

SPRING 2017

Harris Hearsay

THE HARRIS CENTER FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Hancock, New Hampshire



Baltimore Oriole photo: Meade Cadot



Our Mission

A member supported nonprofit organization, the Harris Center for Conservation Education is dedicated to promoting understanding and respect for our natural environment through education of all ages, direct protection and exemplary stewardship of the region's natural resources, conservation research, and programs that encourage active participation in the great outdoors.

CONTACT us at:

(603) 525-3394

jacobs@harriscenter.org

VISIT us at:

83 King's Highway, Hancock, NH 03449

harriscenter.org

In this issue...

Love Small

Land Conservation News
88 Acres Protected in Stoddard

Wells Memorial School
Harrisville Watershed Study

Researching Redbacks

You can help ensure a grand future for the Monadnock Region by naming the Harris Center as a beneficiary in your will or estate plan. Anyone can make a bequest, and no amount is too small. For more information, contact Jeremy Wilson at (603) 525-3394 or wilson@harriscenter.org.

Our warmest thanks go out to everyone who has made a donation to the Harris Center's Annual Fund or to our Membership drive. If you've yet to give, we hope you'll reflect on the widespread benefit to all as you consider making a contribution. If you'd like to make your donation online, please visit our website. For other ways to donate, please contact Diana at (603) 525-3394 or jacobs@harriscenter.org. We appreciate your support!

harriscenter.org

A wood frog makes its way across North Lincoln Street (Keene, NH) with the help of the Salamander Crossing Brigades on April 6, 2017.

photo: Brett Amy Thelen



I fell in love last spring. It happened in an instant.

One late night, I went up to the garden. Something small was eating the carrot greens just as they were pressing their way out of the soft June ground. I was supposed to squish the offender. Armed with work gloves and my headlamp, I kneeled at the edge of the garden bed, searching the tiny carrot tenders. A glistening track of silver caught my eye, sparkling in my lamplight. It shimmered, leading me through a tangle of eaten vegetables. And then it happened.

I fell in love with a snail.

A small brown snail, bending my garden greens, engulfing my seedlings. I slipped off my gloves and picked up the penny-sized creature. Cradling it in my palm, I held my breath, waiting for it to feel brave enough to peek out from its spiraled shell. Slowly, so slowly, I felt the snail's cool foot slide out against my skin. I watched as it lifted its long, antennae-like tentacles. At the tip of each tentacle sat an eye, taking me in. On that warm June night, I sat in the garden holding that tiny snail and, I did, I fell in love with it.

It isn't so unusual for some small, unsuspecting creature to capture my heart. Toads, bumble bees, salamanders, red velvet mites, star-nosed moles, woolly bear caterpillars, pink-eyed

grass, trailing arbutus. Oh, and caddisflies. I am so smitten by these little charmers.


This is why I get along so well with the children I teach. We stop and notice. We lean into the things we find. Our eyes are open, our hands outstretched. Once I watched a young boy encounter a milkweed tussock moth caterpillar. He was holding it up to his nose and sniffing it. He said, "It smells just like me when I've been outside all day." Of course, I had to sniff it too. He was right.

Watch a young child. They notice the tiny, common strands that connect us to this world, and to each other. After teaching a group of second graders about red wiggler worms, one

young girl wanted to keep her worm with her during snack. She said, "I have some lettuce and I want to share it with my worm. We both love lettuce."

The small things in nature – the things we can hold, touch, or lay down next to and watch, closely – these are the things that open our hearts as children. These are what remind us of our connection to one another. When we stretch out a gentle finger in invitation to the snail, the worm, the caterpillar, the caddisfly, we know – even from, and perhaps *especially* from, a young age – that we are both alive in this one moment, together. 🐌

photo: Susie Spikol Faber



love small

by Susie Spikol Faber,
Teacher/Naturalist and
Community Programs Coordinator



This newly protected parcel includes the foundations of an enormous barn, seen here with an adult for scale. photo: Russ Cobb

LAND CONSERVATION NEWS

by Jeremy Wilson, Executive Director

88 Acres Protected in Stoddard

We're delighted to announce that the Harris Center recently purchased an additional 88 acres at Robb Reservoir in Stoddard. The purchase was comprised of two parcels, both of which connect to our existing 1,670-acre Robb Reservoir lands, which are in turn part of a 14,000-acre corridor of contiguous protected lands extending from Hancock through Antrim and into Stoddard. Since 1980, the Harris Center has focused our land protection efforts on large conservation clusters like these in order to provide habitat for far-ranging wildlife (...and far-ranging people!)

