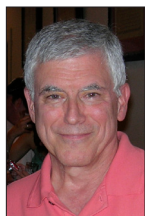




Andover Village
Improvement Society
Andover's Land Trust
Founded 1894

Fall 2012
Vol. 119, No. 2

avis update



From the AVIS President

Mike Timko

This is my first opportunity to address the members as President of AVIS since my election in April. I took the job with the knowledge that we have a wonderful cadre of Trustees, Wardens and active volunteers who all contribute to a very dynamic organization. I have been actively involved in AVIS for about 13 years now and during that time I have seen it evolve into a modern organization taking advantage of the technology of the day, but still grounded in an old-fashioned love of undeveloped natural woods.

I would like to thank previous president Fred Snell for presenting me with such a healthy, vibrant organization, and for remaining an active part of it in his own right.

Since AVIS was born, 118 years ago, our principal purpose has been to preserve as much land as possible in as natural a state as possible and to make that land available to the public for enjoyment. In the beginning, keeping the land out of the hands of developers and letting it naturally regenerate was enough. However, the modern world has brought with it a number of pressures that threaten the quality of our reservations.

Invasive species of plants are displacing native plants in many areas. Foreign insects threaten native trees. With the elimination of top predators, the growth of the white-tailed deer population is threatening the ability of the woods to sustain themselves. The recent increase in temperature, temporary or not, has exacerbated the invasive species problem while threatening to change the very composition of our forests.

The AVIS Trustees have become convinced that we need to be more active in managing our land. We have successfully attracted individuals trained in forestry and wildlife management as both

Trustees and advisors. As a body, we are learning more about forest husbandry. Eventually, there will be no more land to acquire and we will be in the business of simply getting the most out of what land we have. (By the way, we are not there yet. Our Land Acquisition Committee currently has its eyes on more than 20 possible additions, if we can come up with the resources.)

We have worked on eradicating certain invasive species for several years, and this year, the Trustees voted to allow bow hunting of white-tailed deer on the Harold Rafton Reservation. We realize that this is a departure from our previous stance of no hunting of any kind on our reservations, and that it may not sit well with some of our members. However, the Trustees determined, based on information from the Commonwealth and other sources, that there is a serious problem with deer overpopulation in Andover that is rapidly getting worse and that there is no viable method of reducing the herd other than hunting. The Rafton Reservation, which is surrounded by Andover Conservation Commission land where bow hunting is already allowed, is an appropriate area where we can contribute to the solution to this problem.

This policy, as with all AVIS initiatives, is subject to ongoing review.

A few members have contacted us to say that they will no longer support AVIS if we follow the Andover Conservation Commission's deer hunting policy. While I respect the right of everyone to vote with their wallet, I would ask those who disagree with us to remain a part of the organization and help us decide what is best for AVIS in the long term.

I look forward to working with everyone so that, when I eventually leave the Presidency to my successor, I will leave AVIS in as good a condition as I found it.

THANK YOU

We never can thank our supporters, volunteers, and donors enough. Here are a few we wish to recognize:

- The Boston Foundation for annual grants of \$5,000 from the Bessie P. Goldsmith Fund that are used for improvements and maintenance on the Goldsmith Reservation, as well as necessary tools and equipment.
- Nuala Boness, Heather Holman and Joan Johnson for real estate advice.
- Caffrey & Caffrey, Gilbert & Renton LLC, and Edwards Wildman Palmer LLP for legal counsel.
- Fred Snell for seven years as President of AVIS. Fred stepped down in March 2012 but continues to serve on the Board of Trustees as well as to do many hours of volunteer work.

The AVIS Update is a biannual publication of the Andover Village Improvement Society. The mission of AVIS 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.

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Evelyn and Al Retelle: Guardians of Bakers Meadow

By Alix Driscoll

GUARDIANS OF BAKERS MEADOW

“It’s always changing” that’s what Al Retelle loves about Baker’s Meadow, which he and Evelyn have protected for decades as co-wardens. “Right now it has two zillion waterlilies and two swans. It’s filling in, in the middle; Left alone it will become a meadow.” IOther than letting it be, they have proudly shown off their reservation to generations of admirers.

Evelyn sings the praises of the meadow in all seasons. “It is part of our home life. In the fall it is pretty sensational” and she loves winter “with its community of skaters.”

Early after building his home in 1958, on the banks of the Meadow, Al went to an AVIS trustees meeting and shared that the owner, Alexander Henderson, wanted to sell a portion of the current Baker’s Meadow. AVIS promptly bought it for \$4,300 and paid \$300 to maintain the dam originally built to contain muskrats. Al was immediately and deeply drawn into the need and the process for acquiring more land for AVIS.

