Now I'm in charge of watching over the Jones Forest in Milton. This makes my little heart happy for so many reasons and gives me even more drive to finish up my degree and get into the environmental field doing what I love... I wanted to become a volunteer steward to learn more about the land around me and be able to help protect it and pass my knowledge on to others."

– Cheyanne Pelletier (@nh_warpony)

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Protecting Bethlehem's Wildlife and Waters

By Kelly Whalen Cioe

Landowners Dick and Nancy Gould have generously sold 273 acres along 1.8 miles of the Ammonoosuc River to the Forest Society at a price of only one-third of the land's full value, enabling the permanent conservation of the property. The Ammonoosuc, which means "small narrow fishing place" in Abenaki, is one of the largest rivers in the northern White Mountains, originating in Lakes of the Clouds on Mount Washington's western slope and flowing westward to meet the Connecticut River in Woodsville. With scenic vistas and key cold-water fisheries in its upper reaches, the Ammonoosuc River is home to wild brook trout, as well as rainbows and browns.

Dick Gould, an avid fly fisherman, is keen about conserving the land to protect wildlife habitat, ensure clean water, and provide more angler access to the river.

The new reservation, called the Ammonoosuc River Forest, consists of two sections: 80 acres on the north side of the river, abutting Route 302, and 193 acres on the south side of the river, abutting the White Mountain National Forest. The upstream end of this forested property starts at the Carroll-Bethlehem town line, just upstream of the New Hampshire Fish and Game angler access parking area on Route 302, about two miles west of Twin Mountain. The property runs downstream from there for 1.8 miles, with frontage on both sides of the river for 1.1 miles of that distance.

The land includes an established snowmobile trail ("Twin Mountain Connector") running through the property's southern section and then into the White Mountains. Many kayakers and whitewater canoeists delight in this stretch of fast water each spring. Great views of the Presidential and Franconia ranges are visible from trails within the property, and also from Route 302, where over a mile of undeveloped frontage provides a scenic buffer along this



Among the many projects former senior director of land conservation Tom Howe successfully shepherded to completion is the Ammonoosuc River Forest in Bethlehem, the Forest Society's most recently protected forest reservation.

designated New Hampshire Scenic Byway. This project protects drinking water for nearby homeowners with on-site wells, thanks to the significant sand and gravel aquifer underlying the property. It also protects historic features of the old Boston & Maine Railroad bed, whose culverts are made of massive, hand-cut granite beams.

To improve fishing access to the Ammonoosuc River, the Forest Society plans to construct an additional parking area off of Route 302, with a short trail down to the old railbed that closely parallels the river. The southerly portion of the property is accessible via town roads off of Route 3, and will have three-season parking that leads to extensive wood roads and trails. This section of the property also borders good fishing water and it provides superb habitat for upland game, deer, and moose.

"In addition to the Goulds' generous sale price, many organizations and individuals came together to complete the fundraising effort," said Tom Howe who,

as senior director of land conservation for the Forest Society, managed the \$565,000 fundraising campaign. Grant funding for the project included \$300,000 from the NH Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), \$130,000 from the NH Fish & Game Department's Fisheries Habitat Account, \$46,200 from the NH Charitable Foundation's Upper Connecticut River Mitigation & Enhancement Fund, and \$24,000 from "Moose Plate" funds provided by the NH State Conservation Committee.

Trout Unlimited (TU) and its members played a key role by providing more than \$60,000 in direct support. A strong early commitment by TU's Ammonoosuc Chapter and its members set an example that inspired the Pemigewasset, Saco Valley, Great Bay, and Basil Woods (Concord) chapters and their members to contribute to the project. Farther afield, contributions from the Boston and Nor'East Chapters reinforced the importance of this fishery

as a recreational resource beyond our state's borders.

And at the national scale, this project was one of the first recipients of a grant from TU's recently created Coldwater Land Conservancy Fund, designed to foster partnerships with land trusts in the conservation of key cold-water fishery habitat. To qualify for the \$5,000 national grant, the Ammonoosuc Chapter had to match it dollar-for-dollar with contributions from its own members. An anonymous donor further elevated the incentive for local TU members to give by offering an additional \$5,000 if they could reach their goal, which they did. The project was a collaboration from start to finish, resulting in the acquisition of the Forest Society's 191st forest reservation. ♪

Kelly Whalen Cioe is the communications director for the Forest Society.



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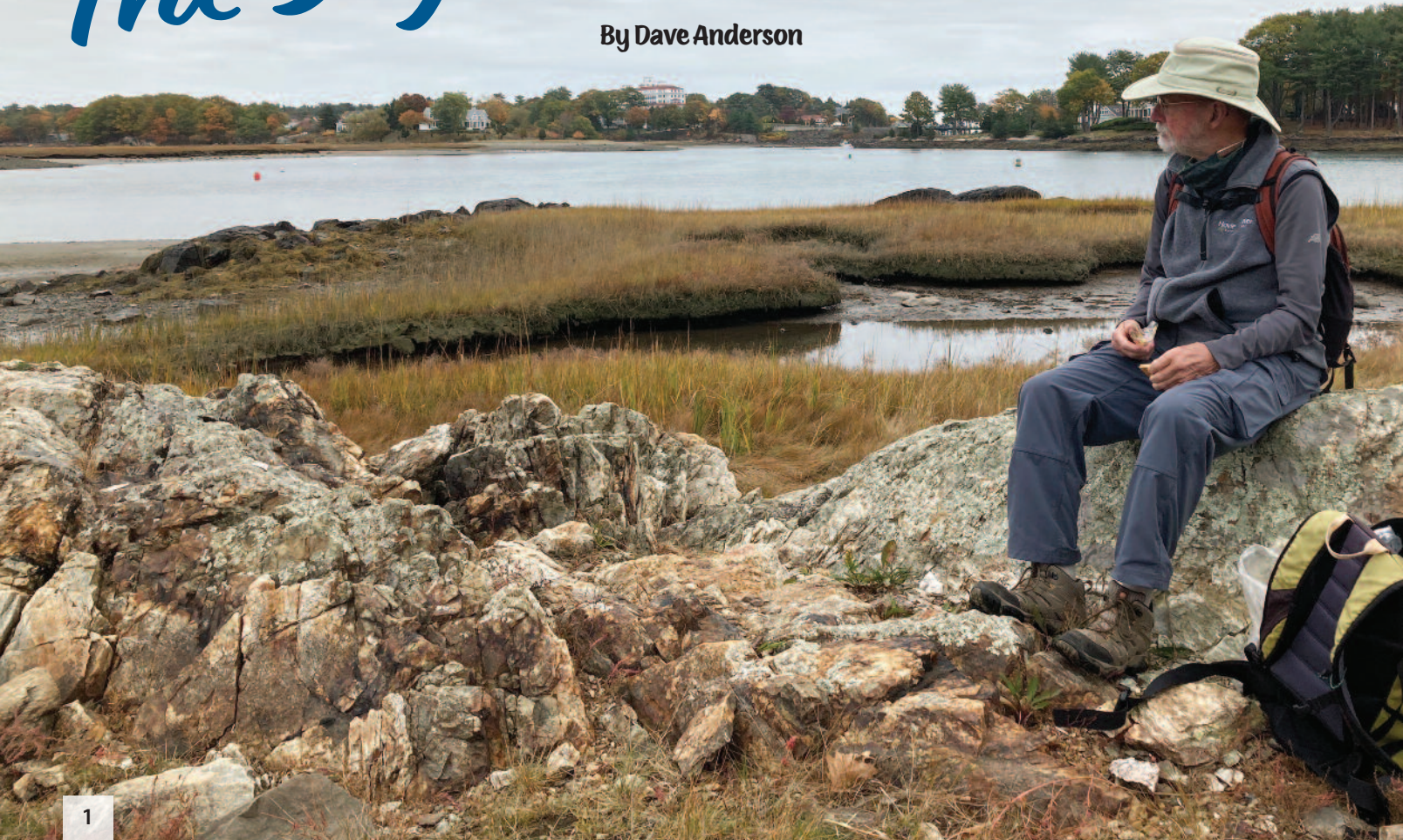
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The 5 Hikes Challenge

