

great places in the granite state

The membership newsletter of the
New Hampshire Chapter
SPRING 2009



Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

A Family Affair: Protecting Schoodac Brook

Drive down Schoodac Road in Warner on Halloween night and you'll be in for a treat. Glowing in the darkness will be the many silly and scary faces of hundreds of jack-o-lanterns, assembled in row after row across a rambling stretch of farmland. The flickering candlelight creates a haunting yet beautiful scene that for many marks the height of the fall season. These repurposed pumpkins are carved by family, friends, neighbors and community members during the yearly Pumpkin Festival at the Courser Family Farm. The tradition has been going on for many years and is just one of several ways in which the Coursers have maintained a strong connection to people and nature from generation to generation. The family has roots here going back to the 1780s; their great-great grandfather, William B. Courser, accumulated land in the Schoodac Brook watershed in the 1830s. Nowadays, brothers Jerry and Tim tap trees and make maple syrup the old fashioned way in their sugar shack. Sister Rebecca tends the farm stand and organic vegetable garden along with her husband, Richard.

Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future

While countless family farms have been lost over the years, the Coursers have successfully maintained their working farm and forestry lifestyle – one that they would like to pass on to future generations. Their commitment to the land and people they love was the impetus behind the desire to protect the farm from being forever changed by possible development and why they decided to partner with the

Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust and The Nature Conservancy to get the job done.

For the past four years, The Nature Conservancy and Ausbon Sargent have worked in partnership to advance protection of the Schoodac Brook watershed. The area harbors a remarkable combination of stream-side wetlands, ponds, and productive working farm and forest lands that provide high quality habitat for several wildlife species of conservation concern, as documented in the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan.

In December 2008, Ausbon Sargent and the Conservancy announced the protection of 440 acres of critical wetlands and wildlife habitat along Schoodac and Knights Meadow Brooks. Add these to the 455 acres of Courser lands already protected by conservation easement during two earlier phases of the project and the salamanders, turtles, migratory birds and other wildlife that live here can breathe a little easier too.

Under the recently completed project, the Courser Family Trust (which consists of William's four great-great grandchildren) conveyed the three conservation easements to Ausbon Sargent. All three parcels were highlighted as conservation priorities in a scientifically-based watershed conservation plan produced by The Nature Conservancy in 2002. As with the previous conservation easements, the recent agreement allows the Coursers to continue to own the land and manage it for agriculture and sustainable forestry, but prevents development, subdivision and other activities

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...the long view

In thumbing through the early drafts of this newsletter I thought I saw a theme emerging of "farms" - two here in New Hampshire and one in Nicaragua. Now that I'm looking at the whole newsletter, though, I think that there's a more fundamental underlying theme that is particularly significant at this moment in time: the importance of taking the long view. That two families are in a position today to conserve their family farms is a testament to their resilience and resolve in keeping the farm together against many odds over the decades. Look also to the resilience of an institution like the Balsams, a hotel that recalls an era long past yet dedicates itself to the future by committing to sustainable business practices and supporting the conservation work of this chapter. In "People Make It Happen" we meet Stuart Lewis, a man who not only dedicates himself to the stewardship of a place that matters today, but has included the Conservancy in his estate planning - the ultimate "long view."

There is no denying that the economic crisis we're in today is real and is impacting our work, our members and mankind worldwide. It could also impact the natural world in ways that last far longer than the crisis itself. Here is where our challenge is perhaps greatest - to find a way to adequately respond to the crisis of the day, yet still take into account the long view of the world our children will inherit from us. Your rising to this challenge speaks volumes and I'm so grateful to our many members and partners who continue to support our work. I promise that we'll do all we must do to stay strong and resilient through these challenging times.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Daryl Burtnett".

Daryl Burtnett, State Director

People Make It Happen: Stuart & Louise Lewis

Stuart and Louise Lewis recently put up a purple martin house behind their home in Florida, where they spend the winter months. "It's vacant now," notes Stu. "But the young ones will need a place to live when they return for the first time and we wanted to give them the real estate."

