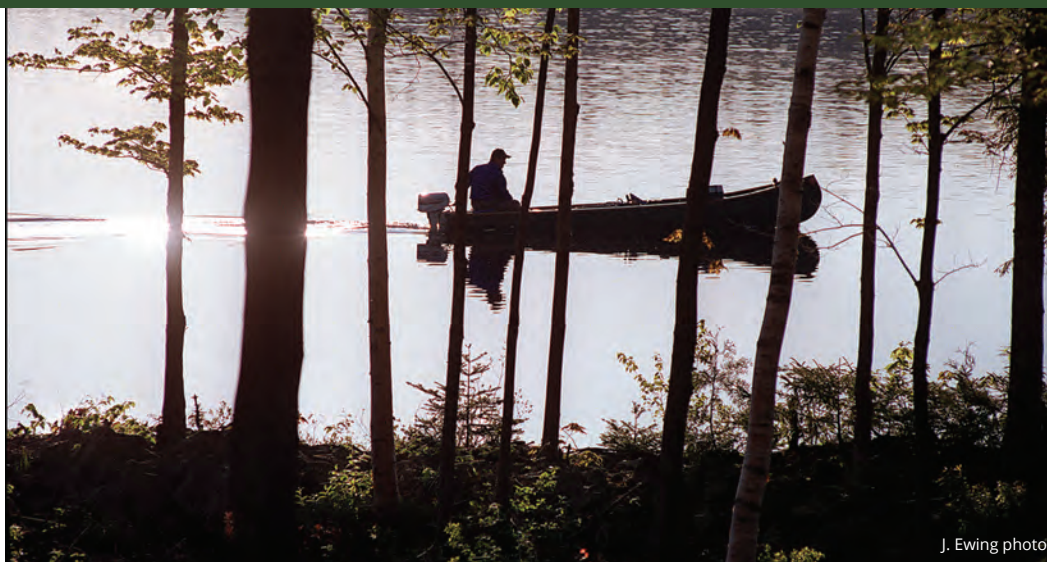




Protecting the Pierce Pond watershed for thirty-four years

Fall 2023 newsletter—volume 12



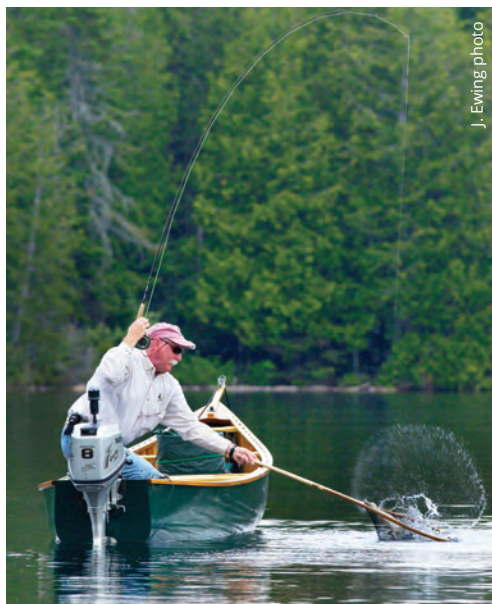
J. Ewing photo

PPWT Launches New Water-Quality & Fisheries-Research Initiatives

—Jerry Bley

Since its founding in 1989, the Pierce Pond Watershed Trust (PPWT) has focused its conservation efforts on protecting the lands within the Pierce Pond watershed. The Trust understands that protecting land is the most important strategy for ensuring the long-term quality of the waters of Pierce Pond and the nine smaller ponds in the watershed.

