

MAKING TRACKS

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The Newsletter of the New Hampshire Coverts Project

June 2008

Taking the Long View from Swett Mountain

Nanci Mitchell (CC02) and her husband Charlie are folks whose actions speak louder than words. Fellow Coverts trainees and instructors may recall Nanci from the Coverts Workshop in 2002 – quiet but inquisitive, focused but also quick with a smile. It's been exciting to learn about the fruits of their conservation efforts over the past several years, since the Coverts workshop. The Mitchell's have doubled the size of their forested property, they've placed conservation easements on virtually all of their land, they've built miles of trails, kept track of how wildlife uses their property, seeded eroded roads and trails, and hosted hikes and tours. Most recently, they completed a wildlife habitat improvement project to create early successional habitat aimed at maintaining habitat for whip-poor-wills, a species that has nested on their land in years past.

We're hoping that you will come see it for yourself. The Coverts Project and the Mitchells will host a Coverts alumni gathering – with a focus on hiking and habitats – at Tree Farm in Gilmanton on Saturday, June 21st (see sidebar). We hope to see you there!



Nanci and Charlie Mitchell atop Swett Mountain

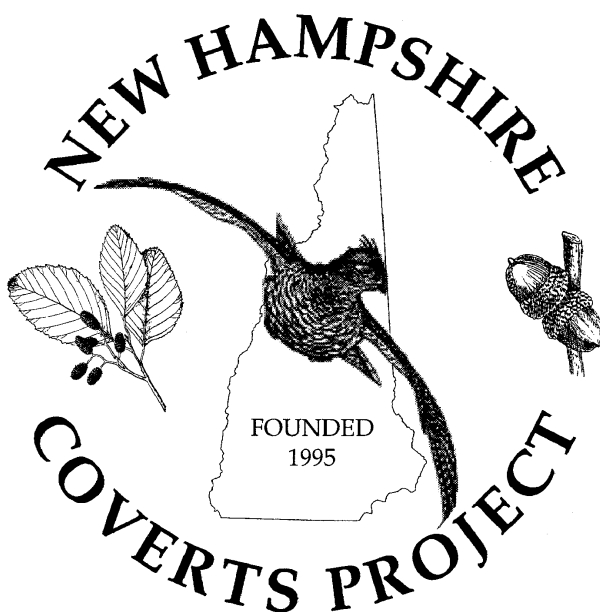
A Forest Retreat

The Mitchell's raised their kids in Hollis, New Hampshire surrounded by conservation activism, community involvement, and a beautiful forested tract owned by a neighbor. They often enjoyed the surrounding area for exploration and recreation. But over time, the adjacent woods sprouted lots of houses, and they were convinced it was time to move to a 340-acre tract on the south side of the Belknap Mountains, in Gilmanton. Charlie laughs that "it was the first and last place we looked at...and we never even knew about the views from the top!" In anticipation of Charlie's retirement, they designed and built a log house, which visually "melts" into a backdrop of Swett Mountain. They moved there full-time in 2001, and Charlie retired last year.



Extension Wildlife Specialist Matt Tarr examines a vernal pool at the Mitchell's

Several years ago, Nanci and others in the Hollis area founded the Nichols-Smith Conservation Land Trust, keeping a toe-hold in her previous community. But she also joined the board of the Gilmanton Land Trust and the Belknap County Cooperative Extension Advisory Council. Since 2001, she's also



chaired the Gilmanton Conservation Commission. At the regional scale, she served on the board of the New England Environmental Education Alliance.

Conservation Action

A year ago, the Mitchells took a bold – they've said "crazy" – step to acquire the adjacent 360-acre Durrell Farm parcel which abuts their own hilltop parcel on Swett Mountain. Liquidation loggers had moved onto it after it had been acquired by a local developer. Using retirement funds painstakingly set aside over many years, they purchased the tract, paying an additional premium to do so before all the timber had been cut. Then they celebrated the closing by spending that afternoon raking and reseeding badly rutted woods roads.



It's steep terrain, but the views are worth the hike!

Three months later, the Mitchell's donated a conservation easement on a 304-acre portion of their Swett Mountain Forest, and bargain-sold another easement, at a deep discount, on all of their newly acquired Durrell Farm tract. At the core of their motivation was a desire to inspire others to follow their lead. By linking other conservation parcels, including lands and easements held by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forest, the Town of Gilmanton, and Belknap County, the recent conservation projects created one unfragmented block of 8,898 protected acres, laced with publicly accessible trails.

