

WONALANCET OUT DOOR CLUB

Newsletter



April 2014

CARING FOR THE SANDWICH RANGE SINCE 1892

The Elders Issue

*Two months ago, the **New Yorker** published an essay by Roger Angell entitled, “**THIS OLD MAN: Life in the nineties**” In it, Angell wrote, “We elders -- what kind of handle is this, anyway, halfway between a tree and an eel? -- we elders have learned a thing or two, including invisibility. Here I am in a conversation with some trusty friends -- old friends but actually not all that old: they’re in their sixties -- and we’re finishing the wine and in serious converse. . . There’s a pause, and I chime in with a couple of sentences. The others look at me politely, then resume the talk exactly at the point where they’ve just left it. What? Hello? Didn’t I say something? Have I left the room? . . . I didn’t expect to take over the chat but did await a word or two of response. . . When I mention the phenomenon to anyone around my age, I get back nods and smiles. Yes, we’re invisible. Honored, respected, even loved, but not quite worth listening to anymore. You’ve had your turn, Pops; now it’s ours.”*

Well, recently, I went around and listened to some of our elders. The ones I could find who were willing to talk to me, that is. And I’m here to tell you that they were well worth listening to. If I were a better documentarian, I’d have filmed them. But at least I wrote down some of their stories. And if I get them a little mixed up or forget some of what they told me, I hope you’ll forgive me. I’m not so young myself.

*My original plan was to give each elder (or pair of elders) a separate essay. But some of them overlapped and shared experiences and -- like watercolors -- bled into each other. So, here they are: **Our Elders.***

Starting with the oldest, let me introduce **Pierce Beij**, known to many as **The Iron Man of the Granite State**. My own introduction to Pierce came at Ferncroft, some years back. We were about to set off on a hike, when we saw an old guy wrestling the kiosk into the ground. Alone. Of course, we offered to help. “No need”, he said, “I can handle it.” (He could.) The next time I saw Pierce, was on a guided hike on some steep ground around Chocorua. “I don’t know if I’ll make it”, he told me. “Arthritis is slowing me down”. “Well”, I said, “I’m having knee problems. I may not make it either. We can stick together and bring up the rear.” I brought up the rear -- Pierce was ahead of me all the way, except when he slowed down to make sure I didn’t get lost. Which reminds me of a famous Pierce story. When Pierce was a young fellow of just over 80 or thereabouts, the WODC summer trail crews would make camp on a site where Fred had found a spring, and then they’d need people to haul in supplies. Anyway, on this particular trail (must have been Dicey’s Mill), there was a terrible shortage of haulers and Pierce took the biggest spool of cable for the grip hoist and carried it up. Janet Cooke saw him from her doorstep and when Fred passed a few minutes later, she told him that someone who must have been at least 60 had come by carrying a huge load. When Fred informed her that the person in question was over 80, she suggested that from then on, the haulers drive in and park by the trailhead.

Chris Conrod says, “In later years, when we met to hike up to some remote part of the Sandwich Range to do trail work, Pierce wouldn’t be there at the trailhead. But when we got to our destination, he would already be there, either well rested or already working. He claimed he had to start hiking early because he couldn’t keep up with us. Then he would proceed to outwork all of us.” The one person Pierce thinks is as tough or maybe even tougher than him is Judy Reardon. He pointed out that even though Judy had a bad hip, she never complained and therefore everyone would give her the heavy loads to carry. He went up the Kelly Trail once with the crew and Judy. The young men all went home, leaving Pierce and Judy to do the work. “At the end”, said Pierce, “we just wanted to lie down and cover ourselves with leaves).



Trail work 10 years ago: Pierce works while the young folks watch. (This was the year when the entire Trail Crew -- save Pierce-- quit part way through the season.)

At some point, folks started worrying that Pierce would crap out and have to be carried out himself. Around that time, they got better crews and faster hikers, and Pierce felt that he no longer fit in and retired from active trail work, while he was still only in his youthful mid-80s.

Pierce was conceived on the shores of Squam Lake when his parents honeymooned there in the summer of 1919. His first experience of trail work was in 1938, the year he joined the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. He was living in Washington D.C., working for the Navy, and Myron Avery, one of the builders of the Appalachian Trail, was the Chief Admiralty Navy Officer, so there was a Navy-trail connection and Pierce got sucked into it. Pierce left D.C. because his allergies got so bad that the doctor told him to move north. It's hard to know how to take this statement, because Pierce also claims that he couldn't work for the Navy any more since he didn't have a Ph.D., plus he was allergic to uniforms. Maybe with a grain of salt.