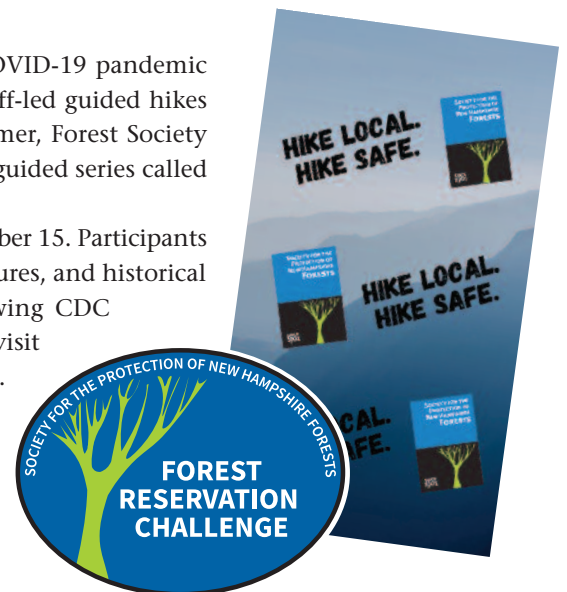
By Dave Anderson



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Necessity proved once again to be the mother of invention when the COVID-19 pandemic threw a wrench into the Forest Society's plans to offer its traditional staff-led guided hikes series at scenic destinations across the state in fall 2020. Over the summer, Forest Society education and outreach staff hatched a conceptual plan for a new do-it-yourself guided series called The Five Hikes Challenge (5HC).

The challenge kicked off on Saturday, August 29 and ended on Saturday, November 15. Participants received new paper trail maps with hiking tips, property-specific interpretive features, and historical notes for context. The maps also included tips on how to hike safely following CDC guidelines. To complete the challenge, participants had to pick 5 reservations to visit from a list of 26 recommended properties and take and submit a photo from each. Finishers received embroidered Forest Reservation Challenge patches, matching stickers, and a buff emblazoned with the Forest Society logo and the "Hike Local/Hike Safe" theme (pictured at right). The neckwear, now a collector's item, proved to be a popular incentive for people to register, but the greatest incentive turned out to be a universal desire for healthy outdoor exercise at new locations.





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1. "The challenge took us to some properties we had never visited before, and some close to home!" – Anna Ludders

2. "Sharing the roots and beauties of mother nature with my daughter so she can conserve and preserve for the future generations to come." – Chandra Shekar

3. "Ta-da! Challenge completed!" – Tammy Ditman

4. "I had just reached the summit area of Gap Mountain after a pleasant climb through the woods. I looked around and saw the summit of Mount Monadnock amidst the autumn foliage." – Bill Frantz

5. "We had a great time doing [the hikes]! Thanks for proposing this challenge and for all the great work you do!" – Cheryl Wolff

6. "During this weird hiking season, I took on a couple of challenges. One was the 5 Hikes Challenge which I made more of a challenge by aiming to hike reservations I have not visited before. Another was a personal challenge: to learn fern identification. Polypodium (pictured) is one fern I have down pat, using many identifying characteristics including its wonderful reproductive sori." – Kate Wilcox



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Welcome and Congratulations!

The staff's effort to create the 5HC was rewarded with 376 unique registrations on behalf of 722 individual hikers. Event registrar Tina Ripley mailed paper trail maps and buffs to registrants. Of those 376 registrations, 151 (40 percent) were existing Forest Society members and 225 (60 percent) were new to the Forest Society. It has been gratifying to welcome 182 of those hikers as new Forest Society members. Another impressive statistic? Of the 722 hikers, a total of 343 completed at least 5 hikes for a 47.5 percent success rate.

Responses to the post-hike surveys were also positive. Ninety percent of participants said they plan to return to one or more of the 5HC destinations they explored and 99 percent thought it was very important to protect forests like those they visited. The Forest Society is grateful for the opportunity to learn an entirely new approach to sharing trails on our conservation properties with a wider audience.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ANNA LUDDERS; CHANDRA SHEKAR; LINDA LAFLAMME; BILL FRANTZ; CHERYL WOLFF; KATE WILCOX



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- 1. "The site of the former Burrows Farm at Moose Mountains Reservation." – George DeWolf
- 2. "I loved finding new places to explore ... [and] I am looking forward to doing many more of the hikes!" – Nena Melvin
- 3. "Strolling down an old road through tall pines at Heald Tract." – Christopher Cameron
- 4. "My husband Tony and I were excited to begin exploring a new reservation that is a little beyond our usual stomping grounds. We weren't disappointed. Thanks to this challenge we were made aware of this beautiful hike." – Annette Immorlica
- 5. "On a beautiful fall day, my family picnicked and enjoyed the 360-degree view atop High Five Reservation's Wilson Hill." – Thomas Algozzine
- 6. "My granddaughter Louisa, Icelandic Sheepdog Eirie, and I check out the 200-year-old pine tree in Bretzfelder Park." – Susan Stepp
- 7. "This was taken on Hedgehog Ridge in Deering, N.H., in early September. My dog Maddie and I were so happy to be on a beautiful ridge we had never visited before." – Jana Howe
- 8. "This photo is from our Madame Sherri Forest hike, which ended up being a beautiful fall day. Initially it was a little crowded around the castle ruins, but once we got on trail, we were spread out." – Scott Casper



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(THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) GEORGE DEWOLF; NENA MELVIN; SUSAN STEPP; JANA HOWE; SCOTT CASPER; CHRISTOPHER CAMERON; NIMA HAGHPANAH; HEATHER ALGOZZINE; (OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) AMY MARQUIS; DEVON RIVERA; ROLAND BERUBE X2; KATHY SULLIVAN



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9. "Our first hike of the challenge was on a sunny, brisk Halloween afternoon (yes, we were in costumes) at the Merrimack River Education and Conservation Area in Concord. Our poodles, Lorelei and Sebastian, happily joined us on each hike." – Amy Marquis

10. "Devon Rivera and his hiking companions were among the brave few 5 Hikes registrants who tackled Andrew Brook Forest, a strenuous climb to Lake Solitude on the eastern slope of Mount Sunapee. Here, the group is pictured at Hay Reservation in Newbury." – Anna Berry, Forest Society digital outreach manager

11. "This is a photo from our first hike at High Five Reservation. We have since hiked it again at sunset. This was also our first selfie using an Apple Watch to remotely snap the photo! We have wonderful discussions, and sometime tech lessons, during our hikes!" – Kathy Sullivan

12. "We enjoyed the challenge so much that we decided to do a sixth hike to enjoy the views from both Phoebes Nable and Beauty Ledge in the Moose Mountains Reservation!" – Roland Berube

13. "On our first hike of the challenge, we were rewarded with this view less than a mile up the Hedgehog Ridge Trail. This was just the first of many views along that trail." – Roland Berube



12

What's Next?

