

Notes from the Hosmers



“It’s About this Beautiful Lake, Nothing Fancy”

An Interview with Russell and Janet Spring by Phillip Grisdela Jr.

Recently I had a chance to sit down with Russell Spring Sr. doing what he enjoys most, sitting in his living room looking out over the pristine view of Little Hosmer. It seems right that after being drawn to the area for its beautiful scenery and down-to-earth community, Russell is still enjoying the same view he was attracted to from the beginning. Russell played a critical role in creating today’s Craftsbury, while preserving what has always made it such a special place. With people skiing in the sun on the snowy lake in the background, Russell shared some of his memories about how he got here and what the area means to him.

Russell first came to the region with an Outward Bound Program after graduating Yale and immediately fell in love with the beauty of the region. He moved to Stowe in 1950 where he met his wife Janet in 1953 while they were both downhill ski instructors. After several years, they began to look for ways to escape the “rat race” they felt the town was becoming. In 1972 Russell and Janet sold their house, purchased an RV, and were ready to take up cattle ranching in Wyoming when the deal fell through at the last minute. With no contingency plan, the family took the advice

of some friends who had suggested moving to Craftsbury. Russell and Janet had first discovered the village coming back from family sailing excursions on Caspian Lake. Their first stop was what is today the Mill Village B&B run by Nancy Moran. The family moved in, along with a “travelling zoo,” that included a goat, a horse, a donkey and a flock of chickens. They would stay in that house for a year before finding the home that Russell and Janet still live in today (sans zoo). Sitting in his chair overlooking the lake, Russell says proudly, “when I look out today, it’s not a whole lot



Janet and Russell Spring
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Some Things Never Change...early skiing in Craftsbury

From GREEN MOUNTAIN FARM, Elliot Merrick, 1933

“Most everybody skis in our town nowadays, though it was practically an unknown art in our earliest years. For such a snowy land, where the skating ice is soon covered and the drifts lie deep five or six months, the skis are truly wings, making an asset of what used to be a long and dreary season. The roads were the only paths in former days, except for an occasional snowshoeing hunter. But now the pole-pocked ribbons streak off everywhere, and even a few dairy farmers will clamp their rubber boots into the harness and try it with the children on Sunday afternoons.

Our old friend Swami—a wizard on the boards as a result of his schooling years in the Swiss Alps—taught most of the local boys



Home of the Craftsbury Ski Company

how to ride the snow. He got up ski clubs and school meets, cross country races and slaloms, and for those who couldn’t buy skis he made pairs and gave them away. The school kids took to it, and particularly favored slaloms down through sheer-sided maple sugar places where the “flags” were tree trunks two feet thick.”

The Craftsbury Ski Company,

From The Historical Society display, Craftsbury

Incorporated in 1933, the Craftsbury Ski Company first started making maple skis in the Wheeler barn on the Common, then moved the operation to

the abandoned grist mill in Mill Village. The entrepreneurs were Ted Coomaraswamy from India by way of Switzerland, and local farmboy, Charles Wheeler. They hired local young men to operate the machinery. These were the skis that the Craftsbury Academy ski team used under Coach Coomara. In 1937, CA placed

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The Hosmer Ponds Watershed Initiative

Liz Chehayl
Judy Davis
Judy Geer
Eric Hanson
Nancy Moran
Diane Morgan
Steve Wright

Call Eric Hanson 586-8065
for more information about
HPWI.



The Hosmer Ponds Watershed Initiative is a community-driven effort, supported by the Craftsbury Outdoor Center and Vermont Land Trust. The goals of the Initiative are to increase our appreciation and understanding of this special place through outings, workshops, and gatherings. We hope to engage community members in thinking about long term conservation goals for the region and what tools are available to reach such conservation goals. If you would like to explore conservation options for your land, contact Tracy Zschau of VLT: 748-6089 or Tracy@vlt.org. There is money available to help cover the legal cost of setting up donated conservation easements.



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different now than it was then.”

