

CONNECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF COLD HOLLOW TO CANADA FOREST LINK



SUMMER 2016

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WHEN THE FOREST CAME TO THE CAPITAL

By Charlie Hancock, Board Chair

Greetings friends and welcome to the Summer 2016 edition of *Connections*, the quarterly newsletter from Cold Hollow to Canada. The trees are leafing out, the songbirds are coming back, and the peepers are busy at their evening cacophony, lending a soundtrack to any windows left open at supper time. We hope you're enjoying the beautiful weather and that your gardens are turned and ready for planting.

Last year the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation delivered the 2015 *Vermont Forest Fragmentation Report* to the legislature. The comprehensive report detailed the importance of forests to our cultural heritage, our economic vitality, and our ecological health. The report also documented both the process and the effect of forests fragmentation occurring across the state—including the eye opening fact that for the first time in over 100 years we are losing forest cover—and shined an important spotlight on the need to balance future growth with the protection of healthy working forests, and the myriad of services they provide.

This year, as the first half of the Legislative Session progressed, we saw a number of bills introduced which focused on the future of what (in my biased opinion) is Vermont's greatest resource. The most wide-ranging piece of legislation around the future of our forests to pass through the house and senate this year was H.857. This bill took many

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Bridget Butler - Program Director

PHOTOS: MARTHA MACY (TOP), WILLIAM H. MAJOROS (LEFT)



turns during the session, but in the end came out from under the golden dome as one of the strongest tools for ensuring the future of healthy and intact forests, clean water, and functional wildlife habitat for the future of our state.

One of the most important components of the bill is the provision which amends the goals and requirements for municipal and regional land use planning to address forest fragmentation. The bill encourages local and regional plans to identify those areas that are important as forest blocks and areas of habitat connectivity, and to plan for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests. A plan may include specific policies to encourage the active management of those areas for wildlife habitat, water quality, timber production, recreation, or other values or functions identified by the regional planning commission. The policies could be regulatory or non-regulatory. It's important that the bill retains local control, for each town or regional planning commission to decide what path is appropriate for them. Finally, this section of the bill would create a study committee to examine potential revisions to Act 250 and municipal bylaws to protect contiguous areas of forestland from fragmentation and promote habitat connectivity between forestlands.

Other provisions of H.857 include

- Establishing a working group on Intergeneration Transfer of Forestland to develop recommendations for a statewide program to improve the capacity of successional planning technical assistance for forestland owners, keeping forests intact between generations.

- Amending the requirements related to compensation, terms of appointment and authority of town forest fire wardens, and directs the Commissioner of Forests and Parks to develop a policy that determines how to reimburse towns for the costs of fire suppression.
- Directing the Commissioner to submit a report recommending implementation of a harvest notification program for the State of Vermont.
- Clarifying that a municipal bylaw may not provide regulation of sound silviculture practices in our working forests
- Creating a path to ease the financial burden on landowners around the donation of forestland to the Green Mountain National Forest, or to the Agency of Natural Resources for public use.
- While not included in H. 857, another bill passed by the house and senate this session will require the licensing of Foresters who practice in the state, elevating the profession and ensuring that the stewards of our forests are well qualified to direct the management of the vast woodlands.

Healthy forests play an important role in mitigating climate change, maintaining clean water, fueling our local economy, supporting recreation, tourism, and so much more. The legislation passed continues the legislature and administration's work to elevate the importance of Vermont's forests, and we applaud them for their efforts and attention around such important work.





COURTESY OF MATHIEU DUPUIS, SÉPAQ

PRESERVING HABITATS AROUND THE PARC NATIONAL DU MONT-ORFORD

By André Champoux, Appalachian Corridor Conservation Consultant



During this past winter, Appalachian Corridor, in partnership with Sépaq (Société des établissements de plein air du Québec), has put in place a project to protect the periphery of the Parc national du Mont-Orford. The goal is to make landowners in this area more aware of the importance of preserving lands with important ecological values because, among other reasons, they are located close to a huge protected area. Biodiversity does not know administrative boundaries created and imposed by humans. Mammals move in and around the park, birds fly over it and nest there, and plants flourish in the whole region.