It's safe to say that even post-COVID, our staff will plan to continue to offer variations of the self-guided, do-it-yourself adventures. We've begun to talk about a regional version or stratifying hikes by difficulty to appeal to a wide range of interests. We are also thinking about creating challenges that include waterfronts, open summit views, or special destinations with interesting historical features and unique stories. Please stay tuned! ♪



13



Blue Panorama | Watercolor | 6" x 12"

This painting was done after my first hike at the Morse Preserve. I had never seen Alton Bay from this vantage point. It was a spectacular early fall day. The distinct cloud patterns added to the drama. The scene is the second of two paintings completed from my first introduction to Morse. For this one, I decided to use a limited palette to emphasize the abstract patterns of the rocky ground and sky above. The focal point is dead center, a risky compositional choice, intended to reflect the sublime nature of the majestic panorama.

The Five Hikes Challenge, Told in Brushstrokes

By Brenna Woodman

How did your relationship with nature change in 2020? During a time when the future has been unpredictable and accessibility to familiar people and places has been limited, there does seem to be one thing that many people have gained: a fresh connection to their local forests.

Some of these connections were aided by the Forest Society's Five Hikes Challenge, which saw more than 300 participants explore more than 30 Forest Society properties across the state in fall 2020. The program captured the attention of those seeking a much-needed outlet to decompress and reset in nature. Some participants took the challenge to another level in their own unique ways, from doing 31 hikes in 31 days, for example, or, in the case of artist Claudia Michael, painting each property she visited to capture her experience.

Forest Notes chatted with Claudia to learn more about her recent endeavor and evolving bond with New Hampshire forests.

Pointing the Way | Watercolor | 15" x 11"

New Hampshire forests present a visual feast of textures, colors, and shapes. In this painting I was focusing on the pattern of the bark, on the foreground tree. Tree bark exhibits a variety of colors that our eyes often dismiss as brown or gray. Upon closer examination and the effects of light, one can see warm and cool colors. This particular tree was standing like a sentinel with gesturing arms, revealing an open view.



What are your ties to New Hampshire?

I am both a lifelong New Hampshire resident and painter. I was born in New Hampshire and live in Manchester. While I am a retired art teacher from public schools, I continue to keep busy and serve as a consultant and an adjunct art professor at Granite State College and the New Hampshire Institute of Art.

When did you start painting?

I remember drawing at five years old and practicing on paint-by-number sets in elementary school; I took my first art lessons in high school. When I began painting regularly soon thereafter my compositions were in oils, but I have worked primarily with watercolors for the last 30 years. Over time, I preferred to stay away from the toxicity within oils, and I really enjoy the speed and spontaneity that watercolors provide in expressing different experiences and emotions.

Had you participated in a 5 Hikes program previously?

This was my third time participating in the Hikes Challenge. For the first two years, I would venture to properties with friends and really enjoyed the educational component that came along with these visits. There were often people present on the properties to explain the various fungi and vernal pools that existed on the land and how they contributed to the overall lifecycle of the surrounding environment.

Although I enjoyed visiting new properties with my friends, I thought I would take the opportunity this year to incorporate a creative element while I experienced these properties in peaceful solitude and could gain newfound perspectives.

As you did this challenge and paintings in tandem, did you learn something new about yourself and your connection to nature?

Incorporating my artwork within this challenge was a natural progression for me in a lot of ways. For the last twenty years, I have done mostly plein-air painting (leaving the four walls of a workspace behind and painting outdoors) to capture landscapes as authentically as possible and get assorted views and interpretations. I get excited by focusing on a themed project, and this challenge allowed for me to really run with it and see what visions came forth.

With that said, even after all these years of crafting landscape watercolors, I continue to gain new appreciation and understanding of natural features. I have always enjoyed capturing different interpretations of light and showcasing how sunlight evokes distinct imagery and atmosphere onto scenes. Recently I have also taken more photos during my visits which I will later revisit to further inspire my compositions and illustrate how light hits in new ways.

In a time where we are more “distanced” than usual, this experience heightened my connection to nature and validated the importance of being present within a practice, whether it’s



Under Construction | Watercolor | 11" x 15"

Along the trail were many fallen birches. My attention was captured by the sunlight filtering through the trees. The white birches provided a contrast to the autumn greens and golds the forest held that day. Walking through the woods brings an awareness of life cycles, visible growth, decay, and regeneration. There is a beautiful order to the symbiotic relationship of the organisms that make up the forest.

painting or hiking or just sitting peacefully in a field, and never taking for granted the ability to have these moments of tranquility on protected land.

What Forest Society property did you have the strongest connection with and why?

I was very drawn to the Morse Preserve. In addition to emphasizing sunlight in my artwork, I really enjoy having water views as an added element to work with and the Alton Bay viewpoints really resonated with me (and inspired several different compositions).

What property do you want to paint next?

I can genuinely say I have enjoyed every single Forest Society property I have visited so far. I find that my preferences change and depend on my mood, but that is the beauty of having this array of land accessible to us all. I do not have a defined list of what property to visit next, but I often reference my latest *Forest Notes* issue and other online materials to gain new inspiration. I am excited to build on the journey and see how I can continue to incorporate creative pursuits to remain motivated, avoid feeling isolated this winter season, and learn more about myself in the process.

Prior to this latest hiking challenge, I also officially became a Forest Society member to take full advantage of their resources and keep a better pulse on their latest activism. I am a huge supporter of their ongoing advocacy work, and hope that this past year has encouraged more New Hampshire residents to pay attention to environmental preservation on the local level. ♪

Brenna Woodman is an avid environmental enthusiast and supporter of the Forest Society. She splits her time between the Seacoast and the White Mountains, where you can often find her (and usually her old rescue dog) at Creek Farm or Bretzfelder Park.

Digging and Dating

Study aims to date stone structures at Monson Center

By Carrie Deegan

On a drizzly November morning at the Forest Society's Monson Center in Milford, N.H., a group of archaeologists and volunteers from the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR) and the New England Antiquities Research Association (NEARA) have erected a dome tent overlaid with several tarps above one of the property's many historic cellar holes. The scientists and researchers, led by New Hampshire State Archaeologist Mark Doperalski, aren't searching for artifacts left by settlers during Monson's short life as New Hampshire's first inland colonial settlement. The tent and tarps aren't even for protecting their investigation from the weather. Rather, the group is testing a method of archaeological dating called optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dating, which could help archaeologists and historians across New England determine the age of man-made stone structures.

Developed in the 1980s, OSL dating has typically been used in the Northeast to age layers of geologic sediment, not date the construction timeframe of stone structures. The method exploits the fact that minerals, such as quartz and feldspar (the main components in granite), when buried, absorb and accumulate natural radiation that exists in the sediment. The longer they are buried, the more ionizing radiation accumulates within the crystals. When the rocks are exposed to light, the stored energy is released into the atmosphere in a matter of seconds.

OSL dating works when buried rocks or sediment samples are collected in complete darkness and brought to a laboratory where they are exposed to blue-green light. Upon exposure, the energy released by the sample is captured and measured using specialized equipment. The larger



Top: New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources archaeologists Mark Doperalski and Tanya Krakcik begin excavation near the Nevins foundation.

Bottom: Tarps are used to cover and block light from entering a foundation during OSL sampling at Monson Village.

the signal, the greater the time that sample has been buried.

In the case of Monson Center, there is considerable confidence that all of the structures in this settlement were constructed between 1737 and 1770, when the village was mysteriously abandoned.