Having developed all those allergies, he took advantage of the G.I. Bill to get a Masters in Horticulture at U.N.H. While there, he looked for land that was cheap and had a good view. He got offered a few hundred hilltop acres in Holderness, with a pond and a view as far as Mt. Washington, for \$10 an acre. (He notes that had he not been viewed as a sucker flatlander, the price would have been \$6/acre.)



When I talked to Pierce, he and his wife, Kay, had been married for 60 years and, not surprisingly, they'd met hiking. In 1953, Kay and a friend were walking the Appalachian Trail from Pennsylvania on up. They'd done Mt. Washington and come down to HoJos (in the unlikely event that there's a reader who hasn't gone up or down Tuckerman's, HoJos is the hut partway along the trail, with an orange roof). Pierce, now a farmer, had just gotten in his last load of hay; stuck some cans of food and a sleeping bag in his old car (he still has it -- the car, that is, although he probably has the sleeping bag as well), and went up there, where he spotted a blonde and a brunette. and quickly arranged a hike with them. The girls went on to finish the AT, came back down, and Pierce drove them to Katahdin which they all hiked. It took only a couple more weeks for Pierce to decide to marry the blonde, and they've been together ever since. There was a period when

they kept hiking with their young children on their backs, but after a while, Pierce kept hiking while Kay "fa'amed". They were subsistence farmers who wanted to protect the land (they currently have 380 acres in easement), and Kay earned a little money by selling what their surplus at a vegetable stand, but I think it's fair to say that they didn't get rich off their acreage.

Pierce doesn't remember which he ran into first -- Fred or the WODC. Whichever, it hooked him. (He could have joined the Randolph Mountain Club, but they had the double handicap of being both further away and snooty.) However, going back to a (highly recommended -- go to it!) trustworthy source (<http://www.wodc.org/ironman.html>) we learn: "Beij insists that Lavigne, a respected conservation leader, is the inspirational one. But Beij, an 82-year-old retired farmer, can still hike 20 miles during the day and then make a Forest Service planner squirm at an evening hearing." Trail work was pretty casual (read: disorganized) back then but Pierce always carried a pruning saw in his pocket and after a WODC hike, went back up the trail to take down a tree. Peter Smart came along, took note, and the rest is history. Or as Pierce says, "I probably joined the trail crew just for the hell of it."

Although **Martha & John Chandler** are very different in many ways from Kay & Pierce Beij, they have some points in common, and one of them is that John, like Pierce, was conceived on his parents' honeymoon -- in this case, actually in Wonalancet on their wedding night (or so the family legend has it). The elder (really elder!) Chandlers were married in July of 1926 in Pittsfield, NH (John's grandfather's town), and spent said night in a cabin in Ferncroft. John was born on April 6th, 1927.

John knew Ferncroft through his parents and they probably chose it because of its sled dogs -- John's father had worked in the mines of Nome for three years, and gotten to know dogs there. John's parents rented the "Wild" cottage (now housing Ann Rogers and John Carman) and he underwent a Ferncroft baptism by falling into the brook when he was 2 or 3. "Ferncroft" referred to the biggest of three inns (Ferncroft, West Farm and Tilton Farm). Tilton Farm, a spacious three story farmhouse, burned in 1911, while Ferncroft burned in the '60s. It was back and beyond where the Hurleys live, with tennis courts between it and the current parking lot. This was an era when locals rented their cottages to vacationers who took some of their meals at Ferncroft, but either couldn't get rooms there or couldn't afford them. It's difficult for those of us who arrived later to imagine that area as it must have been in its heyday (just as it was difficult for vacationers then to imagine the earlier worker's quarters and woodworking mills that had crowded the banks of the brook at Ferncroft), but there was even a big tiled swimming pool between Squirrel Bridge and the Holteys' place. That swimming pool ultimately became a menace and was filled in by Ed French after he'd bought the land. He also took down some of the now ramshackle cabins and built the barn that's there. (Those wishing a full description of touristic Wonalancet at its zenith, in the early part of the 20th century, should go online to www.wodc.org/newsletter/1998-05.pdf, for a great essay by George Zink on that topic. In fact, even if you don't read the

