



WINTER 2021



POLLINATORS TAKE CENTER STAGE AT PARSONS FAMILY PRESERVE

LONG-TERM HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT OFFERS BENEFITS FOR ALL TO ENJOY

Parsons Family Preserve, donated five years ago by the Parsons Family, is now Somerset Woods Trustees' first habitat restoration project - an ambitious 'rewilding' effort under the leadership of Trustee Ann Dorney. As you may know, butterflies, bees and other insects are declining in large numbers and there are many reasons for this. We are working to restore this field with prairie plants that are native to Maine and avoiding pesticides which are contributing to the loss of native bees. Parsons is an unusual place as you start to look at what grows there naturally. There are many plants that are usually seen in prairies which suggests that this may have been a true prairie years ago.

In addition to plantings, we are removing some plants like shrubs and trees that are considered "invasive" and do not belong in Maine. There are also small shrubs and trees that are coming up into the field, which we are trying to remove to help keep it a meadow. We have planted chestnut trees and some rare species of grass and flowers as well; even a native lupine that was used in the past by a butterfly that has disappeared from Maine since the only plant they feed on is this kind of lupine. Parts of the field are temporarily fenced off so that we can replant areas that have lost a lot of their plants. We have put up bluebird boxes (two were used this year by other kinds of birds, but no nesting bluebirds yet - maybe next year).

What can you do to help? Come walk and enjoy watching the many kinds of bees, insects and butterflies (not to mention the wild turkeys, birds, deer and other animals using the field). Most of the summer, we saw five different species of butterflies on the field. Volunteer for one of our work days, or if you cannot make the date and want to help, let us know. Because we want this to be a place for pollinators, we are not allowing any motorized vehicles on the field. We have had ATVs, pickup trucks and dirt bikes on the field - please encourage your neighbors if they have driven them on the field to enjoy a nice walk on Parsons instead. Avoid use of pesticides in your own yard - if we all avoid pesticides, we can keep more of our pollinators alive.

We are making connecting trails with Malbons Woods and the Eddy, and Wesserunsett Stream Preserve, so you can enjoy a longer walk if you like. *(Continued on page 2)*



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

A Walk in the Woods

Another year has flown past despite COVID for us here at Somerset Woods Trustees. We have had a very good year with trail use on our various properties at an all time high.

Jacobs Pines in East Madison, Weston Woods and Waters in Madison and Wesserunsett Stream Preserve in Skowhegan all have seen increased usage with their improved and new trails. Thanks to the many volunteers that have made this possible, particularly John and Janice Malek, Dave Turcotte and Bob Abbott. Young's Wildlife Preserve in Concord has been the beneficiary of new parking and a turnaround thanks to Somerset County. We got the new parking area as a thanks for allowing the county to build the turnaround for plows on our property.

We added two Trustees, Kevin McFadden and Sarah Bigney McCabe this year. Kevin is a science teacher at the high school and a naturalist. Sarah is Outreach Director for the Maine AFL-CIO. Bob Haynes stepped off the Board but continues his work and dedication for us. As you can read on the front page, Trustee Dr. Ann Dorney has embarked on a special project to restore pollinator habitat at Parsons Family Preserve in Skowhegan.

Lastly, Somerset Woods Trustees has lost a benevolent friend, Alfred Jackson of East Madison. Alfred donated most of his beautiful property, about 200 acres, a few years ago. Alfred left some fields and a sustainably managed forest with a native trout stream going through it. We will consider developing light trails on Jackson Woods in 2022.

Thank you to all of our volunteers and supporters. We do this for you and cannot do it without you.

Our very best Seasons Greetings! - *Jack Gibson, President*

Pollinators Take Center Stage

Continued from p. 1

There are lots of berries on Parsons for you to pick (if you beat the bears and wild turkeys). If you would like small trees to plant, we can likely donate some to you or your friends - please ask first. We hope to put a bench under one of the chestnut trees so people can sit and appreciate the beauty of the field.

We hope you will enjoy this space that we are trying to create. There is also a popular geocache on Parsons (not telling you where).



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Somerset Woods Trustees is a nonprofit conservation organization with a mission to protect lands in Somerset County that have significant natural or cultural resources and manage them in a sustainable way for public benefit.

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all photos J. Brockway except as noted



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December 2021

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Dear Friends,

A year ago, I wrote to introduce myself as the new executive director at Somerset Woods Trustees. As a relative newcomer to this organization, I am often startled by its depth of history and humbled by the visionary leadership of our founder, Louise Coburn. In 1927, she took up the hard work of preserving the unparalleled natural beauty that contributes so mightily to our quality of life today. I cannot drive into Skowhegan without a nod of appreciation to her leadership in protecting the town's iconic gateway of towering trees along the Kennebec River.



Nearly 100 years later, we continue to honor, defend and build upon those early investments. With your generous support this year we opened Wesserunsett Stream Preserve, adding to a growing corridor of conservation land extending out from those original parcels along the river. To meet community demand, we expanded and improved our trails not only in Skowhegan but in Madison, East Madison and Concord. We partnered with Skowhegan Outdoors to host more outdoor events and learning opportunities. Year after year, we put your dollars to good use creating a legacy of local land conservation. With your help, we can and will do much more.