It is important to slow the increasing development in areas around the park to minimize land uses that could work against the mission of provincial parks: to preserve our natural and cultural heritage in these parks. To do this, it is important to permanently maintain and perpetuate the habitats essential to animal and plant populations, and also to make sure that species are not confined within the park. Under this project, a peripheral zone was delineated so that organizations and landowners of large properties (more than 5 ha) could participate in the conservation of natural habitats. The municipalities and the RCMs will also take part in the project. They will take into account the periphery in their land use planning tools for the region.

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What is a “peripheral zone”?

This is the zone within which legal activities could have a major impact on conservation in the park, on its biodiversity, its environment and the visitor experience, and inversely, within which the presence of the park has a positive influence on the community that lives there, from an environmental, social and economic development perspective.



COURTESY OF MATHIEU DUPUIS, SÉPAQ

CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION IN THE NORTHERN GREENS

By Bridget Butler



First row: Bridget Butler (CHC), Stansje Plantenga (Ruiter Valley Land Trust)
Second row: Caroline Dauget (Appalachian Corridor), Louise Gratton (Appalachian Corridor), and Nancy Patch (CHC)

Cold Hollow to Canada's program director Bridget Butler and board member Nancy Patch recently visited our partners in Quebec to discuss cross-border collaboration. The Ruiter Valley Land Trust and Appalachian Corridor both work in Quebec in the Northern Green Linkage and are part of Two Countries One Forest's Staying Connected Initiative.

A wonderful spring morning was spent outside discussing areas of common interest and overlap. All three groups have been gathering data on wildlife using the Keeping Tracking Monitoring Program protocols and are interested in developing a database about wildlife crossing roadways. Moving forward the

three partner groups will look to maximize the use of volunteer skills by cross posting tracking survey dates and events. The goal is to reinvigorate volunteers by encouraging them to visit other survey sites and learn from each other. The groups will also collaborate on CHC's new WildPaths Project to monitor roads for wildlife through live sightings, roadkill and tracks.

Ruiter Valley Land Trust, Appalachian Corridor and CHC will also be sharing stories of their conservation successes with each other through newsletters and social media. We hope to continue to build a stronger constituency cross-border with our Quebec partners as wildlife and wild places have no bounds, and neither should we.

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HOW DID THE MOOSE CROSS THE ROAD?

By Eve Frankel, The Nature Conservancy in Vermont

The generosity of our forests is endless. They clean our air and water, store carbon, provide timber, and produce fuel for heat. Forests protect our soils, help maintain our earth's biodiversity and provide habitat for wildlife. As our large blocks of forests are fragmented by development, wildlife is often the first to feel its impacts when wide ranging species like bear, bobcat and moose can't "get there from here".

Such is the case in the "Bolton Flats" area east of Burlington, where moose, bear or deer encounter multiple challenges to moving north-south. They encounter train tracks, Interstate 89, and VT Route 2 in a densely traveled area. Wildlife crossing signs are prominently posted but animal vehicle collisions still occur frequently. These are usually deadly for the animal involved, and can be very dangerous or even fatal for drivers.

In this and other locations, innovative efforts are happening to make transportation corridors more permeable for wildlife movement. For example, creating wildlife walkways under highway bridges and installing larger culverts for use as animal crossings can make a big impact.

Our state lies at the crossroads of an extensive wildlife habitat network reaching from the Adirondacks in New York to the Canadian Maritimes. Just like people, animals need to travel through this region, across state

boundaries, highways and roads in search of mates, food, and wintering sites. As this region becomes more developed, we are working to ensure that wildlife can continue to thrive on our shared planet.

