



Spring 2008
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AVIS Update



The annual Rafton hike kicked off with donuts, cocoa ... and a campfire.

Winter outings

A light snow added to the ambiance of the annual Rafton breakfast outing, but did not provide enough of a base for skiing; therefore the 20 attendees enjoyed an outstanding winter hike, including a stop at the Fish Brook viewing platform for a nice view of the frozen brook and beaver dams. This event was lead by Burt Batcheller, David Dargie, and Shelia and Ted Pendleton.

AVIS land acquisition news

- Susan Stott

AVIS is excited to announce that the Sellers Estate has accepted AVIS' offer to purchase 10.5 acres of land on Highland Road. The next step is completion of a purchase and sales agreement, with an expectation of closing before the end of June 2008. More information about this important addition to the AVIS reservations will be in the next Update.

In August, Todd Wacome donated to AVIS a 5,000 ft² parcel at the end of Manning Way. AVIS very much appreciates the donation of



Photos by Peggy Kruse

The annual Goldsmith moonlight outing in February, led by Burt Batcheller and David Dargie, had five skiers and 14 hikers of all ages, a mini-campfire and hot chocolate.

this strategic parcel, as it not only enlarges the Stanley Reservation, but it also will connect the Stanley Reservation to an expected donation to AVIS as part of the Willoughby Estates subdivision.

In February, AVIS enlarged the Wilkinson Reservation by an acre and a quarter. This addition, located off of Foster's Pond Rd., was purchased from Rick Keller when he acquired 4 Foster's Pond Rd.

Land management news

- David Dargie, Land Manager

Thanks to our multitude of volunteers, the AVIS reservations have had many improvements this past fall and winter:

- Eagle Scout candidate Mike Kelly and a crew of 25 restored one of the trails at Baker's Meadow.
- Aline Dargie designed the artwork for the Goldsmith kiosk and Emily Trespas is helping with the Skug River kiosk.
- Eagle Scout candidate Peter Casey constructed the third installment of what will be a 400-ft boardwalk over a large wetland at the Vale Reservation which will create a thru-trail from the MBTA parking lot into the reservation.
- Phillips Academy students trimmed trails at the West Parish Meadow, Indian Ridge, Bakers Meadow and Stanley Reservations.
- At the Skug River Reservation, a group of volunteers led by Dave Doub extended the Hornidge Bridge due to flooding by beaver dams.
- Warden Dennis Crispo relocated the entry trail to the Hammond Reservation due to high water from a 5-ft high dam built by beavers.
- Dick Dillon cleared a new trail at Bakers Meadow on the land that was donated to AVIS by Arthur Kalogianis in 2007. This trail connects Whispering Pines Drive with Homestead Circle.
- At the Burns Reservation, Warden Alan Smeltzer oversaw construction of new bridges built by high school students.
- South Church volunteers trimmed trails and built a set of wooden steps at the Shawsheen River Reservation and Lupine Road Reservation.
- The Free Christian Church, with wardens Dick Dillon and John Wragg, had a work party in November at the Shawsheen River Reservation.
- After years of service, Tom Cronin stepped down as associate warden of the Shawsheen River Reservation. Don Milligan is the new co-warden.



Photo by David Dargie

As a scout project, Erin O'Kelly designed, built and installed six owl nesting boxes at the Goldsmith Woodlands.



Photo by Abby O'Hara

Last spring, after vandals set fire to a bridge in the Purden reservation, Michael O'Hara and his dad, John, repaired the boardwalk.

From the president

- Fred Snell, AVIS President

AVIS outreach continues in many ways. We have been encouraging non-trustees to join AVIS committees to spread the work out and bring in fresh ideas.



I spoke at a State Senate committee hearing in support of a clarification to the law that protects landowners who allow the public to use trails. The change would specify that this law would also apply to utility companies such as National Grid and make it easier to run trails over their land.

Volunteers from AVIS are working with Wood Hill elementary school to get teachers and students out on the reservations.

