



ANDROSCOGGIN LAND TRUST

Spring 2021



Joshua Nagine,
ALT Board Vice President
*talks with Bates students on the banks of the
Androscoggin River at Katherine Breton Memorial Preserve*

Five new ALT board members—elected to three-year terms at our annual meeting last November—are bringing a diverse array of new skills, interests, and experience to our organization. We are grateful every day for their enthusiasm, fresh ideas and willingness to pitch in wherever needed!

Wylie Mitchell



Wylie had a distinguished 33-year career in admissions at Bates College before retiring in 2011 as Dean of Admissions Emeritus. In the following years, he served as the Visiting Dean at Bowdoin and Colby colleges, and as college counselor at Waynflete, Chewonki Semester School, and Aiglon College in Switzerland. Wylie's community contributions have included service on the board of directors

of Chewonki, Hebron Academy, and the Waynflete School. A Kansas City native, he graduated from Williams College in 1973 and began his first career in admissions at Boston University.

Wylie and his wife Barbara have lived in Auburn for more

than three decades. They have three grown children, whose families live in Portland and Boston, and recently welcomed a golden retriever puppy named Cappy. The entire Mitchell family enjoy activities such as hiking and maintaining trails, kayaking and sailing, and cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Wylie is now sharing his organizational and leadership skills with ALT's Development Committee, and with his love of photography helps capture ALT's many special landscapes and activities.

Amy Soper

Amy Soper works as a Conservationist at 7 Lakes Alliance



in Belgrade, managing the organization's Stewardship and Courtesy Boat Inspection programs. One of her main responsibilities is stewardship of the Kennebec Highlands, which spans more than 10,000 acres. Amy earned a Master's degree in Sustainable Natural Resource Management from Unity College, and earlier in her career worked as an intervention teacher at RSU 73, where she incorporated conservation into her curriculum. She has been actively involved in her family's logging business since she was a young child, and continues to live in her home town of Livermore where she raises her two very busy boys.

Amy's hobbies include many types of outdoor recreation: snowmobiling, skiing and ice fishing in the winter; hiking and riding her motorcycle in the summer. She has hiked many of the great peaks of Maine, fished pristine lakes and ventured through rugged terrain—experiences have solidified her belief that Maine's natural wonders need to be conserved for all to experience and enjoy. At ALT, Amy quickly stepped into a board officer role, now serving as Board Secretary and as a member of the Stewardship Committee.

Debbie Poliquin



A resident of Lewiston, Debbie works as a Senior Accountant at Androscoggin Bank, where she has worked for the past 23 years. Her financial expertise and experience is proving invaluable to ALT's Finance Committee, a key group in

every nonprofit organization. Debbie earned a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Daniel Webster College in Nashua, NH. Debbie's first association with ALT was when she and other bank employees participated in the 2015 Androscoggin River Clean-up, then later joined in on winter snowshoe hikes.

A member of the Central Maine New England Mountain Bike Association, she enjoys biking the Maine trail systems with her local biking group known as the Dirt Divas. When not working or biking, she enjoys spending time with her family—including her husband Ted and adult children Jamie and Adam—snowshoeing, reading, and listening to bluegrass music.

Judy Marden

Judy lives in a historic farmhouse on a small mountaintop in Greene, where her surrounding 200 acres of woods and fields—the Marden-Chittick Refuge—are protected by conservation easements held by ALT since 2003. Judy's dedication to land



conservation and to our organization goes back to ALT's founding days in the 1980s, and her long-term institutional knowledge and perspectives greatly benefit all of ALT's activities and deliberations. Judy has returned to the Board after a hiatus of two years, having previously served as President, Vice President, and Chair of the Lands Committee. She is currently serving on ALT's Stewardship and Lands committees.

Before retirement, Judy's last career (of five different roles at Bates College over a span of 38 years) was managing the coastal Bates-Morse Mountain Conservation Area in Phippsburg. Judy was an advisor to the Bates Outing Club for decades and co-chaired its Centennial Celebration; she is long-time leader of the local segment of the annual Androscoggin River Source to the Sea paddle and is an active volunteer with the Stanton Bird Club. An avid cross country skier, snowshoer, and kayaker, her favorite activity is spending time in the woods and on the water.

Paula Curtis Everett

Paula is a retired RN and health educator who has worked with elders, children, and in the health insurance industry. Paula has lived in North Auburn for 35 years on a seven-acre farm that abuts Auburn Water District land. She lives there with her husband, dog and cat, many birds, porcupines, skunks,



deer, squirrels, fishers, coyotes, foxes, deer mice and other creatures that find a home there.. She is an Androscoggin Hospice volunteer, a member of Stanton Bird Club's Board and Education Committee, the Auburn Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, and recently the Senior College Board at USM Lewiston/Auburn College. Along with her husband Michael, Paula has led hikes and snowshoe treks for ALT and other organizations, and enjoys snowshoeing/hiking, drawing, camping, painting, reading, keeping a nature journal, and gardening.

