



Connections

The newsletter of Cold Hollow to Canada Forest Link: Fall 2011



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Special points of interest:

• Be in touch if you'd like to submit an article to be published in our newsletter. We'd love to hear from you.



• If you'd like more information or to be added to our email list, please email us at <info@coldhollowto canada.org>

Edits and layout by
Corrie Miller
Staying Connected Initiative

Conservation, INC.

Hi friends, and welcome to the sixth edition of our quarterly newsletter! It's been a wild summer, especially with storm events affecting our neighbors in the southern part of the state. We hope that this edition of *CONNECTIONS* finds you happy, healthy, and looking forward to cooler days, crisp nights, and the slow transition as the landscape is painted in a pallet of reds, oranges and yellows (and of course, Ski season!).

CHC's been busy these past few months. First and foremost we'd like to announce that we've taken the first steps to officially incorporate Cold Hollow to Canada as a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. This will allow us access to a larger pool of grant funding as well as give us greater leverage in the broader community of conservation organizations across the northeast. Most of the transition to *Cold Hollow to Canada, Inc.* will happen behind the scenes, but we hope that it strengthens the organization and better enables us to carry out our mission in our corner of the Northern Greens.

On September 1st we co-sponsored a great event in Montgomery, with *Staying Connected* and the *Wildlands Network*, to bring TrekEast to our region (more on Page 2 and 3). We heard stories from

John Davis, a man who has hiked, paddled, and biked his way from Florida to the Northern Greens (and he's still going!) to raise awareness about the importance of connecting wildlife habitat along an *Eastern Wildway*. At the event, we launched our own *Wild Paths* project, to engage community members in monitoring and recording wildlife tracks along roads in the Northern Greens.

Wild Paths is an extension of our regional monitoring efforts initiated in 2009 through Keeping Track® (KT). This year, KT volunteers will be monitoring **six** permanent "transects" in our region, helping us learn about wildlife habitat in our forests. Now, with *Wild Paths*, we'll

get to learn about wildlife movement between different habitats, as animals cross roads. **Read all about our Wild Paths project on Page 6 and sign up to monitor a road near you!**

We hope you enjoy the rest of the newsletter. Check out the Upcoming Events on Page 7 and see you at a great event in Johnson next month hosting the United Nations Gorilla Ambassador and Ape Alliance Chairman, Ian Redmond.

Happy Fall,

Charlie Hancock, CHC Chair



Photo by Jo Anne Wazny

A young helper draws names of t-shirt winners at TrekEast event in Montgomery

Superman in Cargo Shorts? Reflections on TrekEast

By Bill McGroarty, CHC Steering Committee, Richford

What sort of person would be willing to devote a year of his life, and subject himself to the rigors and hardships of a 6,000mile journey by foot, bicycle and kayak through the wildest remaining real estate along North America's east coast? About 60 of us showed up at **Montgomery's Grange Hall** on September 1st to try to answer that question.

The event that highlighted this unusual person was a multimedia slide show titled **TrekEast**, and was co-sponsored by CHC and the Staying Connected Initiative (SCI). As you probably know by now as readers of this newsletter, both groups are working towards trying to preserve the very special **physical character of our "home place"** – CHC on a local level and SCI on a more regional palette.

The **"unusual person"** we all came to see that night – one John Davis – is a rather normal looking, albeit very physically fit, forty something who radiates a calmness and centeredness that is very soothing. According to John, the motivation for his undertaking was to see and experience as much of **the east coast's remaining wilderness** as he could while he is still physically able to do it. Although he had been exploring it a little chunk at a time and writing about it for years, he thought this could be his last chance to see it up close and personal in its entirety – prairies, mountains, forests and wetlands.

To accomplish this he started his trek in the Florida Keys in January 2011 and plans to finish in the Gaspé Peninsula, Canada in November, perhaps on skis. I would add that during this time he has been living in a one person tent that he has carried with him. His only breaks have been to make one to three day stops in a number of cities and towns along his route to make presentations about his experiences and to spread his message. (For more information about TrekEast go to: <http://www.wildlandsnetwork.org/trekeast>.)

The main goals John has set for himself and the messages that reflect these goals are:

- The importance of forming a network of people to work at **helping to connect the east's remaining wild places** by establishing a series of wildlife habitat corridors between

these natural areas. Sound familiar?

- The critical necessity of reconnecting people with nature.
- The importance of encouraging private land stewardship.

The photographs and narrative he used to emphasize the beauty and importance of the areas he is traversing were quite moving. They conveyed a real sense of fragility and the urgency needed to conserve these places.

