



Connections

The newsletter of Cold Hollow to Canada Forest Link: Summer 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

Soggy Summertime Greetings

Hi friends, and welcome to the fifth edition of our quarterly newsletter! It's been a wet and wild spring, but things appear to finally be drying out (knock on wood) and hot summer days are on the way. There's a lot to report in this newsletter as our member Conservation Commissions have been busy!

Congratulations to the Bakersfield Conservation Commission on receipt of a grant from the Vermont Recreation Trails Grant Program in support of the Bakersfield Community Trails project. The \$13,000 grant will allow the town to build a trail in the new town park, leading through the upland portion of the woods and then around the eastern side of the cemetery, connecting up with the Ball Park trail on the other side of East Bakersfield Road. Construction will begin on August 13th at a volunteer work day. Look forward to soon being able to access Bakersfield Community Trails information at www.ourbakersfield.org, thanks to a startup grant from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund.

The Enosburgh Conservation Commission has also been busy. They hosted a bird walk at the Enosburgh Town Forest on May 22nd with Dave Brown of Craftsbury Commons. Dave shared his wealth of experience as folks identified songbirds

and talked about the different habitat types each species depends on.

The Montgomery Conservation Commission has had Japanese Knotweed in its sights lately. In partnership with MRBA, on June 11th, they hosted the first workday in a multi-year project to

eradicate this harmful invasive pest from the Trout River Basin. Over 30 people from across the region turned out to tackle a large section of West Hill Brook adjacent to Rt. 188 with great success. Stay tuned for more about knotweed and control strategies in the next newsletter.



Photo by Pat Elmer

Intrepid hikers to Metcalf Pond Cave in Fletcher.

CHC hosted a bat talk in Fletcher on June 8th. About 40 people turned out to hear Scott Darling of VT Fish and Wildlife give a fascinating presentation on the bats of our region and the latest news on white nose syndrome, which is decimating bat populations across the north east. The event was followed up that weekend by a rather wet hike out to the legendary cave complex in Fletcher near Metcalf Pond. Thanks to Camp DREAM for helping to coordinate the event and to landowners who allowed access!

Don't forget to check out upcoming events on Page 5 and on our website.

Thanks! And enjoy our newsletter.

Charlie Hancock, CHC Chair

A Case Study: the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

By David K. Adams, WHIP Specialist at Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

To demonstrate one of the many resources available to landowners interested in managing their land for wildlife, we asked Dave Adams to share a story about an application of the WHIP program in Vermont.

Charlotte, VT ~ as the sun rises in the east, morning dew still clings to the blades of grass and highlights the work of thousands of spiders whose webs glisten in the morning light. The only sounds that can be heard are the birds slowly waking up and the occasional rooster crowing. This peace and quiet is quickly shattered when the operator fires up the Bull Hog, and prepares to grind an old field that has become dominated by honey suckle, buckthorn, prickly ash and dogwoods.

Flash back to summer

2008, I am on site with Curt Alpeter, the landowner of approximately 100 acres of open field, old fields, early successional habitat and mature woods. We are discussing wildlife habitat, and how we would like to work to improve the overall shrub land bird habitat, and improve the habitat for woodcock and grouse that have historically used this area. We are discussing the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and how it can help Curt meet his goals as both landowner and a wildlife enthusiast.

Over the next 12 months, discussions continued among Curt, Vermont Audubon and Vermont Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop a comprehensive plan that meets everyone's goals. In working with Audubon's Mark LaBarr, a Shrubland Bird Habitat



Photo by flickr/UncleBucko

In the Champlain Valley, Eastern towhees may be declining due to lack of shrubland habitat. WHIP helps landowners create habitat for these birds.

Assessment Plan was developed. From that, a more general wildlife habitat plan was developed and funding for the work was provided by the USDA's Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). The goal of this WHIP plan is to control the invasive plants that are dominating the site, set back the forest succession where appropriate, release wild apple trees, and set up a delayed brush hogging schedule that increases habitat diversity.

