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**The Newsletter of the Fracestown Land Trust, Inc.**

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**Winter 2016**



*The  
Chairman's  
Letter*

Chris Rogers

Dear Friends,

I hope you are enjoying the beautiful winter weather. In many ways, winter is the best time to explore the outdoors. The air is pure. The views are crystal clear. Leaves do not obscure the landscape. The very best part, of course, is no bugs!

With several thousand acres of protected land in the area that can be enjoyed by the public—there are plenty of places for us to get up, get out, and get going. Of the 823 acres of land owned by the Fracestown Land Trust, 536 acres are protected by non-development conservation easements held by other land trust organizations. (In addition, the trust has accepted grant money that restricts any

future development on an additional 37 acres.) The FLT also holds 29 conservation easements on approximately 1,554 acres owned by others—and an executory interest in an 18-acre easement held by the town. In all, the total land protected by the FLT today amounts to 2,432 acres.

Compared to 2014—with the acquisition of 37.4 acres on Old County Road North from the Miller family and 149.5 acres near Bullard Hill Road from the Schott family—2015 was a relatively quiet year. The trustees continued to monitor both the properties that the FLT owns and the conservation easements that we hold. Trustees, members, and friends created new trails to FLT-owned lands that facilitate public access. We also completed the requirements for the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Grant FLT received for

**Chairman's Letter** *Continued on page 6*

## New Trail Bridge Spans Collins Brook

A new trail bridge is ready for use in the Dorothy and Herman C. Miller Family Memorial Forest — the result of a combined effort by the Francestown Land Trust, Conservation Commission, and community volunteers. The bridge provides for an easy brook crossing on a new trail, which extends from Old County Road North into the Dinsmore Brook Conservation Area.

Many thanks to the volunteers who helped with construction, to Abigail Arnold for providing lunch, and to Tom Paige for trucking the poles to the site. A HUGE thank you is owed to George Whipple for setting the poles in place with his excavator. George's meticulous efforts made for fast work finishing the project. ■

Betsy Hardwick



New bridge in the Dorothy and Herman C. Miller Family Memorial Forest, construction crew (left to right) Paul Marshall, Mason Ames, Chris Rogers, Jeff Tarr, Betsy Hardwick, George Sanderson, Larry Ames

## Schott Brennan Falls Reserve Flora

The Schott Brennan Falls Reserve vegetation consists of a mixed forest typical of cool temperate climates. The canopy is dominated by the conifer *Tsuga canadensis* (Hemlock) and by the hardwoods *Fagus grandifolia* (American beech), *Betula alleghaniensis* (yellow birch), *Betula nigra* (black birch), *Quercus rubra* (red oak), *Acer rubrum* (red maple), and a few *Betula papyrifera* (paper birch). Smaller trees include *Ostrya virginiana* (ironwood), *Acer spicatum* (mountain maple), *Acer pensylvanicum* (striped maple), and *Hamamelis virginiana* (American witch-hazel).

The shrub layer is not well developed, except locally. It consists mostly of *Viburnum lantanoides* (hobblebush), *Viburnum spp.*, *Cornus spp.*, and, in wet areas, *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry).

### Herbaceous Ground Layer

Common are: *Aralia nudicaulis* (wild sasparilla), *Maianthemum canadense* (Canada-mayflower), *Aster spp.*, and *Solidago spp.* (Goldenrod). *Gaultheria pro-*

*cumbens* (Wintergreen) is also common locally.

Lush fern beds are evident in many locations: *Dennstaedtia punctilobula* (hay-scented fern), *Osmunda spp.*, *Pteridium aquilinum* (bracken), and, on rocks,



Hobblebush

*Polypodium virginianum* (common polypody). The *Lycopodiaceae* are also well represented: *Dendrolycopodium obscurum* (tree clubmoss), *Huperzia lucidula* (shining firmoss), *Lycopodium clavatum* (common clubmoss), and *Diphasiastrum complanatum* (ground cedar).

