

Trail Work in the Wildlands



For his Maine Master Naturalist Capstone project, Nick Noyes began designing and installing a series of interpretive signs along a 1.5-mile section of the north end of the Valley Road. It's expected to be complete next summer, with corre-

sponding information on the website.

Some of our long-standing volunteers as well as a couple of new ones really stepped up the trail maintenance work this summer and fall. Geo Atwood, Nick Noyes, Dave Doherty, Ed Wardell and Andy Peake have created and installed many new signs, trail blazes, stone steps, reroutes, and by-passes that make navigating the Wildlands trails an even better experience for hikers.



Above—Nick Noyes and Bob Comerford installing new signs on the Stuart Gross Trail. Right—Dave Doherty & Ed Wardell installing steps on a re-routed section of the Stuart Gross Trail.

Controlling Invasives in the Wildlands

Because of earlier human interventions, as well as some of our own early construction projects, several species of invasives are present in the Wildlands. However, given the size of the property (4,500 acres) and the environmental indignities visited on it, the Wildlands are remarkably free from major invasive problems. We have been working to keep it that way for 15 years, mainly with early intervention and eradication.

Allowing invasives a foothold can cause major changes in the ecosystem. In the case of autumn olive, which we have in the Wildlands, it out-competes and displaces native plants by creating a dense shade that hinders the growth of plants that need lots of sun. It can produce up to 200,000 seeds each year, and spread over a variety of habitats because its nitrogen-fixing root nodules allow the plant to grow in even the most unfavorable soils. Birds scatter the seeds along roadsides and forest edges, which often completely take over log-yarding areas (which are abundant in parts of the Wildlands).

Japanese knotweed (often called “bamboo”), another invasive present in the Wildlands, is extremely aggressive and very difficult to eradicate. It has completely colonized the entire corridor of hundreds of streams in New England. Once in the water course, it establishes itself quickly and kills off all other stream/river bank vegetation. This eliminates the native plant species that insects feed on, which in turn reduces or eliminates fish populations. Stream and river banks colonized by knotweed are much more susceptible to erosion, which compromises the water quality and ecosystem. Knotweed reproduces easily from small pieces of stems or roots, as well as from seed. In the Wildlands, the current areas of knotweed are around bridge abutments and

“Controlling Invasives” continues on page 5



Coming up March 1 is our traditional snowshoe race—with some big changes. We're adding new routes, a fat bike race and duathlon option. Thanks to Sarah Vickers, Jennifer Riefler and Peter Keeney for the new and long-standing energy and support for this winter event. We're calling it the Wildlands Winter Winter Wilderness Challenge, knowing the snow conditions are unreliable, and it sounds better than The Wildlands Shoe Race. Go to our website to for more info and to sign up.



*Conserving Land, Water and
Wildlife Habitat for the
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Hancock County*

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From the President

As I've completed my first full year as President of GPMCT, I've been reflecting on what the Trust means to me and the community. I am pleased to chair a talented board, whose members all share a passion for the organization and the land we steward. GPMCT's accomplishments and excellent care of its land are directly related to its dedicated Executive Director, Land Steward, Education Coordinator, Forester, Membership Coordinator, Development Coordinator, and Ranger.

We are working on ways to more accurately count our visitors to the Wildlands, Chapman Farm, and our easement properties in Lucerne (Phillips Lake islands and Sunset Ledge), but we estimate that there are 15,000 visits to the Wildlands annually (many from repeat visitors), based on trailhead registers and parking lot counts. Most are from Hancock County, but about 20% are from Penobscot and Waldo counties. That represents a significant portion of the population from the community and I'm proud that we provide great outdoor experiences to so many. Of course, our properties also host many more wild creatures and we strive to balance the human needs with the wild ones. The biggest challenge is to maintain the trails, roads, signs, and everything else needed to make the human experiences happen, so I'm especially thankful for the support of more than 400 members and about 100 volunteers, who collectively make all of this possible. To all members and volunteers, Thank you!

— **Chris Johnson, Board President**

Explore Outdoors!

by Emily Carvalho

Explore Outdoors! has continued to connect with children and families in Hancock County. Since starting the position this fall, I've been out on the Miles Lane Trail System learning about forest decomposition with the Middle School science club, planting garlic bulbs with third grade Ellsworth Elementary & Middle School students, and studying the changing seasons by monitoring tulip growth with seventh grade EEMS students. EO has also been at the Ghostport Festival with creepy crawlers, at the Craft Fair making suet feeders, and several other events.