He remembers that about the same time the AVIS annual meeting hosted as speaker Oscar Root, from Brooks School, who strongly urged AVIS to purchase land in places where there was “a good bird count.” Al agreed but took this a step further.

AVIS LAND ACQUISITION WENT “FULL BORE”

As AVIS president from 1960-1965, Al relates, land acquisition “just exploded” seemingly due to several serendipitous factors: Many landowners wanted to sell off their land at that time; he teamed up with Harold Rafton to purchase AVIS land, and his Board was filled with faculty members from Phillips Academy, who greatly supported conservation of increasingly rare open space.

On his watch, AVIS purchased parts of Deer Jump: 27 acres from Essex Company and 37 acres from Arthur and Natalie Stansfield. He wisely protected the northern section of Fish Brook by having AVIS purchase land from Jacob Shlakis.

AL RETELLE PROTECTS TOWN LAND TOO

On the floor of Town Meeting in 1960 Al made an impassioned plea to establish the Andover Conservation Commission and became its first chairman. Six years later the Commission was given \$10,000 to acquire land. Under Al’s stewardship \$250,000 was appropriated two years later to permanently preserve town land under the aegis of the Commission. When the Town purchased the remaining 52 acres of Shlakis land, four decades ago, Al took over Overseer duties; his goal was to restore it to meadowland.

CONSERVATION DAY

As AVIS Trustee, in 1968, Al helped inaugurate “Conservation Day” celebrating the open space in Andover at the same time the Earth Day movement was spreading across this nation. At the start of Claus Dengler’s presidency, Al says, he “backed off” and designed a brochure with Rafton utilizing the latter’s airplane to photograph AVIS’s treasures.

RESPECTED BIRDERS

At their Baker’s Meadow, Al has constructed many nesting boxes for wood ducks and has recorded the presence of more than 145 species of birds. They regularly share their love of birding, often leading tours of folks from the Senior Center. Al and Evelyn have been around the world pursuing their shared adventures in birding.

Some information has come from Juliet Haines Mofford’s AVIS – A History in Conservation, published in 1980.



Photo Credit: Floyd Greenwood

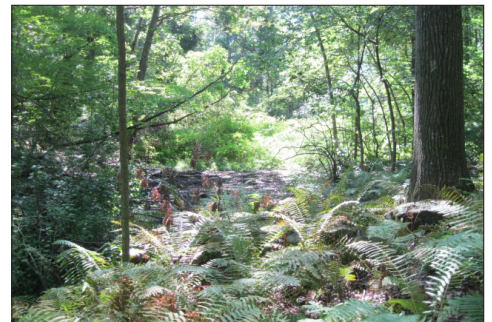
Where Am I?

By Emily Trespas

“Vernal Pools are temporary ponds that fill up with water in spring as a result of snow-melt, spring rains and/or elevated groundwater tables. These pools provide valuable wildlife habitat for small amphibians...”

Left: Vernal pool when dry.

Dry: August view of the vernal pool.



A. Amy Gordon Taft Reservation

B. Wilkinson Reservation

C. Stanley Reservation

D. Sanborn Reservation

See opposite page for the answer!

The 1st Annual TARC Spring Thaw 6 Hour

By Emily Trespas, Warden, Stanley Reservation

On Sunday, March 18, 2012, nearly 60 runners and over 25 volunteers enjoyed an unseasonably hot day along the trails of AVIS's Harold R. Rafton Reservation, The Bay Circuit Trail, and in Andover Conservation Commission Land.

As a warden for AVIS and a Race Director for the Trail Animals Running Club, I was pleased with the diversity of participants who travelled from all over New England for the 1st Annual TARC Spring Thaw 6 Hour. The event raised visibility for AVIS and funds to keep our trails maintained and accessible to the public.

I owe the success of this year's event to the volunteers for their positive support and time and to the runners' stamina, friendliness, and trail-respecting manners. Extra-special appreciation goes to Dick Dillon (co-warden, Harold R. Rafton Reservation) and

Ken Doran (warden, Vale Reservation) who cut and cleared trails with me in the weeks leading up to the event. More thanks to: The Trail Animals Running Club, The A.V.I.S. Trustees, The Andover Conservation Land Commissioners, The Andover Trails Committee, Bay Circuit Trail folks, The Wood Hill Middle School, The Town of Andover and Manager, R. Buzz Stapczynski, The Andover Police Department and Department of Public Works, Ellen and Winslow Townson photographers, the Ciampas videography, Perfecto's, Neighbors-in-Need, and anyone else I forgot.