In addition, we found localized clumps of *Cypripedium acaule* (pink lady's slipper) and *Trillium erectum* (red wakerobin). In wet areas, *Osmunda regalis* (royal fern) and *Sphagnum spp.* (peatmoss) were common. In July, *Mimulus ringens* (square-stemmed monkey flower) was found in bloom in the pond outflow. Its lavender flowers are about 1" across, asymmetrical, and loosely resemble a monkey face. ■

Martine Villalard-Bohnsack

## The Birds of Bible Hill: 1998-2015

I keep a yearly birding list. I jot down every species that I see in or near my yard, the days I observe them, and scraps of pertinent information about them. I begin listing feeder birds every January 1st and I'm often amazed at how long such a list is at year's end! It's a good way to sharpen one's birding skills, while keeping an eye on what goes on in our little paradise.

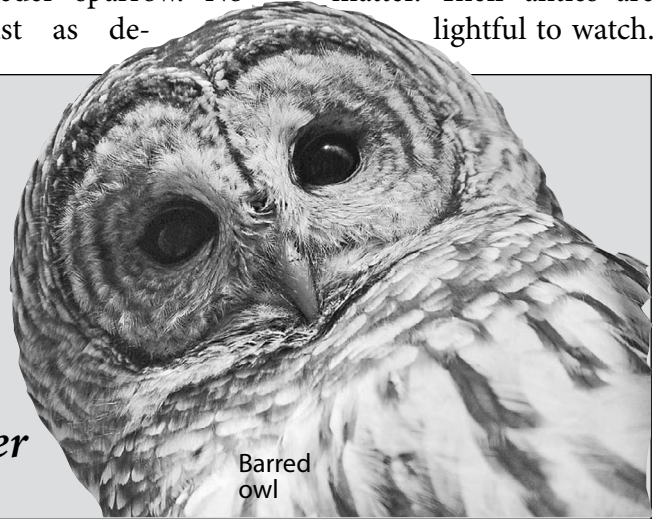
Irruption years are always special. One day you notice an inconspicuous, streaky "little brown job"

asked. I looked out and saw, to my mixed horror and delight, a northern shrike murdering an unlucky redpoll! The shrike was a life bird for me...and, of course, he had to eat.

Winter bird watching can be most interesting. In NH, rusty-capped, tie-tack breasted tree sparrows replace New Jersey's white-throated sparrow as the feeder sparrow. No matter. Their antics are just as delightful to watch.

*"We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope."*

*Wallace Stegner*



with a few dashes of yellow here and there. "Oh, there's a pine siskin!" you think. "How nice." And by the next day, that single bird has frequently been joined by 100 of his kin. The redpoll years are so much more colorful. Eventually, zillions of red-capped, black-faced small brown birds are mobbing the feeders. Some members of the tribe sport quite pink breasts; some are more heavily streaked. And perhaps that paler bird might be the sought-after hoary redpoll.

One winter's day, I walked into the kitchen to find my husband staring intently out of the window. "What is that mockingbird doing on the ground?" he

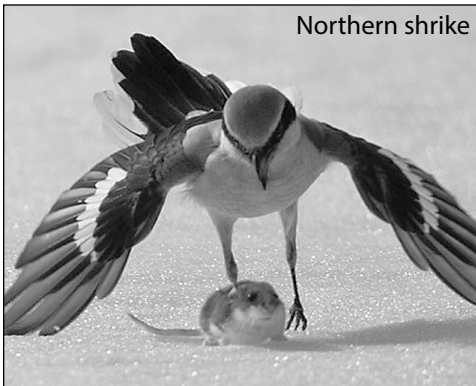
One winter, our suet sustained a mockingbird through the cold months. That fellow was an ingrate, however. With the arrival of warmer days, he flew away without treating us to even one song. On another brisk morning, we watched nine turkeys follow each other in a straight line across our snowy yard. To our astonishment, one by one, those heavy-looking birds flew up into our Prairie Fire crabapple tree. They looked ludicrously happy up there. And another treat: one day as the February shadows lengthened, we watched a small flock of birds fly into another crabapple. Were they

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Pine siskin



Northern shrike



White-throated sparrow





**Birds** *Continued from page 3*

over-wintering robins? No, they were everybody's favorite...sleek and lovely cedar waxwings. Mixed in among them were their larger and more colorful cousins, the wandering Bohemian waxwings.

