



the **drift**

Stories from the Midcoast

Telling and listening for stories
deepens our relationship to the
land, the water, and each other.

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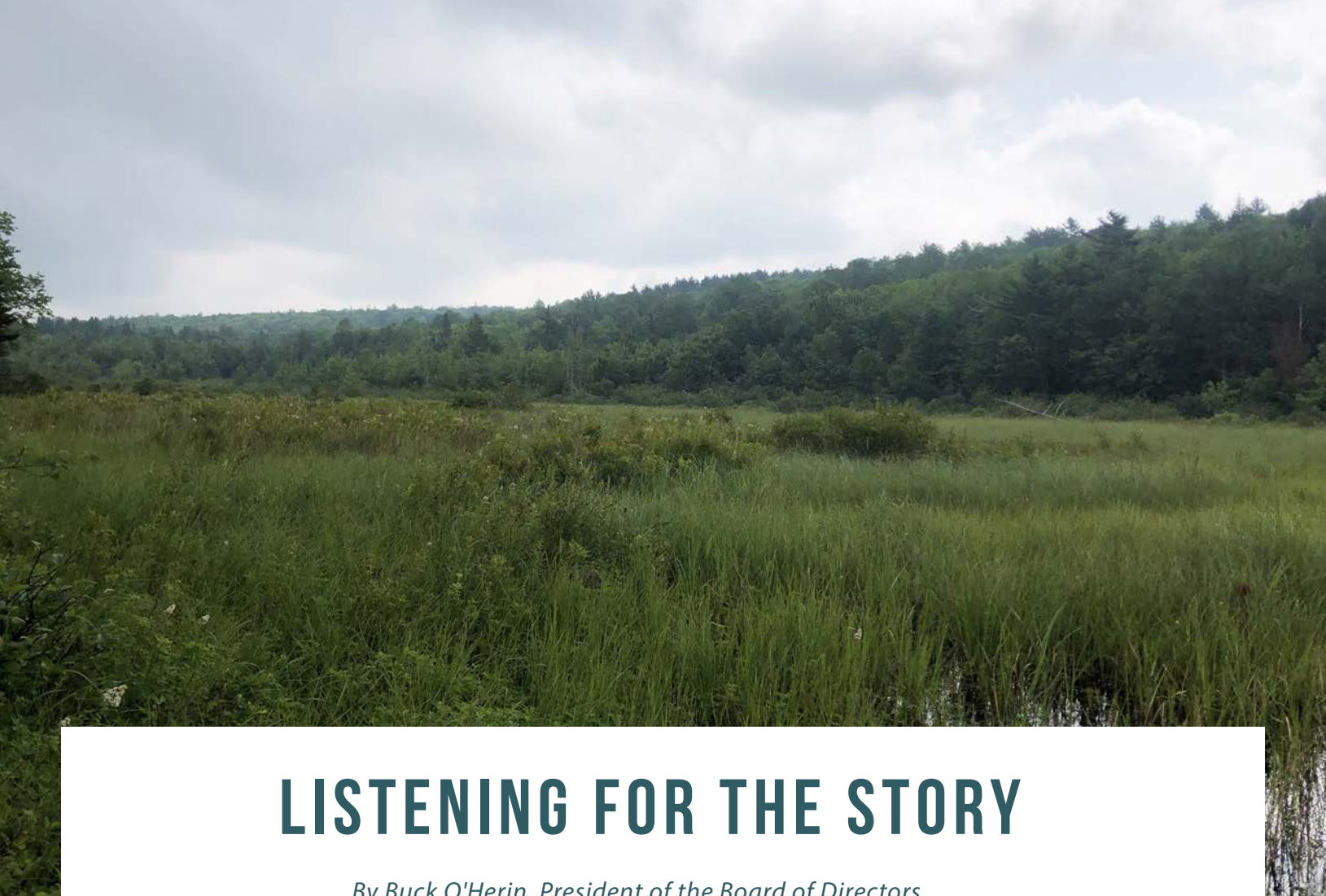
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THE MISSION OF MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY IS TO PROTECT AND RESTORE VITAL LANDS AND WATERS ON A SCALE THAT MATTERS.

WE ENVISION A WORLD WHERE OUR LANDS AND WATERS ARE HEALTHY AND PROTECTED AND WHERE NATURE OCCUPIES A PLACE OF CENTRAL IMPORTANCE IN EVERY PERSON'S LIFE.

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LISTENING FOR THE STORY

By Buck O'Herin, President of the Board of Directors

EDUCATOR AND WRITER DAVID ORR HAS REFERRED TO COLLEGE GRADUATES AS ITINERANT PROFESSIONAL VANDALS. FOR ARGUMENT'S SAKE, LET'S CONSIDER THIS NOTION THROUGH THE LENS OF A SPECIES THAT'S GOING EXTINCT BECAUSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND HABITAT LOSS—BOTH THE RESULT OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES.

Orr suggests that the problem with a formal education is that it encourages young people to find careers before they find a “calling.” A calling has to do with “one’s larger purpose, deeper values, and the gift one wishes to give the world.” Another way to view this is that one story captures our attention to the exclusion or loss of another.

The landscape brims with an endless number of stories about living processes and creatures within and

outside our awareness, but how well do we listen? Each of us is connected to the earth and the evolution of processes regardless of our tenancy and whether or not we listen.

The story most familiar to us is that of human exceptionalism and our rights as landowners, consumers, and citizens. I am more mesmerized by this story than I like to admit, yet I wonder what other creatures would say about this story if we could listen? It is difficult enough to hear the stories of other peoples.

When writer Barry Lopez visited an indigenous community in northern Alaska, he asked an Inupiat man there what he did when he visited a new place. The man replied, “I listen.”

He meant, “to what the land is saying.” It seems now more than ever we must listen to the stories around us, painful stories, stories of beauty and loss, stories seeking different outcomes than the trajectories they are on. Ultimately it is stories that hold us and give meaning to our lives. We all play a role in shaping that story and its outcomes.

WALKING THE TALK: A CONVERSATION WITH MOE MARTIN

By Anne Read, former Midcoast Conservancy Land Protection Specialist

I AM IN THE SHEEPSCOT RIVER HEADWATERS AREA, WALKING AND LISTENING TO THE STORY OF THIS PLACE. AS WE FOLLOW THE MEANDERING PATH DEEPER INTO THE WOODS, MASSIVE HEMLOCKS ALL AROUND US, I CRANE MY NECK TO INSPECT THE DEEP GREEN OVERSTORY. "YOU THINK THESE TREES HAVE WOOLLY ADELGID?" I ASK MOE, THE OWNER OF THESE BEAUTIFUL WOODS. "WELL, I COULDN'T TELL YOU," HE CHUCKLES. "I WOULD HAVE TO CLIMB ALL THE WAY UP THERE!"

Of course, he's right. As a Land Protection Specialist with Midcoast Conservancy I am frequently walking Hemlock forests similar to this one, always checking to see if there's the telltale sign of woolly adelgid infestation, a cottony cluster of tiny masses clinging to a Hemlock branch. But usually, these branches are on a young tree, at eye level, the tree's future uncertain. Today I marvel at these old trees from below, feeling grateful to be in the presence of such ancient Hemlocks that have survived.

The health and biodiversity of this forest is in large part due to Moe's commitment and love for this land. Growing up on this property in Montville, Moe spent his youth exploring the nearly-350 acres and bought the land from his father in the mid-1970s. After taking a forestry course at University of Maine in Orono, his interest in trees began to grow. He worked in a nursery at the University; when his professor sent him home with some seed books, he started buying seeds, growing them, and planting them on his land in Montville. Now, decades later, Moe has planted an estimated 3,000 trees, with the goal of establishing an old growth forest. This is no easy task, and it takes generations to develop, influenced by various factors including climate, soil conditions, and a diverse understory. But Moe has been proactive through sustainable harvesting to enhance the health and diversity of the forest, maintain the habitat, and begin the process of placing a conservation easement on this property with Midcoast Conservancy.

This easement will allow for him and future owners to continue to sustainably harvest, conduct agricultural activities, and protect the property in perpetuity from further division and large development. This property is a connecting piece, providing a potential link to other protected parcels in our Northern Headwaters Focus Area, and allowing for a stretch of habitat corridor to be conserved once this property is under a conservation easement.

Walking the woods with Moe feels like a safari, not moving anywhere very fast for fear of missing a Bohemian Waxwing swooping down to steal a juniper berry or so Moe can point out the tadpoles swimming along in his most recently built pond. This level of attention and care to this forest has clearly paid off as we walk and revel in the glorious evidence of Moe's devoted efforts.

HVNC: HOME TO NEW STORIES EVERY DAY

By Ali Stevenson

EVERY MONTH, EVERY WEEK, EVERY DAY, HIDDEN VALLEY NATURE CENTER IS A PLACE OF CREATION. THE FLORA AND FAUNA ARE READILY APPARENT; THE STORIES OF ADVENTURE, TRANSFORMATION, RESPITE ARE PERHAPS LESS OBVIOUS. NO TWO ARE THE SAME, AND ALL ARE WONDERFUL.



