



Andover Village
Improvement Society
Andover's Land Trust
Founded 1894

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avis update

It Takes a Village and Two to Three Years to Update AVIS Kiosks

By Susan Stott and Suzanne Korschun

From the start, we wanted the signs to welcome visitors warmly while giving them the information they needed about the trails and the AVIS organization.

First, we had to find the right people. Ron Hilbink, Patty Brayden and Lauren Kosky-Stamm started the process. Patty hung in from beginning to end, and perhaps without Patty we would neither have gotten started nor completed the journey.

Suzanne designed the final kiosk signage. The signs were designed to easily identify the AVIS trails using consistent fonts, colors, and style. We hope that the images and colors are inviting and encourage visitors to walk on the trails and to notice the amazing trees, flowers, and wildlife around them.

Floyd Greenwood, Dave Bunting and Suzanne contributed glorious photos. David Dargie made sure we got the trails right. We started with the trails published in the *Andover Trails Guide* and online, which David updated.

Muthu Arumugam connected the QR code to the translations online. Two faculty from Phillips Academy (one current and one retired) did the translations: Mark Cutler translated the Spanish and CY Huang translated the Chinese.

Dawn Pease, owner of Signtech, executed and installed these beautiful signs, working in cold and snowy conditions. This project was a truly collaborative process.



Three new kiosk information signs were installed at Goldsmith, Skug and Vale reservations on December 18, 2020 with kiosks installed at Rafton, Shawshen River and Indian Ridge before the end of 2020. Photo by Susan Stott

Recollections of the Sherman Meadow

By Warden Emily Kearns

She and her husband, Henry Yoshimura, are wardens of the Sherman Reservation

Passing binoculars between us we gasp as the Neowise Comet's thick tail stretches down to grace this sacred land we stand on – the Christopher and Lillian Sherman Reservation field. Two of us are Boston refugees - escaping the city's ambient light for a glimpse of this rare happening.

And this field, itself, is indeed, a rare happening.

Acquired by AVIS from the Sherman family in 2004, the reservation preserves this 2.2 acres meadow for humans and animals alike to savor all seasons. Accessed from just north of 231 Haggetts Pond Road, a wooded trail winds its way up to this field, once part of the Boutwell Farm on High Plain Rd, and long before that, inhabited most likely by the Pennacook Confederacy - a native community who lived, farmed, and fished here, so close to the Merrimack River.



Shown in deep summer, the Christopher and Lillian Sherman Reservation is protected by the wardens Emily Kearns and Henry Yoshimura. Photo by Emily Kearns

The Sherman family felt strongly that “the meadow should remain a meadow...and the forested area, remain an uncluttered forest.” They tended both, cutting the field annually and removing unhealthy trees. They were eager to pass this knowledge to their sons and eventually, to us. When we first moved back here, my childhood neighborhood, Mr. Sherman showed me how to tend to both the forest and the meadow. We continue this legacy by maintaining a path around the field and working with neighbors to be sure the “tending” is honored and practiced.

The Shermans greatly enjoyed the land. One son writes, “My parents... would sit on a large rock ... They enjoyed seeing the meadow, enjoy the day, see the birds that flew by and nested in the trees.” Another son also has fond memories. “It was great to wander around the land. As a kid I'd climb the tallest oak, as high as I could go, and fire arrows into the sky, unconcerned where they would land.”

This precious field continues to honor the Sherman family legacy by providing much joy, bounty, and above all, respite, to all who visit – all humans, plus the animals. Escaping the suburban growth that has squeezed their home, deer, fox, coyotes, turkeys, owls, and other critters abound here, evidenced by the wide variety of scat on the trails. Abundant wildflowers grace the field in the summer - a natural bouquet of black-eyed Susans, Queen Ann's lace, and aster. We are grateful to AVIS for its preservation efforts.

Meet Carl Hayssen, A Warden of Deer Jump

By Alix Driscoll

“Why warden? Why not?”

