

# Jeremy Wilson Named Executive Director

University of Maine Professor has Long Ties to the Monadnock Region

Jeremy Wilson has recently been chosen to assume leadership of the Harris Center as Executive Director Laurie Bryan retires. Currently associate professor in the School of Forest Resources of the University of Maine in Orono, Jeremy will bring to the role fresh insight into the stewardship of our conserved lands and a commitment to further integration of land, education, and citizen science programs.

Jeremy will join the Harris Center staff on a full-time basis July 1, as we say a fond farewell to Laurie Bryan. His selection is the culmination of an intensive search process that began in June 2011, when Laurie announced her impending retirement, graciously giving us a year to find her replacement. The national search process involved a dedicated search committee as well as the full staff and Board.

Jeremy holds an A.B in economics from Bowdoin College, a master's in forestry from Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and a Ph.D. in Silviculture from the University of Washington's College of Forest Resources.

For the past 11 years, he has taught both undergraduate and graduate courses at the University of Maine, where he also wrote grants for and directed research programs that advance understanding of forest stand dynamics. His interests include established and emerging approaches to forest ecosystem management as well issues of scale in forest ecology and management.

Jeremy's administrative experience at the university included management of the forestry program as curriculum coordinator, a position that required oversight and coaching of faculty, staff, and students.

Earlier in his career, Jeremy spent three years as a policy analyst for the consulting firm Abt Associates, Inc. in Cambridge, Mass., in addition to working as a research analyst for the Landscape Management Project and a research forester for the USDA Forest Service in Seattle, Wash.



JEREMY WILSON

"I am tremendously excited about getting to know the people, programs, and places that make the Harris Center so special," Jeremy said. "I am particularly interested in delving deeply into the region's conservation issues and helping to refine education and land conservation programs to address developing concerns."

Jeremy's move to the Monadnock region will be a homecoming of sorts. His great grandparents built a summer house in Peterborough and the family has been visiting the region ever since. "I grew up spending summers exploring the forests, hills, and lakes of the Monadnock region. The subtle beauty of the landscape, where layers of human alterations and natural landscape dynamics are tightly interwoven, always

captivated me. The region also seems to attract interesting people," said Jeremy.

Nor is Jeremy a stranger to the Harris Center, having followed its development over the years with interest. He and his wife Katie were married at the Harris Center in 1991. They have four children, Rowan, 16, Tatum, 13, Quinn, 9, and Oliver, 5. All are outdoor enthusiasts and enjoy swimming, sailing, hiking, and cross-country skiing together.

The staff and trustees welcome Jeremy and his family to the Harris Center community and look forward to introducing him to members, donors, and partner organizations in the coming months.

# Wild Reading

By Susie Spikol Faber  
Outreach Programs Coordinator

I think I first fell in love with nature not just through time spent exploring the wild edges of my childhood landscape, but also through the stories that I practically ate like juicy peaches while I camped out in all my natural outdoor reading nooks. The book was the passport into the story, but the wild reading rooms I stretched out in gave me the permission to engage beyond the story into the world around me as I read. I would pause, be still, let my mind wander, and open my senses.

With this experience in my heart, I trekked out this winter with six middle school girls, a book of matches, and a story to read as we made our way through downtown Hancock into the scraggle of woods behind the elementary school. Along the way, the girls read excerpts from Jack London's *To Build A Fire*. It was a cold gray February afternoon, but as we ambled, the air seemed to take on a Yukon chill. The girls

grew more and more quiet as the story intensified, and they shook their heads at the main character's mistakes and his lack of imagination. They praised the dog's quiet wisdom. We stopped in the woods not far from where we started. It felt like we were a million miles away, deep into the trail along the Yukon. We worked quickly to assemble our own fire—tinder and kindling readied, with wood to feed the flames. In two match strikes

our fire was lit and we moved in around its licking flames. Rennie Timm, Hancock children's librarian, read the final few paragraphs. The fire crackled; the girls listened as they toasted marshmallows. The story spun across the flames, and the howl of the dog marked the end of London's tale.

I loved this day with these girls. It was like we had walked into the story. As Rennie read the last few paragraphs, I sat across the fire circle and watched the girls. The marshmallow toasting wasn't the real treat. It was looking across the circle and seeing the girls tucked down in the snow, transfixed by both the story and the fire.



## Hats off to Susie!

We are thrilled and proud at the Harris Center with the recent accolade Susie Spikol Faber has received from the board of the New Hampshire Environmental Educators. Susie has been chosen as New Hampshire's Non-Formal Environmental Educator of the Year! For Harris Center staff, this comes as no surprise. Susie has long been recognized as a creative, diligent, devoted, energetic, and totally engaging leader in this work for over 20 years. Our hats are off to you, Susie, for your dedication and inspirational work that continues to nourish countless students of all ages, the community, and your appreciative colleagues as well. We count ourselves lucky to be working alongside you.