Thank you to Downeast Audubon, GPMCT and BHHT for welcoming me into this community of environmental educators. I'm looking forward to many new adventures this new year. Come Explore with us!

New Members The following new members joined GPMCT between June 15, 2019 and January 15, 2020. Welcome!

Paul & Teresa Billings
Jennifer Britz
Kenneth & Kathleen Burgess
Jean Conary
Daniel Cordero
Petra & Jacques Delli Paoli
Dutch Valley Food Distributors, Inc.
Patricia Finnigan
Sara Hayman & Sarah Nicholson
Tony Jewell & Debra Payne
Charlotte & Robert Landis
David Libby
Laurel E. Lockett

Craig MacDonald & Sarah Vickers
Mary Moran
Richard Moran
Gretchen Nagy
Jason Richard
Liam Riordan & Susan Thibedeau
Stephen & Nancy Robbins
Evelyn & Warren Silver
Lisa Sullivan
Christopher Spellman
Nick Tymoczko
David S. Warner

From the Executive Director



Top row— Last Fall's Wildlands Challenge Adventure Race and the Trail Run drew enthusiastic participants of all ages. Bottom row, 1st and 2nd from left—Popple Grove Loop riders on trail opening day. Bottom row, 3rd and 4th from left— High school trail crew at work. Bottom, right—Capstone Trail rider.

Since our last print newsletter in August of last year, we've been working on numerous projects to strengthen the organization, and improve the experience of our diverse users in the Wildlands:

- After a lot of work last winter and spring, in November we were awarded re-accreditation by the national land trust accrediting body, the Land Trust Alliance. We were first accredited 5 years ago. The rigorous accreditation process assures that we operate with the highest standards with our finances, land acquisition, and stewardship. We're proud to be one of 23 accredited trusts, out of 80 in Maine.
- In the next couple of months I'll be announcing the hiring of a new Land Steward, the person directly responsible for the care and well-being of the Wildlands and our other preserves.
- There are currently 3 exciting potential land acquisition projects underway. These always take time to ensure we can raise the money to acquire new property, but also that we can build the capacity to steward them well in the long term. If all goes well, we'll have more to announce soon.
- Cheri Domina helped us get a grant from the Davis Conservation Foundation to put together a great new bird list, along with information and resources about where to find birds in and around the Wildlands. The website now has a great store of birding information: you can download the list, birding maps, and access lots of other useful information. Click on the Wildlands tab at greatpondtrust.org.
- The now annual Wildlands Challenge Adventure Race and the Trail Run each had more than 60 participants.
- Work on the Hillside Trail finally got off to a good start before wet weather shut it down for the winter. The northwest slope of Oak Hill is very wet under the best of circumstances, and even a little rain makes working there impossible.

- The first section of the Capstone purpose-built mountain bike trail was completed by the Penobscot Region of the New England Mountain Bike Association with a lot of the finishing touches done by a paid trail crew of high school students. More to come next summer.
- This fall we issued about 30 deer hunting permits for the Wildlands. We'll be polling those hunters, but we know that not all of them were successful, but some were.
- In a first for the Trust, we found ourselves having to defend one of our conservation easements. In 2005, GPMCT accepted an easement on several parcels of land and islands in the Village of Lucerne, obligating the Trust to protect the conservation values (wildlife habitat, intact forests, etc.) of the land, in perpetuity. When an abutting landowner cut a 35 by 800 foot swath of woods and installed three utility poles over their boundary, on the Village/easement land last spring, it was an obvious violation of the easement. We immediately went to work to get the Village and abutter to remedy the violation. In the ensuing months, we've been part of a legal process to further clarify each party's rights, replant 80 trees and get further protection for the easement with defined buffers and signage.

As always, I implore you to get out and enjoy the Wildlands in winter. Some of my favorites are: Great Pond Mountain (the winter bypass is marked, but it's still a good idea to have creepers or snowshoes with good cleats); for a longer walk from the North Gate, the Birches/ Mountain View Trail loop is stunning (I saw a Snowy Owl there in December); on skis, both the Valley Road and Dead River Road are in good shape (but changeable daily); and for the adventurous who like what used to be called "downhill-cross country," a reliable source says that if you're on the west side of the summit loop on GPM and aim 10 degrees left of the prominent East Bucksport Methodist Church, you'll come out on the east end of the Dead River Road—with some good skiing in-between. That's my goal for the winter.