Substantial historical research has been conducted on each of the former homesteads, as well as their occupants. The cellar hole that Mark Doperalski's team is working on, for example, was constructed by Thomas Nevins Jr., who was born in 1711 on a ship heading to the New World from



Ge archaeologist Suanna Crowley documents the soils at Monson Village.

Northern Ireland. He married in 1745 and had eight children born at Monson Center between 1746 and 1761.

“The fact that we know so much about Monson,” Doperalski explains, “makes the site a perfect place to test the accuracy of OSL dating for this application.” In essence, Monson Center is the control in this experiment to determine whether OSL dating could be used locally to date structures of unknown origin and timeframe.

If you’ve spent any time in the woods in New England, you know that stone structures are often found in the forest. Cellar holes, stone walls, and old wells are abundant, but so are seemingly random rock piles or cairns.

“Some of these piles can be as large as a room,” says Donna Thompson, project coordinator for NEARA, the organization funding the OSL dating study. Other rock piles are much smaller, but regardless of size, many are of unknown origin. We understand from oral histories that indigenous people living in what is now New England may have built cairns to commemorate significant events or individuals. It is very difficult to tell, however, whether a discovered cairn is of indigenous origin or the result of a colonial settler clearing fields for cultivation.

As a part of this OSL research project, rock and soil samples were also taken from

two stone structures at Bear Brook State Park in Allentown, N.H. “There are stone piles at Bear Brook that are six feet high, and some are elaborately constructed with larger stone on the exterior and smaller stones inside,” Thompson says. It’s hard to imagine a colonial farmer bothering to engineer such a complex formation, but, as she points out, that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen.

At Monson Center, Doperalski and fellow NHDHR archaeologist Dave Trubey excavate a stone under the tarp tent from the bottom of what would likely have been the chimney of Thomas Nevins’s home. Safety protocols for COVID-19 make their effort more challenging, with social distancing and mandatory mask requirements, but everyone is making do. To see in the complete darkness, the researchers use red-light headlamps, which do not trigger the release of electrons in the newly excavated granite.

After what seems like a long time, Doperalski emerges from the tent with two parcels about the size of cracker boxes, well wrapped in aluminum foil and then black plastic. It can be tricky to secure

samples that have been undisturbed since construction, but Doperalski is confident these samples had not been disturbed since the Nevins home was built because of the way the stones were deliberately fitted together and still oriented horizontally. The two samples will be sent to two different laboratories, one in Washington State and one in Colorado, for OSL analysis. The duplication is an additional effort to validate results and rule out processing errors. Scientific rigor meets Yankee conservatism at its best. “The best case scenario is that both labs return similar results for each of the Monson and Bear Brook samples, and that the age of the Monson samples is within the known range of possibility for the settlement,” Donna Thompson explains. “That would indicate that OSL dating of stone structures may be a useful tool for our community.” Connecting archaeologists with more and better tools is definitely the end goal from NEARA’s perspective.

Unfortunately, the research team won’t know the full picture for more than a year. After the samples are analyzed, the laboratory results will need to be adjusted for the amount of local radiation in New Hampshire’s soils. This data will take a dosimeter, a device used for measuring radiation, about 11 months to collect at each site. It’s a long wait, but archaeologists are patient people, conditioned to thinking in centuries instead of decades or years. “In the end,” Doperalski says, “it doesn’t matter whether these historical structures have been here for a couple hundred years or a couple thousand. Either way, it’s still important to preserve them.”

Carrie Deegan is community engagement and volunteers director for the Forest Society.

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No matter if you’re on foot, snowshoes, or cross-country skis, Monson Center is a beautiful destination to explore in winter. Plan your next visit at forestsociety.org/monsoncenter.



From left: Bees construct honeycomb in the empty space of one of Eric De King's beehives. Eric checks on a colony of bees in his apiary in late fall.

From Agriculture to Apiculture

Managing land that benefits bees and other pollinators

Story and photos by Emily Landry

As a child, Eric De King remembers watching a beekeeper dressed in a full bee suit remove a swarm of honeybees that had ended up in his family's yard. The beekeeper's calm demeanor was intriguing given the situation. Fast forward to today, and Eric's fascination with beekeeping is still going strong. Eric began beekeeping in 2013 when his family moved from Massachusetts to Warner, N.H. In 2017, Eric moved to another home in Warner, one with more land, where he built a larger apiary.

The De Kings purchased the property from the family of late poet Maxine Kumin and her husband Victor, who had donated a conservation easement on their land to the Forest Society in 1995. Located on a dead-end road, the property consists of an eighteenth-century house, some old fields and agricultural structures, a small man-made pond, and 108-acres of conserved forestland. The house was a little older and the parcel of land a little larger than the De Kings had envisioned; but as fate would have it, it was perfect for their

family and a great location for the apiary.

Eric's main land management goal is to sustain habitat that supports honeybees. One may think that creating this sort of habitat is as simple as planting a few flowers, but there is much more to it than that. Creating an effective and efficient honeybee habitat involves a lot of knowledge about bees and plants. As a self-taught beekeeper, Eric gleaned most of his knowledge from books, YouTube videos, and local beekeepers, including the Kearsarge Beekeepers Association. He's also relied on the advice of a forester. "[For me, a forester] knows the importance of creating honeybee and other pollinator habitat and, as a result, we've incorporated a variety of trees and shrubs that support those goals into our forestry management plan," Eric says.

Honeybees require pollen and nectar to live. Most plants produce pollen, but nectar is only produced by species that blossom. Blossoms have evolved to attract pollinators, such as bees, with their sweet nectar. Bees fly within a 2.5-mile radius

from their hive traveling from blossom to blossom collecting nectar and pollen and consequently pollinating many of the plants they visit. Back in the hive, bees regurgitate the nectar from their honey stomach into uncapped honeycomb cells. By beating their wings, bees circulate air through the hive, evaporating excessive water from the nectar and transforming it into the sugary substance we know as honey, which provides food for the hive. When beekeepers harvest honey, they are mindful to leave enough behind for the colony to consume over the winter. During the warmer months, pollen supplements a bee's nectar diet and provides much-needed protein for them and their brood. A plentiful supply of pollen ensures the queen bee will lay an abundance of eggs to populate the hive.

In New Hampshire, bees are typically most active from May to October when the temperature is consistently over 50 degrees Fahrenheit. This is the time when they forage and produce honey. Knowing which plant species produce nectar and



From left: Eric prepares a bee smoker, a device he uses to calm bees so he can work on his hives. The final product: The author holds a jar of Eric's honey made by bees that he raises on his property in Warner.

pollen at certain times of the year is very important in planning bee habitat. Eric and his forester strategically manage his forestland to this end by selecting trees and planning to plant trees that blossom throughout the spring and summer, such as maple, dogwood, and willow trees. Bees also collect resin from non-blossoming trees, including pine trees, to make propolis, which they use to glue the hive together. Eric also manages for the anticipated effects of climate change by planting trees that thrive in the mid-Atlantic's warmer climates. He believes that if the climate continues to warm as projected, he'll be ahead of the game with a more diverse and resilient forest. Eric's land also consists of fields, once used to graze horses the Kumins owned. These fields are now being transformed into a pollinator oasis. He is removing the invasive species, which can be common in old fields, and encouraging the growth of wildflowers such as asters, bee-balm, milkweed, joe-pye, and goldenrods. Other fields are housing the blossoming hardwood saplings he's growing, which will eventually be transplanted around the property. The diversity of plants Eric is managing for on his property will provide sources of pollen and nectar for bees and other pollinators from spring through fall.