Craftsbury was a natural fit for the Spring family, who came to love it for what Russell says it still is today, “a non-commercial, down to earth,

positive community.” The town decided to protect the lakes by enforcing a 5 mph speed limit and also by capping the size of outboards that could be run. Russell began commuting into Burlington to work as a stockbroker, but soon realized that wasn’t what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. A tree farm was his next venture, but as Russell noted wryly, it was “a tough way to make money.” In 1973, a year after moving to the area, Russell turned to the Windridge Tennis Camp where the current Hosmer Point Camp sits. The tennis courts for the camp were created using local Craftsbury clay with the help of Sunny Sweatt, who Russell describes as one of his “personal heroes” and “a wonderful Vermonter.” That same year, Russell and Janet started the Craftsbury Academy Physical Education program (CAPE), which established a strong relationship with the community that would be critical for what was to follow. Students came every week after school to experience the outdoors; whether it was white water rafting in the spring floods, road biking, cross country skiing, rock climbing led by Janet, or anything else the duo could think up to get kids outside. The Springs wouldn’t stop there though. Driving to work at the Windridge camp in 1976, Russell passed the defunct Cutler Academy and saw a new opportunity on Great Hosmer Pond. After leasing the property for a year, he partnered with Arnold Smith and Dean Brown to buy it outright and lay the foundation for the Craftsbury Outdoor Center that we know today.

From the beginning, the Outdoor Center was “about experiencing this special world,” as Russ Jr. puts it, including the community and bountiful natural resources. Russell felt that what was most important lay just outside his window: “this beautiful lake, nothing fancy.” He then outlined the key ingredients of the Center: “quality food as well as simple and comfortable lodging.” Russ Jr. jokes that “while the lodging may not have always been comfortable it was certainly always simple.” Even when pressure came from potential investors to buy the center and Murphy’s

field to build an international hotel complete with golf courses, a Japanese garden and condos, the Springs stuck to their ideals. Janet remembers that when “we got mixed up with people like that we were able to extricate ourselves.” The Center began with youth soccer camps and cross country skiing in the winter, but would expand to include the Elderhostel, sculling programs and running camps that we still enjoy. According to Russ Jr., “each



Russell, Abby, Russ, Janet, and Ellen

one of those (programs) was one person’s really good idea.” Russell focused on bringing in people and investors who also believed in his dream: “the key things were those that [fit] in with our feeling about what this world was about,” he explains. “And that’s right where we are today,” he continues, pointing to his view of a pristine lake. Russ Jr. added that “investors were not investing because of a certain return they expected to get, they were investing because they totally believed in the vision. Most of them never expected to get any return, they were actually shocked when we were able to give them an excellent

return on their investment.” When it came time for Russell and Janet to pass on ownership of the Center in 2008, they worked with Dick and Judy Driessigacker who had a “similar love for the land and didn’t want to change what had already been done, just to keep it going,” that Russ Jr. explained was different from other potential investors.

The Outdoor Center would not have become the place it is today without the unique Craftsbury community that valued the simple, quality outdoor experience that we’re lucky to have. “The way we wanted to go fit in with where the community was coming from,” Russell remembers. “We were looking for something that appealed to us personally, and it turned out there were a lot of people who felt the same way,” he added. The close integration of the Outdoor Center with the community through programs like the CAPE after-school activities made the center feel as if it was working for the community and not just for profit. Russ Jr. jokes that “we were always a virtual non-profit anyways!” The shared dream of the Spring family, the Craftsbury community, and now the Driessigackers, is what makes today’s Outdoor Center possible. Looking out over Little Hosmer, Russell remembers his work with a smile. “It’s a very positive statement of what one can do in this world, you just have to find out what’s important to you,” he says. Janet shows one of the great strengths of this team by adding “and hang on like a bulldog!” ***

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3rd of the Vermont schools competing in the Vermont-New Hampshire High School Interscholastic Winter Carnival on Mt. Mansfield. Charlie Smith took first place in the slalom and was awarded "Best Overall Skier". In 1936, Charlie came in first for the cross-country and the Division A downhill races. Ted Coomara also produced a weekly column in the Newport paper entitled "Skiing" in which he stated that a beginner set of equipment would cost "not less than \$7.00 for skis, \$3.50 for a harness, \$3.00 for poles and \$5.00 or more for ski boots." We don't know what first brought Coomaraswamy to Craftsbury but he started as a pilot delivering bootlegged liquor landing in a farm fields and storing the liquor in barns. After leaving Craftsbury, he was a bush pilot in Alaska where he died in a crash.



Recollections of a former kid on the old grist mill in Mill Village

by Horace Strong

I remember rummaging around upstairs in the old building and seeing the belts with the conveyer cups on them going up through wooden pipes, the screens to sift the ground grain, and mouse droppings on the floor, belts and pulleys and line shafts.

