

Piscataquog News

THE PISCATAQUOG LAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

Introducing Our New Executive Director:

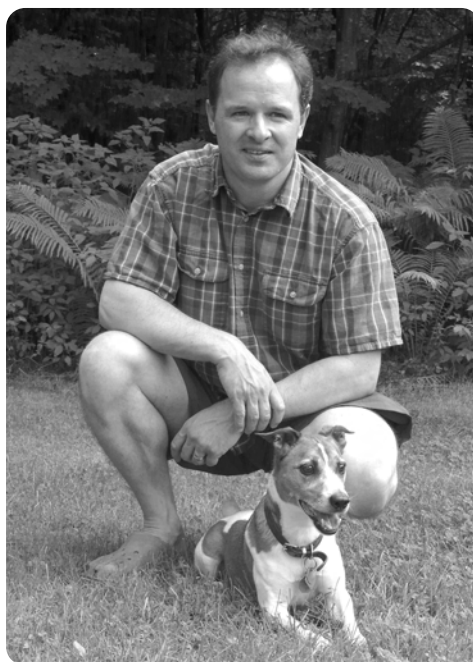
PLC Welcomes Eric Masterson!

by Pat Nelson

Eric's name might ring a bell with friends of NH Audubon – where he has served in various capacities during the last eight years, most recently as Vice President of Development – or with readers of his acclaimed birding column in *The Monadnock Shopper News*, but let's start at the beginning....

Eric was born in Dublin and grew up in the suburbs – or as he defines it “in limbo between city life and country life.” He would have preferred either to suburbia, but the choice for country life won out at age 11 when a friend taught him how to identify birds. Since then, Eric has been fascinated by birds and is passionate about protecting habitat for all wildlife.

After high school Eric followed in his father's footsteps and worked in the printing industry for 9 years, during which time he volunteered for a number of environmental organizations. Finally he “cracked” in 1995 and took a sabbatical before deciding to return to college to get a degree in zoology from University College Dublin. Two highlights during his sabbatical were driving across the Sahara Desert and meeting his future wife. Tricia Burt, an American on retreat in western Ireland, was also switching careers (from public relations to art) and they shared



Eric pauses for a moment with his dog, Andy.
(Photo: Pat Nelson)

much in common. They married, and when Eric completed his degree, they moved to New Hampshire – within range of Tricia's home state of Florida, but with a northern climate more like that of Ireland.

I asked Eric what prompted their move to the States. He explained that Ireland does not share the same rich tradition of not-for-profit organizations prevalent in the U.S. Opportunities to work for the environment

in Ireland are fewer; the market is much smaller and most opportunities are with government agencies in Dublin or Brussels.

Eric says, “I am most satisfied when I excite folks about the natural world. It's important to reach a broad audience, which I was able to do at NH Audubon. On the other hand, I am really looking forward to working with the highly focused mission of the PLC to protect open space in the watershed – for the benefit of people and our rural way of life as much as for wildlife. PLC's work is really a gift to the entire community. I think we can accomplish a lot together.”

Eric continues, “It may not be designated as such, but living in this part of New Hampshire is like living in a national park. I've counted more than 200 species of birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles where I live. That's remarkable, and in part is due to the health of our forests, rivers, and lakes. Protecting the landscape is an investment in our future that has an immediate payoff. PLC is a resource supported by the community for the community, and I am committed to helping the PLC secure an enduring natural legacy for the region.”

One of Eric's pet projects at NH Audubon was improving and broadening the appeal and reach of the raptor observatory. Long before hiring Eric, PLC had already planned a fall Hawk Watch at the observatory on Pack Monadnock. (See page 6 for details.)



TO CONSERVE

the natural and scenic environment of the Piscataquog River Watershed communities:
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

by Eric Masterson

In June, I applied for the position of Executive Director of the PLC. I would like to tell you why.

My wife Tricia and I moved to New Hampshire from Ireland in 1999. We had both recently

changed careers, married, and wanted our move to the States to be the last.

We quickly made many new friends, watched with joy as their kids grew up, and felt the loss as others left. We befriended our oil merchant, discovered that our insurance agent shared my passion for soccer, and fell in love with a local farmstand. A friend with a small woodlot now sells us our firewood. In short, we found a community, and we put down roots.

Many things make up the fabric of a community, and the landscape is one. How many times have you returned from a trip and crossed the Piscataquog River with a deep sense of truly coming home? I have a storehouse of happy memories, and the landscape is a cornerstone for many.

This philosophy extends to my working life. The PLC focuses its efforts in the watershed adjacent to where I live in Hancock. I often pass through PLC towns, drop in at Dodge's in New Boston to buy a drink, chat with folks on the porch, and watch fishermen cast from the bridge. This is what I have come to expect in our small, local towns – things as simple as knowing folks' names, buying locally, and caring for the land.