Their conservation enthusiasm, hard work, and personal generosity have helped shape a new coalition which has formed around the 32,000-acre Belknap Mountain Range. Protection of this area is now the focus of a group of four municipalities and various conservation organizations. Nanci helped jumpstart the effort, and now provides key technical support for its work.

For these extraordinary conservation efforts, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests awarded the Mitchell's their 2007 Conservationists of the Year award.

Wildlife Work

In the true spirit of the Coverts Project, the Mitchell's have spent years thinking not only of the long-term protection of their property, but also about the short- and long-term habitat values it offers for a great many species. Working with UNHCE Wildlife

You are invited to: Coverts Alumni Workshop/Reunion

**Mitchell Tree Farm – Gilmanton, NH
Saturday, June 21, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

Come celebrate the Summer Solstice, explore the Belknap Mountains, see old friends and make new connections! Coverts Cooperators from the last fourteen years, plus family and friends are all welcome. The event will focus on fun and hiking, but we'll also have a chance to learn about the wildlife, forestry and conservation practices undertaken on the property in recent years, and hear about plans for the future. Weather cooperating, you'll be treated to great views from mountaintop picnic spots. You will have a choice of a more or a less rigorous hiking route, but plan on getting good exercise (both routes include a scenic picnic ledge). To register, call Debbie Anderson at 862-1028 or email at debra.anderson@unh.edu. Look for a brochure in your mailbox, or check out the Coverts Coverts webpage at: www.NHCoverts.org

Specialist Matt Tarr and a Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program grant, the Mitchell's recently completed an 8-acre opening to increase early-successional habitat, while also enhancing views of the nearby mountains. They had records of breeding whip-poor-wills on their property, but suitable habitat (dry forests with an open understory near openings in the forest) was decreasing as the trees on a 25-year-old clearcut grew in. The clearing is large, new, and impressive. The Mitchell's aren't shocked by it's appearance, though. They both recognize the habitat value inherent in setting succession back on parts of their property. They're also planning a project to enhance woodcock habitat in a wetter section of their forests, in another old clearcut. "We chose an area with poor-quality trees," reports Matt, and they avoided vernal pools and other sensitive areas. In the coming year, the hill will be green with young growth, attracting feeding birds, rodents, raptors, and hopefully foraging whip-poor-wills.

The Mitchell's have built hiking trails throughout their property, and they love exploring the rocky ledges, discovering new views, observing wildlife, identifying plants and wildflowers, and learning more about their property. They welcome public foot traffic on their land, as well as hunters by permission, and clearly enjoying showing others the special place they live. Please come for a visit on June 21st, and see it for yourself!



Nanci points out a large cavity tree

Portions of this article come from the Citation for the 2007 Conservationist of the Year award by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (T. Howe)



Red-backed salamander

HAPPENINGS

Victoria Barlow (CC2000) from Swanzey sent a note about her efforts with the Swanzey Open Space Committee. If you are looking for creative (and hilarious) ways to raise interest in land conservation for your town, you've got to check out their oxen mascots, Buck and Ike. Since 2007, they have been Swanzey's 'Ambassadors of Open Space' – all 5,900 lbs. of them. They star in their own website (which links to YouTube videos!) at www.BuckandIke.org.

Stephanie Barnes (CC 06), who recently moved to her land in Effingham, sent in the following essay about how she's faring: "I spent my first winter on Woods Mountain and kept a journal. I have lived my 65 years in VT and NH, and am well acquainted with winter. However, this was a winter to challenge the most stalwart Yankee. Record-breaking snowfall was interspersed with rain, sleet and ice. The snow was stratified frozen water, not deep powder. I watched as the barometer plunged for yet another storm, and birds crowded the feeders. Now it's the beginning of April, and Woods Mountain is still locked in winter. But my new Woods Mountain house managed the winter with environmental honors. It's a 1,300 ft² modular, built for our climate and for energy efficiency. I heat with a Vermont Castings air tight wood stove...I burned about two cords of hardwood and used only a quarter of a tank of propane (my backup, for when I'm traveling and for heating water and some cooking). Mostly our meals were made on the wood stove, and we hung our clothes on racks to dry and moisturize the air...All the humans, birds, and squirrels are well-fed now, and ready for spring and another cycle of seasons. I will continue to work on reducing my carbon footprint, leaving as few 'tracks' as possible on Woods Mountain. At the same time, I will work to improve the habitat on Woods Mountain Preserve so that there will be more wildlife tracks."

