



The Newsletter of the Francestown Land Trust, Inc.

Fall 2025

Trip Report: Francestown Thru-Hike

Celebrating the New Green Corridor—from Pleasant Pond to Crotched Mountain

ON A PLEASANT August day, fellow FLT volunteer Hannah Proctor and I set off on a day hike to catalog Francestown's newly linked green corridor, connected by the recent conservation easement on the St. Jean / Turnpike Trails property, which straddles both sides of Bennington Road.

We travelled north to south, choosing to start at the Shattuck Pond trailhead on Pleasant Pond Road and finish at the Crotched Mountain Town Forest trailhead on Farrington Road. We used an iPhone to track mileage, and we made a few side excursions, so mileage and times referred to below are approximate. Overall, this is a 6½-mile, moderate hike, which touches on some sweet views and offers additional noteworthy links to other blue-ribbon outdoor recreational lands.



The Shattuck Pond trailhead is on the left side of Pleasant Pond Road, about 2 miles from the intersection of Route 47. There's limited roadside parking alongside the grassy bank up to the easy-to-spot trail sign.

Starting out, the trail is well-marked with blue blazes. It borders some nearby private property as it gently climbs through a mixed forest littered with boulders. The trail meanders before flattening out through a hemlock stand. Crossing a small foot bridge at the 1/4-mile mark, the trail dips down before resuming a moderate climb.

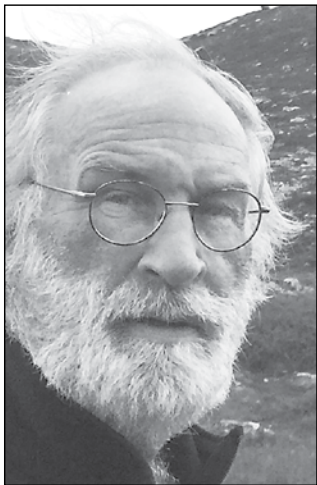
August was dry, so there was no mud or standing water in this area, but there were signs of likely wet spots in other seasons. The woods were unusually quiet except for an outspoken Eastern Wood-Pee-wee high up in the canopy. Otherwise, for this late August hike, it seemed as though most birds had pulled up stakes and moved on.

At the 1/2-mile mark, the trail forks, with a view-trail forking off to the right. We stayed left, through a break in a stone wall, which is the trail to follow toward Shattuck Pond Road. The trail crests a hill to give us our first glimpse of Shattuck Pond shimmering through a stand of red pine. For the next 1/2 mile, the trail winds back and forth, touching the shore of Shattuck Pond. This is a beautiful part of the thru-hike. The forest floor and the trail are carpeted with pine needles, making for a soft and



➔ Trip Report: Francestown Thru-Hike Continued on page 4

A Letter from the Chair



Fall 2025

Dear Friends and Neighbors of the Francestown Land Trust,

This past Summer I attended an outdoor concert featuring traditional New Orleans jazz music. Inserted into one of the music sets was a cover of Paul Simon's *American Tune*. There were all the distractions of an outdoor concert: kids running around and dancing, fireworks going off in the distance—and then, this song, performed with only a single voice and acoustic guitar, silenced the crowd. That evening people knew that they had witnessed something very 'special.' All Summer, whenever I ran into someone who had been at the concert, they brought up this moment, often holding back tears as they remembered that 'special' performance.

The Oxford English Dictionary describes the etymology of 'special' as Anglo-Norman (*special*, *especiall*, *especial*), "denoting a particular or distinctive instance or case of the thing, action, or person specified, specific, exceptional, especially valuable," and, from the Latin (*specialis*), "particular as opposed to general, specific, individual, belonging to or concerned with a particular species, that has particular value, significance, or importance." There are many definitions, but this is the one that suits me: "Exceptional in quality or degree; unusual; out of the ordinary; esp. excelling in some (usually positive) quality; exceptionally good."

When the Francestown Land Trust (FLT) evaluates properties that we are considering purchasing or protecting with an easement, we use a set of guidelines to determine its 'specialness.' These considerations include: water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat and natural ecosystems, recreational, educational, scientific, or scenic value, and its value for forestry or agricultural purposes.

