

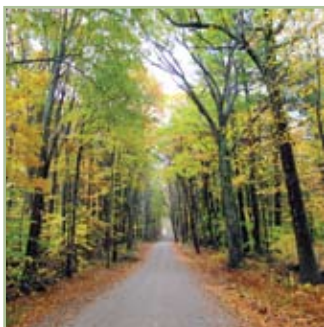
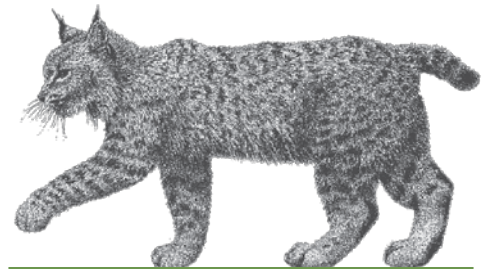


A Pileated Woodpecker forages for crabapples in Hancock, October 2014. photo: Meade Cadot

Harris Hearsay

THE HARRIS CENTER FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Hancock, New Hampshire



Our Mission

A member-supported nonprofit organization, the Harris Center for Conservation Education is dedicated to promoting understanding and respect for our natural environment through education of all ages, direct protection and exemplary stewardship of the region's natural resources, conservation research, and programs that encourage active participation in the great outdoors.

If you would like to join or donate to the Harris Center, please visit our website at harriscenter.org, call our office at (603) 525-3394, send an email to Diana at jacobs@harriscenter.org, or visit us at 83 King's Highway in Hancock, NH.

photo: Brett Amy Thelen

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Volunteer Trip Leader

harriscenter.org

A Pool for Pollinators

by Susie Spikol Faber



Early this fall, a dedicated crew of volunteers and staff dug in to get the old pool site ready for its new life as a pollinator garden.

I've always had a soft spot for the old swimming pool at the Harris Center. In the early 1990s, when I first started teaching at the Wol's Nest summer camp, I would lead campers into the deep, dark, dry base of the old pool. We'd meet in the fieldstone changing house to plan our expedition. Like cave explorers, we'd clutch flashlights as we ventured down into the stone-lined depression, where grasses, moss, lichen, mushrooms, and small plants had begun to grow. We'd always find salamanders tucked into the crevices around the huge boulder that emerged upward from the base. Never disappointed, we'd search the nooks and crannies of the forgotten pool and find snails, slugs, and worms. Once we even found a molted snake skin. It was like playing in a life-size, open-air terrarium.

Back in its day, the swimming pool must have been a haven on a hot afternoon. There's a picture of the Harris Center's founder, Eleanor Briggs, as a youngster, grinning a gap-toothed smile of childhood, swimming in the pool. She remembers days spent on that enormous boulder which peeked above the water line, and the many frogs she caught there.

Over time, the water was drained and small mosses and plants claimed the bits of organic debris that accumulated. Animals moved in. Years later, Harris Center campers once more played there, this time as explorers in search of life on the now mossy surfaces. Then, one day, it was filled in . . . its deep stone sides made the insurance company nervous.

For years, the pool lay buried under a pile of rubble, dirt, and weeds. The stone changing house aged, the windows and doors crumbled in disuse. The site became a shadow of what it had once been.

Then, its rebirth began, starting with the stone house. A generous donor, unsolicited, gave funds to fix up the little stone shed. Soon I noticed fresh paint, new glass, and a clean, restored interior. What a treasure it was to tuck away with a group of children in that magical space once again!

Now, with support from the Caswell Family Foundation, the pool, too, is getting a chance for a new life – this time as an oasis for pollinators, and for humans who find joy in walking through a beautiful garden.

A dedicated group of volunteers spent this past year designing the new pollinator garden, choosing the most appropriate plants, and clearing and cleaning the old pool site. Reclaimed, the pool now sits ready for its new life. Next spring, we'll transform this dirt rectangle into an invitation for birds, bees, butterflies, beetles, and more.

Come walk along the garden's edge, sit on the granite bench, rest on the patio, and find comfort in the shade of the fieldstone house. Feel as refreshed as if you had gone for a swim in an old stone pool on a hot summer day!

☛ If this story has wet your whistle, please contact Diana at jacobs@harriscenter.org or call (603) 525-3394 for information on how to volunteer with the pollinator garden project.



An early photo of Eleanor Briggs holding up a frog she'd caught in the pool.

