



August 2007

PO Box 155, Freedom, ME 04941

Issue No 16

## The Appeal of the Sheepscot Wellspring Watershed

by Susie O'Keeffe

Evening silently weaves her moist self through the woods,  
gentling us toward her wiser ways.

Beaver, emboldened by curiosity,  
gives a glimpse of his thick, rippling body,  
paddle board tail,  
and excellent sense of humor.

Whispers slip off leaves like water,  
Veeries trill,  
Woodcocks serenade,  
Barred Owl continues her ceaseless concerns over cooking.

Our imaginations fill  
and we  
remember  
how  
to be.

This is some of the magic you might come across during an evening walk on one of SWLA's trails—a small taste of what the land trust is ultimately protecting. A full list of the organization's offerings includes permanent protection for wildlife, woodlands, and meadows, miles of hiking trails, stewardship of the Sheepscot River, and a long-term conservation vision for the watershed.

When I was invited onto the board last year I was surprised to learn that all of SWLA's accomplishments are volunteer-driven. Considering the

amount of land the organization protects and the scope of its projects, this is an amazing achievement. However, as development pressure increases exponentially so do the land trust's challenges. In order to protect the ecological integrity and long-term health of the watershed, SWLA must begin connecting undeveloped parcels, and be in the position to purchase land when it comes on the market. If we only protect a small piece here, a strip over there, and a farm meadow some time, we're ultimately going to create isolated islands in a sea of development.

A recent flight over the watershed revealed that we still have a chance to protect and connect large tracks of land not fragmented by roads, houses, or other types of development. But, time is of the essence, and money is essential. Property prices have rocketed, and more and more land is for sale as we lose our farming and forestry heritage. The creation, purchase, and stewardship of easements and land is an expensive, complex, and time consuming process that cannot be properly carried out without significant funds, and at least one paid staff member. Thanks to the generosity of several of

## SWLA President's Letter

our members, we have begun to pay our part-time volunteer executive director, Buck O'Herin. Although his "salary" at this point is better described as a very small gesture toward countless hours of work, it's a great start.

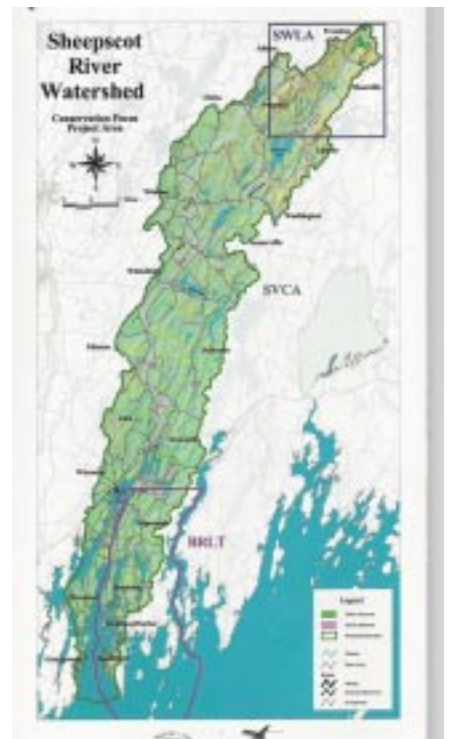
When I reflect on the incredible effort that SWLA's members and volunteers have made over the years to save this community's river, forests, bogs, and brooks, I realize how right Aldo Leopold was when he said that people only protect what they care for, and they only care for what they come to know. Without SWLA we would not be able to know Whitten Hill, the Hogback, Bog Brook, or many portions of the Upper Sheepscot River. Even if we only rarely find time to break free from the frantic pace of modern life to take that quiet meander, to wait for the beaver to find his courage, or to allow the secret whisperings of the forest to fill our imaginations, these places are there for us to know thanks to a vibrant group of people, who care deeply for the land, and understand that left to her own devices, nature offers us the best examples of how to weave peace, inspiration, and beauty into our individual lives, and the larger world.



Frog in the shade. Photo: Wendy Newcomb

Last August I reported on the steps SWLA would be implementing to protect the land and water of the upper Sheepscot River. I am happy to report that in collaboration with the Sheepscot Valley Conservation Association and the Boothby Region Land Trust we were successful in raising over 34 thousand dollars to develop a conservation plan for the entire 320 square miles of the Sheepscot River. The planning is now underway and by next spring we will have a complete inventory of the natural resources in the watershed. This information will be critical to identifying important wildlife habitat and water resources that SWLA will be proactively protecting.