Years ago, we ran a series of articles in *The Francestown News* called 'Saving Special Places' that identified some of these places and called attention to the need to conserve them. Years later, we followed that up with another series called 'Celebrating Special Places,' which provided descriptions of our protected properties and their conservation value. At the peril of devaluing the word 'special,' we are continuing to identify, have acquired, or are working on acquiring even more 'special places.' We are grateful for and thankful to our community for recognizing these places and helping us protect them.

Francestown is a very 'special' place. The all-volunteer FLT organization works with local people to identify and protect land through conservation easements and fee ownership. We strive to preserve forests, wetlands, and agricultural land in perpetuity for recreational and agricultural use and for the protection of wildlife habitat.

Founded in 1986, the FLT currently stewards over 3,000 acres in Francestown and surrounding towns. One of the best ways to get acquainted with our work is to get out on the land and enjoy it. Many of our holdings have well-marked trails and maps are available on our website: francestownlandtrust.org.

We depend on your donations and support. If you'd like to get more involved, our work plan includes invasive plant removal, habitat improvement, trail work, and annual monitoring visits to our holdings. If you're interested, please reach out to us at: info@francestownlandtrust.org.

Larry Ames, Chair
Francestown Land Trust

Did You Know?

The George Holmes Bixby Memorial Library works with the Francestown Conservation Commission (FCC) and the FLT to dovetail their "Read and Ramble" program with JHNS presentation topics. The *Read and Ramble* project posts the pages of a children's book along the *Quarry Loop Trail*, which is located just past the trailhead in the *Crotched Mountain Town Forest*. It's great for children with their parents (and others!) who enjoy reading a story along with a short walk. This past Spring, the library selected and prepared the book: *Soar High, Dragonfly*, by author Sheri M. Bestor and illustrator Jonny Lambert to go along with the the JHNS "Dragons & Damsels" lecture. Then volunteers from the FCC installed a posted sign for each page along the trail.

The library is already busy selecting the perfect book for the next *Read and Ramble* hike to complement the upcoming Fall JHNS program on bald eagles.

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To be notified of upcoming events, contact Hannah Proctor at hqproctor@gmail.com to be added to the email list.

The Orchard Owl

THE OWL WAS perched in a spruce about four feet above the ground in a grove surrounded by 110 acres of apple orchard. I approached it slowly—the owl didn't move. I moved closer until I was able to reach out and touch its soft grey feathers. It opened its yellow eyes but remained still. Something was wrong. This was a very sick owl. I reached up, picked up the owl, put it in my coat, and carried it home.

I was nine years old. Too young to understand that poisons could accumulate up the food chain; that the poison baits left under apple trees to kill meadow voles could also kill owls and other wildlife that feed on the voles. These poisons build up, or bioaccumulate, as predators feed on additional poisoned prey. The poison used to kill the voles was likely warfarin, a first-generation anticoagulant rodenticide. Anticoagulants stop the blood from clotting resulting in death by internal bleeding, organ failure, and hemorrhagic shock.

Today, more potent and persistent Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs), including brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone, and difenacoum, are used throughout the world. SGARs kill mice, but it may take five days for the rodent to die. During this time, mice can be fed on by wildlife predators, allowing the chemicals to pass up the food chain. These highly toxic rodenticides have poisoned eagles, hawks, owls, foxes, fishers, bobcats, and other non-target predators. For example, 100% of 43 red-tailed hawks admitted to Tufts University wildlife clinic from 2017-2019 carried rodenticides. They all died. The death of birds of prey by SGARs is now a grave conservation concern. Further, UNH researchers have found high levels of rodenticides in fishers. Fishers, indicators of forest ecosystem health, have been declining for the last two decades in the Northeast. Children, dogs, and cats are also susceptible to severe poisoning by SGARs.

The federal government now prohibits retailers from selling SGARs. However, they are still available online, as well as to licensed pest control companies. Bills were introduced in the NH House in 2023 and 2024 prohibiting the use of SGARs, but failed to pass.

There are better ways to control mice and rat populations while keeping our wildlife communities, our children, and our pets safe:

- First, exclude rodents by sealing entry points to buildings.
- Second, use snap traps to remove rodents from buildings. These are an effective and humane way to eliminate rodents. Peanut butter or bacon grease work well as baits.
- Third, remove outside food debris and trash that can attract rodents. Cover all trash barrels.