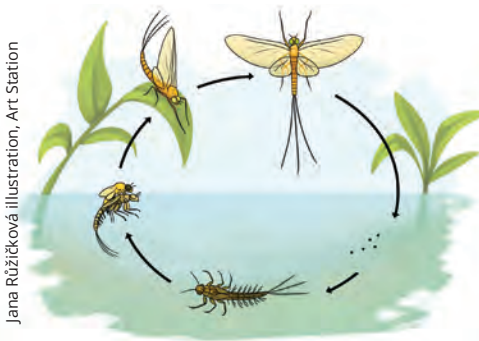
However, recent questions about the ponds' fisheries have led to new initiatives to collect information about water resources. In recent years, seasoned anglers have reported declines in the abundance of certain mayfly hatches on Pierce Pond. While fishing stories are notoriously unreliable, there does appear to be a common thread to these observations, many of which have come from folks who have fished these waters for decades.



J. Ewing photo

These observations have given rise to a variety of questions: Are these phenomena being seen elsewhere? Are they just temporary, or cyclic, or likely to be long-lasting? Are the fisheries being affected? Are the changes the result of global warming or other factors? To begin to answer some of these questions, PPWT's Board of Directors created a Fisheries & Water Quality Committee. The group, chaired by PPWT Director Gene McKenna, has brought together experienced anglers and knowledgeable experts to better understand these treasured waters.

The Life and Times of a Mayfly



Jana Růžicková illustration, ART Station

For those who don't spend their days chasing these hatches, here is a bit of basic mayfly biology. The most notable mayfly hatches on Pierce Pond include Black Quill (*Leptophlebia cupida*), Green Drake (*Ephemera guttulata*), and Hex (*Hexagenia limbata*). Mayflies spend most of their life in the sediments at the bottom of the lake. Once eggs fall to the lake bottom they develop into nymphs, which gradually go through many instar stages when exoskeletons are shed, all

the time feeding on algae and other organic matter in the sediment. In the spring, the adult nymphs are ready to "hatch." They go through a metamorphosis and swim to the surface, shedding their skin and spreading their wings to fly. They live for only a couple of days out of the water with their entire focus on mating and reproduction, eventually laying eggs on the water's surface or on aquatic vegetation. The eggs fall to the bottom and the cycle begins again.

What We Know and What We Don't Know

One of the experts who have volunteered their time and wisdom on this topic is David Courtemanch, a freshwater scientist for The Nature Conservancy in Maine who previously spent much of his career with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, where he had responsibility for monitoring the quality of the state's waters. He also is an avid angler who comes to Pierce Pond. Courtemanch concurs that historically, hatches could be counted on. He speculates that there could be something "disrupting the triggers" that are key to the mayfly's life-cycle. He points to the precipitous global decline in terrestrial insects, and suggests that we should not be surprised if aquatic insects could be straying from historical norms.

Liz Latti, the Regional Fisheries Biologist for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIF&W), says that she is hearing similar stories about diminished hatches from around the Western Mountains

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PPWT REMAINS
"AT THE READY"

Pierce Pond Watershed Trust remains focused on what we know best, while at the same time branching out into new endeavors.

What we know best, of course, is land conservation. We've spearheaded projects ensuring that the entire 12,000-acre Pierce

Pond watershed will never be developed. As folks know, we are now looking to acquire all of the lands in the watershed—most notably, but not exclusively, the largest watershed tract, which is owned by Weyerhaeuser.

Our success over the past 34 years is a result of being opportunistic, taking advantage of each and every conservation opportunity that presents itself. We remain "at the ready" to pursue conservation acquisitions when there is a willing seller. All of the landowners in the watershed know of our interest and are prepared to engage with us if and when they decide to consider a sale of their land. Patience, combined with readiness, is an essential component of land conservation. The Trust has demonstrated that we are in it for the long haul.

New Initiatives

But as we remain ready for that next conservation deal, we are also launching new initiatives to broaden our effectiveness in the watershed, with a focus on preserving its unique character and resources. The front-page article features new efforts to better understand the water ecology of Pierce Pond. While the comings and goings of mayfly hatches may be of greatest interest to die-hard anglers, we all have an interest in better understanding changes that are occurring in Pierce Pond as a result of climate changes and other factors. Collecting more consistent and detailed water-quality data will help explain the changes that we are witnessing.

