

Piscataquog News

THE PISCATAQUOG LAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

LOOKING AHEAD TO GREAT THINGS!

PLC Conservation Projects on the Horizon

by Paula Bellemore, PLC Executive Director

View from Martin Homestead (Courtesy photo)

As we head into the warmer temperatures, things at PLC begin to heat up right along with the sun's rays. We have several land conservation projects underway, which means that 2011 will be as busy or busier than 2010! Here are two of the exciting projects we're working on now.

Mount Dearborn Road Project Phase II, Weare

With two projects in this neighborhood complete (see article on page 3), PLC will be working to conserve two additional parcels in 2011—54.5 acres on the Martin Homestead piece and an additional parcel owned by a neighboring family. The proposed conservation easement on the Martin Homestead parcel will preserve 54.5 acres sloping upward away from Mount Dearborn Road to the northwest and containing a significant amount of land on the western side of Mount Dearborn. Featuring steep slopes in some areas, the forest cover is mostly white pine with some hemlock and assorted hardwoods (beech, sugar maple, white ash, and red oak). Logging in the past, as recently as 2006, has opened up some

areas that allow great views to the south and easy access with little to no understory in some areas. A logging road and landing area lie to the west and north of the house lot along Dearborn Road. This area features south and west aspects with a patchwork of canopy openings that are made up of grasses and shrubs allowing great deer yard habitat. The property is bound by an intermittent stream to the west and features a scattering of wet areas near the house lot and landing area near Mount Dearborn Road, but is relatively dry as the property continues north toward higher elevations. This area provides diverse, connected habitats for wildlife: upland slopes and ridges, farm fields with forest edges, and is a keystone parcel in our plan to connect with the already conserved Perkins Pond Wildlife Management Area.

Ploss Pine Preserve, Goffstown

After a lengthy but unavoidable delay, creation of the Ploss Pines Preserve in Goffstown is now once again moving forward. Barbara Robinson of Goffstown has offered to gift this remarkable 30-acre property in Goffstown's Grasmere district to PLC to be used as a passive recreation and conservation area. While the process of subdividing the proposed conservation area and an existing home into separate lots was lengthy, it appears that we have crossed the last hurdle and are ready to move toward a closing. Ploss Pines Preserve is named for the remnant pitch pine forest found on a ridge running north and south on the property. It can easily be seen from Henry Bridge Road, just downhill of Ploss Lane, where its 3-acre mown field is easily distinguishable. Harry Brook, a conservation focus for the town of Goffstown, is a tributary to the Piscataquog River, and forms a southerly bound of the property. The property also has frontage on the river itself, while an unnamed stream and associated floodplain forest add diversity. Most of the land is forested. A fundraising campaign to cover the associated project costs is now underway. Please contact Paula Bellemore at 487-3331 or plc@plcnh.org to learn more about how you can help preserve this gem.



TO CONSERVE

the natural and scenic environment of the Piscataquog River Watershed communities:
Deering ~ Dunbarton ~ Francestown ~ Goffstown ~ Greenfield ~ Henniker
Lyndeborough ~ Manchester ~ Mont Vernon ~ New Boston ~ Weare

PLC



FROM MY CORNER

by Paula Bellemore
PLC Executive Director

I sipped my tea and listened as the weatherman warned, “Dangerous cold! Risk of hypothermia! Stay indoors!” It was mid-January, my soul was feeling winter weary, and a warm, cozy home did seem far more inviting than the arctic temperatures he warned of. But on this cold morning several PLC volunteers and I were scheduled to walk a possible conservation property—one I’d fallen in love with and hoped to preserve. Soon we were donning our snowshoes and layers, our hats and mittens. Sobered by the cold, accompanied by chattering teeth and sniffling noses, we headed into the gelid forest. In a matter of minutes I could feel our world and our moods transform.

There is nothing so magical as the hush of a winter forest—the sparkle of sun on snow, the symmetrical beauty of freshly laid tracks, the delicately intricate designs left on spun sugar snow by winter-dead grasses blown over in a chill winter wind. Fresh air, no matter its temperature, and full immersion in the quiet and beauty of nature, can be remarkably therapeutic. That day the best remedy for my winter-weary soul was to “take myself to the woods”. How lucky am I that I could!