Nancy Cowan (CC98) lent a hand (and a wing) at February's Farm & Forest Expo, bringing her Harris' hawks for the enjoyment of everyone at the event. Special thanks also to the other Coverts Cooperators who staffed at our booth, including **Linda Brownson** (CC05), **Bob Jones** (CC05), **Judi Lindsey** (CC01), **Nanci Mitchell** (CC02), **Victor Piekarski** (CC07), **Barbara Pinet** (CC05), and **Dave and Tanya Tellman** (CC96 & 95). Thank you!



Caption: Nancy Cowan (CC98) at Farm & Forest, 2008

It was a pleasure to see **Myra Ferguson's** (CC07) excellent piece in Northern Woodlands Magazine this winter. Her piece about restoring their old apple orchard is the very first in the new "Stewardship Stories" section – nice work, Myra! Of her other goings-on, Myra sent in the following report: "I attended two workshops offered by Cooperative Extension. Both of them were held at the SPNHF office in Concord. The first helped me learn to identify wetland shrubs and vines in their winter mode. The second workshop helped me learn how to identify land features using aerial photographs. That was very helpful since our town uses the aerial photographs to identify land that should be protected for its water resources, scenic beauty, agriculture, soils, etc. Here in Plainfield we have had a lot of wildlife sightings. There is a huge bull moose wandering around this part of Plainfield [in early May, 08]. We've only seen his prints in the mud, but nearby neighbors have seen him and confirm that he is big. Turkey season has commenced. Youth weekend was last weekend and two youngsters shot their first toms: one was eighteen pounds and the other twenty-five! We've seen lots of turkeys in the fields; however, since the season started, we've seen a lot less of them. The bluebirds returned to our fields on March 23. We heard their bubbling call and knew immediately that spring had arrived – then, it snowed! They were quiet after that, but we heard them again when the snow melted and the sun warmed the orchard and the fields. We are excited about the Annual Meeting of the Upper Valley Land Trust. The meeting will be held at the MacLane Lodge of the Dartmouth Skiway. There's a hike up Holt's Ledge to hopefully see the peregrine falcons that frequent the ledges. Then

we return for buffet dinner catered by the Farmer's Diner of Queechee, VT. The diner uses vegetables and meats from local farms. When we're finished with the meal, we'll have a very brief business meeting then a jam session by local fiddle and guitar players. All of this happens on May 8 and we hope the weather is good!"

Emily Hague, who is the Stewardship Manager at the Monadnock Conservancy, sends news of a workshop series she helped coordinate in Cheshire County. She writes, "Last fall, I collaborated with Steven Roberge and Karen Bennett of UNH Cooperative Extension to put together a free Friday afternoon workshop series in the Monadnock Region. We held 6 workshops on topics of interest to landowners, Conservation Commissioners, and landowners. It went well, so Steve and [did] it again this spring with different topics."

Honey Hastings (CC04) of Temple appreciated the reminder of "Maple Sugar Weekend" from the Coverts Project Office. She wrote, "Because of [your reminder], I remembered to visit my local sugar shack, buy syrup, sample sugar on snow, cookies, maple butter on crackers. And best of all, stand next to the boiler & take in the smell to remember next fall when I am enjoying the syrup on waffles."



Ginger Jannenga (CC99) of Colebrook sent in this photo taken this spring. She writes, "The trees I got in 1998 via Will Staats, NH Fish & Game biologist in this area, were part of a Fish & Game project for turkey habitat. They're several varieties of wild crab apple. And yes, turkeys come to my fields too....[they're eating] a lot of little blown-off crab apples from "Will's trees" near there. They appear to be a buck and two does. They all munch around for a few minutes, then 'the girls' take a rest until he's finished!...I took a walk on my woods trail yesterday and saw several deer and moose tracks."