Answering this question, Carl Hayssen uses the word “warden” in new inventive way, a noun becomes a verb, an action verb - to work on “his” reservation.

“I live right on the trail, about 50 yards away and have been wardening informally since 1985.” In March 2009 the career electrical engineer officially took up the job aiming “to give back and have some ownership, and to get out most days of the weekends.”

To oversee the mile or so of his part of the Deer Jump Reservation, from the power lines to Nollett Drive, Hayssen runs the trails, or snowshoes or skis in the winter. He hails from Wisconsin and just loves winter.

Enroute he has seen lots of wild turkeys, flighty deer, the results of beaver on the little creeks and fisher cats, plus bald eagles all up and down the river. The Merrimack is eroding and getting worn away in his area, he remarks.

The Field, a small meadow

Hayssen has preserved a singular small meadow, The Field. Downstream from the power lines, it is about two acres bordered by stone walls. The Field is one of AVIS’s five meadows. Recently he directed a crew from Merrimack College doing community service under the moniker “Mack Gives Back,” to clear downed trees to allow for the mowing. He explains it’s a team effort, and a struggle to keep this meadow from becoming a forest as the former meadow by Jillian’s Way disappeared into the woods recently.

Hayssen’s favorite spot

“Go across the Blackbirch Trail, turn left off the main trail, and run up the hill to stand on a bluff under the power lines. Look down the river; you don’t see any houses. I call it Rocky Point.” Possibly thoughts of a similar trek, Sylvester Stallone’s heroic run up the 72 steps, makes him smile.

Each weekend he gets out to oversee his part of the Deer Jump Trail; he’s still running, and, wardening too.



Warden Carl Hayssen and Cooper at his section of the Deer Jump Reservation, between the power lines and Nollett Drive. Included is The Field, a small singular meadow down river from the power lines. Photo by Carl Hayssen.

AVIS President’s Letter

By John P. Hess

The very different 2020 has rolled into 2021. The Covid-19 pandemic continues to challenge us and we mourn for those we have lost. Fortunately, AVIS (and Town) open spaces have been there for us. Our parking areas continue to be full and our reservations continue to be open for people to get outside. Thank you to all the wardens, scouts, members, and donors who supported our effort to keep reservations open during this busy time. The extra use has put added stress on the reservations but hikers have been very good about not leaving trash. Thank you!

AVIS has been busy, despite the virus. Please see the article about the improvements to our kiosks – and many thanks to Trustee Susan Stott and volunteer Suzanne Korschun for organizing these lovely upgrades. In addition, AVIS Trustees have started a strategic planning process that will take several months. This process will put us in a good position to deal with global warming, environmental justice, and other challenges to our natural areas. With your help, we will find the means and the resources to deal with invasive species, changing rainfall levels and other stressors on the animal and plant life in our care.

In addition, please be aware that the Town Warrant for Spring 2021 will probably include an allocation of funds to develop a master plan for the Shawsheen River. AVIS and the Town have protected most of the river bank and now the Town wants to have a plan for moving ahead on the protection and use of the river.

AVIS needs to review all deeds, conservation restrictions, and other documents and develop a full list of where these are stored and eventually make sure we have back up copies of everything. Perhaps a law student or other detail-oriented person will volunteer to review the current status of these items. Please contact me if you or someone you know would be interested.

One last thought, please be vigilant about AVIS’s neighbors who put yard clippings, leaves, etc. on AVIS property. We have had a few extreme encroachments in the past couple of years, including one neighbor who moved a stone wall. This activity is damaging to the reservation and not very neighborly.

We look forward to working together in the future.



An Invitation to the AVIS Annual Meeting

Tuesday, March 9, 2021, 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

A virtual ZOOM meeting

Short film clips of AVIS activities • Election of Trustees • AVIS financial report • Land Management and special projects

Please sign up to join the AVIS Annual Meeting at AVISandover.org

You might like to join in a virtual toast to AVIS. You can purchase the reissued “Journey’s End” beer brewed especially for AVIS at Oak & Iron Brewing Company for our 125th anniversary or toast with your favorite beverage.