So – did I get an answer to the question about what kind of person would do what John Davis is doing with this year of his life? The answer is a bit unsettling, but it is a yes. It is unsettling because I realized that John is not Superman, or a fanatic or a fire breathing "tree hugger." He's as

normal as you and I, but with a lot more motivation, resolution and dedication to an idea and a sense of values that many of us share. Having accepted that, I also realized that I will never be as courageous and committed to perform **such a "grand gesture."** But I also realized that **that's O.K.. It's O.K. as long as I do what I can on a daily basis. It's the shared values and small gestures that are going to help us protect and preserve this special place.**



John's motivation, resolution, and dedication in action at the approximate 3,000 mile mark along his Trek

Beech Nuts and Blowdowns: An Afternoon with John Davis

by Joan Hildreth, Montgomery resident and Keeping Track® program participant

Early in the afternoon of September 1st, John Davis arrived in Montgomery on his fully loaded bicycle. He had already stopped to hike Belvidere Mountain that morning on his way to Montgomery from Long Pond, where he had camped the night before. For most of us, that would have been more than enough physical activity for one day. But, true to one of his stated goals of seeing and experiencing as much of the east coast's remaining wilderness as possible, John was eager to experience more.

After his arrival in town, several of us (Corrie Miller, Bob Hawk, my husband Bill Hildreth, and I) had the pleasure of walking with John on one of the proposed Keeping Track transects in the area. During our journey, John's love of the natural world was readily apparent. He was interested in the various signs of wildlife we encountered such as bear claw marks and moose "barking" on trees, as well as different kinds of scat and tracks.

Tropical Storm Irene had hit the area just a few days prior, and the effects were evident. We stopped to look at a big, healthy looking butternut tree which had, sadly, been blown down in the storm, but were glad to see that some younger butternuts were growing nearby. There were beech branches on the ground everywhere, with lots of nuts on them. We all stopped to check out various features of the nuts, and to question whether or not they were ripe enough yet for



John atop tree blown down by Tropical Storm Irene

bears and other wildlife. (Yes, all five of us were quite fascinated by those beechnuts. What can I say? That's how Keeping Trackers are!) John even went as far as to try one of the nuts himself, and seemed to find it fairly tasty, and not overly bitter. When we arrived at an area particularly hard hit by Irene, we noted the various kinds of trees which had blown down, as well as apparent wind direction(s). We wondered if a microburst might have occurred there. John climbed up on some of the downed trees to have a better look at the damage. He certainly seemed right at home in the woods during the excursion – content and focused.

In addition to showing keen interest in the area we were walking, John asked lots of questions about what was happening locally in terms of private land stewardship, the degree of interest in wildlands, and participation in the Keeping Track program, as well as about CHC, and Staying Connected. His commitment to learning as much as he can about the local places he visits was clear.

After what I would consider a very full, active day, John still had the energy to deliver a great presentation. The next morning he was back on his fully loaded bicycle, headed up the pass toward Québec on the next leg of his journey, ready to experience more of the east's wild lands. It was a treat to spend time with John Davis, learning from him about his experiences, and having the opportunity to share with him some of the very special character of our community and the wilderness of this wonderful area.



Bob, Corrie, Joan and Bill amongst Irene's aftermath along tracking transect

To read John's thoughts as he passed through our region, visit his blog at wildlandsnetwork.org/trekeast/blog



CHC Steering Committee:

Enosburgh Nancy Patch

Bakersfield Forrest Dunnivant

Fletcher Corey Brink

Montgomery Charlie Hancock,
chair

Richford Bill McGroarty
Lenny Tamulonis



Photo by JoAnne Wazny



Conservation Easements: Some Basics

by Nancy Patch—Enosburgh Conservation Commission & CHC Steering Committee

A conservation easement is the primary tool used by a Land Trust to permanently protect the land from fragmentation and subdivision while remaining in private ownership. This is a voluntary agreement between a private landowner and a land trust or other easement holding institution. In Vermont the largest easement holder is Vermont Land Trust (VLT) which often works in partnership with other conservation oriented non-profits as well as the State of Vermont. Some projects are funded with Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) funds and easements are then held by Vermont Land Trust and the State of Vermont.

Easements leave the property in private ownership, allowing the landowners to keep using it as they always have (to harvest timber, develop trails, hunt, fish, hike), sell it, or leave it to their heirs. Easements can be written for each landowner with their wishes in mind and tailored to the individual property. Generally speaking, the easement restricts the use of the land, most often to prevent development and subdivision, but also to prevent other industrial or commercial uses of the land such as mining. Landowners often reserve portions of their property for future development possibilities such as a house site for a family member.