Jim Gillford (Topsfield, MA). Photo Credit: Rob Ciampa

New West Parish Meadow Trail Completed

By John Wragg, Warden, West Parish Meadow



Photo Credit: Fred Snell

With construction of the stone bridgeway over the stream leading to Baker's Meadow completed, the new loop trail, three years in the making, is now open. Built of fieldstone, taking four full days of work, the bridgeway dry-

wall construction employs large rock design techniques to provide a 7-foot wide walkway that is 12 feet in length over the stream. The construction hides the existence of an embedded culvert, adding to the bridgeway porosity. The cost of materials was provided anonymously. The designers/builders of this unique bridgeway are Susan Hunt and Roger Zambon, who were also the source of the re-built Reservation Road culvert wall and the recent upgrade of the extensive fieldstone drywalls in the Sakowich Reservation. Their volunteer efforts over several weeks were exceptional and of professional caliber. AVIS extends its deepest thanks.

Editors Note: the new trail also includes this wooden bridge completed as a Scout project by Ross Barton. Thank you, Ross.



Photo Credit: Fred Snell

Answer: C. Stanley Reservation

The Sakowich Reservation

By John Hess

This special place, overlooking the pond, honors Gladys and Tony Sakowich whose generosity preserves this land for future generations. A.V.I.S.

These are the words on the plaque unveiled at the dedication ceremony on Saturday, April 28, 2012, where we were especially pleased to have donors Gladys and Tony Sakowich in attendance. Over 100 people attended the dedication ceremony of this, the newest AVIS reservation. Kind words and remembrances were offered by Mike Timko, Fred Snell, Nat Smith, and Jim Batchelder. Citations recognizing this fabulous gift were provided by Senator Barry Finegold and Representative Paul Adams. Buzz Stapczynski, Town Manager, thanked the Sakowiches for their gift to the town. Plenty of time remained on this beautiful day for people to walk the property and the nearby Baker's Meadow.

Edibles in the Forest

By John Hess

On a beautiful evening in June, Russ Cohen, noted expert on foraging and finding things to eat in the forest, guided a walk for 24 people in the Peggy Keck Reservation. We learned about huckleberries, Indian cucumber, sassafras, oil of wintergreen, and many more things too numerous to list. Many thanks to Russ for this informative walk. For those not able to come, please check out other edibles walks at users.rcn.com/eatwild/sched.htm

Bill Kirk, reporter for the Lawrence Eagle Tribune, is doing a series of articles on area trails and reservations in order to encourage people to get out and walk and enjoy the resources available to us. Catch his stories in the paper or on-line.

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For information about planned giving or stock donations contact info@avisandover.org. Contributions and dues are tax deductible to the extent permitted by federal regulations. Thank you!

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Fall 2012 - Winter 2013 Calendar

October 13, 2012

Invasive Species Walk

Taft Reservation

Learn about invasive species from expert Walter Kitteridge. Walk the Taft Reservation from 10-noon. Rain date 10/14/12. Parking is on Sagamore Drive off Wildwood near the intersection with Route 125.

For additional AVIS events, see avisandover.org.

For AMC walks, see amcboston.org/andover.

To check for other hikes, visit andovertrails.org

November 3, 2012

Vale Trail and Truss Bridge Dedication

Vale Reservation

Join us at the re-dedication of the Vale Trail, a 4 mile round trip trail, in the Vale Reservation, that now includes a volunteer built Truss Bridge crossing the Shawsheen River. Guided walks of this unique piece of land will be provided. 2:00 pm. Parking available at the train station in Ballardvale off Andover Street

January 27, 2013

Annual Rafton Reservation Hike/Ski/Snowshoe Rafton Reservation.

Meet at 10 AM for AVIS' 42nd annual X-C ski trek. From I-93, go E on Rt. 133 for 0.5 mi. to the first set of traffic lights, take L on Greenwood Rd. for about 1 mi., take 2nd L onto High Plain Rd.. Travel about 1 mi. (cross I-93 & I-495). Park near leaf composting area. No reg. No pets. Hike if no snow, rain cancels. Ls Burt Batcheller, (978-475-3665), David Dargie, (978-996-4475, david@dargie.com)

February 10, 2013

Annual Goldsmith Woodlands Moonlight Hike/Ski/Snowshoe

Goldsmith Woodlands.

Meet at 6:00 PM for family moonlight snowshoe and cross country ski trek for all ages and abilities. Bring a headlamp or flashlight. From Rte. 125, travel N on Rte. 28 (S. Main St.) for about 0.4 mi. Park in front of #491 S. Main St. at Goldsmith entrance. No pets. Hike if no snow, rain cancels. Ls Burt Batcheller (978-475-3665), David Dargie (978-996-4475; david@dargie.com)

March 12, 2013

Annual Meeting

Back by popular demand, we will again have dinner as part of the annual meeting. Please check our website for time and location.



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