Whether it be for people or nature, Stu is always thinking of the next generation. He and Louise enjoy involving their grandchildren in their outdoor hobbies - birding, fishing and identifying plants and animals where ever they may be. They are especially fond of Hurlbert Swamp in northern New Hampshire and try to get up there often as part of their travels. "We need places to do these things," he says. "Preserving land is what benefits us, our grandchildren and those coming after us. We seek out TNC preserves on all of our trips!"

Stu and Louise have supported conservation and the Conservancy's efforts for over 20 years. Modest members, the relationship strengthened after TNC assisted in the sale of Stu's coastal Maine property to the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. "The Conservancy makes deals, not waves," Stu says. "They partner with people and work with them to achieve an end result that works for everyone. They work with other organizations to help raise money and are not afraid to let them take over the lead."

Since then, Stu has become involved with the New Hampshire Chapter as a volunteer. Living in Dover, he helps in monitoring conservation easements around Great Bay. He also participates in surveying native plants, birds and invasive species at the Lubberland Creek Preserve. He even had a hand in identifying possible routes for the Sweet Trail, which links Durham to the bay.

Wanting to do more in the present in a way that would support the future, Stu and Louise became members of the Legacy Club by giving charitable gift annuities. "We always planned to have TNC in our will," remarks Stu. "But this gave us a way to give early and have the money invested to benefit all. It was a good investment that made sense for both us and the Conservancy."

Both Louise and Stu are avid supporters of their local Audubon chapter. Stu is the vice president as well as a conservation officer and Louise helps with outreach and education. Also near and dear to their hearts is "Florida Forever," the state's leading land acquisition program. The Nature Conservancy, however, remains at the top of their list.

"TNC has the where-with-all to protect large tracts of land. And sensitive lands as well. The goal to expand around the world to protect 10% of all habitat types is incredible," Stu says. "The Conservancy meets my goals of what I'd like an environmental organization to do."



Louise and Stu Lewis (and the purple martin house) birding near their Florida home. *Stuart Lewis, photo.*

The Business of Nature in New Hampshire Partnering in Our Future

The Nature Conservancy of New Hampshire and The Balsams Grand Resort Hotel, a historic destination resort managed by global hospitality leader Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts, are proud to announce an innovative and groundbreaking partnership to preserve the natural communities of New Hampshire and the Great North Woods. This partnership is unprecedented for both organizations and demonstrates the value of integrating conservation action and corporate philanthropy.

Because The Balsams is inspired by and cares about the natural setting that surrounds it and the peace and beauty that its guests experience, the resort is committing to do its part to ensure that these treasures are here for generations to come. That is why The Balsams is asking guests to join them in supporting The Nature Conservancy by adding a \$2 voluntary gift per night to their bill. The Conservancy will utilize the funds to support our conservation efforts in New Hampshire, and will offer employees and guests field trips and education on our work to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities of the state.

"We believe The Balsams is setting a terrific precedent by being the first resort in New Hampshire to partner in this way with a conservation organization," said state director Daryl Burtnett. "We are so grateful to The Balsams for launching this exciting



The Balsams sits in the heart of the northern forest. Photo © The Balsams

"...WE CONTINUALLY STRIVE TO FIND NEW WAYS TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS..."

**~UWE ROGGENTHEIN
GM, THE BALSAMS**

partnership and to their guests for their contributions to our conservation work in the Granite State. You can count on us to make the most of this wonderful support through our work protecting the natural world we all need to sustain us."

"We are extremely proud of our stewardship here in Dixville Notch and we continually strive to find new ways to protect our environment," says Uwe Roggenthein, General Manager of The Balsams. "It is our responsibility to protect for future generations and this is why we are so excited to be partnering with The Nature Conservancy and our shared vision."

Beginning with the Conservancy's acquisition of Norton Pool in Pittsburg in 1987, we have been working to conserve habitat close to the resort for more than 20 years. When Daryl visited The Balsams recently and saw the strength of Delaware North's environmental commitment and its focus on guest education, he recognized an opportunity for a special partnership. "It seems clear that one of the main reasons people love The Balsams and visit the North Country is because of its beautiful natural setting and abundant wildlife," he said.

