



Andover Village Improvement Society
Andover's Land Trust
Founded 1894

Fall 2024
Vol. 131, No. 2

avis update

AVIS Receives A MassTrails Grant For An All Persons Trail at Goldsmith Woodlands

By Susan Stott AVIS Trustee

AVIS has considered building a trail accessible to persons of all abilities on one of its reservations for several years. Especially during COVID we realized how important walking in the woods is to both our mental and physical health. We also realized the benefit of spending time in nature is not available to many people with mobility challenges. Because the trail to Bessie's Point at the Goldsmith Woodlands is relatively flat, it is ideally suited for adaptation to an all persons trail (APT), with a wonderful destination, Fosters Pond. Visitors to the Goldsmith Woodlands will hear wood frogs in March, see lady slippers in May and other native plants and wildlife year round.

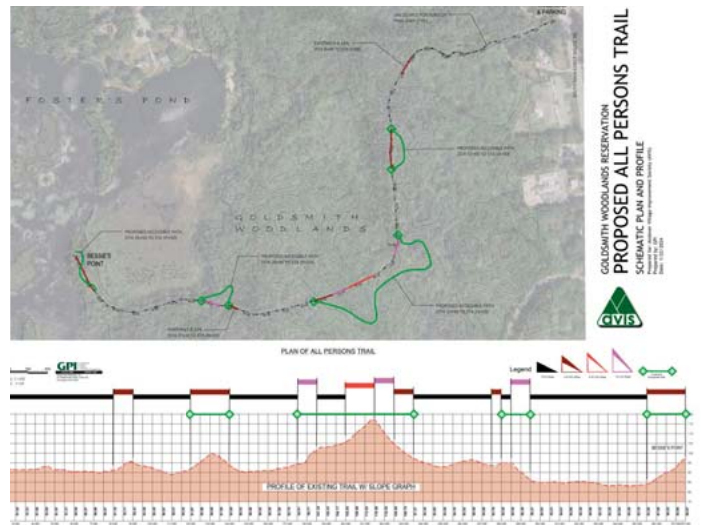
On Friday, June 21, 2024, The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) announced the award of \$12 million to 65 recipients of MassTrails grant funding. AVIS was awarded \$100,000 for the construction of an APT at the Goldsmith Woodlands that will run from the parking area off South Main Street out to Bessie's Point. This trail will be built to Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines (FSTAG) that are the standard for recreational woodland trails at this time. The concept plan for the trail is shown below.

In the next months, AVIS will work with GPI Inc., the consultant that helped AVIS submit the grant proposal, on permitting this trail and the improvements to the parking area through the Andover Conserva-

tion Commission. AVIS is also in conversation with the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) professional trail crew about building the trail in 2025. The AMC has built APTs for itself and other non-profit organizations, including a trail of similar distance and grades at Mass Audubon's Brewsters Woods in Concord, MA.

As it prepared the application for the Mass Trails grant, AVIS learned that the cost and construction of an APT is very different from the cost and construction of a typical AVIS trail built by volunteers. AVIS has already reached out to The Boston Foundation, which owns most of the acreage in the Goldsmith Woodlands. AVIS has provided stewardship for the Goldsmith Woodlands, since 1977 and The Boston Foundation helped fund acquisition of the land that is the parking area in 2000. AVIS is also reaching out to other foundations and individuals. AVIS will make funding the APT the focus of its year-end annual appeal.

AVIS will schedule walks out to Bessie's Point on several Sunday afternoons in September to answer questions and to



Cathy and Alan French exploring the new all persons trail (APT) at Brewsters Woods in Concord, MA. Courtesy Photograph.

develop support for this project. Please look for dates on the AVIS website avisandover.org/ or contact Susan Stott at susan.stott@avisandover.org.



Warden and Ranger, Doug Cummings

By Alix Driscoll

Doug Cummings cares for the Skug Reservation as its Warden, but he also wears the prestigious hat of a Ranger, that is, he works on other reservations too wherever there is a need.

