

# The Mountain Ear

The Great Pond Mountain Conservation Trust Newsletter

SUMMER 2019



## New Trails in the Wildlands— and New Protections

### HILLSIDE TRAIL

The rebuilding of Hillside Trail into a multi-purpose (horse, snowmobile, bike, ski, hike) corridor begins this fall. It will be a barrier-free trail with no steps or waterbars. The terrain at the North end of the trail is rugged and will require moving many large rocks, filling holes, building bridges, and installing culverts. OBP Trailworks of Turner, Maine won the competitive bidding and we're excited to work with Jed Talbot and his crew again. While construction is going on, there may be temporary closures of trails and the Valley Road. Look for late fall completion.



Above—Bicyclists gather at the new Popple Grove beginners' loop near the South Gate. The Capstone Trail is in the Dead River area of the Wildlands.

### CAPSTONE MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL

A mix of volunteers, paid trail crew and professional excavator operators has completed construction of Hancock County's first significant mountain bike trail. The Capstone Trail is part of an eventual 3.6-mile trail in the Dead River area of the Wildlands.

The Penobscot Region of the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) has been working with us for two years, starting with the construction of a beginner loop at Popple Grove that formally opened this summer. NEMBA secured more than \$20,000 in

"Capstone Trail" continues on page 6



### Minuartia glabra Wants You—to Stay on the Trail

Several of the Wildland's open ledges are designated "Low Elevation Balds," with patches of blueberry, lichens, three-toothed cinquefoil, broom-crowberry and mosses. This is also the habitat of *Minuartia glabra*, the rare smooth sandwort (above right). In many places, smooth sandwort is immediately adjacent to a trail—and because the vegetation is rather sparse, it has been trampled and killed at several sites (above left). Please stay on the trail—and if the trail location is not obvious, avoid stepping on vegetation. We're currently working on signage and better-defined trail corridors to help protect this unique plant community.

## WILDLANDS MANAGEMENT PLAN

A subcommittee of the Stewardship Committee has been meeting for the past year, developing a new management plan for the Wildlands. It is in final draft form, and will go to the board for approval this fall. Among other sections, a key piece of it is a zoning plan to help make management decisions:

- Proposed zones will facilitate decision-making in balancing the sometimes conflicting aspects of our mission:
  - Wildlife Habitat
  - Forestry
  - Recreation
- The plan takes the original Dibble/Rees 2006 Natural Resources Inventory ecological reserve, or "unpeopled core" of 838 acres and increases it to 1140 acres.

"Wildlands Management Plan" continues on page 6

Conserving Land, Water and  
Wildlife Habitat for the  
Communities of Northwest  
Hancock County

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THE MOUNTAINEAR  
Published by the Great Pond  
Mountain Conservation Trust

Editor: Landon Fake  
Design: Olga Lange

Printed on recycled paper.

## From the President's Desk

As the new Board President, I am discovering the multiple challenges presented to the Trust on a regular basis. Landon Fake, the Executive Director, is working hard to meet the goals of our Strategic Plan. Karen Balas-Cote isn't appreciated enough for the increasingly technical functions she performs; and Land Steward Shawn Mercer keeps the well-being of the Trust lands a top priority in his complex position. The Board of Directors has been challenged on many fronts, too, and has provided strong and certain leadership. The next year will require more Board involvement in areas long overdue for attention.

Those folks most important to me are the wonderful volunteers who put in many hours (we track the hours) of trail maintenance, office work and outreach. They are the lifeblood of any non-profit, and we are grateful. I am resolved to enroll many more by this time next year, and to celebrate them more often.

My other goals for the year: increase membership; increase the culture of Thank You!; meet and personally thank as many of our donors as possible for their generosity; increase communication between staff and volunteers; challenge the Board to be more supportive of our events and programs. I pledge to support the Trust's goals and continue the work that so many have done before me.

— Chris Johnson, Board President

## Statewide Task Force Report Released This Spring

The Maine Land Conservation Task Force's report, "Shaping the Next Generation of Land Conservation in Maine" is addressed to the "People of Maine," and makes a series of recommendations to governmental units and recreational and environmental groups about the revitalization of land conservation necessary to meet the future needs of Maine's citizens. The task force was comprised of state legislators, town managers, sporting groups, ecologists, Indian nations, land trusts and tourism experts.