Bog bridging to the shore of Split Rock Pond



This summer also marked the first time that the Trust has hosted a college intern—a challenging enterprise in such a remote location for an organization with minimal staffing. But we made it work despite all the rain that plagued the state this summer. Our intern, Ayden Grim, cut down more blow-downs than he cares to remember in order to clear our trail system for hikers. He built bog-bridging to the shore of Split Rock Pond and helped PPWT Advisor Steve Estes restore the "Dynamite Shack." Ayden brought his own forest ecology knowledge to the watershed and conducted a survey for invasive species. His findings, thankfully, showed that the watershed has largely escaped the ecological ravages of invasive plants.

Ongoing Stewardship

The Trust's forester, Bob Haynes, along with a skilled colleague, worked on Fox Island this summer to remove the remaining safety hazards around the campsite, which had been created when a microburst struck the island in 2022, toppling the majority of its trees. It will take some time for the island to recover from the damage, but at least it will be safe for campers and picnickers.



Fox Island campsite clean-up

We coordinated another successful trail-work day this summer, during which eleven hard-working volunteers spruced up our impressive network of hiking trails, clearing brush and painting fresh blazes on trees.

These are just a few examples of how the Trust, with the support of our members, is working to care for the watershed—all while continuing to position ourselves to take on the next land conservation opportunity that arises.

Anne S. Dougherty
ANNE STALLMAN DOUGHERTY

Pierce Pond Watershed Trust
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Kyle McCaskill, Lisbon Falls, ME
Administrative Manager

If It Seems Easy, You're Doing It Wrong

Coordinating the Annual Banquet

—Joanne Gallant

After serving three years on the PPWT Board of Directors, I continue to support the Board and the Trust as the Banquet Coordinator. I quickly learned that organizing the banquet isn't a job at all—it's a mission. You've got to be prepared for anything.

Although the banquet has always been a success, we have had high and low points. Unforeseen problems have included too many tables, not enough tables, meals served too late and too early, menu issues, audio-visual hiccups, too many of the same auction/

raffle items, not enough items, missing items, and undesirable items. Presenters sometimes go MIA, and it falls on me to jump to the mic and ad-lib. During the banquet I am probably sweating profusely, smiling overzealously, and silently panicking.

The annual banquet is a huge undertaking, and it takes a village. I love this process, even though there is a tumultuous relationship between the PPWT Directors and me during banquet time. But the PPWT directors are the backbone of this event and without them it would not happen. I depend on them to gather all the pieces of the puzzle so that I can assemble it. I suspect some of them cringe each year when I start to prepare for the next banquet, because I haunt them relentlessly. But in the end they always, without fail, come through.

It goes without saying that I am not alone in all this. Administrative Manager Kyle McCaskill and I work together like a well-oiled machine. Teamwork at its best.



I am grateful for the opportunity to stay connected with the directors and support the Trust in this capacity. As a second-generation Pierce Ponder for the past 52 years, I will continue to support PPWT and the work they do to preserve the place I call heaven on earth, a place which is near and dear to my heart.

THE MOTHER OF UNFORESEEN PROBLEMS

—Kyle McCaskill

As Joanne Gallant points out in her article, unforeseen problems have always cropped up while coordinating the Annual Meeting/Banquet. But on Thursday, March 30, 2023, we came up against an unforeseen problem I could never have imagined.

That was when PPWT was informed that the Harraseeket Inn would not be able to host our April 1 event, owing to a delayed state kitchen inspection. With two days to spare.

We'd like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who dealt with the April 1 cancellation and event rescheduling with such grace. Extra-special thanks go to everyone who allowed their initial reservation fees to be converted to much-needed donations to PPWT.