And finally, encourage your neighbors and friends to use safe options for rodent control.



Barry Wicklow

Annual FLT Meeting Focuses on Old Growth Forests

FIFTY-FIVE MEMBERS attended the Annual Franconstown Land Trust Meeting at the Old Meeting House on June 12, 2025. After a social reception and brief business meeting our keynote speaker, Sarah RobbGrieco, Northeast Regional Manager for the Old-Growth Forest Network, provided an animated talk on "Old-Growth Forests: Why They Matter and How to Protect Them."

Sarah described old-growth forests as a network of trees in various stages of progression, a patchwork of craziness, a mosaic of oddly shaped trees, haphazard roots, snags, coarse woody debris, nurse logs, and tip-ups. She explained that this "messiness" only happens when a forest is left alone for a long time with no logging. It's a forest that's complex, both above and below ground and many of the intricacies of this system are still being learned.



Old-growth forests matter because they increase biodiversity and abundance of species, have the capacity to store a huge amount of carbon, which helps to cope with climate change, and provide peaceful havens for boosting human health, well-being and spirituality.

As Sarah explained, the nation-wide Old-Growth Forest Network is working to protect and promote these special places by registering one old-growth forest (or a mature second-growth forest that meets specific criteria) in each county in the U.S. She detailed the features needed for a forest to be registered and noted that New Hampshire currently has two forests registered with the Old-Growth Forest Network, one in Coos County and one in Carroll County. More are on the horizon!

After questions/answers with Sarah, audience members continued to socialize, making it an enjoyable evening for all.



quiet approach along the pond. You will find plenty of spots to pause for a quick water break and to take in the peaceful beauty of this protected pond.

At around the 1-mile mark, the trail peels away from the shore. At this point, we accidentally missed a sharp left and briefly followed a false trail, which quickly dead ended into some brush. We only had to backtrack a short way. This turn is where the trail leaves the pond for the last time.

At about 1.1 miles, the blue trail terminates at Shattuck Pond Road. From our direction of travel this turn can't be missed, but for those traveling south to north, picking up the blue trail off Shattuck Pond Road will require a little more attention. Following our route, thru-hikers should turn left on Shattuck Pond Road, walking toward Old County Road North. There is a landing area cleared at the 1.4-mile mark and at the 1.5-mile mark, an access gate to private property and a field. From here, the trail follows the road on a steady and moderate downhill track. At 2.1 miles, the trail hits Old County Road North and faces the Fracestown Land Trust property directly across the road. The thru-hike trail jogs right, briefly following the road before turning left (at the telephone pole), to pick up the foot trail as it crosses a bridge over Collins Brook. The Collins Brook crossing is just upstream from one of Fracestown's few swimming holes. We took a quick break here to enjoy the brook. Fracestown's green corridor is more than just open space. Conserved land creates buffer zones for important water bodies and headwaters like Collins Brook, protecting clean water and thriving ecosystems for future generations.

Setting off again on the thru-hike trail, we crossed a foot bridge and picked up the well-marked St. Jean Trail, which goes off to the left for a steady but moderate climb up a winding path. The trail flattens out and crosses a small foot / bike bridge. Again, for our late August hike, everything was quite dry.

At just over 2.5 miles, thru-hikers will leave FLT property and cross onto private land via the Chasing Cars trail. This is the

St. Jean / Turnpike Trails property that was recently put under a conservation easement funded through the generosity of the landowners, Jim and Cindy St. Jean, along with grants from the Fracestown Conservation Commission and the New Hampshire Moose Plate Program, and through the generous donations made to the FLT's Green Corridor campaign. The property is not only the keystone, completing Fracestown's conservation green corridor, but a significant recreational asset, containing an extensive trail network suitable for walking and mountain biking. The trails on this property are superbly maintained for mountain bikers, so hikers will enjoy solid foot bridges and well-marked and maintained trails.

At approximately 3 ¼ miles, the Turnpike Bike Trails cross Route 47. Once (carefully) across the road, thru-hikers should turn left and follow the trail that parallels Route 47 on your left and the driveway to the parking area on your right. This trail will then bear right, across the driveway and a nice foot / bike bridge, to pick up a mountain bike trail called Get-Away Car. This trail ascends and winds to the left before coming to a fork in the path, just as Campbell Hill Road comes into view. The fork is a bike loop—either direction works—but stay to the right to follow the most direct route to Campbell Hill Road.

