

FALL 2016

Harris Hearsay

THE HARRIS CENTER FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Hancock, New Hampshire



Barred Owl photo: Brett Amy Thelen



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'd 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.

You can help ensure a grand future for the Monadnock Region by naming the Harris Center as a beneficiary in your will or estate plan. Anyone can make a bequest, and no amount is too small. For more information, contact Jeremy Wilson at (603) 525-3394 or wilson@harriscenter.org.

Our warmest thanks go out to everyone who has already made a donation to the Harris Center's Annual Fund. If you've yet to give, we hope you'll reflect on the widespread benefit to all as you consider making a contribution. If you'd like to make your donation online, please visit our website. For other ways to donate, please contact Diana at (603) 525-3394 or jacobs@harriscenter.org. We appreciate your support!

In this issue...

Summer Adventures

Land Conservation News

Our 46th Annual Meeting

In the Field with the KSC
Conservation Research
Interns

harriscenter.org

Now THAT's a Beaver Stump!

Peggy Ueda stands alongside
an impressive beaver-felled
tree on a Harris Center
outing to the Forest
Society's Heald Tract
in Wilton.

photo: Dave Butler





First Time Explorers

by Jaime Hutchinson, Teacher/Naturalist

For the past six summers, I've been lucky enough to welcome the youngest group of campers, the 4- and 5-year-old **Explorers**, into a world full of outdoor adventure, songs, games, and longstanding camp traditions. Every time I teach them how to sing "Alligator Pie" for the very first time, I feel a smile stretch across my face.

The week often begins with a few children peering shyly around the legs of their parents during drop off, or sitting very quietly with stuffed animals during our opening circle. Their apprehension quickly disappears as we enter the woods, which they explore with wonder and excitement. Watching amphibians in our frog pond allows them to forget about the heat and the bugs, at least for a little while. Soon it's time for a picnic lunch under the apple tree as we wait for their parents to arrive. Then, the once-shy children are running up to their parents to tell them all about the salamanders they found or the "bear cave" they discovered. I'm always humbled that I get to share in these first-time experiences – the first, I hope, of many. ➡



At Home in the Woods

by Jenna Spear O'Mara, Teacher/Naturalist

Our goal at the Harris Center is to nurture a sense of belonging in nature. We want kids to feel at home building a fort in the woods, paddling a canoe, or observing bugs beneath the shade of an apple tree.

This year, we reinvented our camp programs in order to provide kids with an experience that they couldn't get in other local camps. The **Woodlanders** spent hours birdwatching, hiking, searching for salamanders, and building forts. The **Rovers** learned about edible plants, even making pancakes out of cattail flour. **Paddlers** and **Wanderers** discovered what it means to make a home in the woods by setting up a camp, preparing meals as a group, and leaving no trace when the adventure was over.

Seeing the kids come to camp with a sense of excitement was gratifying. But the best part for me by far was watching them at the end of each day, holding drawings of birds or insects, hands dirty from searching for critters, and absolutely full of stories of their adventures.



Hours led to days, days to a week or more, and before I knew it our campers knew the woods, the fields, and the ponds like their own backyards. They even had nicknames for their favorite quiet places on the Harris Center grounds and for certain "perfect" boulders on the trails. Camp had helped them immerse themselves in the natural world in a way that shorter outdoor experiences just don't allow. They had found their way home. ➡



The former railroad bed makes for a great trail. photo: Russ Cobb

LAND CONSERVATION NEWS

by Jeremy Wilson, Executive Director

Hancock Rail Trail

We're so pleased to announce that, thanks to extraordinary support from friends of the SuperSanctuary, we're opening another segment of rail trail in Hancock – 0.8 mile connecting Old Dublin Road with Eaton Road.

The Manchester and Keene Railroad line was completed in 1878, and trains served Hancock residents for more than 50 years. When railroad usage declined in the 1930s and the Great New England Flood of 1936 damaged several trestles beyond repair, the line was completely abandoned. Now, it will have a new life as a trail for hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and other nonmotorized recreation.

Planning a walk? Parking is to your right after entering the driveway at 92 Old Dublin Road. No motorized vehicles are allowed on the trail. We love dogs — and they must be on leash at all times, and dog waste carried out. 🐾



To open up the trail, small trees were removed from the railroad bed and drainage ditches cleared.



