HMCA Activities Update

by Diana Todd

for sharing at the September 2018 meeting of the HPC

A summary of what HMCA has been doing in the interval since the last submission in early July, 2018.

* July 6. The Financial Advisory Committee met with Elisabeth Marx, Senior Philanthropic Advisor for Southwestern Vermont, of the Vermont Community Foundation to learn about the potential for investing conservation funds in the VCF by 501(c)3 organizations.
* July 7. Bob Anderson upgraded the Grant Rd kiosk, adding informative posters about the Bishop Farm site, turkey vultures, and some nice routed wooden signs welcoming hikers.
* July 10. Two patches of invasive Japanese Knotweed on Old Hogback Road were found and treated (cut and stumps dabbed with herbicide)
* July 12. A clump of tree-size buckthorns was found on Tower Trail near top of GWW. On Aug 5 a small group of HMCA volunteers cut it down, treated the stumps, bundled the berry-laden branches in black plastic for on-site solar-powered destruction, and combed the vicinity uprooting hundreds of seedlings.
* Late July. Bob Anderson brought his tractor and brush hog to the Conservation Area and mowed some of the trails that were getting overgrown with ferns and blackberries.
* Aug 4. The Insect Safari organized by the Cambridge Entomological Club and the Vermont Entomological Society featured two sessions open to the public, one for day-time insects and one for night-timers. The club did not end up needing to camp on-site after all, but appreciated having the option available. They did not take their pickup truck with the generator up the Tower Trail as originally planned, because the trail was quite muddy from all the rainy weather. They set up their night-time generator-powered equipment near the parking lot.
* August 14. The Education Committee met and is planning to build a page to add to the web site.
* Mid-August. The Financial Advisory Committee reported to the Board on research they have been doing on HMCA’s potential need for funding in the future, and ways to raise funds and to invest them.
* Aug 15. The Summer Meeting featured Scott Darling of VT Fish & Wildlife speaking on “Moose in Vermont, Tiny Threats to Our Biggest Mammals.” About 60 people attended. Scott was an excellent speaker, and he presented distressing details about the slump in Vermont’s moose population over the last decade, and the reasons behind it. Scott was very impressed with how well organized the HMCA meeting was. VT F&W has recently learned that public presentations like this are the second-most frequently cited way that Vermonters learn about VT F&W programs, so they are increasingly motivated to have their staff do presentations like this. The advantage for HMCA is that they do the presentations for free.
* Aug 23. Bob Anderson and Jerry Lundsted restructured the kiosk at the Mt. Olga summit on Molly Stark State Park land. Bob developed the plan for lowering the height of the kiosk and anchoring it better against winter winds. The Park provided the materials. Bob and Jerry did the work, and also repaired the kiosk roof. This work was a good-neighbor donation of smarts and muscle and machinery use to the Park.
* Aug 25. Allison Turner led a well-attended (22 people) Wildflower Walk where she not only identified the plants, but gave information about potential medicinal uses for them. On the lower Tower Trail, a large buckthorn was found, this one shrub-sized. We also found two Spotted Knapweed plants, another invasive, along the edge of the field behind the distillery. That isn’t Conservation Area land, but Ed Metcalfe has given us permission to uproot or otherwise destroy these plants.
* Aug 28. An Invasives Patrol (Jack, Diana) tackled the buckthorn and knapweed, and did a follow-up treatment on the Japanese Knotweed that is growing along the Old Hogback Road.
* Nancy Anderson is planning a display for the Marlboro Fair on Sept 15.
* Aug 28. Charley Eiseman reported the following regarding the Biodiversity Inventory: *“I was just at Hogback yesterday, working on some mapping odds and ends.  It will probably take me a few more days to get to them all. Right now I'm working on going through all my field notes and getting the species lists and mapping as complete as possible, so I can make the best possible use of my remaining field time."*
* The average number of visits (daily) to the web site, calculated for the May 1 - Aug 27 period, is 43, the highest level we have ever reached.