

AVIS Update

The Andover Village Improvement Society (AVIS) is a non-profit land trust. Founded in 1894, AVIS is one of the oldest land trusts in the United States. AVIS' mission is to acquire and preserve Andover land in its natural state. More than 1,000 acres of land are managed by AVIS and are open to all for passive recreation.

Vol. 113, Issue 1 **Andover Village Improvement Society** • PO Box 5097 • Andover, MA Spring 2006
Jane Gossard and Marta Hornidge, Editors

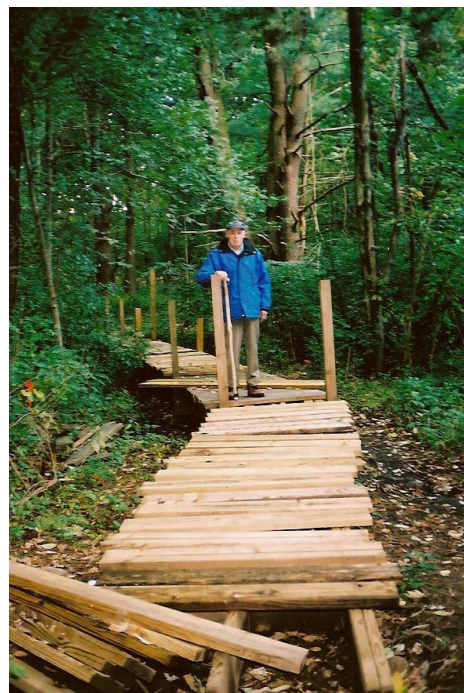
Ten Years of Editing!

by Marta Hornidge

For the past ten years on certain Mondays Jane and Marta could be spotted at Jane's kitchen table surrounded by AVIS pictures, past copies of *Update* and articles recently written by members. Our job was to put all this together and, of course, try to locate an appropriate picture. A pattern was eventually worked out making the whole process easier. Jane never failed to remind us, "Don't forget, a picture is worth a thousand words!" Keeping abreast with AVIS progress has been challenging but fun. Much has happened—far more than can be included in this article—but here are some of the highlights and a couple of our favorite pictures.

AVIS membership has increased and now stands at 1,267 paid members. 88 members have become life members, an easy way to avoid yearly dues. Last year 250 people joined AVIS.

AVIS has acquired about 5 reservations, some pieces have added to existing reservations, and some very lovely land is new to AVIS. The 28 AVIS reservations now include 28 miles of trails and approximately 1,100 acres owned or managed by AVIS. Watch out Mr. Cormier!



The Land Management Committee has blazed new trails, repaired old boardwalks and built new ones—often with Eagle Scout help. A hiker can trot right across some of the swamps now. Saturday clean-ups have been frequent.

Our first lawsuit! Palmer and Dodge represented us on a pesky but successful lawsuit. We won the case, adding needed money to our treasury. Nat Smith (our former president) followed the proceedings carefully, was happy with the outcome, but hoped it would never happen again. Who will dare cut trees on AVIS property now?

AVIS and the Andover Trails Committee printed the third edition of the Trails book which outsold even *The daVinci Code* at the Andover Bookstore's Christmas sales. AVIS also printed an updated Andover map showing all AVIS reservations—a big job!

And so much more! So many talented and informed people have helped. Alerting our membership to AVIS doings has been an enjoyable challenge. Now, as we turn *Update* over to the capable hands of Peggy Kruse, we thank all who have helped us to produce this newsletter during our tenure as its editors.

