



Andover Village  
Improvement Society  
Andover's Land Trust  
Founded 1894

Spring 2020  
Vol. 127, No. 1

# avis update

## A Bench for John Wragg By Alix Driscoll

On a grey misty atmospheric October 30, many AVIS trustees and friends gathered in a stand of golden beech trees overlooking West Parish Meadow. Yonder to the south by the trailhead on Reservation Road “Rognar’s Rock” welcomed hikers to the wooded trail. Closer by, the stone culvert built under his watchful eye gathered the streamlet to the north. It was time to give Ranger Emeritus John Goodwin Wragg his bench.

Crafted by Burt Batcheller, from Western Red Cedar with legs of pressure-treated yellow pine to maximize its durability, the bench will weather well in the demanding New England seasons. With a single coat of clear finish, the bench will soon turn silver, a metaphor for John’s service to AVIS.

### The Rangers

One of seven Rangers, Wragg has worked on multiple reservations as they require his attention. A Ranger prepares by serving as a Warden, that is a caretaker of a single reservation, first, for at least a decade, he explains. With a dogged sense of purpose he and his Ranger colleagues clear and maintain trails, repair dams, bridges, boardwalks, and enhance the beauty of fields and forests, lakes and those rare Andover meadows.

Ranger Wragg has been cutting, chopping, chipping, laying stone on stone and creating singular sites of beauty on AVIS reservations for decades. He financed and directed the building of several stone culverts, granite bridges and planters housing native wildflowers by Susan Hunt and her friend; these are structures that endure.

### Ranger Wragg raises a challenge for us all

He has gifted his treasure to AVIS too, to underwrite necessary repairs, to purchase equipment and supplies to support AVIS missions. About 15 years ago John met with AVIS trustees who had just established the Peggy Keck and Nat Smith Land Acquisition Fund to honor Peggy and Nat upon their retirements. John suggested that the Trustees should also establish a land stewardship fund. The Trustees took John’s advice, established the AVIS Land Stewardship Fund and suggested that the best way to get the fund off to a successful start would be with a gift from John, which he made. At the end of the first year the balance was less than \$2,000 and today, with the support from many generous members, it has grown to more than \$163,000. Up to five percent of the endowment may be used each year to maintain trails, address invasive species and care for AVIS reservations.

In the company of the grey granite boulders scraped to the site ten millennia ago by the glaciers from the north, Wragg’s bench invites him and fellow hikers to sit awhile and to celebrate his service to AVIS.



*On October 30, 2019 AVIS trustees and friends gathered in West Parish Meadow to give Ranger Emeritus and benefactor, John Goodwin Wragg, his bench. Photo by Mike Timko.*

## AVIS 125 Challenge

These 86 stalwart hikers and Hazel Sutton, a canine, hiked all of the 25 major AVIS reservations in the year 2019 to complete the challenge. The finishers celebrated at Oak and Iron Brewery as they received their well-earned T-shirts.

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Bruce Beckwith  
Lillian Beherell-  
Ayscough  
Tony Bielecki  
Denise Boucher  
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Sean Paige  
Frank Pechinsky  
Karen Pechinsky  
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Carolyn Pope  
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Rose Redmond  
Andy Rouse  
Saltanat Sadyrbayeva

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Carina Schusterman  
Lisa Scott  
Julia Sergeant  
Stephen Sergeant  
Larry Smith

Fred Snell  
Buzz Stapczynski  
Susan Stott  
Jim Sutton  
Vicky Sutton  
Hazel Sutton

Mike Timko  
Cathy Vrontas  
Chris Vrontas  
Jim Wilkinson





*Judy and John Lugus. Wardens of the Wilkinson Reservation at the Annual Wardens Party at Oak and Iron Brewery, Nov. 6, 2019.. Photo by Floyd Greenwood.*

## Interview with John and Judy Lugus, Wardens of Wilkinson Reservation

By Alix Driscoll

When Wilkinson became an AVIS reservation in 1981, John and Judy Lugus raised their hands to become its first wardens, now a four-decade commitment. Their home sits comfortably on Fosters Pond, every window framing a vista of the “Great Pond”; they had already lived there for a decade.