"For the last decade, Delaware North has had an effective, award-winning environmental management system in the form of GreenPath®," notes Uwe. "In addition, we work diligently to tell the many stories of our property to all of our guests. We believe the relationship we have forged with The Nature Conservancy of New Hampshire will strengthen both efforts."

Conservation is Good Business

From Northern New Hampshire's spruce-fir forests to the salt marshes and tidal rivers of the Great Bay estuary, the Conservancy is working to protect vital ecosystems that benefit the people of New Hampshire. We are launching a new corporate program which encourages local corporations and businesses to join us in preserving and sustaining New Hampshire's natural resources and quality of life. After all, the foundation of a robust economy is a healthy functioning environment!

Like our partnership with The Balsams Grand Resort Hotel, there are many ways that businesses can support our conservation work:

- Join our corporate council
- Provide matching gifts for employees' contributions
- Volunteer time
- Sponsorship of our newsletter or events
- Hold an outing at a TNC preserve
- Sponsor a fundraising event

Contact Gail Coffey, Foundation and Corporate Relations Manager, at 603-224-5853 x21 for more details on our corporate program.

Five Sisters, One Vision

When it came time to sell the family farm along Follet's Brook in Durham and Newmarket, the five daughters of Florence Arendt Smith knew they wanted to keep the property, which includes breeding habitat for rare turtles, waterfowl and wading birds, intact and healthy for future generations to enjoy.

To realize their vision, they recently sold a 115-acre portion of the family farm to The Nature Conservancy and the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership. This acquisition adds to adjacent conservation lands, creating a contiguous block of over 300 acres of conserved land straddling the towns of Durham and Newmarket.

The property was acquired from the five sisters who together owned the family land known locally as the Knight Farm. The sisters' mother, Florence Arendt Smith, acquired the farm in 1965 from her uncle who bought the property in 1952 after his own farm was purchased for the construction of Pease Air Force Base. With their mother's ailing health and eventual passing, the sisters put the property on the market. Prior to the Conservancy showing interest in the property, it was under contract with a buyer that would likely have subdivided and developed the land.

"We're very pleased to be able to work with The Nature Conservancy and the Great Bay Partnership to place this land in conservation," said sister Adrienne Rubino. "It has meant so much to our family, and it's great to know the land will remain intact and healthy for generations to come."

The property includes over 3,250 feet of frontage on both sides of Follet's Brook and permanently protects approximately 45 acres of associated wetlands that provide exceptional breeding habitat for Blanding's and spotted turtles, both of which are on the State of New Hampshire's endangered and threatened species list. The remainder of the property is a mix of open fields and forests, totaling



Protecting Knight Farm creates a contiguous block of over 300 acres of conserved land in the Follet's Brook area. Photo © Ellen Snyder.

approximately 50 acres of excellent upland bird habitat.

In addition to its outstanding wildlife habitat features, the property provides important water supply protection for an existing town of Newmarket drinking water well and a potential future town water source- Follet's Brook. The Nature Conservancy conveyed a conservation easement over the entire parcel to the town of Newmarket and plans to transfer the property to New Hampshire Audubon, who will manage the property including allowing for public pedestrian access, hunting and fishing.

This is the Great Bay Partnership's second acquisition in the Follet's Brook conservation area. The Follet's Brook area has many important conservation features including known breeding populations of Canada goose, mallard, wood duck, hooded merganser, and green back heron, many warblers and other neotropical migrants, spotted salamander, four-toed salamander, black bear, moose, and bobcat. The Follet's Brook area also includes the state threatened small crested sedge and the state endangered knotty pondweed.

Top Honors for TNC's Own

Joel Harrington, the New Hampshire Chapter's Director of Government Relations, was recently named to the Union Leader's "Forty Under Forty" Class of 2009. Now in its 8th year, this high honor recognizes young New Hampshire residents that have made a significant impact in our communities and make our state a better place in which to live.

Nominated by two different individuals, Joel's dedication to improving the quality of New Hampshire's natural resources and protecting its lands and waters earned



Eric Aldrich, photo

him the much-deserved tribute. The editors also noted Joel's co-authoring of an emissions reduction bill and his collaborative efforts with partners as two of his especially noteworthy achievements.