TNC's Wildlife Connectivity Work

- Targeted land protection that secures important forested pathways for wildlife.
- Cutting-edge conservation science that informs our investments and best practices for a wildlife friendly transportation system.
- Wildlife cameras and professional trackers to assess animal movements at key road crossings. TNC is monitoring 84 cameras at 22 Vermont sites over a 3 year period to determine whether animals are—or aren't—moving safely under bridges and culverts.
- Community engagement in land use planning efforts to sustain forests in the vast areas that aren't permanently protected through land conservation.

The Nature Conservancy in Vermont is a critical player in Two Countries One Forest's Staying Connected Initiative (SCI), which encompasses 5 states, 3 Canadian provinces, and nearly 30 partners committed to protecting wildlife connectivity from New York to Nova Scotia.

Caught on Camera

Here are candid shots from some of the 84 game cameras we monitor to research animal passage under bridges and through culverts across Vermont.

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COURTESY OF THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN VERMONT

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FORESTLAND OWNED BY THE VERMONT LAND TRUST AND THE NATURE CONSERVANCY FOR SALE PROCEEDS WILL FUND FORESTLAND PROTECTION IN VERMONT

Nearly 20 years ago, the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) formed the Atlas Timberlands Partnership to buy 26,000 acres of forestland. The land spans 10 towns: Bakersfield, Belvidere, Craftsbury, Eden, Elmore, Jay, Lowell, Montgomery, Richford, and Westfield. The purchase gave the two organizations a chance to navigate the challenges of managing large tracts of timberland while balancing the ecological, economic, and social values associated with forest management choices.

Over the years the partnership has sold around 3,000 acres of the initial purchase. Now, with Vermont's unfragmented forests on the decline for the first time in a century, VLT and TNC are feeling the urgency to protect more forestland from development. One difficulty is that there is limited funding to support forest conservation. The two organizations are planning to sell up to 23,000 acres to fund the conservation of more forestland.

"We have achieved our key goals of sustainable forestry, conservation, public access, habitat protection, and quality stewardship for these lands, and are eager to apply these lessons to other conservation investments in Vermont's forest," said VLT President Gil Livingston.

The Atlas lands have been open for recreation under VLT and TNC ownership; the conservation easements that protect this land will ensure access continues under future ownership. The easements will also protect features of ecological importance and ensure sustainable forestry practices. Potential buyers will be thoughtfully considered for stewardship values and land management practices that reflect the vision of the two organizations.

Please visit vlt.org/atlas to learn more and view maps of the land.

BOOK REVIEW HALF-EARTH: OUR PLANET'S FIGHT FOR LIFE BY EDWARD O. WILSON

By Nancy Patch

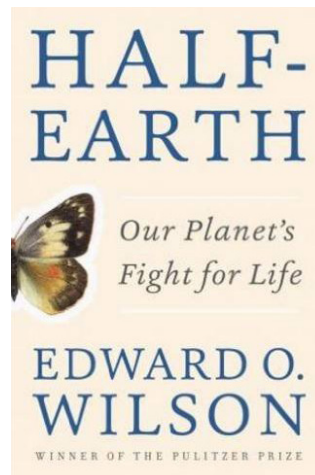
This is more of a book recommendation than a book review. I have been a big fan of E.O. Wilson for much of my adult life. He is a brilliant scientist and author whose work has provided access to an understanding of the big issues that are facing humanity and the earth. This book is a brutal description of what we have done and are doing to the planet. Most of the scientific community has agreed that we are now living in a new epoch that has been coined the Anthropocene, the epoch of man. An epoch that is dominated by the effects of humans on the earth. One of those effects is the greatest mass extinction of species since the extinction of the dinosaurs, which occurred 65 million years ago when an asteroid hit the earth. There have been only 5 peaks of apocalyptic extinctions in the history of life on earth (3.8 billion years), each taking about 10 million years to recover with new species. We are right now losing species at a rate 1,000 times higher than before the spread of humanity. We are in the midst of the sixth extinction.