Another critical step for SWLA this past year was to secure funds to support our entire mission. Last December we conducted our first annual fund raising campaign and we are happy to report that 36 generous friends contributed more than \$3,200! Many of the checks came with letters and notes encouraging us to keep up the great work we are doing to protect the headwaters of the Sheepscot River. I would like to thank all those who contributed. I assure you that the trust such donations represents is much appreciated by the SWLA Board and the executive director, Buck O'Herin, who manage the resources of the land trust. Annual fund raising and the Capital Campaign to support the executive director position will continue to be critical to our future ability to manage property, acquire easements, and provide education



and outreach activities. Your support engenders confidence that together we can face the challenges of preserving and protecting the watershed of the Sheepscot River.

I hope you are able to get outside this summer and enjoy the over 19 miles of trails SWLA helps to maintain. I look forward to seeing everyone at the annual meeting that will be on August 26<sup>th</sup> at Buck and Lisa's house. Thanks again for your support of the important work we are doing.

One last bit of information. You might notice that this newsletter is a bit shorter. That's because we will be sending out two newsletters a year to better stay in touch with the membership. The next newsletter will be in February, 2008.

Glenn Ritch



### Newsletter Contributors

Articles: Bob Brooks, Bernice Nadler, Susie O'Keeffe, Buck O'Herin, Glenn Ritch

Photos: Bernice Nadler, Buck O'Herin, Wendy Newcomb

Layout: Missy Hatch

Editor: Susan Shell



## TRAILS

by Bernice Nadler

It has been a productive year for SWLA's Trails and Stewardship Committee. We have held monthly meetings, periodic work parties, and continue to expand our trail network. Currently our trails cover about eight miles and also hook up with the George's River Land Trust trails on Frye Mountain via the "Hogback Connector." Between articles in local papers, trail maps in town offices, and word of mouth, more people are becoming aware of SWLA's existence through this wonderful resource. Recent efforts have involved building a trail branching off from the Northern Headwaters Trail (NHT) toward the Penney Road. Another leg of the new trail loops back to the NHT. Eventually it will cross the Penney Road and head toward Freedom to connect with yet another trail on the New England Forestry Foundation land on the Freedom Pond Road.

We have new trails brochures available at some of the trailheads with information on joining SWLA along with a trails map. As we continue to

add trails, an updated hand-drawn version of the maps will be found in the map box.

Along major access points to our trails we are identifying our land by posting small metal signs. In a few instances where hunting and trapping are restricted, we are also clarifying this issue.

Nesting boxes for wood ducks have been hung in Bog Brook Sanctuary and hopefully they will be utilized next year if not this one. We hope to install more in the future.

In an effort to more effectively be good stewards of properties on which

we hold easements, we have begun the process of doing baseline documentation. This involves walking the property and documenting (through photos and text) features of note, whether natural or manmade, in addition to recording some of the history of the parcel. We also keep an eye out to make sure that the terms of the easements aren't violated.

Anyone interested in joining our efforts for trail building is welcome. The company is fun and the rewards of extended trails are always heartening. If you would like to help, contact Bernice Nadler at [zignad@fairpoint.net](mailto:zignad@fairpoint.net) or 382-6813.



One of the three wood duck boxes being put up on Bog Brook Sanctuary in June thanks to Board members Susie O'Keeffe, Read Brugger, Bob Brooks, and a visiting friend, Mark.

Photo: Buck O'Herin

# *In The Watershed*

by Bob Brooks



At the edge of the yard sits the remains of an old elm tree that miraculously survived Dutch elm disease for 50 years but finally bought it in the ice storm of 1998. Actually it lived for a few more years after that but every year brought more deterioration until now it is completely devoid of leaves. At first it was a sad event. A tree expert was consulted to see if there was any possibility of saving this old, gray giant but, alas, nothing could be done. Now it sits as a sculpture, still beautiful in a different way, and serves as a rest stop for the many species of birds that, when it was alive, I could barely see. Doves, Great Crested Flycatchers, Phoebes, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Blue Jays, Scarlet Tanagers, Hummingbirds, and Hawks are among its many visitors. On a clear morning the tree is sun-kissed and the birds are resplendent. It is in this light that one can notice the lovely egg yolk hue under the wing of a preening Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Despite much public opposition big game hunting is coming to Montville courtesy of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, which has recently announced a three-week "experimental" moose hunt in the southern and central sections of the state to begin in the fall of 2008. The reason given is that moose-vehicle collisions are on the rise. There has been no scientific census done on moose in the state; the department bases its population estimates on hunter sightings and road kill. There