With the completion of this project, the entire shoreline of Robb Reservoir is now permanently protected from development. The smaller of the two parcels (15 acres) contains a section of Robb Reservoir shoreline, along with the original stone foundations of the Robb family's residence and enormous barn, and the remains of several mills. The Robb family arrived in Stoddard in 1770, originally haying the meadow that would become Robb Reservoir. In 1800, they built a dam, flooding the meadow, to power the saw and grist mills they owned and operated. By 1833, they were producing rakes and clothespins. Christopher Robb, a great grandson of the original Robb settlers, began operating a larger mill north of the Reservoir in 1853, in an area known as Cherry Valley. At its peak, his Stoddard Lumber Company employed more than 75 people, using

Continued on next page...



Robb Reservoir provides outstanding recreational opportunities, on both land and water.

top photo: Jeremy Wilson bottom photo: Russ Cobb

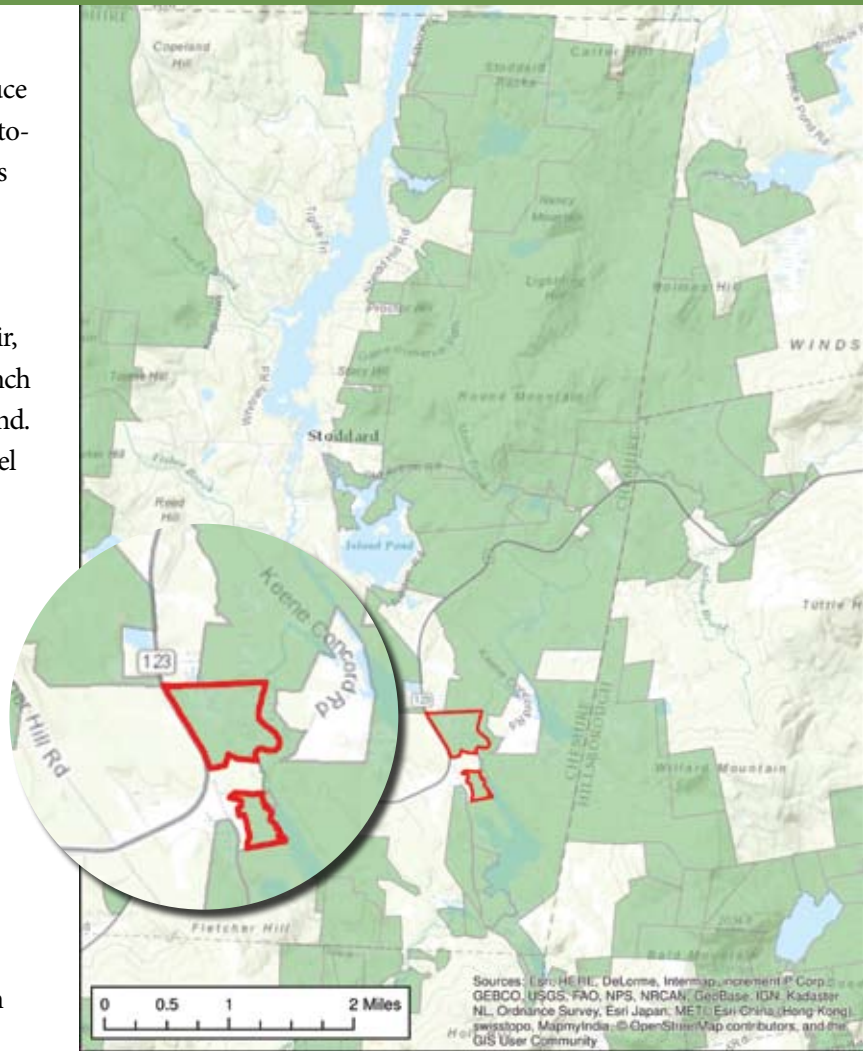
LAND CONSERVATION NEWS *continued*

water flowing from Highland Lake and Island Pond to produce wooden wares like pails, spools, knobs, tubs, and pegs. Christopher Robb was an early proponent of forest sustainability. His company pamphlet asked, “*Why should not the forest have as intelligent care and treatment as the wheat field, the vineyard, or the orchard?*”