Loon Population Healthy Despite Raptors and High Water

—John Abbe

We had a great time counting the loons this year! Thanks to the volunteer-recruiting efforts of PPWT Director and Education Coordinator Kate Drummond, the Pierce and Curci families helped count, with the result that we were able to count almost the entire pond. We counted a total of twenty loons on the pond, though it was slightly foggy, and we may have missed some.

Biologists from Maine Audubon had split up the pond on a map into four almost-equal sections. Our volunteers counted from four to six adult loons in each of the four sections, and one immature loon was seen in the Middle Pond.

The Abbes counted the Lower Pond from Cobb's Camps south to Gull Rock. The Curci family counted two sections: Cobb's Camps north to Otter Pond Cove, and the Middle Pond. The Pierce family counted the Upper Pond. The only section not counted was the Basin.

As we all know, the water was very high this year. This may have caused loon nests on the shoreline to be destroyed or at least become unviable. Also, raptors such as bald eagles and osprey have been seen harassing the loons. Eggs and loon chicks are prime fodder for raptors. Nevertheless, the loons continue to have a healthy population on Pierce Pond. High water and birds of prey may come and go, but thanks to our volunteer loon-counters the biologists will have solid data to rely on.



Loon-counters Anja Hanson, Derek Pierce, Sara Corbett, and Mike Paterniti on Upper Pond

Our 2023 loon-counting volunteers were John Abbe, Hannah Abbe, Sara Corbett, Dr. Michael Curci, Christine Curci, Stephanie Curci, Shawn Davis, Olivia Davis, Eliot Davis, Anja Hanson, Derek Pierce, and Mike Paterniti. Many thanks to everyone!

We are looking for more volunteers for next year, especially to count the Basin. The loon count is always on the third

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PPWT Member List (as of 8/17/23)

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Averill, Andrew & Catherine	DeLorenzo, Michael, & Katherine Thornton	Hashem, Sr Daniel F. & Carolyn	McCormick, Kyle & Diane	Sears, Doug & Cathy
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Beck, Katherine	Engelhard, Mary	Huber, Margaret & Bob Bittenbender	Moore, Blaine D.	Stover, Jacqueline L.
Bell, Daniel O.	Enright, Richard J.	Hutchins, Betty	Morazzini-Vandegrift, Glenn & Pam	Stringos, Gust & Jan
Berry, Irene & Bill	Estes, Jason & Pam	Hutchins, Eric E.	Moretti, Frances	Sullivan, Kevin & Sue
Berry, Nan E.	Estes, Stephen & Jo-Ann	Hutchinson, Leigh	Morris, Barbara	Sullivan, Lynn
Betts, Cameron & Heather	Ewing, John	Iannuccilli, Leonard & Claudia	Morton, Gerald & Jean	Taylor, Mark & Sheila
Bickford, Jeff	Fagan, Christopher T.	Jagger, Judith	Moss, Bob	Thayer, Ellen
Bien, Stephen	Fagan, Kathleen	Jeffers, Georgia	Murch, Bob & Doris	Thomas, Kimberly E. Abbe
Blake, Alfred C & Elaine T	Fairley, Erin, & William Patz	Jennings, Rupert, & Carol Robinson	Murphy, Patricia	Timmins, James A.
Bousquet, Paul R. Jr.	Falender, Elaine, & Gordon Gayer	Johnson, Peter & Mary Ann	Murray, Charles & Amanda	Tome, Randy & Janice
Brisbois, Richard	Farrar, Mandy	Jordan, Calvin	Neudel, Eric, & Alison Gilkey	Torrey, David & Ann
Brown, Gary & Ann	Farris, Kenneth & Nancy	Julia, James D.	Neudel, Eric, & Alison Gilkey	Toth, Mark
Brown, Peter & Karen	Feitz, Aaron	Kalloch, Norman R.	Nicholas, Frederick Snow	Troy, Jonathan F
Burke, Gary & Deborah	Feitz, Nick & Pamela	Keller, Rob & Lisa	Nichols, Don	Tully, Barbara
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Burnham, Frederick H.	Flewelling, Bruce K.	Kennedy, Rev. Thomas & Joanna	Norcross, Dick & Mary Ann	Valentine, Charles Clinton
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 Bley, Jerry
 Bullen, Dana & Heidi
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 Cobb, Elizabeth V.
 Cobb, Jaysen Merrill & Jessica
 Corbett-Paterniti, Sara & Mike
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 Powell, Sam Neudel
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 Wellenbach, Lilly
 Wellenbach, Patricia
 Wells, Joshua
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 Whiting, Steven
 Whiting, Tim Jr. & Family
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 Wirth, Jean
 Zamoic, Michael & Rhonda