Marsha Wilkinson, who was living on the land in the ‘50s, was given it upon the death of her uncle. Her son, David, a science teacher at Andover High School, used the reservation as a teaching site, especially for geologically-passionate students. Kettle holes created by thawing glacial blocks of ice abound and an esker commands the highlands. Judy shares that her favorite areas are the ridge line on the esker and “a perfectly round vernal pool.”

The 23 acres of the Wilkinson Reservation wraps around the west side of the pond, now greatly enlarged by the dam, with Conservation land to the south and the 170 acres of Goldsmith Woodland to the south and east.

“It is a privilege to be a warden and have a role in preserving these woods that will remain as is for future generations.” John adds with reflection in his voice “It’s easy to manage and provides wholesome exercise.”

Historically speaking, the reservation’s paths, one of which is an old carriage road, were created by local people and predate AVIS’s acquisition. The Wilkinsons had also related to the Lugas that “back in the day ice was harvested from the pond and that many trees were laid waste by the Hurricane of ’38, but few signs of that devastation remain today. “

Judy, a former math teacher, later switched careers into computer programming and worked for several financial firms and MIT. John also has a systems background.

“You can pretend you are in the very middle of Maine when out walking,” says John softly; Judy nods in agreement.

“It is a privilege to be a warden and have a role in preserving these woods that will remain as is for future generations. John adds with reflection in his voice “It’s easy to manage and provides wholesome exercise.”

## President’s Letter

By John P. Hess



Wow! What a year - 2019. AVIS celebrated its 125th anniversary with many activities and many partners. This is what makes AVIS so great; people love to support and participate in AVIS activities. This is a testament to those who came before us and had the foresight to preserve open space. Together we can continue that legacy.

Beginning with a hike on January 1, 2019 organized by the Andover Trails Committee, we were able to get people out onto the AVIS properties as a major part of the celebration. More than 20 hikes were organized by a myriad of partners including specialized bird and edibles-in-the-woods treks. In all 85 people (and one dog) completed the AVIS 125 Challenge to hike the 25 reservations.

The Andover Center for History and Culture organized two events in honor of AVIS: The Breathing Spaces, an exhibit in the spring, and, during the summer/fall, a show of juried art inspired by AVIS reservations. A beer, created by Oak & Iron Brewery, was named Journey’s End in AVIS’s honor.

The Memorial Hall Library developed a guide to the outdoor organizations in the area; they sponsored talks, and prepared a reading list of related nature books. The Addison Gallery of American Art used their collection and those of other organizations to present a thoughtful and most relevant show, A Wildness Distant from Ourselves, curated by Gordon Wilkins, about the impact of Europeans on the environment in North America. That show is still on display until July – see it if you haven’t already.

Local artists honored AVIS by creating twelve installations on the reservations in the summer and early fall. They were led by Morgan Von Prella Pecelli.

In honor of the many partnerships that AVIS has developed, both in the past and in this anniversary year, the Essex National Heritage Commission presented AVIS with its Pioneer in Partnership Award at their annual meeting in October 2019.

Thank you to all who participated and who collaborated. AVIS’s reach is wide and deep. This celebratory year is now past but we will continue to encourage everyone to get outside and enjoy the land we have preserved forever.



*Accepting the 2019 Pioneer in Partnership Award are AVIS Trustee Alix Driscoll, AVIS President John Hess, AVIS Trustee Denise Boucher and Land Manager David Dargie at Glen Magna Farm in Danvers, on October 3, 2019.*



AVIS Membership

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Dues: \_\_\_\_\_ \$30 Individual    \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Sustaining  
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You can join or renew online at [www.avisandover.org/join.html](http://www.avisandover.org/join.html) or make check payable to "AVIS" and mail to :

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PO Box 5097  
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For information about planned giving or stock donations contact [info@avisandover.org](mailto:info@avisandover.org). Contributions and dues are tax deductible to the extent permitted by federal regulations. Thank you!

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For additional AVIS events see  
[AVISANDOVER.ORG](http://AVISANDOVER.ORG)

To check for other hikes visit  
[ANDOVERTRAILS.ORG](http://ANDOVERTRAILS.ORG)

For AMC walks see  
[AMCBOSTON.ORG](http://AMCBOSTON.ORG)

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.

Please be sure to check our website, [avisandover.org](http://avisandover.org), for hikes and other activities during the fall and winter.