This type of management also creates a diverse habitat for other wildlife. The seeds

dropped by the wildflowers will provide forage for many different small animals which in turn are a food source for larger animals, including owls and fox. The meadows and fields are habitat for ground dwelling birds and insects as well.

Even with all this thoughtful land management, sometimes beekeeping isn't all it's cracked up to be. Last year was not only tough on humans, it was also tough on bees, including Eric's. Most of the state was in a moderate drought throughout the summer and fall and the lack of rainfall exhausted groundwater reserves, limiting plants' capacity to produce pollen and nectar. An inadequate pollen and nectar supply triggers the queen to cease egg production as she knows the workers will not be able to feed both larvae and the bees themselves. This can be very harmful to a hive, and coupled with other common factors—disease, land use conversion, pesticides, and climate change—it can be detrimental to the state's honeybee and native bee populations.

Beekeeping is no easy task, although it's not hard either, Eric says. "As frustrating as 2020 has been in terms of colony

mortality, it is still just working the hives and observing the day to day and seasonal changes in the bees' hive management and behavior that makes the work both fulfilling and challenging," he notes. "A happy and docile colony last week can be a box of hate this week."

If you're interested in beekeeping, he recommends joining a local beekeepers association, finding a mentor, and consulting online resources. If beekeeping doesn't quite tickle your fancy, there are still other ways to support the pollinator world. You can make your yard more pollinator friendly by not using harsh pesticides and herbicides on gardens and lawns and by planting native flowers and blossoming trees. Eric would love to see more homeowners build pollinator gardens on their property. "[These gardens] would create a huge benefit for all these invaluable insects as well as provide beauty for the homeowner to observe," he says. With spring right around the corner, now's the time to research and plan! ♪

Emily Landry is an easement steward for the Forest Society.

▲ Learn More:

A creative way to provide some habitat for native bees is to build a bee hotel. To watch a step-by-step video about building one of your own, visit forestsociety.org/woodshop-wednesdays-andy-crowley.

Venturing Out on the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway

Story and photos by Oliver Reitz

Starting a new job is always hard, but doing so at the beginning of a global pandemic is something I had not prepared to do. In April 2020, I began working for The Venture Out Project (TVOP), a nonprofit that leads backpacking trips for the LGBTQ+ community in a safe and inclusive environment, as their administrative coordinator and an instructor. I was excited to get my boots on the ground in the new programming year, but COVID-19 completely changed everything. It all stopped, including TVOP overnights, day events, and volunteer-led hikes. When I was hired, I thought I'd be training volunteers and keeping trips running smoothly. Instead, I spent most of my time at home, rethinking the way we do things, creating virtual education trainings, running social media, and barely speaking to any volunteers. This was devastating for us and especially for our participants. These trips mean so much to the people in our community who are searching for a respite from the real world and a chance to bond with others like them in a whole new way.

Although our events were on hold, Director of Trip Operations Travis Clough suggested that we scout trails we'd never hiked before, so when we could go out in groups again, we'd have some new trips to offer. Enter the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway (MSG), a 49-mile trail connecting Mount Monadnock in the south to Mount Sunapee in the north. I had never heard of the trail until Travis suggested hiking it from end to end. It would be the longest thru-hike I had ever done, but I was excited to try it. So, in mid-June, Travis, Logistics and Marketing Coordinator James Saunders, and I embarked on a five-day southbound exploration of the MSG. Our goal for the trip was to identify portions of the trail that might be good for a group backpack later in the summer. We planned to note how much room there was at each shelter, the distance between shelters, the water availability, and any



James Saunders, logistics and marketing coordinator for The Venture Out Project, basks in the sun at Halfmoon Pond on the second day of his Monadnock-Sunapee hike.

fun perks like lakes to swim in.

On our first day, we stopped for lunch at Lake Solitude. It was the perfect place to sit, reflect, and mentally prepare myself for the longest trail I've ever attempted to hike. I knew I'd miss my partner and two dogs who I hadn't been away from for even a day since the pandemic started. I also knew I was out of practice. I felt confident I could handle the mileage, but I hadn't been backpacking in almost three years. Fortunately, it didn't take me long to feel like I was at home in nature where I'd live for a week and let my feet take me where I needed to go. Inspired by the beauty of the lake, I was ready to push on.

There is a fair amount of road walking on the MSG, but most of it is on gravel and there are plenty of turns and hills to make it interesting. The most memorable section of road we hiked was on the second day. Travis and I hiked ahead while James stayed behind to eat lunch in the sun on Mount Lovewell. We had just turned onto Lovewell Mountain Road,

when off to our left, we heard rustling in the bushes. I could see something moving around quickly. A raccoon? A porcupine? I couldn't tell, but we kept walking, hoping to pass by without upsetting it too much. Then it appeared on the road: a ruffed grouse fluffing its feathers and making a hissing noise. We stopped and stared, unsure of what to do next as it came closer and started to flap its wings. Then it took flight and headed straight for Travis, who screamed and held up his trekking poles in defense. The grouse flew just above him and landed behind us. Before it had a chance to strike again, we both started running. I don't remember how long we ran, but we didn't stop until we were sure we were far enough from its presumed nest to no longer pose any threat. After we made it away from our quail friend/foe, we decided to cool off in Halfmoon Pond where we had a good laugh about the whole situation.

Day three was long. We put in 12.5 miles; but walking through the 11,000-acre



Left: The author enjoys a moment alone at Lake Solitude on the first day of his hike.

Right: From left, Travis, James, and Oliver are all smiles at the General Washington Shelter after completing their second day of hiking on the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway.

Andorra Forest, a property the Forest Society holds a conservation easement on, and seeing the Robinson Brook Cascades made it worth every step. It was a perfect sunny day with clear skies. We also climbed Pitcher Mountain's fire tower where we were rewarded with spectacular views of green hills and mountains and sparkling blue lakes for miles in every direction.

On the fourth day it rained—and rained, and rained, and rained. We were soaked to the bone, but the weather did bring out plenty of red efts to look at, some of which I helped move off the road, telling each one, “Don’t get squished. Don’t get eaten.” As we arrived at Silver Lake, the rain stopped and the sun came out. We hung up our wet gear and took a dip in the lake. Even though the water was too cold to stay in for long, it was exactly what my sore muscles and feet needed. When we reached the Spiltoir Shelter, we were drenched and exhausted, but James was ready to keep hiking to enliven our spirits. We were only a mile from the Route 101 parking area, so with barely enough cell phone service, we managed to order a pizza and have it delivered to the trailhead. James hiked out and returned with three boxes of hot, cheesy goodness. Eating pizza in a shelter isn’t exactly conventional, but boy was it the perfect way to end our day.

On day five, we finished our hike of the MSG just north of Mount Monadnock. We’d all hiked it so many times before that we didn’t feel like it was necessary to summit on our trip. Hiking the trail left me feeling rejuvenated. After months of working from home and being mostly alone, it helped bring life back into perspective. We hoped this trail could do that for some of our participants as well. It was such a good place for reflection since it was mostly quiet, and even though we saw other thru-hikers, we had the shelters to ourselves every night.