The report describes how Maine's 75 land trusts have been critical to conservation by acquiring the majority of newly preserved land in Maine over the last 30 years. This network of land trusts now manages more than one million acres, more than the combined acreage of federal and state ownership, but in doing so has incurred a huge stewardship obligation as that land is to be preserved in perpetuity.

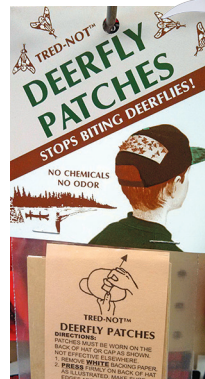
Among the report's six key recommendations are to "create land conservation opportunities that connect people with land and water" and to "ensure that land conservation benefits Maine's economy and communities." Such recommendations expand the concept of land conservation well beyond simply preserving land in its natural state. Rather, the task force proposes that proper stewardship of Maine's natural resources includes integrating its traditional uses of forestry, farming, fishing and tourism in balance with land preservation. As one fisherman succinctly put it, "you can't eat scenery." The full report is here: <http://maineconservationtaskforce.com/>

## Wildlands Predators

When we visit the Wildlands, we become part of the eco-system: for mosquitoes, black flies and midges in some parts of the Wildlands, humans are an important part of their diet. Although they are pests to us, birds, bats, and fish, in turn, depend on them. Mosquitoes, black flies and midges can be kept at bay with a variety of commonly found repellants.

Deerflies and ticks are a little more complicated. Shown are two staff-tested and recommended solutions for these other Wildlands residents.

Permethrin-treated clothing is a very effective defense against ticks. You can either buy a spray bottle and treat your clothes yourself, which is supposed to be good through 7 washings, buy pre-treated clothing, or send your clothes out to be treated, which is supposed to be good for 70 washings and fairly inexpensive.



Deerfly Patches and Permethrin can be found in stores and online. Insect Shield clothing and treatment is here: <https://www.insectshield.com/> More information is here: <https://sectionhiker.com/treating-your-clothes-with-permethrin/>

## 25/25 Campaign Success

Donors:	73
Donated/Pledged:	\$26,875
Total (including match and gifts toward expenses):	\$58,091
Total Expenses:	\$2,694
To Stewardship Fund:	\$25,206
To General Endowment Fund:	\$28,619

**Thank you to the many generous donors!**



## From the Executive Director

Our fiscal year has just finished and I've been reflecting on the work we've done. In some regards, it's been a housekeeping year of many small steps to strengthen the organization and get our house in order.

- We've moved almost all of our records and photos online to a system that allows staff, board, and committees immediate access to all the information within their scope of responsibility.
- We changed our fiscal year end from May 31 to June 30, to better align with the year's quarters and other organizations we work with.
- A small committee has taken on the large task of updating the Wildlands management plan to a document that steers decision-making for the next 5 years (see article). That process includes "zoning" the Wildlands into different areas, with large sections where the priority is on wildlife habitat with little human activity and other areas with more trails and recreation.
- An updated website with a new look and a simpler interface.
- We applied to renew our accreditation (done 5 years ago) from the Land Trust Alliance, the national organization that sets standards to ensure sound and ethical financial management, land transactions, governance, and stewardship. It involved reviewing, revising and writing many of our policies, tweaking our accounting systems and reorganizing hundreds of documents related to our land transactions. We expect to have our renewal in the fall.
- A successful \$50,000+ capital campaign to bolster our endowment and land stewardship funds; with a donor's offer to match up to \$25,000, we raised all the match, and more.
- We've had a trail consultant help lay out a new alignment for the Stuart Gross trail, with detailed construction notes and estimated costs. The jeep trail section of the trail has long been a problem, with continuing erosion, and sometimes dangerous conditions created by the running water on much of the trail, and inaccessibility in the winter. Part of the project will be to protect the large fragile patches of sandwort and cinque foil.
- We sold a property in Bucksport that was donated to us with that intent. That money has been split, with half going into our stewardship reserve for the Chapman Farm property and half to our fund for other land acquisition.