**AVIS EVENTS**

**Wardens and Conservation Commission Overseers training** / March 18, 7 p.m., Memorial Hall Library.

**"Trails are Gateways to Nature"** / Alan French, April 2, 7 p.m., Memorial Hall Library.

**Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day, 1970** / It will be celebrated in April. The

Conservation Commission will be holding an opening for the Bellevue Trail into Tewksbury. Look for events in the AVIS.org webpage.

**AVIS Annual Meeting** / Tuesday, April 14, Old Town Hall, Main Street, 6 p.m. socializing, 7 p.m. dinner, 8 p.m. meeting and speakers. Please see information in this AVIS Update.

**Deer Jump Reservation hike** / in partnership with Essex County Greenbelt Association, Thursday, Sept. 10,

9:30-11:30 a.m. Meet at the end of Merrimack Dr. Tewksbury, at the beginning of Deer Jump. Led by David Dargie 978-996-4475 and Jane Rumrill. Please register at [ecga.org/events](http://ecga.org/events).

**Vale and Shawshen River hike** / in partnership with Essex County Greenbelt Association. Thursday, Nov. 19, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Parking at the end of Dale St. Led by David Dargie, 978-996-4475 and Jane Rumrill. Register at [ecga.org/events](http://ecga.org/events)



*Hikers gathered on a balmy January 2020 day to participate in the 51st annual hike on the Harold Rafton Reservation. Led by David Dargie, Burt Batcheller and Ken Doran, the hikers had a beautiful day for their outing.*

JOHN HESS  
President

JIM SUTTON  
Membership

ALIX DRISCOLL  
Editor

LINDSEY CHANDLER  
Designer



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# The 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 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.

*Jameson French (PA '71) has continued with a lifetime of environmental activism—especially around forest and land conservation. He is currently Chair of the DC-based Land Trust Alliance, Vice Chair of the American Forest Foundation and Vice Chair of the National Wildlife Federation Action Fund. He is President of Northland Forest Products and lives with his wife and family in Portsmouth NH.*



*It took eight truckloads to haul this pile of trash collected around town on Earth Day 1970. Andover Ecology Action leaders including Dave Lux, Jameson French and Andrew Reding from PA plus Abbot and Andover High School leaders stand on the trash collected by hundreds of people.*

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## Thank You

We can never thank our supporters, volunteers and donors enough. • The Boston Foundation - Thank you for the annual grants of \$5,000 from the Bessie P. Goldsmith Fund that are used for improvements and maintenance on the Goldsmith Woodlands, as well as necessary tools and equipment. • Annual Appeal Donors during 2019, our 125th anniversary Year. Thank you for supporting AVIS with your donations, and for keeping the land protected and open to the public. Thank you!

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## A Salute to the 2019 Eagle Scouts By Buzz Stapczynski, AVIS Eagle Scout Manager

For years, the Eagle Scouts of local Troops 77 and 79 have created and built most valuable and lasting projects benefitting AVIS and visitors to its 1300 acres and more than 25 reservations. This year the construction of bridges, benches and an elegant stairway fulfill the keystone project requirements of the Eagle Scouts, the highest award in scouting.

Six young men have fulfilled their Eagle Projects while serving AVIS. Arthur Quattrochi, Troop 79 built a boardwalk on the Deer Jump Trail on the former Franciscan land. Griffin Vieira, Troop 79, built a boardwalk on the Deer Jump Trail near the Conservation Commission's Retelle Reservation.



*Eagle Scout Kyle Greenwood surveys his stairway leading down to the Lupine Reservation riverfront, on Lupine Road. Next to him is Buzz Stapczynski, AVIS Trustee and Manager of the Eagle Scouts. Photo by Floyd Greenwood.*

Mitchell Paige, Troop 77, constructed a bridge on the Deer Jump Trail on the former Franciscan land. Kyle Greenwood, Troop 77, designed and built an elegant stairway from Lupine Road to the Shawsheen Riverbank, in the Lupine Reservation. David Callahan, Troop 79, built seven AVIS benches for trails. One bench is at Indian Ridge Reservation at Pooh's House. Joshua Kazmer, Troop 77, created a boardwalk on the Deer Jump Trail between the Reservation and the Retelle Reservation. AVIS honors these Eagle Scouts and is grateful for their service.