After our trip, we all agreed that the MSG was the perfect trail to run our first overnight on. There was not a ton of foot traffic, there were some really great views, and most of the campsites had plenty of space. We knew participants would be hesitant, but our trips are small, they are outdoors, and people in our community seemed desperate for some sense of connection. We figured out how to keep everyone as safe and comfortable as possible, including wearing masks and distancing, sleeping in individual tents, and eating from individual dehydrated food systems. We downsized our usual enrollment and capped it at four participants led by two instructors, James and myself. We began our journey at Pillsbury State Park, where we stayed one night to go over some basic backpacking skills, hang out by the fire,

and play a couple of games. On Saturday morning, we headed out for the MSG. We made it to the Max Israel Shelter early in the day and set up our tents, fixed a bear line to hang our food, and then day hiked Mount Lovewell.

On this trip, we had one beginner backpacker and three people who were more experienced, but all were new to The Venture Out Project. It is always nice to see the more experienced hikers help the newer ones. Sometimes we move a little slower than some of the diehard backpackers, but hiking in a group pays off when we reach the summit together and we can feel our collective joy. It was no different on Mount Lovewell. Everyone was excited to share the view and the triumph of reaching the top. We spread out on an outcropping to snack and relax. It was then that I felt confident in our decision to hike this spot. We sat on the summit for at least an hour and we had it all to ourselves.

When we returned to the shelter there were several other hikers around. We were glad we had set up camp earlier and reserved a little space just for us where we could chat and laugh as we made our meals, happy to be together in nature. We ate dinner and let the day wash over us.

On our final day, we ate breakfast, played games, and headed back to Pillsbury State Park. Once we got there, we gathered



In August 2020, The Venture Out Project led its first backpacking trip of the year on the Monadnock–Sunapee Greenway. From the minute they stepped foot on the trail (left) to near the end of their hike, where participants took in views from the summit of Mount Lovewell (right), everyone appreciated the beauty, solace, and space to relax—even during a pandemic.

in a circle and talked about leaving behind all of our anxieties and fears as we headed back to our everyday lives. It is always hard to return from a trip after spending time with people who understand you and who you can truly be yourself around. It is difficult to step back into the day-to-day, which for many queer people consists of subconsciously changing the way we act or speak in order to not be seen as overtly queer. Even though it's many times subconscious, it's still draining. It takes a toll on the way we are able to interact with people, on our ability to let our guard down, and on how much focus we can expend on other things. Going back to that is tough, even after only being gone from it for a short while. It was especially tough this time because not only was everyone going back to their lives, they were going back to their lives in the middle of a pandemic and in the middle of civil unrest.

Liz, one of the trip participants, summed up her experience nicely in a blog post she wrote and published on our website: "In some ways joining the first TVOP trip mid-covid seemed like an unnecessary risk to take; but driving home

after two nights in the woods with three other TVOP newbs and two guides, I felt full in a way I hadn't realized I'd been missing for the 6 months prior. I felt like I had formed a new family."

It is common for folks to leave our trips with a new sense of fullness and family, but to do so in the middle of a pandemic has been especially healing for those who can attend. "In a pandemic that makes establishing in-person connections a challenge at best, building new friendships (even situational, fleeting ones) felt like a miracle," Liz said. For me, having this job and seeing the faces of the people I serve and hearing their stories feels like a miracle every day. I am so thankful for everyone who comes on our trips and for everything we are able to do for them.

The MSG was a great place for us to get back into leading trips, and we hope to return in the future. There are so many fantastic opportunities on this trail: the amazing views on Mount Monadnock, Pitcher Mountain, and Mount Sunapee; the peaceful respite and swimming at Halfmoon Pond and Silver Lake; and the chance to stop for real food at the

Washington General Store. The MSG is truly a hidden gem with so much to offer.

Since leading that trip, I've learned a little more about the Greenway. I've learned that it is coming up on its 100th birthday and that it was almost lost forever until sections of it were rebuilt in the 1970s. In a lot of ways, the MSG is like many of our participants. They might feel lost or broken, but spending time outdoors with other queer people gives them hope. The combination of nature and a sense of community helps them rediscover themselves. And once they've found themselves, they can share their joy and light with others, in the same way that the MSG being found and restored has given joy to its hikers over the many years of its existence. I'm so grateful that I was able to hike this trail and soak in its radiance, and in doing so, see my fellow queer hikers get to open up and to experience their true selves.

Oliver Reitz (he/him/his) is the programs lead and an instructor for The Venture Out Project. He spends his free time hiking his favorite trails, rock climbing, and searching for new swimming holes.

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Using two game cameras mounted on trees, Dave Anderson photographed an adult female bobcat feeding on a deer carcass over a two week period. He also photographed other wildlife visiting the kill site, including blue jays and red squirrels by day and several mice by night.



A View To A Kill

We're not the only hunters

Story and photos by Dave Anderson

This is not a hunting story; it is a bobcat story. My family lives along the hem of a wilder forest realm by rural standards. The valleys and hills between mounts Kearsarge and Sunapee are broken by beaver ponds, rural villages, and two-lane highways. When the wind is from the east, you can hear truck tires whine on I-89. It's a vertical landscape of rugged ledges, steep compared to the gentle hills, farmland, and creeping suburbs of valleys not too far south from here.

It's 5:30 a.m., half an hour before first light. With only a little pool of red lens

light to illuminate the ground in front of me and the swirling steam from my breath impairing my vision, it feels like I'm walking on the moon. The day hasn't even started and I'm already, umm, lost. I sit down to collect my thoughts at the base of a hemlock tree. I missed the faint landmarks, a dry streambed, a fallen log, and a thicket of saplings, that mark the way to my tree stand. Few people ever hike here. There are no paths except game trails.

I hunker down, turn off my headlamp, and wait for dawn, when I'll aim to determine my location. I hear unknown animals

rustling in a carpet of frozen oak leaves. Twinkling stars reveal the dark silhouettes of a ridge and an adjacent hill. An hour later, I find myself a few hundred yards from the stand that I intended to hunt deer from.

By mid-morning, the biting windchill is taking a toll. I decide to return home. Walking in the frozen forest, I spy a ring of bare ground where leaves and twigs were freshly scraped to form a mound. Turkeys wouldn't scratch leaves to create a pile. No acorns here either. I investigate. The leaf pile sprouts four deer legs with

hooves sticking out. The hair rises on the back of my neck. Adrenaline surges through my body and I feel sick to my stomach. I glance around nervously and start looking over my shoulder. I guess this is a fresh kill, likely by a bobcat—a big one. Maybe still nearby? I retreat uphill to my tree stand to make a plan.

Sitting about 80 yards from the dead deer, I ponder whether it might possibly have been killed and concealed by a poacher. Had somebody shot a doe and tried to hide the evidence? I dismiss that idea. A poacher would either drag it home or walk away. A bobcat makes more sense.

A male bobcat weighs 15 to 40 pounds with an average weight of 21 pounds. Females are smaller, weighing 9 to 34 pounds with an average weight of 15 pounds. The deer looks to weigh about 75 pounds. There are no nearby signs of a struggle or drag marks. Bobcats are solitary. They kill prey larger than themselves, including deer, but they typically eat small game: mice, squirrels, birds, and rabbits. Like all cats, they employ stealth and do not stalk or run-down prey but lie waiting in ambush. They crouch motionless and can pounce ten feet and give short chase.

I don't want to uncover the carcass alone to see if it had been shot or fed upon. I text my son, Cody, who is hunting on the top of a steep hill adjacent to the ridge I am on. An hour later, we meet up and make our way to the kill site. I pull away leaves and twigs to reveal what's left of the deer. It's apparent that whatever animal killed it is not done feeding. What I originally thought was a doe is not. I feel the skull and find antler nubs. It was a

“button” buck. I didn't expose the fresh carcass for long. The deer is cold but its eyes are still partially clear, not yet cloudy. Hours old. The bobcat would be back.