AVIS is working with other environmental groups to try to influence the design of the I-93 highway interchange between Dascomb Road and Rt. 125. The Sanborn Reservation borders this area and could be impacted greatly by this project.

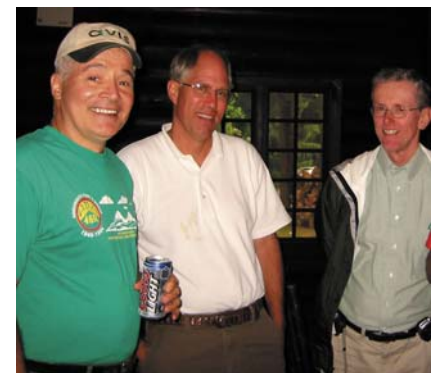
In Memoriam: Dick Hornidge

Dick Hornidge, long-time warden of the Skug River Reservation, passed away this winter. He is remembered with the Hornidge Bridge in the Skug Reservation. AVIS extends condolences to his family and especially to his wife and former AVIS trustee, Marta.

Wardens Picnic 2007



Chip and Pat Gregory, Sherman Reservation wardens.



Photos by Peggy Kruse

Dennis Crispo, Hammond warden; Dave Doub, Trustee; Fred Snell.

AVIS Annual Dinner 2008

John Hess, Glenn Wilson join AVIS board

AVIS welcomes two new trustees to the AVIS board, John Hess and Glenn Wilson. John Hess was a ten year member of the Andover Board of Selectmen. He enjoys skiing and hiking, and, after being appointed to the AVIS board in the fall, has already helped draft a wardens manual and chaired



Glenn Wilson and John Hess, new trustees.
Photos by Peggy Kruse

the Nominating Committee. John says he is “looking forward to a trip to wine country in April with my lovely wife, Kathy.”

Glenn Wilson has been the assistant director of Andover Youth Services since 1999. When

not in the office, he is often outside rock climbing, mountain biking, hiking, snowboarding, cooking burritos, kayaking, whitewater rafting, running from bears, eating burritos, and just looking for adventure anywhere. Glenn says he is “looking forward to contributing to AVIS and continuing AYS’ involvement in keeping Andover’s resources beautiful.”

Alex Chanler retires as trustee

-Peggy Keck

Alex Chanler, who is stepping down after eight years as an AVIS trustee, was an enthusiastic member of the AVIS Land Acquisition Committee. He seldom missed a meeting; he was always willing to walk prospective properties no matter how tangled or loaded with poison ivy; he cheerfully work on field measurements. If you asked “Would you have time to look into this?” he never said “No.” He was very involved in the purchase of the Sherman Reservation where a complicated division of land was required. The division of land for the Chester Street purchase enlarging the Burns Reservation was also difficult, and Alex’s diplomacy helped solve a couple of problematic issues. He also went house to house along Chester Street talking to the neighbors about the AVIS purchases and the hope of eventually connecting the two parcels of the Burns Reservation with a footpath.



In addition, Alex attended the Rt. 93 interchange meetings and worked on the boardwalk at the Mary French Reservation from day one. He is a perfect volunteer: caring and willing to put in hours of time with no expectation of reward or recognition. Many thanks for your devotion to AVIS, Alex.



Andy Girdwood and Peggy Keck



Steve Cotton and Marta Hornidge



Jeff Wager and John Wragg

Plants Gone Wild! Invasive plants subject of talk

Sylvan Kaufman, Conservation Curator at Adkins Arboretum in Maryland, gave an informative talk about invasive plants at the AVIS Annual Meeting. Like the invasive plants of her topic, Kaufman covered a lot of ground in a short period of time, so only a few highlights are covered here.