In the words Fon Solo make you think of Star Wars, you may not be a gravel biker—but you would want to be if you were at HVNC on the day that over 80 riders of all stripes, ages, and competitiveness rolled through the preserve! A pitstop was set up at the Barn; if it helps to set the tone, the snacks included oreos, pumpkin chocolate chip cookies, pickles and shots of Tin Top hard cider mixed with bourbon. Everyone lingered, stretching muddy legs while catching up with friends and newbies to HVNC who marveled at the incredible trail network. Many of the pack were from Portland and beyond, and delighted to have found a new riding destination!

rang out across the bog, the fields, and the lake. After learning that his bike ride had been 2.5 miles long, a wide-eyed little guy exclaimed, “That’s two of my island!” For kids raised on islands (especially one a mile long!), the boundless expanse of HVNC was a kind of freedom they don’t often experience.



As part of a three-day retreat for the students, parents and staff of every year-round island school in Maine, the Island Institute arranged for a full day at HVNC. The canoes were rarely out of the water, the fat tire bikes in regular rotation as the kids (and grown-ups) took full advantage of the outdoor adventure opportunities there. The rocks and trees had to be smiling at the joyful noise that

HVNC hosted three weeks of Hearty Roots camps this summer, as it has in previous years. Hearty Roots fosters resilience in midcoast Maine youth through a fusion of social-emotional and outdoor adventure programming; the woods and waters of HVNC are perfect for the journaling and reflection that are part of a Hearty Roots day. A spiral of yoga mats on the Barn floor are a sunburst of centered energy. The

trust that evolves within the group over the week leads to heartfelt and powerful sharing in the closing circles on Fridays. The healing power of the natural world is on full display.

For one weekend, HVNC offered solace and rejuvenation to the folks who attended the Heron’s Haven Retreat, a gathering to celebrate life and wellness for cancer survivors, those living with chronic illness, those who have survived life-threatening conditions, and their caregivers. Through their off-grid nature immersion at HVNC, attendees leaned into mindful wellness, creative movement, and the nature connections that we find in the beautiful Maine outdoors.

Woven between these events are the school groups that pour out of their buses into the HVNC parking lot every week, the Coastal Senior College visitors, the Maine Conservation Corps regional gatherings and more. Like the rings on a tree, the chapters of HVNC’s stories expand and reinforce the gifts it has to offer us all.

A LONG TRAIL: 20+ YEARS OF TRAIL BUILDING WITH CHARLIE WITHERELL

By
Isobel
Curtis

MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY'S 95 MILES OF TRAIL ARE MAINTAINED EXCLUSIVELY BY VOLUNTEER TRAIL CREWS AND EACH OF OUR THREE REGIONS HAS A VOLUNTEER TRAIL COORDINATOR. THANK YOU TO OUR COORDINATORS BUCK O'HERIN (SHEEPSCOT HEADWATERS), GERRY FLANAGAN (SHEEPSCOT VALLEY) AND CHARLIE WITHERELL (MEDOMAK VALLEY) FOR ALL THAT YOU DO- AND OF COURSE TO OUR TRAIL CREW MEMBERS. THANK YOU ALSO TO DAVID ELLIOT AND KIT PFIEMER FOR YOUR MANY YEARS COORDINATING THE TOWN OF WHITEFIELD'S TRAILS COMMITTEE!

Isobel Curtis: Charlie, how and when did you first get involved with Medomak Valley Land Trust?

Charlie Witherell: Well I was friends with Tom, one of the people who worked on trails at MVLT, and he said come on out and so I did. **The first thing I remember doing was at Burkett Mills**, we worked on a small plank bridge there- the one where the beaver felled the tree right next to the bridge. Anyway, that bridge went in around 2002 or 2001.

IC: So Tom first got you involved on the trail crew in 2001, and that stayed your domain?

CW: There wasn't really a trail crew per se at first. There was Ed Fischer and Tom and myself and Karen Clark. Ed was the one who explored most of Burkett and got the trails there going. It was **just a small group of people, no email list or anything**. Somewhere along the line though, Liz (then the ED of MVLT) and I began working on the access database together because I was familiar with the technology. After Liz left MVLT I spent a year or so as the acting ED/chairman of the Board and so got involved with that aspect of Medomak Valley Land Trust as well.

IC: At first, were you mostly helping develop and build more trails?

CW: **Back then, Goose River Peace Corps, Reef Point, and Burkett Mills were really it for trails**. Eventually Ed Kahora and I started planning trails elsewhere: Geele, Peters Pond, and Riverbrook- and Mill Pond was also added to Goose River.

IC: How did the trail crew evolve from a handful of people to a regular crew that meets every Wednesday and an email list of 50+, all under your tenure?

CW: I wish I knew! There was a small core group, and then it just grew from word of mouth I think. **Building new trails takes a lot of people**, or is easier with a lot of people... Ed and I did a fair share ourselves... but once we started doing more trail building that really got the group going. We'd meet every week and get a good turnout. At some point I started sending out emails to let everyone know when trail days were happening and sending thank you emails recapping the day.

IC: What's motivated you to spend so much time coordinating and leading the Trail Crew?

CW: I don't know, I like to cut things down! I guess I've always liked building things and projects. With trails, there was always a project. **There was also a camaraderie that developed: it was fun**.

IC: Because the draw of the trail crew is more than just working outside and getting a sense of accomplishment right? You could get that doing yard work at home!

CW: Right, it's the team and community kind of experience, it's getting together with other people. We all need that in some form.



Tim Libby (left) and Charlie Witherell at Riverbrook Preserve.



Charlie Witherell (left) and Ed Kahora at Burkett Mills Preserve.

IC: Why do you think it's so important to have public hiking trails?

CW: Well, think of the number of people who can use a public trail versus the number of people who actually have a trail behind their house. Unless you have significant acreage, you probably don't have that. Maybe you own property that backs onto trails, but that's a very small percent of the population. There's a lot more who don't have access otherwise. You can look at the property lots on the tax map and anywhere the lots are less than 10 or 20 acres those people likely don't have access to trails. Go up and down main street here in Waldoboro, no one really has that. **Public land is important because it provides access.**

IC: To close out, can you share some favorite stories or memories from trail work?

CW: Certainly building the big bridge at Riverbrook in the field, that was quite a project. Thank goodness Carl had the expertise to help with the site plan and design.

Bill McLaughlin also had the tractor with the post hole digger and NC Hunt donated a lot of lumber for the bridge. **That was probably a two-year project, we met every week for several weeks during the summer, normally with a big crew of 10 or so.** Of course the bridge did end up a little too high... we had visions of the Tappan Zee, or maybe we were going for a bridge like the one in Bath, had to make sure the ships could pass underneath!

Ed's and my encounter with the ticks at Riverbrook when we bushwhacked across the whole thing because we didn't know there was a snowmobile path 200 feet away. We must have had 300 ticks each. We came back to the office and were flushing ticks down the sink, but of course they came back and they were crawling out of the drain. I didn't see them but we heard about it later!

Also Geele, getting from the stretch on the woods trail near where the tides reverse to what we call the "highway" - the trail that comes back through the center of the property where Ed's Bump is. Building the trail from the highway down to the

water, that sure took forever. We kept trying to figure out where we were and where to go next, it was so thick.

IC: So, why's it called Ed's Bump? There's got to be a story there!

CW: Because if you were to follow the woods road "highway" straight the whole way, it goes through a wet spot. **Ed figured out a way to route the trail** around it, and so it's called Ed's Bump.

Charlie Witherell has truly built a community around trail maintenance in the Medomak Valley area. Thank you Charlie for your 20+ years of trail stewardship and leadership!



Charlie Witherell (front right), Ed Kahora (middle left), Bob Brayley (middle right), James Dalglish (left back), and Tim Libby (right back) at Geele Preserve.

DAMARISCOTTA LAKE WATERSHED COUNCIL

A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BLESSED PLACE

By Carolyn Gabbe

Photo: Keith Carver

I HAVE BEEN REFERRED TO IN MANY WAYS OVER THE MILLENNIA BUT MY MOST RECENT IS PERHAPS MY FAVORITE: CAMP MAKARIA (MAH-CAY-REE-AH, FROM THE GREEK FOR "BLESSED ONE").

Lemerged from receding glaciers and still border what is called Damariscotta Lake, 44 degrees N 70 degrees W, though more of me was visible before Central Maine Power raised the water level four feet in the 1920s. But that's a story for another day.

The Wawenock, members of the Abenaki nation, a branch of the Algonquins, camped around here in summer, enjoying the abundant fish and wildlife in the area. There were many old hardwood trees bearing nuts and berry bushes. The Wawenock were well-fed by the land and the water.

When the Europeans came, Chief Samoset signed a treaty with John Brown for access to a very large area of land in the midcoast, but the European settlers argued for almost 200 years over which of them really had the rights. In 1813, the Massachusetts courts decided that the treaty was null and void, as it was not

based on their law, and awarded the settlers the rights to the land, much of which was already occupied by towns, villages, and farms.

The trees were mostly gone by then, felled for the 26 shipyards in Nobleboro (which included the town of Damariscotta). And so I hosted sheep and dairy cows and members of the Hall family for six generations. I even sheltered "runaway" slaves on the freedom trail to Canada. In the sixth generation, Clive Hall married a very unusual woman from Madrid, Maine. Estelle Smith was a force of nature herself. She earned a Master's degree in education from Columbia University and became a Maine Guide, both unusual achievements for a woman of her times. Estelle also established the Junior Maine Guides program.

Estelle Hall loved me, drew her strength from me. She opened Camp Makaria in 1937 and ardently shared our connection with the girls that



came summer after summer. She hosted the girls camp for 20 years. Instead of retiring, she then rented cottages to their families, who had also grown very attached to me. Their children and grandchildren still come in the summer to camp.

