



Hogback Mountain
Conservation Association

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Newsletter #27 - June 2015

Hogback Mountain Newsletter

Summer at Hogback

Check out the great programs and activities planned for this summer at Hogback and mark your calendar. Other programs may be added as time permits and The Newsletter will keep you updated. Also, please be sure to check out the Hogback Facebook page as well as our website for other current information at hogbackvt.org.

Change of email address note: HMCA has recently adopted a new email address for the organization: hogbackvt@gmail.com. This newsletter came to you from that new email account. If you have any of our old email addresses listed in your address book, please delete them and replace them with the new one. (Note, one of our old addresses was also a gmail account starting with the word hogback.)

Ferns of Hogback

FERNS were among the first plants to solve the challenges of terrestrial life. Enjoy a look at how they've done it with BEEC naturalist Patti Smith.

Both fern events are co-sponsored by the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center and the HMCA.

Ferns of Fields and Wetlands
Saturday, July 18 at 3 pm (Free!)



We will begin with an introduction to the ferns of our region, their curious life cycles, and the key characteristics that can be used to identify fern species. We will then take an amble along the trails

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of the old ski area to look for the ferns that grow in sunny and damp places, such as bracken fern, sensitive fern, marsh fern and royal fern.

Article by Patti Smith

*Meet in the field behind the white A-frame building on Route 9 just west of the gift shop.
Parking in the big lot north of Route 9.*

Forest Ferns

Saturday, July 25 at 3 pm (Free!)

Begin with a refresher on fern identification, and a sampler of the common forest ferns of our region. We will then head out on the wooded trails of Hogback to identify and admire the forest ferns, including New York, hay-scented, lady, and the wood ferns. The walk will be hilly, but the pace will be slow.

Article by Patti Smith

Meet in the big parking area north of Route 9, west of the former Skyline Restaurant.

Hogback Day 2015

“Hey guys I just saw a tadpole blow a bubble!”

Chilly wind on May 20th added to the excitement of this year’s Hogback Day, an annual school-wide event for Marlboro Elementary School. The morning featured guided hikes and activities led by community members and teachers, offering students a wide variety of choices for exploring the forest, meadows and trails. Wind played an active role in the morning, whipping parachutes made from natural materials off the fire tower and snapping brown-paper kites off their lines. “The wind blew us away, literally and figuratively,” commented Ron LaBrusciano, facilitator of the ever-popular kite-making activity.

Expeditions into the forest featured looking for porcupines and other wildlife, exploring archeology, and trailblazing. Quieter adventures included nature journaling, wilderness games, and vernal pool exploration, which led to the surprising discovery of one student: “Hey guys I just saw a tadpole blow a bubble!” Hogback Day highlights the many different ways in which Marlboro Elementary School and Hogback Mountain Conservation Association collaborate to engage students in celebrating the natural and cultural resources of their town forest.





Special thanks to the community members who volunteer to share their passion and expertise with students, and to HMCA for providing stipends to support the day: Lexi Atsalis-Gogel, Rachel Boyden, Mike Clough, Tim Hayes, David Holzapfel, Patrick Johnson, Ron LaBrusciano, Dan MacArthur, Mike Purcell, Patti Smith, and Megan Wright.

Tom Wessels to Speak at HMCA Summer Meeting

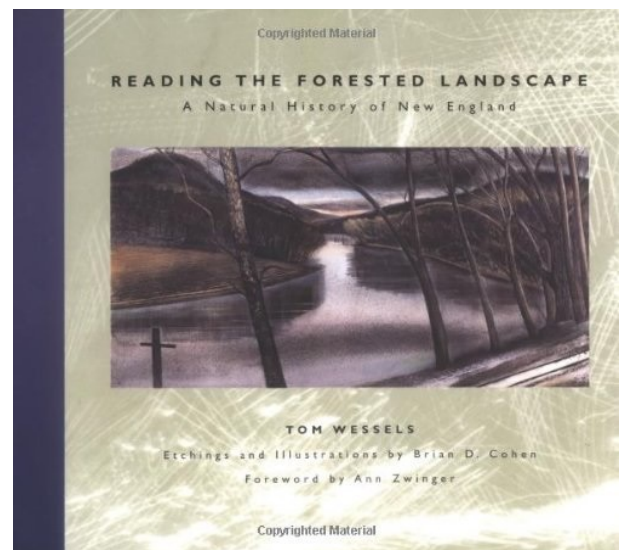
Tom Wessels will be the featured speaker at two HMCA events on Sunday afternoon, August 9. The first (the Talk) will be a slide show about the concepts in his well-known book, “Reading the Forested Landscape.” The second (the Walk) will be a walk through the woods in the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area. Participation for the Walk will be limited to 30 people, signed up in advance on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you’re a fan of Tom Wessels, stop reading and sign up right now by emailing HMCA at hogbackvt@gmail.com. The Talk will be open to the public.