Hopefully Coverts Cooperators were able to tune into **Ben Kilham's** (CC98) most recent special on the National Geographic Channel which aired on March 8th. Called "A Man Among Bears," the story headlined with a great quote from Ben: "Every field of science has rules...like you can't work with habituated bears or you can't have close association with bears. Well, with rules like that you're never going to learn anything." If you want to learn more, or you missed the special, check out Ben's website at: www.benkilham.com

It gives us great pleasure to report that **Dick Mallion** (CC99) of Whitefield was awarded the prestigious Regional EPA Lifetime Achievement Environmental Merit Award on May 22nd (Earth Day) of this year. The merit awards, given out since 1970, honor individuals and groups who have shown particular ingenuity and commitment in their efforts to preserve the region's environment. Here's the quote from the news release: "Richard Mallion is well-known in New Hampshire as a tireless advocate of the environment. After 29 years in the U.S. Army, Dick retired as a brigadier general and began life fly-fishing in streams near his hometown of Whitefield in rural northern New Hampshire. As a member and recent chair of the Whitefield Conservation Commission, Dick has led efforts to create a town-wide inventory of natural resources, worked to protect the town's water resources and built coalitions with neighboring conservation commissions. He was instrumental in establishment of the Pondicherry Division of the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge. Dick also played a lead role in the Cooperative Extension Advisory Board for Coos County and the Weeks State Park Board of Directors. He chairs the board of the Nature Conservancy's New Hampshire chapter, working to clean major blow downs from trails, carrying heavy timbers to construct bog bridges and monitoring the forest's condition. He is as willing to share his ideas as his labor. His dedication has left treasured natural places in New Hampshire better protected for generations to come." Congratulations, Dick, on the well-deserved recognition!

Tom Thomson (CC95) was invited to Maryland last fall as a special guest speaker at the Maryland Forests Association Annual Meeting. Tom, a tireless advocate for family forest owners (and one of the first Coverts Cooperators in New Hampshire!), gave a talk about Forest Certification – the problems, the opportunities, and what needs to be done. Tom states, "...In my opinion, the biggest mistake we have made on Forest Certification in the U.S. is that it was conceived as a

top down process, rather than building it from the ground up. Because of this structure, we did not engage the major stakeholders of the forest community in the decision-making process: the family forest landowners. They are the largest block of stakeholders in the forest community, exceeding in numbers of over 5 million throughout the United States, owning and managing over 278 million acres, and providing 70 to 75% of all the wood fiber produced in this nation..."

Thanks to **Joe Trudeau** (CC07) of Hancock who sent in this great wildlife story: "This spring I have so far been lucky to have some very exciting wildlife sightings. On May 1st, while surveying vernal pools for a Natural Resources Inventory of Lyndeborough, I had the privilege of encountering a family of coyotes. They walked right up to me and didn't see me, although I wasn't under any cover. The mother had a pup in her mouth, and the father presumably did too, because suddenly there were two pups and two adults about 50 feet away. The male was the largest and most beautiful canid I've seen up close, very strong, healthy animal. When I made some noise to alert them to my presence the adults barked and ran off, but forgot the kids! Immediately the pups walked right up to me and put their heads to the ground in what appeared to be a submissive statement. They were so cute and tiny that it was all I could do to not pick one up and bring it home. Then, on May 4, I was exploring the 54 acres I just bought in Bradford and spooked three black bear cubs who climbed up a hemlock. I was in a very dense understory of striped maple and couldn't see more than 40 feet in any direction, so I was suddenly feeling very vulnerable. Where was the sow? I retreated slowly and alertly and had no mishaps with an angry mother bear. I guess I bought the right piece of land!"



One of the coyote pups Joe encountered in Lyndeborough

Francie Von Mertens (CC99) writes, "Under the auspices of the Peterborough Open Space Committee, I put out the second Open Spaces, People & Places Peterborough Calendar featuring twelve of the



town's conservation lands. Each monthly feature has several photos plus a nature almanac and some history – both human and natural –

including how the land was conserved, whether by landowner families, Conservation Commission, neighbors, a land trust, or a combination. Pictured here is Eric Aldrich's January photo of Peterborough Elementary students at the Fremont Conservation area observing an otter track near an abandoned beaver lodge. The goal of the calendars is to tell the human stories behind the green-colored parcels on a town's conservation lands map, as well as to encourage townspeople to explore the town's great conserved places. Since working with photographers on the first calendar (2006), I've taken up photography with zeal. What a great way to heighten observation of the natural world. Next calendar project: Nature of the Monadnock Region!"