A new walking bridge is supported by huge granite bridge abutments. photos: Jeremy Wilson



Railroad mile markers along the trail report Keene is 20 miles to the west and Nashua (not Manchester) 37 miles to the east.



Educators and Researchers Honored at Our 2016 Annual Meeting

The Harris Center recognized several extraordinary partners at our 46th Annual Meeting on a glorious Sunday, October 16. **Jack Calhoun**, outgoing trustee chair, introduced the new slate of board trustees, including Karen Bennett, Sandy Greene, Jim Hassinger, Tyler Hogan, and Dan Langille, followed by a warm welcome to **Sue Copley**, our new trustee chair.

Executive Director **Jeremy Wilson** thanked the many volunteers who make what we do possible, reviewed land and school program highlights from the past year, and recognized staff anniversaries.

Sharyn D'Eon, principal of Chesterfield School, was named **2016 Educator of the Year**. The Harris Center first worked with Sharyn 26 years ago, initially as a student teacher, then as a teacher with her own classroom at (Benjamin) Franklin School in Keene. Now, as principal of Chesterfield Elementary School, Sharyn continues to place a high value on kids exploring their local landscape and on teachers gaining confidence and competence with outdoor natural science investigations.

Sharyn's vision has become reality – the Harris Center now works with *every* 1st through 8th grade student and teaching team at her school. No child is left inside at Chesterfield School thanks to Sharyn D'Eon!

The Harris Center also honored the **Keene State College Department of Environmental Studies** with the **Laurie Bryan Partnership Award**. Professor



Sharyn D'Eon, principal of Chesterfield School, received the **2016 Educator of the Year** award, presented by Harris Center teacher/naturalist **Jenna Spear O'Mara**. photo: Margaret Baker

Renate Gebauer accepted the award for the college, which makes vital contributions to the Harris Center's conservation research work. Through coursework, independent research, internships, and citizen science projects, KSC's dedicated faculty and students collect ecological data that help inform our land stewardship. Their work also ties in with our education mission, as it provides exceptional, hands-on learning opportunities for young adults who have great enthusiasm for the natural world, often with little professional experience in the environmental field.

Harris Center highlights from the year included celebrating the conservation of over 800 acres of land in Harrisville and Nelson. Our school programs had a successful year, collaborating with classroom teachers in over 160 classrooms in the Monadnock Region. In addition, we offered over 120 environmentally focused outings, lectures, movie screenings, workshops, camps, and afterschool programs last year.

Dr. Hutch Hutchinson, from the Boston University Questrom School of Business,

was our featured speaker. His fascinating talk, "Learning from the Mountain," traced New Hampshire's central role in the birth of the outdoor education movement.



Dr. Hutch Hutchinson delighted us with tales of New Hampshire's role as a leader in the birth of the outdoor education movement.

photo: Meade Cadot

After the meeting, attendees were invited to view a display made by the Chesterfield School's 2nd grade teachers, and to socialize over the enticing homemade refreshments provided by our board of trustees.

Thanks for another great year, and a great annual meeting! ➡



Renate Gebauer accepted the **2016 Laurie Bryan Partnership Award** on behalf of **Keene State College's Environmental Studies** program.

