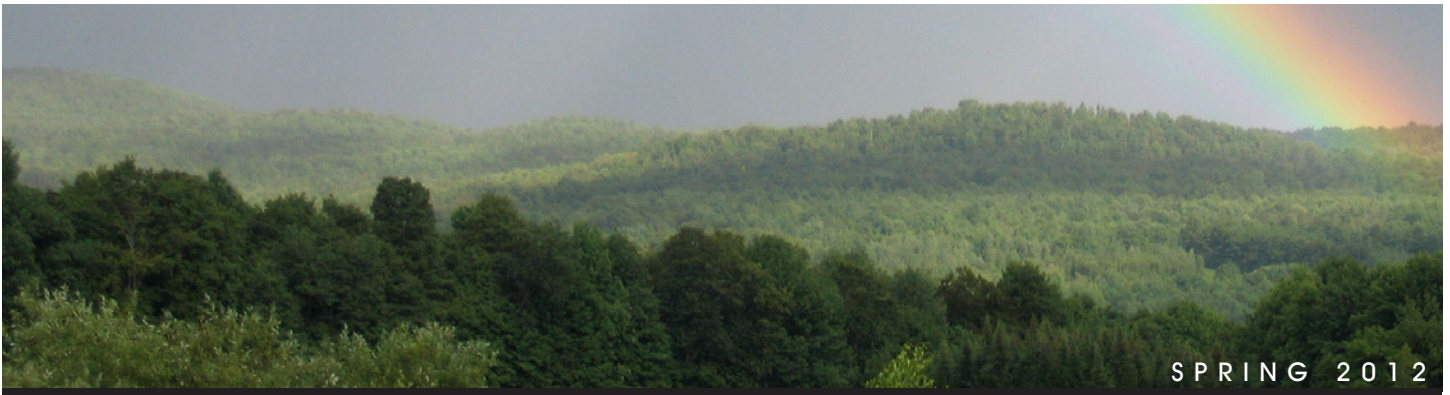


CONNECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF COLD HOLLOW TO CANADA FOREST LINK



SPRING 2012

PHOTOS: JOANNE WAZNY

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KEEPING CONNECTIONS

By Charlie Hancock

Greetings Friends, and welcome to the eighth edition of our quarterly newsletter. CHC has had a busy winter getting the *WildPaths Project* up and running in our region with our partners at the *Staying Connected Initiative*. Launched this past fall, the project seeks to engage community members in monitoring the movement of wildlife populations across our towns in an effort to gather data on the use of important connectivity zones between areas of core habitat. These zones are crucial for the survival of wide ranging mammal species in our region, ensuring stable and viable populations.

As part of the project CHC held three one-day training courses taught by local ecologist and wildlife tracker Jeff Parsons. Over fifty community members participated in the training which covered tracking skills, as well as the data collection protocol for the project. Now these volunteers — teams of our friends and neighbors — will begin to investigate road segments in our towns, monitoring 1–2 mile road segments twice a winter and documenting the tracks of focal species in these important connectivity areas. The information collected will be uploaded to an open-source database online. This way, over time, we can amass the information necessary to better inform future planning efforts in our towns to ensure the continued function of these connecting zones as our communities grow and change in the coming decades. *WildPaths* is an extension of our regional wildlife

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monitoring efforts initiated in 2009 through *Keeping Track*® (KT). Teams of KT volunteers are already monitoring six permanent transects within areas of core habitat in our region, helping us learn about resident wildlife populations in our region. Now, with *WildPaths*, we'll get to learn about wildlife movement between different habitats, as animals cross roads. Both these projects are part of a three-tiered approach CHC has developed to continue and monitor wildlife populations in our region, and how they move across our landscape. The third tier of the project looks to everyone in our region to let us know about the wildlife they see. Whether it's a black bear, moose, bobcat or fisher, let us know what you've seen by going to our website and recording the sighting under the *Tracking Wildlife in the Northern Greens* tab, where you can also find information of *Keeping Track* and *WildPaths* and take