Like Estelle, they draw strength from me and appreciate the beauty of this place. Grayce Hall Studley, Estelle's only child, is the seventh generation of Halls on the land and she and her husband Jack still host summer campers—some of them fourth generation—on part of the land. Others have moved on to the land year round, living lightly and loving me deeply. I am a blessed place.

MEDOMAK VALLEY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION IN THE MEDOMAK

By Morganne Price

THE MEDOMAK REGION IS ROOTED IN STRONG COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND PEOPLE WHO SHOW UP JUST TO HELP A NEIGHBOR OUT. IT IS EXACTLY THESE QUALITIES THAT MAKE WORKING IN THE MEDOMAK WATERSHED SUCH A SPECIAL PLACE. AS WE COZY UP NEXT TO THE WOODSTOVE AND EMBRACE THE CRISP AIR, LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT HOW YOU ALL CAME TOGETHER TO HELP GET THE GOOD WORK DONE.

VOLUNTEER CAPTAIN PROGRAM

Here in the Medomak we rely on our volunteer captains, folks who graciously donate their time, boat, and knowledge of the river to help Midcoast Conservancy protect the Medomak. This summer we were able to expand our estuary monitoring and more than double the number of samples Midcoast Conservancy and the Maine Coastal Observing Alliance (MCOA) have been able to collect in the past. This allows us to understand what is happening below the surface and monitor changes.

Our volunteer captain program also allowed Midcoast Conservancy to assist Marine Vegetation Scientists from the DEP to conduct eelgrass surveys, safely and skillfully navigating the tight and shallow waters eelgrass often likes to grow in. Eelgrass beds are some of the most valuable and productive ecosystems, providing food and shelter for many species of

young fish and invertebrates, including lobsters. Eelgrass beds are shifting locations globally, and the DEP is mapping their locations in order to monitor the changes happening here in our corner of the world.

LOBSTER TRAP CLEAN UP

The collaborations continue with our lobster trap clean up on Oar Island in Bremen. Midcoast Conservancy council members and volunteers teamed up with volunteers from the Maine Island Trail Association to continue the project that started last summer. MITA brought their trap compactor, the "crush-station" which



allowed us to remove the remaining 5,200 lbs of traps and lines from the shore.

TRAIL CREW

The Medomak Valley Trail Crew is a group of dedicated volunteers who gather every Wednesday morning to help keep our Medomak Trails, and beyond, in tip top shape. From clearing blow downs, building bridges, to tackling thorny invasives, it seems there is nothing this group cannot do.

If you are interested in helping out at any of our events, volunteering, or just want to chat, please email Morganne at morganne@midcoastconservancy.org. She always welcomes input from the community! To stay up to date on the happenings in the Medomak region, be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram. We post about events and fun facts about the land, water, and critters we share this space with.

SHEEPSCOT HEADWATERS



2023 IN THE SHEEPSCOT HEADWATERS WAS A YEAR OF ENVISIONING AND OF ACTION.

Midcoast Conservancy staff held two listening sessions at Lake St. George Brewing to give community members an opportunity to share their thoughts on the future of Liberty Woods, a 1,000 acre community forest stewarded by Midcoast Conservancy. Themes like universally-accessible trails, educational features, and ways to engage people new to the area or without outdoor experience were among the ideas offered up. Stay tuned for updates as we work to incorporate shared vision for this very special place!

Also in Liberty, the determined and creative crew that comprise



the Friends of Haystack Mountain worked hard to raise the money needed to purchase that beloved community landmark and destination for birding and spectacular vistas, thereby protecting it from development. Purchased earlier this year with the help of a bank loan, the land will be preserved and managed by Midcoast Conservancy; public access will remain in perpetuity. Anyone interested in helping

pay off the last \$75,000 of the loan can go to <https://www.haystackmountainmaine.org/>.

And speaking of action, another successful Goosepecker Trekker saw over 30 people hike the Whitten Hill Preserve and gather after for a picnic and update on Midcoast Conservancy work in the area. When you put friends, a fall foliage foray, and food together, good times are guaranteed!

SHEEPSCOT VALLEY



THE SHEEPSCOT VALLEY COUNCIL HAS BEEN HARD AT WORK FIXING TRAILS AFTER THE HEAVY RAINS AND BIG STORMS THIS SEASON!

The vegetation along the trails at Griggs Preserve, Whitefield Salmon Preserve, and Maguire Preserve has all been trimmed back so all could go enjoy the fall foliage. Also, seven bridges at Trout Brook Preserve have been replaced or repaired so you can keep your feet dry while hitting the trails. Congrats on a stellar job by the Sheepscot Trail Crew!

The Council has also been very involved in the local grassroots Sheepscot Knotweed Project, working to manage infestations of this invasive plant along the Sheepscot River (see story on page 19). Additionally, members of the Council helped out at our State of the Sheepscot event in Whitefield and were busy assisting Midcoast Conservancy staff with property monitoring this fall.



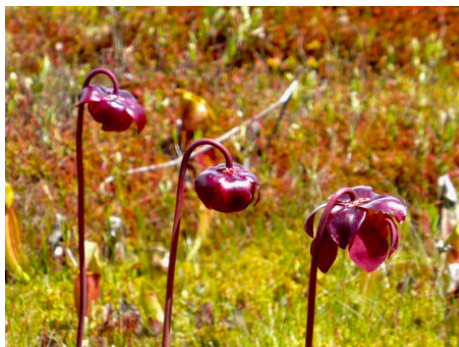
HIDDEN VALLEY NATURE CENTER



HVNC WAS ABUZZ THIS SUMMER WITH PROGRAMS, EVENTS, AND THOUSANDS OF RECREATING VISITORS!

The huts and yurt saw a steady stream of campers who canoed on Little Dyer Pond and took to the trails. Fat tire bike rentals at the Welcome Center got families rolling and guided Wednesday Wander hikes took participants to the Bog and on a fern foray.

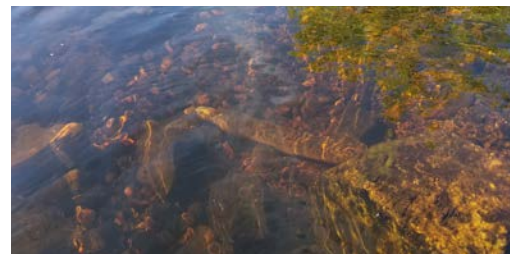
A rollicking Live Edge Music Festival brought nearly 500 folks to the Bezon Barn to hear four Maine bands fill the forest with fabulous tunes that had people on their feet dancing from the first note to the last.



Three Timber Frame courses constructed beautiful post-and-beam buildings that were then transported to their permanent homes.

And the soul-soothing wonder of time in the woods did its magic for several group retreats (see page 4).

Full moon hikes (on snowshoes when the trails are blanketed) begin in December and will continue through March, so whether it's a hike, an overnight, or a thrilling bike ride, HVNC has what you need for fun in the forest!



THE STORY OF SALLY, THE MISUNDERSTOOD SEA LAMPREY

By Melissa Cote

*Sea Lamprey, *Petromyzon marinus*, are one of Maine's 12 native species of sea-run fish. Having been around for ~340 million years, they are a primitive species that lack a jaw and instead have a suction cup-like mouth. Their mouth, or oral disk, allows them to attach to rocks and parasitically feed on their host fish, which is how the adults feed in the marine environment. Don't let the scary sight of their seven rows of teeth or the horror stories of their invasion of the Great Lakes fool you. Sea lamprey are important ecosystem engineers and keystone species in their native range. What follows is the story of Sally, the misunderstood sea lamprey, and how her existence in the Sheepscot River truly benefits the watershed and all the other species that live there.*

Sally the misunderstood sea lamprey emerged from her gravel nest 15 days after her mother and father buried their eggs in the streambed. She blindly floated downstream until she found a nice sandy patch and proceeded to burrow into the sediment by wiggling her body in a figure-8 motion. That is where she remained for the next four years of her life, happily vacuuming up decaying plant and animal material as she grew to be roughly five inches in length.

One day, after four years of living in the streambed, she began a transformation that prepared her body for life in the ocean. As she went through this metamorphosis, she developed eyes, a mouthful of teeth, and changed from the brown color of the streambed to a grayish blue with a silvery belly. Upon fully entering the juvenile stage of her life cycle, Sally began making her way downstream towards the Gulf of Maine. Along the way she heard some anglers discussing how sea lamprey were monsters that killed the fish they liked to catch. She thought to herself, "I haven't eaten any fish...yet." She felt sad that the anglers didn't like her, but continued on her way to the ocean.

Once in the Gulf of Maine, Sally found herself in deeper waters in search of a host fish. She spent the next 18 months

in the ocean, feeding on marine fishes such as herring, mackerel, and pollock. She thought back to what the anglers said, and mentally argued that she wasn't feeding on the freshwater fish they were catching, like small-mouthed bass!

One morning in early spring Sally felt the internal tug that she needed to return to freshwater to spawn. On her way, she stopped feeding and became a sexually mature adult about two feet in length. She found a mate, named Samuel, and together they went in search of the ideal place to make their nest and spawn! Together, Sally and Samuel swam up the Sheepscot River, through the opening at Head Tide dam, past the place where the Coopers Mills dam had been, and found a nice gravel patch in Midcoast Conservancy's Palermo Preserve. They began picking up rocks with their mouths to build their nest called a redd.