Thank You

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Meadows of the Shawsheen River Reservation By Warden Don Milligan

AVIS acquired the Shawsheen River Reservation through Chester Abbot. The Abbot family came to Andover about 1685 and settled on a King's Grant, which extended for about three fourths of a mile. Abbot chose the area with space to pasture his animals and the Shawsheen for an adequate water supply. In the 1840s the railroad rerouted their line from its original course through what is now Spring Grove Cemetery to a more direct route to Lawrence; the newly established commercial area around the Great Dam effectively cut off his cows from pasture and water. Thus, the railroad built a cattle pass underneath, which was known as "Abbot's Cattle Pass" and deeded it to him. Circa 1900 the underpass was deeded to the railroad and another was built to accommodate increased traffic. The cattle continued to be herded to pasture over Andover Street until the mid 1950s when the Abbots relocated their dairy farm to Vermont.

The Shawsheen Reservation consists of two or three meadows depending on whom you talk to. Starting from Central Street, there's a natural boundary created by the brook, Henderson Bridge and the kiosk built by Eagle Scout Max Li. This meadow is uniquely suited to support a large variety of species: i.e., biodiversity: "a variety of species in a particular area of ecosystem". It is covered with joeypyeweed, cardinal flower, butterfly milkweed and other native essential pollinating plants that help support several endangered species including the monarch butterfly.

The second meadow has the Claus Dengler Trail. This trail follows the river upstream to a pastoral knoll with benches and picnic

tables overlooking the "old swimming hole". Here you will find one of the "AVIS natural wonders" known as the "Octopus Tree". A very young wag has informed us, "It can't be an octopus, it has too many legs". It is a marvelous place for young folks to crawl around and under a tree. This second beautiful open meadow and the pine savanna is bordered with native trees and shrubs with varieties of ground cover under the trees. The open meadow offers a glimpse of the ongoing success of ecological restoration on the reservation.



Andrea and Patrick Milligan from Ballardvale enjoy climbing in the Octopus Tree. Photo by Don Milligan.

It supports several native wildflowers and grass species that attract a variety of insects, birds and animals that depend on and call this meadow home. It could be considered to end near the center of the red pine grove.

The third section is all about supporting birds. Several native flowers, fruiting shrubs such as high bush blueberries provide nutrients to our Eastern Bluebirds. There are several bluebird boxes with supporting notes in the field. This last area has goldenrod, culver's root and New England aster with poke weed near the serpentine bridge. These native plants help our migratory bees and birds continue on their journey. From all the fruits, nuts, pollen and fungi in the soil, the Shawsheen River Reservation makes an extraordinary difference in supporting the survival and protection of native and endangered species.

I want to thank Warden Susan Hunt for her wise words of wisdom relative to the features and native flora she has nurtured on this reservation.

Look for the River Herring, the Fifth Year By Dr. Jon Honea

After the most challenging year in memory for most of us, the Fifth Annual Volunteer River Herring Count is another reason to look forward to spring. You can expect another announcement with more details in March or early April as their annual time for spawning approaches. The river herring spawning run will begin in late April or early May, depending on how soon the warm weather arrives. River herring are actually two nearly identical and closely related species that return from the ocean to spawn one after the other. Alewife arrive first and blueback herring soon follow, often a week or two later. They were an important component of streams and rivers like the Shawsheen, spawning in the 1000s in Andover before the era of dam-building during the Industrial Revolution.

The spring of 2017 saw their first return in almost 100 years south of Lowell Street and since long before that south of Stevens Street after derelict dams at those locations were removed just a few months before the spawning run began. Data from volunteer counters, each observing the river for only 10 minutes, showed that about 1,500 river herring spawned during the first two spawning seasons.

