



Andover Village
Improvement Society
Andover's Land Trust
Founded 1894

Spring 2023
Vol. 130, No. 1

avis update

Paul Dick, Warden of Ann Rawlins Greene Reservation

By Alix Driscoll

We met for a chat in the fall as the famous and beloved Los Angeles mountain lion, P22, had just been captured. The majestic solitary cat seeking friendship or food had become too neighborly.

The discussion quickly turned to Dick's local "cat," a fisher cat that calls the Ann Rawlins Greene Reservation and its environs home. It is actually a weasel, a member of the marten family; the six-pound shy animal does not fish but hunts mice and possums. Dick says there are a few in town and are the size of a large domestic cat.

Important Wildlife Connections

By good planning and wise vision AVIS and the Conservation Commission established a wildlife corridor through town years ago including Shawsheen River, Vale, Ann Rawlins Greene, Burns, Poms Pond and Fosters Island reservations creating a large open space for wildlife. There are 115 AVIS acres and 101 acres of Conservation Commission land conserved in this corridor.



Here is Paul Dick, the warden of the Ann Rawlins Greene 26-acre reservation off Dascomb Road and Andover Street. Courtesy Photo.

Dick's reservation, the 26-acre Ann Rawlins Greene Reservation, sits on an esker, the continuation of the distinctive Indian Ridge esker. Local residents include Barred Owls, Great Horned Owls, possum, deer, raccoons, coyotes, turkey and, of course, the fisher cats. Fighting the explosive growth of invasive glossy buckthorn and bittersweet, Dick has been diligently clearing the trails on his reservation except by the swampy sites.

During his career, Dick worked for IBM, Raytheon, and Digital

Equipment Company as a software engineer and has served as a Conservation Commissioner in North Reading.

A fan of geology, he loves the view of the glacier-scraped terrain of the esker from the bench at the ridge line. But is it permanent?

Dick shares: "Permanent is a subjective term here. Due to its protective status it will always be free of development; however, its characteristics will undoubtedly change. Its current makeup is oak/pine forest but with global warming that could change. Many of the oaks in there are dying; what will replace them is unknown."

However, that bench will provide Dick and visitors to his reservation many a year to view the unique geological landscape of this town and its preserved wildlife corridor.

Editor's note. Jamey French will be the 2023 AVIS Annual Meeting speaker. He will be speaking about "Land Trusts in Perspective". This piece ran in the Spring 2020 AVIS Update. Earth Day 1970 was a strong collaboration among the students from Phillips Academy and their leaders, Andover High School students, AVIS and the Conservation Commission. Jamey led the project. He is the student in the middle of the photo.

First Earth Day in Andover, 1970

By Jameson French



Many of us have been moved by the passion of Greta Thunberg and other youthful climate activists. Their energy and determination gives me some measure of hope that actions can be taken to avert or at least lessen the global climate crisis. This youthful enthusiasm brings back memories of Andover 50 years ago, and the work that a group of us "youths" did in the months before and after the first Earth Day on April 22 of 1970.

We were supported older community members, including many connected with AVIS like my father Bob French, (AVIS Trustee and President), Juliet Kellogg, Phebe Miner, Andy Rogers and our PA faculty advisors biology teacher, Tom Cone, (AVIS Trustee) and George Sanborn.

For those of you who remain pessimistic about the current situation, it may be helpful to remember how awful things were in 1970. The Merrimack River was one of the 10 most polluted in the country with raw sewage from Andover and other towns being pumped directly into it. DDT, DDD, chlordane, toxaphene, and the herbicides 2,4D and 2,4,5T (agent orange) were still in wide use and available on the local hardware stores shelves.

There was no recycling. The Shawsheen River was a trash dump. There were campus and community efforts to stop the

photo on next page ►

sale and use of the “deadly nine” pesticides in Andover. The PA switched to a reduced spray and sanitation program on the elms and stopped the use of all the listed pesticides and herbicides. With the help of high school students, AVIS leaders and the Conservation Commission, we developed a petition signed by 596 registered voters requesting the storeowners to remove the destructive chemicals from their shelves. They agreed!