— **Landon Fake**

An Interview with Landon

by Sarah Levine

Last spring I sat down to talk with our executive director Landon Fake on his first anniversary with the Trust. I wanted to understand his background and other secrets behind his quiet, deliberative demeanor. The board, who had chosen him from among 28 applicants, was confident that, with decades of experience in the outdoors and with nonprofits, he was the right fit.

“Though I was born in New York State,” says Landon, “I spent my youth in northern New England, much of it in the woods, on the water and on the ski-hill. My father, an engineer with General Electric and later IBM, brought us hiking, canoeing, skiing at every opportunity. If the best time to paddle the St. John river was spring, then that is when we would go and he thought nothing of taking us out of school for a week to paddle it.”

After graduating from high school in Lewiston, Maine, Landon worked a variety of jobs, including as a cameraman for the fledgling WCBB public television station and as a carpenter building chicken barns. He then went west and worked as a carpenter in Colorado and San Francisco. When ski season arrived, he’d head for the mountains. He doesn’t remember worrying about money (‘somehow I had the willingness to learn what I needed to support myself’). Eventually, after traveling with a friend through Mexico and Central America, and crewing on a yacht in the Caribbean, he enrolled in recently-founded Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. It was flexible and accommodating enough for a non-traditional, older student. Landon majored in American Literature, wrote his senior thesis on Vladimir Nabokov and became deeply involved in the college’s rock-climbing program. “I was pretty obsessed with climbing for a while. I climbed all over North America—New England, the Rockies, the western deserts, the Sierras, Canada. I even took off a semester to climb El Capitan and other big walls in Yosemite.”

While at Hampshire, he spent summers working with at-risk youth at an outdoor program in Connecticut. Afterward, he got a job with Outward Bound and moved to Bethel, in western Maine.

During his 27 years with the Outward Bound, Landon rose through the ranks from trip leader to staff trainer and course director to directing the whole public enrollment side of the organization. He had married his college girlfriend and by the mid 90s they had two daughters. “Being at Outward Bound was a wonderful experience. Although I had a demanding desk job, there were always people around who were drawn to adventure. At first, I managed to stay just fit enough to go on climbing and paddling trips to Europe, Canada and the American West. Later those became skiing and sailing trips with my family.”

“After decades of expansion, enrollment was beginning to decline,” Landon recalls, “and although we were having some success with new international and professional development programs, the larger national organization was struggling. There was an ill-conceived merger of four of the schools (that later collapsed) and I found myself reporting to an executive in Colorado.”

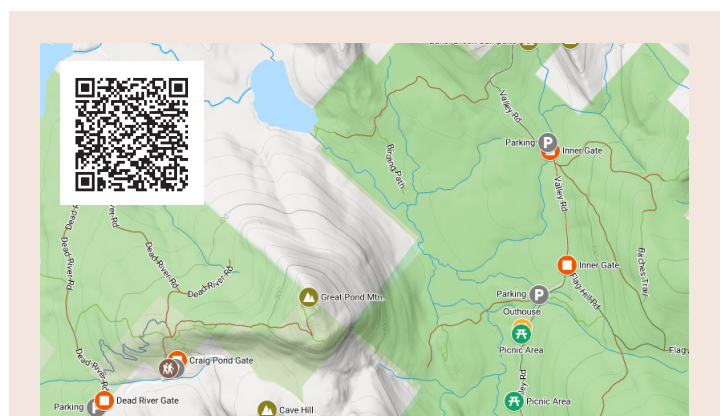


Landon’s has been a frequently-seen face in the Wildlands for almost 2 years now. Board Vice-president Sarah Levine thought it was time to give *The MountainEar* his story.

In 2009, Landon left Outward Bound, but he and his family stayed on in Bethel, where he was on the board of the Mahoosuc Land Trust. He went on to found a new nonprofit, to take on the construction and management of public access trails and pathways, as well as the town’s newly-acquired Bingham Forest.