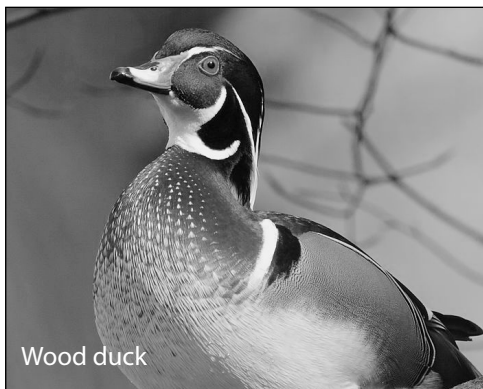
Frequently in this season, we hear a pair of courting barred owls inquiring "Who cooks for you?" Once, toward the end of an unusually cold winter, we saw one of them sitting on the edge of our bird-bath, hoping, I guess, for the appearance of a weak-

two nesting pairs. Also in March, another sparrow begins to trill his beautiful song. This aptly named little song sparrow sings throughout the summer, during which he and his industrious mate usually produce two sets of birdlings. This month also shows us a few early migrating palm warblers.

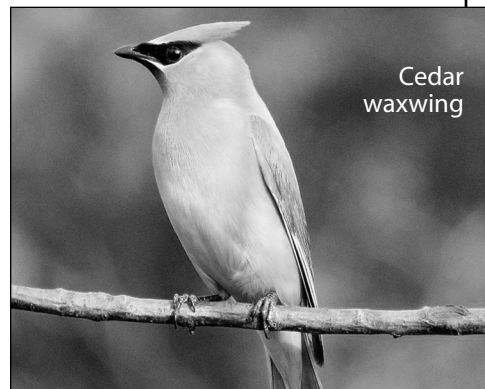
Sometimes in this month, we notice a male blue-bird investigating our bluebird houses, only to then disappear for a few weeks. Ah, but April belongs not only to the bluebirds, but to my equally loved tree swallows.



Junco



Wood duck



Cedar  
waxwing

ened chickadee or a restless chipmunk. Many of these owls starve during winters of deep, ice-crusted snow. Another long, hard winter produced avian behavior that surprised our favorite birding leader. Our winter bounty of holly berries feeds many types of fruit-eating birds. This time, when the crop was depleted, how was our lone hungry robin to exist? To our surprise and to Mr. Bird Leader's near disbelief, we watched as he discovered that sunflower chips were actually edible. He survived!

Late March begins spring migration. We look forward to flocks of juncos and white-throated sparrows beneath our feeders. In lucky years, we are privileged to watch a gorgeous white-crowned sparrow digging in hungrily. Occasionally we see a big rusty-striped fox sparrow amongst the crowd, and once we were thrilled to host a migrating male towhee. Another rare, but so welcome, bird is the friendly, feisty red-breasted nuthatch. How I wish they nested nearby.

In late March, usually before we've declared 'Ice Out' in our pond, a male phoebe is claiming his territory. We don't always see him, but his harsh 'fee-bee' is hard to ignore. Just as welcome is the 'conkaree' of the male red-winged blackbird. I've learned a lot about that handsome bird because our pond often supports

What marvelously acrobatic performances they give as they fly twittering over fields still covered by patches of rotting snow. A banner spring for us is when our field sports both a pair of blue beauties and one, sometimes two pairs, of those iridescent swallows! Another bird to watch for in April is the charming little chipping sparrow, who nests each year on our property.

