



BANGOR LAND TRUST NEWS

FALL 2014

Let's Go Wild!

by Dick Andren & Lucy Quimby

It's a time for celebration! Fifty years ago, on September 3, 1964, after 8 years and 66 revisions, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act into law. The year 2014 marks the 50th anniversary of this remarkable legislation that created a way for Americans to protect their most pristine wildlands for future generations. The National Wilderness Preservation System now protects nearly 110 million acres of wilderness areas from coast to coast. This anniversary is a wonderful chance to celebrate all that's been achieved for wilderness in the past 50 years and remind Americans of all that we can achieve in the next 50 and why it's so important that we continue to protect remaining wild areas.

The U.S. government's definition of "wilderness" is an area where "the earth and the community of life are untrammelled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain." Fifty years ago we could envision protecting "untrammelled" nature. Today we know that anthropogenic climate change is a reality. Scientists all across the country are working on predictions as to exactly how the climate will change, and what the effects will be on the natural world.

Predictions are that the combination of the effects of climate change, along with the explosion of the human species to 7.2 billion members, has put us in the midst of the sixth great extinction of species on the planet. This extinction may be comparable

in both rate and magnitude with the five previous mass extinctions in Earth's history, including the loss of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago that resulted from a giant meteor or comet striking the earth (<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/345/6195/401.full>).

So where does your local land trust fit into this picture, and what can individual citizens do about this huge problem? First, we know that plants and animals will colonize new areas, if space is available to them, and that they are actively continuing to evolve (although probably not as fast as the climate is changing). Along with the extinctions there will be a great "reshuffling." Our area will lose some species and gain others. We can help preserve the degree of biodiversity that will promote adaptation to environmental changes. Careful scientific studies have shown that isolated natural areas lose species diversity over time. The smaller the area the greater the loss. Armed with this knowledge conservation organizations of all stripes are making a concerted effort to link natural areas together. Bangor Land Trust partners with Orono Land Trust to conserve a wildlife corridor on the east side of Pushaw Lake. (Click on the Caribou Bog/Penjajawoc Lands Project on the BLT website.) Our "wild back yard" is a crucial part of this worldwide effort to allow space for all non-human species to "reshuffle." Your support of your local land trusts helps the project of making wildlife corridors.

Second, we can participate, as citizen scientists, in studying the changes as they take place. The data collected from efforts such as back yard bird counts and the National Phenology Project (both hosted by Cornell University) teaches us more about what is actually happening and helps scientists and policy-makers identify actions that might be taken to protect species in danger. We can also learn about our local plants and animals and become more attuned to what is happening to them. Donne Sinderson, our BLT office staff, has become a Master Naturalist (congratulations Donne!!) and is making a section of our BLT website into a catalog of local plants and animals, and a resource for plant and animal identification.

Third, we can advocate and use our power as consumers to change practices worldwide in ways that will protect certain ecosystems. For example, the destruction of Southeast Asian rain forests to create palm oil plantations has recently slowed in response to citizen activism.

Finally, we can make our own lives more wildlife-friendly – put bird tape (available at Fields Pond Audubon Center) on our windows to help prevent bird strikes, keep our cats indoors, and choose environmentally friendly methods of pest control. And we can join one or more of a whole array of local, national and international organizations that are working to slow climate change.

Dear Friends,

Recently we've been hearing from various sources about the health benefits of walking in evergreen forests. Apparently this is a popular health practice in Japan, where an hour-long walk among Japanese cedar trees is called "forest bathing." Research catalogued in the National Library of Medicine includes studies documenting the beneficial effects of phytoncides, an aromatic compound given off by these evergreens, on the human immune system.

A thorough scientific evaluation of the research literature would require fluency in both immunology and Japanese – but one could well take a more empirical approach and personally investigate the effects of "bathing" in our own native evergreens. I am thinking in particular of the lovely stand of young balsam fir on Central Penjajawoc Preserve (on Essex St just in town from the intersection with Burleigh). You come to these trees most quickly if you go clockwise around the loop. The trail becomes quite narrow and your nose will identify the evergreen aromatics. Conversely, you could go counterclockwise around the loop and soon find yourself in a stand of northern white cedar, another fragrant evergreen, perhaps more closely related to the Japanese cedars. In either spot, stand, breathe deeply, listen to the forest sounds, and see if you feel more relaxed, with your head cleared of clutter, and able to sleep better at night! You might even want to try this when you feel a cold or flu coming on, and see for yourself if it makes a difference. The nice thing about this health remedy is that as long as you go dressed properly (sturdy shoes and warm enough clothing) there are no bad side effects, no danger of overdosing on the scent of balsam fir or northern white cedar!