On Earth Day more than 400 students collected a pile of trash 12 feet high in the parking lot on Main Street. It took eight dump truck loads to take it all to the landfill. There was a special effort led by PA math teacher Nat Smith, who led AVIS for three decades, to clean up the Shawsheen River. I remember helping to haul two refrigerators and a dozen tires.

Most of us were young and naïve but passionate and enthusiastic. We were nurtured, counseled and supported by the adult conservationists including the board and membership of AVIS.

AVIS President's Letter By John P. Hess

Welcome to a new year. AVIS has continued to stay involved in maintaining our properties. Management of invasive species continues to require our attention and will do so for years to come. Fortunately, we have a good team of volunteers working on it. As we start the new year the Board of Trustees has approved a new budget that increases our effort to control invasive species. Trustee Amy Janovsky has been able to get a small federal grant to help with this but it will always need your support as well.



In 2021, one of the main issues we addressed was related to beaver dams and high water. In 2022, we were more concerned about encroachments on AVIS lands. Most of us would not welcome dumping of yard waste or other unapproved activities on our yards and AVIS does not welcome them either. Our Board is developing a “frequently asked questions” document to share with neighbors and we are willing to meet with any neighbor who has questions about this issue.

In talking to people, I often find that the general public does not realize that AVIS has several videos of its reservations. These videos were taken by our friend, Alan Michel, using his drone. For the most part, Andover High School students have edited the videos and provided voice-over narratives. Please check out these videos on our website AVISAndover.org.

On the subject of videos, AndoverTV.org is an excellent resource for all things Andover, including hiking. Their archives include an excellent video about walking in Andover featuring former AVIS President Fred Snell (Robb Center – Walking in the Andovers 3-1-22). For those who like information about a longer hike there is also an excellent video about one Andover citizen's experience hiking the 230-mile Bay Circuit Trail from Plum Island to Kingston Bay with Meg Holmes (Robb Center). I encourage you to explore all these virtual hiking options.

Thank you for your continued support. You may donate to AVIS through our website or by sending a check. There are also many opportunities to volunteer, not just on work parties but on social media or other activities. If you have some free time, please let me know. We welcome your input.

A spring vernal pool gave this wood frog his start By Cheryl McKeough

The protection of habitat for vulnerable amphibians is one of the sometimes overlooked functions of our AVIS properties. In early spring if you have ever heard the sweet call of the tiny tree frogs called spring peepers, or the “quack” of wood frogs (picture), you have been close to a vernal pool. These are unique, seasonal, wetland bodies of water that have no inlet or outflow to sustain them, and so are usually dry by summer's end. This fact makes them a perfect ecosystem niche for an important, but quietly dramatic race that occurs each year in the life cycle of amphibians.

Because seasonal pools cannot support a predatory fish population, they are a safer environment for amphibians to lay their eggs to mature before time runs out and the pool dries up. The tadpoles must develop legs and lungs before that happens, which takes two to four months, so it's a race against the clock. A summer drought can spell disaster.

Among the contestants in this race are not only peepers and frogs, but also several species of “mole” salamanders. The spectacular, 6 - 10-inch, yellow-spotted (picture), and the more illusive (five-inch) blue-spotted, and the rare marbled, salamanders are wonders of nature. A lucky child will never forget their first encounter with one.

A fun family adventure is a hunt on what naturalists refer to as “Big Night”. Armed with flashlights, carefully search for salamanders entering vernal pools for breeding. This event begins on the first rainy spring night after daytime temps reach 45-50 degrees--the conditions that favor a wet slither from underground burrows of winter to the breeding waters of nearby vernal pools. These intrepid wee beasts can travel up to a half mile on those delicate little legs.

The protection of vernal pools and their surrounding habitat is crucial to the survival of these fascinating species. Many, but not all, of the vernal pools on AVIS and Conservation Commission properties are mapped and certified. Certification provides protection for surrounding habitats from development. Children who love nature may wish to be involved in hunting for and protecting these habitats and their inhabitants. Available through the Merrimack Valley Consortium is: Certified: A Citizen's Step-By-Step Guide to Protecting Vernal Pools, by Elizabeth A. Colburn & Rex Burkholder. And here is a link to the state agency for certification: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/vernal-pool-certification>.