Here are the details: Tom Wessels, a self-described “terrestrial ecologist,” is Professor Emeritus at Antioch University. He can look at a forest and see stories



upon stories:
human history,
the passage of
wildlife,
interactions

between plants, things happening in the soil and the air. And he can tell those stories like a master: engrossing, stimulating, and challenging the listener. His book “Reading the Forested Landscape,” which will be the basis of his talk on August 9, reads almost like a series of mystery stories, with Tom as the sleuth who uncovers the



hidden past of a piece of land simply by observing the plants, the rocks, the shape of the terrain. HMCA is proud to have Tom as the featured speaker for our Summer Meeting, which we hope will be the first of an annual series.

The Summer Meeting (and the Talk) will be held at 1:00 pm on Sunday, August 9, at Memorial Hall in Wilmington. There is no registration or admittance fee, but donations will be accepted. See driving/parking directions at the end of this article. We'll have a 5-minute welcome and review of what the Hogback Mountain Conservation Association has planned for the coming season, then we'll turn the floor over to Tom Wessels. Tom will also be available before the meeting to autograph copies of his books. He'll have some available for sale in case you don't already own your own copy.

After the slide show, those who have signed up for the Walk will drive to Hogback and reconvene in the big parking lot north of Route 9. The Walk will not cover a great distance, nor will it be on challenging terrain, but it may last about an hour-and-a-half to two hours. We'll be stopping frequently to look at items of interest that Tom sees, and we'll be learning how to see and understand these types of things ourselves. The Walk will end at 5:00. We can't predict the exact start time; it will be after the Talk, once the 30 participants have reconvened at Hogback.

Article by Diana Todd

Directions to Memorial Hall, 14 West Main Street, Wilmington, VT: Memorial Hall is on the south side of Route 9 west of the stoplights in the center of town. It's just past the Crafts Inn, and set a little further back from the road than the Inn is, so it's easy to overlook. It's a two-story building with the gable end facing the road, with dark shingle siding and white trim. There is public parking behind the building, but please don't park in the parking lot owned by the Inn. Additional parking is available in the public lots just across the river.



Mushrooms at Hogback

Sunday, September 20 from 2 - 4:30

Early autumn is a good time for finding fungi, including such edibles as lobster mushrooms, oyster mushrooms, hen of the woods (maitake), black trumpets, and hedgehog mushrooms. Justin Garner will be our guide as we explore the woods in quest of mushrooms. Justin has a long-standing interest in these often neglected and misunderstood life forms, and has pursued education in botany, plant chemistry, and for good measure human physiology and biochemistry, and is thus prepared to teach about the nourishing, medicinal, and toxic properties of our diverse fungi.

With luck, we will find some of the tasty edibles and perhaps some with medicinal attributes. Bring a bag or basket for collecting mushrooms and a mushroom knife or small pocketknife. Be prepared for off-trail hiking in wooded terrain.

Co-sponsored by the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center and Hogback Mountain Conservation Association.

Article by Patti Smith

Meet in the big parking area north of Route 9, west of the former Skyline Restaurant.

Wildlife Festival at Hogback

Sunday, September 6

Be sure to include the annual Wildlife Festival at Hogback, hosted by the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum on your summer calendar. It's being held this year on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend, Sept. 6. And it's always a popular day for families and kids with lots to see and do for everyone.

HMCA will be offering guided hikes on the mountain as part of the Festival. More detail will be posted in an upcoming Newsletter. Also check our website (hogbackvt.org) or the museum's website at (vermontmuseum.org) for more information as it becomes available.

Lyme Disease Research Project Coming to Hogback

When Lyndon State College student Connor Hunt joined the college's Natural Sciences research team that is investigating Lyme Disease vectors, he knew just the spot to use in studying whether there is a correlation between elevation and the presence of Lyme Disease. Hogback! Connor, who grew up in Wilmington, knew that Mount Olga in the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area is one of the most easily accessible high spots on the spine of the Green Mountains in southern Vermont.

You might notice some signs high on Tower Trail this year (and in coming years) explaining the temporary markings and pieces of equipment that will be used in the study. Connor will be setting out live-catch traps to capture not ticks, and not deer, but mice. Most people know that Lyme Disease is carried to humans by deer ticks. Many people aren't aware, though, that white-footed mice are a key vector in the transmission of Lyme Disease.