"I am deeply honored to have received this recognition by the Union Leader and those who nominated me," says Joel. "My Dad always said to me that 'if you enjoy what you are doing, you will never work a day in your life.' There is nothing better than waking up each day to a state whose landscape is so special and worth preserving for future generations."

Congratulations, Joel!

From the Courser Farm to Nicaragua: Organic Farming

The idea and benefits of organic farming stretch far beyond the Courser Farm and Warner, New Hampshire. Practices are continually implemented and constantly improved in many other project areas and across the globe.



Proceeds from sales of organic honey and coffee support the local community. Photo © TNC.

Marbely Garcia Lopez is a professional catadora de café or “coffee taster,” helping develop international markets for organic coffee from Chinandega, Nicaragua. The Conservancy is supporting local partner Fuente Verde’s efforts to achieve organic certification for shade-grown coffee and honey, sustainable products from the area’s intact forests. Says Marbely:

“All countries have good coffee, they all have something special to offer and they all taste a little different, but my job is to

make sure that this is the best coffee possible. The Bourbon variety grown here is one of the best and tastes more like chocolate. This is a natural element of the coffee that has to



Marbely Garcia Lopez stands with one of the coffee plants. Photo © TNC.

do with the shade and the process from cutting the coffee to drying it. The volcano also helps to give it a better taste.”

Achieving organic certification requires a great deal of care and oversight of the growing process of the beans. Marbely’s quality and pest control efforts are essential to the process, but she needs help. Funding for better management and employee training is needed in order to increase production. The results will allow Fuente Verde to provide permanent work for more people in the area, as well as support the local communities through coffee sales.

If you would like to learn more about our work in Nicaragua and Central America, please contact Tiffany McKenna at 603.224.5853, x 15 or tmckenna@tnc.org.

A Rare Fungus Among Us

Noted mycologist, Lawrence Millman, and his friend made an incredible discovery while visiting a Conservancy preserve – a mushroom thought to be extinct for nearly 100 years! Below is an accounting of the historic find in Larry’s own words. Please note that because this newly rediscovered species is so rare, and to prevent any unintentional impacts from collection, the Conservancy has decided to not publish the name of the preserve or the host tree on which it occurs.

In 2005, a friend and I found a polypore (wood-inhabiting fungus) in New Hampshire that hadn’t been seen in almost a century. The polypore in question, *Echinodontium ballouii*, was last documented by mycologist William Hosea Ballou in 1909. The fungi was presumed extinct until we found 15 specimens.

Upon learning of this rare fungi discovery, Roy Halling, chief mycologist at the New York Botanical Garden, said: “To my mind, this is one of the most significant events in field mycology in quite some time. Such a find indicates that basic field work is the foundation of all biology.”

“Basic field work” describes our search methods perfectly. Like many fungi, *E. ballouii* is very specific about its host. You will not find it growing on, for instance, a sycamore, than you’ll find a polar bear in the Caribbean. It grows exclusively on one particular species of tree that grows in swamps. What’s more, it grows only on old trees.

That there aren’t too many old trees of this type left in the Northeast (the rot resistant wood was once highly desirable for boat building as well as house building) narrowed our search considerably. We also accessed these swampy areas in the winter on snowshoes. Any other time of year, and we would have been stopped dead in our tracks by impenetrably mucky conditions.

We investigated half a dozen places in New England before we found our specimens in the New Hampshire swamp. When we found our first *E. ballouii* growing on a branch stud, we knew it immediately. For this was not a “perhaps” discovery like the recent sightings of the ivory-billed woodpecker. This was the polypore itself, hard and palpable, with its obvious diagnostic features -- a blackish-brown, zoned cap and pink, nub-like spines on the underside.

And when we found our first specimen, it was a moment of celebration. For the death of one particular species had been, in the words of Mark Twain, “greatly exaggerated.”

Interested in fungi and other wild plants? Join TNC for “Walk and Cook with a Fungi” on June 18th. Details at www.nature.org/newhampshire.

Courseur, continued from page 1

that would degrade habitat.

“We are excited and proud that we are able to protect this scenic and beautiful property forever,” said Rebecca Courseur. “The purchase of this easement enables us to continue our farming tradition spanning several generations and hopefully, several generations to come.”