Most forestland conservation easements in Vermont are donated by the landowner, as opposed to being

purchased. When donated, an easement is considered a charitable donation and if it meets the criteria for "deductibility," income and estate taxes can be reduced. Under the 2010 tax relief act, Congress increased the allowable charitable deduction for easements donated in 2010 and 2011 to 50% (instead of the traditional 30%) of Adjusted Gross Income, and allowed any unused deduction to be carried over for 15 years (instead of the traditional 5 years). Unless extended, this benefit will sunset at the end of this year.

Easements are perpetual and binding, both for present and future owners of the parcel. Deciding to conserve land now protects it for future generations

and for the long term health of the planet. It is sometimes said that it is unfair for one generation to make the decisions for future generations when talking about land conservation, but these decisions are made all the time in other areas. Once a housing development is built, it does not go away in a generation or two; when a Wal-Mart is built, the building remains regardless of ownership. It is legitimate and fair for a landowner to decide that their property will remain open. It is also essential that we maintain open space in some way to ensure the continuation of other animals and plants as well as maintain outdoor recreation, the working landscape economy, and other amenities that our forests provide.



Photo by Jo Anne Wazny

For more information about conservation easements on your land, contact VLT's Carl Powden at carl@vlt.org

Conservation Commission Corner: Montgomery

by Charlie Hancock—Montgomery Conservation Commission & CHC Steering Committee

Montgomery's Conservation Commission was created at Town Meeting in March of 2011. We're a young commission when compared to some of our neighbors who have a number of years under their belt, but we've got a lot of energy, and a long list of potential projects and ideas.

The first project we tackled this year was addressing the prevalence of Japanese knotweed along the Trout River and its tributaries in town. We've all seen the bamboo like stalks, heart shaped leaves and lacy white flowers along our rivers and streams, in our back yards and even finding its way into the garden. Japanese knotweed is one of the most high profile and damaging invasive weeds in the country. Found in 39 out of the 50 states, the plant is considered a non-native invasive species. "Non-native," because it is originated from eastern Asia, and "invasive" because once established, the plant takes over an area, out competing native herbaceous plants, ferns and shrubs. This greatly reduces the overall biodiversity in an ecosystem—which is at the foundation of environmental health—and can have significant wide ranging impacts on wildlife populations. While invasive species do often produce food for wildlife (like honeysuckle berries), the nutritional benefits are usually much lower than those offered by the native plants that it replaced. It's like replacing meat and potatoes with potato chips and soda, which can make a big difference if you're a song bird bulking up for your migration south. Invasive species also change the canopy architecture in wooded areas, reducing potential nesting sites, and limit

the long term development of native ecosystems.



Photos by Ave Leslie

Before and After—Montgomery's efforts to eradicate Japanese knotweed



This year the Montgomery Conservation Commission, in partnership with the *Missisquoi River Basin Association*, began a multi-year project to eradicate Japanese knotweed from the Trout River basin. The plan, developed with input from the *Nature Conservancy* and other conservation groups who have tackled this problem, involves two annual cuts: the first in late spring (once the plant has put out new vegetation and used up the energy stored in the root system over winter) and the second cut—completed in early fall—before the plant can pull resources back into

the root system for its winter dormancy. The timing of these two cuts is designed to hit the plant when it hurts the most and limit re-sprouting. This is the basic control strategy when combating this pest—cut, cut, cut, and then cut again. Over time you can greatly reduce the productivity of the plant and its ability to spread. Because of this, the Montgomery Conservation Commission is using another strategy recommended by the *Nature Conservancy*: an application of herbicide which, when applied to the cut stem, travels to the root system and stops the plant from re-sprouting. The herbicide is approved for use around streams and water bodies, and is applied by a state licensed applicator directly to a cut stem to limit spread. As part of this project in Montgomery—which has focused on the lower reaches of West Hill Brook where it meets Rt. 118—we plan to use the herbicide on at least a portion of the second cut area, monitor the results over the next year, and adapt our strategy going forward.

The use of an herbicide was something that the Conservation Commission discussed quite a bit. The conclusion was reached by looking at past projects in our region where simply cutting the plant back resulted in more limited success over a much longer timeline. The commission is not recommending that an herbicide treatment is for everyone, everywhere, and as part of the project they hope to discuss other non-chemical options that landowners have.

You can contact the Montgomery Conservation Commission at (802) 326-2093, or attend one of the monthly commission meetings.