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 Brock, Clara
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 Clegg, Julian
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 Dulany, Ryleigh
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 Edmonds, Fiona
 Edmonds, Harris
 Edmonds, Maeve
 Goss, Bingham
 Goss, Lauren
 Goss, Stewart
 Joseph, Jayden
 Lis, Dylan
 Lynn, Ethan
 Lynn, Isaac
 McDuffee, Jackson Abbe
 McDuffee, Lyndin Abbe
 McDuffee, Madison Kay
 Pierce, Brooks
 Pikaart, Colgan
 Pikaart, Margaret
 Pikaart, Marinos
 Pikaart, Sylvia
 Robinson, J.P.
 Robinson, Liam
 Ryan, Elin
 Ryan, William
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 Simonton, Jade Victoria
 Stallman, Lukas K.
 Swarmstedt, Elijah
 Toth, Bobby
 Toth, Frank
 Yabuta, Mila

Loon Population

continued from page 3

Saturday in July, which next year falls on July 20th. If you would like to participate, please contact me over the winter at johnabbe@yahoo.com.

Editor's note: Maine Audubon has been conducting the Annual Loon Count since 1983 (see maineaudubon.org/projects/loons/annual-loon-count). Until 2019 there were no data collected on the Pierce Pond loon population. However, thanks to PPWT member John Abbe, Maine Audubon now has four years of loon-count data for Pierce Pond.



HOW TO BE LOON-FRIENDLY

Loons need good nesting habitat, which includes quiet areas where chicks are safe from waves, predators, and disturbance.

- Keep family pets from running wild near lake or pond shores.
- Do not approach nests or loons on the water too closely, especially if the loons are calling or displaying. Use binoculars instead to watch loons.
- Obey the no-wake law within 200 feet of shore to assure that waves don't destroy lakeside nests.
- Keep boat trailers free from aquatic plants when traveling.
- Use lead-free fishing tackle (lead poisoning continues to be one of the leading causes of death for Common Loon adults in Maine)
- Dispose of fishing line so it does not get tangled up in a loon's feet or bill.

GIFTS WERE RECEIVED IN MEMORY OF:

Bruce Bates
 James Beck
 Ann Massey Burnham
 Floyd and Maude Cobb
 Gary Cobb
 Jane Millett Dornish
 Carl Freeman
 Bradley E. Gage, Jr.
 John Gotto

Russell Guibord
 C. Thomas Jagger
 Albert Martin
 Margaret Louise Messinger
 Arthur Miller, Jr.
 Robert E. Schmidle
 Roland Scribner
 Roland Ware
 Donald Edward Wirth

GIFTS WERE RECEIVED IN HONOR OF:

Ann Burnham
 The Burnham Family
 Charles Tucker Harrison

Audrey and Scott Hutchinson
 Margaret Messinger

PIERCE POND GUARDIANS:

We are honored to recognize the following members for informing us that they have generously included Pierce Pond Watershed Trust in their will or estate plan:

Dudley & Elisabeth Abbe
 Constance Fraser
 Peter B. Herrmann
 Alice & Phillip Howard
 Jack Learmonth
 Kevin Sheridan

New Research Initiatives

continued from page 1

region. She can't confirm how much of what she hears results from changed hatch timing or overall population declines. She says that MDIF&W fisheries staff focus on the health of fisheries rather than insect populations. While the change in hatches could potentially affect the fisheries in Pierce Pond, Latti notes that brook trout and landlocked salmon are both opportunistic species who will switch food sources depending on availability. Salmon, in particular, look to smelt as a food source as they mature. Angler and longtime PPWT Director Charlie Burnham points out that mayflies aren't the only insect populations that are undergoing changes—he has observed a recent increase in caddis flies as well as a decline in dragon flies at Pierce Pond.