Skug Is Rich in History, Flora, Fauna

Snake River runs through it; it's 75 acres of real estate with an amalgam of Skug River and Hammond reservations of AVIS and the Mary

French and Jenkins Quarry of the Conservation Commission.

The local indigenous people named their waterway Snake; the settlers created more than two centuries ago a grist mill and sawmill

Doug Cummings, AVIS Warden and Ranger

continued on page 3 ▶

President's Letter

By John Hess

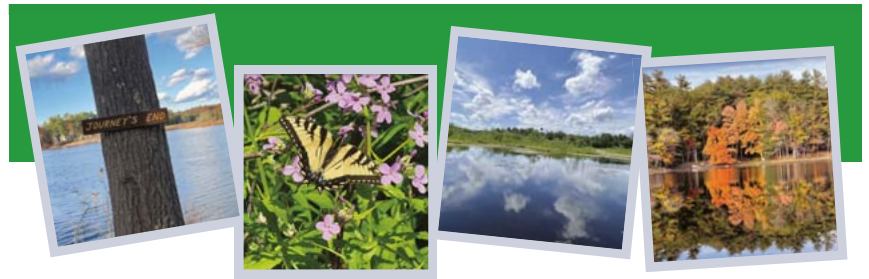
It is hard to believe it has been five (5) years since we celebrated the 125th anniversary of the founding of AVIS. We had so many activities that year in honor of those who came before us and who preserved so many acres. Everyone pulled together to make it a great year.



All of AVIS Trustees and volunteers continue to be active in care for the land we protect, lands that were inhabited by indigenous populations long before Europeans came here. Volunteers work hard all year long and during COVID managed to keep these properties open. If anything, we came out of that year stronger with more members and more volunteers who all recognize the worth of these open spaces.

As you read through this newsletter you will see that AVIS continues strong. This strength is reflected in the group that came together to organize a photo contest to help preserve memories of iconic AVIS sites. Others continue to attack invasive species and clear trails. While AVIS looks to the future to make properties more accessible, we thank you for your continued support.

Photo Contest: A Visual Journey of AVIS



Our first AVIS photo contest is open to photographers of all skill levels and ages.

For 130 years, generations of AVIS volunteers have worked to preserve land, protect native habitat, and provide opportunities for the public to experience and enjoy nature. Andover is fortunate to have such a treasure of open space, and we are seeking digital photographs that capture the essence of our AVIS properties, iconic sites, and landscapes.

Categories include:

- Novice Eye (Ages 7-15)
- Abstracts or Details
- Landscape & Rivers
- Plants & Flowers
- Birds, Bees & Wildlife
- Black and White
- AVIS Works (trail work, boardwalks, invasive removal, Scout projects, etc.)

Entry Fee

The Entry Fee is US \$15 per image. Up to 3 entries per person are permitted. Entries in the "Novice Eye" category are free.

Prizes

One Grand Prize winner will be awarded a \$150 prize. One First Place winner will be awarded to each category. These winners will win a \$75 prize.

Deadline for submissions is November 15, 2024

See rules and competition information at avisandover.org or scan the QR code below.



The Andover Village Improvement Society
P.O. Box 5097, Andover, MA 01810

New Members Sept. 23 - June 24, 2024

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Thomas Amirault | Lucas Loury |
| Stephen Andrews | C M Merritt-Hauer |
| Cynthia Barakatt | Joseph Messina |
| Patricia Boutin-Skene | John Miller |
| Matthew Carbone | Samel Nork |
| Chase Productions | James Patterson |
| Molly Chill | Laurie Peterson |
| Dana Chisnell | Timothy Platt |
| Fern Fisher | Pledgeling Foundation |
| Kathleen Fitzpatrick | Patricia Recesso |
| Bruce Gimbel | Dan Rooney |
| William Grannan | Bonnie Rosencrantz |
| Richard Hanson | Brian Samuels |
| Alan Harris | Anna Stein |
| Todd Hay | Karl Thiele |
| Jennifer Knight | Karen Wise |
| Rob LeVine | Tom Zhang |

Volunteer box

AVIS relies on volunteers for all its responsibilities. Best known are the Wardens, Rangers and the Eco Team. There are many other tasks that require assistance. If you or someone you know would be interested in helping, please let us know at volunteer@avisandover.org.