Only about 500 returned in 2019 and approximately 1,000 spawned last spring. Because river herring take three to five years to mature, many of the fish that we count this coming spring will be those that hatched from that very first spawning run in 2017, so we may see more fish than in previous years.

Like last spring, we will be observing safety precautions due to the pandemic, in particular maintaining safe distances and taking turns to count as well as entering observations in a simple form accessible with your phone. Again, expect more details in a few months. Until then, for more information, visit <https://www.andovertrails.org/river-herring-count.html>. Special thanks for support over the years to Andover Trails, the Andover Conservation Commission, AVIS, Andover High School, Greater Lawrence Technical School, Burt Batcheller, Bob Dalton, Dave Vandooren, Craig Liversidge, Keith Osborne, and our many volunteers.



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

Spring Adventures on AVIS Reservations: Notes for Young Naturalists

Late winter and early spring is a time of birth, coming out of hibernation and dormancy, and awakening on AVIS properties. The buds are swelling on the trees getting ready to burst forth with a new year's crop of leaves. If you carefully open a bud you may see the leaves curled up inside.

Look high up into the bare trees and you may find the leafy mass of a gray squirrel's nest, called a "drey". Inside may be a mother squirrel and her babies. Usually there are from two to four but possibly as many as eight babies. They will be cozy and warm in the drey until the babies are big enough to explore the world outside.

While you are looking up perhaps you will get a lucky glimpse of the earliest breeding bird in New England, the Great Horned Owl. Wisely, they time the hatching of their nestlings to coincide with small mammals waking from winter rest in March and April. This assures them lots of furry food for their chicks, called owlets who find mice and chipmunks delicious.

Underneath the surface of water frogs and other creatures are waking from hibernation under the mud.

Turtles don't hibernate; rather, their metabolism slows, while they maintain a slightly wakeful state. They may even occasionally be seen swimming slowly beneath the ice during the cold of winter. While they are dozing on the bottom, their eyes have light detection abilities that signal when the days are getting longer. This helps them know when the ice is melting and they can go up for a breath.

Under the ground, woodchucks, also called groundhogs, and jumping mice are the only true hibernators, sleeping from fall to spring. Chipmunks, rabbits, and other rodents don't truly hibernate, they do experience a reduced metabolism during the winter months, called dormancy. From this state of hibernation-lite, they can rouse themselves every few days to eat from their stores of food and defecate.

By late winter or early spring all of these creatures have produced young, and the cycle of spring rebirth has begun.



Left to right: Lincoln and Carter Platt are looking for awakening animals on the Keck Reservation. Their grandmother, Cheryl McKeough, an AVIS warden, wrote the accompanying article.

Jack's Farm, a Meadow in the Peggy Keck Reservation

By Warden Mark Kaluzny

When the Cavallaro Family sold the parcel of land that is now part of the Peggy Keck Reservation, they only had one restriction: "Please name it after our Dad". Thus Jack's Farm, the meadow, is now an integral part of the AVIS 45-acre land network. It sits on the southern edge of the Peggy Keck Reservation near the intersection of Route 28 and Gould Road.

It's nestled near a pine forest, a wetland and a small stream. Two footbridges lead to the meadow and into the main part of the Peggy Keck. Watch out during the rainy seasons as the edges of the meadow tend to flood. There is a bench conveniently located on the edge of the meadow to sit down, relax and watch nature go by. I've seen many deer, a fox and a woodpecker visiting the area. It's an active transit point for visitors both two-footed humans and four-legged animals travelling between the Goldsmith Woodlands and Harold Parker State Forest.



Warden Mark Kaluzny stands near the entrance to the meadow.

Reflections By Tom and Jen Boshar

Having lived in Andover most of our lives we had previously explored a handful of the AVIS reservations, but this fall we are pleased to have satisfied our recent goal to hike all of the trails. We keep asking ourselves "what was your favorite AVIS reservation?" and our answer keeps changing. There are so many similarities, yet each trail is different: Bonier was so peaceful with the afternoon sun filtering through all the yellow leaves; Purdon with its hilly terrain right in the heart of town; little Burns hidden in a Ballardvale neighborhood; the "new" Deer Jump section behind the old seminary and West Parish Meadow where Jen's emotions came forth as she remembered her youth of horseback riding in the field around 50 years ago.

