

## Nashoba Conservation Trust Summer 2021 News

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### Conservation Corner

Ken Hartlage

We've regularly noted in these pages how vital volunteers are to NCT's trail maintenance and habitat restoration projects, and our ongoing work at Day Woods is no exception. Led by members of the Pepperell Invasive Plant Advisory Committee (IPAC), NCT board members and other volunteers pulled multiple bag-loads of invasive plants around the area overlooking Gulf Brook. Invasive plants, such as Japanese knotweed, garlic mustard and phragmites, can have devastating consequences for ecosystems by altering soil chemistry and structure. For example, riverbanks inundated with Japanese knotweed are more prone to erosion than with native plants. Invasive plants also disrupt the local food web, leading to a decline in our native insect populations and the animals that prey on them.

Fortunately for Pepperell, the newly formed, all-volunteer IPAC is here to help us deal with these threats through education, outreach and projects. The invasive plant pull at Day Woods is just one example of the work they will undertake. Following the invasive pull, the Town of Pepperell DPW delivered three truckloads of mulch, which we spread over the area to keep the invasive plants from growing back. In the Spring of 2022, the IPAC team will be back to supervise the installation of native plants on the site.

Additional improvements to the site are scheduled for August with the installation of two benches at the overlook. Nathan Landino, a member of Scout Troop 13, Pepperell, constructed the benches using funds raised for his Eagle Scout project. But Nathan didn't stop there – he also built two benches for the pollinator meadow at NCT's Seminore Woods parcel and a picnic table for the Conservation Commission's Keyes-Parker parcel. What a gift to our community!

My dad once told me that volunteers are the backbone of a community. Since moving to Pepperell sixteen years ago, I've come to appreciate just how true that statement is because this town positively buzzes with great ideas and the people willing to make them a reality. Pepperell is a community with great natural beauty, and we owe many thanks to the volunteers who help to keep it that way.



Volunteer Mark Fountain hard at work

## Understanding Deer Population Dynamics

Paula Terrasi

How can we better understand the social and environmental dynamics of wildlife in our communities? The diversity of wildlife found in Pepperell's rivers and streams and across our protected open spaces is appealing to researchers.

Such was the case when researchers from the University of Wisconsin and Boston University commenced a three-year study in Pepperell and five other communities in Massachusetts to study the impacts of increasing deer populations on forest health and to better understand how communities approach deer management issues.

With permission from the Board of Nashoba Conservation Trust, the Town of Pepperell Conservation Commission, and private property owners, the team from the University of Wisconsin installed motion-activated game cameras to monitor plots of land for deer activity. Summer vegetation surveys were conducted in the plots and cameras are angled to capture deer and other wildlife that enter. The researchers will return twice yearly over a three-year period to change the camera batteries and to replace the SD cards that contain photos.

The team from Boston University will conduct interviews and focus groups with stakeholders to discuss Pepperell's perception of deer populations and other wildlife, concerns with deer management, environmental impacts, conservation and environmental management objectives, and approaches for managing deer.



Researchers from the University of Wisconsin install a game camera  
L to R: Olivia Colby, Megan Morrison, Jamie Goethlich  
Photo credit: Harvey Serreze

The research data will be used to model deer management scenarios at local and statewide levels. The data and findings will be shared with participating communities to help land managers better understand the impacts of deer populations on their properties and deer management options.

To learn more about the study, please contact Paula at 978-314-1910.



## Our Trip to Alaska

Patty Franklin

My husband Jim and I began our long-awaited epic journey to wild and scenic Alaska this past June where we explored the Kenai Peninsula for two incredible weeks with our friends, Gail and Gerry Coffey. After 17 hours of traveling to Anchorage with our masks on, we arrived at our hotel exhausted but excited about beginning our road trip the next morning. The Kenai Peninsula is located south of Anchorage and encompasses all of the Alaskan wildlife habitats with the exception of the Arctic tundra. Our plan was to travel to as many lakes, wetlands, and trails as possible to observe wildlife in their natural environment.