Carcasses often attract scavengers, namely coyotes, foxes, raccoons, and skunks by night and ravens and crows by day. Cats cover a carcass to hide it. Coyotes and foxes do not. The same is true of their scat. I find at least one deer kill in this area each winter. There are a lot of deer in this south-facing red oak forest. The terrain is steep. When the snow is deep, predators have an advantage in late winter when deer are at their weakest. The carcasses rarely last much more than a week.

Later that day, I rig game cameras on trees near the deer carcass and stay away for almost a week. Over Thanksgiving weekend, I return to my deer stand and to check the cameras. While sitting in my stand, 25 feet above the forest floor, I watch an adult bobcat and a kitten walk by. A first-ever thrill. Each cat goes out of its way to walk atop fallen logs to avoid rustling the leaves, pausing motionless before moving on to the next. Cryptic camouflage renders them almost invisible when they sit still. They walk parallel fifty yards apart, kitten following its well-fed and, obvious to me now, expert deer-hunter mother.

We're not the only ones hunting deer for winter sustenance. In comparison to these local professionals, I'm a poor substitute. ♪

Dave Anderson is the senior director of education for the Forest Society.

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Did You Know?

New Hampshire's bobcat population appears to be stable. Anecdotal evidence suggests they may be increasing. More residents report sightings and tracks. Bobcats have benefitted from their ability to prey on an ever-increasing wild turkey population. In winters of deep snow, inexperienced and smaller bobcat juveniles may stake out backyard birdfeeders to prey on squirrels and birds.

Keeping Forests as Forests

By Matt Leahy

New Hampshire is the second most forested state in the country, according to data from the Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA). We should certainly be proud of this distinction; it does give one a sense of the natural beauty that helps makes our state so unique. However, the significance of this ranking goes beyond just an aesthetic appreciation. Therefore, we should not simply cheer the fact that we are the second most forested state in the country. Instead, we should focus on how to keep New Hampshire's forests as forests for the long-term future.

This is not an academic assignment. The forests here filter and clean the water we drink and the air we breathe. They sequester and store carbon. They are home to many wildlife species, and they serve as the foundation for both the forest products and outdoor recreation industries, key drivers of economic health in our state. Trees, especially their roots, mitigate the effects of heavy rain by helping the ground absorb more precipitation. Finally, New Hampshire's forests also inspired one of the most important achievements in conservation: the passage of the Weeks Act over 100 years ago and, as a result, the establishment of the national forest system in the eastern United States.

That is a lot of good stuff. Best of all, it is all happening here in the woods of New Hampshire. Is it possible, however, that we as a state are taking for granted all the gifts the forests bring us every day? To an extent, underestimating the importance of this resource is understandable. We can't, for example, tell when and how the forests are cleaning the air or water. If we can't always see the benefits which are accruing in, and because of, our forests, we may not fully value these natural services.

The question of whether we are taking for granted our forests is an important one

to raise today because, according to the FIA, current forest area in New Hampshire is 4,714,647 acres, or 390,000 fewer acres than existed in 1970. Another study, led by researchers from the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Department of Natural Resources and the Environment and published in the *Journal of Forestry*, showed New Hampshire experienced a decline in the amount of forest cover from 1996 to 2018, which dropped forest cover in the state to 77.65 percent. Although the FIA and UNH study used different methodologies, the fact that both data sets showed a similar trend is troubling.

To be sure, government programs exist at both the federal and state levels that can partially address this problem. The federal Forest Legacy Program, funded under the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) are two examples of programs that are used in the state to conserve the forested landscapes here. LCHIP has protected more than 294,000 acres and the Forest Legacy Program has protected 273,252 acres—but we can't rely solely on them.

So, we are faced with two challenges as we work for the long-term protection of our forests:

1) How to increase recognition by the public and by public policy makers of the

connection between forests and the air we breathe and the water we drink? Improving the public's awareness of the complex web of natural services is an important part of adopting public policies that successfully contribute to the sustainability of our forests.

2) Land trusts and government agencies will likely be unable to permanently protect all the forested areas. But, they don't necessarily have to meet that goal. According to the 2020 New Hampshire Forest Action Plan, more than 70 percent of New Hampshire's forests are privately owned. The second challenge is to develop or expand policies which encourage and incentivize more private landowners to place long-term conservation protections on their properties. A comprehensive strategy must recognize and include the key role this group of stakeholders will play in ensuring the forests remain as forests.

Deforestation, the permanent conversion of forests to other land uses, is a real problem. As we celebrate our status as the second most forested state, we need to commit to ensuring we never lose that ranking. ♪

Matt Leahy is the public policy manager for the Forest Society.

SOON-TO-BE RELEASED

The State Forest Action Plan, prepared by the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands, is a 10-year strategic plan that provides long-term, comprehensive, and coordinated strategies for addressing the challenges and opportunities facing New Hampshire's forests. All states are required to develop such a plan in order to receive federal funds from the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act. This law authorizes the federal government to provide financial and technical assistance to states and private landowners for forestry-related issues, including forest management and stewardship, fire protection, insect and disease control, reforestation and stand improvement, and urban forestry. As we go to press with this issue, the plan was still being finalized. When it's released, it can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/3qt0kbD>.

Chestnut Orchard Volunteers Recognized at Spirit of NH Volunteer Awards

By Carrie Deegan

In 2018, the first round of chestnut seeds, from three different breeding lines, was planted at the Tom Rush Forest in Deering, N.H., as part of a project to revive the struggling trees. For the past two years, a group of about ten volunteers has worked to keep the nearly 600 chestnut trees healthy and thriving. Although the work, which includes a lot of weeding, watering, and mowing, is not the most glamorous, it is the group's commitment that makes their job all the more impressive. "It's pretty easy to get a lot of people to come out for something fun like planting chestnuts," Forest Society field forester Gabe Roxby says, "but those who take on the drudgery of ongoing maintenance work are the real heroes. The group's work is vitally important to the success of growing resilient chestnut trees, and the Forest Society could not do it without them."

The group's ongoing effort was not lost on the Forest Society and other organizations, however. On December 9, 2020, they were recognized for their remarkable service at the 17th Annual Spirit of NH Awards, livestreamed from the Bank of NH Stage in Concord. Organized by the nonprofit Volunteer NH, the event "recognizes those who go above and beyond the call to serve throughout the Granite State, shining a spotlight on the often unsung heroes among us in front of an audience of their families, friends, colleagues, and the greater community."

Most of the chestnut orchard volunteers are members of the Deering Conservation Commission (DCC), and some are also volunteer land stewards who help monitor the many Forest Society reservations in Deering. "We were proud and happy that the Forest Society decided to place the chestnut nursery in our town," Gary Samuels, chair of the DCC, says. "We took



Tom Rush Forest chestnut orchard volunteers take a breather from watering chestnut saplings over the summer.

on care of those little seedlings as our personal responsibility...[and] our own adopted treelets."

COVID-19 protocols and precautions made tasks at the orchard a bit more challenging this year, but the volunteers, armed with masks and hand sanitizer, still got the work done. They even managed to have a bit of fun while doing so, including at least one physically distanced morning weeding session with mimosas! "We take a fair amount of pride in seeing the success of the project," Samuels notes. "We also accept a responsibility for ensuring that these young trees have a part in reestablishing some sort of presence of American chestnut in our eastern forest."

