



OUR MISSION

TO CONSERVE THE
NATURAL AND SCENIC
ENVIRONMENT OF THE
PISCATAQUOG RIVER
WATERSHED AND
PROTECT THE PURITY
OF ITS WATERS.

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Watershed News

THE PISCATAQUOG WATERSHED ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

How much land does a bear need to feel at home in our watershed? How about a bobcat or a mink or an otter? At current and projected growth rates, **will there be room for us all?**

New Hampshire is the fastest growing state in the Northeast. Our population has doubled since 1950 and likely will triple by 2020 to more than 1.5 million people. Roughly 85% of the state's projected growth over the next 15 years will occur in four counties, including Hillsborough and Merrimack counties, where our watershed towns are located. At the community level, Weare's projected growth rate – 80% from 1998 to 2020 – is among the highest in the state. Though growth is relative, and projections are only projections, our landscape is undeniably changing to accommodate continued housing and commercial demands. Current pressures are projected to rise with the expansion of I-93. Much of this growth will occur in rural communities like ours, in part because the state's two largest cities, Nashua and Manchester, are pretty much maxed out, and in part, importantly, because people moving to the state are attracted to more rural and suburban settings like those our Piscataquog River watershed towns offer.

From a human perspective, the changing landscape translates into more buildings and roads and less undeveloped land – fewer forests, fewer farms, increased vulnerability for streams, rivers, wetlands, and aquifers from increased runoff and smaller, less effective natural buffers, plus rising demands for water. It means new neighbors and friends for the same number of acres. It means smaller, discontinuous blocks of forested land, which has implications for wildlife as well as commercial forestry.

Looking at growth statewide from the land conservation perspective, some 1.3 million acres in NH are already protected from development. However, more than 70% of protected lands are in northern NH. Locally, using 1998 data (which we are in the process of updating for all watershed towns), the amount of permanently protected area as a percentage of total community acreage ranges from a low of 5.9% in Lyndeborough to a high of 20.1% in Dunbarton. Weare at 5,464 acres and New Boston at 4,584 acres have the most land in conservation.

GROWING SMART

by Margaret Watkins



So, how much conserved land is enough? For a thriving economy, a high quality of life, and healthy ecosystem, the story is complicated. We need to be asking, how connected are the protected parcels? How large? How significant are they ecologically? Do they harbor rare or endangered plants or animals? Are they protecting high value wetlands, aquifers, or public water supplies?

Statewide, a consortium of conservation organizations and state agencies, now known as the NH Living Legacy Project, has determined that there is insufficient protection for nearly three-quarters of known rare plants, for more than three-quarters of known rare vertebrate species, and for more than 90% of known rare invertebrate species.

We need to be asking:
How connected are the protected parcels?
How large?
How significant are they ecologically?
Do they harbor rare or endangered plants or animals?
Are they protecting high value wetlands, aquifers, or public water supplies?

Locally, the PWA is working with the Living Legacy Project to identify ecologically significant areas, wildlife corridors, and links among conserved blocks of land. A scope of work for additional research, contact with landowners, and permanent land protection will follow completion of the mapped information this spring and a written plan by the fall. We hope to engage local boards and commissions in this effort to help protect

the watershed's Green Infrastructure. In doing so, we will have provided a place for the bears, the bobcats, the otters, and minks to live along with the thousands of anticipated new residents in the watershed.

All data in this article are from *New Hampshire's Changing Landscape: Population Growth, Land Use Conversion, and Resource Fragmentation in the Granite State*, prepared by Dan Sundquist, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and Michael Stevens, The New Hampshire Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, October 1999.

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Why We Don't Celebrate GROUNDHOG DAY in New Hampshire

by Rosemary Conroy

Every February 2nd at 7:25 a.m., more than 30,000 people gather to witness the ritual harassment of a

hapless creature named Punxsutawney Phil. Yes, Groundhog Day. The citizens of this western Pennsylvania town have turned this

unassuming holiday into a three-day extravaganza complete with fireworks, parades, contests, feasting, dancing, and more. Not to mention the main event — will Phil see his shadow? (*In case you cannot remember, if the groundhog sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter; if he doesn't, somehow, miraculously, it's over.*)

And while other cities across Canada and the United States have jumped on the shameless exploitation of an over-sized rodent bandwagon, none appears to have achieved the level of spectacle that occurs in Punxsutawney. But, as far as I can tell, not many places in northern New England commemorate this event.