— Polly Pattison

# On the Right Path

## Otter Brook Farm and Environmental Literacy

By Laurel Swope, Middle/High School Teacher-Naturalist

Peering into trees, sorting buckets of bugs, and tracking a porcupine to its den have all become common experiences for the eighth graders of South Meadow and Great Brook Schools. Being the “newbie” naturalist at the Harris Center, having the chance to guide monthly excursions for these adolescents at Otter Brook Farm in Peterborough and Greenfield has been a supreme opportunity in a time of positive change in the school systems.

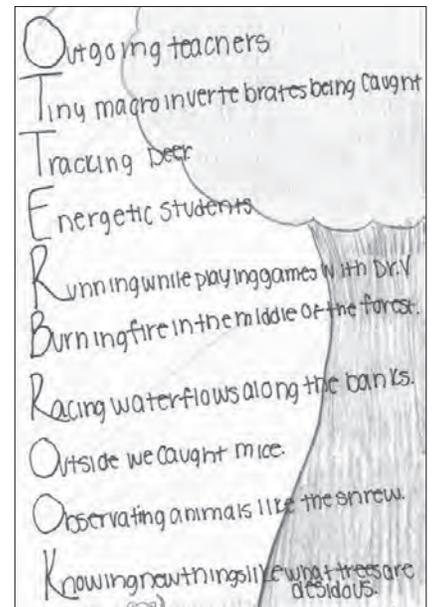
The bright side of educational policy right now is that the fall 2011 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (previously the No Child Left Behind Act) includes what is now known as the No Child Left Inside Act (NCLI). NCLI strives to create an avenue for well-rounded students who are environmentally literate. New Hampshire has been working for two years to create a draft of its Environmental Literacy Plan, which creates a pathway for achieving statewide environmental literacy, and is required for federal funding based on the new No Child Left Inside Act.

Our Harris Center mission includes our being “dedicated to promoting understanding and respect for our natural environment through education of all ages.” With the new initiatives from the nation and state, our mission is now being both realized and understood by many more individuals than ever before. The history of the Harris Center sets us up to be part of the change, and to continue to educate students outdoors.

Environmental literacy means having an understanding of the natural world, and having the ability to make decisions about the environment based on scientific, economic, aesthetic, and ethical considerations. At Otter Brook Farm, eighth-grade students are able to gain information on various aspects of science, including adaptations, water quality, forest cover type, small mammals, tracking animals for research, predator vs. prey relationships of specific habitats, winter survival techniques, survey sampling techniques, and much more.

With guided inquiry from September through March, the students are also gaining an understanding of the scientific process: to ask a question, gather background information to formulate a hypothesis (educated prediction), go to the field to collect the data, and return to analyze the data to see if their hypothesis was correct. After March, it's the students' turn to show they can create their own questions and to design experiments that may help make decisions about the environment. Their ideas, level of insight, and creativity never cease to amaze me.

The students become proud of their explorations and accomplishments in the outdoors by the end of their last middle school year. The classroom teachers and Otter Brook Farm naturalists are also proud of the transformation in students becoming environmentally aware citizens. The Otter Brook Farm program is one vision, in one district, in one state, that is on the right path. Just imagine the possibilities of No Child Left Inside, and the change we could see in youth across the nation!



Eighth-grade students at the ConVal district's Great Brook School wrote and illustrated poems, including these two, based on the field studies they are undertaking at Otter Brook Farm in Peterborough and Greenfield.

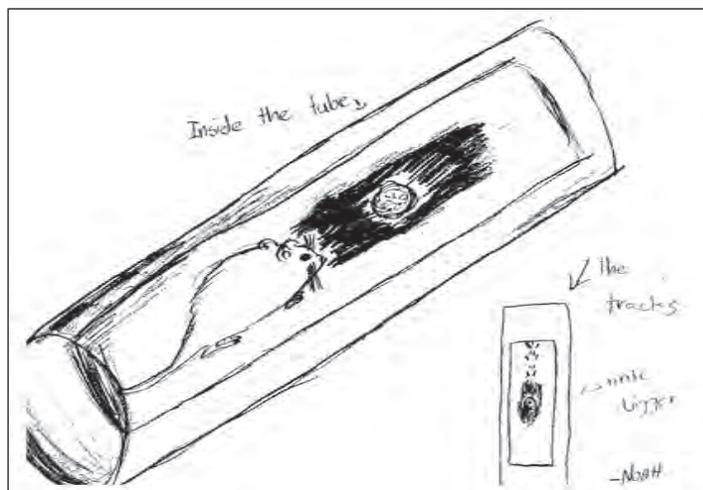
# Footprints in Charcoal

In a Snowless Winter, Fourth-Graders Make Their Own Tracking Devices

By Cole Turner, Evan Turner, and Noah Krason

Peterborough Elementary School Fourth Grade

*This winter, when Peterborough Elementary School fourth-graders began their study of New Hampshire mammals and habitats, there was very little snow. We were able to easily see lots of feeding evidence on the bare ground (chewed acorns, pine cones, and scat full of seeds and apple skins). Most everyone became competent in recognizing the differences in the shapes of acorn nuts eaten by mice and those eaten by squirrels. There was a lot of interest in learning about the lives of these small mammals. We designed an investigation to gather small mammal footprints in "tracking tubes." Fourth-graders Cole and Evan Turner, and Noah Krason worked together to plan, write, and illustrate this article describing their experience.*



**W**e did this project so we could learn about the smaller mammals. For example, white-footed mice live here in New Hampshire and so do meadow voles and short-tailed shrew. We were looking for evidence of these mammals, and since there wasn't snow for tracking, we made tracking tubes.

