



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

Vol. 112, Issue 2 **Andover Village Improvement Society** • PO Box 5097 • Andover, MA Autumn 2005
Jane Gossard and Marta Hornidge, Editors

AVIS Land Management 2005

by Dave Doub

Think of your favorite place or trail on an AVIS reservation and ask yourself what makes it special. Probably three criteria come to mind: the quality of the habitat, the condition of the trail and the accessibility to the reservation. Maintaining and improving these characteristics of our reservations are the objectives of the Land Management Committee and wardens. Assisting with this effort is a host of community groups including scouts, church and temple groups, Andover Youth Services, Andover Conservation Department and friends of AVIS who, acting on their own, help to maintain our land. All strive to make the experience of visiting a reservation more enjoyable.



L to R: Mr. Brown, Peter Brown, Eagle Scout Michael Stewart, Ed Hunt cut new trail on Vale

Improvements on Goldsmith Reservation include new parking spaces on land purchased by the Land Acquisition Committee, new trails cut by Youth Services, and boardwalk restoration, erosion control and benches all constructed by Boy Scouts. These have helped to make for a pleasant jaunt out to Bessie's Point to observe scenic surroundings at Foster's Pond. It is not surprising that the Goldsmith Woodlands continues to be our most visited reservation.

West Parish Meadow provides three field laboratory sites for the high school biology class. Each team of students performs studies throughout the year of pond, marsh and stream habitats. The diversity of these habitats in a relatively small area is largely due to our actively managing the meadow environment. The meadow is cut at least once a year to prevent transitioning into woodland. Unlike the meadows at the Deer Jump, Shawsheen and Lillian Sherman reservations that are cut by professional contractors, the West Parish meadow is cut gratis by George McNaughton, our neighbor and long time friend of AVIS.

Across Reservation Road from West Parish Meadow lies Baker's Meadow, familiar to the high school cross country runners as well as to several beaver families that have dammed extensively the feeder streams creating tiers of ponds and forcing trail relocation and boardwalk extensions by wardens Al and Evelyn Retelle. Another neighbor regularly clears the dam spillway of beaver clippings to prevent flooding of the berm just recently restored by Scout Michael Anderson. Nearby, where the trail had undergone considerable erosion exposing tree roots and subsoil, Michael's brother, Matt Anderson re-established the trail bed using retaining boards and woodchips. The pond trail provides one of the most scenic vistas but would not completely encircle the pond without the generosity of Tony and Gladdis Sakowich who continue to maintain a trail across their property on the western side of the pond.

Baker's Meadow is actually a pond transitioning back to meadow as more silt collects each year in the marsh-filled coves and on new islands surfacing in the middle. Al has tried to slow down this transition process by clipping young tree shoots that are left exposed each winter across the surface of the frozen pond. Despite Al's efforts, it is only a matter of time before Baker's Meadow eventually becomes the meadow that it once was. This demonstrates the dynamic nature of habitat management. With limited resources and its preference for minimal intervention, AVIS avoids disturbing nature's balance. Meadow cutting, brush burning and selective removal of invasive plants are typical habitat management practices that we are willing to undertake. By doing so, we ensure a rich diversity of habitat.

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To improve access to these habitats, AVIS continues to expand its extensive trail system. Recent developments include a new access point to Baker's Meadow off Dorset Circle. Local residents will soon have a trail cut back to the pond thanks to a generous donation of land by Susan and Randy Harris.

This year, working in conjunction with Andover's new Conservation Agent, Bob Douglas, a permit application was filed and approval granted for the construction of fifteen new boardwalks. Bob shepherded us through the submittal process in time to begin construction on the first boardwalks this fall. One is slated to go on a new trail that Phillips Academy students will construct to connect the academy to the Stanley Reservation and Rec Park beyond. Two more boardwalks on the Merrimack River trail are in the planning stage by Scout Rob Tornatore.

Habitat, trails and access make visiting an AVIS reservation an enjoyable experience. They will continue to be improved as more people offer to help. We welcome anyone interested to get involved. Please contact any of us on the Land Management Committee: Mark Cutler, David Dargie, Dave Doub, Andy Girdwood and Peggy Kruse. There are plenty of projects planned and loads of gratification in store for all who share in managing our reservations.



Wardens' Party September 2005

by Marta Hornidge

A crystal clear September day greeted about 35 trustees and wardens of AVIS reservations. Phillips Academy's Log Cabin provided a spectacular setting for this annual party to celebrate and thank the wardens for their hard work during the year.

Tables and chairs were placed on the extensive green field surrounded by groves of pine trees. A sumptuous picnic lunch soon loaded the tables. Dave Doub and his helpers grilled special hot dogs provided by Kate, his wife, and plump hamburgers. No Wardens' Party tradition was broken: some hot dogs were a bit dark on one side making little difference to the taste. Traditional salads filled the bowls while one table was specially devoted to hors d'oeuvres thanks to Fred and Marj Snell. Beer and soft drinks, cookies and brownies completed the feast.

A contented group assembled in a semi-circle to hear Dave Doub, Chairman of Land Management, speak about improvements on various reservations made during the year. The major destroyer of trails and boardwalks has been the proliferation of the beaver population. Harold Rafton Reservation has perhaps suffered the most severe damage. The blueberry patch has been flooded to the point of almost destroying the crop (see article on page 5 for Gail Zwerling's plans to cope with this situation next spring). Beaver control is a hot topic! Al Retelle, warden of Bakers Meadow spoke about his recommendation to eliminate this destructive animal, a method promptly disputed by his wife. The Hornidge wardens of Skug Reservation are greatly thankful for the new trail to replace the beaver flooded one, and the addition to the bridge made on hot mosquito days in August by a team of valiant workers. Summer time was hardly a rest time for AVIS workers and planners.