is no evidence that killing more moose diminishes collisions with them. While it is true that there are accidents, the percentage of moose-vehicle related accidents is actually on the low end of the wildlife-related accident scale. According to Karen Morris, the IF&W head moose biologist, the main problem is driver speed and inattention. Most of the accidents occur in Aroostook, Piscataquis, and Franklin counties so why kill moose in Waldo County? It is so nice that the moose are making a comeback on SWLA lands and they certainly aren't overpopulated in Waldo County. In my personal opinion this decision is more related to the decrease in hunting interest which, unfortunately, IF&W solely depends on for their revenue. Applications for moose hunting permits alone are down 26% since 2001. I am pleased that the SWLA board formally expressed its opposition to the hunt in this part of the state which was noted by IF&W at one of their public hearings. I'll keep you posted! (Pun intended.)

The first annual SWLA bird walk took place on June 3<sup>rd</sup> led by world-class birder Bob Duchesne. Bob, when he is not representing the Bangor area in the state legislature, is among other things the creator of the Maine Birding Trail website, a terrific resource for birders in Maine. SWLA is now represented on that site ([www.mainebirdingtrail.com](http://www.mainebirdingtrail.com)). The day was a gray, wet, and foggy one but 15 brave souls showed up. We

started the day looking at the marsh where we saw nesting Red-winged Blackbirds and then proceeded to the Bog Brook trailhead and were not on the trail for very long before we heard the beautiful song of a Yellow Warbler. We crossed the brook and continued on to the marsh viewpoint where we first heard and then saw a pair of Swamp Sparrows. We then backtracked, stopping many times to find a Blackburnian Warbler that Bob heard with his amazing ear, to no avail. The foliage is very thick in early June and some of the birds were identified by their song only. Heading up the Big Pine Trail we found Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers and finished the day at the Bog Brook marsh behind the second beaver dam. We heard or saw 34 species in a period of two and a half hours. Bob very generously suggested making this an annual event and mentioned that he will be giving a workshop next spring on birding by ear.

Babe, a very tame yearling white tail deer, has been making the rounds of the neighborhood. He has absolutely no fear of humans and actually seeks their company. So if he walks up to you, he just wants a pat or a rub on his neck. He is eating wild food and accepts handouts of clover. Good luck Babe!

Tom Boothby called with this fantastic story. He heard a wild turkey loudly gobbling and making other frantic noises behind a brush pile near his house. He slowly approached and much to his surprise came upon a coyote and the turkey locked eye-to-eye in a frozen standoff. They were so focused on each other that Tom was able to get within 15 feet of them before they noticed him and bolted off in opposite directions. Tom theorizes that the turkey was diverting the coyote from her chicks, a very courageous but dangerous maneuver.



Janice Kaspar, Cloe Chunn, Elisabeth Wolfe on SWLA bird walk led by Bob Duchesne.  
Photo: Buck O'Herin

On July 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6 a.m., from our newly cleared wildlife viewing station at Big Rock on the Bog Brook trail, I observed a mother wood duck and eight ducklings in the marsh behind the second dam. They were all huddled together on a long, half-rotted log basking in the sunlight. This is very exciting news since I think it is the first time that wood ducks have been successful in Bog Brook! Wood duck eggs take between 28 and 37 days to incubate and I first saw them on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. We installed the boxes on May 29<sup>th</sup> and judging from their size the chicks had to be at least 7 to 10 days old when I saw them. If you do the math, it is possible that she used one of the boxes but in all likelihood the young ducks were hatched in a tree cavity. Maybe she will use one of our boxes next time around.

If you have any interesting wildlife or nature observations send me an email at [bobbrooks220@yahoo.com](mailto:bobbrooks220@yahoo.com) for inclusion in future articles.

## Unity College President to Speak at SWLA Annual Meeting

Dr. Mitchell S. Thomashow, the President of Unity College and a SWLA member will speak at SWLA's annual meeting. Dr. Thomashow and his wife Cindy recently moved to Montville after living in southern New Hampshire for over 30 years. He is the author of four books and numerous articles, including his well-known book, *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist*. He has written extensively about the need for people to pay "close attention to natural history and local ecology as primary sources of wisdom for healing and collective responsibility." He believes that, "only from this wisdom can a deeper global perspective emerge."