May begins with the sweetly insistent voices of tiny spring peepers. Sometimes just one little frog begins to call, but as the season progresses, many more join in. This really loud chorus bursting with hope and joy touches my heart. With May come the avian stars, the host of tropical migrants we've all been waiting for. We identify them first by song. Oh! Do you hear the rose breasted grosbeak? The oriole? Isn't that a scarlet tanager singing? An indigo bunting? I heard bobolinks early this morning, did you? Listen! It's twilight and the wood thrush is singing. The great crested flycatcher has such a harsh song. The 'che-bek' of the least flycatcher is remarkably loud, isn't it? But the kingbird is sometimes hard to hear. 'Tea-cher, tea-cher, tea-CHER!' shrieks the ovenbird. And that red-eyed vireo sings nonstop all day long! 'Witchity' calls the common yellowthroat, while the yellow warbler

**Birds** *Continued on page 5*

**Birds** *Continued from page 4*

announces 'I am so pretty!' The chestnut-sided warbler's 'pleased, pleased, pleased to meetcha' is easy to recognize, while the magnolia warbler's song is definitely harder to learn. We're lucky to catch glimpses of these active little birds foraging among the tender new leaves. Eventually, temporarily stuffed, so many of them fly on to nest north of us.

But still, there are plenty of bright visitors to watch. One year we were putting out oranges for six

The pond really enhances our bird-watching. One spring day a pair of beautiful wood ducks spent an hour or so investigating its possibilities. Another June brought a family of Canada geese and their six fuzzy goslings. They stayed for five days. We love to watch the tree swallows and brilliant barn swallows splashing the pond's surface as they chase insects. Occasionally, we see kingfishers diving in search of the small pond fish or maybe tadpoles. August's inevitable drought makes the pond's far shore available to the majestic



Downy  
woodpecker



Scarlet tanager



Chickadee

brilliant male orioles. Another spring found us temporarily feeding four gorgeous rose-breasted grosbeaks. Did you know that the arrangement of those blood-red breast feathers differs from bird to bird? And that part of the summer's fun is watching daddy grosbeak stuff suet into the insatiable mouths of his offspring? All the woodpeckers make a point of introducing their offspring to the delights of suet. As the summer progresses, the red spot on the top of the young downy and hairy male woodpecker's head slowly marches downwards 'til it reaches the back of the birds' neck where it belongs. Catbirds, with their raucous, garbled mockingbird-wannabe song, have so much personality. And then there are those fabulous hummingbirds!

On September 9, 2005, I was startled by some winged thing flashing by close to my head and landing not far from me. I saw a back view of a dark, stocky bird, but I had no idea what it was. Two weeks later, my journal stated that I had "a marvelous look at one of two woodcocks who've been flushing and zooming by us the entire summer!" The next spring, they flushed from our bog garden and flew low over our heads into the woods, evidence that they were nesting in our woods. We were delighted to add them to our yard list!

great blue heron. If the water level drops even lower, it attracts migrating solitary sandpipers. In late summer, we watch young phoebes launching themselves from drooping branches to fly-catch over the pond.

2015, our last opportunity to watch birds on our property, has been a very good year. In May, Stella, our self-pollinating cherry tree produced a spectacular crop of dark red cherries. For over a month, the fruit was a magnet for quite a few species. The robins and waxwings were the prime beneficiaries, followed by those funny catbirds. But the real WOW moment came every time a scarlet tanager disappeared into those heavily laden branches, its feathers exactly matching the cherries. Also in May, we rescued a frantic Canada warbler, desperately thrashing about in our garden shed.

The last week in June brought an incredible surprise. At dusk we heard a strange sound on the terrace. We were watching a nature film and I remember thinking, "I never knew that they had that bird in that country." When I realized that it was coming from our terrace, I crept to the door just in time to see a robin-sized bird fly up to a locust branch. It promptly began calling (surely not singing) 'WHIP-poor-Will.' Loudly and clearly. Over and over again. Once I heard

**Birds** *Continued on page 6*

### **Birds** *Continued from page 5*

it calling in the near-dawn hours, too. We couldn't believe our good luck and were saddened when it disappeared after two weeks.

It's been interesting reviewing 17 years of watching birds on Bible Hill. It's been sad, too, to realize how both the numbers of birds and the number of species has dwindled during our residence. What happened to the pair of piratical looking evening grosbeaks we watched for many years? The farmer across the street began to try for not two, but for an extra June-haying in his fields. If he had waited to cut his hay even as late as July 4th, the lovely bobolinks who had bred for years on his property would have had a fighting chance. But the farmer cuts his fields earlier and earlier and the bobolink eggs or their newly hatched babies are crushed. I believe that no birds tried to reproduce this year.

