

Landmarks

The Newsletter of the Downeast Coastal Conservancy
Winter 2015



Photos by student volunteers

Connecting Communities through Student Volunteerism

By Tim Moffett

Along the Machias River, just across the old truss bridge from Whitneyville, lies a path. Between giant hemlocks, through spiny hawthorn, and across marsh it follows the river, never straying far from its banks. Today, this path is part of a recreational trail network at Machias River Preserve, but its use reaches back generations. The Hemlock Trail, as it is known today, provides access to some very interesting features of the preserve. Historically, the trail served as a connector between communities and we at Downeast Coastal Conservancy believe it can still serve that purpose, though in more ways than previously realized.

As it begins, the Hemlock Trail is well worn by years of use. It easily parallels the mighty Machias through mixed forest but eventually comes to an impassable barrier—thick brush and an open water marsh created by a substantial beaver dam. Our plan to extend the trail was dead in the water until Ashby Bladen, a local expert on trail building, recognized a way to traverse the dam and incorporate it as part of the trail. Though a route was now planned, the path was uncut and impossible to follow. At this point, we knew we lacked the manpower for the job. Fortunately, the community came to our aid.

Through a little networking, we found that DCC and the faculty of Machias Memorial High School and University of Maine at Machias had

complementary needs. The sophomores at MMHS were in need of a project for their annual Community Service Day. Faculty from UMM's Environmental and Tourism Management program were hoping to find an outdoor stewardship project for their students. Accordingly, we planned a trail building blitz—four student groups in two weeks.

Professor Gregory Benton was the first to arrive with students in early October. His class was eager to make a difference and quickly began clearing fallen trees and repositioning washed out bridges on another

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trail battered by recent storms. They rewarded themselves by eating apples from a tree along the trail. One student remarked that outdoor opportunities are not as prevalent in his hometown of Melbourne, Florida. Two days later, the MMHS sophomores arrived ready to take on the thorny brush of the new Hemlock Trail extension. They quickly “hammered” their way toward the beaver dam doing much of the heavy lifting needed to create a path.

The following week, Professor Mark Douglas brought an enthusiastic group who

cleared debris and were the first to cross and clear vegetation from the dam. Their work concluded with the repositioning of another bridge washed out by a heavy September downpour. The final group led by Professor Karen Beefink finished the trail the next day. They focused on detail work and painted navigational blazes. Before leaving, they ensured no branch was out of place. The Hemlock Trail is now complete and maps and signs will soon reflect this community effort.

At its end, the mile-long Hemlock Trail intersects with the longer Heritage Trail

which follows the river another three miles to Machias. The Machias River Preserve was the result of an extensive effort that required collaboration between nonprofit groups, local businesses, state agencies, and most importantly, folks from the community. Projects like these strengthen our sense of community and build a foundation for future partnerships. We expect this seemingly inconsequential student-built trail to continue to provide opportunities for connecting communities. 🌿



Become a frog expert!

The following is a request from Maine Audubon that we are happy to pass along to our members. For almost ten years, DCC Executive Director Rich Bard was the volunteer for this frog survey route. “The nights I spent listening for frog calls were magical,” he said. “Standing silently for 5 minutes at a time throughout the evening gave me a new appreciation for the amazing sounds of the darkness around us. I highly recommend this opportunity.”

Maine Audubon is looking for an interested volunteer to conduct spring amphibian surveys on a road route between

Wesley and Machias. The survey has ten stops along the road where volunteers listen for five minutes and record the relative abundance and the species of amphibians they hear. The routes are run three times a year, in early spring, late spring and early summer. Each run is designed to capture a different group of calling amphibians. The routes are run after dark and take between two and three hours. For more information, please visit <http://maineaudubon.org/wildlife-habitat/amphibian-monitoring/> or call or email Project Coordinator Susan Gallo (sgallo@maineaudubon.org, (207)781-6180 ext. 216.)