I theorize that there are three main reasons for this local lack of celebrating groundhogs, none of which have to do with their reputations as garden pests. The first is based on semantics: "*We t'ain't got groundhogs in New Hampshire,*" a curmudgeonly forester once told me. "*We's got woodchucks.*" So, even though *Marmota monax* has several common names, groundhog isn't one of them up here. (*Got that, fellow flatlanders?*)

The second reason is more practical. Having lived through more than a dozen New Hampshire winters, I have yet to see one come even close to being over in February. If experience is any guide, it is just getting serious. So although many people do desperately wish for the groundhog, er, woodchuck to not see a shadow, we don't really believe that tomorrow will suddenly be spring. Besides, spring just means boot-sucking mud and blood-sucking black flies.

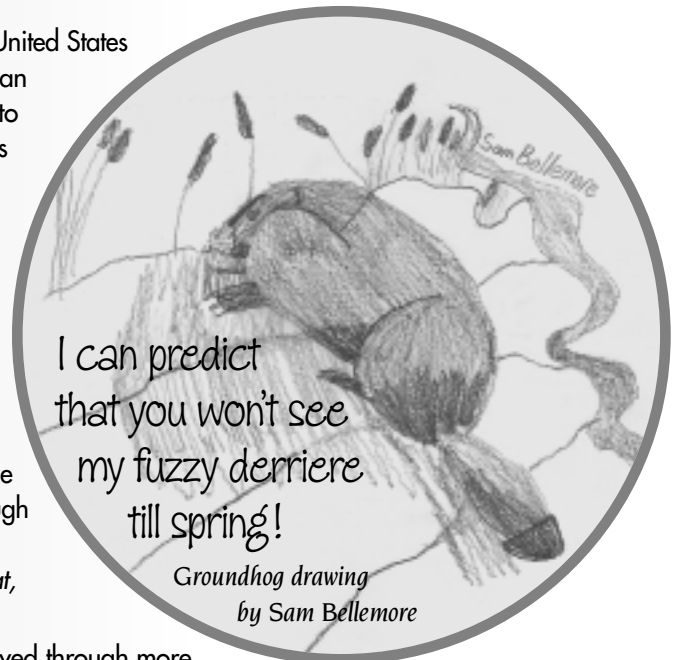
And then there's the third reason: biology. You will be hard pressed to find a woodchuck right now in New Hampshire. Well, one that would be awake enough to see anything, never mind his shadow. Woodchucks are one of our two true hibernators. The woodland jumping mouse is the other. While many people think the black bear sleeps soundly through winter, it does not. Our bruins undertake more of a semi-hibernation — they do not fall as completely into a deep torpor the way a woodchuck does. If disturbed in winter, a black bear will wake up and can easily move around, if necessary.

The metabolism of a woodchuck, on the other hand, slows so far down that you could reach into its burrow, pull it out, and swing it around over your head and it wouldn't wake up. *NOT* that I am advocating

"*We t'ain't got groundhogs in New Hampshire,*"
a curmudgeonly forester once told me.

"*We's got woodchucks.*"

They must have biologists and pragmatists in Punxsutawney too. Well, according the official website, www.groundhog.org, "the groundhog tradition stems from beliefs associated with Candlemas Day and the days of early Christians in Europe." February 2nd marks the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. A common custom was to have the clergy bless candles and distribute them to the people to mark the occasion. And they apparently also watched the weather.



such a practice — but one of my biology teachers once described its hibernation that way.

So, just how did the good people of the Keystone State come to seek out woodchucks in winter?

According to an old English song:

If Candlemas be fair and bright,
Come, Winter, have another flight;
If Candlemas brings clouds and rain,
Go Winter, and come not again.

thus predicting six more weeks of bad weather, which they interpolated as the length of the "Second Winter."