The goal of the orchard project, a collaboration between the Forest Society and the American Chestnut Foundation, is to produce trees that are resistant to the

fungus that causes chestnut blight. Over time, these blight-resistant American chestnuts would eventually be reestablished in New Hampshire's forests, in addition to other forests along the Atlantic seaboard. The project at Tom Rush Forest is still in its infancy, with as many as 2,400 chestnut trees still to plant and tend over the next 3 decades, but the volunteers are more concerned with what they can accomplish now rather than what's to come. "I may not live to see the end of this experiment," volunteer Kay Hartnett says, "but I'm okay with that." That sentiment just about sums up the true definition of selfless volunteer service and it's something the Forest Society is forever grateful for. ♪

Carrie Deegan is community engagement and volunteers director for the Forest Society.

▲ Online:

To watch a video presentation of the Tom Rush chestnut orchard volunteers, visit forestsociety.org/chestnutorchardvols.



Clockwise, from top left: By placing a conservation easement on their property, Rob and Sherri Morrill are ensuring that more than a century of farming and land stewardship can continue for future generations. Views of Mount Kearsarge can be had from the farm fields. Wetlands along Little Pond provide important habitat and water resources in the Merrimack River Watershed.

Protecting Working Farmland, Forest, and Wetlands in the Capital Region

The Forest Society is working together with the Town of Boscawen to purchase a conservation easement on 124 acres of high-quality agricultural land in Boscawen from the Morrill Dairy Farm. The farm has been in operation for nearly a century and is now owned by Rob and Sherri Morrill, whose four children, Andy, Kevin, Ryan, and Kim, all work on the farm. Well known for its red and white Holsteins, the farm was founded in 1925 in Penacook, N.H., and has been recognized with national awards.

Today, the Morrills milk 140 cows among a herd of 500. The farm owns or leases more than 1,000 acres of land in Penacook, Concord, and Boscawen on which it produces corn, hay, and other grains. In addition to the dairy operation, the family

shows dairy cattle at events and auctions, runs a successful feed business, and sells forage to other dairies in the area. The Forest Society already holds conservation easements on several parcels of land either owned or leased by the Morrill Dairy Farm.

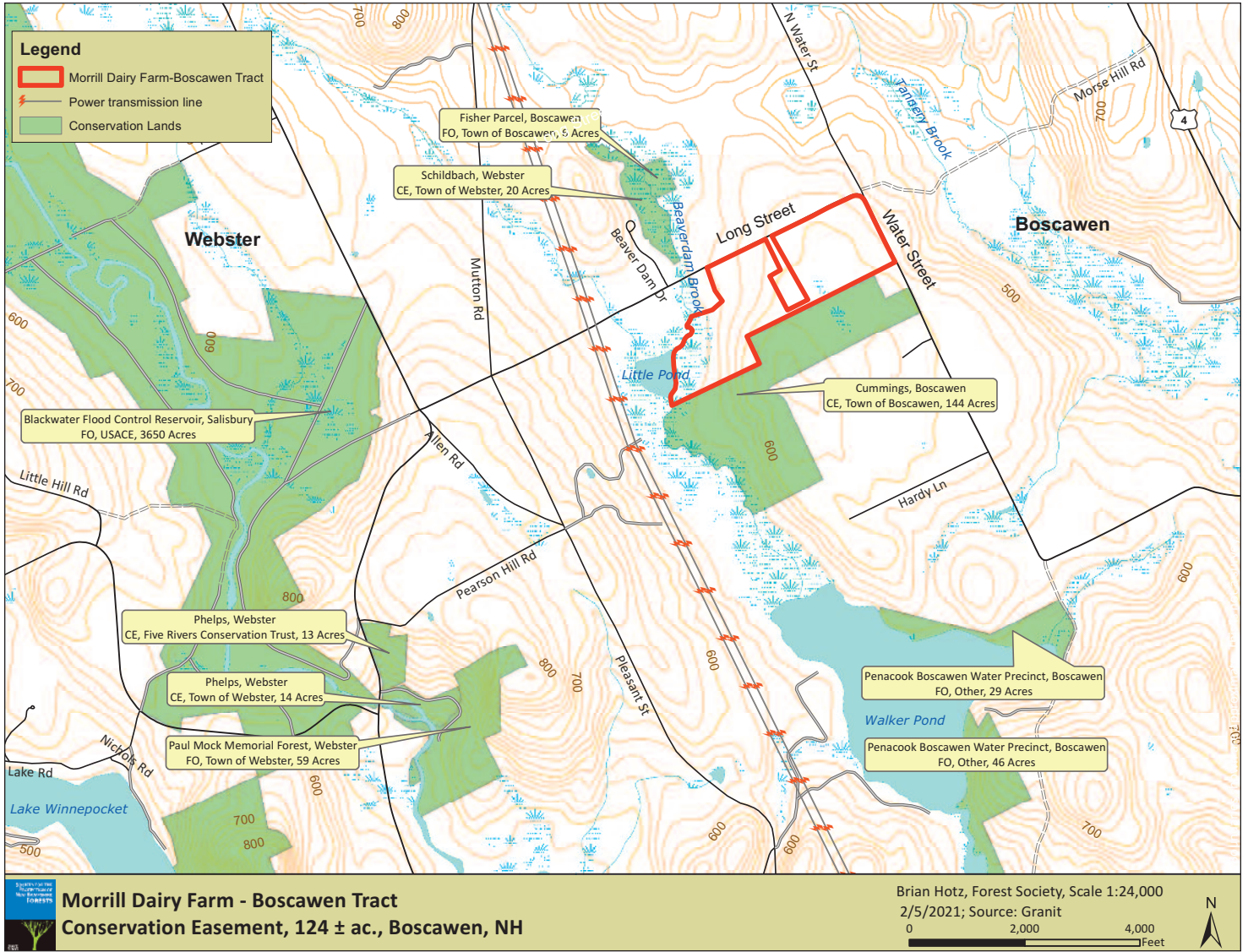
The 124-acre property in Boscawen is an important agricultural component of the farm's larger land holdings in the Capital Region. The land includes 75 acres of crop and pasture land with excellent agricultural soils and 40 acres of woodlands and wetlands along Little Pond. The scenic property has over a mile of undeveloped frontage on two roads and offers tremendous views of Mount Kearsarge.

The project has already attracted generous support from the Town of Boscawen and other federal, state, and local grant programs,

including the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, and the Merrimack Conservation Partnership. Now, the Forest Society must raise the final \$17,000 of the total project cost of \$408,000 by March 31, 2021. Funds will support both the acquisition costs and perpetual stewardship of this conservation easement. Please help conserve this spectacularly scenic and productive rural landscape by making a donation today. Thank you! ♪

▲ Online:

For more information on the Forest Society's ongoing land conservation projects, visit forestsociety.org/currentprojects.



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Thomas A. Howe, 1957–2021



Tom Howe, shown at work on a bright winter day on what is now the Forest Society's Morse Preserve in Alton, was instrumental in helping conserve key landscapes in New Hampshire, including the Belknap Range.

The Forest Society and our extended conservation family suffered an unimaginable loss on January 26, 2021, when we learned that our long-time colleague Tom Howe died in an accident.

Tom was the Forest Society's senior director of land conservation. He had worked at the Forest Society for nearly 25 years and had his hand in protecting thousands of acres over the course of his career. Nationally, he was known and respected among conservation professionals for his deep knowledge and generous spirit. With heavy hearts we offer condolences to Tom's family and join with a vast network of others in grieving his loss.

Tom's obituary, a memory of a life well lived by a good man who will be deeply missed, can be found at forestsociety.org. His family is planning a service later in the year. ♪