Years ago I drove horses hitched to our lumber wagon loaded with milk cans over the dam to unload milk into the Creamery. It was a creamery then with an ice house just south of the mill pond and boys would jump off the roof into the pond. One summer day I recall boys fishing in the pond all morning while Jim Ryan spread manure at the Ryan farm. He was watching and at noon

he came down and caught the fish and went back to his spreading. There were stories of great trout in the brook just below the Creamery that fed on the milky waste water.

Ted Coomara was interested in skiing and promoted it in Craftsbury. He and Charley Wheeler got to fussing around with making equipment in a woodshed at the Wheeler farm on the Common. I remember seeing a long belt sander that they used. They made a steamer to bend the skis. As time went by they moved to the old creamery in the Mills.

I don't remember seeing the operation but I remember waiting for a pair of skis to be done in time for Christmas. They were made of maple and there was a pair of poles with bent circles of wood laced with leather. The poles were just saplings that had white adhesive tape wound around every 6" or so. Pretty crude but they made a little boy very proud and happy. Skiing has come a long way. Bode Miller of Olympic fame needed equipment for Sochi costing \$175,000. His helmet cost an ungodly price and I don't recall needing a helmet or \$7,000 boots.



For more information on the ski company in Mill Village (and other really interesting displays), visit the Craftsbury Historical Society on Craftsbury Common this summer. Open Wednesday and Saturday mornings.

Water Quality Legislation being considered by the Vermont Legislature this session

Over the summer of 2013, a Shoreland Protection Committee of the House and Senate held several public meetings in which they presented information from the Act 138 Report on water quality issues in Vermont, reviewed shoreland standards as passed by the House in H.526 in 2013, and gathered input from the public. Work on H.526 has progressed this session through the House and Senate and is currently in a conference committee at the time of this writing.

The bill would establish a permitting process for development and vegetation management within a shoreland protection zone around lakes. The goals of the legislation are to increase natural vegetation within a 100 foot zone around a lake, and to limit developed, impervious, and cleared areas within a 250 foot zone. Natural vegetation is nature's infrastructure for stabilizing shorelands, moderating stormwater runoff, filtering toxic substances, protecting lake and shoreland habitat and ecosystems, and protecting water quality.

Part of the impetus behind this legislation comes from EPA studies revealing that Vermont lakes rank worse than both the northeast region and the national average (lower 48 states) in terms of shoreland disturbance. Poor biological health is three times more likely on lakes with poor lakeshore habitat. Only 17% of Vermont lakeshores are in good condition as measured by the extent of disturbance and lawns along the shore, compared to 42% regionally and 35% nationally. Vermont is the only northeastern state without standards for shoreland development.

Several other bills relating to lakes and streams are also currently being considered in the Vermont House and Senate ranging from establishing a fund to finance ecosystem restoration and regulations for flood hazard zones to loans for failed wastewater and water supply systems and adjusting rules on dams and moorings. All of the details can be found at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us>.

Wintering Deer Yards *By Ross Morgan*

Wildlife biologists in Vermont explain that White-tailed deer live in two ranges: a summer range, which is most of the state, leaving out only urban areas, and a winter range, often called deer wintering yards, which make up only about 6 percent of the summer range. White-tailed deer are near the northern limits of where they can and do live in Vermont, and the limits are the winter weather conditions. Surviving the winter for deer is sometime called going “through the winter bottleneck”, not all will live until spring; many may lose 25-30% of their body weight and survive. When the late fall and early winter snows reach 15 to 18 inches, the deer begin to move to traditional wintering yards, which are most often areas of dense softwoods, where snow accumulates on the canopies of pines, spruce, fir, cedar and hemlock, then goes from crystalline snow to water vapor, and does not drop to accumulate on the forest floor. Hence the snow is not as deep under softwoods.

One winter I made four snow depth measurements several different times, all within 100 yards of one another. It was assumed that each sample area received the same snowfall. In a field, the maximum snow depth was 34 inches, the sugarbush had 32 inches, the spruce and fir stand had 19 inches maximum, and the dense Norway spruce plantation never had more than 9 inches. The deer were yarded up for the winter in the latter two stands, occasionally went to the sugarbush to find food, and never went into the field.

In a publication of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, “Management Guide for Deer Wintering Areas in Vermont”, three goals for managing deer wintering areas are listed. The goals are to provide perpetual shelter, to maintain deer mobility and access throughout the wintering area, and to provide accessible browse for food. This guide is oriented to preserving attributes of softwood stands for yards when logging. Travel lanes are often laid out to connect over the landscape and ideally are maintained as areas with dense overstories where deer can travel easily, although some timber may be cut. At the landscape level these travel lanes connect and allow the yard to be functional. There is one long, narrow yard that runs in softwoods from near Craftsbury Village to near Albany Village, including a large area around the north end of Little Hosmer and along the whole western shore of Big Hosmer.