Summer/fall 2009, we have a signed WHIP contract and we now begin to develop a plan of attack for the invasive species and clearing the site. In working with a local invasive control contractor, and a brush grinder out of Derby, we developed a two stage comprehensive approach that will hopefully control the invasives first and then grind down the treated invasives and other low quality trees and shrubs, allowing

native trees and shrubs to return that have high value for wildlife.

Fast forward to July 2010, it is an early Saturday morning and I am with the brush grinder operator and the landowner going over the habitat plans and looking at the management areas. In walking the site, large mature buckthorn are brown and dry as the winter treatment has been extremely successful in removing the noxious weed; none of the treated buckthorn showed any signs of life. Once we had control of this invasive

species, the next step was to grind down the dead stems and provide room for the grey dogwood, birch, maple, pin cherry, chokecherry, and wild apple trees to thrive. Grinding continued throughout the weekend and into the following week. The grinding removed the low quality stems leaving pockets of good wildlife shrubs able to clone and re-sprout.

Present day, the field has had a chance to recover, young dogwood shoots are re-emerging, released apples, cherry, and dogwoods continue to thrive. The source of the invasive species has been set back to a stage of easy control with mowing, hand pulling, and light foliar spraying. Overall, this project shows that collaboration between partners can be the key to good habitat management, and when partners work together, wildlife benefits.



The Wood Turtle: A Special Reptile

by Nancy Patch, Enosburgh Conservation Commission and CHC Steering Committee

Wood Turtles are special; they are the only turtle in Vermont that is a forest dweller. We most often think of turtles basking in the sun along the rivers (painted turtles) or lumbering across the roads to get to nesting habitat and back (snapping turtles). Wood Turtles actually spend much of their time foraging in the wooded areas next to rivers and sometimes in the hay fields next to rivers where the wooded buffer is small or non-existent. They can move up to 1,000 feet from the stream that they overwinter in. Can you guess the biggest hazards that these turtles may have to face? Right, human activity: removing Riparian (adjacent to river) forests, mowing hay crops, and other river edge development.

Another reason Wood Turtles are special is that their populations are in decline; they are considered a species of concern in Vermont. They actually have an even higher threatened status across the border in Canada. I am not sure whether this is due to the numbers or whether the Canadian system is different from ours, but we share a need to protect these turtles internationally. The Missiquoi River and its watershed, with associated Wood Turtle habitat, are located both in the U.S. and in Canada. The Missiquoi River source originates in Troy, Vermont, flows north to Canada, and then turns back to the US crossing in Richford. The US towns of Richford, Berkshire, Enosburgh, Sheldon, Highgate and Swanton all have banks along this river. In addition, the Trout River, which is part of the Missiquoi watershed and flows from Montgomery to the Missiquoi has Wood Turtle habitat. Several smaller streams may also provide habitat if they are deep enough for overwintering and breeding.

We know that there are populations of Wood turtles along the Missiquoi and Trout Rivers as there have



Photos by Nancy Patch

Wood Turtle found in Enosburgh by Jeff Goyne.

been recent sightings in Richford, Enosburgh and Montgomery. In Canada there is an extensive education program that is helping spread the word to residents and users of the Mississquoi. These efforts are hoped to be expanded into the US in the near future.

Adult Wood Turtles may live to be 60 years old and so some have seen incredible changes in their homes over the years. While they live to be old, egg and hatchling survival is very low. It also takes more than a decade for females to become reproductively mature. This means that survival of adult turtles is critical to maintaining the species.

Another common name for the Wood Turtle is "Old Red Legs" as the neck and front legs are often red or orange in color.

The carapace or "shell" is sculpted and the rings on the individual scutes (bony, external plate or scale) can be counted to age the turtle. Wood Turtles have probably been in this area for at least 10,000 years, since the end of the last ice age and probably before humans moved in.