essay, there's a terrific drawing showing all the amenities, from swimming pool to chicken coops, and their placement.) John and Martha both loved hiking, and they looked for a place to buy that would be near trails and near John's family's farm, but not *too* near the latter. They looked at other places, but Wonalancet cast its spell. In '68, they bought an old building that was next to the burnt out Tilton Farm, and had originally handled overflow from it. Their new possession was a jungle of weeds and junk; the toilet fixtures had fallen through the floor, and they paid the Fire Department \$100 to burn it down for practise. Demonstrating the impossibility of pleasing everyone (or maybe anyone), half the neighbors thought they were crazy to buy it while the other half thought they were evil to destroy this "landmark". But, this gave them some land and, in '69, they moved up a little cottage they'd found in Center Harbor. It wasn't really habitable, but it did have (cold) water. After rebuilding, they dubbed it "Windowmere", though a neighbor snidely referred to it at "Windowlessmere", which denoted its level of luxe.



John & Martha enjoy a lively discussion over a WODC Trail Map

(photo by Chele Miller)

Showing true grit, (and egged on by their kids) they even used it in winter, with no heat, hauling water from the brook to wash and flush, despite the freezing temperatures. The Chandlers knew about WODC even before they bought land here. Our Club had gone through a tough time during WW II, when there was a dearth of men to maintain the trails, and some trails had been abandoned or semi-abandoned. In fact, not much trail work was done up until about 1970. But then things exploded. First of all, the Frenches, the Sidleys and the Chandlers all bought at about the same time and the Weymouths not long afterwards. So one thing that exploded was the juvenile population, whose numbers went from zero (or close to it) to more like 14. (The Weymouths contributed

8, so no wonder.) Martha talks of the excitement of lunchtimes, when you never knew if you'd be alone at the table or feeding all 14 kids. There was a big growth spurt in WODC, led by Tom Cleveland, Alan Purvis and Dave Loughran, and people started adopting trails. (I'm not sure when this started but the idea had been pioneered by the AMC and a formal request for adopters went out in 1981, by Eugene Koch, that year's Trails Chair, and seconded by Ted Sidley, who pointed out that a tremendous windstorm had left the trails in terrible shape and help was desperately needed.) The Chandlers had already adopted the Red Path to Tilton Spring and the Pasture Path up to Mt. Katherine, along with a still vividly remembered horrible swampy bit put in to skirt a fenced field where the Covilles kept horses. (Stan Coville compensated for the swamp to the Club, if not to the Chandlers by acting as forestry advisor to WODC, especially in our battles with the Forest Service which was then carrying out heavy cutting near our trails.) It was a happy day for the Chandlers when the horses went the way of all flesh.

John lawyered (did you know that one of his clients was Grace Metalious, the author of Peyton Place?), and Martha did whatever was needed to support her family, her community and WODC. I've been reading old online newsletters and reports on the WODC website (and very fascinating reading they are, too), and they show that Martha has spent the last forty years doing whatever tedious, unsung task needed doing to keep the Club going and acting as advisor without portfolio. Neatly enough, she makes her first appearance in the 1974 newsletter, where George Zink informed members of important issues that would impact our trails. George does this as President, but over and over again he writes, "Martha and I think . . .", "Martha and I would like", "Martha and I met with" and both names and addresses are appended at the end. By 1975, Martha is officially the Club's Secretary-Treasurer, with a segue into Newsletter Editor in 1976, as Barbara Sidley became Secretary-Treasurer. In 1981, Ted Sidley (then V-P) introduces the idea of WODC T-shirts and Martha & John become the folks in charge. This is their *33rd year (!)* of storing, selling and shipping T-shirts; a task which has become ever more demanding as the variety of shirts and the number of Club members ordering them has increased. Of course, this was not all they did. Chris Conrod, who edited this newsletter for ten years, writes, "Back in the old days when the mailing of the newsletters was done by hand, John and Martha would do it all: all the labeling, all the stamp licking, all the sealing, sorting and delivery to the post office, every issue." Martha and John have been de facto (if not de jure) members of WODC's Executive Committee for as long as anyone alive can remember, and one of my memories of the Club's Outreach Program, which Tom Holtey instituted in 2006, was that we could count on the Chandlers riding up on their bikes to make sure that we were okay and didn't need help. (Since we were sitting comfortably under an awning, drinking the cider and eating the trail mix ostensibly purchased to strengthen exhausted hikers, we never did, but it was always a delight to have the Chandlers as company.)