This year's annual meeting will be held Sunday, August 26 at 5:00 p.m. at the home of Buck O'Herin and Lisa Newcomb, 265 Halldale Road in Montville. This year's meeting will start with a potluck supper (bring your own place setting as well as a dish to share), followed by the business meeting and Mitch Thomashow's presentation. All SWLA members are welcome and encouraged to attend this fun annual get together.

We will be voting on a slate of five candidates to the SWLA Board of Directors: current board members Glen Bridges, Charles Fletcher, and Bernice Nadler, whose terms expire

this year, and two candidates (to be announced) to replace outgoing board members Vernon LeCount and George Maendel. Vernon is the first board member affected by the term limits that the membership passed in 2001.



## Conservation Plan Update

by Buck O'Herin

In early June SWLA Board member Susie O'Keeffe got a bird's-eye view of the Sheepscot watershed when she accompanied project biologist Janet McMahon on her spring fly-over of the entire watershed. Janet said the timing of the flight was perfect; trees were leafed out enough to be able to more easily identify different species by color but not so much that the topography and features were not still discernible. Susie reported that the new perspective gave her an increased feeling of hopefulness: "I saw a lot of forest in the upper watershed not yet fragmented by roads and development."

The fly-over is just one of the ways that Janet will "look" at the watershed in order to inventory its natural resources. She also plans to walk or paddle the entire length of the river and to hike many of the 40-plus miles of trails maintained by the three land trusts in the water-



Janet McMahon

shed. In addition to getting out on the ground, Janet will also look at available resource maps and existing data from state and federal agencies. The data and maps from the completed plan will greatly assist all three groups in being more proactive and knowledgeable with long-term conservation planning.

On June 14 at the Sheepscot Valley Conservation Association (SVCA) office in Alna, which overlooks a

broad, tidal Sheepscot River, four SWLA board members and our executive director met with Janet and representatives of SVCA and the Boothbay Region Land Trust to get an update on the conservation plan and to discuss recommended focus areas which are high priority areas for protection. Approximately fifteen will be chosen for the 320 square mile watershed. Two in our area that will be included are the headwaters area that encompasses SWLA's 220-acre Northern Headwaters property and 90-acre Antignani property, as well as the largest habitat block in the watershed at over 9,000 acres that extends from the Burnham Hill Road in Montville to the Plummer Road in Liberty.

Fundraising for the \$34,646 project is completed. Grants were received from MBNA, the Maine Community Foundation, Sweet Water Trust, L.L. Bean, and the Davis Conservation Foundation. The project is on schedule to be completed next April.

## SWLA Receives



## Citation

On May 12 at Unity College's commencement ceremony, SWLA was presented a citation acknowledging the land trust's "commitment to land protection and wise stewardship of natural and cultural resources."

SWLA Board President Glenn Ritch and executive director Buck O'Herin were in attendance to receive the award. "This means a lot to us, especially coming from the school that calls itself the environmental college," said O'Herin. Ritch added, "It's great to get the recognition; it directly supports the work we are doing."

Unity College Assistant Professor Tom Mullin presented the award. He later said "Land trusts like Sheepscot Wellspring Land Alliance play a vital role in not only preserving for generations the land and natural resources of their communities, but serving as living laboratories for learning. Schools and colleges in partnership with land trusts across Maine utilize these ecological havens to engage the scientists and land managers of the next generation."

## SWLA Website

By the time you read this article SWLA's website should be up and running. Our domain name is [swlamaine.org](http://swlamaine.org). Please let us know what you think. Also, we are looking for a webmaster who can regularly update the site with photos, information about events, and breaking news. Please contact us if you are interested or have any suggestions ([bucknlisa@fairpoint.net](mailto:bucknlisa@fairpoint.net) or 589-4311). See you on the world wide web!

## Capital Campaign

This past winter SWLA began a capital campaign effort to raise money for operational support. The support directly funds the executive director position and pays for invaluable professional consultation. We know from our own experience and from discussions with other land trusts that having an employee, even a part-time employee, is the key to increasing SWLA's effectiveness as a conservation organization. We have already seen considerable results from changes made to our organizational structure and by having an employee.