I am a staff member at Somerset Woods Trustees, but I am also a donor. Please join me in making a gift to our Winter Appeal, which provides vital income as we rise to face new challenges and meet new opportunities. Consider making your

gift a monthly recurring donation like I do. It is an incredibly impactful way to give to our small nonprofit. One-time and recurring gifts may be made by credit card at our [Web site](#) or by check in the remittance envelope included with your newsletter.

I encourage you to reach out to me if you would like to contribute your time, skills or resources to our projects, or if you have project ideas to share. Reach me at somersetwoodstrustees@gmail.com or by phone at (207) 679-7306.

The importance of permanently conserved land has never been more evident. Join me in supporting these special places and spaces with a gift to Somerset Woods Trustees.

With gratitude,


Jennifer Brockway, Executive Director



WESTON WOODS & WATERS EXPANSION CAMPAIGN

IMPROVING ACCESS, ENHANCING STEWARDSHIP

With your help, SWT will acquire an additional 15 acres to better develop Weston Woods as a community forest for all to enjoy

In just two years, Weston Woods & Waters in Madison has become one of Somerset Woods Trustees' most visited properties. With miles of trails spanning across its 300 acres, the forested peninsula is a year-round destination for local residents and visitors alike. Now, we have opportunity to purchase another piece of the original Weston Farm, and it is a crucial piece for improving public access and meeting our forest stewardship goals.

Located on Route 43, the forested parcel includes road access and a former landing area perfect for development as a trailhead. The parking area plus connector trails to the existing network will allow SWT to better position Weston Woods as a destination for schools, natural resource educators and outdoor enthusiasts. **With recent grant awards from Maine Community Foundation and Davis Conservation Foundation, we are well on our way to success! In fact, we have less than \$20,000 to raise to complete the purchase and improvements.** Please consider adding a campaign gift when you return your Winter Appeal contribution. Every gift takes us closer to realizing our vision for the new Weston Woods & Waters Trailhead by Summer 2022!

Weston Woods & Waters Expansion Campaign \$65K



Increasing access to Weston Woods & Waters is a priority focus for SWT. Improvements made last month, for example, mean the River Trail is now fully accessible for everything from skis to bikes to mobility devices. Thanks to LLBean Maine Land Trust Grant Program at the Maine Land Trust Network for the project support. B. Santiago photo

STEWARDSHIP ROUNDUP

Stewardship volunteers invested hundreds of hours in 2021, improving trails, planting trees, making maps and restoring habitat. Highlights for the year include:

Wesserunsett Stream Preserve Steward Dave Turcotte led trail development on our newest property, featuring challenging terrain and abundant stream views. Access the trails from Evergreen Drive in Skowhegan. Up next: connector trail to SWT's Parsons Family Preserve, Malbons Woods and the Eddy.

Taylor Field Orchard A good crew of SWT volunteers reclaimed the apple orchard at Taylor Field in Skowhegan this fall. Come spring, we will install signs to identify each of the heirloom varieties and continue to manage invasive plants including bittersweet vine, honeysuckle and buckthorn throughout the year. By fall, we hope to be able to celebrate with a community apple harvest! You can best access Taylor Field through the Coburn Woods trail system, or by foot from Norridgewock Avenue.

Eaton Ridge Preserve Two new trails were added to this quiet preserve off East River Road in Skowhegan, offering views of the stream and opportunity for a longer walk. Bridges were also added to protect sensitive streamside habitat.

Jacobs Pines Volunteers Janice and John Malek have developed an impressive network of foot trails, accessed from Lower Mills Road in East Madison. Cedar seedlings were planted on the Lower Mills portion of the preserve, the site of a timber harvest by a prior landowner.

Trail Marks, Maps & Kiosks! Trail users will see fresh paint to help navigate our trails, and fresh maps and trailhead kiosks are on the way thanks to grants from Maine Community Foundation's Conservation for All and the LL Bean Maine Land Trust Grant Program. At Coburn Woods, you'll find fresh markers, trail signs and a kiosk thanks to Eagle Scout candidate Connor Files (see back page of this newsletter).

Want to join the SWT Stewardship Crew?
Email somersetwoodstrustees@gmail.com!



WINTER ACCESS

Several trailhead parking areas will be kept clear of snow this year, thanks to generous supporters. We will provide access updates for additional properties on our [Web site](#) & [social media](#).

Coburn Woods, Russell Rd., Skowhegan

Weston Woods & Waters, Weston Ave., Madison

Canaan Bog, East River Rd., Skowhegan



COBURN WOODS TRAILS

RUSSELL ROAD, SKOWHEGAN

Visitors to Coburn Woods will notice a new kiosk at the Russell Road parking lot featuring a map of the 330-acre property's trail system. The kiosk and map - plus individual trail signs and mini kiosks at the Taylor Field and Coburn Avenue entrances - are the work of Eagle Scout candidate Connor Files of Boy Scout Troop 485.

Coburn Woods boasts an extensive network of trails, including many professionally designed for mountain biking. The trailhead parking is kept open in winter, and the property is enjoyed by many on skis, snowshoes and fat bikes. Winter users are encouraged to share the trails, respect other users, and follow the seasonal restrictions on some uses in order to maintain trail conditions.

Be sure to pause and appreciate Connor's good work when you next visit to hike, bike or ski. Our thanks to Connor and everyone in the community who has supported his efforts.

At right, Eagle Scout candidate Connor Files during the first stage of kiosk construction in November.