It should be clear from the preceding paragraph that **Barbara and Ted Sidley** also played major roles during the period covered here. Both the Sidleys and the Chandlers described Club leadership and work roles as turn and turnabout. The Chandlers, the Sidleys, Ralph Weymouth and the Zinks were mainstays, but Dave & Betty Bowles, Dave Loughran, the Randalls, the Cookes, and Dana, Helen and Nat Steele all played important roles, with occasional help from others. (Dave Bowles isn't profiled as one of our elders here, only because he was interviewed in an earlier newsletter: www.wodc.org/newsletter/2011-04.pdf) George Zink (written up in many past newsletters) was the main link to the Forest Service, but it's clear that the Chandlers, Ted Sidley and Ralph Weymouth worked with him extensively, creating personal relationships; writing letters, and attending meetings. George made no bones about his opinions of the USFS, and our Gang of Four quashed many FS designs while pushing the FS to create plans and make them public. If today we have good and mutually respectful relations with the FS, and if we have increased Wilderness boundaries, you know who to thank.



Ted and Barbara, like the Chandlers, purchased a place in Wonalancet in 1968. (The years around 1970 mark a sea change in the area, with a group of active young hikers moving in; with the exception of Pierce, an alien from distant Holderness, all the elders profiled here arrived within a three year period.) Ted and Barbara exhibited remarkable decisiveness/impulsiveness, since neither of them had been conceived in Wonalancet nor known anything about it: they came one day, hiked Whiteface, saw a "For Sale" sign on what's now their house, and bought it. As to this love at first sight and their falling into a meaningful relationship with WODC so quickly, Ted's explanation is that the AMC guide of that time mentioned the WODC and "there was something mystical about 'Out Door', which wouldn't have been mystical if it were the single word 'Outdoor'". (Since the Sidleys don't strike me as either mystical or impulsive, I can only attribute their relationship with Wonalancet and WODC to the power of the setting; after all, they are not the only folks to fall under its spell.)

The Sidley's friend and neighbor, Steve Harris, was active in trail work and influenced Ted, who started carrying a saw on hikes. His reward, bestowed in 1976, for what he claims to

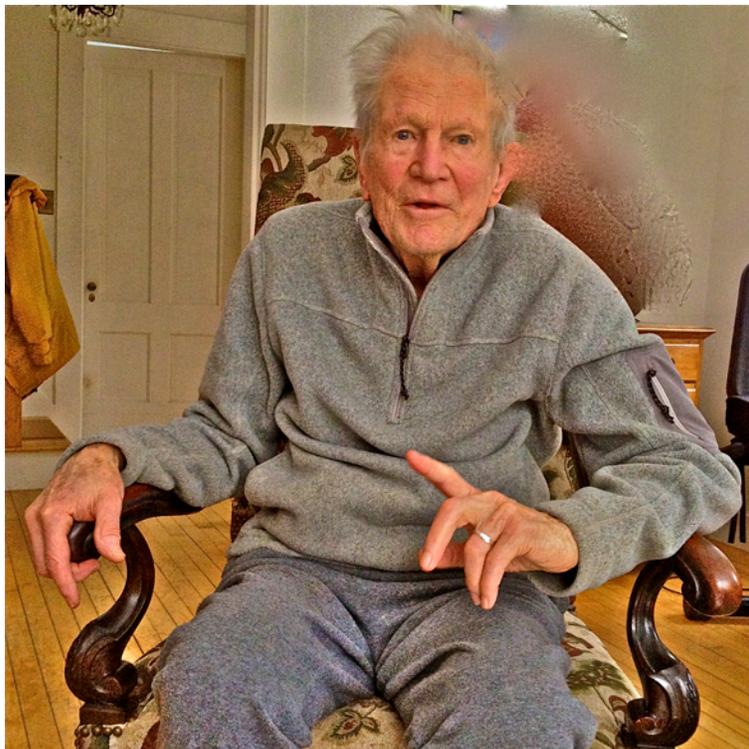
have been not really much work, was to be made Vice-President and Trail Chair. He served as Trail Chair for five years, and then continued as VP until 1985, when he was elected "Timber Chairman". Barbara meanwhile served as Secretary-Treasurer, until these titles too were divorced, whereupon she continued as Secretary for years uncounted (I gave up counting; she kept writing.) As good citizens, the Sidleys adopted a trail: the McCrillis. Note that they adopted the McCrillis *Path*; not the McCrillis *Trail*, which has been such an ongoing thorn in the Club's side, even in Ted's day as Trail Chair. His terse comment on it was that the Whiteface end of the Trail was always a problem; first there was a bull, and he was difficult, and then Townsend bought the place, and he was more difficult.