The three tracts in this phase expand and enhance existing conservation lands. The 109-acre “Knights Meadow Marsh Tract” abuts and expands the NH Fish and Game Department’s Knights Meadow Marsh Wildlife Management Area. The 146-acre “Remainder Farm Tract” and the 185-acre “Poverty Plains Tract” abut the previously protected Courseur property.

Combining Strengths

The partnership between The Nature Conservancy and Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust has leveraged the complementary skills and strengths of each organization. Ausbon Sargent has been the primary easement negotiator, raised considerable funds from interested community members, assumed much of the responsibility of completing the due diligence required to complete the transaction, and will hold and monitor the easements in perpetuity. The Nature Conservancy completed the science-based conservation plan that guides land protection in this area, raised private funds, provided technical assistance on easement drafting, and provided science, mapping, and administrative support necessary to secure the public funding; a key element of success.

“Protecting the Courseur family lands is a perfect example of how a regional land trust like Ausbon Sargent works with a global-scale organization like The Nature Conservancy sharing expertise and land conservation knowledge,” says Debbie Stanley, Executive Director at Ausbon Sargent.

The total project cost of \$534,000 was funded by grants from the NH Fish & Game Department (\$203,000); the New Hampshire Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (\$56,000), the Town of

Warner (\$75,000), and the Town of Webster (\$10,000). In addition, a foundation and many private individuals, including the Courseur family, provided vital contributions.

The long-term commitment to the land that has enriched their lives is

evident in the eyes of the Courseur siblings as they light each candle in the hundreds of pumpkins that line their fields. It’s a labor of love for the farm and the community that means so much; a tradition that now can remain just that for generations to come.

A Sense of Place: Reflections on Farm Life by Rebecca Courseur

The properties the Courseur family just put under easement are described as the Knight’s Meadow and Poverty Plains pieces and the “back of the farm.” It is not unusual for land that has been in families for several generations to have been given place names that relate to some connection or personal experience for the family. For example, the Knight’s Meadow land



The Courseur family farmhouse as it looked in the 1920’s. Photo compliments of Rebecca Courseur and the Courseur family.

has always been referred to within the family as the Harper Lot. My grandfather, Fred W. Courseur, had purchased the property from Helen C.B. Hope in 1928 and the deed description refers to the farm being owned by William and Abbie Harper. Hence, in family conversations we always referred to it as the Harper lot. A sawmill was located on this property as early as the 1820s and was operated by Henry Little. The stonework still remains and creates a pretty set of falls. Another interesting aspect is a stone quarry located just off of White Plains Road. Stones were cut from boulders and ledges located above ground. The pieces were probably used to build foundations for adjacent farms and perhaps the mill. New Hampshire Fish & Game purchased enough of this property from my father in the 1960s to create a road and a parking lot and build a new dam at Knight’s Meadow Marsh.

The Poverty Plains piece and the “back of the farm” are located along a road by the same name (although we called it just “Plains” Road) and Connors Mill Road (previously known as Roby Road). The upland of these two properties consists of a forest of pine and oak and are referred to as “Oak Hill.” Pasture land ran along “Plains” and “Roby” Road and to us these were called the “bull pastures” as cattle were pastured there during the summer months. Some of the cattle were my father’s but we often kept animals from other farms as well. My father’s flock of sheep might also spend the summer here. A salt lick was placed near the “Iron Gate” and I can still hear my Father call out “Ka-day, Ka-day,” to summon the animals.

There was a very small wetland near the height of land that provided water for the cattle and was big enough for my father to stock hornpout. A few times during the summer the neighborhood kids would gather with flashlights and tackle boxes and climb into the back of the “big” truck to go fishing after supper. The pasture along Connors Mill Road contained a great spot to pick blueberries under the power lines. We kids would not venture into these pastures by ourselves as we were always afraid of a herd of bulls chasing us!

Recently my brothers carved a challenging slope for sliding at the “Iron Gate” on Oak Hill. It is wide and long and contains a few jumps that challenge my nieces and nephews on their Vermont Rockers, snowboards, inner tubes or even a homemade bike sled. A bonfire is built, hot dogs are roasted, smores and chocolate bars consumed, stories are told and more family memories are created to strengthen that “sense of place.”