As Sally and Samuel worked, they heard a group of hikers approach. One hiker said, "Look, I think those are sea lamprey! How horrifying they are!" Their friend replied, "Actually, sea lamprey are native here, and right now they are making their nests. As they move the rocks around, silt and fine sediment are freed from the streambed, cleaning the gravel. This is good for endangered Atlantic salmon that require clean gravel to spawn. Their redds also add more complexity to the

habitat, which is good for other fishes and insects. By building their nests, they are ecosystem engineers, much like beavers are!" Sally couldn't help but smile—a very toothy smile—thinking she was actually doing some good for the environment and her fellow stream inhabitants.

Once their nest was complete, Sally and Samuel were very tired. They were so focused on reproducing that they hadn't eaten anything since they entered back into freshwater. They both felt the end was near, but they had one final act to complete: spawning. Together they vibrated their bodies, releasing eggs and milt into their nest and covering them up with rocks and sand.

Immediately after, Sally, with no energy left, let her body drift downstream into a pool where she died. Samuel lay in their redd for the next few days before he too lost the remainder of his strength, and died. The carcasses they left behind became an important source of marine-derived nutrients for aquatic macroinvertebrates, other freshwater species, and even terrestrial plants!

Fifteen days later, larval sea lamprey emerged from Sally and Samuel's gravel nest and drifted downstream where they found a nice sandy patch and burrowed into the streambed, like Sally before them.

CONSERVATION WORK ORIGIN STORIES

FROM THE STAFF

LINC OLIVER-O'NEIL

Reimagining and restoring our vital relationships with ourselves, each other, and the ecosystems that support us is the fundamental work of our time. Coming out of college, I wanted to find a way to bend my labor and skills to this critical moment of climate collapse. However, after reading “Black Faces, White Space” by Carolyn Finney, I began to understand that our work was much more complex than I’d originally thought. If we are going to pull through this crisis as a species, it is going to take an overwhelming majority of humans working together. To access that level of trust and collaboration, however, I learned that we need to address the underlying, planet-wide social inequities and associated trauma as an integral part of climate work.

After some wandering through several climate justice spaces, I chose the conservation field for several reasons. First, land trusts like Midcoast Conservancy understand the importance of conserving and stewarding physical landscapes that support not only the plants and animals we love, but that bring essential human benefits like access to land for hunting and foraging, and buffer zones for flooding and pollution. Second, I shifted my focus from trying to directly serve and shift the ecological relationships of BIPOC communities (who are historically, systematically, and culturally excluded from climate conversations), to organizing upper middle class, college educated white people. While Midcoast Conservancy works with and serves all types, this is a critical demographic who have held and continue to hold a lot of power in our service areas. Third, I believe



that our respect for the sanctity of all life, and the complexity of the ecological relationships in our watershed, positions us well to understand how to navigate nuanced relationships across difference, tackling both our intertwined social and ecological crises simultaneously.



ISOBEL CURTIS

I grew up in a large, rapidly-growing town of 60,000. I lived on the outskirts across from a manmade reservoir and a small swath of water utility-owned land where my dad and I frequently went walking. My imagination grew up there, spreading far into the canopy above as I learned the names of different tree species: red oak, white pine, sugar maple. The maples were my father’s favorite. As I got older I went there to seek solace away from the constraints and pressures of school and home life. It was a place without rules or judgment, seemingly boundless though only 20 acres. Those walks in the woods with

my father fundamentally shaped who I am. Developing a relationship with the natural world at a young age led to a lifelong curiosity and compassion for what lies outside the door. I didn’t grow up in Maine with its rocky coastline, rolling fields, and dense forests, but I was lucky enough to grow up near a small sliver of open space. I do this work because those 20 acres matter. Conservation not only supports healthy ecosystems, it also ensures people have access to land and water for recreation, hunting, fishing, farming, and forestry. It builds the foundation of curiosity and compassion in the next generation that we need to create a liveable future. People can’t care about what they do not know.

MELISSA COTE

Like most teenagers who aren't sure what to do with their life, I struggled with a decision of major (pun intended) consequences. What should I major in when I go to college? Obsessed with forensic crime shows of the early 2000s, CSI, NCIS, Bones, etc., I thought perhaps forensic sciences?! Although, at 16, I wasn't sure how I'd react to working with dead bodies, so I used the summer prior to my junior year of high school to really put some thought to it.

Every summer my family spent a few weeks at my grandparents house in Damariscotta, where my grandfather grew up. We had a standard list of activities we always embarked on, including crawling around the rocks of Pemaquid Point, cooling off in the "swimmin' hole" at Bristol Mills, eating lobsters at Shaws Lobster Wharf, and finding sea treasures at the Rachel Carson Salt Pond Preserve. As a giant tide pool to play in and explore, the salt pond was always my favorite place to visit.

That summer, I decided to venture out to the far side of the salt pond, slipping

and sliding all over the seaweed. While looking under submerged rocks in the icy water for any fun sea creatures, I found a sea urchin for the first time! I sat for a long while observing it, wondering how it moved and whether or not its spines would stab me if I picked it up. Eventually, the tide came in and it was time to leave. Later that year, when it came time to make the MAJOR decision and write my college essay, I decided to write about this experience and elected to major in marine sciences.

Reflecting back on my time spent in Maine as a child, I realized that my sea urchin experience wouldn't have happened without conservation organizations working to protect lands and waters, and allowing public access to these places. I'm happy to be a part of an organization dedicated to this type of work, especially now as we face the threats of climate change and development. Without my sea urchin encounter, perhaps I'd be investigating dead bodies instead! Natural places inspire us, heal us, and ignite our curiosity. We need to protect and preserve these beautiful places in Maine for future generations of awkward teenagers to be inspired by and help cultivate their curiosity!



STEPHANIE HANNER

I am most often fueled by my colleagues to be involved with this work! Without a background in science or environmental studies, but rather a sheer interest in what surrounds me and a natural curiosity to ask a lot of questions, I am indebted by what they are happy to share, and their passion is infectious.

In the few months since joining Midcoast Conservancy, I've been able to participate in a wood turtle sweep and controlled burn of Japanese knotweed, gotten enthralled by discussions about the quantity of bald eagles congregating on our mutual commutes into the office, been introduced and then quickly addicted

to the Merlin Bird ID app, chatted about different types of bog bridges, heard about and saw pictures of an Eastern milk snake hiding in one of our canoes (turns out it was a record for the first to be spotted in Edgcomb per the Maine Reptile & Amphibian Atlas!), learned fascinating facts about lichen and moss, discovered certain types of spiders can move their webs, and enjoyed gathering wild blueberries at a Waldoboro preserve (but not more than I needed) - this is all in addition to the teamwork exhibited daily by staff and volunteers. Whether we're coming together for an event, deadline, or new project, I enjoy coming to work every day and knowing we are all doing our part to contribute to an organization working to protect our environment.

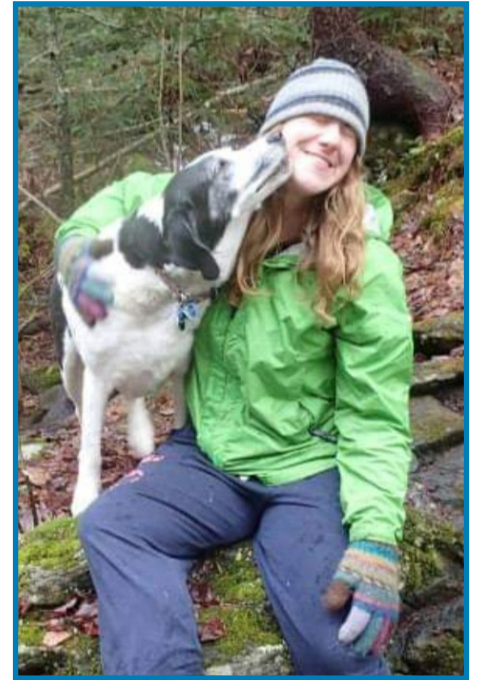
MORGANNE PRICE

I do not remember the first time I saw the Goose River, one of the major tributaries of the lower Medomak, though it is a place that holds many memories. I grew up on the Goose River, exploring the forests, streams, and swamps behind my house that make up the Three Brooks Wilderness and the Goose River Corridor, two areas that Midcoast Conservancy is working to protect.

Whenever it was that I first saw that river I am sure my childhood dog, Pumpkin, was by my side. Pumpkin was some sort of beagle/spaniel/retriever mix my parents had gotten from a newspaper ad in the early 90's. She was the best childhood dog anyone could ask for, always down for a game of fetch or a romp in the woods. On one walk in particular, when I was around 10 years old. I was extra grateful for her. I had decided to explore a new area of the forest and quickly got turned around. Slightly panicked, I asked Pumpkin to bring us home. She understood and led us back to safety. Turns out I was not that far off course, so humbled and happy we returned.

The next dog to enter my life and the Goose River came when I was about 12 years old. Penney, a hound mix from the shelter, had a nose that knew where to go and an independent nature. She would often peel off on her own excursions, sometimes bringing back a deer leg, shed antler, or rabbit foot, and always covered in something extra-fragrant. She spent most of her 14 years running around back there and I often wished I could understand those woods like Penney did.