Our local capital campaign has so far raised \$26,725 in pledges over the next five years. In July we did a mailing to residents in SWLA's four-town service area, Freedom, Liberty, Montville, and Palermo, seeking new members. In August we are planning dock-to-dock outreach via canoes to landowners on Sheepscot Lake in Palermo. The canoe outreach is a fun and effective way to meet watershed neighbors and introduce them to SWLA's vital work. This is just one of the ways we are working to increase visibility, membership, and financial support—the keys to support the infrastructure so necessary to SWLA's efforts to protect land in our region.

Our campaign to solicit funding from foundations has so far netted \$12,500 from Newman's Own Organics. We are optimistic that our hard work will ensure we receive this amount for two more years.

If you are interested in helping out with this campaign in some way, with ideas, volunteering, or donating please contact us.



**Dave Bridges scoops up samples from a local stream.**

## Stream Ecology Walk by Bernice Nadler

On a sunny Saturday in June, a number of us met with SWLA board member Dave Bridges to learn about stream ecology. We gathered at the head of the Bog Brook Trail and began with an overview of the Sheepscot headwaters on maps he had brought along. While we listened to him discuss the ecosystems of the bog, we were lucky to see a deer swim across. I have often heard that deer are good swimmers but had never seen one in action and indeed they are! We then moved downstream where Dave collected some samples for us to view under his microscope. Because of the low water level and warmer temperatures, we had more success finding insect larvae driving to a spot farther downstream. Once we got the idea from him of where to look, it was fun turning over rocks and looking for the larvae of the caddisfly, stonefly, and mayfly. Prior to this I had no idea how these insects began their lives. And I was much more receptive to them than sightings of mosquito larvae! It was a morning well spent.

**Dave Bridges shows a caddisfly larvae to SWLA board member Charles Fletcher.**

Photos: Bernice Nadler



## *Thanks For The Help!*

SWLA's work is mostly done by volunteers—usually board members. But every year there are many others who help out in some way with the multitude of tasks. We owe them great thanks. The list of people this past year includes: Therese Bagnardi, John Bagnulo, Tom Boothby, Jim Bowers, Heidi Brugger, Tim Caverly, Mike Cuning, Brendan Curran, Bob Duchesne, Kai George, Mac George, Carol Gillette, Laura Hatfield, Maureen Hoffman, Tom Hrichak, Mike Hurley, Todd Knowlton, Jan Laux, Jay LeGore, James Melanson, Annette Naegel, Paul Plumer, Sara Prescott, Margie Shannon, Mike Shannon, Liz Sizeler, Will Sugg, and Susan Wolford.

Special thanks to Barrie Brusila of Mid-Maine Forestry for reviewing SWLA's conservation easement guidelines; Missy Hatch for designing the newsletter; Caroline Pryor for providing essential consultation assistance; and Wes Cotton for organizing a successful benefit contra dance for SWLA with wonderful music provided by Paul Bernaki, Ben Hatfield, Jacob McCurdy, John McIntyre, Julia Plumb, Nancy Rosalie, Jack Silverio, and Seth Yentes.

### **SWLA Board of Directors**



*SWLA Directors serve for staggered three-year terms. Directors are listed with contact information and the year their term ends.*

Glenn Ritch, President	2008	342-4906 - glennt@fairpoint.net
Dave Bridges, Vice President	2009	382-6221 - bothbridges@fairpoint.net
Read Brugger, Treasurer	2008	382-6477 - rhbrugger@fairpoint.net
Glen Bridges, Secretary	2007	382-6221 - bothbridges@fairpoint.net
Bob Brooks	2008	589-4458 - bobbrooks220@yahoo.com
Charles Fletcher	2007	589-4222 - larcsfl@yahoo.com
Ben Hatfield	2009	342-4657 - slugfarm@hotmail.com
Vernon LeCount	2007	589-3560 - hvlecount@yahoo.com
Bernice Nadler	2007	382-6813 - zignad@fairpoint.net
Susie O'Keeffe	2008	323-3467 - smokeeffe@gmail.com
Susan Shell, Vice President	2009	589-4188 - sshell@fairpoint.net
Glen Widmer	2009	382-6034 - gwidmer@gwi.net
Buck O'Herin, executive director		589-4311 - bucknlisa@fairpoint.net

**Sheepscot Wellspring Land Alliance**  
**PO Box 155**  
**Freedom, ME 04941-0155**

**Join Us! SWLA Annual Meeting: August 26 @ 5:00**