In these moments I’m reminded of the importance of PLC’s work to preserve land, protect open space, and provide opportunities for watershed residents to “take themselves to the woods”. Any moment now, PLC will celebrate the protection of our 5000th acre. Over our 40-year history we’ve introduced, educated, and inspired countless people of all ages, developing in them a better appreciation for all the riches found in the world around us. And there will be more opportunities this spring to introduce the next generation to the wonders of the woods in warmer weather as we investigate vernal pools. (See page 5.)

PLC’s many accomplishments are possible only with your continued support. PLC’s Annual Fund is the primary funding source for this important work. Every dollar of our goal is needed if we are to continue to preserve, protect, and provide. If you have not yet contributed to the Annual Fund, or if you can

consider an additional gift, please do so today! An envelope is included with this newsletter. We’re very close to meeting our goal, and your generous contribution could be just the push we need! Thank you!

Optimizing Our Resources & Simplifying Some Procedures

We strive to make maximum use of every dollar that comes in. To this end, we are making a few changes to operate even more efficiently.

- **Communication:** We are changing to a quarterly newsletter, which will be augmented by monthly email updates—so *be sure to sign up at www.plcnh.org* if you are not already on our email distribution.
- **Networking:** As of March 7, PLC has a new Facebook page. This page will support PLC better than our former Facebook presence. Search for Piscataquog Land Conservancy and select the one that is defined as a Non-Profit Organization. Then “Like” us today so you can keep up with all the latest news.
- **Fundraising:** In response to feedback from our members, we will no longer make a distinction between membership dues and donations. The bottom line is, your gift to PLC is valuable and appreciated no matter what it’s called! If you provide financial support during our spring and fall fund drives, you are a member of the PLC family. Period!
- **Materials:** As always, we welcome your used ink cartridges, which we turn in to Staples to offset (sometimes 100%!) the cost of supplies. We also gladly accept donations of printer/copy paper and other office supplies.
- **Got Frequent Flyer Miles or Points?** This year’s Land Trust Alliance (LTA) National Land Conservation Conference (known as Rally) will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in mid-October. Rally is an opportunity for staff and board members of land trusts all over the country to come together for four days of intensive training and valuable networking. To help defray the cost, PLC is seeking a donation of frequent flyer miles or a round-trip ticket to Milwaukee. Got any unused points you’re willing to contribute? Call Paula at 487-3331 or email plc@plcnh.org. Thank you!



*A ginormous thank you to Lyn Lombard and Barbara Thomson, who spent the better part of a week repainting my office! The color is perfect, and your generosity overwhelms me.—
Thank you, Lyn & BAT! You are my heroes!
~Paula*

Photo: Pat Nelson

Summary of 2010 Land Protection Projects

by Paula Bellemore

2010 was another phenomenal year in PLC's 40-year land conservation effort. Seven land protection projects added to our inventory of protected open space!

Sunderland II—110 Acres, Henniker

Co-owners Martha and Larry Sunderland, longtime PLC members, added another 110 acres to their 170-acre easement in Henniker. Big Brook and Favor Brook wind through this expansive 280-acre area, home to brook trout, beaver, otter, moose, and bear. Big Brook features several scenic waterfalls, and vernal pools on the property provide an important niche for amphibians and turtles.

Stewart Easement—53 Acres, Franconia

This property has 5000 feet of frontage along Rand Brook and the Piscataquog River in an area with the highest ranked habitat in the biological region noted in the NH Wildlife Action Plan. PLC's Board of Directors was thrilled to support this project with its first grant from the newly established Land Protection Assistance Fund (LPAF). The LPAF provides assistance for collaborative projects that possess remarkable natural resource values and are receiving a broad range of support from diverse sources. The 53-acre property is now owned by the Town of Franconia Conservation Commission under a conservation easement held by the Franconia Land Trust. PLC provides executory oversight.