Left: Here is a yellow spotted salamander that lives in a vernal pool in spring. Right: Here is a wood frog that lives in a vernal pool in the spring.

COLLABORATIONS

Behind the scenes with Botanist Walter Kittredge By Trustee Amy Janovsky

AVIS opens its reservations to visitors so they can enjoy getting out in nature close to home. Some visitors watch for birds or animals; some just enjoy a quiet walk; and still others are there to study, to learn about and to enjoy the many native plants that live in these refuges. Botanist Walter Kittredge is one such visitor; he has been exploring the AVIS reservations since he was a boy and has kept detailed lists of the plants he has observed there for more than the past five decades.

After receiving his Bachelor of Science in Botany from the University of Maine, Walter began a 40-year career at the Harvard University Herbaria helping to curate a collection of five million dried plants from all regions of the world. This work honed his taxonomic skills so that in a relatively brief walk through a reservation he can identify and create a list of more than 100 species of native and introduced plants found there.

Walter is generous with his knowledge and has been an advisor to AVIS on numerous projects. He uses a Floristic Quality Assessment technique to characterize the ecological integrity of a property assigning a relative value to the plants onsite using a scale developed for our region by NEIWPCC (originally known as the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission). This technique assigns higher values to plants that thrive in undisturbed habitats, and lower values to plants that can survive in greatly disturbed areas (e.g., busy roadsides). It creates a numerical “snapshot” of a property that allows it to be tracked over time.

It also provides a way to measure positive impacts from invasive plant removal and replenishment of native keystone species.

The ecological integrity of conservation land is what makes it different from a typical “park”, allowing it to support diverse insects, amphibians, mammals and birds.

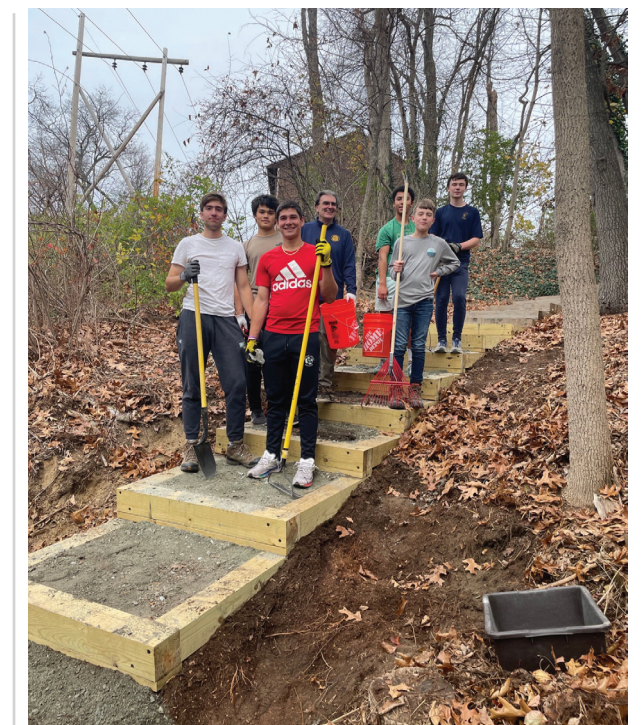
Scientists like Walter are observing the adaptation of plant species in response to the disruptions of climate change throughout our region.

By monitoring the species diversity and guiding responses to invasive plants, encouraging native plants, and making recommendations for habitat restorations, he is helping land trusts take better care of these valuable natural resources. Locally, Walter advises the AVIS Eco Team (formerly the Weed Warriors) and has helped the group maximize its impact. He runs the OakHaven Sanctuary where he grows many species of native plants and trees.

We appreciate his expertise and enthusiasm, and look forward to another year of using his expertise to help manage the AVIS reservations.