The traps will be baited at dusk with an oatmeal-based lure, and then picked up again at dawn. Any mice that are caught will be inspected for ticks, and a tiny tissue sample will be taken. Then the mice will be released at the same spot where they were captured. The tissue sample will be tested for Lyme Disease. Interestingly, although Lyme Disease can be present in mice, it doesn't make them sick.

Data from Hogback will be added to data from other sites throughout the state. Researchers will then be able to look for correlations in the data. Where are the hot spots? What are their common factors? Are mice more likely to be infected in some types of habitats than others? Does Lyme presence vary with elevation? And will any of these correlations change over time? Stay tuned. We'll be interested in reading about the findings of this research team.

Article by Diana Todd

The Great White Way

Phase two of the Early Successional Habitat

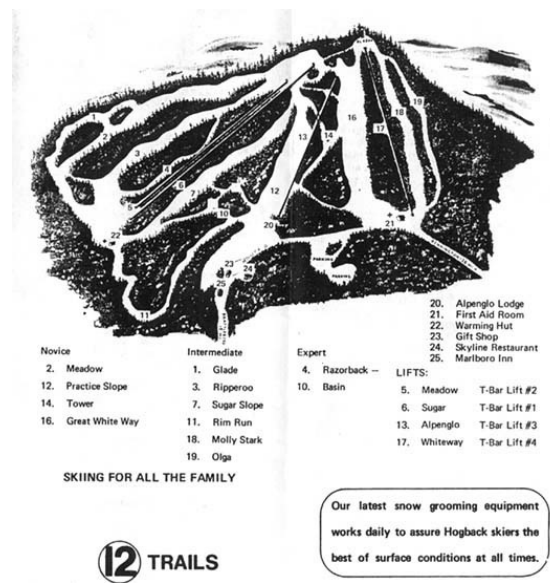
When you hear the name “the Great White Way” you may think of the turn-of-the-century nickname for the stretch of Broadway in Manhattan that encompassed the theater district, so named for the bright nighttime illumination of those newfangled incandescent lamps. But for those who skied at Hogback, “the Great White Way” conjures up images of a lovely wide-open expanse of snow – the beginner slope on the north side of the mountain that was serviced by the poma lift.

That's the slope we'll be reopening this fall as Phase Two of the Early Successional Habitat (ESH) project. By cutting back the vegetation and letting it regrow, we're increasing the variety of habitat types on the mountain, and generating some of the dense young thickets that are vital to many species of birds, including the American woodcock. Other types of wildlife also thrive in this kind of fresh regrowth. A side benefit of the project is that humans get to enjoy the openings as well. Hikers and snowshoers will enjoy the vistas that are opened up. (More athletic souls might enjoy skiing down the re-opened slope.)

Come fall we'll be starting the work, relying on volunteers to help with the cutting and hauling. In the meantime, we're rejuvenating the ESH committee. This group does things like

- find and mark the edges of the former ski slope before work begins
- identify and mark trees to be retained, like wild apples and cherries
- document the project with photographs
- use GPS to track the progress of the work

If you'd like to be part of the ESH committee, contact us at hogbackvt@gmail.com.



Article by Diana Todd

New Director Named to HMCA Board: Amanda Whiting

The Board welcomes a new Director: Amanda Whiting. Those of you who have been on the mountain helping with the Early Successional Habitat project in the past two years have probably met her, since she came to almost every ESH event in 2013 and she was at all of them in 2014! This past spring she helped with the installation of the antenna on Hogback that is being used by UMass researchers to track songbird migration patterns.

Amanda is a graduate of Marlboro College. She lives in Brattleboro and works as the Event Manager at the Brattleboro Art Museum. We're looking forward to having her input as we develop new projects in the coming years. Welcome, Amanda!



Wow, Talk About A Haircut!

We were walking along a trail at Hogback on one of those cloudy, misty days in early June and spotted this fellow hastily lumbering down a small, dead striped maple tree, obviously wanting to get away and possibly embarrassed by an obvious and significant loss of hair. Quills really, since they're made of keratin, the same protein found in hair.

And that's what made this porcupine so interesting. We emailed this picture to Mike Clough at the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum for more possible information. Mike's guess was a serious confrontation with another animal, (probably not a fisher - the porcupine usually loses those confrontations). He sent us a picture link of what might have been a Jack Terrier, whose head was so completely encased in quills it was virtually unrecognizable. Quite hard to look at that poor dog.



Fortunately this fellow's quills should grow back in a few weeks.

Photo and article by Bob Anderson