After snowfall, the winter diet of White-tailed deer consists of woody browse, the twigs and stems of seedlings, saplings and

shrubs. They prefer white cedar, birches, aspens, American yew, hemlock, maples, ash, white pine, mountain ash, sumac, witch-hobble, and high bush cranberry. Other species such as beech, balsam fir, spruces, and larch are either unpalatable, indigestible, or both. An adult White-tailed deer requires approximately five to seven pounds of food per day. Energy demands are greatest for pregnant and lactating females, for males in the autumn rut, and for all individuals during severe winter weather.

Deer travel up to 15 miles to reach traditional winter ranges (deer yards) that offer continuous coniferous cover overhead. Deer



high in the Lowell Mountains may winter around the Hosmers. Movement to the winter range is rapid, often less than 24 hours. Benefits of yards include reduced wind chill and easier movement in shallower snow. Deer travel within the winter range along well-defined trails, which is a key advantage for deer living in groups in winter; an individual saves energy by not having to continually create a new trail. The detection and escape from predators may be another advantage. An ideal yard would also include an abundance of desirable browse, and some running water, so the animals do not have to melt snow using up body heat.

Deer wintering yards can be altered by heavy cutting and development. There is an interesting case in the Adirondacks of deeryards also being abandoned when people started feeding deer. In the February 2008 issue of the *JOURNAL OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT*, an article

by Jeremy Hurst and William Porter of SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, addressed the changing use of deer yards when the artificial feeding brought the deer to the villages creating a tourist attraction. After examining 16 Adirondack deer yards they observed a change in deer wintering behavior to incorporate residential communities into their wintering range. They compared locations of deer herds in 2003 and 2004 to yards mapped in the 1960's and 1970's. “Deer were predominantly absent in 9 of 16 historical yards, but present in communities within the same drainage.”

The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife mapped the deer wintering yards in the 1980's, and they are available on <http://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/anra/> More up-to-date mapping would be very helpful to landowners, foresters and wildlife managers.

News from the Craftsbury Outdoor Center

Milfoil Update from Big Hosmer

Last summer, despite an increase in the number of hours spent pulling milfoil, the invasive species grew relentlessly and spread to more areas of the lake. This prompted the Outdoor Center to invite Austin Ritter of Integrated Milfoil Management to come and do an assessment of the lake. Austin gave us good feedback on the work we had done so far, but agreed that hand-pulling was not going to be able to keep up with the growth of the milfoil.

Austin has been having some success using a Vermont species of weevils to control milfoil populations. His study of Hosmer showed that these native weevils occur naturally in the lake! It's possible that if we can encourage their growth in a few protected out-of-the way milfoil patches, they might help to control growth of the weed. This would allow us to focus our hand-pulling on key high-use areas, such as the public access, the relatively shallow channel in the northern half of the lake, and areas around lakefront docks.

If you would like to learn more about milfoil, or have suggestions on its management, please contact John Brodhead at the Outdoor Center: johnbrod@craftsbury.com. Over the past 13 years since it was first discovered near the public access on Big Hosmer, John has been managing the efforts to control the infestation. The state has provided partial grant funding, volunteer spotters have helped, and the Outdoor Center has covered the remaining costs. **Since 2001, over 5,000 hours of work has gone into this effort.**

Hearty thanks to Center employees John Brodhead and Don Houghton for the extensive hours they have spent underwater. Thanks also to volunteer Rob Libby who pitches in when he can. ***



Without control efforts, waters less than 20 feet deep can become choked with Eurasian milfoil.

Return of the Ram Pump

Some of you may have noticed that there are once again animals grazing in the upper portion of Fox's fields. They have to be some of the luckiest pigs, turkeys and chickens around to have such a lovely view from their pasture! But the challenge of having animals there is the lack of water. For the first part of the summer, COC athletes hauled water up from the pond in large plastic tanks... workable, but not easy. Minds turned to better solutions and one idea was to try the old technology of a ram pump. A ram pump uses water pressure (hydraulic head) to pump water uphill



without needing any other power source.

About this time, at last summer's HPWI gathering at Fox's Far-away Farm, some of our athlete-farmers had a chance to chat with Dave Linck and Clare Young, and learned that indeed, in the old days, a ram pump had been used to bring water up to Fox's fields!