In addition to trail work or invasive species removal here are some of the areas where help is welcome:

- Write grants, newsletter articles, or news releases
- Help prepare the next edition of the Andover Trails Guide
- Help organize events such as hikes, Andover Day, or Annual Dinner
- Check kiosks for accuracy and wear and tear.
- Assist in the archiving/cataloging of AVIS materials.



On behalf of the Trustees, Amy Janovsky presents a photo to Denise Boucher upon her retirement from the Board of Trustees. Courtesy Photograph.

► continued from page 1

on the river they called Skug.

The last glacier deposited an impressive erratic in adjacent Harold Parker State Forest to the east. To the north is the house where the Jenkins Family welcomed both slaves traversing the Underground Railway and abolitionists Frederick Douglass and neighbor Harriet Beecher Stowe. The land abounds in springtime native flowers and fungi.

Earlier Experiences

From Cummings earliest experiences, he loved the land protected by AVIS and the Conservation Commission, realizing it has been set aside for all to enjoy forever. He became an AVIS volunteer after a 32-year career managing information systems at Vicor in Andover.

Cummings work on his Skug Reservation dovetails well with his venerable skills.

Reverence for Hand-Hewn Skills

Cummings honors hand-wrought creations. He builds wooden barrels and forged items; he has helped create stone walls here and in northern England.

“How people of days gone by knew wood and understood materials to ply their trades, a sense of understanding of how things work,” he shares. “I have a reverence for old trade skills of the past and the craftsmen who knew not just their tools but the materials they were shaping in such a deep and intimate way. Many of these skills and associated knowledge have been lost, replaced by a get-it-done-quickly mentality. I like to get



Peace Pipe fungus found under pine trees. Photos by Doug Cummings.

a feel for what once was and get a flavor for how we used to build things.”

“I have taken a class with a cooper and built a wooden bucket using 1830's tools. I use that bucket as my slack tub at my coal forge where I dabble in blacksmithing. I have taken courses in dry stone wall building, hand wood tool working. I have helped build stone walls in Vermont on some family property and even worked to raise the barn at Willow Springs Winery in Haverhill, Massachusetts. All of these projects were done the old fashioned way (well mostly).”

Projects and goals I would like to do at Skug

Repair walls where appropriate without damaging the look of the walls;
Inventory plants and fungi that grow there;
See if there is a way to make a trail to the south end of the reservation closer to the river;
And add a few more geocaches

Eco Team 2024-2025 Calendar And More

By Lynn Landry, Amy Janovsky and Denise Boucher

We ask you to sign up ahead of time?

It is ideal, but not mandatory that we know if you can make it. We need to gather enough tools and other supplies to support the group, and Amy needs to know how many muffins to make!

Please practice good woods hygiene.

Wear long pants, long sleeves, and sturdy footwear. Bring water. Gloves you know fit well are handy if you have them. No worries if you don't. We have extras to share. Spray your clothing with repellent before setting out on the trail.

Can't tell a Buckthorn (Boo) from a Black Cherry (Yeah)?

We'll teach you! We'll help you learn to identify our invasive and our native plants.

The full tentative schedule is below.

Please mark the dates in your calendars. If you have any questions, email me at Hamletof-Lynn@gmail.com or call/text 978-474-0456.

Weather is the ultimate power, so a confirmation of the event will be sent closer to the day.

We are looking forward to seeing you again, -Lynn (Amy and Denise)

Sunday	Day	Time	Location
31-August	SAT	8:30-11:00	TBA
8-September	SUN	1:00-3:30	TBA
21-September	SAT	8:30-11:00	TBA
5-October	SAT	8:30-11:00	TBA
13-October	SUN	1:00-3:30	TBA
26-October	SAT	8:30-11:00	TBA
3-November	SUN	1:00-3:30	TBA
16-November	SAT	8:30-11:00	TBA
30-November	SAT	8:30-11:00	TBA



I am locating my first geocache. Courtesy Photograph.