Now at 31 years of age I am still running around in those woods with my dog, though now I get to do it for my job. My current canine partner is a border collie named Kraken who was born at my farm, which is surrounded by the Goose River Woodlands. Every year Midcoast Conservancy puts boots on the ground for each one of our properties, this is called property monitoring. Last September as Kraken and I were monitoring some of Midcoast Conservancy's Three Brooks/Goose River properties and easements a big smile came across my face. Here I was exploring these

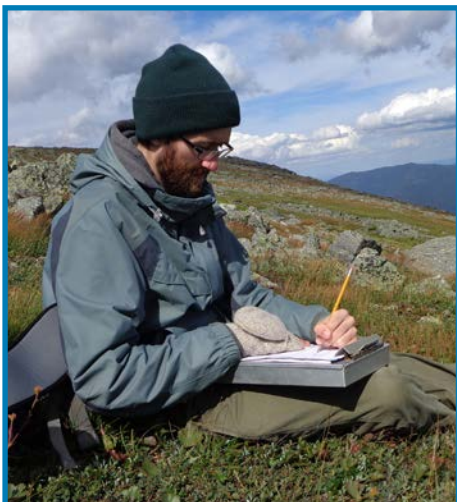


lands that are a part of who I am, with my dog by my side, just as I have done since I was a child.

I am so grateful to be a part of the work Midcoast Conservancy is doing to connect people to these places and ensure we all have access to these vital lands and waters.

CHRIS SCHORN

I am in this work because I am a big nerd. I don't mean the cute or socially-aware kind of nerd. I am talking about memorizing Star Wars trivia, watching Lord of the Rings on repeat,



and sleeping in Pokemon bedsheets. I was much more comfortable with my Nintendo 64 than I was with the outdoors. In fact, when my family moved when I was 7, I begged my parents not to move us into anywhere that had "woods", because I had just seen the movie trailer for "The Blair Witch Project" and was convinced that all of Maryland's forests were inhabited by witches. Thankfully my parents decided to go the "exposure therapy" route, and our next house was surrounded by woods (as far as suburbs go). As I grew into your typical moody teen, I found myself going for walks in those woods while wrestling with all my hormonal anxiety. Funnily enough, they were some of the same woods that Rachel Carson explored while living in my hometown about fifty years before I did. And maybe something of her spirit still inhabited those woods and

followed me home. I found peace and beauty in those woods, even if I sometimes pretended I was on Middle-Earth instead of regular Earth. Way led onto way, and learning led to a desire to learn more. One day I found myself majoring in Environmental Studies & Botany, and somehow I found myself with a master's in Plant Biology, and then one day I found myself here.

Along the way I learned that regular Earth is just as cool as Middle-Earth—even cooler, because it's right outside and it's real. I applied my Pokemon-collecting proclivities to plants, making lists of ones I hadn't seen yet and planning field trips for myself to go find them in their native habitats. And I now have a job that is full of adventure and exploration, discovering new worlds in every tree stump and finding new tales in every management plan.

TIM LIBBY

I was fortunate to have spent so much of my time on the land growing up. I was the kid that needed walking lessons in the school hallway because otherwise I'd run full speed, and I did poorly in some subjects because I was looking out the window at the trees rather than at the board. Matrices are not as cool as trees! I lived both around Willard Beach in South Portland and rural west Falmouth where I spent many of my favorite moments. My grandparents also lived on the Scarborough marsh and we were with them all the time, growing up. When my father first bought a place in Falmouth with 15 acres of woods it wasn't long before I met the neighbor boy, whose family had a 75-acre farm. All I cared about was being there when I wasn't, and we spent most of our hours out there. I watched a lot of that land get flagged off, dug up, cemented and tarred. It really bothered me and I wondered

how all of the world could be paved? When I was in Orono I became desperate to somehow become a part of positive change, so I decided the best way for me to participate in positive change was to stay in the land I'm from and participate there. There wasn't much available land left around Portland, not that I could afford, so food activism landed me in



Unity where I managed a farm and began working in the woods. Today I call myself a land manager. It's hard for me to imagine being anything else. Perhaps now the best way I am participating in positive change is as a steward of the land, sharing my skills and land care ethics with people who also care.



PATRICIA NEASE

As a kid I was often in the woods; despite growing up in suburbia there was ample green space where I lived and most of our family vacations centered around camping. I played in the woods behind my house with my friends, hiked on weekends with my family, and generally spent as much time outside as possible. Really, though, I grew up wanting to be a marine biologist. On non-camping family vacations we usually visited aquariums and they were always my favorite parts. I've been a big science nerd for a long time. My crunchy granola high school (shout out, Community High in Ann Arbor, MI!) had an integrated science program where instead of having biology, chemistry, and physics as separate classes, they were integrated so you got a little of everything each year. Freshman

year, there was an aquatic ecology unit where the class did benthic macroinvertebrate surveys, water chemistry, and learned about healthy streams. From there I was hooked. As a sophomore, I raised salmon in a 70-gallon tank before releasing them into the Lake Huron watershed, and took every science class I could manage. After a summer at the University of Michigan Biological Station I did my undergraduate degree in fisheries and aquatic science at Colorado State University and worked in an ecotoxicology lab. During graduate school at Purdue University I started exploring science communication and I'm so grateful that my job combines my two loves, aquatic science and communicating that science! Each day is a commitment to doing my part to protect our small slice of the planet.



DRIVING THE STORY OF THE LAND By Tim Libby

FALL: ONE OF MY FOUR FAVORITE TIMES OF THE YEAR IN MY FAVORITE PLACE IN THE WORLD. MY ROLE AS A LAND MANAGER HAS ME TRAVELING FAR AND WIDE ACROSS OUR SERVICE AREA. THESE DRIVES, COLORFULLY VIBRANT IN A PHASE OF TRANSITION TOWARD THE DARKER, SLOWER AND DORMANT TIME OF YEAR, HELP TO REMIND ME OF SOME OF THE MYSTERIES OF TIME'S PASSAGE.

There is a bit of a vista that opens up over Medomak Pond when you are headed north on the Washington Road in Waldoboro. From there you can see all the way to the headwaters, some 20 miles away, and some of its prominent features. One is Coon Mountain, crowned by a tower that stands on Rt 220 in Liberty. Just over that ridge is Lake St George. To the left and even more prominent is Kager Mountain, its granite face standing in contrast to the vegetated land around it. Taking the drive over Coon Mountain and then down along the ridge north west on the Stickney Hill road you literally straddle the St. George and the Medomak watersheds. Traveling a little further along that

road, you pass around the Marshall Shore of Lake St. George with Hogback Mountain perfectly framed over the water in the distance. Driving further yet, you pass over another ridge where you are presented with the broad face of Bolin Hill before descending into its valley, bisected by Route 3. At that intersection, Lake St. George sits to the right behind the brewery; just a little left on the road is John's Ice Cream. If you dropped your ice cream on the pavement there it would melt into the Sheepscot River!

I love these hills and how they share with me views of the landscapes surrounding them. Long vistas offer me reminders of how small our

world really is, and allow me to see more than what is just in front of me. This perspective feels timeless, as if I am suspended above an ancient land. It's a scale of time that is difficult for any ordinary person to imagine, how this landscape was formed when the awesome power of the Earth boiled its center to the surface and cooled over hundreds of millions of years. And how over hundreds of millions of years, multiple ice ages with their enormously thick layers of ice, moved ground, then melted, and deposited gravel, sand and loam along the valleys, over and over. Today we have our beautiful soft hills and mountains along with their gentle valleys gifted by these powers of time. We will enjoy them for the instant that we are here.



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. STORIES CARRY KNOWLEDGE. STORIES GIVE US POWER.

By Morganne Price

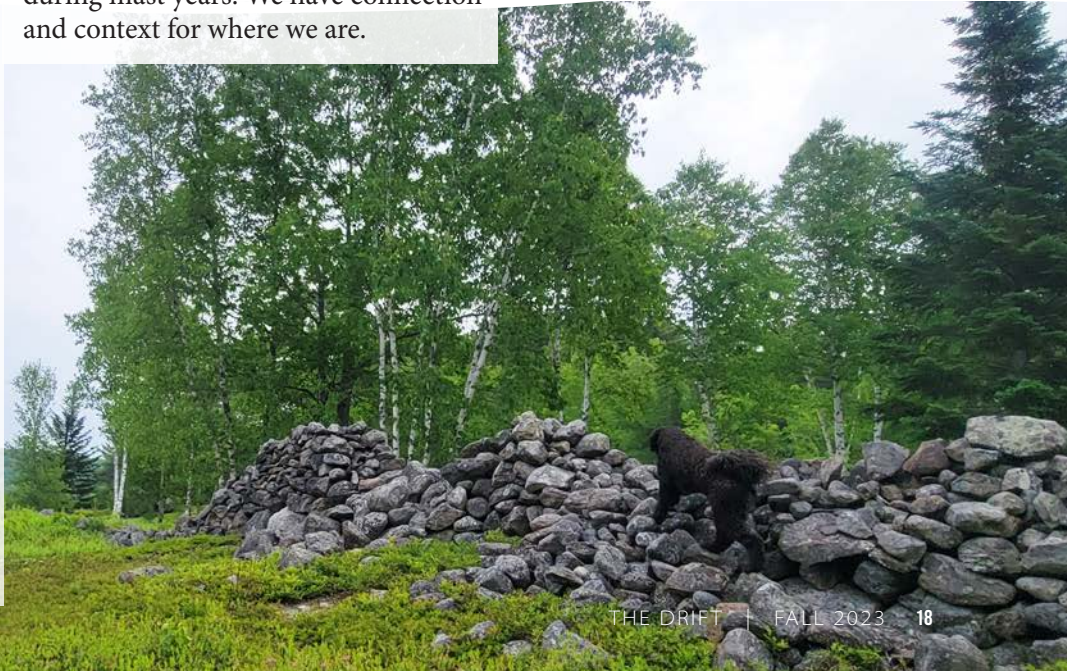
AS MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY WORKS WITH LAND OWNERS TO PROTECT LAND, WE ALSO WORK TO PROTECT THE STORIES AND CONNECTIONS THAT GO WITH THEM.