The next day, Ethan and Eric from the Center poked around in the lower part of the property, and found an old concrete cistern. They pulled off the wooden top, and down in the bottom, sitting in a bit of water, they found the old ram pump! They pulled it out to have a good look. It was in remarkably good condition—though not quite workable.



The salvaged old pump

Meanwhile, a new ram pump was installed, and after a few weeks of tuning, produced a steady stream of water to fill a holding tank near the top of the field, from which water can be run as needed for the animals. It works great, and it's even better to know that it's the way it was done 100 years ago, too. ***



The new pump

Beavers—Habitat Manipulators

- Largest member of the rodent family in North America weighing up to 60 pounds
- Found from sea level to elevations of 12,000 feet
- Eat the bark, leaves and twigs of many tree species as well as herbaceous aquatic plants such as lily pads, skunk cabbage, grasses and sedges
- Once nearly extinct, their numbers are now increasing as they reclaim their former range; conflicts between people and beavers are prevalent
- Beaver ponds not only create safe areas for the beavers but the diverse wetland systems which support a wide variety of fish, amphibians, birds and mammals



2013 Outings and Events



- ◇ Programs on Coyotes and Geese
- ◇ Fox Farm Gathering
- ◇ Wildflower exploration

If you've ever thought, "I love this landscape – I want it to be here for future generations – what can I do NOW to ensure that?" Have you considered:

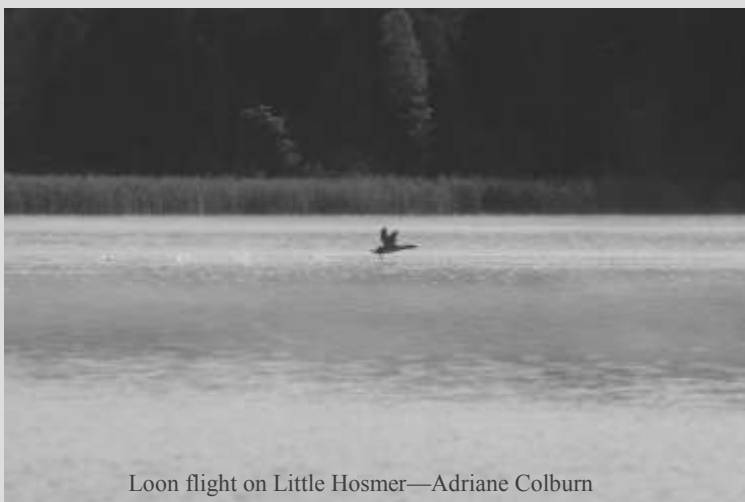
Getting more involved with the Hosmer Ponds Watershed Initiative by:

- **Hosting an event** if there is something unique or different on your land or about your land management that you would like to share.
- **Introducing a friend or neighbor to the group** by getting them on the mailing list or bringing them to an event.
- **Hosting a small gathering in your own neighborhood** to speak about local wildlife, cooperative management ideas or the trails that might cross property boundaries.
- **Donating funds** to bolster the budget for local events and conservation activities
- **Getting on the mailing list** for email updates at nancy@nancymoranphoto.com

As a landowner, you could:

- **Explore management options** for your land that might improve its riparian value or wildlife habitat.
- **Get technical assistance in forest management, riparian buffer design and plantings** that could be cost-shared or entirely funded by the Hosmer Protection Fund or other funders.
- **Consider a conservation easement** to permanently protect your land (and take advantage of special funds to **offset the costs that landowners often bear in this type of transaction** – costs related to appraisal, legal advice, and stewardship endowment, etc.)
- **Create an estate plan** to address key issues involved with passing land to the next generation.
- **Enroll your land in Vermont's Use Value Appraisal program** (current use) to lower your property tax burden while actively managing your land for forestry and agriculture.

If you'd like to learn more about the Vermont Land Trust or conservation options, call or email Tracy Zschau, VLT Regional Director, at (802)745-6301 or tracy@vlt.org.



Loon flight on Little Hosmer—Adriane Colburn

NEW ORGANIZATION Watersheds United Vermont

Vermont now has an organization that helps local watershed organizations be more effective by working together, sharing information, and gaining access to technical and financial resources. Watersheds United Vermont (WUV) was several years in the making, as representatives of local watershed groups met to talk about their challenges and how a statewide network might support their work. Members of the new organization promote healthy waterways through education, water monitoring, and restoration projects such as planting tree buffers, controlling invasive species, or sponsoring river cleanups.