Paula became a Maine Master Naturalist in 2015. The story of how she first came to see herself as an environmentalist dates back to her now-grown son Andy's childhood. Paula owned an old farm in Chesterville, where she lived in late spring and summer; there, she and Andy would regularly walk to a favorite place in the woods to sit under an old hemlock and read stories together. After a year's absence, they gathered their books and walked to their beloved spot, and what they saw "broke their hearts," Paula recalls. Acres and acres of trees had been clearcut, their favorite hemlock was gone, and no bird song could be heard. Andy looked around and said, "Mummy, where have all the trees gone?" No answer came, Paula remembers, only silence.

Forestry Stewardship Plans at Katherine Breton Preserve

This article about ALT's stewardship work at the Katherine Breton Memorial Preserve was written by forester Harold Burnett—owner of Two Trees Forestry in Winthrop—and published on his website. We have reprinted it with his permission and made slight edits for our ALT readers.

Androscoggin Land Trust was naturally thrilled when a wildlife lover bequeathed 102 acres of woods and fields in Lisbon to the land trust in 2007. But over time, the responsibility of honoring the wishes of the late Katherine Breton began to weigh on the organization. Her house needed repairs to become rentable, the property was mostly unvisited by the public, and Katherine's desire for ALT to manage for the benefit of wildlife was mostly being provided by a hands-off approach. The land trust decided it needed to take a more active role.

Plans were formulated to develop a recreational trail, upgrade the house, and see what could be done to perhaps combine those needs while improving the land's suitability for birds and other wildlife. ALT Treasurer Dana Little and former board member Doug Boyd, both avid birders, were particularly interested in how forestry might improve conditions for wildlife, an outcome they are certain Breton would have approved of. "She loved deer and turkey," explained Dana. "She had bird houses and bird feeders. This was really consistent with her wishes." He was eager to practice the kind of forestry promoted by Maine Audubon, whereby conditions for an entire suite of birds can be enhanced by focusing on priority species. "I got really excited by that," said Dana. And so the land trust hired forester Harold Burnett of Two Trees Forestry to update their management plan and make recommendations.

Timber harvesting has long been a recognized stewardship practice at ALT. The trust had initiated periodic timber harvests on 1,500 acres inherited from Verso Paper years ago and has conducted a variety of forestry interventions on other properties, explains Doug. "We've been willing to try different things," he said.

On a joint site visit, Harold noticed the property was already attractive to wildlife because of the varied conditions: commercially cultivated vegetable fields, stream-laced gullies, Androscoggin River frontage, field and woods edges, and a forest of varied species compositions. But he also noticed that the woods were uniformly shady. "What that property significantly lacked, from a bird and wildlife standpoint, were canopy layers. It was one tall canopy. There was no young stuff growing," explained Burnett.



ALT Board Treasurer Dana Little and former Board member Doug Boyd confer with Two Trees Forestry owner Harold Burnett at the Katherine Breton Memorial Preserve.

Two Trees recommended periodic timber harvests to bring partial sunlight into portions of the woods, in order to stimulate herbaceous growth on the forest floor and create multiple canopy layers, while not disturbing the environmentally sensitive brook-drained gullies. The wooded areas, away from the gullies, were then split into three potential harvest areas, with one scheduled for harvest every six to eight years, so as to stagger disturbance, provide nearby prime habitat for wildlife to move to as necessary during harvests, and earn periodic income to help maintain the property. With ALT Board approval, plans advanced for the initial 22-acre harvest.

That harvest, conducted last summer by Brown and Brown Trucking from Norway, removed about a third of the trees in harvested areas, leaving the woods more open in character. The new conditions won't produce wildlife abundance overnight, explained the forester, but early signs are encouraging. Dana heard the chipping trill of pine warblers all summer long, even during logging operations. He has also spotted or heard two kinds of thrushes, three kinds of hawks, a handful of warblers and grouse. "If I went in and seriously birded, I could probably identify 30 or 40 species," he said with satisfaction.

Going forward, ALT is working to secure funding to build trails at the preserve so others can enjoy the beauty of the property, and hopefully observe an abundance and variety of birds and wildlife. Harold credits the land trust with accomplishing multiple goals with its harvest and long-term strategy. "They walked the line between meeting the desires of the donor to benefit wildlife, and the financial realities and liabilities of her gift."