And then, of course, there is the more exciting work:

- Our ExploreOutdoors! education program impacted hundreds of young people in the past year in this part of Hancock County, with dozens of activities to get

impressionable minds outdoors to learn about and be affected by the natural world. Julianne Taylor, the educational coordinator who got things off the ground has left to work closer to home on MDI. We wish her well and thank her for the great programs she conceived of and implemented. We are currently in the hiring process to find the next educational coordinator to carry that work forward.

- The Hillside Trail reconstruction will happen later this fall with the help of a \$42,000 grant from the State's Recreational Trails Program (see article).
- A significant new mountain bike trail being built and funded by the Penobscot Region chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association (see article).
- We're upping the ante in our long relationship with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and will be working on 90 acres of the Wildlands this year to accelerate the transformation of what was a clear cut 20 years ago to a healthy, vigorous forest. And the following year we'll jump to 180 acres/ year. We'll be publishing the details of this on the website.
- This is the first year the North Gate will be open weekends all summer, allowing easier access to several trails in the interior. If you've only been up Great Pond Mountain, I recommend exploring the very different, but equally enchanting Bump Hill, Flag Hill, Mead Mountain, and Flying Moose Mountain.

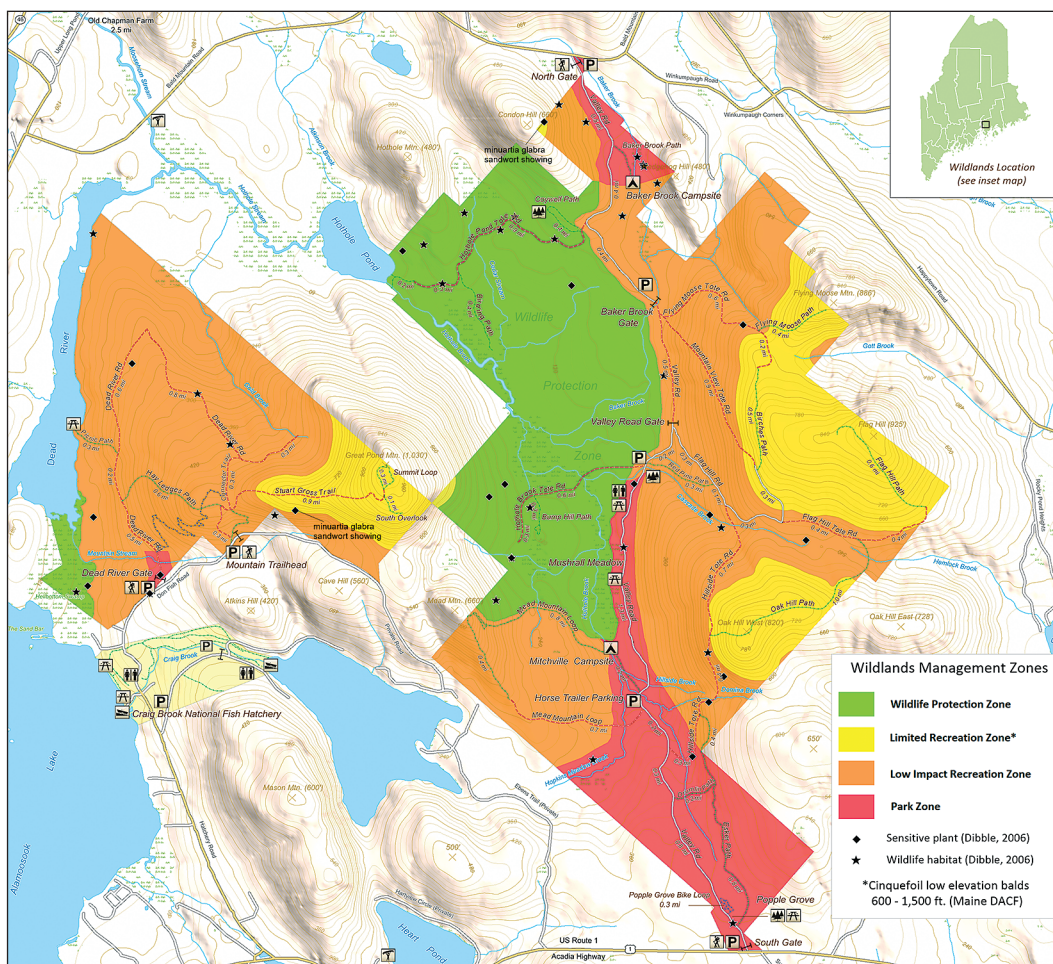
Best Wishes for a healthy, outdoor summer.