LAND CONSERVATION NEWS

by Eric Masterson

Two recent projects highlight our land conservation efforts this year. In West Peterborough, the Harris Center conserved 109 acres on Brush Brook Road (Route 137), most of which is ranked “highest value” in the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan. The property is contiguous with a 7,142-acre conservation corridor between Nubanusit Lake and MacDowell Reservoir. It was formerly owned by Hiroshi Hayashi, the well-known chef and restaurateur, who long sought to conserve the land. The purchase was made possible by wonderfully generous donations from friends of the Supersanctuary and from the Town of Peterborough, through its land conservation capital reserve fund. In late October we were able to purchase 15 wooded acres bordering the property, conserving nearly 130 acres in total.

In Antrim, the Harris Center recently conserved the 184-acre undeveloped western portion of the former Girl Scout Camp Chenoa. The land shares its southern border with New Hampshire Audubon’s Willard Pond Wildlife Sanctuary. A 34-acre beaver pond and associated wetlands on the property provide wonderful habitat and help protect the quality of water flowing into Gregg Lake. Generous support from friends of the Supersanctuary, the Town of Antrim, New Hampshire Audubon, and members of the Gregg Lake Association made this purchase possible.



photo: Meade Cadot

Autumn meadow on the former Hiroshi Hayashi property in West Peterborough.



photo: Deb Porter-Hayes

The Chenoa property (roughly outlined above, and pictured below) is west of Gregg Lake in Antrim. Both the Hayashi and Chenoa properties will soon be utilized by the Harris Center’s education programs, and will feature public trails.

Thus far, the Harris Center’s land program has protected:

- **16** hills and mountains greater than **1,500** feet in elevation
- Shorefront surrounding or abutting **5** large lakes and **14** smaller water bodies
- **59** miles of rivers and streams
- More than **1,600** acres of diverse wetlands
- **13** miles of scenic hiking trails

...All on over **21,000** acres of conserved land grouped in large clusters.

photo: Stephen Froling

Two ConVal Teachers Honored at Our 44th Annual Meeting

by Jeremy Wilson and Janet Altobello

We held our 44th annual meeting in the Thelma Babbitt Room on Sunday, October 19. Susie Spikol Faber, celebrating her 20th year at the Harris Center, thoroughly entertained and inspired the crowd with stories highlighting lessons learned from teaching in the field and forest – namely “Embrace the moment”, “What you put out comes back to you,” and “Sometimes the end is just the beginning.”

Jeannie Connolly, ConVal’s Arts Integration Coordinator, received the **Laurie Bryan Partnership Award**, named for past Executive Director Laurie Bryan’s commitment to forming partnerships with organizations, groups, and individuals to further the Harris Center’s mission.



Jeannie Connolly (left) with Jenn Sutton.

Jeannie received the award in recognition of her 16 years of teamwork with Harris Center naturalists. She works with Harris Center educators and classroom teachers to plan art projects that help elementary school children explore natural and cultural history. With Jeannie’s guidance, children create their own nature journals, field guides, papier mâché animals, vertebrate books, watershed maps, downtown history tour guides, illustrated flash cards, and more.



Carol Young with Harris Center teacher/naturalist, Janet Altobello.

Janet Altobello, in her 25th year as a Harris Center teacher/naturalist, presented the **Educator of the Year** award to **Carol Young**, biology teacher and science department leader at ConVal High School. This award is given annually to educators who demonstrate exemplary collaboration with Harris Center naturalists.



(L to R) ConVal ninth graders, Delaney Beaudoin, Vicki Sousa, and Pat LaRoche conduct a heat transfer study in the Harris Center’s Kulish Room under the direction of adjunct teacher/naturalist Ted Stiles.

Last year, the Harris Center school program, with cooperation and support from Otter Brook Farm, embarked on new adventures with all 6th, 9th, and 10th graders in the ConVal School District. It was Carol Young who led the campaign to bring the Harris Center to every 9th and 10th grade science class. ConVal 9th graders, as part of a heat transfer study in their earth and physical science course,

conducted an energy audit and made recommendations for improving the building’s energy efficiency. ConVal 10th graders, as part of their biology classes, worked with Harris Center teacher/naturalist Laurel Swope to conduct an invasive plant survey of ConVal’s campus, and made recommendations for controlling the spread of these opportunistic plants. We’re grateful that this project will continue another year. Carol is an insightful, strong teacher who creates lab and field experiences that encourage student curiosity, and we are delighted to work with her as she skillfully guides students toward scientific literacy.

The Harris Center is very pleased to recognize and honor these two extraordinary educators!