When human populations are disturbed or removed from a landscape, their stories often disappear too. When walking on land without knowing its story we must look for clues about its past and present happenings. It is one thing to know that there is a mixed hardwood forest on a preserve. With this knowledge, some inferences could be made. There is a high likelihood there are squirrels, deer, and turkeys foraging the forest floor in search of acorns. Looking at the type and size of the trees we could surmise that this may have been a field at one point. Perhaps a nearby stonewall gives clues about past livestock activity.

For many thousands of years people have been living with this land, creating and sharing stories. Passing a connection from person to person, generation to generation. People love to tell stories. Mention a beloved river or forest to an old timer and they will share the story of the land that has been held by the people who have been living with that parcel for many years, perhaps even many generations.

With generational knowledge we could look at that same mixed hardwood forest and remember a parent telling us the stories their grandparents told them. Perhaps a time when the area had been a pasture for dairy cows. How when the price of milk dropped, the cows were sold and the surrounding woodlands started expanding into the field. We know from our own childhood in those woods that there is a giant oak tree near the stone wall, a favorite of the deer during many years. We have connection and context for where we are.

Everywhere we go, the land and water holds stories, many of which we will never know but exist all the same. We humans are great keepers of stories. It is part of who we are and how we connect to people, places, and things. When information is passed along through stories it adds to the spirit and life of the place. A sense of continued connection is to know that you too are a part of the stories.



THE SHEEPSCOT KNOTWEED PROJECT: A COMMUNITY CONSERVATION STORY

By Isobel Curtis and Kristin Stone

THE STORY OF THE SHEEPSCOT KNOTWEED PROJECT BEGAN WITH AN ILL-FATED INFLATABLE TUBE TRIP DOWN THE SHEEPSCOT RIVER. TWO NEIGHBORS, CONCERNED ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF KNOTWEED GROWING AROUND TOWN, DECIDED TO FLOAT THE SHEEPSCOT RIVER TO SEE HOW MUCH WAS GROWING ON ITS BANKS. THE GOING WAS SLOW AND ARDUOUS THANKS TO LOW WATER, BUT THEY EVENTUALLY WOUND THEIR WAY FROM HEAD TIDE DAM IN ALNA TO THE RIVERBEND SURROUNDING MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY'S TROUT BROOK PRESERVE.

Knotweed choked the shoreline, but they also saw curious bits of orange flagging. What was happening? They reached out to Midcoast Conservancy and learned of their plans to restore the native floodplain community. An idea was born in that first conversation: why not share the management techniques being used at Trout Brook with the wider community? Many months and conversations later, the Sheepscot Knotweed Project was born. A deeply collaborative and grass roots effort, the team is comprised of community leaders, private landowners, invasive species and plant biology experts, and Midcoast Conservancy staff.

The goal, contrary to most messaging around invasive plants, is not actually to “eradicate” Knotweed- it is simply too well-established. The real goal and central ethos is to help people become aware of what’s growing around them and how it interacts with the rest of the landscape. It is to teach people to be good stewards of their backyards by promoting and planting native species. In a time of rapid and destabilizing change, landowners can help relieve stress on ecosystems by supporting native biodiversity and foodwebs as

species adapt to the myriad of new climate conditions- including new neighbors such as Knotweed. Localized management is also important in particularly sensitive or ecologically important areas such as the floodplain and along the river.

The approach is multifaceted: 1) research and demonstrate the efficacy of different management techniques, 2) create informational materials and hold events to raise awareness, and 3) recruit volunteers to directly support landowners in managing their knotweed. In 2021, Midcoast Conservancy began management efforts at Trout Brook Preserve. In 2022, the Sheepscot Knotweed Project established test sites to experiment with different control methods at Trout Brook, organized a community float down the river to raise awareness, and led a management workshop to share our management strategies. In 2023, we partnered with three private landowners and recruited volunteers to help with the once monthly repeated cuttings of knotweed needed to weaken the plant. We also hosted another river



Knotweed at Trout Brook 2022

Knotweed is particularly harmful along the banks of the Sheepscot River as it can increase erosion (due to its root structure, the very large rhizomes actually break the soil up and make it more susceptible to erosion) and thus silting into the river. This is an issue on the Sheepscot as it is prime salmon rearing and spawning habitat and they require gravel stream substrate. The river bank and floodplain are also particularly rich and unique vegetative communities that are home to some rare and threatened species.



Knotweed at Trout Brook 2023

float (with ample water this time) and are planning another management info session. 2024 will be our third year and we look forward to working with more landowners and volunteers, organizing events, and continuing to collect data on various management strategies.

To learn more about managing knotweed or about the Sheepscot Knotweed Project, email sheepscotknotweedproject@gmail.com.



LIFE ON THE PAGE

By Chris Schorn

MANY STORIES ARE TOLD—AT ONE POINT OR ANOTHER—WITH PAGES. PAGES CAN CARRY THE TEXT OF A NOVEL, OR THE DIALOGUE OF A SCREENPLAY, OR SPACE FOR SKETCHES, OR THE BAR LINES OF A MELODY. THERE IS ANOTHER KIND OF PAGE, HOWEVER, THAT IS BEING TOLD ABOUT—AND LITERALLY, WITH—THE FABRIC OF MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY’S LANDSCAPE.

On every one of these pages is pasted a label, with a few names and a date and a place. And on every one of these pages there is a plant. I mean a literal plant, flattened and glued and taped into place. These pages live in cabinets, and the tale that they comprise stretches hundreds of years and spans the entire earth.

These “pages” are herbarium specimens. There may be a quaint Victorian-era connotation to the word “herbarium”, but it may surprise many not only do they still serve as modern scientific research facilities, but that there is a herbarium growing and flourishing in this day and age containing, in part, the plant biodiversity of Midcoast.

Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens and Maine Natural Areas Program launched the MidCoast Flora Project in partnership with Midcoast Conservancy and myriad landowners across our region¹.

“The goal of the MidCoast Flora project is to understand and document the complete current plant biodiversity of the Midcoast region, especially Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties, which have received far less botanical study than other regions of Maine,” says Melissa Cullina, Director of Plant Science & Collections at CMBG. “The study will allow CMBG and conservation partners like Midcoast Conservancy to detect changes over time, assess threats, and set local protection priorities in a rapidly changing climate.”

Midcoast Conservancy preserves represent ideal sites for specimen collections, because *they are conserved into perpetuity!* They will remain

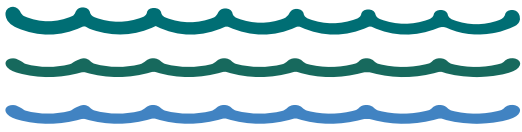
valuable study environments for decades and centuries to come, offering the opportunity to host long-term ecological studies. So far, over 700 plant specimens in the MidCoast Flora have been collected from Midcoast Conservancy preserves! These scientific specimens represent everything from common weeds, to native woodland herbs and grasses. (Rare species have been found and documented on our preserves, but these specimens are left to flourish in place!)

Herbarium specimens can tell hundreds of stories, apart from their vital use as tools for research, identification, and species description. When did a particular invasive species appear in the United States²? How does the flowering life stages of plants collected hundreds of years ago compare to flowering times today³? How does insect predation in wild plants vary over the decades⁴?

There are hundreds more stories that could be told in the future using these specimens—stories we couldn’t dream of with the technologies and methods of today. Just like land conservation, the growth of our local natural history collections represents an investment in a better future.

¹Early stages of the project were funded by the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund. ²Delisle, F., Lavoie, C., Jean, M., & Lachance, D. (2003). Reconstructing the spread of invasive plants: taking into account biases associated with herbarium specimens. *Journal of Biogeography*, 30(7), 1033-1042. ³Willis, C. G., Ellwood, E. R., Primack, R. B., Davis, C. C., Pearson, K. D., Gallinat, A. S., ... & Soltis, P. S. (2017). Old plants, new tricks: Phenological research using herbarium specimens. *Trends in ecology & evolution*, 32(7), 531-546. ⁴Meineke, E. K., Classen, A. T., Sanders, N. J., & Jonathan Davies, T. (2019). Herbarium specimens reveal increasing herbivory over the past century. *Journal of Ecology*, 107(1), 105-117.

FISH TALES



SAMUEL FORD

The little wooden 12-inch ruler still liked about an inch and a half, measuring to the tip of his tail, then there was about 16 inches above the little ruler. After taking a few pictures, I released him so someone else could get the same thrill that I did. My heart was beating so hard, I thought it was knocking the buttons off my shirt.



ANDREW LAMB

I was up at the crack of dawn on August 24 this year. My family has been vacationing in Maine for 12 years. I have been fishing for 24 years and have never seen a largemouth bass as big as the one I caught that day.

I took my boat out from the southwest corner of the lake, across from the Mill House. I navigated up the east side of the lake to a little stretch of the bank in between Bryant and Hoe Island.

I was casting a topwater lure that imitates some kind of dying alewife. After a few hours of no bites, a massive splash startled me as my lure was about 3 feet from the bow of my vessel. The fish pulled my line straight down toward the bottom, and I knew I had something heavy on the end.

I know that largemouth bass are probably the largest (heaviest) species in the lake. I know there are landlocked salmon and chain

pickerel, but I certainly haven't seen any as big as the bass I had on my line that morning.