Mount Dearborn Road Project, Phase I: Grant Family Farm Conservation Area—32 Acres, Weare

In February 2010 PLC launched a multi-year conservation project known as the Mount Dearborn Road Project. By December 2010, Phase I of the project had been completed, with conservation easements in place on two of the three parcels owned by the Martin family, and work well underway on the third. Once complete, the Mount Dearborn Road project has the potential to create a minimally fragmented block of over 750 conserved acres stretching from the summit of Mount Dearborn (Weare's tallest peak) to the far reaches of the Perkins Pond Wildlife Management Area.

Melvin Farm Easement—19 Acres, Weare

Prime agricultural soils make the mostly open farmland on the Melvin Farm Conservation Easement in Weare of particular importance to both the Town and the PLC. Funded in large part by a grant from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, this important open farmland has been permanently preserved.

Hawkes Amendment—27 Acres, Melvin Valley, Weare

Shawn and Denise Hawkes expanded their existing conservation easement, adding an additional 27 acres. Located in the high priority Melvin Valley region of Weare, this area offers a combination of first and second successional forest growth, providing a rich and varied combination of habitats throughout the broad valley.



Top: Melvin Farm, Weare (Courtesy photo) Bottom: South Branch of Piscataquog frontage on Stewart Easement (Photo: Barry Wicklow)

Hughes Easement—40 Acres, Weare

In 1996 Bette Hughes gifted her entire 43.5-acre property in Weare to the PLC, reserving a life-estate in the house and a portion of the land for herself. The reserved life estate allowed Bette to live in her home as long as she wished, but ensured that the land would be permanently preserved while she made a significant gift in support of PLC's ongoing conservation work. Following Bette's death in 2009, PLC placed the land under conservation easement, and sold the property to its new owner, Michael Snow, who is establishing a PYO blueberry farm on the property—an agricultural use that we believe would have greatly pleased Bette!

Preston Preserve—19 Acres, Goffstown

A visitor once described a visit to the Preston Preserve as “walking through a forest that felt slightly magical to me, though I'm not sure why. Maybe it was the lay of the land, with the stone wall hugging the hillside, and the fine mix of trees—some of them quite spectacular—and the early morning light. In any case, thank you for...preserving your woods.” PLC is most grateful to Mrs. Pearle Preston, who left her land in part to PLC, ensuring it remains a magical place for generations to visit and enjoy.

Join us to celebrate [at the Gravity Tavern in New Boston] when we close on our 5000th acre. To be notified of this spontaneous event, be sure we have your email address.

PLC Graduates 14 New Trackers!

In early December, 14 intrepid new trackers graduated from a year-long, PLC-sponsored course in wildlife sign and track identification run by renowned wildlife biologist and tracker Susan Morse of Keeping Track, Inc., based in Jericho, Vermont. The students attended six full-day workshops, three in Vermont and three here in the watershed, and two evening workshops.

Hearty congratulations to our new trackers: Alicia Bergeron, George Carville, Holly Cassidy, Sanja Polic Chambers, Kate Fitzpatrick, Holly Green, Ethan Judd, Steve Judd, Abby Kelly, James McNaughton, Candice Shaffer, Lou Springer, Susan Tucker, and Ellie Weiss.

PLC uses teams of trained trackers to help identify and prioritize prospective conservation projects where the preservation of wildlife habitat is a goal. Once during every season of the year, teams consisting of four trackers walk a specific transect that has been laid out on a chosen property, gathering data and documenting signs of wildlife and habitat.

Beginning in late spring this year PLC will deploy three new teams across the watershed. If you would like to join them, new tracker wannabees are always welcome! Call the PLC office at 487-3331 or email us at plc@plcnh.org

PLC uses teams of trained trackers to help identify and prioritize prospective conservation projects where the preservation of wildlife habitat is a goal.



Top: Susan Morse and her intern display the furry remains of someone's dinner to tracker trainees. (Photo: Alicia Bergeron)
Bottom: Candice Shaffer and Alicia Bergeron document some bear scat. (Photo: Sanja Polic Chambers)



We LOVE Our Volunteers—THANK YOU!