I am using the extractigator to remove nasty buckthorn in the photo. Courtesy Photograph.

A Look Back on my Environmental Sustainability Internship

By Ella Dougherty

As my senior year at Andover High School (AHS) comes to an end, I'm proud to share my AVIS contributions as part of the AHS Environmental Sustainability Internship Class (ESIC) under the direction of Ms Melanie Cutler.

First, a bit of background. ESIC is a class that takes a special approach to experiential learning, providing an internship that is matched with each student's interests and skills. I was paired with two AVIS Trustee mentors, Lynn Landry and Amy Janovsky, who opened my eyes to the beauty of AVIS properties, encouraging me to explore various trails and share my learnings with the Andover community at large.

One of my primary responsibilities with the internship was to write and post blogs for the AVIS website. These monthly blogs educated readers about various topics, such as the changing animal hibernation patterns due to global warming. With more than 30 AVIS reservations in Andover open to the public to explore, I also provided activity suggestions to encourage individuals to get out and explore, such as geocaching.

During the internship, I learned about how to identify various types of invasive species, such as buckthorn and the bittersweet vine, and how to remove them. Did you know that AVIS regularly organizes volunteer outings to help preserve the natural beauty of the properties? Check out the AVIS events calendar to see future dates for removal sessions and learn more about upcoming nature walks and other events.

My other priority was to help people all of all ages, abilities and physical conditions determine which local trails are a good fit. I focused on learning more about trail accessibility, creating a starter checklist to help people safely enjoy various AVIS properties.

Thank you to my mentors, Amy and Lynn, for giving me this opportunity. The ESIC AVIS internship opened my eyes to new environmental sustainability information and opportunities within nature that I will take with me as I head to Fairfield University in the fall.

Four Scouts Are Working on their Trail Improvements for Their Eagle Scout Projects

By Buzz Stapczynski, AVIS Trustee

Owen Finlay is in Troop 76 and he recently finished three boardwalks in the Den Rock Reservation.

Owen Chatterji, Troop 77 is developing plans to build a boardwalk(s) in the Andover Highlands Reservation and perhaps add a bench along the trail.

Kyle Haskell in Troop 77 is developing plans to build a boardwalk along the Shawsheen River in the Vale Reservation.

Martin Bragg, Troop 79, is developing plans to remove and replace an old boardwalk along the Merrimack River on the Deer Jump Trail.

This Year's Herring Count

By Dr. Jon Honea, Andover Conservation Commissioner

Thank you all very much for another season of observations of the spawning run of river herring on the Shawsheen River following the removal of dams in 2016 and 2017. A total of at least 88 of you plus several dozen students from Andover High School were able to contribute your time this year for at least one 10-minute count. Several of you did a substantial number of counts—thank you so much! There were a total of 225 individual counting sessions over 45 days, observing 95 river herring swimming upstream. John Sheppard at the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries reported the estimated total spawning run size upstream of our count location was 1,042 +/- 396 river herring. Last year was more than double this year.



Volunteer herring counter, Masa Honea, Dr. Jon Honea's son, is shown preparing to count the herring swimming upstream to spawn. This is made possible due to the removal of two dams recently. Courtesy photograph.

AVIS CREATES HABITAT RESTORATION



Oriental bittersweet and invasive shrubs choking the former white ash stand.



Mechanical clearing is the first step: removing dead trees and vines.

A Meadow Emergences from the Tangle

By Amy Janovsky, M.F.S. Land Stewardship Lead

An idea was hatched back in 2018—AVIS could seek funding to do a multi-year restoration of a dying stand of white ash trees that had become little more than a junk-food stop for migratory birds moving along the Merrimack River flyway. Five years later with support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, AVIS set to work on this project. By that point, the overgrowth had become overwhelming, and heavy equipment was needed simply to enter the four-acre parcel.