Annual Meeting: Being Wild in Andover/Farewell to Kathy and Marta

by Jane Gossard



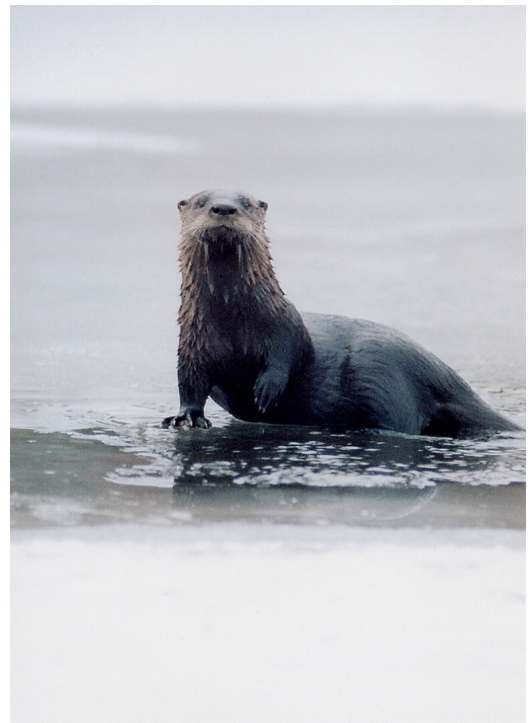
Speaker Kevin Talbot

Members attending Annual Meeting this year were delighted by an outstanding slide presentation given by Warden Kevin Talbot (Shawsheen Road Reservation). Kevin, a member of the Shawsheen River Watershed Association, has spent many hours on the Shawsheen River enjoying the wildlife there, and working to clean it up (they have pulled over 1000 tires from the river). An employee of the Andover Post Office on Stevens Street, Kevin spends his lunch hours photographing the creatures who make their homes on the Shawsheen no more than a hundred yards from where many of us go to mail our letters. The animals have come to know him, and as a result he has some amazing shots of wildlife. We actually saw a bat's tonsils as it was hissing at his camera, baby goslings with their parents, great blue herons with speared fish in their mouths, and a full-body shot of a river otter posing on shore for the camera! Kevin's message was simple. There is a whole wild world that exists all around us, if only we can stop for a minute, be still and open our eyes, ears and our hearts to it. He encouraged people to get out on the river in canoes and kayaks (the Shawsheen River Watershed Association has them for your use) and enjoy the beauty there. He also encouraged us to step up and help to keep the river clean by joining SRWA work parties (See SRWA website shawsheen.org or contact Andy Girdwood, AVIS representative to SRWA). Thank you Kevin for a great program! (Kevin's photos can be enjoyed at his website: ghostflowers.com)

We also said "thank you" and "farewell" to Marta Hornidge and Kathy Dietz, retiring trustees (see articles pp. 3 & 4) and welcomed two new trustees: Marcia Sharp and Chris Vrontas (p. 4). Peggy Keck and Matthew Dallet gave tribute speeches for Marta and Kathy, and Jane Gossard read a poem in Marta's honor, illustrated by Fran McCormick and framed by the board of trustees (p.3). AVIS also gave certificates of appreciation to four boy scouts who have done considerable work on AVIS lands: Greg Wilbur, Michael Anciello, Dave Ramsdell, and Michael Stewart (see AVIS Tidbits). Thank you to trustee Libby Poland who organizes this evening of fun, food and fellowship each year!



Heron with fish—photo by Kevin Talbot



*Otter on the Shawsheen River
photo by Kevin Talbot*

Farewell and Thank You to Trustee Marta Hornidge

from the text of Peggy Keck's speech with words from Nat Smith

Marta is a teacher, intrepid hiker, mountain climber, kayaker, talented writer, photographer, cookie baker par excellence, and best of all a devoted and enthusiastic AVIS trustee and friend...She has been a vital part of every AVIS activity and event, from cultivating blueberries to nurturing bluebirds, from being warden for the Skug River Reservation to grilling hotdogs in the middle of Lupine Road (yes, that actually happened!), and in the process producing dozens of cookies for every occasion. I'd guess she has made hundreds, maybe thousands of cookies over the years, that were not only good, but also good for you.



Nat Smith sums up Marta's contribution to AVIS with these words, "Marta has a childlike love of life, one full of energetic curiosity, physical exuberance, eternal optimism and contagious laughter. She has brought to the board her boundless enthusiasm for conservation, her organizational energy, timely writing, willingness to do whatever was needed, her deep knowledge of all the reservations, and delightful candor in her approach to solving problems."

Marta (Peggy continues) knows the AVIS reservations in an intimate way that not many people do because she walks and explores them on an almost daily basis and at all seasons of the year. She has introduced many people to the beauties of a reservation by taking them on a hike or inspiring them with her writing. Not only have she and Jane Gossard put together a lively newsletter twice a year for many years, but Marta also provided many of the photographs that made it interesting. Many of you may remember some of the colorful and descriptive articles she wrote about AVIS for the Townsman over a period of years. Perhaps some of you may have joined AVIS or were inspired to explore a reservation as a result of reading her essays. Marta's own words convey best her perception and deep appreciation of the natural world around her:

Autumn trails are crowded with leaves of myriad shades of yellow and red, an Oriental carpet. No squirrel or bird moves undetected in the crackling leaves. While sitting on a rock overlooking the soap stone quarry in the Skug Reservation, I even heard, before I saw, a caterpillar, as noisy in the rustling leaves as a squirrel.