Many Pierce Pond anglers, like long-time Director Charlie Burnham, have an intimate knowledge of insect hatches and fisheries in the watershed.

About 75 miles along the Appalachian Trail northwest of Pierce Pond, just south of Baxter Park, a devoted group of anglers shares a concern about diminished hatches and hopes to find out what might be the cause. Yoke Pond Camps, a private fishing club, is supporting a research effort led by Hamish Greig, an Associate Professor of Stream Ecology at the University of Maine. Greig, along with his graduate students, is undertaking a multi-year research project on Yoke Ponds and other nearby waters (a total of seven ponds in all) to better understand an observed decline in the Green Drake hatch. Greig states that while the scientific literature has studied declines in aquatic insect hatches in other regions of the U.S. and Canada, there has been little research done in the Northeastern U.S.

Greig's research team is conducting a wide range of activities including detailed water-quality monitoring, sediment sample analysis, and sediment cores collection, which can shed light on the history of the ponds and their aquatic insect populations. They even hope to capture mayflies and eggs and raise them in the lab to better understand how they are affected by water-quality factors as well as different sediment structures. 2023 was the first full field season for the study, so it will be some time before any conclusive results are available.

Trust Initiatives

PPWT's Fisheries & Water Quality Committee has embarked upon an ambitious agenda, including the following:

► **Water-Quality Monitoring:** "It is amazing how little water-quality information there is about Pierce Pond," says Dave Courtemanch. Other than Cobb's Camps' regular testing of their water supply, water-quality monitoring has been limited to MDIF&W's occasional testing during fishery surveys. To rectify this, the Committee, with Courtemanch, has arranged to add Pierce Pond to the list of lakes that Maine's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regularly monitors for temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, nutrients, and clarity. DEP conducted its initial testing at the end of August.

Based upon Courtemanch's recommendation, the Trust is looking to become part of a statewide lake monitoring program known as the Lake Stewards of Maine. This would entail trained volunteers measuring water transparency through the season in various locations within the watershed. The purchase of additional equipment would also enable the Trust to measure temperature and dissolved oxygen level. With a warming climate as well as dramatic fluctuations of water levels from year to year, there is interest in better understanding trends in water temperature throughout the water column, which has a major impact on fisheries.

► **Angler Information Collection:** This past summer, Gene McKenna led efforts to distribute and collect angler logs at Pierce Pond that allow anglers to record observed hatches, successful fishing methods (flies or lures), and species caught. Over 70 logs were

submitted (enticed by a fly rod raffle for participants), the results of which will be tabulated and made available to MDIF&W and others. Additionally, those anglers who kept fish were encouraged to donate fish stomach samples, which were frozen and delivered to MDIF&W. These survey efforts would not have been possible without the assistance of Cobb's Camps, most importantly Kristen McLaughlin.

Additionally, the PPWT Board has allocated funding to allow MDIF&W biologists to conduct a telemetry study of the Pierce Pond brook trout and salmon fisheries. Fish are captured (by anglers or traps), typically in the spring, and then fitted with radio transmitters. At regular intervals throughout the season, the location of the fish are tracked by monitors in boats. The resulting data will show where the fish are moving throughout the season and offer insights into where they seek thermal refuge in the summer, as well as where they go to spawn in the fall.

Longer term, there is the potential for the Trust to piggy-back on the Yoke Ponds research project to offer further clues as to what may be going on with Pierce Pond's mayfly populations.