At Campbell Hill Road, thru-hikers reach the 3.85-mile mark. Turn right and follow the road a few hundred yards, at which point the pavement ends. Once on the dirt road, take the first left picking up Bullard Hill Road. Stay to the right, not the driveway to the left. The first stretch of Bullard Hill Road is bordered on the right by the Jack and Margaret Hoffman Sanctuary, which is protected as "forever wild" by the Northeast Wilderness Trust. Forever wild land management is minimal to non-existent. Among other restrictions, the land will never be logged and is posted no hunting. This ecologically vibrant land hosts two large beaver ponds that feed into Brennan Brook, part of the Merrimack River watershed. The wetlands on the property are ranked among the highest quality habitat in the region.

At 4 ¼ miles, the thru-hike reaches the trailhead for the Schott Brennan Falls Reserve. For hikers willing to take the excursion, the trail to the waterfall is approximately ½ mile from the trailhead and passes a very pretty marsh area.

Trip Report: Fracestown Thru-Hike Continued on page 5



Joan Hanchett Nature Series

A BIG THANK YOU to the numerous people who work behind the scenes to make the twice-a-year *Joan Hanchett Nature Series (JHNS)* happen! In addition to the Fracestown Land Trust, the series is sponsored by the Fracestown Conservation Commission, the George Holmes Bixby Memorial Library, and *The Fracestown News*.

New JHNS Children's Program Brings Nature to the Fracestown Elementary School

THE JOAN HANCHETT NATURE SERIES (JHNS) has long been a favorite lecture series in Fracestown. Named in honor of beloved librarian Joan Hanchett, the series invites experts to come and present on all kinds of nature and wildlife topics.

Recently, the supporters of this series (see above) decided to embark on an additional *JHNS Children's Program* to bring nature instruction and activities directly to the children at the Fracestown Elementary School (FES).

The first *JHNS Children's* event took place during the *FES Outdoor Lions Learning Day* last June and was attended by all

children in grades K through 4. Homeschooled children were also invited and welcomed.

Slater Roosa from NH Audubon presented "*Scales, Scutes and Skins*," a program about reptiles. Over the course of two 30-minute sessions, the children listened attentively to facts and stories about reptiles, eagerly asked questions, and got an opportunity to feel the 'scutes' and 'skin' of the two live ambassadors, a painted turtle and a python snake.

The program was a resounding success by all accounts and planning is already underway for this year's Fall activity!

A Gathering to Say *Thank-You*

ALWAYS MOTIVATED TO find a reason to take a moment away from their chores, the FLT board members gathered informally on the Toll Booth Tavern deck on Friday, August 8th to celebrate Linda Lindgren, recipient of our latest *Robin Haubrich Volunteer Award*. Initiated last year, this award recognizes outstanding FLT volunteers.

We were pleased to present a stunning colored pencil painting of Brennan Brook created and gifted by Francestown artist Martine Villalard-Bohnsack.

Ms. Lindgren has provided professional editorial assistance on the biannual FLT Newsletter, the Annual Fund Letter from the Chair, and other articles needing a critical eye. She has worked “behind the scenes” with FLT for close to 15 years, ensuring our writing meets a consistently high level of excellence.

We appreciate Linda’s assistance over these many years and are thankful that she remains “on-board.”

Thank you Linda!



Trip Report: Francestown Thru-Hike *Continued from page 4*

For the thru-hike, Bullard Hill Road starts to climb steeply for another $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, marking the hike’s hardest section. On our hike, we needed to step off the trail twice to allow for passing dirt bikers, who courteously slowed and waved as they passed.

Bullard Hill Road tops out at the intersection of the Mountain Road, which heads off to the right. This is the site of Francestown’s “lost village” and features cellar holes from an 18th-century settlement. There is also a lovely high field here, private property, which allows for sneak peaks of Mt. Monadnock and a very scenic view of Crotched Mountain’s eastern shoulder.