a look at the information already being collected and represented on interactive maps that will continue to grow in the coming years. Check it out at www.coldhollowtocanada.org. CHC would like to thank the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund who provided a generous grant that made the *WildPaths Project* possible.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter. Enclosed, we'd like to share a great conservation success story in Bakersfield, articles on Black Bears and the work of "The Bear Man" Ben Kilham, information on Audubon Vermont's *Forest Bird Initiative*, and plans for a new project CHC will launch this coming year to engage landowners in Cross-Boundary Management. Thanks, and enjoy.



JOANNE WAZNY

A CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY IN BAKERSFIELD

By Nancy Patch

Dorothy Allard and William Martin Jr. recently donated an easement to the development rights on 182.5 acres of forestland in Bakersfield and Waterville to be held by the Vermont Land Trust. The cost of the appraisal to determine the value of the easement and the legal fees were covered by The Vermont Land Trust. This property is located off the Waterville Mountain Rd and in a forest block at the center of the CHC region. The land features some pretty rugged terrain with slopes going up through Bakersfield and across the border into Waterville where the land drops back to the east forming some very interesting cliffs. The property includes a Rich Northern Hardwood natural community and some particularly interesting wildlife habitat including Peregrine Falcon nesting habitat. Recently a public trail was also established on a part of the property by the Bakersfield Conservation Commission (BCC). Dorothy happens to be chair of the BCC and has spearheaded a trails campaign in various locations throughout Bakersfield. Dorothy was also a founding member of Cold Hollow to Canada. We recently caught up with her to find out more about the conservation of this fabulous parcel.

When did you first consider the possibility of forever conserving your forest land?

Probably when we first bought the land, we thought about the possibility of conserving it. The former landowners had at one time tried to subdivide the land, but the planning commission denied the permit (as we understand it) and so it never went through. We knew we would never develop it but we also knew we wouldn't be around forever.

How was this decision made? What were the positives and the negatives you considered when making this decision?

We had lots of discussions with VLT to try and understand the process better. We also talked with others who had conserved their own land. We knew that a large property close to us had been conserved recently, and we understood the

additional advantage of having our property conserved in terms of providing a larger contiguous area as a wildlife corridor. Other positives included that it allows us to use the land the way we want, including living there, cutting firewood, keeping it in current use, and maintaining trails on the property. And we got a lot of praise and thanks from our friends and neighbors. We also kept out two additional acres in case we needed to subdivide them out in an emergency (such as an illness and huge medical bills, for example). Negatives were the potential risk involved when selling the property in terms of reducing the number of potential buyers; and the amount of time and effort it took to negotiate the easement.

What was the process like?

It involved discussions with VLT; an agreement with our bank to allow the easement, given that we still have a mortgage; an appraisal of the property, a survey by VLT, and some work with an attorney to go over the paperwork.

What would you say to others who are considering doing something like this?

It takes time. It is a decision that affects the property "in perpetuity," so make sure you really want to do it. If you are truly dedicated to conservation and preservation of our Vermont landscape, here is something you can do that really will make a difference now and for the long term.

How do you think this action has affected the natural world in this region?

In the short term, not too much — unless we are "leading by example" and others around us decide to conserve their land as well, because we have conserved ours. The reason it doesn't affect the natural world in the short term is that we aren't treating the land any differently than we would if it wasn't conserved. The easement is to ensure that those who own it after us (the long term) will also conserve it.