The Maine Amphibian Monitoring Program (MAMP), established in 1997, is a joint effort between Maine Audubon and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. It



is also part of a larger national effort, the North American Amphibian Monitoring Program (NAAMP), which has coordinated similar surveys in more than 25 states. 🌿

Note from the Executive Director



By Rich Bard

An old friend whom I haven't seen for a while popped into my office to ask if I had any suggestions of where she could go paddling. Although she talked about finding a place that was more sheltered from the wind than her usual haunts, I suspected that she was also just in the market for something new. Her timing couldn't have been better. It was mid-October and the changing colors were at their most vibrant peak. Without hesitation I explained how to find the Orange River Conservation Area in Whiting.

Two days later my friend was back in the

office, glowing and visibly moved by the experience she had at the Orange River. She and a paddling companion spent several hours exploring the waterbody and even hiked up the trail to Estey Mountain (still under construction – look for much more information next spring). She has been around this area for nearly her whole life, but she told me that she has never seen a place like that. As she paddled through the winding channel of the flat-water river, each bend brought new views and opportunities for exploration. She is already making plans to go back in the spring.

I never tire of hearing about people's discoveries when they return from an exploration of DCC's preserves. Whether

it's bobcat or moose tracks right outside downtown Machias at the Middle River Park, a particularly delicious apple from a tree at the Pike Lands in Lubec or the grounding experience of measuring yourself against a recently discovered giant boulder at Pigeon Hill in Steuben (with a new spur-trail to show you the way), these are reminders that we are in the business of inspiration.

Where would DCC be if we stopped providing sources of inspiration – that feeling that there is more to learn and more to see? Who would care about the thousands of acres of land that we care for year after year if they were unable to imagine a family of beavers storing food for winter in their new pond at Tide Mill Creek, eagles roosting in the shoreline trees at Ingersoll Point, a herd of deer sheltering from the wicked winter winds among the cedar trees at Machias River Preserve or a group of summer camp children learning about marine biology through an art project at Mowry Beach? We may never actually be present to see them, but for many of us, just knowing that Downeast Coastal Conservancy provides a place for these events to unfold is reason to support us.

We invite you to use and enjoy our preserves, but most importantly, we ask you to be open to inspiration. Please get in touch and let me know what you find! ❄️

Winter Preview



For some people, winter can be one of the best seasons for getting outside. The short days and sometimes lengthy periods when we are trapped indoors inspire us to make the most of a blue-sky sunny day, even when the temperatures have plunged. We all know that exposure to sunlight regulates our internal clock and helps defeat the dreaded seasonal affective disorder, also known as cabin fever. So this winter, make a resolution to get out there and enjoy what winter has to offer!

DCC's hiking trails are perfect for snowshoeing. Last winter a small group enjoyed Friday afternoon snowshoeing at Middle River Park in Machias. It was a wonderful way to get to know some new people and feel secure about being with a group as we explored off-trail and really got to know the park. We hope to establish something similar this winter for Machias. If you'd like to get a group together somewhere else on a DCC preserve, let us know and we'll

help organize it for you!

Sledding at Middle River Park is returning to the tradition that it once was for local kids (and adults)! If you want to join other groups or families for a sledding get-together, feel free to post a notice on our Facebook page or let us know and we'll post it for you. Impromptu groups often form this way with just a few hours' notice.

We are currently exploring ways to groom one of our hiking trails for cross-country skiing. If you have access to a snowmobile or have any way to help make this a reality, please get in touch so we can talk about it.

Winter activities are difficult to plan very far in advance thanks to unpredictable weather and snow conditions. Please watch our Facebook page or the events calendar at our website (<http://www.downeastcoastalconservancy.org/events-calendar/>) for notice of upcoming events. ❄️

Changing Leaves, Changing Faces

Farewell Becky Lee

If you have walked into the DCC office or called us on the phone over the past five years or so, you probably encountered the smiling face or cheerful voice of Becky Lee. In that five years, Becky has put her personal stamp on all aspects of this organization, from the playful yeti displays in our office window that change with the seasons to her meticulous record-keeping and filing skills that keep our office humming along efficiently. Becky has moved on to the next phase of her career and we all wish her well. Fortunately, Becky will remain in the area and has promised to stay on as an active volunteer and advisor as we transition to a new face in the office. The hiring process is underway and we hope to have someone seated at the front desk by the end of November. Thank you, Becky, for everything you've done for DCC. We wish you the best in your next adventure! 🍂