As a grand-slam side journey, and for the most adventurous thru-hikers, the Mountain Road trail is a gateway to the 900-acre Crotched Mountain Town Forest. Heading west, the Mountain Road reaches the East Summit Trail about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from Bullard Hill Road. From there, hikers can venture up to the Crotched Mountain summit and cross to descend the West Summit Trail, or even continue on to the Bennington trail systems, which circle back to the West Summit trail via Shannon’s Trail and the Lower Link trail.

The thru-hike itself stays on Bullard Hill Road and from the Mountain Road intersection starts down a somewhat steep decline. The road is loose stone and gravel here so take the descent slowly. Walking sticks might be helpful. As the road flattens out, hikers are treated with impressive views of the Wapack Range beyond picturesque cattle-grazing fields.

At 5.6 miles, Bullard Hill Road connects with the Crotched Mountain Town Forest, with Scot’s Trail on the

right. Scot’s Trail is another opportunity to take a side trip into the Crotched Mountain Town Forest, where a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ mile loop passes a meadow, a beaver pond, cellar holes, hemlock stands, vernal pools, and mountain views.

Continuing down Bullard Hill Road, at the 6-mile mark is an intersection with a trail that splits into the West and East Summit trails on the right and the Link Trail to the parking lot on the left. From here, Bullard Hill Road continues out to Farrington Road.

For the thru-hiker it’s a fielder’s choice between the Link Trail out to the Crotched Mountain Town Forest parking lot or the last $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of Bullard Hill Road out to Farrington Road and then a left down to the same parking lot.

Start to finish, the Francestown green corridor thru-hike from Pleasant Pond Road to Farrington Road is about 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The mix of trails includes something for everyone who enjoys the serenity and beauty of New England forests. In addition, thru-hikers have several opportunities to add to their hike with excursions on Francestown’s adjoining trail systems.

In addition to providing a delightful day hike, the continuous green corridor provides the benefits of contiguous habitat for wildlife and is made possible by the collaborative efforts of the broader Francestown community,

including the FLT, the Conservation Commission, private landowners, volunteers, and generous donors. We invite you to enjoy this fun hike and further discover the variety of our Town’s extraordinary outdoor resources. ●



Tim Coffin

Three New Benches Invite Lingering in Special Places

A SURPRISE AWAITS you on three properties owned by the Francestown Land Trust (FLT). FLT Board members, with the help of David Gleason, have assembled and put in place comfortable benches in the Rand Brook Forest, the Schott Brennan Falls Reserve, and the Collins Brook Headwaters for folks in our community to enjoy.



The bench at the Rand Brook Forest meadow, donated by Marsha Dixon, was the first to be assembled. A group of five carried the bench to the chosen location, where they dug holes for the cement footings, and clipped and pruned vegetation to ensure perfect viewing. The Rand Brook Forest trailhead is located at the parking lot at the end of Old County Road South. It is a 514-acre property acquired by the FLT in separate parcels, (Hardwick, Lorden, Turner, Paige and Seamans), between 1999 and 2016. Check out the kiosk at the parking lot for the history of this diversified, conserved forest. There are two ways to reach the meadow: a grassy open roadway or a wooded trail (with sign) off to the right shortly after starting down the road. Both lead to the bench and a welcome place to sit overlooking the meadow and the Lyndeborough mountain range. It is well worth the 2-mile round-trip hike to rest in the beauty of natural surroundings.

The second bench was installed at the Schott Brennan Falls Reserve and was donated by Bev Abbot, who lives in the area and has enjoyed walking the forest with her family since early childhood. The 149-acre Schott Brennan



Falls Reserve is located a short walk down Bullard Hill Road off Campbell Hill Road. This bench installation was a bit more challenging as trail access was limited. Chief Larry Kullgren offered our crew his time and the Francestown Fire Department's backwoods rescue vehicle to drive the bench and other materials to the site. Once again, the crew of five secured the bench in place and, once



FROM TOP: Collins Brook Headwaters | Butterscotch, David Gleason's dog quietly sitting by the bench | David Gleason assembling bench in his workshop | Chief Larry Kullgren with the Francestown Fire Department's off-road vehicle bringing bench to Brennan Falls Reserve | Greg Neilley and David Gleason installing bench at Brennan Falls Reserve | Ken Houston, Marsha Dixon and Ben Haubrich at Collins Brook Headwaters



again, with a feeling of camaraderie. Situated with a view of Schott's Pond and the wetlands, one can sit and enjoy watching beavers and other wildlife. The round-trip hike to Schott's Pond is about 1.5 miles. Brennan Falls is a short walk beyond the pond and particularly lovely in the spring when the water is running after the winter snow melts.