Throughout the winter and spring the ALT Board Directors made several visits to our lands.



An ALT board visit to Ambrose Farm in Turner on a frigid winter's day. Many thanks to landowner Steve Knudsen for his hospitality and education about the farm's history and future plans.



Winter walk through North Turner Conservation Area



Active timber harvest and demo from our forester, Steve Gettle and the logging crew. Our board and special guests were able to view many aspects of a harvest at Alden Hill.

Spring farm visit to Packard-Littlefield Farm



Pink Ladyslipper



Fringed Polygala



Yellow-throat Warbler



Angus Cattle

*Photos submitted by
Dana Little,
Wylie Mitchell,
and Aimee Dorval*



Historic Foundation

Upcoming events – Save the Date!

June 19th – 9-11am, 10th Annual River Clean Up, Festival Park- Auburn, ME

June 19th – 9am-3pm, Stream Explorers with Maine Audubon and YMCA, 167 Stetson Road Auburn, ME

June 30th – Paddle After Hours

July 17th – Paddle After Hours

July 25th – LA River Race, various locations in Lewiston/Auburn

August 1st – Paddle After Hours

October 27th – Fundraiser night at Lost Valley

November tbd – Annual meeting

Please check our website, social media, or sign up for e-news for more details and updates on events

Conservation is only possible with your support! It's been a very different year for ALT. Yet we are still doing good work to protect and steward land in our region. We're so thankful for our dedicated members. With COVID-19 we were unsure of how things would turn out. We pivoted and learned a lot about virtual gatherings and other necessary skills to maintain the organization.

You made it certain, that our lands do matter. We've heard and seen how precious these spaces are to the community. We're now about to finish this fiscal year still affected by Covid-19. We are working diligently to steward these places and protect even more. ***If walking at Sherwood Forest, Spruce Mountain, or meandering the banks of the Androscoggin River at David Rancourt Preserve inspired and uplifted you during the pandemic and beyond please make a generous gift before the end of our fiscal year on June 30th. We could really use the extra support!***

You can make a secure, online gift here or mail a donation to our office at PO Box 3145 Auburn, ME 04210 (remit envelope in this issue for your convenience)

Thank you for protecting and stewarding YOUR lands.

The Magic World of Vernal Pools

Have you ever been out for a walk through the woods on a spring day and noticed a pool of water created by melting snow and spring rain? Have you ever wondered about just what might be going on within it, and even crouched down to take a closer look? If so, you might have been rewarded with glimpses of a fascinating world of emerging life.

Called vernal pools (meaning related to springtime), these seasonal wetlands form in shallow depressions in the forest that fill with water from melted snow and spring rain, before gradually drying out in the warm temperatures of summer. These pools provide essential breeding habitat for the life cycle of several amphibians and other species because of their wet/dry cycle: for example, forest frogs can safely lay their eggs there because the pools can't support fish, the main predators of frog eggs. Many amphibian species are vernal pool specific: they must return to the specific vernal pool in which they were born to breed.



Here in Maine, there are four species, called “vernal pool indicator species,” that are completely dependent on vernal pools in order to survive and reproduce: wood frogs, spotted salamanders, blue-spotted salamanders and fairy shrimp. Some vernal pools with particularly valuable habitat are protected by law under the state’s Natural Resources Protection Act.

Wood Frogs

Wood Frogs are one of the first frog species to begin their short breeding season, usually in early March. Soon after they waken from winter, the frogs make their way to the vernal pool, where the males begin their familiar quack-like mating calls and the females lay as many as several thousand eggs that form a big gelatinous mass. After breeding, the adult frogs soon disappear to their upland leaf litter habitat, where they are seldom seen. Meanwhile, the newly-laid eggs gradually grow into tadpoles, as their tails shorten and little legs develop. By late summer, the tadpoles will have fully changed into frogs and then leave the vernal pool, which is usually dry by then.



(Don't confuse the quacking of the wood frog with the higher-pitched peep-peep chorus of spring peepers, tiny yellowish tree frogs that rarely more than an inch in length).

Spotted Salamander

Spotted Salamanders primarily live underground and coming out to feed on earthworms and insects at night. On rainy nights in spring, they venture the distance to a nearby vernal pool to breed—normally the same pool each year—in a gathering known as a “congress” of salamanders (a fun fact for word-lovers). The eggs are frequently laid in communal masses ranging from 30 to 250 eggs. As larvae, spotted salamanders have feathery gills and feed on small insects and worms, easily falling prey to turtles and large insects. But if they survive, spotted salamanders can be long-lived, with some known to live more than 30 years.