Walk into boggy areas to see the brightest colors: tawny cinnamon ferns, thickets of deep red blueberry, and brilliant red maples. But be careful! Don't be tempted to pick the spectacularly colorful three-leafed vine that encircles trees; poison ivy leaves are just as potent, though far more beautiful, in the Fall than during summer. This month is surely a magical time to visit the woods.

Where will we find another who can write so eloquently? Thank you Marta for all you have done for AVIS, and from all of us who have had the pleasure of working with you.

The Guardian for Marta



photo by Kevin Talbot

On strong legs she walks
the woods and meadows,
steps sprightly on leaves
and roots and rocks,
stops suddenly to listen.

A red-winged blackbird
"urees" across the thawing
pond. The great blue heron,
legs dangling, wings out
over the reeds, a harsh cry.
Deep in the forest dark
still pools are singing.
Wind breathes in the pine.

She passes near the den of
the kits birthing, notes where
the deer have lain in the snow,
follows the tracks of the big cats,
the wandering trails of coyote.
Her wild heart stands with the bears.
Nestlings know her hands.

Delicate unfolding of flowers,
droplets shining on young
leaves, orange moon rising,
soft fur of first frost – she
sees all. In winter, as she skis
through snowfall's silent
whiteness, her eyes hold
clear skies, and the memory
of sun-spark on water.

Jane Gossard 2/20/06

Farewell and Thank You to Trustee Kathy Dietz

by Jane Gossard



If I had to choose one word to characterize trustee Kathy Dietz's contributions to AVIS it would be "generous." During her tenure as a trustee she has been generous with both her time and her talents (which are many). One of the delightful things that happened when Kathy took responsibility for the annual dues mailings were artistic, sometimes clever, and always inviting requests to send in your annual dues. I would guess that most folks, like myself, have looked forward to her annual letter, wondering what she would come up with next to inform and entertain us while asking us to send money! As trustee in charge of new members, Kathy implemented two town-wide mailings to solicit new members. Her last effort yielded 252 new members for AVIS. Kathy has given her support and advice to AVIS planning and fund-raising efforts and has graciously opened her home for AVIS events. Of course, Kathy has attended countless trustee meetings where she has taken an active interest in whatever may be the issue of the day. Matt Dallett paid tribute to her wisdom with these words, "You can always count on Kathy to recognize a hair-brained scheme when she sees one!" Perhaps what we all know best about Kathy is her love for the land and growing things. She is warden of Sunset Rock Reservation and has worked hard there to clear new paths. Anyone who has read the AVIS newsletter over the years has seen her many times. This is because she has been so active at clean-ups. She has this radiant smile that lights up her face, especially when she is digging in the dirt. We just haven't been able to resist photographing her again and again. Thank you, Kathy, for all you have given to AVIS, we wish you well in whatever your next endeavor may be!

AVIS Tidbits

Foundation Grants – AVIS received an \$8,510 grant in 2004 and a \$5000 grant in 2005 from the "Bessie P. Goldsmith Fund" at The Boston Foundation. These funds were used to maintain and improve Goldsmith Woodlands and the access from Rt. 28, including the installation of a new parking area, a new fence and shed, tree removal, snowplowing and tool rental and repair.

Invasive Interest – Botanist Walter Kittredge, AVIS hike attendee, is very knowledgeable and interested in identifying invasive plants for removal which could lead to a grant request.

Neighborhood Volunteers – A group of neighborhood volunteers led by trustee Gay Bird created a new trail on the Harris land which is now part of Baker's Meadow. Dick Dillon has also been very helpful as an AVIS volunteer. Thank you!

Eagle Scout Projects – **Michael Anciello** built erosion control steps in Indian Ridge behind the Collins Center and repaired the 400 ft. boardwalk between Indian Ridge and West Parish Meadow. **Dave Ramsdell** cut a new trail on Vale Reservation.

Greg Wilbur built erosion control steps on Bessie's Point in Goldsmith and also on the Harris Parcel. **Michael Stewart** cut a new trail on the Vale Reservation. Thank you Eagle Scouts!

Welcome New Trustees Marcia Sharp & Chris Vrontas



Marcia, a hiker and cross country skier, conditions on AVIS land for summer hiking trips to the Alps with her daughter. She is principal of Millennium Communications Group, serving foundations and non-profit organizations.



Chris, warden of Deer Jump Reservation, writes that his daughters develop entire screen plays involving the "Troll Bridge" over the Merrimack River. He is a lawyer specializing in employment, intellectual property, civil litigation.