Pennsylvania's earliest German settlers found groundhogs "in profusion in many parts of the state." Since the groundhog most closely resembled the European hedgehog, they adapted their ancient tradition to this American animal.

Something apparently got lost in the translation. Maybe in ancient Rome the hedgehogs were up and about in February, but not woodchucks in western Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, the Groundhog Club has cleverly modernized the tradition and rumor has it that they keep Phil in a zoo for easy access on the big day. The well-publicized annual event, according to their website, stretches back to 1887, when the "first official trek to Gobbler's Knob" took place. From that vantage point, the logbook recorded that what I assume was the first official Punxsutawney Phil did indeed see his shadow.

But what about stoic New Englanders? Nineteenth-century farmers used the expression, "Groundhog Day, half your hay." If more than half was gone, their cows might not make it till spring green-up. I suppose the modern-day equivalent is people who burn wood for heat, although "Groundhog Day, half your woodpile" doesn't rhyme as well.

So whether you gather in the Granite State or trek on down to Punxsutawney, here's my official Woodchuck Day predication:

Winter will definitely end too late for some
and way too soon for others.

Rosemary Conroy is an artist/naturalist/writer living in Goffstown. She writes a biweekly column for the New Hampshire Sunday News, in which this article originally appeared on February 2, 2003. She also cohosts and writes Something Wild on NHPR. Visit her website at www.studiobuteo.com.



PLEASE CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL.

If it has a red line, your membership is due for renewal. Won't you please renew right away? And tell a friend about PWA! We depend on your support!

- ☐ \$10 Student/Senior ☐ \$30 Family ☐ \$100 Wood Turtle (Gift option: PWA fanny pack)
☐ \$20 Individual ☐ \$50 Salmon (Gift option: "Vernal Pools" book) ☐ \$250+ Deer (Gift option: Handmade walking stick)

☐ Check here if you want the optional gift premium listed for higher levels.

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YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL:

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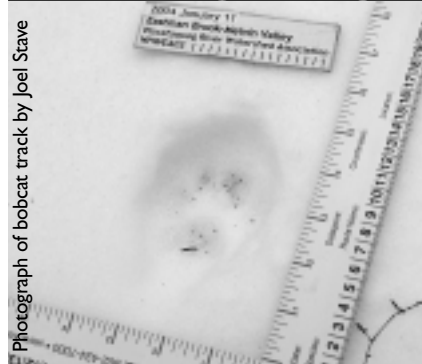
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Remember to check the other side of this form. Then return it with your payment to:

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THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR CONTINUED HELP IN PROTECTING THE WATERSHED!

LATE Winter KEEPING TRACK



Photograph of bobcat track by Joel Stave

Even if you missed seeing the otters at play in the river behind the Good Neighbor Café in New Boston, it's not too late to see evidence of our mammalian neighbors under the often perfect conditions for late winter tracking.

NOVICES ALWAYS WELCOME!

Sunday, Feb. 15 (New Boston)

Call Ken at 487-5114

Sunday, March 7 (Weare)

Call Gordon at 487-2994

Sunday, March 14 (Weare)

Call Gordon at 487-2994

Sunday, March 21 (Dunbarton)

Call Margaret at 774-7120

**Dates are subject to change
– especially in winter.**

**Call contacts for the latest
schedule and make-up dates.**

New Board Member: *Chris Conroy*



Chris Conroy

The PWA is pleased to introduce our newest board member, Chris Conroy, a longtime friend and supporter of the PWA. Chris is President of Heartwood Media, Inc., a video and multimedia production company in Manchester. He lives in Goffstown with his wife Rosemary, who has served on the Board and remains an active PWA volunteer.

Chris hopes to use his experience in the communications field to help the PWA reach out to new and current members and business sponsors, and to help educate the public about the beauty and importance of the Piscataquog River watershed.

"Chris's business experience, media skills, enthusiasm, and great sense of humor are readily apparent in his comments and questions at the Board meetings he has attended," observed Margaret Watkins, PWA Executive Director. "He will be a delight to work with."

According to a study of charitable giving in 2002, gifts to environmental organizations account for only 2.7% of donations to nonprofits, yet people often rank the environment high on a list of factors they value most as contributing to their quality of life.