New Coverts Cooperator **Don Wharton**, (CC07) sent an update from his home in Landaff: "I wanted to let you know that I have been appointed to the Landaff Conservation Commission, which was one of my Coverts workplan goals. It will be interesting work, as the town is redoing its master plan (and doing an natural resource inventory), and at town meeting [this spring] the voters passed an on-going annual budget for the conservation commission of \$5000 to be drawn from Current Use Change Penalty taxes."

Jan Woodbury (CC98) of Amherst completed the UNHCE Master Gardener course last year, which, according to Jan, "enhances my Coverts training on many subjects." She's put it all to use, too: "I've learned so much volunteering to answer the phones at the UNH Cooperative Extension Family Home and Garden Center Help Line (based in Manchester) twice a month. Lots of interesting wildlife questions/problems. I've done a couple of wildlife hands-on presentations this year – a Science class of kids at risk at Concord High and the 4-H Spaces Conference in Epping [editor's note: Thanks, Jan!]. In May, I will be a judge at the State Envirothon Competition in Henniker."

Leave No Child Inside:

Helping children connect with their wild roots

by Marilyn Wyzga, New Hampshire Fish & Game, Project HOME Coordinator

It is the mid-1950s, Trenton, New Jersey. Out of the blue – and inspired by stories from my father’s work buddies – my parents decide to try camping. Mom and Dad pack up the station wagon with their three young kids and drive off to the Poconos under grey skies. By the time they arrive at Promised Land Campground, their visions of sleeping beneath the pines are awash in a downpour. Dad warms stew on a fire beneath the picnic table. They sleep in the car. Morning dawns, the sun comes out and, as dad recalls, “We had a beautiful weekend out of it.” Thoroughly hooked, they invest in a canvas tent that will house them and, as the family grew, all 7 of us kids. They take up backpacking, buy a second-hand canoe and for the next 40-some years of summer and fall vacations, tour around New England and other parts of the country, camping out.

My parents didn’t bring us along to teach us about nature. We were just a family having fun outside. Today I make my living as a wildlife educator in New Hampshire – a career I attribute to those early outdoor experiences – and all of my siblings enjoy their own unique connection to the outdoors. I consider us fortunate.



Sadly, opportunities like these are less and less available to today’s youth. Children are not getting outside – not fishing, or building forts, or looking under logs for salamanders. A national conversation about

this phenomenon has been ignited by outdoorsman Richard Louv’s groundbreaking book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. In it, Louv traces the causes and impacts of this separation through interviews with educators, parents and health professionals, as well as with children themselves. He outlines the environmental, social, psychological and spiritual implications of what he calls “nature-deficit disorder.” And he describes a growing body of research that reveals the necessity of contact with nature for healthy child development — and for adults, neighborhoods, whole communities and the very future of our society.

New research strongly suggests that childhood experience in nature is a vital element, perhaps a

necessity, for healthy child development. Outdoor play develops full use of the senses, helps protect psychological well-being, improves attention-deficit disorder and reduces stress.

Yet as of 1990, the radius around the home where children were allowed to roam on their own had shrunk to one-ninth of what it had been in 1970. Why is this happening? Limited access to nature, fear of strangers, popularity of video games, TV and computers, perceived safety risks and fear of lawsuits – the list is lengthy. Well-meaning but frightened parents, school systems and media are keeping kids out of the fields and the woods. By moving childhood indoors, we are depriving children of a full connection to the world. The implications – both for children’s physical and mental health and for the future of our natural resources and traditional pastimes such as hunting and fishing – are far-reaching. Consequently, one of the most important gifts we can give a child is his or her own enthusiasm for the outdoors.



Outdoor Classrooms

In the past few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed dramatically. A child today can tell you about the whales in the ocean, dinosaurs of the past, or trees in the rain forest, but not about what lives and grows in his or her backyard. While today’s kids are aware of the global threats to the environment, their own physical contact with nature is fading.

What can we do to help reconnect children with the outdoors? For one thing, say experts, revive recess. Roughly 40% of school districts have either eliminated recess or are considering cutting it. Without these activities that increase heart rates and improve hand-eye coordination, it’s easy to see why 17% of children are overweight.

David Sobel of Antioch New England University says schools are unintentionally spreading fear of the natural world and ecological problems. Children are savvy to current environmental issues like

global warming, Sobel notes. But lacking direct experience with the outdoors, they begin to associate nature with fear and disaster, rather than discovery, joy and wonder.