*Hard-working Volunteer on Sherman Reservation
photo by Dave Doub*

Come and Enjoy the Sherman Reservation!

by Dave Doub

The Lillian and Christopher Sherman Reservation, our newest acquisition, is “open for business.” Thanks to wardens Patricia and Chip Gregory, John Wragg and a group of AVIS volunteers, a trail now leads from its entrance at 233 Haggetts Pond Road to a three acre meadow tucked behind the homes that front onto Haggetts Pond and High Plain Roads.

AVIS is grateful to the Sherman family for making this acquisition affordable. Lillian Sherman had enjoyed cultivating wildflowers native to New England along the brook that flanks the trail leading to the meadow. Christopher Sherman had kept the meadow cut each year. Realizing that at some point they would have to sell this land, the Shermans encouraged their children to consider preserving the land and suggested that AVIS would be suitable for this purpose. When the land passed into their estate, their son Michael approached AVIS and arranged for the sale at below market value.

Today, the trail through the woods and field beyond beckon visitors to come and enjoy the quiet and solitude of this reservation. While easily accessible for those within walking distance, other visitors will find convenient parking on Hacienda Way. The entrance is located on an access easement across a corner of the neighbor’s yard so visitors are asked to stay on the trail for the first 100 feet. AVIS signs made by Chip mark the entrance to the reservation.

The meadow is one of four that AVIS maintains by cutting several times each year. AVIS is thankful to the Therkelsen’s on Penni lane for providing access to the meadow and helping with cutting the meadow. Meadow habitat enables a diverse composition of wildlife. It’s also ideal for flying kites on a windy spring day.



Dorset Circle access to Bakers Meadow Reservation (photo right): The Harris family generously donated a 1.5 acre lot on Dorset Circle to AVIS, providing a wonderful new

Three New Acquisitions Donated in 2005

photos and captions by Susan Stott

McKenzie Court access to the Sunset Rock Reservation (photo left):

AVIS received a new access to the Sunset Rock Reservation as a result of Planning Board approval of McKenzie Court, off Porter Rd. AVIS has defined the 2200 square foot access with split rail fence and a gravel path.

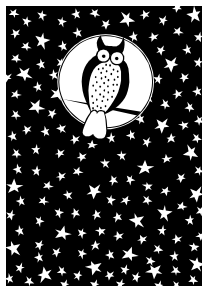


access to the Bakers Meadow Reservation. AVIS has placed an AVIS sign on the street to identify this new addition.

Hay Bale addition to the Nat Smith Reservation (photo right): AVIS received a 5.2 acre addition to the Nat Smith Reservation (formerly Bailey), resulting from Planning Board approval of the Hay Bale subdivision off Bailey Rd. **Thank you to all three generous donors!!!**



Winter Traditions



This year the **Moonlight Ski** was well named. Just after one of the biggest snowstorms of the season ended, a brilliant full moon appeared and 12 hardy skiers set out by its light to ski through Goldsmith Reservation. The group included adults, children and teens. Due to high winds, the warming fire was built in a sheltered spot next to an esker at the beginning of the trail instead of the usual spot in Scout's Hollow. It was a magical evening.

The **Rafton Breakfast** happened on a beautiful winter day with just the right amount of snow for both skiing and walking. Burt Batcheller led the skiers and David Dargie led the walkers. Camaraderie, coffee, hot chocolate and donuts were enjoyed by all.

AVIS New Member Signup (Current members will receive dues notice)

Name		
Address		
Town	State	Zip
Individual membership		\$15
Family membership		\$30
Sustaining membership		\$100
Life membership		\$500
Additional donation		\$
AVIS * P.O. Box 5097 * Andover, MA 01810		

AVIS Calendar

March 18 (Saturday) Boardwalk brush clearing on the Vale Reservation

April 1 (Saturday) Clean-up on Lupine Reservation invasive species eradication fire

April 8 (Saturday) Boardwalk repair on the Keck Reservation 9:00 am. Meet at the entrance across from the State Police barracks. Andy Girdwood 978-475-5253 or Tim Petter 978-749-0649

April 29 (Saturday) Bridge repair on Deer Jump Reservation 9:00 am. Meet at the pumping station. Park at the gate at the end of Bundrett Ave. Strong people are needed to work a pile driver. Nick Orrick 978-682-2317

Warden's Party – late summer or early fall (to be announced)

AMC walks - www.amcboston.org/andover

Please visit our website @ www.avisandover.org for more information and to see this newsletter in color

AVIS
P.O. Box 5097
Andover, MA 01810

Non-profit org.

U.S. Postage PAID

Permit No. 344

Andover, MA 01810