Here is the boardwalk built in memory of the former warden, Emily Trespas of the Stanley Reservation, on the reservation in the fall. It was constructed by a team of Phillips Academy members and one student with the support of the school's Community Service Department. Photo by Mark Cutler, Warden of Stanley Reservation.



Theo Trant on the left in the photo leads his fellow Boy Scouts continuing the Lupine Reservation steps project started by Kyle Greenwood a few years ago. It is his Eagle project. Leo is in Troop 77 and a senior at Austin Prep. Kyle built and installed the first set and Theo built the rest finishing the job this fall. The photo was taken by Amy Janovsky.

List of AVIS Donors 2022

We can never thank our supporters, volunteers and donors enough! Through the Bessie P. Goldsmith Fund, **The Boston Foundation** made a significant donation to enhance a wetland viewing area as well as continuing their annual \$5,000 grant for equipment, improvements and maintenance on the Goldsmith Woodlands property. **Annual Appeal Donors:** Your financial support enables AVIS to keep our reservations safe and open to the public to enjoy. Thank you!

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**AN INVITATION TO THE
AVIS ANNUAL MEETING**

Old Town Hall, Main Street
Tuesday, April 11
Cocktails at 6:00 p.m.
Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
Business and Meeting 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Election of trustees, AVIS financial report, Land management and special projects
Guest speaker: **Jamey French**, President and CEO of Northland Forest Products, past president of Land Trust Alliance (national) and leader of the first Andover Earth Day 1970
Please sign up at AVIS Andover.org

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To check for other hikes visit
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For AMC walks see
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The AVIS Update is a biannual publication of The Andover Village Improvement Society. The mission of AVIS is to acquire and preserve Andover land in its natural state. More than 1,200 acres of land are managed by AVIS and are open to all for passive recreation.

History Walks by Mark

Kaluzny Look on our website AVISandover.org, for hikes, including those offered in collaboration with the Andover Center for History and Culture (ACHC).

AVIS Annual Meeting

Wednesday, April 11,
Cocktails at 6:00 p.m.
Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
Speeches & Business 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Old Town Hall,
Main Street, Andover, 01810
AVISandover.org
Guest speaker: Jamey French
Andover Earth Day creator and organizer 1970, Past President of the Land Trust Alliance (national) President and CEO of Northland Forest Products.

April Vacation Hikes for Families with Kids

We are offering two family-friendly one-hour walks in nature. No dogs, please! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Monday, April 17, 10 a.m., Led by Cheryl McKeough, teacher and naturalist

We'll meet at the children's garden across from West Parish Church at 10:00, Monday, April 17, for an easy one-hour scavenger hunt and walk in nature. No dogs, please. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Tuesday, April 18, 10 a.m.. Led by Trustee Mark Kaluzny

Let's walk along the Shawsheen River and see which critters are back or waking up! Maybe we'll find Andover's famous "Octopus Tree"!

Meet at the far end of the Ballardvale Commuter Rail parking lot at 195 Andover St, Andover

Weed Warriors (now Eco-team)

2023 Kickoff event, **Saturday, April 1st**. Meet at West Parish Church's parking lot at 8:30. We'll have a guided hike for newcomers, while experienced team members get started on removing some glossy buckthorn and European honeysuckle.

Sunday, May 7th, 8:30, park on Abbott Bridge Road or Lupine Road and meet at the entrance to the Shawsheen River Reservation for a garlic mustard pulling event. Two years ago there was enough of this invasive plant to fill 23 garbage bags—let's see what we can remove this year!

We welcome new and occasional volunteers! Please Email Eco-team Lead Lynn Landry (hamletoflynn@gmail.com) for more information and to let us know you're coming so that we can have tools and gloves available for all.

AVIS Gear

AVIS had a great celebration of its 125th anniversary in a few years ago. Many people purchased items in support of that anniversary. If you missed purchasing something we still have some left - fleece jackets, vests and hooded jackets. We also have polo shirts. Look for them at the Annual Meeting on April 11 at Old Town Hall. Be in touch with Mark Kaluzny also.



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