Land protection and conservation research efforts within the past year were highlighted by Executive Director Jeremy Wilson. Photos and details of the land protection projects can be found in the *Land Conservation News* article in this newsletter.

In the business meeting, board officers for the year were announced: **Jack Calhoun** of Harrisville, Chair; **Hunt Dowse** of Hancock, Vice Chair; **Chuck Van Horn** of Hancock, Treasurer, and **Alison Rossiter** of Hancock, Secretary. Retiring trustees **Paul Faber** and **Emily Hartshorne** were recognized for their wonderful service. We welcomed two new board members, **Beth Corwin** and **Richard Pendleton**, both from Peterborough.

After the meeting, attendees were invited to tour points of interest throughout the Harris Center building and the grounds. Enticing homemade refreshments were provided by our board of directors.

Thanks for a great year and a great annual meeting!

Celebrating the Year of the Salamander: Part II

by Brett Amy Thelen



A spotted salamander makes its way across North Lincoln Street in Keene during the spring amphibian migration.

Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) — a national coalition of biologists, land managers, and individuals dedicated to the conservation of amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats — has designated 2014 as the *Year of the Salamander*, a time to illuminate, educate, and celebrate all things salamander. In salute, here are a few (more) stories from the Harris Center’s salamander files:



Salamanders Can Help You Get Into a Good College

Every spring, the Harris Center’s citizen science program trains volunteers to serve on Salamander Crossing Brigades at amphibian road crossings throughout the Monadnock Region. These heroic volunteers count migrating amphibians and safely usher the animals across roads during one or more “Big Nights” each spring.

Sarah and Emily Wilson — a mother-daughter team from Keene — first joined the Salamander Crossing Brigades when Emily was in fourth grade, nearly a decade ago. Sarah recalls, “I still remember our first night out, when we got out of the car and a wood frog was hopping across the road right in front of us!” It quickly became a springtime tradition: “Emily and I would go out even when we weren’t ‘called.’ If it was maybe just a little rainy, or the temperature wasn’t just right, we would go out anyway. And those were wonderful nights. Often we were the only ones out, and we would talk as we walked back and forth on the road, and listen to the peepers and wood frogs that had already made it safely across the street to their vernal pools... It gave us some wonderful mom-daughter time.”

As the coordinator of this project, I’ve had the pleasure of watching Emily grow up with the Salamander Crossing Brigades, one rainy evening at a time. On school nights, her mother

would insist on leaving the crossing site early enough to get a good night’s rest, but Emily was always reluctant to go, ever on the lookout for salamanders. And I’ll never forget the year Emily showed up behind the wheel of the family station wagon – logging hours for her driver’s permit while transporting her mother to the amphibian crossing. Suddenly, she was no longer a kid! When the time came to apply to college, Emily wrote her application essay on her salamandering (see opposite page on right), and it did the trick!

This year saw the advent of a new twist on the Wilsons’ springtime tradition: instead of walking side by side, Sarah and Emily texted back and forth about the first spotted salamander of the season. Sarah was at North Lincoln Street in Keene, as always, but Emily was at Smith College in western Massachusetts, where her passion for salamanders helped open the door to a whole new adventure.

Salamanders are One of a Kind

In addition to their stop-you-in-your-tracks-and-then-tell-everyone-you-know-about-it charisma (see *Celebrating the Year of the Salamander: Part I* in the Spring 2014 *Hearsay*), spotted salamanders are one of a kind: that is, each individual adult spotted salamander has its own unique spot pattern.

This past spring, we piloted a project to photograph the spot patterns of spotted salamanders encountered at the North Lincoln Street amphibian road crossing in Keene, and we were able to identify five individual salamanders on their migrations both to and from their breeding wetland. This new, minimally invasive “mark-recapture” technique could potentially provide meaningful information on year-to-year survival of the spotted salamanders that must cross roads to reach their breeding pools. In the words of one of our Salamander Crossing Brigade volunteers, it’s also *way cool*.



SPOT PATTERN COMPARISON: This spotted salamander was encountered on its inbound migration on April 11, 2014 (left) and its outbound migration on April 27, 2014 (right). Note the distinctive spot pattern on the animal’s head and upper back, which is unique to this individual salamander.

“The Big Night” by Emily Wilson

I look outside the kitchen window and see that the stone walkway leading up to our side door is spotted with raindrops. I run into the living room where my mom lies on the floor, reading the newspaper. “It’s raining!” I say. “How cold is it?” she asks.