Native plants are defined as plants that were in the U.S. prior to European settlement. Since that time, more than 50,000 species of plants have been introduced to the U.S., of which about 1,000 are considered an invasive threat. Plants are imported for many reasons, including food, medicine and decoration. Invasive plants’ threat to other plants arise di-

rectly via competition for a specific habitat and indirectly by changing soil chemistry, hydrology and fire regimes. Kaufman described two approaches being used to halt the continued invasion of these plants: Massachusetts and Connecticut have adopted a black list approach that bans importation and sales of certain plants. Australia and New Zealand have adopted an even stricter white list approach: only plants on the list are allowed in the country.

Banned Plants in MA

*Norway Maple
Oriental Bittersweet
Japanese Barberry
Purple Loosestrife
Japanese Knotweed
135 others*

Ostrich Ferns and edible plants

- Russ Cohen

Ostrich Ferns are the so-called “Fiddlehead” ferns that show up in upscale produce markets and on fancy restaurant menus. One of the biggest mistakes novice foragers make when trying to harvest fiddleheads is to see some ferns at the fiddlehead stage (when the young, curled, unfurled fronds look like the top part of a violin) and exclaim “Fiddleheads! They look just like the ones I’ve seen in the stores! They must be the same thing!” And so they pick some, bring them home and cook them up, and they usually taste horrible. The reason is that they harvested the wrong species of fern.

Although most ferns go through the “fiddlehead” stage, the Ostrich Fern (*Matteucia struthiopteris*) is the only species I know of in New England whose fiddleheads are safe and tasty to eat when cooked. Raw Ostrich Fern fiddleheads contain thiaminase, an enzyme that breaks down thiamine (Vitamin B1) in the body, but cooking the fiddleheads breaks down this chemical.

Ostrich Ferns prefer alluvial floodplain soil for their habitat. We don’t have much of that in eastern Massachusetts, so Ostrich Ferns are not common here. One local place where such soil conditions do occur, though, is along the Merrimack River. Note that AVIS policies do not allow the harvesting of Ostrich Fern fiddleheads, or any plants, on AVIS reservations, but people can still learn to recognize the plant there and then find it growing in another spot where harvesting is allowed.



Photo by Fred Snell

Russ Cohen, shown holding an Ostrich Fern, led 45 people on a hike/discussion about edible plants on the Deer Jump Reservation sponsored by Essex County Trails and Sails.

We encountered around three dozen species of edible wild plants in our AVIS walk. Many of the plants we saw are included in my foraging book, *Wild Plants I Have Known... and Eaten*, published by Essex County Greenbelt. We also found several species of edible mushrooms, including the “Chicken Fat” *Suillus* (*Suillus americanus*, so-called because of its strong resemblance to its namesake) and its close cousin the Dotted Stalk *Suillus* (*Suillus granulatus*). For my 2008 schedule of foraging walks, see <http://users.rcn.com/eatwild/sched.htm>.

Welcome to new AVIS members

Madelaine St. Amand
Marcy Samel
Breck & Lani Arnzen
Joan & Michael Patrakis
William McGarry
Dana & Elizabeth Hurst
Scott & Jennifer Hoenig
Joshua & Mollie Shenker
Sandra Redfern
Paul F. McCarthy

Stefani Traina & Mark Goldshein
Gail Ralston & Robert Decelle Jr.
Lee Alphen
Art Pare
Harland Alpaugh
Adam Rollfs
John Gianitsis
Kerry O’Kelly
Erin McLaughlin
Leontine Hartzell

AVIS thanks ...

- Nat Smith for making more brown and yellow AVIS signs for the entrances to reservations.
- Libby Poland for organizing another enjoyable Annual Meeting.
- Ann Cobleigh and Heather Holman for real estate advice.
- Dick Moody for a generous donation of trail tools.
- John Hess, Susan Stott, Alix Driscoll, Amy Janovsky, Karen Hermann and Dick Howe for their work on the CPA.
- The Boston Foundation for an annual grant of \$5,000 from the Bessie P. Goldsmith Fund to support our stewardship of the Goldsmith Woodlands. This helped us purchase supplies to construct the entrance kiosk, purchase equipment and undertake routine maintenance.