Thank you, donors!

The Nature Conservancy of New Hampshire gratefully acknowledges the support of you, our members. The following have generously contributed \$500 or more to local programs or live in New Hampshire and have contributed to other TNC initiatives between October 1, 2008 and February 28, 2009.

During the same time period, many more generous donors from New Hampshire have contributed to The Nature Conservancy's conservation efforts in this state and throughout the world. Thank you all!

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Of all dollars spent by the New Hampshire Chapter of The Nature Conservancy in FY08 92.2% went to support conservation activities, 4% general & administration and 3.8% fundraising. These numbers are not reflective of the organization as a whole. Charity Navigator gave TNC its highest rating -- four stars, or "exceptional".



Red-breasted nuthatch. Daryl Burtnett, photo.

ATTENTION PHOTOGRAPHERS!

Enjoy taking your camera along when out hiking, biking or kayaking? The Nature Conservancy is looking for high-quality photos taken by YOU at our preserves and project areas around the Granite State.

Rolling landscapes, singing birds, blooming flowers, rippling water and adults and children making discoveries in nature... we'd like to see our conservation work through *your* lens.

So send us your photos. You may see them in print in this very newsletter or on our website at www.nature.org/newhampshire! High-resolution photos (300+ dpi) can be emailed to mlepage@tnc.org. Prints or slides can be mailed to our Field Office at 22 Bridge Street, 4th Floor, Concord, NH 03301. Please note that all photos received will not be returned and by providing photos, you grant TNC permission to reprint them. We *will* give you photo credit!

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www.nature.org

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Receiving duplicate mailings? Please let us know! Email the duplicate names to mlepage@tnc.org and we'll fix it!

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The Nature Conservancy will be hosting many exciting field trips over the next several months. Each is lead by chapter staff and/or local experts, is free and open to the public. Details and directions can be found at www.nature.org/newhampshire. RSVP is requested, as some trips have space limits. To register for a trip, please contact Megan Lepage at mlepage@tnc.org or 603.224.5853, extension 23.

SAT, MAY 9 4th ANNUAL GREAT BAY BIRD WALK
8am-12pm Join us at TNC's Lubberland Creek Preserve in Newmarket as coastal bird expert Steve Mirick once again educates us on the migrating and nesting birds that call Great Bay home. Please RSVP at your earliest convenience for this very popular field trip.

SAT, MAY 16 WILDFLOWER WALK #1
9am-11am TNC's Gail Coffey will be aiding in the identification of wildflowers growing at the Conservancy's Warwick Preserve in Westmoreland, NH. Bring a hand lens and field guide if you have them! When signing up, please specify the date you plan to attend.

THUR, MAY 21 WILDFLOWER WALK #2
8am-10am TNC's Gail Coffey will be leading a second trip to identify wildflowers growing at the Conservancy's Warwick Preserve in Westmoreland, NH. Bring a hand lens and field guide if you have them! When signing up, please specify the date you plan to attend.

SUN, JUNE 7 DRAGONFLY & DAMSELFLY WALK
10am-12pm Join TNC's Gail Coffey and Tom Young, founder of the NH Odonate Club, as they observe and learn about darners, baskettails, skimmers, and more at our Manchester Cedar Swamp Preserve.

THUR, JUNE 18 WALK AND COOK WITH A FUNGI
5:30pm-8pm Join TNC's Gail Coffey and Russ Cohen of the MA Riverways Program at our Lubberland Creek Preserve in Newmarket as they learn to identify edible plants and mushrooms, followed by an edible plants tasting session.

SAT, JULY 11 A RECIPE FOR RESTORATION
9:30am-11:30am Join TNC's Jeff Lougee for a morning of blueberry picking in the Ossipee Pine Barrens. It's all-you-can-eat while learning about this unique ecosystem!

FIRST SATURDAY CONSERVATION & COFFEE OF EACH MONTH
9am-11am Our new monthly outing program at Great Bay! Each month is a new theme. Families encouraged! Details can be found each month at www.nature.org/newhampshire.