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Introducing Ben Kilham, wildlife rehabilitator and photographer, coming to Enosburg Falls April 19th

A SHORT BIO OF THE “BEAR MAN”

By Ben Kilham

When I started this journey 18 years ago, I had very low expectations and a very simple idea. I wanted to study carnivore behavior, perhaps with fishers (a large woodland weasel), coyotes, or bobcat. I had this interest since before I attended college. It grew out of growing up with my father Lawrence Kilham. He was a virologist at the Dartmouth Medical School who studied bird behavior as an amateur. Our house was home for many species of wild visitors from woodpeckers to a leopard. My interest was keen; I often helped my father with observations and raising wild creatures. As a result, he had four books published and wrote as many as 125 scientific journal articles.

I am what is now called a “gifted” dyslexic, that is I have an IQ in the top 1 percent of the human population but I read at a “third grade” level. While I was unaware of the term dyslexia at the time, I managed to graduate from the University of New Hampshire with a B.S. in Wildlife in 1974, I my grades and test scores were erratic at best and I was unable to get into graduate school. With my dreams of studying animal behavior and working with it professionally were dashed, I enrolled and graduated from a trade school for gunsmithing in Lakewood, Colorado. It was apparent I had another calling, as I flourished working with my hands. For the first time in my life, the results of my efforts reflected my ability, and the results were tangible. My experience as a gunsmith was challenging and personally rewarding (see biography from website), but I still had aspirations and an interest in animal behavior.

In 1982, my wife Debbie, who I met while we both worked in the product engineering department at Colt Firearms, and I moved back to Lyme, New Hampshire where I opened my own custom gunsmithing business. I didn't fully comprehend why I was such a poor student until after I was accepted as a Special Student at Dartmouth's Thayer School of Engineering. I was accepted at the recommendation of two of my customers who were professors at Thayer who had



BEN KILHAM

recognized my ability for mechanical design. I was tested for learning disabilities and for the first time understood why I had such difficulty with school. Despite an IEP (individual educational plan) I could not keep up with the reading or calculus and quickly dropped out.

What I learned from this experience I wished I had known twenty years earlier. I learned that I was intelligent and that I could succeed at anything if I relied on my abilities and developed methods that worked for me. My methods for both mechanical design and behavioral research involve observation, experience and testing with experience. I follow the evidence and use scientific literature only as reference. My own methods have allowed me to do qualitative research without being entangled in the trappings of professional science.

There is a price to pay for independence, and that is that professional science controls both public funding and access to the scientific journals. I have been fortunate that my work has been received so well by the public at large. I am often asked, “What do scientists think of your work?” While I do have the support of many scientists, it is the average person that ultimately judges the work of science. My goals are:

TO CONTINUE MY WORK IN ANIMAL AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR.

TO CONTINUE TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC WITH LECTURES, BOOKS, DOCUMENTARIES AND OTHER FORMS OF MEDIA.

TO CONTINUE TO MAKE SCIENCE ACCESSIBLE AND TO INSPIRE YOUNG PEOPLE.

TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION OF WILDLIFE HABITAT.

TO WORK TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DYSLEXIA AND OTHER LEARNING DISABILITIES.

BLACK BEAR IN VERMONT

By Nancy Patch

Black bear are one of Vermont's most fabulous creatures. They are a shy animal that will try to stay out of the way of humans, but when we humans and bears do come into contact, we both get an adrenaline rush. Most of the time, the bear will hear or smell you before you know they are there. In fact because of this you may never know they are. I once saw a bear quietly walking away from me. I could not hear the animal at all moving through the trees, but it was very clear from the direction it was going and how close it was, that it had definitely seen me and my dog coming and simply moved away. Another time I saw a larger bear move to hide behind a tree. It hid its head quite well but that big body was still visible. It was a comical sight. It seems the only bear that have run like the dickens away from me, have been small or very young bear, or ones I have surprised. For example, once I was walking through a patch of tall cinnamon fern. Suddenly a bear popped up and we looked at each other for a few seconds and as I backed away, it turned and ran. That was certainly a surprise for all of us.