Easement Monitors Potluck & Ancient Trails Presentation

Graham and Pam Pendlebury and Cindy Stave pulled together a wonderful event on March 5. The annual Easement Monitors Spring Kick Off potluck dinner was held in New Boston with more than 65 people attending and enjoying a wonderful dinner. That evening, PLC's David Hardy Memorial Lecture Series sponsored a fascinating presentation by Abenaki scholar and Harvard professor Lisa Brooks titled "Ancient Trails Beneath Our Feet" about the region's natural and human history. This combination event was a huge undertaking—and we're so grateful to Graham, Pam, and Cindy for pulling it all together! Bravo!

Two Full Moon Snowshoe Events a Hit!

PLC's two Full Moon Snowshoe events were a huge hit! Tickets sold out in record time, and although the moon played hide and seek a bit in February, the stars sparkled, the coffee steamed, and the music was lively! In March we were treated with spectacular views of the super moon and ended with a roaring campfire! Many thanks to our fabulous hosts: in February, Mike Depetrillo and his lovely wife Kari Lewis with help from Guy & Ashley Tino of the Northeast Cafe, and in March, longtime friends of PLC, Mike & Deanna Powell. We may host an *impromptu* night hike in warmer weather, so be sure you're on our email list! Sign up at www.PLCNH.org today!

PLC Hosts First Land Conservation Summit

On January 29, PLC hosted more than 20 conservationists from several watershed communities to discuss land conservation in our region, and to see the newly updated Piscataquog River Watershed Land Conservation Plan. Plan maps were distributed to each of the watershed communities. PLC and the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) will continue to work with the 11 towns to adopt and

utilize the conservation plan in their long range, open space planning and development of future land use ordinances. Thank you to Abigail Arnold, Dennis Calcutt, Paul Doscher, Barbara Griffin, Betsy Hardwick, Carol Hess, Amy Kizak, David Preece, and Derek Serach for helping to coordinate and execute this very successful event. See you next year!

Salamanders, Turtles, Snakes and Frogs—It's Spring!

Mid-March to mid-April brings many early spring amphibians out of their winter hideouts.

Two much-loved harbingers of spring are wood frogs and spring peepers (*byla crucifer*, so named because of the cross on its back). These welcome noisemakers typically burst on the scene seemingly out of nowhere in late March or April. While their visits are brief, their calling can be heard day and night during times of peak romance!

Peepers are only 1.5" long, so they're hard to find—but you'll surely hear them. If you're determined to find them, try this: Have two or three people point their flashlights to where each thinks a single peeper might be. Begin your search where two or more beams cross. Good luck!

In contrast to the sweet chorus of spring peepers is the raucous "quacking" of wood frogs (*Rana sylvatica*), who actually freeze solid during winter and emerge

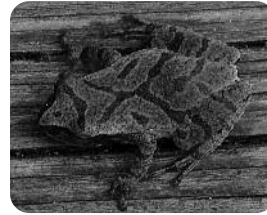
from the mud when temperatures thaw. These black masked bandits cluster in vernal pools—sometimes when the ice has not yet even totally vanished. You can learn more about the freeze/thaw cycle of these and other amphibians at http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nationworld/2002118796_frogs14.html.

On the earliest rainy nights of spring, you'll also see yellow spotted salamanders emerging from their winter underground locations and crossing the road in their annual migration to a nearby vernal pool—their version of a "singles bar"—where they court a prospective mate, breed, and lay their eggs.

Spotted turtles are fairly easy to spot (yes, pun intended). You'll see them basking on warm rocks or logs in a wetland, or perhaps resting in a nice, wet, meadow.

Garter snakes will turn up as the sun starts to warm the ground. Look for them near woodpiles, houses and sheds, or in a sunny glade in the woods.

Vernal pools are fun to explore with kids, so grab a grandchild, a field guide, a net, and a bucket, and head out into the muck!



Red eft and spring peeper (Photos: Pat Nelson)

Replace any egg masses exactly where you found them and be respectful of all wildlife. Don't handle these creatures with your bare hands and be gentle! Oils in human skin can harm salamanders and salamander skin can transfer bacteria to humans.

PLC will be leading a Walk in the Woods exploration of vernal pools on April 16. (Check our Events calendar below for details.)



Saturday, April 16 9AM–Noon Salamanders, Polliwogs, Turtles & Frogs!