*This is Arthur Quattrochi's Eagle Scout Project. The boardwalk is on the Deer Jump Reservation, at the former Franciscan land. Photo by Floyd Greenwood*

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## Join us for the Fourth Annual River Herring Count on the Shawsheen River

By Dr. John Honea

River herring are coming to the Shawsheen River again! Beginning in late April or early May—depending on water temperature, river flows, and little-known ocean interactions—we'll start our fourth year of counting river herring as they swim upriver from the ocean to reproduce. Before widespread damming of rivers in the 1700s and 1800s to drive the Industrial Revolution, river herring spawned by the 100s of millions in streams and rivers up and down the East Coast. They were once an important food source for many animals including humans and a vital link between freshwater and marine ecosystems, one we are helping to revitalize by monitoring their restoration upstream of two relic dams on the Shawsheen that were removed three years ago. Just months after the dams were removed, our volunteers observed strays from elsewhere in the Merrimack River system swimming upstream of the former dam locations to spawn and we witnessed additional spawning runs in the following two years. Because it takes three to five years for river herring to mature, all of the spawners we've observed thus far have been strays from elsewhere in the Merrimack River system. This spring will be the first year that some of the offspring of the first year's spawning event will be maturing into adults, most of which will come back to spawn in the same areas where they were hatched. So, this year we hope to see many more fish as we receive both a small percentage of strays from elsewhere as well as most of the newly matured adults hatched from our first spawning run back in 2017. As the river herring spawning run through Andover grows, I believe that it won't be long before we have more fish than we can count with our current observation methods. I think we're all looking forward to that challenge! In the meantime, past volunteers should watch their email inbox for an announcement in late March or early April with a call to count. Counting is easy: just watch the river for 10 minutes at any time convenient to you, record the number of fish observed, and make note of river and weather conditions. For more information, visit <https://www.andovertrails.org/herring-count.html>. Special thanks for support over the years to the Shawsheen Greenway section of Andover Trails, the Andover Conservation Commission, AVIS, Andover High School, Greater Lawrence Technical School, Burt Bacheller, Bob Dalton, Craig Liversidge, Keith Osborne, and our many volunteers.



Here are river herrings. (*Alosa pseudoharengus*.) Photo by Jerry Prezioso, NOAA Fisheries.

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## AVIS Annual Meeting

Tuesday, April 14, 2020

Old Town Hall, Main Street, Andover

6 p.m. socializing

7 p.m. dinner

8 p.m. Annual Meeting and speakers Jim and Mary Gage:

*The Curious Mystery of the Andover Turtle Mound*

Cost of the dinner is \$40

You may also purchase a dinner for a dedicated volunteer.

Of course, all are invited to join us for the speaking portion of the event at 8 p.m. free of charge.

**To purchase tickets online visit Events Section of website:** [avisandover.org/events.html](http://avisandover.org/events.html)

**To purchase by mail,** please send a check payable to AVIS, P.O. Box 5097, Andover, MA 01810.

Please give the number of tickets desired and a single name to put the reservation under. Please give a phone number and an e-mail address for each ticket holder. Guests need not respond individually if their ticket has been purchased by another person, so as to avoid an overcount.

Questions: 978-475-4521 Jude Livermore

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Here is the work team digging out AVIS's Turtle Mound. Photo by Mike Imko

## The Turtle Mound Investigation is the topic for the Annual Meeting

By David Dargie

The Follansbee Rockery, a Victorian rock garden just south of Haggetts Pond was a popular attraction in the late 1800s. After its builder Paul Follansbee passed away in 1900, memory of it began to fade away. William Goodwin, searching for evidence of Irish monks sailing to New England in 1000 AD “rediscovered” the rockery in 1939. He dubbed it the “Turtle Mound” and claimed it to be a thousand years old. This set into motion 75 years of contentious debate and wild theories about its origins. New research has uncovered its true history.

In 1912, Warren Moorehead, Curator at Phillips Academy, published a booklet titled “Certain Peculiar Earthworks Near Andover, Massachusetts” which documented a number of unusual linear ditch and mound earthworks. In 2019, a joint project between David Dargie of AVIS, and James and Mary Gage set forth to inventory all of the surviving earthworks. The results of this project will be presented by the Gages of Amesbury.

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