A tracking tube is a 20-inch length of drain pipe that has a 4-inch diameter. This is how the tube works. It is designed to catch only a small mammal's tracks, not the animal itself. An animal might walk in for food that we put inside, or for shelter. There is charcoal rubbed on a piece of paper surrounding the food. The charcoal isn't covering the whole paper, so that after the animal has eaten the peanut butter, it runs out and leaves its black footprint on the white part of the paper.

After our class, six tubes were out for one night, and only one tube looked like it had been visited by an animal. The peanut butter was partly eaten and there was a black tail drag mark between some of the gray footprints. Two days later there were more footprints in more tubes. Then we matched the footprints with illustrations from a field guide. Red squirrels and mice had visited our tubes. Next we will change one thing about our investigation and then put the tubes out again. Some groups will change the kind of place they put it and others will change the food. Here are some

fun parts of making and using the tracking tubes. A fun part is finding the right place to put the tracking tube. It is fun walking around in the woods with your friends. Another fun part is checking the tube and looking to see if an animal has gone in it. Here is one final fun part. It is fun to learn more about the smaller mammals near the school.

## How To Make a Tracking Tube

1. First, you need to collect a piece of 20-inch long drain pipe that has a 4-inch diameter; a piece of white paper an inch shorter than the tube and about 3.5 inches wide; and some peanut butter with oats mixed together. You also need a piece of soft artist's charcoal and some tape.

2. Next, color with the charcoal around the middle of the paper. You want to make sure that the charcoal on the paper is totally black.

3. Now place the food (peanut butter) in the center of the paper.

4. Then, tape the paper (that now has charcoal and food on it) into the tube. You want to make a tape roll (like a tube) and stick it onto the paper. Finally, slide the paper into tube and push the paper down on the tube. Now you have your own tracking tube!



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# Harris Hearsay

The Harris Center for Conservation Education  
Hancock, New Hampshire  
[www.harriscenter.org](http://www.harriscenter.org)

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## The Nighthawks' Haunt

Nighthawk Patrol volunteer Sigrud Scholz watches for state-endangered Common Nighthawks (*Chordeiles minor*) at dusk over the Colony Mill in Keene, part of a citizen science nighthawk survey coordinated by AVEO & New Hampshire Audubon in July 2011. Keene is one of only a handful of places in the entire state where these distinctive birds can still be found during the breeding season. The Colony Mill is a particularly notable nighthawk haunt, as nighthawks have historically congregated there to feed on insects attracted to the smokestack lights. AVEO will be partnering with New Hampshire Audubon and interested citizen scientists to conduct nighthawk monitoring in Keene again in 2012. Visit [www.aveo.org](http://www.aveo.org) to learn more!

*Photo by Kathleen Murphy*

# Land Ho!

*By Meade Cadot*

*Land Program Director and Senior Naturalist*

In the five months since the Harris Center annual meeting, the land committee and staff have been busy beavers—helping donors add a half dozen new properties to the Supersanctuary. In chronological order, the towns represented are Peterborough, Harrisville, Hancock, and Nelson. The Peterborough land, 17 acres, abuts and is, literally, related to the Otter Brook Farm land protected by a 470-acre conservation easement donation last May. Located on Route 136 in Happy Valley, the abutting, newly protected property (this one, too, by conservation easement donation) lies directly across Otter Brook from the farm, and features a fabulous view of North Pack. The 32 acres in Harrisville (purchased with funds donated for land protection) abut the Harris Center's Doone Mountain upland, and connect that land with the lowland and riparian land along Nubanusit Brook protected by the Army Corps of Engineers.

The newly protected land in Hancock comes as a conservation easement donation by Holly Fincher and Peter Newell, and is small in size (9 acres) but very strategic, as it was a potential house site in a scenic meadow near the Harris Center—right at the intersection of King's Highway, Eaton, and Old Dublin scenic roads.

Finally, a pair of land purchase and easement donations has added more than 250 acres to the Supersanctuary in Nelson. First, using funds donated for land protection, we purchased 80 acres along Old Stoddard Road and Bailey Brook, which abut our Osgood Mountain Kulish Ledges lot. Then, in late January, Maury, Martha, and Elizabeth Collins donated conservation easements protecting two abutting properties directly across the road, totaling 176 acres, and also abutting other Collins land already under a Harris Center conservation easement. We were awarded \$4,930 through the Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership to help cover transaction costs associated with the land purchase and easement acquisition. These newly protected lands result in a thousand-plus acre cluster of contiguous Supersanctuary lands, with almost a mile and a half of Old Stoddard Road protected on both sides. The importance of this road's protection to far-ranging wildlife was illustrated by research showing more utility poles with Black Bear territorial bites per mile than on any other road within the 18,000 acres protected by the Harris Center. Hooray for more room to roam for one and all—including all of you!