photo: Meade Cadot

IN THE FIELD

with the Keene State College Conservation Interns

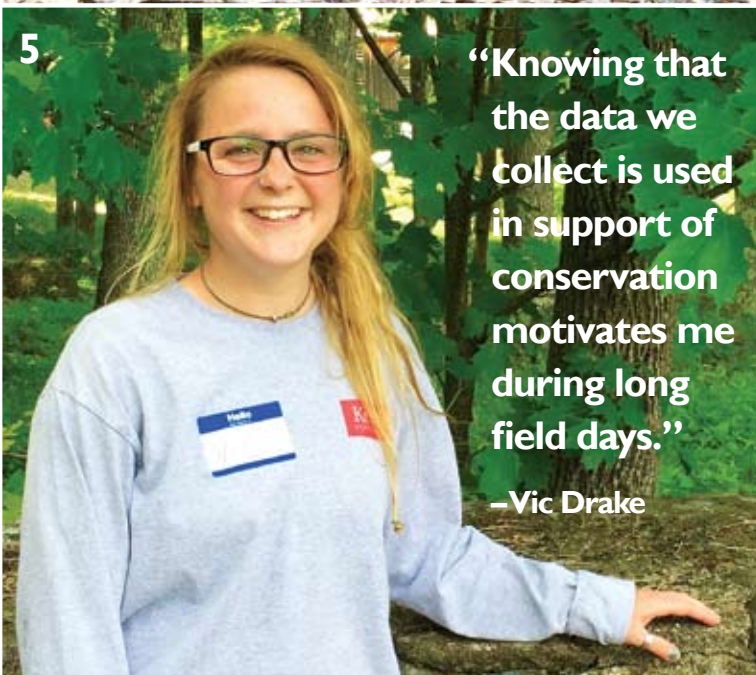
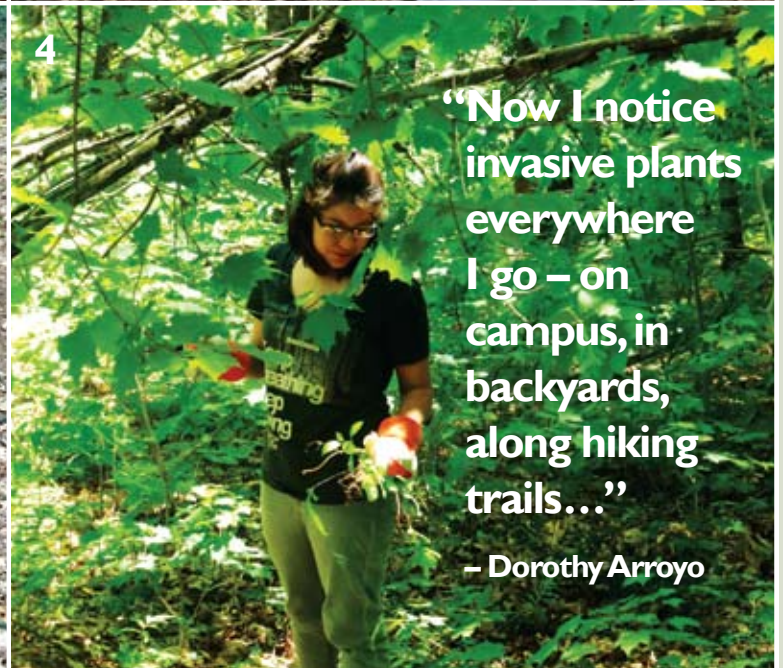


The 2016 KSC Conservation Interns: (left to right) Shauna Sousa, Dorothy Arroyo, Vic Drake, and Rob Lanfranchi

by Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director

Each summer, under the guidance of Harris Center staff and KSC faculty, a team of undergraduates gains specialized training and firsthand experience with many facets of the Harris Center's diverse conservation and education work as part of a seven-week conservation internship program.

It's a win-win! The Harris Center receives tremendous help with our stewardship and education activities, plus scientific data we can use to better steward the lands in our care, and the students gain an unparalleled, hands-on learning experience. Since 2013, **four teams of conservation interns** have documented a whopping **47 vernal pools** on more than **3,000 acres** of land; surveyed **85 forest community inventory plots**; and recorded over **4,500 wildlife** road mortality observations, of over **30 species**, on a road that bisects Harris Center-protected lands. They've documented **4 invasive plant infestations** and pulled **thousands of invasive plants**; helped construct or improve **2.5 miles of hiking trail**; measured, mapped, and monitored **10 American chestnut plantings**; assisted with **12 educational events** for students in Grades 2 through 10. They helped prepare the Harris Center's new **pollinator garden** site for planting; conducted **weekly monitoring** of the Harris Center's backcountry campsites on Spoonwood Pond; and assisted with conservation **easement monitoring**, among other tasks. Wow! 🐾



Keene State College Conservation Internships at a Glance

- 1 **Documenting a Vernal Pool** The 2016 KSC conservation intern team documents a vernal pool on Harris Center-conserved land.
- 2 **Forest Community Inventory** Rob Lanfranchi uses a prism as part of a forest community inventory project.
- 3 **A Rest in the Woods** Shauna Sousa takes a rest before resuming a forest community inventory on the Hiroshi Land.
- 4 **Hand Pulling Invasive Plants** Dorothy Arroyo tackles an invasive plant infestation on Harris Center-conserved land.
- 5 **A Career in Conservation** Vic Drake wrote that her internship with the Harris Center reinforced her professional commitment to protecting the natural world.

photos: Internship team and Brett Amy Thelen