Come explore a local vernal pool with us. We'll learn all about the amphibians and reptiles that depend on these innocuous looking puddles, and do some fun mucking about in the process. Suitable for all ages! Wear boots and bring specimen buckets, nets (if you have them), and a sense of fun! Oh, and be prepared—you may get wet, and mud is not out of the question! Led by PLC volunteers.

Saturday, June 18 9AM–Noon Birds & Blooms!

Come along for a sneak peak into some local backyards to explore landscaping specifically designed to attract birds and butterflies. You'll learn which plants attract which birds, and how wildlife-friendly landscaping can provide wonderful year-round habitat for all sorts of wild creatures! Led by PLC volunteer and horticulturist Lyn Lombard.

Top: Investigating a vernal pool at Woodland Associates in New Boston. (Courtesy photo) Bottom: Yellow Swallowtail on native blue flag (Photo: Pat Nelson)



All events begin at the PLC office in New Boston (5a Mill Street, right behind the Community Church), where carpooling can be arranged. You can always track upcoming events on our website at www.PLCNH.org.

What's new at PLC?

Each November PLC's Board of Directors holds a week-end retreat to evaluate the organization's programming and effectiveness, and to articulate goals and objectives for the coming year. At the 2010 retreat Board members focused on two key areas: finances and land protection. Several new developments evolved out of the retreat, some of which build on or expand work already in progress.

In mid-2010 PLC added a 10-hour per week Stewardship Coordinator position and **Deb Ives** moved from the existing Membership Coordinator post into this new Stewardship role. **Barbara Hayes** was then hired to replace Deb. With this new division of responsibilities we are able to benefit from the focused attention Deb now gives to the coordination of PLC's Stewardship and Land Management efforts, including coordinating our 50+ volunteer easement monitors who monitor each of the 90 PLC properties annually. An E-newsletter is sent out quarterly to these volunteer monitors, and Deb has completed an audit of our land and easement files. Great job, Deb!

With the number of acres under PLC's protection rising rapidly in recent years it became apparent that our stewardship work was becoming more involved and required an ever increasing amount of our time, attention, and resources. Of course, that's a great problem to have! To address this, the Board has divided PLC's Land Protection committee, which was previously charged with both the evaluation and review of all new land protection projects and oversight of our stewardship work, into two separate and distinct committees: Land Protection and Stewardship. **Len Allen** has graciously agreed to chair the newly formed Stewardship Committee and **Paul Doscher** heads the Land Protection Committee. Both committees continue to work hand-in-hand, and already we've seen great productivity and efficiency gains with this change!



by Carol Hess, PLC President

I have always been struck by the fact that the PLC geography is defined by three separate rivers with headwaters that are quite near to each other, yet the rivers fan out over a great distance before rejoining to make one strong river in Goffstown that then flows to meet the Merrimack River in Manchester at Bass Island. I have stood at Bass Island, looking upriver, amazed that our organization has been protecting the Piscataquog's sources and the land in its surrounding communities for more than 40 years.

The three branches of the Piscataquog River are a great metaphor for the three essential components of the PLC:

- People who are willing to protect their land in perpetuity.
- Stewards who are willing to commit their time to monitor the land and carry out the trust of the initial donor.
- Financial supporters who are willing to commit financial resources to ensure that PLC is there to protect additional lands and to ensure that the desires of these donors are protected into the future.

We would not have the effective land trust in our area without these three branches. It is important that we continue to grow in all three areas—continuing to protect additional land, overseeing through stewardship the land we have been entrusted, and making sure that we are fiscally solvent so we exist in perpetuity to fulfill our promises.



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Who's Knocking?



At this time of year, homeowners are often awakened by a knocking on their house or a nearby object. More often than not, the perpetrator turns out to be a woodpecker.

While other birds use song to establish their territory and attract a mate, woodpeckers drum on highly resonant objects to advertise their presence. So if you find a bird pecking on your chimney cap or a metal downspout, they aren't looking for bugs. They're using the object to telegraph a message to other birds.

David Sibley describes the drumming of two of our most common woodpeckers as follows:

- **Hairy Woodpecker:** Very fast; at least 25 taps per second; long pauses of 20 seconds or more.
- **Downy Woodpecker:** Slower; about 15 taps per second; frequent drums with pauses of only a few seconds.