After minutes of the fish fighting for its life, I got the fish to the boat. I was in shock. I couldn't believe the size of the fish. I've fished my whole life, made millions of casts and never seen anything quite like it. I put the behemoth on my scale, and it measured in at 5 pounds and 12 ounces.

It appeared to be a very old fish. It had sores and markings all over it. Despite these blemishes, she was gorgeous. The way the early morning sun came over the pine trees and shed light on the beautiful creature is something seriously magical. It makes me emotional! What a creature.

I released her back into the lake to grow, spawn, and live out the rest of her days. Never change, Damariscotta Lake.





GWENNE OBERG

In August 1971 my folks bought a cottage on Damariscotta Lake; I was seven years old. On our very first visit my dad promised that if any of us caught a big fish, he would have it stuffed. My older brother took me fishing in our aluminum row boat that day and being a novice angler, I tossed my bobber out into the middle of the lake. Generally not a prime fishing spot but somehow I hooked a small mouth bass. Although the reel broke while hauling it in, my brother pulled the line in by hand, netted the fish and removed the hook for me. I proudly brought the fish home to show my dad. It was a very big fish to a seven-year old. My mother reminded him that he needed to keep his promise, so we drove the fish in a bucket of water to a taxidermist in Hallowell to be picked up the next summer.

In the 50+ years since, our family has caught many larger fish in the lake, and my brother is a fly fishing expert and although I have not tossed a line in for many years, my trophy still hangs on the cottage wall today.

CHRISTIE MACDONALD

I dedicate this to my brother who passed away a year ago. Some of his ashes are spread where this happened....Rest in peace, dear brother.

This happened many years ago, and I assure you, it is completely true! My husband Paul, my brother Tom, and my friend Dave were on a lazy, fun-filled fishing day. They meandered out of our cove and over to the Pulpit Rock area. What luck! The fish were going crazy here! They caught many fish and they kept on biting. Tom caught the catch of the day...a true monster! The boys were in awe. This beast jumped out of the water and fought like he was never going to get into that boat. Well, just as he was about to land this epic fish, the line broke and the fish swam away with his most

favorite lure. The boys were not done with their fishing adventure but the cooler was empty and Tom wanted to get that exact lure to try again. They came in, drove to town, and got their provisions, ate lunch and then got back on the water and headed back to the spot. They all put lines in—and Tom hit another big one! He fought hard...he was determined to not lose this one. Slowly, carefully, methodically he reeled in this big fish. Out of the depths, he appeared on the surface, but what were they seeing? Was that

THIS STORY WAS TOLD AND RETOLD OVER THE YEARS AND THE DETAILS DIDN'T CHANGE. THE EXCITEMENT AND LAUGHTER CONTINUE TO THIS DAY!

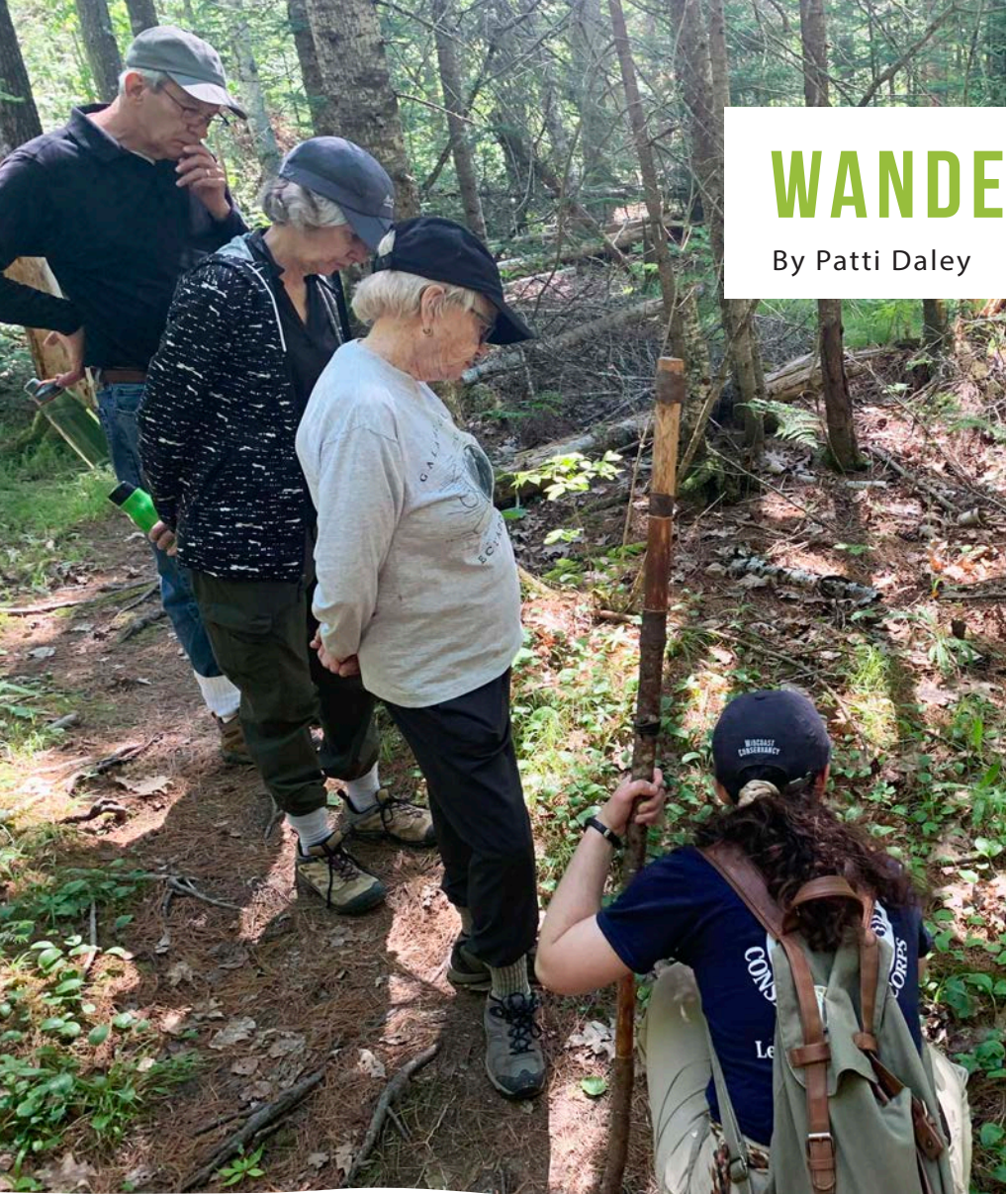


a fish with a lure hanging out of its mouth? Could it be?

YES! It was THE beast! Tom went to grab the fish but he gave one last jump and spit BOTH lures out of his mouth and dove deep out of sight. The boys could not believe what they just witnessed. This story was told and retold

over the years and the details didn't change. The excitement and laughter continue to this day. Too bad it was long before cell phones to capture the epic adventure... or is it? Perhaps living in the moment, and now the memory, is the best way to experience our most favorite piece of paradise, Damariscotta Lake.





WANDERING STORIES

By Patti Daley

WHO NEEDS A WALK IN THE WOODS ON A BEAUTIFUL MAINE DAY? WHO WELCOMES FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT MAINE FLORA AND FAUNA FROM DEDICATED VOLUNTEER NATURALISTS? WHO DISCOVERS NEW TRAILS AND RECENTLY ACQUIRED PRESERVES WITHIN A 30-MINUTE DRIVE? WHO LIKES TO MEET NEW AND INTERESTING PEOPLE WHO SHARE A FONDNESS FOR OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES. I DO!