I know that PLC supporters care deeply about nature in the Piscataquog Watershed. We live in a society ever more removed from the natural world. The PLC represents something I hold dear – a connection to that world. I am honored to become involved at this time – cogniscent that this is an organization with a history of accomplishment. In many ways, what we achieve in the next few years will be a testament to the hard work of those who brought us to where we are today. I am honored to follow in the footsteps of Margaret Watkins, whose dedication to the conservation of the Piscataquog Watershed has helped to make this a place where a person would like to pause awhile to cast a line.

HONORING THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE:

A Testimonial from a Past President

by John McCausland

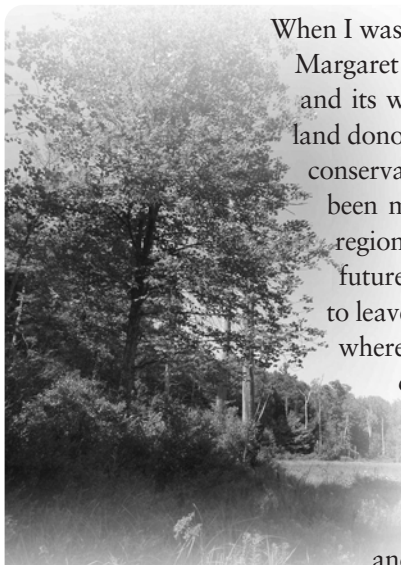


Photo: Cindy Stave

When I was president of the [then] PWA, I used to pray that we would always have Margaret Watkins as Executive Director. Her long knowledge of the organization and its work, her wonderful relationship with the PLC “family” of volunteers, land donors, and financial supporters, and her amazing network of contacts in the conservation community – how could we ever replace her! Well, I should have been more trusting. Margaret brought PLC to its current state as a healthy, regional land trust with a strong board, donor base, and set of priorities for future land protection. When she announced that the time had come for her to leave and move on to other challenges, I realized that we had reached a point where we could indeed manage without her. That is the greatest gift any leader can give – to prepare the way for succession. Margaret's interest in the PLC continues, as does her friendship with all of us who knew and worked with her. It is good to know that she is delighted by our choice of a successor. In Eric Masterson we have someone who will be able to step into the ED position, bringing his own gifts and experience, and learning the parts of the job that are new to him. I look forward with excitement to the next chapter in the PLC's history.

Far and away, the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.

– Theodore Roosevelt



PLC Helps Preserve Working Farmlands in Goffstown

by Kelly Teevan

Photo: Kelly Teevan

A long relationship has led to the protection of two neighboring farms on a historic Goffstown hill.

Paul Welch's father bought the house and horse barn on Shirley Hill when Paul was about two years old. The seller was Shirley Johnson, who owned Shirley Hill House – a resort described in its brochure as “the Saint Moritz of America.” Two years later, the Storm of 1938 took the roof off the hotel, and Mr. Welch was able to buy more land when Mr. Johnson decided to close the resort.

Paul started working with chickens and a garden that sold vegetables when he was eight. He has worked on that land since then, running a large dairy herd until the barn burned, dramatically, in 1966 – with the national champion bull rescued at the last moment. Now Paul raises hay on three beautiful hilltop parcels, known for their views to Route 128 in Massachusetts, especially from the large granite Tipping Rocks, and views of Goffstown's own Uncanoonuc Mountains. Paul breeds a few horses every year and looks after hay crops for neighbors.

Jim Shirley's family, across the road, settled there in 1763, when Goffstown was just two years old. Many generations have lived and farmed there; the Shirley home is a landmark cherished by people all over town. The history of the Shirley family is, in a way, the history of the United States: some members serving in the Civil War (even a great-aunt named for Vicksburg), and some moving west in the 1800s. Jim's wife, Sara, now runs a produce farm (ShirleyFarm.com) using the community-supported agriculture (CSA) model, whereby 35 families share in the benefits and risks of the farm and farmer, keeping their spending local and greatly

cutting food transport. Shirley Farm is one of the very few Bicentennial Farms in New Hampshire, meaning it's been in production in the same family since before the Constitution.

In the early 1940s, Paul Welch attended the one-room Shirley Hill School, along with Jim Shirley's two sisters, Mary and Connie. After awhile working by their homes, Jim and Paul came to see each other daily. Then Jim went off to college and law school, lived in Deerfield for 22 years, and eventually returned to his family home with Sara in 1993.

Paul had felt the financial squeeze on a farmer with the rising costs of taxes, insurance, and building maintenance. The value of land for development was also rising, and he eventually

sold off a couple of parcels to keep his farm going. Knowing that the clock was ticking and wanting to preserve the land, Jim and Paul talked off and on about what feasible options might exist. Paul had his motivations: to keep the land open and working, as he'd always known it. And Jim had his: to protect the legacy of so many generations of families who'd worked that land – a feeling few of us can know.

