



Sheepscoot Log

Newsletter of the Sheepscoot Valley Conservation Association

Fall 2010

12 Rivers Collaborative Hires Coordinator

The Sheepscoot Valley Conservation Association is acting as the lead land trust and fiscal agent for a new effort among 10 midcoast land trusts called the 12 Rivers Conservation Collaborative. Named for the number of river systems that extend from the Kennebec estuary to the western shore of Penobscot Bay, this project seeks to accelerate the pace of land conservation by bundling smaller projects into a larger effort in order to attract new funding sources. We are happy to announce that 12 Rivers has recently received a grant for \$17,000 from the Horizon Foundation to hire consultants to help us frame our work and move it forward more quickly.

The funds have allowed the SVCA to hire **Marcel Polak** as the part-time Coordinator for the 12 Rivers project. Marcel has been involved with land trusts and the environment for over 30 years. He was the co-founder and longtime executive director of the Mahoosuc Land Trust in Bethel, Maine and co-founder and director of the



Androscoggin

River Watershed Council. Currently, he owns his own business consulting for private buyers, land trusts and state agencies on land conservation projects and acquisitions and is an advisor for the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions advising municipalities on development of open space plans and on local funding options to protect wildlife habitat. He has a Master's Degree in Natural Resource Management and Administration.



Read Braggier

The 12 Rivers Conservation Collaborative is working to protect forestland in midcoast Maine.

Recently, Marcel and Maureen represented the 12 Rivers Collaborative at a meeting at the Wells Reserve entitled: "Regional Conservation Partnerships: Answering the question together in our own ways – how will we double the rate of land protection?"

Collaborative groups from across New England and New York attended to share their successes and tribulations. Many have experienced the same issues 12 Rivers will likely face – helping organizations of different size and capacity work cooperatively; approaching nontraditional partners to increase land protection; incorporating the

needs and desires of local municipalities, and more. It was heartening to hear of the great successes that many long-standing projects have accomplished and sets a high bar for our local effort.

"Step back and take a deep breath. Did you like it? Would you like to keep doing it? Then this is why we need to protect our forests."

- Heard at the recent Regional Conservation Partnerships Meeting

Our mission is to conserve the natural and historic heritage of the Sheepscoot Watershed through land protection, habitat restoration, advocacy, education and support for compatible land uses.



2010

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The Sheepscoot Valley Conservation Association is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

From the President



Dear Members and Friends,

Thanks to your loyal and enthusiastic support, I'm pleased to report that 2010 has been another year of achievement for the SVCA. Several important parcels including an addition to our Trout Brook Preserve came under permanent protection. Efforts to engage the community around the Sheepscoot Bog, a key Focus Area, got underway. Volunteers and staff developed a very successful Geocaching contest on our seven public preserves. The SVCA's 2nd Champagne on the Sheepscoot fundraising party was hugely successful, raising more than \$10,000. And, most recently, nearly a mile of new trail opened at the Bass Falls Preserve in October.

Behind the scenes, Board and Staff continue the drive toward Accreditation, a process that once completed, will make the SVCA an even stronger organization. On behalf of all of us at the SVCA, I hardily congratulate the Coastal Mountains Land Trust and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust on receiving Accreditation. We appreciate the huge commitment of time and energy it takes by both staff and board to achieve this important stamp of excellence.

Fiscally, 2010 has proven to be another difficult year for the Nation's economy and consequently a challenging one for the SVCA's annual budget. During the last quarter, we have been watching our expenses very carefully and omitting items that won't effect our operations. At the same time, we are leaving no stone unturned in our search for revenues. If you haven't renewed your support yet this year, please do so. It is really important. Members' support ensures that our talented and hard working staff have the resources they need to keep the SVCA moving forward.

My fellow Board members and our staff, join me in wishing you a very warm and wonderful Holiday and we hope that 2011 brings you joy and good health.

With deepest thanks for your support,

Honor Fox Sage



When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world. ~ John Muir

Please consider a year-end gift to the Annual Appeal. Our goal is to raise \$6,000 - we are over halfway there.... every bit helps.

“Champagne on the Sheepscot” fundraiser a Success



The Lincoln Academy Jazz Band plays for the crowd from the terrace.

The Champagne on the Sheepscot fundraiser, held on a beautiful fall evening, was well-attended and raised over \$10,000 for SVCA!



Caitie Wronker



Volunteer Bob Springhorn and SVCA board member John Wentzel tending bar.



Folks gathered under the big tent to enjoy hors d'oeuvres.

Caitie Wronker



Bailey Bolen, Gerry Flanagan & Tom Eichler.