This book does more than let us know what is happening to our planet and biosphere, it offers a solution that is equal to the magnitude of the problem. First it can be shown that conservation does work. As an example, the extinction of bird species has been cut in half due to conservation efforts. Another; since the enactment of the endangered species act 22 species have gone extinct, but 227 species have been saved that would most likely have been lost. The unfortunate fact is that while conservation works, these efforts currently fall short of what it will take to save the natural world.

Next, encourage the naturalists. Approximately 2/3 of the species on earth are still unknown as are the ecosystems that support them.

“The crucial factor in the life and death of a species is the amount of suitable habitat left to them.” Mr. Wilson tells stories of the passion and sharing that occurs among naturalists. My own experience with the best naturalists in Vermont verify and solidify his description. We have work to do. But we all need to be bolder and reach for a greater goal, so that scientists can still make these new discoveries.

This goal is to protect half the planet in order to thread the bottleneck of human population growth. The population of the planet is expected to grow to at least 10 billion from the 7 billion that exists today before it starts to decline. But it will decline. “In every country where women have gained some degree of social and financial independence, their average fertility has dropped by a corresponding amount through individual personal choice”. If women are safe, free and educated, global population will decline. Protecting this half-earth can also be done in a way to link the planet together; to provide connectivity on a global scale, much the way Cold Hollow to Canada is working to link the habitats in the Northern Forest Ecoregion. Currently, we have globally protected about 15% of the earth’s land area and about 3% of the oceans. This goal is achievable but we have to be bold. This book provides a path. If you love the earth, read this book.





A WILD NEW VIEW

By Bridget Butler

Late spring and summer are my favorite seasons for work. That's because it's the time of year that requires me to get outside to do my job for CHC as Program Director. The WildPaths Project has been a big part of my outside time this spring as I've been visiting local conservation commissions and environmental groups to share our reinvigorated citizen science project. I've also been busy leading WildPaths Walks each month to introduce more community members to the project and demonstrate how easily our roadside observations can become valuable data.

While the project has been received very well and we've had plenty of folks on the monthly walks, I think I'm most amazed at how it's changed my perspective while driving. I'm actively looking for signs of successful and unsuccessful crossings and I'm always thinking about how animals move across the landscape. My eye has become

fine tuned to look for places where the road I'm traveling has separated forest from wetland, or where the forest is allowed to grow as close to the road as possible on either side. I take cues from the landscape, knowing where to slow down now for wildlife based on what's on either side of the road. I look at guardrails differently, and wonder if a moose could easily step over a particular guardrail or if it would be forced to walk around it. I remember back long ago when I separated a mother moose and her young calf on route 242 in Jay where the land dropped off beyond the guardrail and the calf was pinched between my car and that unnavigable obstruction.

Wild animals need to move just like people do. We head off to the store to buy groceries or jump in the car to visit family on the weekend. Moose and bear, even snakes and birds need connected habitats in order to find food and to find suitable mates. The roads that cut through the habitats

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Participants in the monthly WildPaths Walk in Enosburg on Chester Arthur Road

BRIDGET BUTLER



Unknown mammal skull found within 50 ft of roadway

BRIDGET BUTLER

they rely on for their seasonal and even daily movements have the potential to impede movement and are sometimes a threat to their survival.

The WildPaths Project's goal is to provide an informed perspective of wildlife moving in the Northern Green Mountains. Walking, biking or driving the roadways this summer, we're all bound to come across roadkill or even have a near miss with a wild animal. Those moments are of great value to the WildPaths Project! Each report I've completed so far and each picture I've taken, has me thinking: Why did the animal cross here? What made it a safe crossing? Why did this animal not make it? And, more importantly, what can we do to make it better?

I encourage you to visit our website and [download a couple report forms](#) to keep in your car this summer and fall to share your observations, or join us on one of the [WildPaths Walks listed on our calendar](#). And, I hope you gain a new perspective on the animals moving across this landscape we call home.



Game trails are documented as well as sightings, roadkill and tracks.