At the beginning of our road trip, we stopped at Potter Marsh at the southern end of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge and walked along the boardwalks through the marsh. This habitat was perfect for viewing a variety of birds, including red-necked Phalaropes, Red-necked Grebes, Trumpeter Swans, nesting Arctic Terns, Violet Green Swallows and a pair of Eagles.

We continued on our travels along Turnagain Arm crossing through the Chugach Mountains where we observed over 35 eagles on the mudflats along with Arctic Terns, and Glaucous Gulls. We stopped at a crystal clear alpine lake



Bald eagle



Portage Glacier Road



Mother and cub clamming at low tide

and took in the breathtaking snowcapped mountains and glaciers looming all around us. Far above us, we watched a black bear crossing a meadow with her cub and mountain goats perching on the edges of cliffs as they browsed for food. Using our Kenai Peninsula Wildlife Guide, we hiked many trails carrying bear spray with us as a precaution. We added more bird species to our list with each walk, including many we had never seen before. When we were climbing a trail along a moving stream with waterfalls, we saw an American Dipper. By the end of our trip we had seen nearly 100 bird species. We saw moose browsing just about every day. We watched a female moose browsing across the river from where we were staying in Soldotna, while her two calves played along the water's edge. Further down the river was another female moose with one calf, and we saw Caribou in a nearby location who were well hidden.

## Our Trip to Alaska continued...

Patty Franklin

We went on two glacier and wildlife boat tours out of Seward harbor, where we motored south through Resurrection Bay and out into the rough waters of the Harding Gateway to Kenai Fjords National Park and Northwestern Fjord. We wanted to experience the awesome marine life and we were not disappointed! We saw numerous bird species including many horned and tufted puffins flying by, diving for food and flying back to their nests to feed their young. Thousands of nesting seabirds covered every inch of rocks and ledges on the islets we passed by. We watched several Orca pods as they searched for food and observed humpbacked whales, a fin whale, Steller sea lions and sea otters. Our female captain was also a naturalist and we learned so much about the wildlife, the fjords and glaciers. We went fairly close to a glacier melting into the deep waters. We saw a number of floating pieces of ice with female harbor seals and their pups lying on them in a protected area where the orcas can't reach them. They stay here until the pups are about one month old. We were surrounded by cliffs and glaciers. Words can't describe the beauty and wonder of it all.



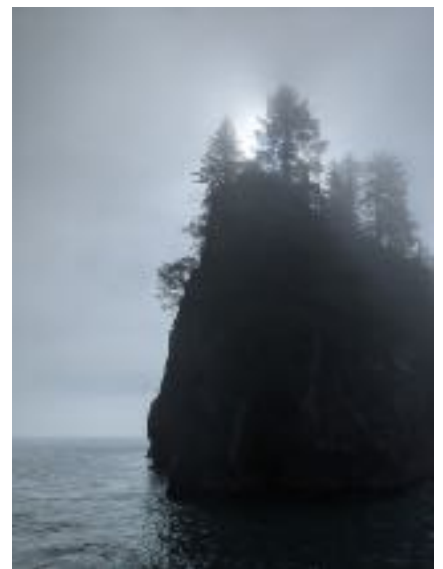
Resurrection Bay



Moose

Near the end of our trip, we spent two fascinating days at a wilderness lodge on the coast of Cook Inlet at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. The place is so remote that we had to charter a small plane to get there and landed on a beach. We went there to observe coastal brown bears (Grizzlies) in their natural habitat and did not have to wait long. As we embarked from the plane, we saw a female brown bear with her second-year cub as they dug for razor clams down the beach from us. We were assigned our own guide and we spent the next two days out on the trails observing the brown bears as they were foraging for sedge grasses, digging for clams, courting, mating and interacting with a cub. We caught glimpses of a river otter and saw wolf, moose and bear tracks on the beach.

Alaska is truly the last frontier. We hope to go back to visit other areas in Alaska, including the Arctic tundra in the future.