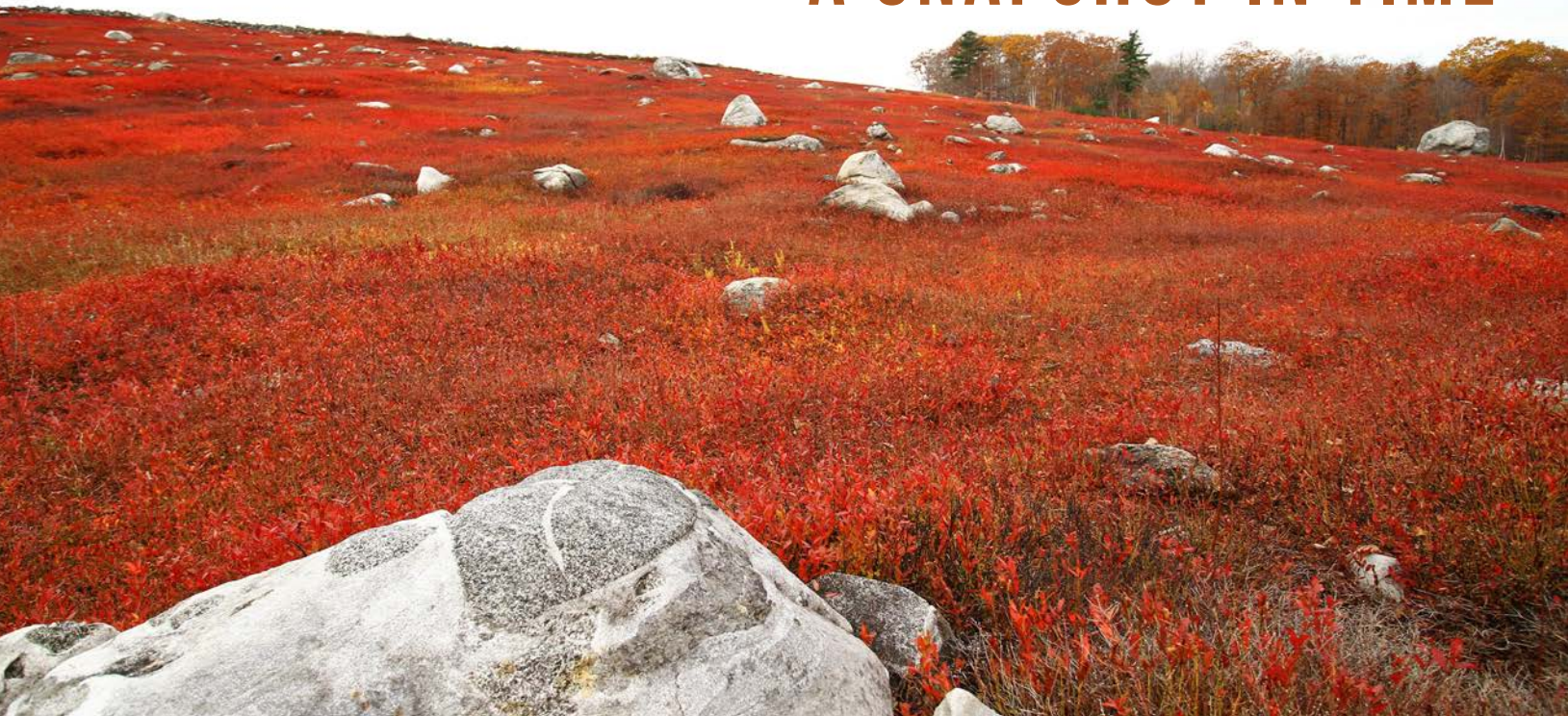
It's a sleepy Wednesday morning when my alarm goes off. I hop out of bed and quickly pull on the clothes I have laid out the night before: long-sleeve shirt, long pants, sturdy socks and hiking boots. The bug spray is resting in my cap. A quick application of sunscreen and a quick dash to the coffee pot come next. Hmmm. It is 9:30. Hike starts at 10. Now, where are the directions to this week's Wednesday Wander? I check out the Midcoast Conservancy website. Ah, there it is. Easy to find. The drive to join the Wanderers is always part of the treat. Maine offers beautiful vistas as my car merrily rolls along on its way to

yet another new destination. There is always a thrill of anticipation as I drive! I wonder if our walk past bogs and marshes will stir up the beautiful blue heron I so admire? Will I be learning about the varieties of ferns from Jane Harrison and Kit Pfeiffer at Peter's Pond, or Hildy Ellis at HVNC? I remember the incredible mushroom display last year. Maybe there will be a sighting of the rare Cardinal flower at the Goose River Peace Corps preserve. Hunting for salamanders under slippery river stones is always fun when Chuck Dinsmore shows us how. I remember the experience of Forest Bathing at Hidden Valley Nature

Center. The majestic Hemlocks in the Northern Headwaters. Who knew that trees could survive by copping together so the strong can support the weak? I am so grateful that there is always a Midcoast Conservancy volunteer present to answer our questions.

Of course, there is the sheer pleasure of walking and talking, of looking and listening in these beloved Maine woods and meadows. Thank you, Midcoast Conservancy for helping so many to enjoy the wonder of nature that is right here!

CLARRY HILL HIGHLANDS: A SNAPSHOT IN TIME



- **AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY:** THERE ARE SEVERAL SMALL FARMS ON THE HILL RAISING SHEEP AND OTHER ANIMALS. MOST OF THE WILD BLUEBERRY LAND IS USED AS PASTURE; VERY FEW AREAS ARE TILLED.
- **1920-30:** THE FERTILITY OF THE FIELDS BEGINS TO DROP AND THE WILD BLUEBERRIES BEGIN TO PROSPER.
- **1950:** EDWARD CUTTING BEGINS MANAGING THE CLARRY HILL FIELDS FOR WILD BLUEBERRY PRODUCTION.
- **2022:** COASTAL BLUEBERRY SERVICES PUTS THE 263 ACRES UP FOR SALE.
- **2023:** MAINE FARMLAND TRUST, SEVERAL VERY GENEROUS DONORS, AUDUBON, FRIENDS OF HOG ISLAND, AND MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY BAND TOGETHER TO RAISE THE MONEY NEEDED TO PROTECT THE PROPERTY FROM DEVELOPMENT.
- **IN 2024,** THE AGRICULTURAL EASEMENT PURCHASED BY MAINE FARMLAND TRUST WILL ALLOW BLUEBERRY GROWING TO CONTINUE INTO THE FUTURE.



GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP TO MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY

Celebrate the holiday season by giving a family member or friend the *Gift of Membership to Midcoast Conservancy!* Your gift of a membership welcomes friends and family to conservation and community involvement in Midcoast Maine.

Once you purchase a gift membership, we'll send a welcome email to the recipient notifying them of your gift as well as an official new member welcome packet in the mail. You will also receive a confirmation email with tax receipt for your records.

Your gift membership recipient will enjoy all the benefits of membership for Midcoast Conservancy, and you'll enjoy knowing that your gift supports our work of protecting and restoring vital lands and waters on a scale that matters.

Gift recipients are entitled to the following member benefits for one year:

- Bi-monthly emails about our work and upcoming events
- Member discounts on camping at HVNC and program fees
- The Drift twice a year

Midcoast Conservancy membership is a gift that you know will fit the recipient and be a reminder of your generosity all year!

LET YOUR STORY GO ON AND ON... IMAGINE FAR INTO THE FUTURE

Where the waters in midcoast Maine are sparkling clean, full of native fish and safe from noxious invading plants.

Where future generations are roaming the same trails you love, as well as new ones preserved with your help.

Where the scenic landscape you enjoy today is still teeming with birds, mammals and other wildlife.

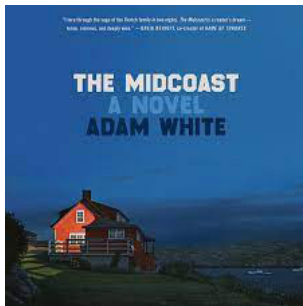
A legacy gift to Midcoast Conservancy will make a world of difference to the wild species and wild places in your community. Let the story of your love for midcoast Maine be told forever thanks to your generosity.

CONTACT US TO DISCUSS YOUR LEGACY GIFT: (207) 389-5150. THANK YOU!

AROUND THE WATERCOOLER: STAFF BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

KATE'S PICK:

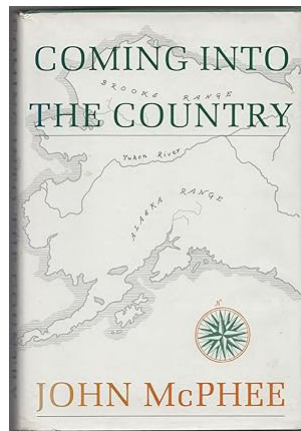
THE MIDCOAST
BY ADAM WHITE



For anyone who didn't have the opportunity to follow along with Maine Public's All Books Considered Book Club selection this past June, I recommend picking up a copy of *The Midcoast* for a fun and inimitable read. Full of drama and suspense, this novel is a crime procedural on the surface. However, much like its plot, there's quite a bit hiding under the surface. White imbues every page with a sense of both place and people unique to an author raised along the waters of midcoast Maine. You'll have to read to the end to know whether you've sussed out "who-done-it," but you can be sure that every page will be full of places (and perhaps even some people) you'll recognize.

CHRIS'S PICK:

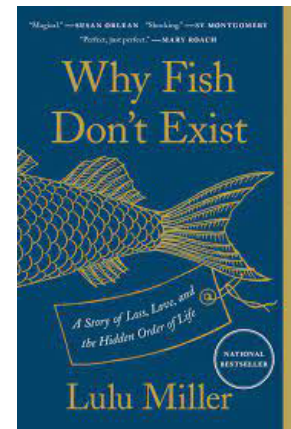
COMING INTO THE COUNTRY
BY JOHN MCPHEE



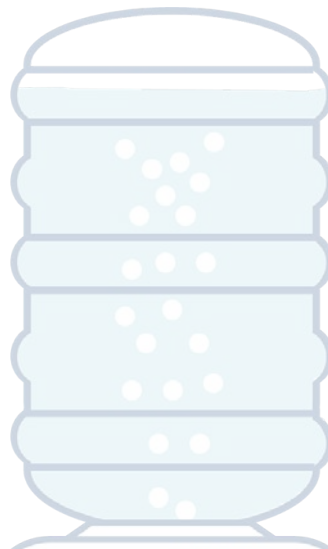
Though I've never been to Alaska, this book has me hankering to go. McPhee shares his nature experiences from the backcountry and tells stories from many unforgettable characters in rural Alaskan communities, painting a portrait of an incredibly wild place--in all senses of the word.

MELISSA'S PICK:

WHY FISH DON'T EXIST
BY LULU MILLER



Ever feel so inspired by someone that you begin researching them endlessly, grasping for any information on how to be more like them? But then you come across the darker aspects of their life that leave you... less inspired? Almost... ashamed to be inspired by them in the first place? Follow Lulu Miller in her quest to fully understand David Starr Jordan, who identified and named more than 2,500 species of fish. Oh and you get to learn about why fish don't *actually* exist, but you'll have to wait for the last chapter.





MIDCOAST
CONSERVANCY

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