The story gets more complicated at this point, as many groups came together with Paul and the Shirleys to conserve 100 acres of prime-quality working farmland, plus a 77-acre woodlot. Jim met with Carol Hall who was a representative of both Goffstown's brand new Open Space Committee and the Russell Foundation, and a bold plan emerged. Given the statewide significance of the farm soils and the availability of local matching funds and generous landowner donations, the farms were strong candidates for federal grant funding, administered by the NH Natural Resources Conservation Service. About 18 months later, with the very special efforts of the Russell Foundation and support by Goffstown's officials and taxpayers, and after many twists and turns, all the Welch fields and parts of the Shirley land are now protected by easements held by PLC.

Jim Shirley tells of a time long past when the two properties were probably both part of the Shirley Farm, “and this, in its way, reunites the old farm, forever.”

Kelly Teevan is one of the organizers of the Friends of Goffstown Land Conservation (FOGLC), a new citizens' group dedicated to land conservation and education in Goffstown. You can reach Kelly at kteevan@foglc.com or 497-5508.



PLC to Attend Land Trust Alliance Rally

Thanks in part to a grant from the Russell Foundation, Eric Masterson, PLC's new executive director, and Director of Development Paula Bellemore will be attending the 2008 Land Trust Alliance Rally on September 18-21 in Pittsburgh, PA. Rally, a national land conservation conference, is a key networking and training event that allows PLC to stay current with a wide variety of land trust issues. We look forward to learning from Eric and Paula upon their return!

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AUTUMN

Walk in the Woods Events

Please register for all events at www.plcnh.org (under Events) or call 487-3331. Walks are held rain or shine. In the unlikely event that a walk is cancelled due to unsafe conditions, an outgoing message will be left at 487-3331.

Hawk Watch!

Pack Monadnock, Peterborough ~ Saturday, September 20

That's right – we're venturing out of the watershed for a very special trip. Join other PLC friends for a hike up Pack Monadnock via the Raymond Trail (or take the auto road, if you prefer). The hike is about 1.6 miles each way. At the summit, a short trail leads from the parking lot to the raptor observatory, inviting visitors to take in this exciting spectacle. A New Hampshire Audubon representative staffs the summit on weekends to answer questions.

Meet the walk leader at the carriage sheds in the center of Francestown (at the intersection of Routes 136 & 47) at 8am. We'll carpool to Peterborough and plan to return around 2pm. Pack a lunch, water, camera, & binoculars, and dress appropriately! Rain date is Sunday, September 21. Call 487-3331 after 5pm on Friday to see if we've rescheduled.

Note: If you take the auto road, admission to Miller State Park is \$4 for adults and \$2 for children ages 6-11; children ages 5 and under and NH residents over 65 are admitted free.

Hike Up Rose Mountain

Francestown/Lyndeborough ~ Saturday, October 4

Enjoy the view! The summit of Rose Mountain offers a nearly 360-degree view after a morning's climb along an old logging road. Some steep sections with loose, rocky surfaces have tricky footing, but overall the hike can be managed by most. We'll leave from Russell Station Road in Francestown (follow PLC signs) at 9am, enjoy lunch on the summit (in Lyndeborough!), and return to the trailhead at approximately 2pm. Wear sturdy shoes and dress appropriately for the weather. (It might be chilly at the summit!) Don't forget lunch and your camera!

Annual Meeting Field Trips

Saturday, October 18

This year PLC will return to the very popular Deering Center for our annual meeting. Watch your mailbox for our Annual Meeting flyer, including details on field trips to local natural areas.



Autumn Schedule

Get outside and try something new this fall!

Novices are always welcome, so please join us!

Sunday, September 28 ~ Bullard Hill, Francestown
Call Gordon at 487-2994

Sunday, October 5 ~ Whiting Brook, Francestown
Call Margaret at 774-7120

Dates are subject to change. Call leaders to confirm.

Welcome to Our New Members!

(as of August 1st)

Marie Carothers

Eric Masterson & Tricia Burt Masterson**

R. Douglas Powers & Doria Harris*

* Contributing Member (\$50)

** Supporting Member (\$100)

*** Guardian Member (\$250+)

Special Gifts

The Dunbarton Garden Club \$100.00

The Diversity Club at John Stark
Regional High School \$300.00

Save the Date!

PLC Annual Meeting

Saturday, October 18

4pm – 9pm

Join us for the annual PLC "family" get-together as we welcome our new Executive Director and celebrate our milestone of 4000 protected acres.

This year's meeting will return to the bucolic setting of **The Deering Center**, which was a big hit in 2005.

Once again we will enjoy PLC's traditional spaghetti feast featuring our "secret sauce" and the always "calorie-free" [tee-hee!] desserts provided by PLC members.