Have you sent in your contribution to the PWA Annual Fund yet?

Every gift counts!

Thank you!

Currently, all parties (Goffstown Selectmen, NHDOT, Guilford Transportation) have

agreed on terms for the purchase of the rail bed between Manchester and Goffstown village by the state on behalf of the town. The remaining dissenter in this transfer is the state's Assistant Attorney General Craig Donais. He feels that there are title issues too serious for him to agree to the purchase. There have been a series of meetings over the last

UPDATE ON GOFFSTOWN RAIL TO TRAILS PROGRAM

couple of months to try to resolve these differences of opinion.

It was originally thought that the town's matching funds for the purchase would expire at the end of 2003. The selectmen recently determined that due to the way the ballot article was worded, the actual expiration is the next town meeting in

March. This gives a little more time for discussions with the state's attorney general's office.

Meanwhile, planning is underway to conduct a design charrette (brainstorming and planning session) for the trail. The Piscataquog River Local Advisory Committee (PRLAC) has received a grant from the state that they wish to use for this purpose. It is hoped that the charrette can be held sometime in late March, after the purchase issues have been settled.

For more information, contact Friends of the Greenway at info@thegreenway.org or Selectman Barbara Griffin at the Goffstown Town Hall (497-8990).

PWA Feedback Form

Let us hear from you – anytime! Please share your news and ideas with PWA.
You can write to us at the address on the reverse or email us at contactpwa@yahoo.com.

- ☐ I'd like to join a Keeping Track team.
- ☐ I'd like to help the Purple Loosestrife Awareness Committee (PLAC).
- ☐ Please send PWA brochures for my neighbors and friends. How many do you need? _____
- ☐ I want to support the PWA in other ways (for example, lead a walk, blaze a trail, write an article, provide publicity, write a grant, do research, raise funds, volunteer to aid school programs, host a local information meeting, etc.).

PLEASE SPECIFY YOUR INTERESTS:

I WANT TO LEARN ABOUT:

- ☐ Ways to protect my land.
- ☐ Remembering the PWA in my will.
- ☐ Making a major contribution to the PWA.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT. YOU ARE THE PWA!

Come Celebrate With Us and

Fall in Love

with the *Tuthill Woodlands Preserve!*

**Snowshoe Open House, Tuthill Woodlands Preserve, New Boston
Saturday, February 14 - Valentine's Day**

All are welcome, so bring your friends and neighbors!

10:30 Brief Opening Ceremony

11:00 & 2:00 Guided snowshoe tours (snowshoe rentals available)

Tour guides will include members of the PWA's Keeping Track teams who can point out signs of animals who call this beautiful property home.

Thanks to the Tuthill family and the many supporters who made the protection of this property possible, all of us and these animals can enjoy this nearly 200-acre preserve in perpetuity. The property also features beautiful stonework in cellar holes, culverts, and stone walls.

After each snowshoe tour, participants are invited for cookies and hot chocolate at the nearby home of **Ken and Lyn Lombard** on Pine Echo Road. Won't you please join us?

Snowshoe Rentals By reservation only.
Members \$5 / Nonmembers \$7 To reserve snowshoes (*first come, first served*), call the PWA office at **487-3331** or email Paula at **pbellemore@pwa.mv.com**. Specify your name, phone number, choice of 11:00 or 2:00 tour, number of snowshoe pairs needed, and weight of users. Reservations will be confirmed on February 9th and 10th.



Thank you to EMS for providing snowshoes for this event.

Directions From New Boston village, take Rte. 136 west toward Franconia. In about 2 miles, turn right onto **Tucker Mill Road**. The Preserve is on the left about 3 miles from Rte. 136. Park along the road.