Pierce Pond – A Unique Research Opportunity in a Changing World

More than three decades of PPWT's successful conservation efforts have resulted in a 12,000-acre watershed that is permanently protected from development and available for the public to enjoy as they have for generations. This conserved watershed also provides important research opportunities to monitor environmental changes in a controlled setting that is devoid of impacts resulting from activities such as shoreline development and agriculture. The Trust, along with its partners, is beginning to take advantage of this valuable research opportunity.

We hope to better understand how factors such as a warming climate are affecting the watershed's ponds and the creatures that live within them. Moreover, we hope to gain insights about how we, as stewards of the watershed, can take actions in the future that will preserve the resources of these treasured waters.

The Adventures of Steve Estes & Friends

Hauling Timbers to Split Rock Pond



The challenge was to get thirty cedar timbers from the Three Ponds Loop trailhead to Split Rock Pond for the Trust to use for bog-bridging.

On March 1 2023, Fred Burnham, Mike Zamoic, my friend Steve Bearor, and I snowmobiled up with tote sleds, cutting through blowdowns on the way.

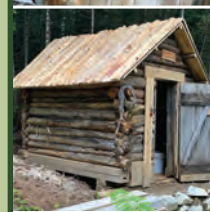
We trimmed, cut, and brushed a decent path, then packed and widened it. On March 3 we moved the timbers.

The 6" x 8" x 8" timbers weighed from 40 to 70 pounds each.

On the second trip my tote sled tipped over. It was a bit of a struggle to right it and get it back up on the trail.

After three trips we finally had the thirty timbers delivered to where they would be used on the trail.

And if the truth be told, we had fun doing it!



Resurrecting the Old Dynamite Shack

The Dynamite Shack was built in 1950 by my father's Great Northern Paper Company crew. It had become so overgrown that few people even knew it existed.

The roof, the top two rows of logs, and the bottom two logs were rotted and had to be removed.

When I dug the dirt floor down to add height, I encountered a rock the size of a wood stove. It became a personal battle, me verses rock!



I jacked up the walls, installed sills, and added three rows of new logs around the top.

I installed a floor, remade the gable ends, replaced the roof-support logs, and boarded with rough-cut cedar topped with rolled asphalt.

Asphalt shingles went over it, followed by cedar slabs, so it looks as rustic as it did before. The door was reinstalled, chinking added between the logs, and a bench, shelf, and places to hang tools added.

I had some much-appreciated help from Jerry Bley and Intern Adyen Grimm. Now the Trust has a quaint but servicable storage building at Lindsay Cove, about 200 yards up the road just before the upper parking lot. Walk up and check it out!

Member Memories

I Owe So Much to Pierce Pond

—Peter Lytle

A note thanking me for a recent donation made me realize that I should be thanking everyone in PPWT for their hard work. Like so many others, I feel that I owe so much to Pierce Pond and the Cobb family.

In the early 70's I mapped the Pierce Pond area geology as part of my PhD. I showed up one day at the camps and asked Floyd Cobb if there was any chance of staying there while I mapped. He knew I had little money, but immediately agreed to let me set up shop in the building Gary used for his camp for teens. He also invited me to eat with his family in the kitchen and gave me the use of a boat for a nominal fee.

Over three summers and about six months, I was part of the Cobb family. I have perfectly wonderful memories of Floyd, Maud, Maud's mother "Nana Kootchi," Gary, Judy, and



Peter Lytle and Gary Cobb, twenty years after Peter finished his geologic mapping of Pierce Pond as part of his PhD.

Robert Mallett. I also remember Andy running around the camp as a cute two-year-old toddler!