BRIDGET BUTLER



UPCOMING EVENTS

WILDPATHS IN BAKERSFIELD

Saturday, June 25, 1–3 pm
East Bakersfield Road. Free event.
Please register to find out where to meet.
Register by contacting Bridget at
bridget@coldhollowtocanada.org

Be a part of CHC's WildPaths Citizen Science Project in Bakersfield. We'll walk one of the many wildlife crossing sites identified by the state looking for signs of animals and roadkill. WildPaths is an opportunity for community members to help gather much needed data on where wild animals are crossing our roads; both successfully and unsuccessfully. Find out how the WildPaths project will help inform decision making when it comes to wildlife and transportation. Participants will learn how to share random observations or how to Adopt a Roadway for the project.

WILDPATHS IN RICHFORD

Saturday, July 23, 2–4 pm
Stevens Mill Slide Road. Free event.
Please register to find out where to meet/park.
Register by contacting Bridget at
bridget@coldhollowtocanada.org

Be a part of CHC's WildPaths Citizen Science Project in Richford. We'll walk one of the many roadways considered a wildlife crossing site looking for signs of animals and roadkill. WildPaths is an opportunity for community members to help gather much needed data on where wild animals are crossing our roads; both successfully and unsuccessfully. Find out how the WildPaths project will help inform decision making when it comes to wildlife and transportation. Participants will learn how to share random observations or how to Adopt a Roadway for the project.

WILDPATHS IN BELVIDERE

Saturday, August 20, 9–11 am
Bog Road. Free event. Please register to find out where to meet/park. Register by contacting Bridget at
bridget@coldhollowtocanada.org

Be a part of CHC's WildPaths Citizen Science Project in Belvidere. We'll walk one of the many roadways considered a wildlife crossing site looking for signs of animals and roadkill. WildPaths is an opportunity for community members to help gather much needed data on where wild animals are crossing our roads; both successfully and unsuccessfully. Find out how the WildPaths project will help inform decision making when it comes to wildlife and transportation. Participants will learn how to share random observations or how to Adopt a Roadway for the project.

WILDPATHS IN FLETCHER

Friday, September 23, 10 am – Noon
Metcalf Pond Road. Free event. Please register to find out where to meet/park. Register by contacting Bridget at
bridget@coldhollowtocanada.org

Be a part of CHC's WildPaths Citizen Science Project in Fletcher. We'll walk one of the many roadways considered a wildlife crossing site looking for signs of animals and roadkill. WildPaths is an opportunity for community members to help gather much needed data on where wild animals are crossing our roads; both successfully and unsuccessfully. Find out how the WildPaths project will help inform decision making when it comes to wildlife and transportation. Participants will learn how to share random observations or how to Adopt a Roadway for the project.

SAVE THE DATE:

CHC ANNUAL GATHERING

October 27, 2016

Hold everything for the evening! We're planning a wonderful event to celebrate our accomplishments in 2016 and what our vision is for the year to come. Details to follow as we get closer to the date... think dinner and a dynamic speaker!

REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETINGS

BAKERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the last Monday of every month
at 1:00 PM in the Town Hall Building,
40 East Bakersfield Rd, Bakersfield.

ENOSBURGH CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the fourth Monday of every month
at 7:30 PM at the Cold Hollow Career Center,
184 Missisquoi St., Enosburg Falls.

MONTGOMERY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the first Wednesday of the month from
5:00 to 7:00 PM at the Public Safety Building/Library
at 84 Mountain Road/Rt. 242, Montgomery Center.

RICHFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at 5:00 PM
in the upstairs conference room of the Arvin A. Brown
Public Library, 88 Main St, Richford.

COLD HOLLOW TO CANADA STEERING COMMITTEE

Meets the third Monday of each month from
6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Cold Hollow Career Center
in Enosburg Falls or Bakersfield Library. We rotate
the location, so please let us know if you'll be
joining us. It'd be great to see you there.

**Don't forget to check coldhollowtocanada.org for updated Upcoming Events*