Threats to the wood turtle include the following: habitat loss which can lead to population isolation, road mortality, and impacts from mowing machines. Collection, both casual and commercial, is a problem and is often increased when habitat is fragmented and human presence increased. What can we do? Maintain forest cover along streams, look out for turtles in the road, brush-hog fields that are not cropped *after* September, and keep the mowing bar 5 inches high in hay fields. Most importantly teach others to see, look, care about, protect, and cherish those creatures that were here before us. The turtles deserve to be there in the future for our great grandchildren to see and cherish as well.



CHC Steering Committee:

Enosburgh	Nancy Patch
Bakersfield	Forrest Dunnavant
Montgomery	Charlie Hancock, chair
Richford	Bill McGroarty Lenny Tamulonis



Enosburgh Town Planning Considers Greater Protection of Natural Resources

by Nancy Patch—Enosburgh Conservation Commission and CHC Steering Committee

On May 5th, Jamey Fidel from Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC), Catherine Dimitruk from Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), Corrie Miller from the Staying Connected Initiative, the Enosburgh Planning Commission, the Enosburgh Conservation Commission and Cold Hollow to Canada met to discuss revisions to the Enosburgh Town Plan and By-laws. Jamey, through assistance from Davis Conservation Foundation, and Catherine, through a Municipal Planning Grant, will be providing

assistance to the Planning Commission as well as model language that will help Enosburgh better protect, in ways appropriate for Enosburgh, our natural resources and wildlife. Some of the topics to be addressed in this process include adding legal definitions of "significant wildlife habitat" and "wildlife habitat connectivity," enhancing overall policy statements that directly address wildlife and natural resource needs in the Town Plan, strengthening the protection of the existing Conservation District, and considering the development of a Conservation II district that overlaps with habitat blocks identified by the state and in Enosburgh's Natural Resources Assessment prepared by Arrowwood Environmental. [The Habitat Blocks priority ranking is a VT Fish & Wildlife project and the final product has just been released. This is a great new tool and corresponds nicely our town's Arrowwood Report.]



As both a member of the Conservation Commission and CHC Steering Committee, I was very pleased with the reception that the Planning Commission gave to the guests and how open to new ideas they were. Both Catherine and Jamey will be providing different options and tools to make both the regulatory and voluntary actions of the community have strength to protect our working landscapes and ecology. We are moving in the right direction in Enosburgh to protect our forests, waters and wildlife for future generations.

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 Road, Bakersfield.

Enosburg Conservation Commission

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

Montgomery Conservation Commission

Meets the third Tuesday of every month from 5:30 to 7:30 PM at the Montgomery Library at 86 Mountain Road, Montgomery.

Richford Conservation Committee

Meets the first Thursday of the month in the upstairs conference room of the Arvin A. Brown Public Library, 88 Main Street, 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.

Wildflower and Butterfly Identification Walk

Sunday, July 10 from 1:00—3:00 PM. Come enjoy a couple hours of our Town's natural beauty! Hosted by the Richford Conservation Commission. Parties will meet at the Troy Street Rail Trail parking area at 1:00 PM and will leave from there to walk the trail to see what they can find.

Trail Work Day, Bakersfield Community Trails

Saturday, August 13th from 9:30 AM—1:00 PM. Bakersfield Conservation Commission has received a grant from the Vermont Recreation Trails Grant Program in support of the Bakersfield Community Trails project (details on page 1). Construction will begin on a volunteer work day scheduled for August 13, 9:30-1pm. Start to TBA.

Vermont Coverts Cooperator Training

September 9—11 @ Kehoe Conservation Camp in Hydeville, VT. This 3-day workshop on forest and wildlife management offers classroom and field studies taught by professionals and geared toward woodland owners. This seminar is free and includes food, lodging, and materials. For more information, visit www.vtcoverts.org/education.php.

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



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