An Opportunity Not to Let Pass?

by Nancy Patch—CHC Steering Committee, Enosburgh

Cold Hollow Timberlands (CHT) is a package of properties in the Northern Green Mountains that are currently for sale and offered by LandVest Real Estate. The properties were formerly owned by Bell-Gates Lumber but were sold to Lowell Blake Timber Management Associates, a timber investment organization, when Bell-Gates closed. The total acreage of these 12 properties is 6,899 acres, and the asking price for all is \$5,250,000, or \$760/acre. Of the 12 properties, 7 are in the Cold Hollow to Canada region (specifically, Bakersfield, Belvidere, Fletcher and Waterville) and comprise 6,313 acres. Two smaller properties are in Orleans County and 2 in Washington County.

Cold Hollow to Canada is interested in discussing the conservation of these properties with our members because they are important large blocks of forest that, if conserved, would increase the protection of large forest blocks and support connectivity to other conserved lands. For example, the Fletcher Mountain and Smithville parcels are contiguous to already conserved lands that would create a conserved corridor from Fletcher to Canada that is parallel to the Green Mountain ridge, which is protected by the state of Vermont and the Green Mountain Club. This lower elevation corridor has a greater biodiversity potential than the ridgeline of the Green Mountains and could provide a critical path for wildlife.

Under the Lowell-Blake ownership, harvesting has been aggressive, but the properties continue to support quality timber growing stock and have productive forest soils. In the

best of worlds, CHC and conservation supporters could find a way to permanently protect these properties as open space, wildlife habitat, public recreation use, and forest product management. While all in one ownership today, a group of interested people could come together and divide the ownership into distinct properties for separate ownership. The Bakersfield Conservation Commission has tossed around ideas of one day having a Town Forest. The north end of Fletcher Mountain is in the town of Bakersfield and includes King Mt, a Bakersfield landmark and historical settlement area. Other smaller lots may be ideal woodlots for timber or maple syrup production. In addition, the Codding Hollow property is adjacent to the Long Trail and would have high importance for the Green Mountain Club.

What steps can we take as a fledgling organization to initiate projects like this one? CHC has the capacity to write grants and to discuss options with our partners. You can take steps by sharing your ideas, concerns, and interest with us. Also, perhaps you could pledge some financial support? We would like to garner supporters to help when opportunities like the CHT properties come up for sale. We are not now asking for money, but please let us know if you would consider a forest conservation fund campaign if we were to start one. CHC is now a VT non-profit organization and we are seeking federal non-profit status. In the near future, we hope to be able to accept tax deductible donations and to start just such a campaign. We would love to hear back from you.

Join Wild Paths Project!



Wild Paths participants (like you?) can take part in a one day training course taught by a local ecologist and wildlife tracker, Jeff Parsons. The training will cover basic tracking skills, as well as the data collection steps. After being trained, teams of neighbors, conservation commissioners, friends, or interested individuals can volunteer to investigate road segments for tracks. You will walk – twice each winter – along 1-2 mile road segments and document the tracks of focal species.

CHC, with assistance from partner organizations, will create a place where volunteers can enter their data and see it on a map. We hope this website interests folks in wildlife populations and their movement throughout our region. Over time, we hope to have amassed enough data to determine important road crossings and to help town and regional conservation planning efforts.

If you're interested in participating in the Wild Paths Project let us know by contacting Bob Hawk at (802)533-9803 or robert.l.hawk@gmail.com.



Calendar of 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 Library, 86 Mountain Rd, 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.

Invasives Prevention and Management for Foresters, Loggers and Land Managers

Participants can choose from four workshops in the Fall 2011 (Sept 21 & 27) and Spring 2012 (May 22 & 29); \$45 per workshop (lunch included). Registration required. For a registration form and more information go to www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/.

Gorillas in the Mist—An Illustrated Talk by Ian Redmond

Tuesday, October 4 from 7:00 to 10:00 PM. 480 Hogback Road in Cambridge VT. Admission free, donations accepted. Ian Redmond, the UN Gorilla Ambassador and Chairman of the Ape Alliance, is renowned for his work with great apes and underground elephants. Mark Laxer, President of Vermont-based Chimp-n-Sea Wildlife Conservation Fund and author of *The Monkey Bible* will join the discussion. [Click here for more information.](#)

Chainsaw Safety and Tree Felling Training

At North Woods Stewardship Center. Contact Jayson at (802) 723-6551 (x115) or www.northwoodscenter.org/events.html to register. The cost is \$150.

Game of Logging Levels 1 & 2

Saturday and Sunday, Oct 22-23, 8:00 AM-4:30 PM

Game of Logging Levels 3 & 4

Saturday-Sunday, Oct 29-30, 8:00 AM-4:30 PM

For other course locations and dates, visit:

www.woodlandtraining.com/courses.php

2nd and 4th photo by Jo Anne Wazny; 1st and 3rd by Corrie Miller

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