— *Landon Fake*

**New Members** The following new members joined GPMCT between June 1, 2018 and June 14, 2019:

Wendy Alpaugh & Willam McDonnell	Aaron & Emiko Kingsbury
Beth Beaulieu	Mary Murray
Liz Becker	Steven Medina
Cameron & Susan Bird	Carol & Walter Muth
Karen Brace	Wendy L. North
Lysle Brinker	Erik & Krista Pages
Jay Brownlee	Tyler Piebes
Lucy Condon	Fred & Rosamond Rea
Pamela Druckerman	Joshua Saucier
Gregory Edwards	Kurt & Robyn Silberstein
Stephen Gaal	Elizabeth M. Ventura
Dina Goodwill	Mary & Brett Wood
Betty Jamison	

- Identifies elevations above 600' and fragile "low elevation balds" which need special management, especially on Great Pond Mountain, Flag Hill, and Flying Moose Mountains
- Designated "Park Zones" at gates, campsites to allow for group use and facilities like picnic tables and outhouses
- Creates standards for trail construction & signage
- Better defines specific uses (hiking, biking, snow-mobiles, horses, etc.) on specific trails
- Takes an incremental approach to mountain biking, maintaining control over route location and monitoring of use.
- Limits all trail mileage to what we can maintain to an established standard
- Addresses upper Stuart Gross Trail/ Jeep trail erosion and trampling of fragile Low Elevation Bald natural community and rare Smooth Sandwort



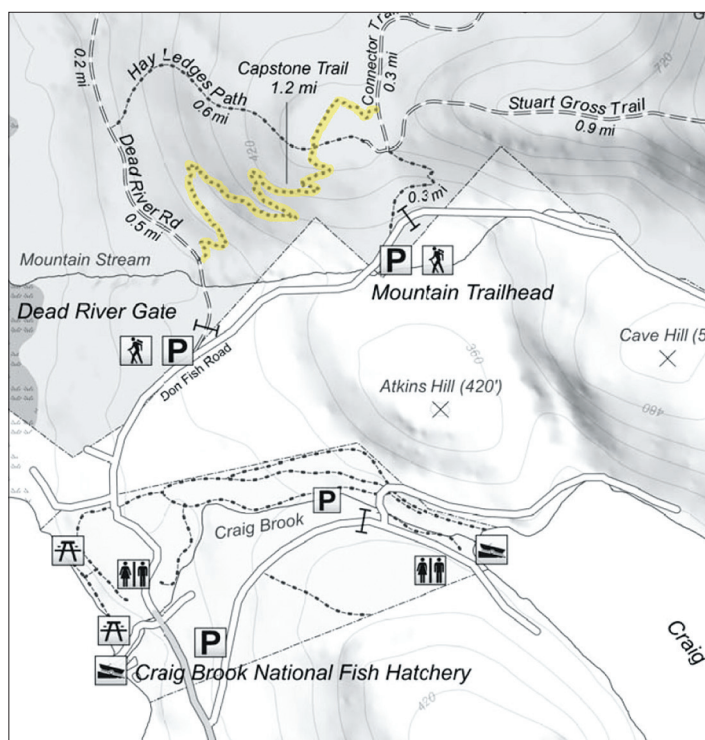
**Above—**The new Wildlands management plan divides areas into one of four zones in order to address wildlife protection and recreation goals.

*"Capstone Trail" continued from page 1*

grant and individual funding to complete the first segment.

The trail name references the capstone project that several University of Maine Civil Engineering students completed in 2016, a design and proposal to GPMCT for a trail network. "We dug up that 121-page report and decided to use it as a concept for our trail system," said Craig MacDonald, president of PR-NEMBA. Avery Mornis and Lucas Wardell, two of the proposal's authors, heard about NEMBA's project and immediately made plans to come help. Lucas, whose family lives in Orland, did much of the first layout and hand work and Avery, who works for a trail construction company in Vermont, agreed to get time off to run an excavator on the project for a couple of weeks.