At the era we're describing here, the trails were maintained but not improved. When Barbara and Ted came here, the Forest Service was learning how to plan; how to interact with the public and take public opinion into consideration, and how to develop a forest-wide plan, rather than local efforts. Ted became a faithful partner to George Zink in attending Forest Service and political meetings and over the years, the relationship between WODC and the FS has become stronger and important for both. Ted gives the AMC credit here for helping with the FS, but points out that both the AMC and the Society for the Protection of NH Forests were against the Wilderness designation. The SPNHF attitude is understandable, since they are a voice for "managing"; i.e., harvesting the forest, but Ted points out that the AMC's anti-Wilderness status is harder to understand. (Editor's Note: My guess is that the big split was between those -- like the WODC -- who saw Wilderness as a way to protect the environment and limit human incursion, and those -- like the AMC -- who wanted to increase membership and get more people into the mountains and into their huts, which would have presented a problem in Wilderness.. One group was concerned about overuse; the other said it was just misuse that was the problem. As a staunch WODCer, I think there's a fine line between overuse and misuse. Don't forget -- it was that damn AMC that invented the 4,000 footer club, without which we wouldn't have to spend nearly as much money hardening certain trails, which shall remain nameless. Or maybe I'm just anti-AMC because they recently canceled their WODC membership.)

Ralph Weymouth graduated from Annapolis in '38 and was a naval officer for 35 years. Guess he didn't have Pierce's allergies.) He served in WWII, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf, as well as calmer places such as Hawaii and Iceland. Shortly after graduation, while anchored off the French Riviera, he met his wife to be on the ski slopes. She was French, and a good enough mountaineer that she was in the running for the French Olympic ski team. But she also loved the ocean, having grown up in Menton, and they spent Ralph's Navy leaves sailing up and down the Atlantic Coast, with winters in the Caribbean. In 1971, Ralph received a letter from a 16 year old baby sittee (if that's a word) of his, at Wonalancet Farm,

telling him that he *had* to buy a cabin behind the Farm, and siccing a realtor on him to clinch the deal. At that time, Ralph was stationed at the D.C. Navy Yard; his wife was headed to France the following day with what Ralph described as “a bunch of children” (this made no sense to me until I realized that the Weymouths had eight children, so keeping track was not simple); and he had never seen said cabin. Undaunted, however, he offered to buy it. It turned out to have been built in 1920 “out of rusty nails and old warped boards”, but it came with 3.5 acres and a great location. (There’s clearly something about Wonalancet that makes people both impulsive and liable to buy substandard housing.)

In 1973, he retired from the navy and -- in what was the Weymouths’ 33rd move, came up to Wonalancet, thinking it would be for a year but, as we might predict (prediction always being easier in retrospect), falling in love with the place. He added insulation and, in the 80s, bought a small barn in Portsmouth which got added onto the original cabin. Although essentially all of those 33 moves had been from one coastal location to another, Ralph came to love the mountains, hiking summers and skiing winters; using skins to get up the trails. He adopted the Cabin Trail and, up until a few years ago, was still helping Chele Miller keep this gorgeous path open. But before adopting it, he spread his efforts around, pointing out that everyone in the Club at that time shared titles and tasks. Ralph did, however, take the lead in sign-making. Coming from a life lived around the globe, he decided to make distances on the trail signs metric. “You can’t imagine the number of hikers that would cross out the kilometers and put in miles!” he told me. (Ted Sidley saw a slightly different side of anti-metric hiker emotionality; noting that signs were pulled down and/or disappeared at an amazingly rapid rate, and keeping them up at trail junctions became difficult.)