Food was prepared by the host committee and Seasons catering.

Caitie Wronker



Maureen and Paul Hoffman get the Champagne ready to pour.



It was difficult to choose only two favorite photos from the many beautiful entries displayed in the barn. See page 5 for photo contest winners.

The SVCA wishes to thank again our hosts - Brett and Priscilla Donham, Ames True Value of Wiscasset and all the generous event Patrons, everyone who bought tickets or donated to the event, the Host Committee and all the hard-working volunteers who helped out, Seasons Catering, Sheepscot Flower Farm, the Lincoln Academy Jazz Band and everyone who entered their beautiful photos in the contest.

Sheepscot River Sturgeon population proposed for listing as Threatened

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Fisheries Service has proposed that five populations of Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*) along the U.S. East Coast receive protection under the federal Endangered Species Act.

The Gulf of Maine population is proposed for listing as threatened, and endangered status is proposed for the Chesapeake Bay, New York Bight, Carolina, and South Atlantic populations. Atlantic sturgeon are large, slow-growing, late-maturing, long-lived, estuary-dependent fish that live the majority of their lives in salt water, but hatch and spawn in freshwater. Historically, their range included major estuary and river systems from Labrador to Florida. The Sheepscot and Kennebec estuaries support the only known reproducing population of Atlantic sturgeon north of the Hudson River. Because the marine range of an individual sturgeon can be very broad regardless of where it originated, threats along the East Coast can affect fish from any of these populations.



Atlantic sturgeon captured during a NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center research survey. Atlantic sturgeon captured alive on the survey are tagged and returned to the water. Photos courtesy of NOAA.

Historical catch records indicate that these fish were once abundant, supporting important colonial fisheries. In the late 19th century, demand grew for sturgeon caviar and the first major U.S. commercial fishery for them developed. This lasted from about 1870 until the 1950s with landings peaking in 1890. The commercial fishery collapsed in 1901 when landings were about 10 percent of the peak. Landings declined to even less in subsequent years, persisting until a moratorium was established in 1998. It is currently illegal to fish for, catch or keep Atlantic sturgeon from U.S. waters.

NOAA's Fisheries Service is accepting comments on the proposed listing through January 4, 2011. To learn more see their website at: http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/press_release/2010/News/NR1025/index.html

***Give a delicious holiday gift from these businesses
that donate a portion of their proceeds to SVCA:***



Big Barn Coffee - Hand crafted coffee, gently roasted in small batches for an exquisite taste experience. www.bigbarncoffee.com



Highland Foods Maple Pepper® - Only the finest natural ingredients, combining the age-old flavor of maple sugar, the zest of black pepper, and ocean fresh sea salt to bring you a deliciously versatile seasoning. Try them once and you'll be coming back for more! www.maplepepper.com

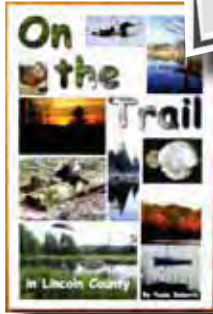
Holiday Gift Ideas that benefit SVCA

Gift Memberships

Starting at \$40

Books & Maps

We offer trail guides, historical musings and pictorial books plus maps of the Sheepscot Watershed.



SVCA Fleece Vests, T-shirts & Hats

Show your support with apparel adorned with SVCA's logo.

T-shirts have original block print designs (below) by a local artist. Available in blue or green sizes S-XL.

Call 586-5616 or see the website for details:
www.sheepscot.org/SVCA_Gifts.htm



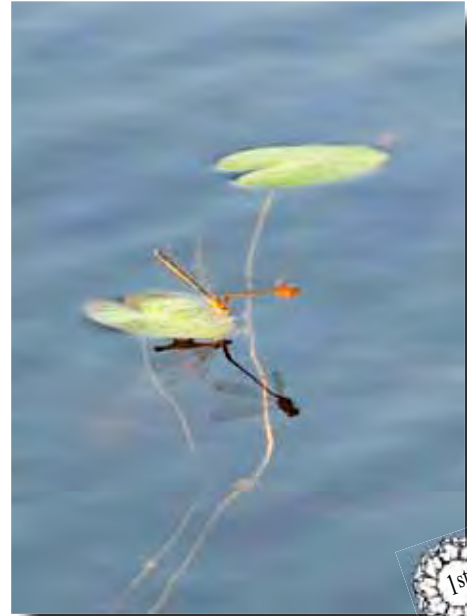
Sheepscot Valley Conservation Association

And, don't forget to shop locally! These local businesses also generously support the SVCA:

- Ames True Value Hardware & Supply in Wiscasset*
- Evergreen Farms in Waldoboro*
- Green Hollow Orchard in Whitefield*
- LeGarage in Wiscasset*
- Lincoln Canoe & Kayak in Freeport*
- Mexicali Blues in Newcastle*
- Mook Sea Farm in Walpole*
- Patagonia Outlet in Freeport*
- Renys in Damariscotta*
- Rising Tide Market in Damariscotta*
- Rock, Paper, Scissors in Wiscasset*
- Sheepscot Flower Farm in Newcastle*
- Sheepscot Valley Brewing Company in Whitefield*
- Treats in Wiscasset*
- Wizard of Odds and Ends Antiques in Head Tide, Alna*

2010 Photo Contest Winners

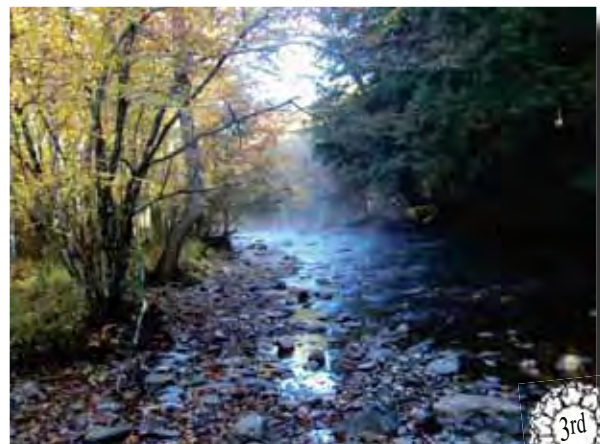
Enter to win in 2011!



"Damselfly Shadows"
by Callie Wronker



"Lunch by the Sheepscot River"
by Katherine Davis



"SVCA Palermo Preserve"
by Michael Eddy Heatley, Jr.

SVCA's GIS Mapping Center is Home at Last

You've probably seen some of the gorgeous regional maps generated at SVCA - perhaps at the office in Newcastle, at the kiosks at our preserves, or maybe in your own town office. And if you've had a few years of volunteer or staff experience at SVCA you may have seen so many of the maps that



Paul Hoffman in the new GIS office space located in SVCA's headquarters on the Sheepscot Road in Newcastle.

you've begun to take them for granted. But of course they don't just fall out of the sky, and just as SVCA itself has grown over the past decade, so its mapping capabilities have followed a rising trajectory.

The SVCA Geographic Information System (GIS) Support Center had its birth in 1999 in the SVCA office located at that time in a 10- by 20-foot space attached to the Head Tide store, with just room enough for three desks, a couple of cabinets, and a little-used computer. High quality mapping software was available, some grant money made it affordable, and volunteers Maureen and Paul Hoffman - she's now executive director and Paul is on the board of directors as well as GIS Center manager - were excited about the prospect of charting the salmon habitat of the Sheepscot watershed.

Thus the center's first relatively modest maps came to be, but as Maureen and especially Paul became more adept at using the software they started looking for additional ways to apply it, such

as layering tax map data onto topographical town maps to help investigate acquisition or easement possibilities in the region. The results constituted a great advance in the combined presentation of natural and property-line data, both for SVCA's purposes and potentially for those engaged in conservation and planning efforts in the wider community. Paul began offering mapping services at nominal cost to other land trusts, and to the towns themselves for such uses as preparing comprehensive plans or shoreland zoning regulations.

Demand grew steadily, and in 2000 the GIS operation moved into a basement office space in Paul and Maureen's Newcastle home that was big enough to accommodate a large professional-grade printer for producing maps up to 42 inches wide. Now in the fall of 2010 the operation has moved again, this time into an upstairs room of the Newcastle office site that SVCA has occupied since 2003. It's a tight fit for that 250-pound, six-foot-long printer, and it took a moving crew to get it in, but everything now is in place and up and running again.

Clients of the SVCA GIS Center 1999 through 2010 include 41 Maine land trusts and conservation bodies, among them the Natural Resources Council of Maine, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Island Trails Association, and the Atlantic Salmon Federation. Twenty midcoast towns also have sought mapping services from SVCA, and "we continue

to receive a steady flow of client requests," Paul says. GIS policy restricts its services to groups or projects that have a conservation purpose. For projects of a purely commercial nature commercial mapping services are available, and SVCA does not compete with them.

"I can't tell you how many meetings I've been in where someone referred to the Center positively, not knowing that I was there," says Maureen. "The GIS Center has given the SVCA a state-wide presence and is widely acknowledged as a model that shows how small land trusts can work together to efficiently offer services at a lower cost."