Severe storms like hurricane Irene create stresses for both river systems and volunteer networks, and unfortunately, it seems that climate change could make those events the new normal. In addition, stubborn water quality problems--that stem from practices spread across the landscape rather than single wastewater pipes--are raising public awareness that Vermont's streams, rivers and lakes are not as healthy as we might wish.

We are hoping that WUV creates strength in numbers by sharing lessons and resources among groups. WUV is just getting off the ground this spring, thanks to funding by Ben and Jerry's, the Lintilhac Foundation, and Vermont Community Foundation. Our priorities include:

- ◇ Providing a statewide email network and website (www.watershedsunitedvt.org) that will help groups communicate with each other and keep track of reports, training opportunities, state policies, and grant deadlines.
- ◇ Sponsoring statewide meetings and webinars where groups can learn from each other.
- ◇ Helping to link groups with partners who can help with funding, technical expertise, or other assistance.

For information or to offer suggestions, please contact:

Ann Ingerson, Program Coordinator,
watershedsunited@gmail.com

Notes From the Hosmers
c/o Eric Hanson
P.O. Box 22
Craftsbury, VT 05826



E-newsletter: if you would rather only receive an electronic version of this newsletter, please email nancy@nancymoranphoto.com

2014 Summer Events (all HPWI events are free and open to the public)

Wildflower Walk

- ◆ **Saturday, May 31 10 a.m. – 12**
- ◆ **Location: Meet at the Little Hosmer Access parking lot to car-pool from there**

Join Plant Ecologist Eva Dannenberg to find plants such as twinflower, bulblet fern, star-like false solomon's seal and other late spring flora. Last year we saw over 36 different flowers. Leisurely paced, on and off-trail walking. Bring water, and a hand lens if you have one. For more information, call Eva at 586-7737 (evenings and weekends) or 802-730-3472 (most weekdays).

Walk in the Woods

- ◆ **Saturday, June 28 10 a.m. – 12**
- ◆ **Location: Meet on Morrill Drive off South Craftsbury Road, south of Craftsbury Common.**

Visit a managed forest with Ross Morgan, Forester and Kristin Sharpless, ecologist to see how and why trees are selected for harvest to restore the forest system, maintain water quality and streamflow, and enhance habitat for birds and other wildlife. Leisurely walk. Co-sponsored with Audubon Vermont. For more information, call Ross at 586-9697

Social Paddle on Big Hosmer Pond

- ◆ **Sunday, July 20, 1 p.m.**
- ◆ **Location: Big Hosmer Pond boat access**

Join us for a leisurely canoeing/kayaking event with a stop for refreshments (provided) and conversation at a cabin by the lake. If you need to borrow a canoe, life jacket, and/or paddle, or would like to be a passenger in someone else's canoe, call Eric at 586-8065. Rain or shine (unless it's pouring!). For more information, contact Nancy at 586-6937.

Beavers—Habitat Manipulators

- ◆ **Wednesday, August 6, 7 p.m.**
- ◆ **Location: Craftsbury Public Library**

Come to a slide/talk presentation on the history and biology of beavers and their habitat conflicts with humans by Skip Lisle, Wildlife Biologist, of Beavers Deceivers International. Sponsored with the Library and the Craftsbury Outdoor Center. For more information, call Diane at 586-9697.

Ecology and Geology of Vermont: The shaping of our landscape

- ◆ **Sunday, September 14, 7 p.m.**
- ◆ **Location: Craftsbury Public Library**

Attend a presentation on how soil, climate, and other factors have influenced our landscape and human settlement by Eric Hanson, Conservation Biologist of Vermont Center for Ecostudies and Vermont Loon Recovery Project Coordinator. For more information, call 586-9683.



Canoe outing on the Black River

Also in the Area

Northeast Naturalist Gathering, May 16-18 at Hosmer Point Camp wildflower walks, birding sessions, reading the landscape forays, artwork, singing and storytelling, and good times for all. Contact David Gilligan, 586-7711 ext. 133

Help support HPWI honorariums for our speakers and event leaders

Send donations to: Craftsbury Outdoor Center, Hosmer Ponds Watershed Initiative, 535 Lost Nation Rd., Craftsbury Common, VT 05827 or stop by the office. THANKS!!! The Craftsbury Outdoor Center has set up an account under their non-profit status to process donations.