The third bench is an anonymous

gift, and is located at Collins Brook Headwaters, a 100-acre parcel acquired in 2017 in a collaborative effort between the FLT and the Francess town Conservation Commission. The acquisition expanded the Shattuck-Dinsmore land protection initiative. It protects the headwater streams of Collins Brook, two ponds, and numerous wetlands. In 2015, the NH Fish and Game plan identified 40 acres of the property as the “highest-ranked wildlife habitat in the state.” To find the bench, take Schoolhouse Road past the Crotched Mountain Golf Course and then take the first right onto Wilson Hill Road. Approximately ¼ mile on your right is an FLT sign where a ¼ mile trail leads to a beautiful, protected pond area. Collins Brook Headwaters collects water from smaller tributaries like Dinsmore Brook and the outlet of Shattuck Pond. It then joins the South Branch of the Piscataquog River in Francess town, all a part of the Merrimack River watershed. Take a picnic with a friend and enjoy the bench overlooking the beautiful pond in a rural setting, just minutes from your home. This bench is easily accessible to all ages and a perfect place to develop family memories.

What a fun project for FLT Board members in collaboration with volunteers and donors to provide community benches overlooking the forests, meadows, mountains and wetland ponds, which are all such an important part of the fabric of Francess town.

Marsha Dixon



Elizabeth Lavalley, Patti Long and Kathy Byrne at Rand Brook Meadow

Donor Appreciation Reception

ON SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 21ST, more than 40 supporters of the FLT gathered for an afternoon reception to celebrate the history and future of the organization.

Board members engaged with donors to thank them for their support in achieving two important milestones in the FLT journey.



- 1) The successful completion of the 2024 / 2025 Green Corridor Campaign, which raised the funds needed to acquire a conservation easement on a critical 55-acre parcel surrounded by other conserved land. This keystone property creates a “green” corridor of hiking trails within Francess town, and the region, by linking together major conserved blocks of land, including the Shattuck Pond Town Forest, St. Jean / Turnpike Trails, and the Crotched Mountain Town Forest.
- 2) The formal launch of the “Abigail Arnold Legacy Society” to recognize and honor those who plan to leave a bequest in support of FLT’s mission. Planned giving is an impactful way to help the FLT continue to protect our forests, farms, and waterways and honor a donor’s personal vision for Francess town’s flourishing future.



Guests at the receptions included individuals from various generations with long-standing connections to Francess town, who shared their stories with newer residents. The common thread for all was appreciation for our town’s wonderful quality of life.

Tables of delicious baked goods, appetizers, and drinks tempted from under a blue-bird sky and a view of Crotched Mountain made for a wonderful afternoon gathering.

Thank you to everyone who attended and to all our donors and volunteers for your ongoing support of the FLT mission.

For a current listing of future community events hosted by the FLT, please visit our website at francesstownlandtrust.org

Tim Coffin



**FRANCESTOWN
LAND TRUST**

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UPCOMING EVENT



Joan Hanchett Nature Series *presents*

Resurgence of Bald Eagles in New Hampshire

WHEN: Friday November 17, 2025 at 6:30pm

WHERE: Francestown Town Hall

PRESENTER: Chris Martin



Photo by Jack Dorsey

The Joan Hanchett Nature Series (JHNS) is a free program for adults and children of all ages. It is sponsored by the Francestown Land Trust, George Holmes Bixby Memorial Library, The Francestown News, and the Francestown Conservation Commission.

Photo by Mark Cronin



DID YOU KNOW that the Bald Eagle has rallied from a serious decline in population in the 1940s to a point of respectable numbers? Come join us while we learn about the dramatic bald eagle population recovery in New Hampshire and the management efforts and partnerships that have helped eagles.

Chris Martin has been a raptor biologist for NH Audubon for more than three decades. His work focuses on recovery of the state's endangered and threatened raptors in close collaboration with NH Fish & Game. He recruits, trains, and supervises an enthusiastic corps of NH Audubon volunteer field observers who monitor these species all across the state.