A complete environmental curriculum, by contrast, engages children directly in nature while using traditional methods and current technologies to teach subject matter in the classroom. Some schools cut recess so children will have more time to study for tests. Louv argues that nature “does not steal time, it amplifies it.” Getting acquainted with nature inspires creativity and, studies show, actually improves test scores.

Taking It to the Streets

New Hampshire may be largely rural, but the problem of nature-deficit disorder is not limited to urban areas, as naturalist Ruth Smith found when she ran an after-school program in rural Hopkinton. “Even kids who said they liked being outdoors had little personal experience and lacked basic skills like how to navigate a trail,” she noted. Once out and about, Smith observed that the thing the kids most enjoyed was outdoor play in nature – building forts, dams and tree houses.



Even in urban and suburban areas, nature is closer than you might think. Louv recommends taking advantage of “nearby nature” – the ravine behind

your house, or the little woods at the end of the cul-de-sac. Adults expect nature to be so much bigger, but to a child, that ravine is a universe. Protecting those little spaces in cities and suburbs is a step in the right direction.

Still, the No. 1 reason parents give for limiting their children’s play outdoors is fear of “stranger danger.” At a talk by David Sobel in Hancock, a local parent observed, “playing in the backyard is not safe,” even in their small, rural town. Ironically, the statistics on abductions suggest almost all are by family members, and the number of abductions has been going down for about a decade; kids are safer outside the home than at any time since the 1970s.

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EXTENSION STAFF UPDATES

New Extension Forester,
Strafford County
Debbie Goard



Debbie Goard is the new Extension Educator in Forest Resources based in Strafford County. Filling the shoes of long-time forester Don Black, Debbie moved to New

Hampshire from the Kansas Forest Service, where she worked as a Watershed Forester for the past 4 years. She is originally from Massachusetts, and got her B.S. degrees in both Forestry and Biology from the University of Massachusetts, and her M.S. degree in Forest Hydrology with a minor in Silviculture from Oregon State University. Her work in Kansas has enabled her to gain a strong appreciation for good forest stewardship and the need for quality education of landowners and natural resource professionals. For Coverts Cooperators in Stafford County, it would be great to introduce yourself to Debbie! You can reach her at 749-4445 or at Deborah.Goard@unh.edu.

New Extension Forester,
Belknap County
Andy Fast



Andy Fast replaces another long-time forester, Sumner Dole, as the Forest Resources Educator in Belknap County. Andy’s diverse background has been focused on

forest conservation and stewardship. He comes to his new position after being the Reservation Stewardship Specialist at the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, where he developed and implemented land stewardship educational programs for volunteers. Andy has spent much of his non-work time volunteering on his town’s conservation commission, developing a town forest management plan, and working on a prescribed burn crew. In earlier days, he was a US Forest Service forestry technician in Alaska and a natural resource crew supervisor in California. Andy received his undergraduate degree from Skidmore College and his M.S. in Natural Resources from the University of New Hampshire. We hope Belknap County Coverts folks will take the time to get to know Andy – you can reach him at 527-5477 or at Andy.Fast@unh.edu.

Kristina Ferrare
Forestry & Wildlife Program
Outreach Assistant



Coverts folks may have already met Kristina, who coordinated our booth at Farm & Forest this year. She is the new Forestry and Wildlife Program Outreach Assistant, and will be responsible for much of our program’s federal reporting, as well as helping us improve our website content, staffing the Forestry Information Center, and helping with our database in the Forestry & Wildlife Program. Kristina received her Master’s degree in forestry from UMass, and assisted the UMass Extension Forestry program in its landowner outreach programs and communications, including their Coverts program. Prior to that, she worked in the private sector in middle management of a large, educational testing firm and also for the Massachusetts Woodland Cooperative as its office manager. We’re delighted to have Kristina on board!

Emma Carcagno
Wildlife Program Assistant



Emma Carcagno has been working since last fall as an assistant in the UNH Cooperative Extension Wildlife Program. As part of Extension’s agreement with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Emma has been helping private landowners and others with technical assistance to do wildlife habitat improvement projects, and to plan and implement programs using federal cost-share funds. She has an undergraduate degree from Rutgers University, and is working to complete her M.S. in natural resources from the University of New Hampshire. Her graduate work focuses on the ecology of vernal pools. Emma is helping coordinate a series of workshops on grassland habitat management that will take place this summer around the state. Thank you, Emma!