Our "adventure" helped us really appreciate the effort that goes into the AVIS organization and realize the gems that Andover has to offer. Hiking the reservations helped our physical and mental health, both much needed in this stressful time, and we hope that other Andover citizens take advantage of this wonderful asset that AVIS has to offer. Thank you.



Tom and Jen Boshar at the Nat Smith Reservation. They walked every AVIS reservation in 2020 and were delighted to share their enthusiasm and joy.

Eagle Scouts Projects and Invasive Species

By Buzz Stapczynski

In the Fall AVIS Update I wrote about the seven Boy Scout Eagle Projects that were underway in 2020. By December, four were completed and the remaining three are scheduled for this year. These projects all have AVIS adult advisors guiding the Scouts along the planning, permitting and construction process. I want to thank three of our Wardens who were guiding the Scouts with their projects on their reservations last year.

Deer Jump Warden Chris Grobicki assisted Scout Vincent Candela, Troop 79, in the design and construction of the 105 feet of boardwalk along Fish Brook. Rafton Reservation Warden David Poirier, who was featured in the Fall AVIS Update, guided Scout William Storz, Troop 76, in the work he did to build the 100-foot boardwalk along Helen's Trail in Rafton. Baker's Meadow Warden Rick Davidson advised Scout Moiz Mahesri, Troop 77, on his boardwalk projects in Baker's Meadow and Sakowich reservations. In addition, Ranger Dick Dillion was an invaluable advisor on the boardwalks Moiz constructed. I'm constantly impressed with the talents our Wardens bring to their reservations.

Actually, we count on wardens to provide us with ideas to improve their reservations and/or trails. The Boy Scouts have standards for all Eagle Projects in order to provide a meaningful leadership opportunity for the Scouts and a true service to the community. So, wardens, if you have improvement projects in mind, please let either Davis Dargie or me know and we will see if it's something that works as an Eagle Scout Project.

In our Fall Update, Amy Janovsky wrote about the work AVIS is doing to remove invasive plants in the Shawsheen and Vale reservations with funding and guidance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and using licensed professionals to do the work safely. As part of our land stewardship efforts, we are working to address the invasive plant problem in ways that are ecologically sound and enhance the native wildlife habitat.

You may have seen the goats the Town employed in the summer to control overgrowth at Andover High School's central courtyard and in the atrium at South School. This spring, AVIS plans to evaluate using goats to rein in invasive plants and poison ivy on some of our reservations. We'll keep you posted in the next Update.



Eagle Scout Vincent Candela at the Fish Brook on Deer Jump where he constructed a 105 foot boardwalk with the guidance of Deer Jump Warden Chris Grobicki. Courtesy photo.

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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.



AVIS EVENTS

Please see avisandover.org as the year progresses for new posting of events.

Please mark your calendar for the AVIS Annual Meeting by ZOOM for Tuesday, March 9, 7:30-8:30 p.m. Please sign up to join the Annual Meeting at avisandover.org

A Heads Up: Planning for Andover's 375th Anniversary By Ann Ormond

The Town is looking forward to working with many community partners during the coming months to celebrate its upcoming 375th Anniversary in 2021. Soon we will be assembling a committee to work together to develop a plan for events and programs beginning in early summer. For more information contact Ann Ormond, Director, Business, Arts and Cultural Development ann.ormond@andoverma.us



"Bessie" named for Bessie Goldsmith, joined the annual ACE Scarecrow display downtown in October 2020. She is adorned by lots of AVIS gear (a hat and 125 anniversary jacket), the requisite covid19 mask and boots shared by John Hess in celebration of the life of his wife, Kathy. Photo by Susan Stott

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