To hear recordings of these birds drumming, just search for "drumming" at www.sibleyguides.com.

Drumming does not usually harm structures, but in 1995 the Space Shuttle mission was delayed when flickers tapped six little holes into the Discovery's external fuel tank!

A MANUAL FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE LANDOWNERS & LANDSCAPERS:

Landscaping at the Water's Edge: An Ecological Approach

This new publication from the UNH Cooperative Extension explains how our landscaping choices impact surface and ground waters and provides information and expertise to help landscapers and property owners living along New Hampshire's waterways make decisions about landscape design and maintenance that will reduce pollution and environmental degradation.

The book is fully illustrated with photos and sketches to provide clear examples of the concepts presented. The appendices carry extensive information pertinent to state regulations, along with recommended plant lists and other resources.

You can order this and other publications from the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension at <http://extension.unh.edu/resources/> or send a check to UNH Cooperative Extension Publications Center, Nesmith Hall, 131 Main St., Durham, NH 03824.

Good News! Conservation Tax Incentive Renewed

Congress has renewed a tax incentive for private landowners—especially working family farmers and ranchers—who protect their land with a voluntary conservation agreement. The incentive, which had expired at the end of 2009, helped PLC work with willing landowners in our community to conserve acres of productive agricultural lands and natural areas between 2006 and 2009.

Conservation-minded landowners now have until **December 31, 2011** to take advantage of a significant tax deduction for donating a voluntary conservation agreement to permanently protect important natural or historic resources on their land. When landowners donate a conservation easement to PLC, they maintain ownership and management of their land and can sell or pass the land on to their heirs with a reduced tax burden while foregoing future development rights.

The enhanced incentive applies to a landowner's federal income tax and has these advantages:

- **Raises the deduction a donor can take** from 30% to 50% of their income in any year for donating a voluntary conservation agreement.
- **Allows farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their income.**
- **Increases the number of years over which a donor can take deductions** from 6 to 16 years.

"Our whole community wins when thoughtful landowners conserve their land this way, protecting wildlife habitat, clean drinking water, scenic landscapes, recreational spaces, and productive agricultural lands," says Paula Bellemore, PLC's Executive Director. "Conservation agreements have become an important tool nationally for protecting our watersheds, farms, and forests, increasing the pace of private land conservation by a third—to over a million acres a year."

According to the Land Trust Alliance, the national organization that provides a voice for land trusts in Washington, DC, last year's bills to make this incentive permanent had 274 House and 41 Senate co-sponsors from all 50 states, including majorities of Democrats and Republicans in the House. This legislation is supported by more than 65 national agricultural, sportsmen's, and conservation organizations.

How You Can Help Make this Tax Incentive Permanent

Legislation has been introduced to make the enhanced conservation easement tax incentive permanent. Call your senators and representatives today (Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121) and ask to speak with the staff members who handle tax issues.

- **Ask your senators to co-sponsor the Rural Heritage Conservation Act, SB 339**, by contacting Tiffany Smith at the Senate Finance Committee.
- **Ask your representative to become an original co-sponsor of the Conservation Easement Incentive Act** by contacting Lori Prater in Rep. Gerlach's office or Carla McNeill in Rep. Thompson's office.

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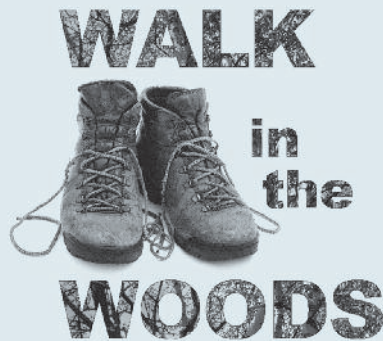
SPRING 2011
**Salamanders, Polliwogs,
Turtles & Frogs!**

Saturday, April 16

Birds & Blooms!

Saturday, June 18

See details inside.



Spring 2011 Volume 23, No.1

Piscataquog News

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spring is coming



Marsh marigold brightens swampy areas in spring
(Photo: Pat Nelson)

See inside for news
about changes at PLC and about

the life awakening

in your backyard and the watershed this spring.