HMCA Activities Update

by Diana Todd

for sharing at the September 2020 meeting of the HPC

A summary of what HMCA has been doing in the interval since the last report in early July 2020.

* In late July, a group of HMCA Directors worked to control the highly invasive plant Wild Parsnip which is growing on both sides of Route 9 where it bisects the conservation area. They snipped and bagged the seed heads, and uprooted the mature plants. This is the second year of the effort to control this invasive. Wild Parsnip is spread primarily through scattering of the seeds by mowing machines, so it is important to remove the seed heads before they mature. We were almost too late. Some seed heads had already ripened and shattered. Start earlier next year! This plant doesn’t send up a flowering stalk until its second year of growth (or even later). The immature plants are very difficult to uproot, while those with flowering stalks come up easily. The long term plan is to snip seed heads and uproot mature plants every year until the population is reduced. We are working both sides of Route 9 along the entire length of the conservation area and a bit beyond on both sides, within the state highway right-of-way. We have not found any Wild Parsnip (yet) that is not right along the highway.
* Bob Anderson brought his tractor to the mountain and mowed several trails, including the area around the Quonset Hut at the base of the former ski area.
* Although HMCA will not be hosting any public walks/talks on the mountain this fall, we helped Eric Slayton spread the word about his bird-banding project that he is conducting on Hogback. He is recruiting volunteers to help him band birds daily from mid-September through October, during the fall songbird migration.
* Eric Slayton recommended Hogback as the site of a MOTUS antenna. This network of antennas, being organized by NH Audubon, will be able to track the locations of birds that have been netted and equipped with special sensors. HMCA shared information about the Facilities Use Agreement with the project director, and consulted Jennifer Garrett at Vermont Land Trust to see if installing an antenna would run afoul of any of the restrictions detailed in the conservation easement held by VLT. (Permanent new construction is not allowed. The antenna would be up for at least 5 years, with an option to renew several times, so it tips into a gray area.) HMCA and HPC have been invited to participate in an online meeting later this month (date TBA) to learn more about the project. Eric Slayton accompanied a representative from the MOTUS project on a tour of the Hogback area. It seems likely that their first choice for locating the antenna will be to install it on the fire tower or communications tower on the summit of Mount Olga, just over our border in Molly Stark State Park.
* HMCA has continued to provide trail maps at the kiosks. Map usage indicates that the trails have been very popular this summer. No maintenance problems have been reported.