Thanks to the following donors for making the Tuthill Woodlands Preserve a reality:

FOUNDERS

James Barnett & Shirley Sullivan
John & Diane DiStaso
Richard Kaeser & Diane Fortier
Jon & Lois Kesty
Nancy Loddengaard & David LaMagna
Tom & Pat Pine
Russell Piscataquog River Watershed Foundation

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Barbara C. Gannon
Daniel & Marie MacDonald
Piscataquog Area Trailways

TUTHILL GIFT IN MEMORY OF MARION C. RUSSELL

Justice David H. Souter

Russell Foundation

FUNDS NEW PROJECTS

The PWA Board of Directors is excited to announce the first two of many future projects in the Piscataquog River watershed to be funded by the Russell Piscataquog River Watershed Foundation. Gordon and Barbara Russell created the Foundation as an expression of their love for and commitment to the Piscataquog River Watershed, with which Gordon is intimately familiar.

These first two projects are:

1 An internship to assess and document the natural and historical resources of the PWA's Tuthill Woodlands Preserve;

2 The digitization of tax map information for conservation projects in the Rand, Brennan, and Cold brook watersheds (within the larger Piscataquog River watershed).

Both projects reflect the Russells' goals for their Foundation. Its purposes are:

● To protect, preserve, and study the natural attributes of the Piscataquog River Watershed, with priority given to land and water conservation and protection, research involving flora and fauna, and land conservation.

● To provide financial assistance to high school and college students for research directed to the advancement of understanding of the environment of the Piscataquog River Watershed.

A PWA founder and Director Emeriti, Gordon has worked tirelessly on behalf of watershed protection as a teacher, an explorer and researcher, a land protection activist, and a leader. **We look forward to advancing many PWA conservation goals for the watershed with support from the Russell Foundation.**



5A Mill Street
New Boston, NH 03070
(603) 487-3331
pwa@pwa.mv.com
www.pwa-nh.org

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It's time to renew your membership!
Please use the form on page 3.

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Celebrate Valentine's Day with us!

**Snowshoe Open House, Tuthill Woodlands Preserve, New Boston
Saturday, February 14 - Valentine's Day**

All are welcome, so bring your friends and neighbors!

10:30 Brief Opening Ceremony

11:00 & 2:00 Guided snowshoe tours followed by cookies & hot chocolate

(See page 5 for details.)

SPECIAL GIFTS FOR Lake Horace Marsh PROJECT

Barbara Allison Thomson
Joshua & Hollis Young
Hewlett-Packard Company (matching gift)

Welcome to Our New Members!

David, Michele, Brian & Nick Petersen	New Boston
Richard & Sheena Floreani*	New Boston
Sherri Heiber	Goffstown

*All new members will be entered into a raffle
for a night at the Greenfield Inn.*

Other Special Gifts

Jason Sachs

Member Renewals Since Last Newsletter

Michael Amaral & Family	Warner
Gloria Andrews	Chichester
Susan & David Avery	Francestown
Daniel & Laurie Beaulieu	Weare
Herbert Benedict	Francestown
Rev. Florent Bilodeau	Manchester
Frank Bolton	Weare
Charles & Martha Boswell*	Francestown
Matilda Boyle	Francestown
Bill & Polly Brendle	New Boston
Lisa Brooks	Deering
Jon Brooks & Jami Boyle	New Boston
Jed Callen & Carol Hess	New Boston
Don & Sarah Chapman	New Boston
Andre, Jr. & Mary Ellen Compagna	New Boston
Frederick Daggett	New Boston
Peter & Elisabeth DeRoeth **	Boston, MA
Ken Duchesne	New Boston
Gerald & Dona Fairbairn	New Boston
Janet Falcone*	Goffstown
Erik & Kathleen Ruty Fey	New Boston
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Don & Patricia Grosso	New Boston

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Dwight & Heather Lovejoy	New Boston
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Irving T. & Elinor M. McDowell**	New Boston
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Barbara Sholl & Kevin McLarnon	New Boston
Lorraine Miller	New Boston
Diane Padilla & Ellen Musinsky*	Weare
Graham Pendlebury	New Boston
Thomas & Patricia Pine	New Boston
Glenn & Charlotte Price	Weare
Hannah Proctor*	Francestown
James & Jane Raymond	Goffstown
Bobby Reeve	Weare

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Phil & Jane Workman	New Boston
Joshua & Hollis Young**	Charlestown, MA

* denotes extra contribution
** denotes contribution of \$100 or more