There once was a good-sized flock of barn swallows successfully raising young in that old barn. This year I think only one pair returned from Venezuela. For years, we had a resident pair of American redstarts, but they vanished several years ago. Our small, but reliable colony of little brown bats had flourished in our little barn. We used to love taking young grandchildren out at night to see them swooping gracefully over the pond, snapping up mosquitoes. Then came the white-nose syndrome in 2006, and afterward we never saw another bat.

And then there are the journal entries. July 7th: "Many monarchs fluttering over the milkweed patch." September 3rd: "Clouds of mint-condition monarchs almost cover the Seven Son Tree's blossoms." This year I saw one monarch butterfly in our garden. It is so very hard for caring people to witness the rapid destruction of the natural world and all it represents. ■

*Meredeth J. Allen*

### **Did You Know?**

Trail maps of the Rand Brook Forest, Schott Brennan Falls Reserve, Crotched Mountain and Miller/Dinsmore Brook Conservation Area, as well as the Frankestown Wildlife Action Plan map can be downloaded from [francestownlandtrust.org](http://francestownlandtrust.org)

### **Chairman's Letter** *Continued from page 1*

Avery Brook and advised families expressing an interest in conservation.

The FLT also supported the Piscataquog Land Conservancy in their efforts to conserve the summit of Rose Mountain in Lyndeborough before the end of 2015. This support is part of a long tradition of working with other conservation partners, such as the Town of Frankestown, the Frankestown Conservation Commission, Monadnock Conservancy, Society for Protection of NH Forests, and numerous foundations to make the most of all of our conservation resources.

As 2016 moves forward, we will continue to sponsor the Frankestown Arts Fest (now in its fourth year), lead hikes, and participate in the Joan Hanchett Nature Series. (For more information about an upcoming hike and the Joan Hanchett Nature Series, please turn to page 8.)

Last summer FLT began evaluating two important habitat conservation projects. While it is too early to go into the details, we do expect to make an announcement this spring. Both these projects score very highly on the New Hampshire Fish and Game Wildlife Action Plan "Scoring Map" (see page 7).

As we celebrate past accomplishments and move forward into 2016, the FLT is extremely grateful to you for your generous and ongoing support. We couldn't do it without you. Thank you! ■

### **Share Your Talent at the Frankestown Arts Fest**

It's not too early to start getting ready for the Frankestown Arts Fest, on **Saturday, June 25, 2016**.

The Frankestown Arts Fest is where we come together to share our arts, crafts, and musical talents. Paintings, jewelry, pottery, and crafts of all sorts are welcome. Items may be for sale or just for show. The event also features music, poetry, dance, and storytelling. So, get your creative boots on and make some art! Then come celebrate the good works of the Frankestown Land Trust and Frankestown artists.

For updates see Frankestown Arts Fest on Facebook. To volunteer or for more information, send email to [marcytripp@hotmail.com](mailto:marcytripp@hotmail.com).

### **Do you have questions about or ideas for events?**

We welcome your input! Please send an email to [info@francestownlandtrust.org](mailto:info@francestownlandtrust.org)



## New Hampshire has a New 10-year Wildlife Action Plan

Where can you learn about New Hampshire's 27 unique habitat types, research threats to wildlife, and find lists of actions you and your community can take to protect wildlife?

The New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan has it all! The new 10-year plan includes new planning tools and updated wildlife habitat maps. (See the new "scoring map" for Franconia in full color on our website: [franciatownlandtrust.org](http://franciatownlandtrust.org)).

The Wildlife Action Plan guides efforts to protect wildlife and manage habitats in New Hampshire. The Plan not only helps to keep rare species from becoming endangered, it also works to keep common species common. NH Fish and Game spearheaded the update of the 2005 plan, working with conservation partners, private landowners, non-profits, and municipal, state and federal agencies. Citizens from across the state played a pivotal role, including 166 people representing 79 communities who participated in public engagement sessions, 1,142 people who responded to an online survey, and 123 who commented on the plan.