In 2013, he left Mahoosuc Pathways and Bethel to become manager of the Camden Snow Bowl. “I loved skiing and the task – the renovation of the Snow Bowl – looked like it was tailor-made for me. To attract skiers from further afield, the area needed new lifts, trails and snowmaking equipment. I went full-tilt into what turned out to be a very underfunded enterprise. A bad snow year and the resulting stretch of difficult town politics became untenable and the idea of trail building on a friend’s large property was looking pretty good.”

Landon was happily building trails near his house in Hope, Maine when he saw that GPMCT was looking for a new ED, and was impressed by an organization that took stewardship seriously enough to have a modern tractor. The rest is history.



If you haven’t used the new Google Wildlands Map (created by Leah Page), you can find it here. Point your smartphone at the QR code above. In the key on the left of the screen you can toggle what you want to see. For example, you can turn the contour lines on or off.

drainage ditches where fill from outside the Wildlands was brought in.

In managing the Wildland's forests, one of the main challenges is the invasive beech bark scale insect and its accompanying fungus that decimate the American beech. These diseased beech are significantly altering the forest by reproducing so rapidly that they crowd out other species. Without intervention, parts of the Wildlands will evolve into stands dominated by diseased beech.

Managing Russian olive, autumn olive, knotweed and beech bark scale insects

A combination of several mowings and spot herbicide application was used on Russian olive in 2012 & 13 and it was successfully eradicated. We have also used spot herbicide application on autumn olive, and this past summer used mechanical methods (digging and cutting) to remove

it. It is tentatively under control, but because the shrub germinates easily, cutting can cause it to spread. We are monitoring it at present and expect some of the larger roots may require herbicide application.



MNAP Invasives Guide

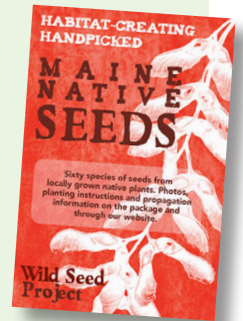
The Maine Natural Areas Program has just published an excellent new guide, *Invasive Plants in Maine*. The 3.75x8" field guide covers 46 species of terrestrial and wetland invasive plants and is waterproof, pocket-size, and ring-bound to allow for future additions. Each species account includes key identification characters, growth form, habitats invaded, control methods, similar native and non-native plant species, and current status of the plant in Maine. This is an excellent reference for any landowner to identify and deal with invasives on their

land. **Invasive species are the second-greatest threat to global biodiversity after loss of habitat.** Invading plants outcompete native species by hogging sunlight, water, nutrients, and space. They change animal habitat by eliminating native foods, altering cover, and destroying nesting opportunities. To buy the field guide or find out more about invasives, go to the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) website <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/> If you want to help document invasives, or see where they are, IMap has a great interface, also accessible on the MNAP website.

Invasives in Your Yard

The positive, fun part of the invasive species issue is getting to know, understand and plant native Maine plants and seeds to create habitat for other native species and combat invasives at the same time. Many native plants are available from spring plant sales at county Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Fedco Trees & Shrubs. Wild Seed Project sells 60 species of native seeds and publishes a magazine full of information on reestablishing native ecosystems:

<https://wildseedproject.net/>



This past summer we used herbicide on two single knotweed plants and one small area about twenty feet square, all of them in or next to water courses where any mechanical disturbance is likely to send plant material that can regenerate downstream. Their location is of special concern because of knotweed's predilection to take over water courses very quickly. Although the patch, which is near the bank of Hot Hole stream, was treated experimentally with salt and vinegar and covering with a tarp, the treatment was ineffective and we concluded that both salt and vinegar, so close to the stream, may be toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms.

For forestry purposes, we have treated several stands of small, diseased beech with herbicide manually applied to a small section of bark. We have also treated freshly-cut stumps of beech to prevent root-sprouting and further proliferation of diseased trees. Last year, our forester, Roger Greene experimented with "high-stump" cutting (the tree stem is cut at waist height to prevent viable sprouts from growing) with promising results. He thinks it's about 80% effective, depending on the amount of sunlight the stems get. It may be a reasonable alternative to herbicide treatment, but running chainsaws with high levels of exhaust and oil emissions for hours at a time has its own environmental impact.

The future

The management of invasives is evolving and we will likely change our practices as other treatments and best practices are developed. We are watching closely as two other species of insects invade Maine, the woolly adelgid, which attacks hemlocks, and the emerald ash borer.



Jennifer Riefler, Dave Doherty, Rosie Pointer and Andy Peake getting a sign just right.



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