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UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

“Making Tracks” is the newsletter of the Cooperators of the New Hampshire Coverts Project. The Coverts Project is a special volunteer education and outreach program that promotes wildlife habitat conservation and forest stewardship. Its goal is to increase the amount of New Hampshire’s private and public lands that are managed with good stewardship practices. The efforts of these volunteers are shared through this publication. For more information, please contact Malin Ely Clyde, Coordinator, NH Coverts Project, UNH Cooperative Extension, 131 Main Street, 214 Nesmith Hall, Durham, NH 03824 (603-862-2166).

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Leave No Child Inside (continued from page 3)

We think of the outdoors as being inherently risky, but indoor dwelling comes with its own risks for children. Pediatricians say they’re not treating very many broken bones anymore. Rather, they are seeing repetitive-stress injuries, childhood obesity, attention deficit disorder and the effects of indoor air pollution. Other disturbing risks associated with the online neighborhood are emerging as kids socialize in a virtual world instead of playing outside. We seem to have traded the perceived dangers lurking in nature for the potentially more threatening and permanent impacts of sitting in front of the television or computer.

We Need Nature

Biologically, humans are still hunters and gatherers. The evolutionary remnants of these past experiences are hard-wired into our nervous system, says zoologist Gordon Orians. Renowned naturalist E.O. Wilson takes it a step further, saying that humans have an innate affinity for the natural world, a biologically based need essential to our development as individuals. Both scientists’ work suggests a genuine physical need for nature, one that, in modern humans of all ages, is simply no longer fulfilled.



Studies have also shown that many people who care deeply about the future of the environment enjoyed transcendent experiences in nature when they were children. Think back to your childhood. If you’re over thirty, you likely spent time in the outdoors uninhibited – playing, making forts, climbing trees, going fishing, getting dirty. What would our lives have been like without those times?

As parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers and role models, we can spend more time in nature with children. The bonus is, when we give children the gift of nature, we gain all the same benefits they do – the stress reduction, the longer attention span, the renewed sense of wonder.

Passion does not arrive on videotape or on a CD... it is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save the environment, we must also save an endangered keystone species: the child in nature.

Louv’s encouragement to grownups is simple and easily achieved: Take the kids outside.

Marilyn Wyzga is a wildlife educator with the N.H. Fish and Game Department. She is coordinating a coalition of agencies and groups in a statewide initiative to bring more outdoor opportunities to New Hampshire children. Contact: Marilyn.C.Wyzga@wildlife.nh.gov.

THE LAST WORD

What is a Vernal Pool?

You learned about vernal pools at the Coverts workshop, but did you know that until now, there was no official definition for a vernal pool in New Hampshire? The Department of Environmental Services has just adopted a definition, along with a list of indicator species for use in identifying pools and some wording regarding timber harvesting. For the complete rules and definitions, visit the DES website at: <http://www.des.state.nh.us/RuleMaking/index.html#awetlands>



A vernal pool

According to the new rules, “**vernal pool**” means a surface water or wetland, including an area intentionally created for purposes of compensatory mitigation, which provides breeding habitat for amphibians and invertebrates that have adapted to the unique environments provided by such pools and which:

- Is not the result of on-going anthropogenic activities that are not intended to provide compensatory mitigation, including but not limited to:
 - o Gravel pit operations in a pit that has been mined at least every other year; and
 - o Logging and agricultural operations conducted in accordance with all applicable New Hampshire statutes and rules; and
- Typically has the following characteristics:
 - o Cycles annually from flooded to dry conditions, although the hydroperiod, size, and shape of the pool might vary from year to year;
 - o Forms in a shallow depression or basin;
 - o Has no permanently flowing outlet;
 - o Holds water for at least 2 continuous months following spring ice-out;
 - o Lacks a viable fish population; and
 - o Supports one or more primary vernal pool indicators, or 3 or more secondary vernal pool indicators.

“**Primary vernal pool indicators**” means the presence or physical evidence of breeding by marbled salamander, wood frog, spotted salamander, jefferson-blue spotted salamander complex, or fairy shrimp.

Secondary vernal pool indicators are also detailed in the rules, found on the DES website at: <http://www.des.state.nh.us/RuleMaking/index.html#awetlands>