I got to know many of the repeat customers who came to fish each year. The most memorable two included Sherman Saltmarsh, Jr., who came for a month or two each year. He had an ancient outboard motor (he was pretty ancient as well) that he spent days fine-tuning before he even started fishing. He also ate exactly nine prunes every morning—no more, no less. The other person was Erastus Corning, Mayor of Albany, NY. Gary would always be his guide and they would camp out on Mayor's Island in the Upper Pond. He once told me that he played with the Rockefeller boys in Bar Harbor growing up, and still thought of Nelson as a spoiled brat.

Twenty years after I finished my mapping, Gary invited me back to Cobb's to lead a geology field trip for his guests. A small armada of boats followed Gary and me around the pond. It was pretty funny; if someone saw a fish rise everyone would stop listening to me and start fly casting.

I still cherish the opportunity I had to hike every square inch around Pierce Pond all those years ago.

Pierce Pond Watershed Trust



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Pierce Pond Watershed Trust is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to protecting the wild character, natural resources, and scenic beauty of the Pierce Pond watershed and preserving traditional public recreational use of the area.

Summer Intern Reflects on Pierce Pond Experience

—Kyle McCaskill

During the summer of 2023, Pierce Pond Watershed Trust (PPWT) had the opportunity to participate in the Richard G. Rockefeller Conservation Internship program, which pairs 11 Maine college-aged students with Maine land trusts. The program, facilitated by Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), helps students develop skills and knowledge of Maine land conservation and stewardship while helping land trusts with their workload. MCHT provided funding, recruitment, training, and general support.

PPWT and Somerset Woods Trustees, a land trust based in Skowhegan, worked together to select and share an intern, who turned out to be Ayden Grimm from Portland, Maine, a student at College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor working on a degree in Human Ecology with a concentration in conservation, forest ecology, and geographical economics. Grimm had previously spent two summers working at Maine Audubon's Gilsland Farm Center, where his responsibilities included mitigation of invasive plant species and general maintenance.

During his time interning for PPWT in the Pierce Pond Watershed, Grimm worked on trail maintenance—including clearing blowdowns and constructing bog-bridging—island-privy siting and improvement surveys, storage-building renovation, invasive-species inventorying, and assisting with educational-programming and forestry activities.

When asked what his first impressions of the Pierce Pond watershed had been, Grimm responded, “I’d never been to a place so spotless in terms of biological health. To have this 12,000-acre watershed protected is so unique, especially because it has been preserved by a group of people without conservation backgrounds, just people who visit and love it.”

Grimm had been looking for an opportunity to rough it and experience being alone in the wilderness. “I wanted to get away from all of the

technology, and the bustle of Portland. But I had never spent a night in the woods alone, with a boat-ride between me and my car.

“The first night there was kind of surreal. So amazingly quiet and peaceful. The night sky was unbelievable. I wasn’t sure if I’d be able to call or text home to let them know I was okay, but I found a spot I could walk to and send a text.”



Intern Ayden Grimm with invasive bedstraw

“There is NO CHANCE that I won't be going Back!”

Grimm said his favorite experience was hiking the Burnham Trail up Pierce Pond Mountain. “Such gorgeous views! And also the loons! I had done loon-calling contests in Belgrade as a kid, but I had never seen or heard loons like that, a group of six together vocalizing.”

Grimm sounded justifiably proud of the invasive plants survey he conducted, which included surveying the entire perimeter of Lower, Middle, and Upper Pierce Pond. “I was amazed at the biodiversity and lack of invasives. There are keystone native species of plants and trees everywhere. I did find invasive bedstraw along some of the roads. But it can’t grow in the shade so it shouldn’t spread. The survey shows the need to continue to monitor for non-natives, to preserve the ecological health of the area.”

I asked Grimm what he tells his friends about the watershed. He replied, “I tell them, ‘this is the most pristine place in Maine or maybe New England. Go experience it! You won’t find anything else like this—mixed woods/boreal forest, where you can bring or rent a boat and camp on an island.’”

Reflecting on Pierce Pond’s future, Grimm said “It’s important to get new people invested in the watershed, for future conservation. There is no chance that I won’t be going back.”