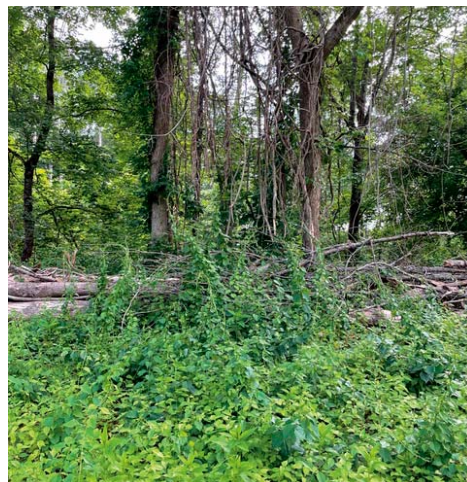
Land trusts must protect conserved land “in perpetuity”. This is an increasingly challenging commitment as climate change alters the ecosystems that have evolved in our region. Locally, the efforts of the AVIS Eco Team are helping to slow the intrusion of aggressive plants from other continents, and our properties are showing great improvement. But we are finding that stands of dead and dying white ash trees are favored roosting spots for crows, robins

and other birds who feast on the sugary fruit of barberry, buckthorn, bittersweet, porcelain berry and other invasive plants and then drop the seeds in the sun-filled opening the dying trees have created. The photos that follow tell the story of the work involved in “reclaiming” these snarls by restoring them as meadows and early successional habitat with native shrubs and pollinator plants. Native shrubs bear fruit with high fat and protein content crucial for successful migration.

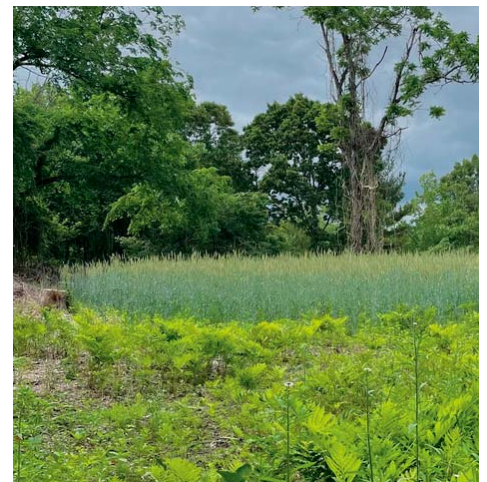
Holding back the tide of invasive plants is an increasing challenge. Openings in the forest canopy from tree harvest, storms or species loss provide an opportunity for new plants to become established. If we can reduce pressure from deer browse (deer prefer to eat native plants) and invasive plants, we can help support healthy forest regeneration and protect the interdependent ecosystems that we all depend on.



Flail mowing or chipping and stump removal are next.



Regrowth of invasive vines and shrubs was brush-mowed and then treated.



The first flush of meadow grass. In late summer we will mow and overseed with native grasses and pollinator plants. All photographs by Amy Janovsky.

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Dues: _____ \$30 Individual _____ \$100 Sustaining

_____ \$50 Family _____ \$15 Student & Senior

You can join or renew online at www.avisandover.org/join.html or make check payable to "AVIS" and mail to :

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Andover, MA 01810.

For information about planned giving or stock donations contact info@avisandover.org. Contributions and dues are tax deductible to the extent permitted by federal regulations. Thank you!

For additional AVIS events see
AVISANDOVER.ORG

To check for other hikes visit
ANDOVERTRAILS.ORG

For AMC walks see
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.

Calendar

Andover Day: September 21, 2024

Ballardvale Day October 19, 2024

ECO Team Schedule

Sunday	Day	Time
31-August	SAT	8:30-11:00
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3-November	SUN	1:00-3:30
16-November	SAT	8:30-11:00
30-November	SAT	8:30-11:00



Alan French, former longtime Trustee, serenading the guests at the AVIS Annual Meeting. Courtesy Photograph.



Doug Cummings took this photograph of a Great Egret on Independence Day 2024 on the Skug Reservation. Courtesy Photograph.



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