Resurrection Bay



## So Long Mention's Pond!

Linn Clark

In the Spring 2021 newsletter, I wrote an article about the Shattuck Dam on the Day Woods property. The article came from an interview with Trescott Abele, who was long-time Town Moderator. But that was only part of the fascinating history of the dams along Gulf Brook. Those of you who have lived in Pepperell before 1993 may have fond memories of Mention's Pond. In an article published in The Advocate in 1993, Trescott tells us more. "At about 1 pm, April 27, 1993, Julie Danforth of Lawrence Street, Pepperell heard a loud noise. Like the roar of a waterfall, the noise was accompanied by the sound of trees crashing down. What she heard was the end of Mention's Pond. The old dam had collapsed." The story goes that after Bill Henry bought the burned-out mill at Mention's Pond, he realized he had a greater source for water if he moved his operation downstream and used the waterpower from two upstream mill ponds. According to the article, the hard-working Bill Henry worked day and night at his mill for several weeks during the spring runoff. "When water drained from his pond he would open gates to let water from Mention's Pond flow out. When that source was used up there was another dam" a half-mile upstream, which he could open. "After that, he was done."

After the Shattuck mill closed down in the 20's Mention's Pond became a lovely spot for locals to take a swim or go fishing. Trescott writes of how he loved to go there and enjoy the solitude....and skinny dip! "As more people used the pond, bathing suits were introduced. A rope swing was attached to a large tree which had grown up on the dam. A boy could swing ten feet over the water before diving feet first or head first." Later another rope swing was constructed near the path coming in from Lawrence Street, which had a platform. Those daring would swing 20' out over the pond! Trescott lamented that as years went by, the pond became too popular and that popularity, in his mind, ruined it. In spite of that, I found it still remained a beautiful pond and I remember taking my boys fishing there and picnicking on the other bank when NCT led conservation hikes along the Jeff Smith Trail.

Trescott concluded: "(and) now Mention's Pond no longer exists. Someday your grandchildren, wandering in the woods off Lawrence Street might find a tall old pine with cleats attached and will wonder why anyone would climb 40 feet up a tree in the middle of the woods! Gulf Brook would be 50 feet away. Even when Mention's Pond existed, some people wondered why."

Today, if you hike the Gulf Brook section of the Jeff Smith Trail from Oak Hill Street to Lawrence Street imagine the activity that took place here 150 years ago! The JST eventually wanders along a wetland which is actually the old Mention's Pond site. An unmarked spur trail off the JST heads back across Gulf Brook just below the old dam. The top of the dam is about 20 feet high! After crossing Gulf Brook, if you take a right, the trail goes to the old swimming hole and out to Lawrence Street. If you go left, you will find the old sluiceway leading to the Mention's mill site. The land is now owned by the Pepperell Water Department.



## Upcoming Events

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, planned NCT events are on hold until further notice

## Volunteers

Volunteers are always needed and welcomed for all the activities that NCT participates in. If you would like to become involved, please contact Pat Peavey at 508-320-2492



## Support NCT with your donations

The NCT offers the following levels of membership:

Individual - \$35

Family - \$50

Sponsor - \$100

Patron - \$250

Benefactor - \$1000

All memberships include subscription to the NCT Quarterly Newsletter. Visit the website at [nashobatrust.org](http://nashobatrust.org) to donate or mail your check to:

Nashoba Conservation Trust  
PO Box 188  
Pepperell, MA 01463

## Pepperell Trail Guide

The Pepperell Trail Guide describes sixteen conservation area and almost 20 miles of trails, some of which pass through or alongside some of Pepperell's most stunning natural areas, including the Nashua and Nissitissit Rivers, Heald Pond and Gulf Brook Ravine. Visit the NCT website at [www.nashobatrust.org](http://www.nashobatrust.org) to download a copy.



## NCT Gear

Our new website makes it easier than ever to order NCT tshirts and window decals. Visit the NCT website at [nashobatrust.org](http://nashobatrust.org) and get an NCT tshirt or window decal delivered right to your mailbox!



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