The collaboration is important to both organizations: NEMBA wants more sustainable, high-quality trails to build and ride, and the Trust needs new constituencies to support the Wildlands—and land conservation in general. In their grant proposals, NEMBA received broad support for the project, including Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, our congressional delegation and the towns of Bucksport and Orland.



**Above—**The Capstone Mountain Bike Trail is high-lighted in yellow.



# Chuck-will's-widow and Other Wildlands Visitors

by Cheri Domina



Chuck-will's-widows are related to whippoorwills and nighthawks, but are uncommon in New England. This spring's visitor in the Wildlands is one of a handful ever reported in Maine.

"Well, that's a strange whippoorwill," I said, as we stood listening on the dark roadside. It was the only bird we really heard that June evening, as Jennifer Riefler, Patrick Reid and I scouted the Wildlands before last year's Night Bird Walk I was to lead for Downeast Audubon. The next morning, Patrick sent a recording to a birding expert, who confirmed that yes, we had a Chuck-will's-widow in the Wildlands—one of only a handful ever validated in Maine.

The Chuck-will's-widow—a "nightjar" relative of our Common Nighthawk and Eastern Whippoorwill—rarely strays north of New Jersey. With a two-foot wingspan, these nocturnal fliers are big enough to eat not only large moths on the wing, but even bats and small birds. To the delight of dozens of birders from all over the state, our visitor sang nightly from the slopes of Flag Hill for weeks.

## The Bird Atlas

The Bird Atlas is an attempt to learn the number and location of breeding and wintering birds in Maine, as a resource for scientists, students, and birdwatchers. Anyone can contribute, whether you adopt a block near you, or just add your backyard sightings to the Maine Bird Atlas on eBird. FMI and sign up: <https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/maine-bird-atlas/index.html>.

Last spring, I adopted the Orland\_NE block for the 2018-2022 Maine Bird Atlas, which includes most of the Wildlands. I walked all Wildlands and Craig Brook Hatchery trails at least once and paddled into Hothole Pond, recording birdsong and sightings as I went—in a notebook or straight to the eBird app. I learned a lot about bird identification, behavior, habitat and migration timing. Every trip had a special sighting—from the olive-sided flycatcher ("quick—three beers!") to a shy Canada warbler and an indigo bunting atop Flying Moose Mountain. An oddball least flycatcher on the Valley Road turned out to be a yellow-

bellied flycatcher—a "life-bird" for me.

To see what has been recorded for the Orland\_NE block in the Bird Atlas, use this link: <https://ebird.org/atlasme/block/44068E6NE>. Perhaps you can add to this list on your next visit, using the Maine Bird Atlas portal in eBird!

The Wildlands is a "hotspot" in eBird; to see what people have spotted over the years go to: <https://ebird.org/atlasme/hotspots> and type "Great Pond" in the search box. You can add your own sightings as well.

If you love birding and have 20 hours to spend, please consider taking on the Orland\_NE block, now that I've moved to New Hampshire. The Bird Atlas project goes until 2022, and there are many species yet to be truly confirmed to breed in the Wildlands.

**Just building your birding skills? Consider volunteering to maintain Wildlands birdhouses or build new ones. Contact Shawn at [shawn@greatpondtrust.org](mailto:shawn@greatpondtrust.org) for more information.**



## Dick Hale

We lost a long-time enthusiast last October when Richard S. (Dick) Hale of Orland and Castine passed away at age 89. Dick and Sharon Bray were among our first board members in 1993. A champion ski racer in his youth, he built many sections of trail and led ski, snowshoe and other trail events and created our first trail map in 1999. Dick's extended family came to our campfire gatherings up until last year, including Dick, Sharon, Dick's sons Tom (with Robin Mendenhall) and Ted Hale, Judy Hale and Donna Williams. He was predeceased by his sister Nancy Helmers, also a supportive member of GPMCT.

## Three Ways to Help GPMCT

- 1 Become a member.** Go to website or use envelope inside newsletter
- 2** If you are not receiving our email newsletters but would like to,  
**A. sign up on our website**  
**B. check your spam filter**
- 3 Volunteer.** Lead hikes, do trail or other outside work, help with outreach events, be on a committee. Call or email us.



## The MountainEar

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### — BECOME A MEMBER, RENEW OR MAKE A GIFT —

- Protect land for wildlife and recreation
- Maintain the trails in the Wildlands and other preserves

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Thank you!