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.

Fred Snell, President
Pam Eaton, Membership
Peggy Kruse, Editor

P.O. Box 5097
Andover, MA 01810
www.avisandover.org
info@avisandover.org

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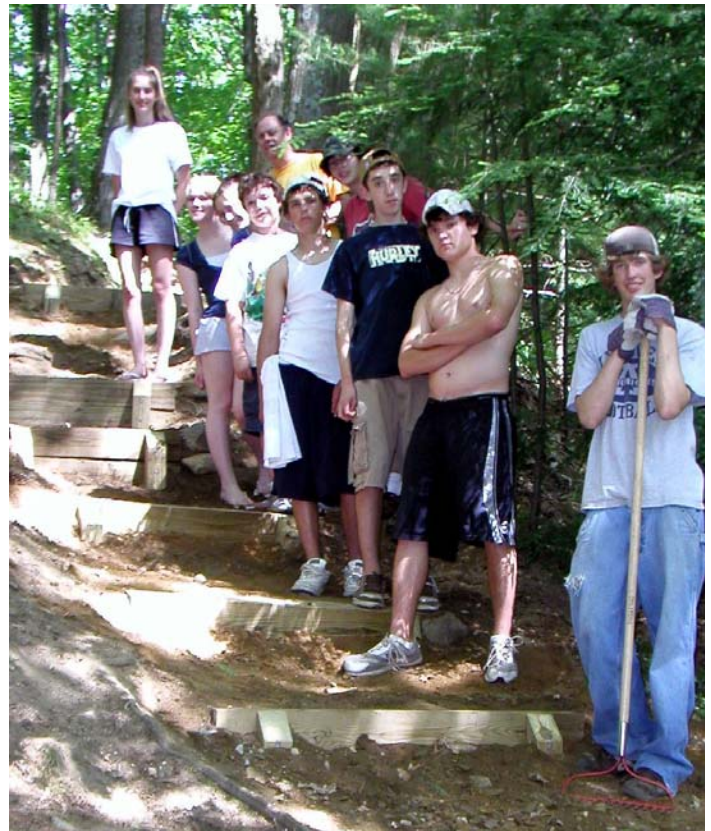
Eagle Scout does triple duty

-John Wragg, Warden West Parish Meadow

In early May, Tommy Fuerst of Scout Troop 76 and I met to begin planning his Eagle Scout project. On a Sunday afternoon in June, Tommy, fellow Scout Christopher Warne and friend Nick Booth waded through the muck of the swamp and hauled out a total of 28 sunken, rotten tires for disposal by a hired contractor. The following weekend 36 Scouts, family members and friends congregated behind the high school. Tommy split the group into two teams. The first team spread wood chips approximately two inches thick by three feet wide over some 200 yards at the crest of the Indian Ridge trail to help stabilize it. The second team, led by Tommy, dug post holes and constructing the series of steps on the slope of the esker face to arrest the erosion.

As a special Scout "Good Deed," Tommy went back into the swamp at day's end in heavy rubber waders to remove hundreds of sheets of paper thrown there by an inconsiderate person the preceding day.

In years to come, many visitors will appreciate the improved appearance of the Indian Ridge trails, the swamp adjacent to the esker, and the second stairway down the esker face.



Tommy Fuerst (right) and crew on the new steps at Indian Ridge.
Photo by Tom Fuerst

Wetlands, beavers and permits

In the spring of 2005, AVIS became aware that beavers were depositing debris that blocked a stream on the Taft Reservation and that the resultant flooding threatened neighbors' basements. A site visit by an AVIS trustee, a representative of the Andover Health Department and the Andover Conservation Director resulted in AVIS obtaining an Emergency Permit from the Health Department to clear away the beaver debris.

However, AVIS failed to realize that the Health Department permit was not sufficient to begin work, that we also needed an Emergency Certificate from the Conservation Department. Having consulted with the proper town officials and believing our ducks (and beavers) were in order, AVIS proceeded to clear the debris from the stream and the underlying culvert.