Fairy Shrimp

Fairy Shrimp are small, translucent crustaceans, tiny primitive lobsters, that spend their entire life cycle in the vernal pool. of eggs: thin-shelled summer eggs that hatch rapidly during the winter eggs (called cysts) that fall to the bottom of the vernal pool, the pool dries out, eventually to hatch the next spring—or even again fills. Because the eggs can withstand long periods of drying ensures the species survival over time.



***A wonderful resource about vernal pools for children, including coloring pages, can be found at:
http://www.vernalpools.me/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/OfPoolsAndPeople_ColoringBook.pdf***

In support of LD 676: An Act to Reclassify Part of the Androscoggin River to Class B

The following is an excerpt of Board President Jim Pross's testimony before the state legislature's Committee on Environment and Natural Resources in early May, supporting the proposed bill (LD 676) to upgrade the water quality classification of the lower Androscoggin River from Class C to B. The committee voted to "carry over" the bill to next year, to allow for treatment plant permitting renewals and further regulatory review. ALT appreciates the hard-working efforts of Grow L + A's River Working Group and other partners to obtain formal recognition of the greatly improved health of the lower Androscoggin in past decades, and we will continue to support this significant endeavor over the next year.

....

"As the committee members have no doubt seen, read, or heard, the Androscoggin Land Trust has played a vital role in bringing awareness and attention to the Androscoggin River Watershed in Androscoggin County. Our service area extends from Jay downstream to Lisbon, where we conserve and manage a total of over 5,000 acres of scenic and natural areas that have environmental, cultural, and recreational value to the communities we serve. Many of our conserved areas within the Androscoggin River Watershed are conserved to protect the water quality of the river. By protecting environmentally sensitive bogs, ponds, and upland waterways, we are working to improve the future health of the Androscoggin River. LD 676 is essential to the future health of the River and the Androscoggin Land Trust strongly supports this important legislation.

ALT works with and is embraced by the business communities in the main population centers that we work in, including Lewiston and Auburn. We provide tangible benefits to the communities we serve by helping to create and maintain special places where people can enjoy the outdoors. While our work is not solely focused on the Androscoggin River, the river's health is central to our mission and our work. We strive to connect people to the river for purposes of outdoor recreation, including fishing, paddling, and hiking along its shores. Nowhere is this more visible than in downtown Lewiston/Auburn where we host an annual river race on the Androscoggin River, week night paddle events in the summer time, and other programming that engages youth on the River. It sends a powerful message about the role that the

Androscoggin River plays in our communities when you see 60 people in the middle of the River, in multicolored kayaks and canoes eagerly awaiting the starting gun of our River Race. When you see 20 kayaks and canoes, with families out on the River on a sunny summer night in August, it sends the message that the people who live in L/A want a healthy and clean River to recreate in.

Similarly, through our Learn to Fish program, which we have hosted for years with the support of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, we teach groups of underserved children how to fish, exposing many of them for the first time to the excitement of fishing on the banks of the Androscoggin. They learn and see that the river is a natural resource for everyone to enjoy. These types of experiences help to cultivate future generations of environmental stewards who learn to appreciate the river as a place that we can all share and use. ALT also organizes a large river clean-up event, where we annually bring together 50-100 volunteers at the beginning of each summer to pick litter off of the riverbanks so that the shores of the Androscoggin River are clean for those children, and for the visitors who come and enjoy Auburn's Riverwalk, or the nearby Barker Mill Trail on a summer afternoon.

...

All of these programs and efforts along the River are designed to bring people together around the river that runs through our communities. When people are exposed to the beauty of the special scenic and natural areas that we protect, they come to place value on the river. They view it as a special natural resource, worthy of protection, and central to the future of L/A's economic health. While non-profit organizations like ours can do our part to make our downtowns more attractive places for investment, we need the State to do its part to ensure that the waters of the Androscoggin are as clean as possible, which will have positive ripple effects for community and economic development and on land values in Androscoggin County. ... ALT is proud to partner with other organizations in our communities to highlight and feature the River as a place that we can all share and learn from."



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The Androscoggin Land Trust is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) membership-supported organization dedicated to protecting, through land conservation and stewardship, the important natural areas, traditional landscapes, and outdoor experience in the Androscoggin River watershed. We currently conserve approximately 5,000 acres of land including over ten miles of riverfront along the Androscoggin River.

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Our thanks to the generous sponsors of ALT



Ask us about our adopt a trail program, volunteer trail work days or property monitoring opportunities! Please contact us at: (207) 782-2302 or info@androscogginlandtrust.org



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