The second parcel (73 acres) lies to the north of the Reservoir, and includes a half-mile of river frontage along the North Branch of the Contoocook River, along with 50 acres of forested wetland. According to the Charles L. Peirce maps of Stoddard, this parcel also includes the site of a former glass factory, operated in the 1840s by Joseph Foster and Isaac Duncan. Stoddard glass was well known for its deep amber and green hues, an artifact of the mineral content of Stoddard sands.

The Harris Center purchased both parcels from Charles Chandler and Ruth Athearn, dedicated stewards of the woods and trails on their family’s land for many decades. They even held on to the land through the 1990s, an era when an 82-lot housing development was planned for the banks of Robb Reservoir.

This exciting conservation project was made possible with generous support from Friends of the SuperSanctuary. A huge thank you to them for helping to preserve the past – and craft an extraordinary future – for the Monadnock Region! ➔



▲ The newly protected lands fill in gaps in a 14,000-acre corridor of conserved land.

HARRIS CENTER IN THE SCHOOLS

Wells Memorial School Students Conduct Study of Harrisville Watersheds

By Jenna Spear, Teacher/Naturalist



April began with snow and ended with warm sun. In between the two, I worked with Claudia Dery’s 5th and 6th grade class at Wells Memorial School, studying the watersheds of Harrisville. We began by poring over topographic maps, decoding the locations of Harrisville’s highest hills and lowest valleys.

The students quickly noticed that water on the east side of Harrisville travels through various brooks and streams before ending up in the Contoocook River. On the west side, water eventually flows to the Ashuelot River.

Our study then took us outside to Russell Reservoir, where we spent a chilly morning sampling for macroinvertebrates. These fascinating critters are important indicators of water quality, as some are more sensitive to pollution than others. After tallying our data, we were happy to discover that Russell Reservoir is home to many mayfly nymphs and caddisfly larvae – both indicators of healthy aquatic ecosystems! ➔

▲ Wells Memorial School students sample for macroinvertebrates at Russell Reservoir in Harrisville.

photos: Claudia Dery

RESEARCHING REDBACK

by Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director

Last fall, a team of salamander-loving Harris Center staff and volunteers installed six study plots in the woods near the Harris Center as part of the Salamander Population Adaptation Research Collaboration Network (SPARCnet), a U.S. Geological Survey-led research effort aimed at understanding the effects of climate change and land use on woodland salamander populations. Each plot consists of 50 small wooden “coverboards” that appeal to woodland amphibians – especially redback salamanders (*Plethodon cinereus*) – as sources of shelter.

Starting this spring, we’ll be working with an array of students to monitor the coverboards. By keeping track of the salamanders found under each board, we can begin to get a sense for the abundance and distribution of redback salamanders in the Harris Center woods, and compare our findings to 25 other SPARCnet sites from Virginia to Ontario. On our first-ever sampling day this April, we found 45 salamanders (!) along with a variety of slugs, spiders, and other denizens of the dank. 🐸

Want to learn more?

Brett welcomes all salamander-related questions at thelen@harriscenter.org or (603) 358-2065.



Installing the Survey Plots (1,2,3) In November 2016, we installed six salamander study plots in the woods near the Harris Center, as part of the Salamander Population Adaptation Research Collaboration Network (SPARCnet). Each plot is comprised of 50 wooden coverboards that will be monitored in spring and fall by students and citizen scientists.

CKS



Checking the Coverboards (4) Conducting surveys involves gently lifting each coverboard and recording what we find beneath it; we also record weather data for each visit.

Success! (5, 6) On our first monitoring day, we found redbacked salamanders in every plot – 45 salamanders in all! The abundance of these salamanders points to their important role in the food web of New England forests.