Experts from around the Northeast came together to assess Species of Greatest Conservation

Need (SGCN), compiling a list of 174 wildlife species with full reports on their status, habitat use, threats to their existence, and actions that can be taken to help protect these species. Experts reviewed the latest research to determine removals (including recovered populations of Osprey and Cooper's hawk). Additions to the SGCN list include three whale species, four more freshwater mussel species, four additional native bat species, four bumble bee species, and five marine invertebrates, including the horseshoe crab and northern shrimp.

The Plan outlines more than 100 specific actions that can be taken by communities, conservation groups, landowners, state agencies, natural resources professionals, and others to protect and manage wildlife and habitats in New Hampshire.

Since 2005, more than 235,000 acres of highest ranked habitat have been conserved in NH, and more than 3,500 citizens, landowners, and land managers have received technical assistance for habitat management.

How will we top these numbers in the next 10 years? With your help!

### Use the Plan to:

- Help towns and land trusts prior-

itize land conservation efforts

- Prioritize research to fill gaps in our knowledge about NH's wildlife and habitats
- Help guide your own land management by using the maps to learn more about existing habitats
- Incorporate actions to protect wildlife into town documents, education programs, property management plans, development guidelines, and much more.

### Interested in learning more?

- **FLT Website:** See the new "scoring map" for Franconia in full color on [franciatownlandtrust.org](http://franciatownlandtrust.org)
- **NHFG Website:** Find the updated 2015 Wildlife Action Plan, including Habitat Maps by town, at the NHFG website at [wildlife.state.nh.us/wildlife/wap.html](http://wildlife.state.nh.us/wildlife/wap.html). Additional information on using the plan to take action will be available on Taking Action for Wildlife at [www.TakingActionforWildlife.org](http://www.TakingActionforWildlife.org) later in the year.
- **Workshop:** Attend a workshop on how you can use the Plan at 6:00 PM on Tuesday March 8, 2016 at the Keene Public Library (Heberton Hall, 60 Winter Street, Keene NH). Snow date: Tuesday March 15, 2016. The event is co-sponsored by the City of Keene and the Harris Center for Conservation Education. ■





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LAND TRUST**

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## Don't Miss These Upcoming Events!

### **Friday, March 18, 7pm • Joan Hanchett Nature Series Francestown Elementary School**

The Joan Hanchett Nature Series is offering a family program on ***Birds, Bats and Butterflies***. Ruth Axelrod, a trained volunteer from the Speaking for Wildlife project will give an exciting hour-long slide presentation highlighting wildlife species commonly seen in New Hampshire. Have you ever seen a bear in your backyard? A mysterious hawk flying over your birdfeeder? A giant woodpecker that looks like he just stepped out of a cartoon? Come learn about these and the rest of the "Backyard Dozen," a group of wildlife commonly found in New Hampshire. You'll learn how to recognize evidence of these species in your backyard and understand how they use different habitats. You'll also get ideas on how you can help wildlife survive and flourish in your neighborhood. Free and open to the public.



### **Saturday, April 9, 10am – 3pm • Hike Schott Brennan Falls Reserve and Bullard Hill, Francestown**

Join Dave Butler and Robin Haubrich for a moderately strenuous, 3- to 4-mile hike on conservation land in Francestown. We'll start with a visit to the Schott Brennan Falls Reserve, which is part of a conservation easement held by the Piscataquog Land Conservancy and owned by the Francestown Land Trust. We'll then ascend Bullard Hill, site of one of the original settlements in Francestown. This trip will navigate the great trail network on the eastern shoulder of Crotched Mountain. Bring water and lunch. Meet at 10 a.m. at the town sheds in the center of Francestown to car-pool the short distance to the trailhead. Back by 3 p.m.

For more information, please contact Dave (603-472-5608) or Ben (603-547-2075 or bph03043@gmail.com). Co-sponsored by the Harris Center for Conservation Education, the Piscataquog Land Conservancy, and the Francestown Land Trust.

**Check out page 6 for more events info!**