Top: Wardens Bob Pustel Jr. and Patricia Gregory

Center: Lunch in the Log Cabin Meadow

Bottom: Wardens Judi & Paul Guerard & David Dargie

AVIS Tidbits

Special Gift—Susan and Randy Harris have donated a strip of land to AVIS which gives a new access to Baker's Meadow (see Calendar). AVIS says "Thank you!"

Award Received—Nat Smith and Peggy Keck received the Virginia Cole Award (for outstanding service to the Town of Andover) at Town Meeting in April (see picture this page).

New Wardens—AVIS has five new wardens: Patricia and Chip Gregory on the Sherman Reservation, Dick Dillon on the Rafton Reservation, Tom Sharkey on the Stevens Reservation, and John Wragg, associate warden on West Parish Meadow. Welcome and thanks from AVIS!

New Members—Thanks to the efforts of Membership Chairperson Kathy Dietz, a town-wide mailing was completed last spring and we have 232 new members. Look for their names in the spring *Update*. If you are new to AVIS, we welcome you. Thanks for joining the effort to keep wild places in Andover!

Land Trust Alliance—A few years ago, AVIS became a member of the Land Trust Alliance, a nationwide umbrella organization for land trusts. As a member of the Land Trust Alliance, AVIS receives updates about legislation that affects land trusts, tips on best practices, and liability insurance tailored to our needs.

Events and Happenings



Top Right: Nat & Peggy receive Virginia Cole Award; Middle Right: Bob & Sarah Knapp—Burns Work Day; Lower Left: Jeff Lafountain, Jim Kobler, Andy Girdwood; Lower Right: Conservation Agents Linda Clearey & Bob Douglas discussing project plans with Scouts Rob Tornatore & Peter Brown
Update Photos compliments of: David Doub, Peggy Kruse, David Schmidt, and Fred Snell

Bluebirds on Shawsheen Reservation 2005

by Dave Schmidt



The Bluebird pair we first sighted at the south end of the reservation on March 31st built three nests and raised six young by mid August. Their first nesting produced four hatchlings on May 8th, but they perished in the nest during a spell of cold weather. By June 20th the pair had selected a different nest site. Three babies fledged from this nest on July 9th. Remaining in the nest was one egg that did not hatch. Thinking that the nesting season was over, we were surprised on August 6th to find that the Bluebirds had selected a different nest site, and were raising another family. Three fledglings left this nest on August 20th. Tree Swallows also had a good nesting season. Each of our 3-box installations had a Tree Swallow nest that fledged young. Fortunately, House Sparrows, which have caused us so much trouble in past seasons, were absent this year.



Addendum by Marta Hornidge, a Bluebird helper

Dave is pleased to have six young birds successfully fledged this summer. He is now busy cleaning out old bird houses and building new ones. He is thinking of locating more nesting boxes further north along the Shawsheen Reservation. Bluebirds prefer privacy from other nests.

Dave wishes to express his thanks to AVIS for allowing him to have such a perfect location for his favorite hobby—raising Bluebirds. AVIS thanks Dave for contributing a fascinating project to an AVIS reservation.

The collapse of an old culvert on the stream that drains the Taft blueberry field caused a water backup that attracted the interest of local beavers. After the culvert was partly dug out to allow drainage again we were sur-

prised to discover it filled back in by beavers. The field was flooded throughout the spring, with the bushes sitting in two to four feet of water. The dam also threatened the property of adjacent neighbors' houses. As the

Beavers' Work Floods Blueberries

by Gail Zwerling



summer progressed the water dried up, allowing for picking in somewhat wet conditions in early September. Most bushes seem to have survived the flooding. Hopefully the stream will drain properly next year without

attracting beavers, but we'll have to wait and see. AVIS is working with the town to obtain permits to fully dig the culvert out and to add a boardwalk in the area.

Sleeping in the Forest

by Mary Oliver

I thought the earth
remembered me, she
took me back so tenderly, arranging
her dark skirts, her pockets
full of lichens and seeds. I slept
as never before, a stone
on the riverbed, nothing
between me and the white fire of the stars
but my thoughts, and they floated
light as moths among the branches
of the perfect trees. All night
I heard the small kingdoms breathing
around me, the insects, and the birds
who do their work in the darkness. All night
I rose and fell, as if in water, grappling
with a luminous doom. By morning
I had vanished at least a dozen times
into something better.



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

Oct. 29 (Saturday) South Church "Day of Service"
clean up of reservations

Nov. 5 (Saturday) Work party to clear a trail on former
Harris land entrance to Bakers Meadow 8:00-12:00 am.
Meet at Dorset Circle. Refreshments and tools pro-
vided. Call Gay Bird 978-475-8533

Jan. 29 (Sunday) 36th Annual AMC/AVIS Rafton
Reservation Cross-country Ski Trek/Hike 10:00 am.
Park on High Plain Rd. at leaf disposal area. Beginners
welcome. No pets. Led by Burt Batcheller 978 475-
3665 & David Dargie 978-475-1149 david@dargie.com

Feb. 12 (Sunday) Family Moonlight Ski/Hike at Gold-
smith Woodlands for all ages and abilities 6:00 pm.
Bring a headlamp or flashlight. Park in front of #491 S.
Main at Goldsmith entrance. No pets. Burt Batcheller
978-475-3665 & David Dargie 978-475-1149

March 14 (Tuesday) AVIS Annual Meeting dinner and
speaker 6:00 pm. Andover Country Club

AMC walks www.amcboston.org/andover

Please visit our website @ www.avisandover.org

AVIS
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