I go back into the kitchen and look at the little thermometer on the table: 45° F. On my way back into the living room to report the temperature, I glance out the window once more. The sidewalk, although difficult to see at dusk, is completely wet from steady rain now falling. Tonight is going to be perfect.

“Make sure you wear layers under your raincoat,” my mom advises me as I run upstairs, skipping every other step. “Got it,” I yell down. “Don’t forget the bucket!”

I don’t hear a response, so I figure she has already gone down to the basement to retrieve the blue plastic bucket that holds our reflective vests, headlamps, Rite-In-The-Rain paper, *Amphibian Crossing Brigade* handbook, and a little, yellow sand shovel for removing dead amphibians from the pavement.

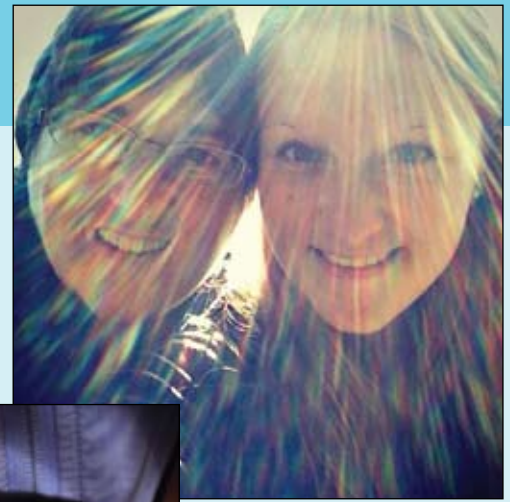
As I put my rainboots on in the kitchen, my dad calls in from the living room. “Have fun,” he says.

“You sure you don’t want to come with us?” I ask sarcastically, knowing he has no intention of going out in the rain on a cold night.

“No,” he says with a slight chuckle. “I’m fine staying here.”

Just as I open the door leading out to the driveway, my mom comes upstairs from the basement carrying the bucket, already clad in her reflective vest. Tucking my ponytail into my hood, I dash from the house to the car with a smile on my face, my mom right behind me.

Seatbelts and windshield wipers on, we pull out of the driveway



photos: Sarah Wilson



and head towards the crossing site. I plug in my iPod and attempt to pick good salamander crossing music for the ride there. As North

Lincoln Street is only across town, we arrive shortly and proceed to drive slowly along the stretch of road that is designated as the crossing site. We park and, making sure we have the bucket, we join the other trained crossing brigade volunteers, already walking up and down the road with flashlights. Just five minutes in, my flashlight illuminates a spotted salamander cruising along the pavement.

“I found a spotty!” I call out. The various glows from the other volunteers’ flashlights start drifting towards us. Soon, a small group forms to admire the sleek black creature with yellow polka dots. Some people take out cameras, trying to keep them dry by holding one hand over the lens; some just coo in motherly manner. The salamander begins to squirm in my hand, so I break away from the cluster of people and walk across the street to place it in a pile of sodden leaves. As it wiggles away, I whisper, “Have fun.”

Just like my dad had said to me.

Denny Wheeler – Volunteer Trip Leader in Good Company

by Eric Masterson

There’s a bookshelf at the Harris Center on which you can find past issues of our print calendar dating all the way back to January 24, 1976. Recently I cracked open a binder to the 1995 winter issue and found some familiar trip leader names among the listings: Lee Baker, Brian Bishoff, Bob Boynton, Swift Corwin, Geoff Jones, Ollie Mutch, Jim Orr, and one other – Denny Wheeler.

As I thought about planning for the spring 2015 calendar, I realized how valuable it is to have many of the same volunteers participating 20 years later – a testament to the role they play in supporting one of our core programs. Recruitment and retention of trip leaders are two sides of the same coin, and we’re always eager to welcome new faces, as we did in March of 1995. If you went on a “moderately-easy outing in the woods of Swanzey to view the Cheese Cut” on March 18 of that year, you’d have been led by Jane Mutch and Denny Wheeler. Jane was already a veteran, while Denny was co-leading her first outing for the Harris Center – though by that time, she was already an old hand on the trails.

With her two nieces, Denny had exhausted the trails of Mount Monadnock and came to the Harris Center looking for new opportunities. She participated in several Harris Center hikes, often with Jane, before committing to leading new trips, and has since led 110 hikes to varied locations across the Monadnock region. Though the Cheese Cut is still a top pick, Royalston Falls is now her number one favorite.

Thank you for 20 years of service, Denny!