"The purpose of this latest move is to make the equipment more easily available to all SVCA staff. We also envision making the equipment available to interns interested in developing computer mapping skills."

- Paul Hoffman, GIS Coordinator

Turquoise Trail Open on Bass Falls Preserve



Steve Brooke from LMF, Joe Barth, Jon Lund and Thom McCullough stand near the new kiosk crafted by Joe & Thom.



Nick Barth

Over 30 folks enjoyed the grand opening of the new trail along the Sheepscot River and through beautiful forest.



Natasha Salvo and Kit Hayden admiring "Oakhenge" along the new trail at Bass Falls.

Harbor Seal at Head Tide

by naturalist Lynne Flaccus

On the Saturday before Halloween, a Harbor seal was seen perched on a rock just downstream from the Head Tide Bridge on the Sheepscot River. Looking a bit out of place with a backdrop of downstream rapids it didn't appear too concerned, attentive and alert as cars drove over the bridge. We watched it for about 15 minutes and took photos before it slipped from the rock into the water, vanishing into the dark water. Though we expected it to be gone for good, it was back on the same rock later in the day.



This harbor seal looked a little out of place so far up the Sheepscot River below the Head Tide bridge in Alna.

Others in town also noticed the seal and it was reported to the Marine Animal Rescue Center (MARC) at the University of New England in Biddeford. Whether it was a bit lost, or simply took advantage of the unusually high tides to follow schools

of fish we don't know. It was seen on and off throughout Saturday and was gone by Sunday.

Harbor seals are Maine's most common "Pinniped" (Latin for feather or flipper foot) frequently seen along the near coast from the ice free waters of the north, to NY. In winter months many of Maine's seals may travel as far south as the Carolinas. Though they are primarily coastal species they are known to travel far up coastal rivers into brackish or fresh water, taking advantage of abundant food and haul out spots with little human disturbance.

Though a seal hauling out in an unusual place may simply be a young seal dispersing and finding its way in the world, or an adult exploring new territories following a food source, there are times when seals may exhibit behaviors that are clearly abnormal. At the top of the food chain, seals in the Gulf of Maine accumulate large loads of toxins, from mercury to PCB's, to the PBDE that is found in fire retardants. High concentrations of heavy metals and chemicals can cause neurological symptoms in animals including odd balance, lack of coordination, or weakness. If you find a seal that you are concerned about it is best to observe behaviors from a safe distance and call MARC. They will be able to evaluate whether the behaviors are normal and will coordinate an evaluation or rescue if need be. Assuming a lone seal hauled out is in trouble or getting too close can often lead to unnecessary intervention.

As animals of all kinds prepare for winter and disperse throughout their territories, this seal is a good reminder to always expect the unexpected when observing the natural world!

Marine Animal Rescue Center (MARC)
University of New England
Biddeford, ME

Stranding Hotline - 1-800-532-9551

Inside This Issue

12 Rivers Collaborative	1
From the President	2
Champagne on the Sheepscot	3
Atlantic Sturgeon Listing	4
Holiday Gift Ideas	5
Photo Contest Winners	5
GIS Mapping Center	6
New Bass Falls Trail	7
Harbor Seal at Head Tide	7
Wildlife in the Watershed	8



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If you haven't renewed your membership in 2010 - it's not too late! Your membership renewal date is printed on the mailing label above. Please renew today - we need you!

Protecting 3,180 acres of land through purchases and conservation easements, including more than 15 miles of Sheepscot River frontage.

Wildlife in the Watershed

Winter program series at SVCA



Native Oysters in Maine: Past, Present & Future

Wednesday, January 12 at 6:00 p.m.
by Peter Larson and Dana Morse from
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences

Scenes from the BP Gulf Oil Disaster

Friday, February 18 at 6:30 p.m.
A Photo-Video Perspective by Shawn Carey of
Migration Productions

Wildlife as I See it in Northern New England

Thursday, January 27 at 6:00 p.m.
Amazing wildlife photos and stories from
photographer Katherine Davis
Co-sponsored by Mid-Coast Audubon Society

Great Blue Heron - Maine's largest Colonial Wading Bird

Wednesday, March 9 at 6:00 p.m.
by Danielle D'Auria, Wildlife
Biologist with Maine Department
of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife's
Bird Group & the Heron Observation Network



Eagles, falcons, peregrines and their Conservation

Wednesday, February 9 at 6:30 p.m.
by naturalist Lynne Flaccus of Chewonki
and local falconer Larry Barnes



Coyote ~ America's Songdog

Wednesday, March 23 at 6:00 p.m.
by Conservation Biologist
Geri Vistein of Project Coyote

There is a \$5.00 suggested donation for each program