This year's guest speaker will be **Howard Mansfield**, author of 5 books, including *The Bones of the Earth*, *The Same Ax Twice*, and *In the Memory House*. Howard lives in Hancock with his wife, author Sy Montgomery, who, quite coincidentally, are Eric's neighbors!

Watch for registration information in a separate mailing.

Ferrin Pond:

A Short History of a Special Place

by Chris Hague

Photo: Chris Hague

Before the visitor to Weare's Ferrin Pond ascends the trail to pristine waters 948 feet above sea level, there are remarkable natural resources to enjoy. There are also reminders of the ongoing conservation effort that continues to this day.

Beyond a parking area just off Mountain Road, a knoll on the recently widened cart road descends toward the trail through the Town Forest to Ferrin Pond. Due to ongoing and currently controversial power line construction, walkers encounter wet spots as the road passes over Buxton Brook.

This area was classified by Professor Barry Wicklow of St. Anselm College as an almost perfect example of a delicate wetland. Carnivorous plants, orchids, cranberries, and other unusual species thrive in this peatland surrounded by almost 4500 acres of contiguous open space. Every transect in a 1994-2004 biodiversity inventory showed vital indicator species. This means that species whose presence are indicative of a healthy ecosystem are alive and well here. Current threats to this wetland caused by human activity are detailed in the minutes of recent Weare selectmen's meetings at www.weare.nh.gov.

Beyond Buxton Brook, yellow markers on the right direct hikers up a trail cut through the Ferrin Pond Forest by volunteers under Gordon Russell's direction. In 1985 the N.H. Governor's Council closed a former cart road up the hill, restricting access to a footpath from the parking area on Mountain Road to the pond. This was

consistent with the will of John S. Bartlett, born in 1881, which allowed public access to the pond by footpath from Mountain Road. The Council's action ended problems created by motorcycle gangs camping and partying on weekends, and ended years of confusion about vehicular access by decreeing that only the state had the right to alter the character of the road to the pond.

The Bartletts, a family that arrived in 1794, acquired and farmed much of the land around the pond. Stone walls tell the story of a century of agriculture on hillsides now reforested with hemlock groves and mixed hardwoods. Some of these walls are believed

to have marked pastures belonging to the pond's namesake, Enos Ferrin, who lived here in the mid to late 1700s.

A large black gum tree and a white pine with a 145-inch circumference highlight the trail's flora. Woodlands open onto a gravel beach where the trail loops around the 40-acre pond. Although the water depth is just under 12 feet, it's easy to see fish and pipewort growing on the bottom.

A 1991 New Hampshire Land Conservation Investment Program grant enabled the Town to acquire land at the pond. In 1992 the

Conservation Commission empowered Town Forester Bobby Reeve to negotiate land purchases on the back side of the pond. More than 480 acres are now conserved. When the Piscataquog Watershed Association acquired a parcel of land abutting the pond in 1995 the entire shoreline became protected. The Conservation Commission described Ferrin Pond as "...an environmental asset, to be enjoyed and savored by those seeking to appreciate quiet, intrinsic and unparalleled beauty." This rare upland pond has to be seen to be savored.

A trail guide with a map and description of natural features is available from PLC. To find Ferrin Pond, take Route 149 west from Route 77 in Weare. In 1.5 miles, turn left onto Perkins Pond Road. In half a mile, turn right on Mountain Road at the crossroads. After a mile, watch for power lines and a small parking area on the right with a sign that tells the history of Ferrin Pond.



Ferrin Pond offers many opportunities for nature lovers and children alike!
(Photo: Paula Bellemore)

New Boston's Yard Sale Nets \$1000 for PLC!

Thanks to the leadership of Louise Robie, New Boston's 2008 Town-Wide Yard Sale netted more than \$1000 for PLC!

This is the second year Louise has organized the event, proceeds from which are donated to a lucky nonprofit that has contributed to the town's vibrant community life.

This year PLC added to the fun by holding our own yard sale. Members donated items that ranged from children's clothing and housewares to furniture and toys. All proceeds from these sales went directly to PLC.

Special thanks to Gail Parker and Graham Pendlebury for all their work on the yard sale.

We couldn't have done it without you!



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, September 20 ~ Hawk Watch!

Pack Monadnock, Peterborough

Saturday, October 4 ~ Hike Up Rose Mountain

Francestown/Lyndeborough

Saturday, October 18 ~ PLC Annual Meeting

Deering, The Deering Center

September 28 & October 5 ~ Keeping Track

See details inside.

July / August 2008 Volume 20, No. 4

Piscataquog News

THE PISCATAQUOG LAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

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Mark Your Calendar!

Come meet Eric & your PLC friends at:

PLC's 38th Annual Meeting

Saturday, October 18 at The Deering Center

Just Arrived:

New PLC Hats & T-shirts!

Stop by the office to get yours!