Reflecting on this research prompts me to think about how our relationship to the natural world has changed over the years, and how the ways that we know nature have changed as well. Centuries ago all we had was the direct, practical, and highly attuned knowledge that allowed people to live close to the land – hunting, fishing, gathering. Now, even as we are in danger of losing the environment in which we evolved, the environment that shaped our capacities as humans, we are learning to know it with a more highly developed science. If you want to explore the research on the effects on our immune systems of phytoncides and other organic compounds, this link <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2793341/> will give you leads.

Whatever scientific knowledge we may gain, we still crave and need nurturing contact with the natural world. In big cities like New York and Boston people have to content themselves with houseplants and heavily used parks. In Bangor you can have Bangor's wild back yard with its own corridor connecting it to the north woods. It takes a whole community to take good care of its wild back yard – so that your wild back yard can take care of you!



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Last winter when the Land Trust staff and the Road Ride committee began to work on Pedal the Penobscot, we could not have imagined how successful the 8th annual ride would become. The weather on Sunday, September 7th, was perfect for cyclists; 225 of them turned out from near and far. Many of the local riders who have ridden Pedal the Penobscot for several years were there as well as riders from as far away as Boston. Individuals rode along with teams, family groups, and students from the University of Maine, Bates, and Colby.

We are able to offer a safe, fully supported road ride thanks to the help of several radio operators who provide constant communications and sag wagon drivers who are available to help any rider who needs assistance. The towns of Hudson and Bradley, the Knights of Columbus in Old Town, and the Health Access Network in West Enfield allow our volunteers to set up rest stops with food and water at their facilities.

When the riders returned to the Waterfront they enjoyed a delicious barbecue provided by the Sea Dog Restaurant and Verve, listened to the live music of the Sus4 band, and checked to see if they had won one of the many prizes generously donated by local merchants. The festive atmosphere included riders talking about their accomplishments, everything from a first 14-mile ride to the 100-mile Century route. Special congratulations to the grandparents who chose this celebration for grandparents day.

The many businesses who sponsor Pedal the Penobscot, some of them for several years, help make this possible, as do an army of nearly 50 volunteers who work on the many tasks essential to this event. We thank all of you who made our major fund raiser a success.



← Even though this road striping does not make regulation-width bike lanes, it does slow motorized traffic and leaves a wider shoulder for bikers and pedestrians. Bangor Trails has been working with the City to stripe wider shoulders to make Bangor more bicycle-friendly. Send us your photos of striping you like, and send us photos of places that need to be made more bicycle-friendly too.



BANGOR LAND TRUST

PO Box 288
Bangor, ME 04402-0288

www.bangorlandtrust.org
info@bangorlandtrust.org

BANGOR LAND TRUST'S MISSION:

“Protect for public benefit land and water in the Bangor region that have special ecological, natural, scenic, agricultural, or recreational significance while increasing public understanding of the value of land and water conservation.”

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“The more you know the more you see.”

Aldous Huxley

The Bangor Land Trust website has developed new ambitions! From time to time people are kind enough to send us photos of interesting or beautiful things in the Bangor area. Sometimes the photos come with identification information, sometimes they come with a query – “What is this?” Donne is combining her web skills with her naturalist skills to compile an online collection of photos of plants and animals in the Bangor area. Please send your photos to info@bangorlandtrust.org, with or without identification. And please do check the photos on the website – none of us is infallible. You may see something we missed that would lead to a different identification - <http://www.bangorlandtrust.org/the-more-you-know.html>.

If you would prefer to receive a color version of *Bangor Land Trust News* as a pdf through email, contact the office (info@bangorlandtrust.org).

Special thanks to St. Joseph Hospital and Bangor Letter Shop for their help in getting this newsletter to you.

Save the Date for Bangor Land Trust's Annual Meeting - Thursday, February 26, 2015