Downeast Coastal Conservancy

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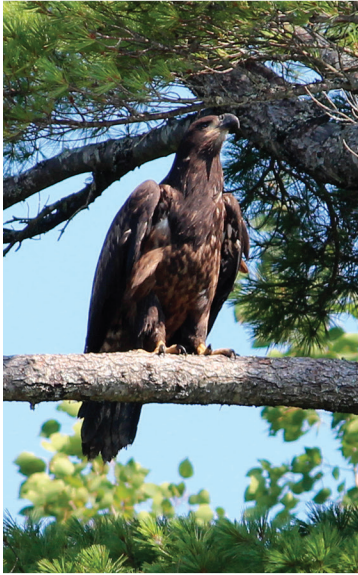


Tim Moffett, the new land steward for Downeast Coastal Conservancy, joined our staff in August. Tim has been a volunteer for DCC since relocating to Machias from Southwest Florida two years ago. He holds a BA in geography from Indiana University with a focus in natural systems. Always ready for an adventure, he is an avid traveler, hiker, birder, and nature photographer. He especially enjoys sharing outdoor experiences with his wife and two young daughters. As land steward, he hopes to engage the public by organizing volunteer work days, student service projects, and outdoor community activities like group hikes and paddles.



William H. Schlesinger, DCC's newest board member, is one of the nation's leading ecologists and earth scientists and a passionate advocate for translating science for lay audiences. A member of the National Academy of Sciences, he has served as dean of the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke and president of the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies. He lives in Down East Maine and Durham, N.C. and continues to analyze the impacts of humans on the chemistry of our natural environment. We look forward to learning what Bill's knowledge and experience will bring to our organization. 🍂

Interested in Volunteer Monitoring?



Volunteer monitoring provides an opportunity to enjoy nature while serving your community. Monitors often have access to sites unused by the public, places that offer a sense of adventure. Join us and experience something new!

All of our properties are monitored annually, many by volunteers. Monitoring involves walking the trails and boundary lines of a property, observing wildlife and human use, and reporting possible management issues.

We will be holding a monitoring workshop in the spring. To participate, please contact our land steward. 🌿

Tim Moffett

Land Steward

207-255-4500

tim@downeastcoastalconservancy.org



DCC Wish List

DCC runs on a tight budget and we value donations of tools or equipment in addition to your financial support. Donations of the items listed below may be tax-deductible. Contact the DCC office for more information. Thank you!

- Projector and screen
- Trail camera
- Fireproof filing cabinets
- Signposts
- Trailer (for transporting mower, lumber or other equipment)
- Storage space

Make a Lasting Gift to DCC

Downeast Coastal Conservancy has an active estate planning program which provides the opportunity for its members and others to support its future conservation efforts through a legacy gift. Including DCC as a beneficiary in a bequest in your will or trust helps ensure expansion and maintenance of conserved lands in Washington County for current and future public access. In addition to a bequest commitment, future gifts may be made by funding a charitable remainder trust or gift annuity (provides current income to the donor and a future gift to DCC), naming DCC as a beneficiary on an insurance policy,

or naming DCC as a beneficiary in a retirement plan.

Dick and Barbara Sturgeon have made a commitment in their estate planning to join others in this important type of support. Dick says, "We want to ensure continuation of our current support with provision of a future gift to aid in preserving future DCC valuable work. In other words, we now know who will make our DCC gifts for us when we are no longer here."

If you desire to make a similar commitment, please contact Rich Bard, Executive Director, at 207-255-4500 or rich@downeastcoastalconservancy.org. 🌿



DOWNEAST COASTAL CONSERVANCY

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The mission of the Downeast Coastal Conservancy is the conservation of the natural habitats and resources of the coastal watersheds, islands and communities of Washington County, Maine, for present and future generations.

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Winter time is fun time!



Sledding at Middle River Park has been a tradition for generations.