After two renewals of the Health Department Emergency Permit, AVIS decided to seek a more permanent solution to the problem and filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) with the Andover Conservation Commission; AVIS then filed the NOI with the MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The DEP performed a site visit that resulted in AVIS and MA DEP entering into an Administrative Consent Order with Penalties (ACOP) because AVIS performed work in a wetland area without first obtaining a signed Emergency Certificate from the Conservation Department.

The revised ACOP requires the following actions by AVIS:

- A \$500 penalty.
- Clean up debris, replant and monitor the condition of the site.
- Write this newsletter article.
- Provide further instruction to AVIS wardens about wetland protection and how to address wetland issues on AVIS reservations.

About Wetlands and the Wetlands Protection Act

As a conservation organization, AVIS is committed to responsible stewardship of our wetlands. In addition to providing habitat for wildlife, wetlands serve the public interest in many other ways. For example, wetlands' capacity to absorb water helps with flood control and storm damage prevention. Wetlands also sequester contaminants and so help protect our public and private water supply.

To ensure that the public's interest in a healthy wetland ecosystem is preserved, the MA Wetlands Protection Act and the Town of Andover's Wetlands Bylaw require permits for any activity proposed in or near wetlands. AVIS supports the regulatory processes that protect wetlands. AVIS' ACOP episode is a cautionary tale about reading the regulations and filing appropriately before initiating work in or near wetlands.



AVIS Calendar

Shawsheen River Reservation photo by Fred Snell

Sat, Apr 12, 9am-12n **Work party, Taft Reservation.** Meet at Coventry Ln. Led by Andy Girdwood, 978-475-5253.

Sat, Apr 19, 9am-2pm **Work party, Deer Jump Reservation.** Meet at the end of Raven's Bluff off of River Rd, take the trail to the left, upstream, to the two acre field high up on the bluff. Led by Mike Timko, 978-681-0424.

Sat, Apr 26, 9am-2pm **Work party, Lupine, Shawsheen River, Indian Ridge & Shawsheen Road Reservations.** Park on Lupine Rd. Led by David Dargie, 978-996-4475, and Dave Doub, 978-470-3703.

Sun, May 4, 9am. **Work party, Merrimack River trails.** Meet at 20 New England Business Center off Old River Rd. Led by Andrea Leary, andrealeary@verizon.net.

Sat, May 10, 1:30 pm **Hike, Vale, Shawsheen, Indian Ridge & West Parish Meadow Reservations.** Hike 3.5

mi. on wooded trails, over meadows and glacial esker. Park near arch across from West Parish Church. Led by Dennis Crispo, 978-858-0394.

Wed, May 14, 5-6:30 pm **Outdoor photography workshop** on the Shawsheen River Reservation. Bring a camera. Principles of lighting and composition that apply to landscapes (as well as portraits) will be covered. Park on Abbott Bridge Drive. Led by Mark Spencer, 978-749-9593. Raindate Thur, May 15.

Sat, May 24, noon **AVIS picnic** Shawsheen River Reservation. Bring lunch, picnic blanket, family and friends. Hike or canoe over, or park on Abbot Bridge Dr. or Lupine Rd. For info, call Peggy Kruse, 978-474-0176. Raindate Sun, May 25.

For **additional hikes and work parties**, see www.avisandover.org. For **AMC walks**, see amcboston.org/andover.

AVIS New Member Signup

(Current members will receive dues notice)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

- _____ \$25 Individual Membership
_____ \$40 Family Membership
_____ \$10 Student and Senior Membership
_____ \$100 Sustaining Membership
_____ Additional Donation: \$ _____
_____ To Land Acquisition Fund
_____ To Land Stewardship Fund
_____ Unrestricted

Make check payable to "AVIS" and mail to:
AVIS, PO Box 5097, Andover, MA 01810.

Contributions and dues are tax deductible to the extent permitted by federal regulations.

Thanks!

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