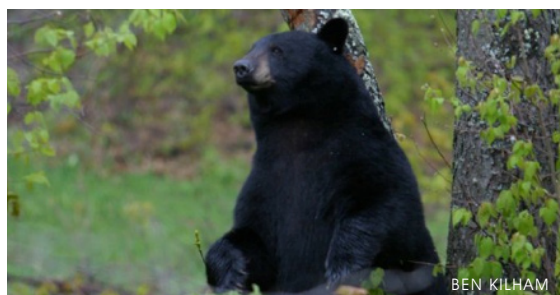
The black bear is an omnivore that eats both plants and animals. Primary food sources include fruits and nuts, insects, fish, and wetland plants. They are also scavengers and at times predators of larger animals. They will feed on fawn if they can find them, and I watched a mother bear try to dismantle a Beaver lodge for the kits one early spring, though she was not successful. In the spring when they emerge from their dens they have depleted all of their fat reserves and are in a state of starvation. The wetlands are the first to green up in the spring and so wetland plants become an essential food source early on. Full nutritional

needs are not met until summer when berries and succulent plants such as jack-in-the-pulpit roots are available. Another bear experience for me was when I followed a bear as it walked through the woods going from one jack-in-the-pulpit to another, digging them up and eating the corm or root. This seemed to be a favorite food for that bear. Don't try this yourself as the corm to a human would cause a painful reaction. The nut crops of oaks, beech and hickory are the fall preferred food for black bear and are essential in building up the fat reserves they need to make it through the winter and to bear young during the denning season. You can see often bear "nests" in beech trees in the fall as evidence of their feeding.

Black bear den in November or into December depending on the food availability. Dens are often a brush pile, sometimes under the top of a large fallen tree or a large top not lopped after logging. Bears may also dig a cavity at the base of a tree or upturned root, or simply dig a hole in the hillside. Male bear will den just about anywhere, but the females are a bit pickier and line their dens with ferns, moss, leaves and such to make the den a warmer, safe, place for their newborns.

A female can have anywhere from 1 to 5 cubs, but 2 is the average. They give birth every other year and the young stay with their mothers for 16 months. In good years 80% of the cubs that are born do survive, but in years where the food availability is limited up to half of the cubs may die.

Black bear need large contiguous tracts of land in order to thrive and have healthy populations. It can be sure that if the bear populations in a location are present and healthy than other species that are wide ranging will also be healthy. The largest threat to black bear and other large ranging animals is habitat fragmentation of core habitat and those connecting areas between the large core blocks. The greatest abundance of black bear can be found along the spine of the green mountains and in the Northeast kingdom. It is no coincidence that it is in these places where the forest is the least fragmented. It is up to us to protect the black bear and the rest of Vermont's wildlife populations by growing smart and protecting what we have.





JOANNE WAZNY

AUDUBON VERMONT FOREST BIRD INITIATIVE CONNECTS LANDOWNERS WITH CONSERVATION

By Steve Hagenbuch

Efforts to conserve northern New England's forest bird populations and the habitats that sustain them require working directly with those making on-the-ground management decisions. In Vermont, where close to 80% of the forestland is held in private ownership, assisting individual landowners in developing "bird friendly" forest management strategies is of great importance.

Audubon Vermont's Forest Bird Initiative (FBI) is taking this community-based approach toward the conservation of a group of 40 bird species for which New England's forests serve as part of their core global breeding habitat. These birds are termed "responsibility species."

Over the past six years, Audubon Vermont conservation biologists have been meeting with individuals who own forestland in Vermont and New Hampshire, as well as with communities that manage town-owned lands, such as town forests. An assessment of each property as breeding bird habitat is conducted and management recommendations are made to maintain or enhance the site's habitat potential. An important principle

applied to every management recommendation is consideration of the landowner's additional objectives for the property, such as timber harvesting, recreational trails, and aesthetics. To date, 290 individual habitat assessments have been completed on nearly 150,000 acres.

Over 60% of the landowners who have participated in the program have indicated they plan on incorporating habitat improvements into their forest management plans. To help these landowners make these plans a reality, Audubon is partnering with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement bird habitat improvements. NRCS now has a Forestry Initiative which can provide cost-share money to forest landowners who want to update their management plans and implement practices that will improve habitat and soil and water quality in the forest. For more information on the Forest Bird Initiative or the partnership with NRCS please contact Steve Hagenbuch at 802-233-0332 or shagenbuch@audubon.org.

CROSS BOUNDARY CONNECTIONS

By Charlie Hancock

With this edition of the newsletter CHC would like to share our plans for a new endeavor in our region to address cross-parcel-boundary management on working forests in our communities. Working with “neighborhood groups” we hope to engage multiple landowners with adjacent parcels to recognize the landscape-level importance of their individual properties, and take a holistic view of management that accounts for broader habitat and landscape level concerns. This pilot project seeks to engage a minimum of three neighborhood groups in our region ranging from 3–5 landowners per group, each group being selected in focal areas of core habitat and connectivity zones. Work will focus on 1) the coordination between new and existing Forest Management Plans 2) the identification

of opportunities for broad scale wildlife habitat enhancement 3) improved efficiencies for active management around a broad range of objectives including wildlife, recreation, forest health and timber production; and 4) an expanded ability to leverage greater cost-share funding from state and federal programs in implementing those practices identified across the different ownerships. We hope to engage these community members as a means to foster a greater appreciation in the community for their land, as well as recognition of its importance in a regional context. We also hope the project can serve as a model for landscape level collaboration to maintain our working forests and enhance wildlife habitat on a landscape level. CHC is currently pursuing funding for the project and hopes to begin work this coming year.



JOANNE WAZNY

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UPCOMING EVENTS

BAKERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the last Thursday of every month at 7:00 PM in the Town Hall Building, 40 East Bakersfield Rd, Bakersfield.

ENOSBURG CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the fourth Monday of every month at 7:30 PM in the Emergency Services Building, 83 Sampsonville Rd (Rte 105), Enosburg Falls.

MONTGOMERY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the first Wednesday of every month from 5:30 to 7:30 PM at the Montgomery Town Office, 98 Main St (VT Route 118), Montgomery Center.

RICHFORD CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Meets the fourth Monday of the month at 6:00 PM in the upstairs conference room of the Arvin A. Brown Public Library, 88 Main St, Richford.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY COMMITTEE

Meets the third Thursday of every month from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Locations vary so visit www.vtwsr.org for up-to-date information.

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

Apple Tree Release and Pruning Workshop

Sponsored by the Montgomery and Richford Conservation Commissions and Covered Bridges Garden Club, Saturday April 14th at 1:30–3:30pm. Meeting at Pratt Hall in Montgomery Center and carpooling to the field site on North Hill. Free to the public, donations accepted.

Ben Kilham, The Bear Man

Enosburg Falls Opera House April 19th at 6:30pm Sponsored by the Enosburg Conservation Commission. Join Ben Kilham, wildlife photographer and New Hampshire Wildlife Rehabilitator for a fabulous photographic exhibition and discussion on black bears of the Northern Forest. Free to the public, donations accepted.

Vermont Vaudeville

Saturday May 5th at 8pm at the Grange Hall in Montgomery. Join Vermont Vaudeville for a fundraiser to support the Montgomery Conservation Commission and Covered Bridges Garden Club. \$12 adults, \$5 14 yrs. and under. More info at www.vermontvaudeville.com.

Vernal Pool and Wildflower walk

Sunday May 20th, 1–3:30pm. Sponsored by the Montgomery Conservation Commission. Details TBA, so save the date!

Vermont Institute of Natural Science

Coming to Montgomery Saturday June 2nd for a presentation on Raptors in our Forest: Birds of Prey. Sponsored by the Montgomery Conservation Commission and Wild and Scenic River Study Committee. Details TBA, so save the date!