Like Ted, Ralph was tremendously influenced by George Zink, and worked with him on Forest Service issues. His timing was good in that the FS passed an Act calling for a new planning process; earlier plans were dominated by lumber interests, and the WODC wanted all aspects of the forest taken into consideration in planning; not just logging. (Ralph, who’s a strong believer in connectivity, was not the only person who pointed out to me that animals played no role in FS planning.) Interestingly, in the 70s and early 80s, the chief FS Saco district Ranger, who had broader interests, came out of lumbering. With those broader interests came a move towards including “cooperators” like the AMC, the WODC and the Randolph Mountain Club. Ralph carried out detailed mapping of 26,000 acres of the Sandwich Range, and the Club tried to get it all into Wilderness. We succeeded with a fair bit -- although not all. The FS didn’t want too much Wilderness, since they couldn’t log it. The Society for the Preservation of NH Forests didn’t want Wilderness since they thought the forest was there to use, and we are pretty sure that the AMC wasn’t crazy about it. Ralph, together with George, Ted and the Club as a whole, put a lot of effort into increasing Wilderness, fighting roads and keeping as much area as possible roadless.

I asked Ralph if George was President when he came into WODC. “Oh,” he said. “George was everything.” It’s clear that George led the charge for more, and more fruitful interactions with the Forest Service; for fewer roads; for more designated wilderness, and more closely monitored logging. But without the Chandlers, the Sidleys, and Ralph working with him, he couldn’t have accomplished anything near what was achieved. Starting with Kate Sleeper, the Club has benefitted from charismatic leaders who were able to inspire others to share their goals and work their butts off. It’s amazing that the elders described here have any butts left at all. So here’s to you, Pierce, Martha, John, Barbara, Ted and Ralph, and the unnamed others who’ve worked so hard over the decades. We are so lucky to have had you, and to have you still! Keep talking -- we promise to keep listening! S.G.

It should be clear by now that the online Club archives are not only a source of information, but also of entertainment. We recommend a perusal -- Early newsletters are a single typewritten (by 1974 the ribbon badly needs replacing) sheet and the dues are \$3 (\$5 for a family). One of the more eye-opening aspects of reading these reports of past Club activities is learning what the Club leadership worked to head off. Did you realize that there had been a proposed permit for thorium and uranium prospecting in 61,000 acres of the WMNF? Or how much clearcutting was done by the Forest Service? Or proposed by them and headed off at the pass? Or that the WMNF had been a prospective site for high level radioactive waste disposal? (Aaargh!) Although our estimable president points out that some supporting information would be helpful on these issues, I’m just quoting the archives. Heh heh.

Spring Trails Report

from the desk of our esteemed President

Jack Waldron

This Wonalancet winter has been a throw back. Based on data from local weather observers we experienced a cold winter typical of the 60's and 70's. This is much colder than recent winters. The snowfall has been higher than average but not up to the dumps of the 60's when Mt Washington recorded its record seasonal snowfall. Our last storm, which was forecast to be 3" -5" but dropped 15 inches of heavy, wet snow, was the unkindest cut of all. We haven't experienced any weather like that which wreaked havoc on the Sleeper Ridge last year. But until the trails reappear from under their winter blanket their spring conditions remain a mystery.

We have not scheduled a major project this year. We decided to take a break for a year and concentrate on Annual Maintenance, and plan to hire some members of Jed Talbot's crew to help us with that.

As usual we'll host 4 **Volunteer Trailwork days** :

Saturday May 17 (WODC Spring Trails Day),

Saturday June 7 (National Trails Day),

Saturday July 19 (New Hampshire Trails Day),

Saturday September 27 (National Public Lands Day).

We'll meet at the Ferncroft Parking Lot at 8:30AM on all our Trailwork Saturdays. Bring water, food, gloves, and clothing appropriate for the weather. Most of all, be prepared to spend a day outdoors, deriving satisfaction from a job well done.

We do have one new effort this season. Jocelyn F Gutches through her NH Charitable Foundation Fund is sponsoring a unisex high school crew to spend a week doing annual maintenance in the Sandwich Range Wilderness. The crew will be based at Camp Rich and work on WODC trails in that vicinity. We are grateful to Jocelyn for her generous and thoughtful effort. We'll monitor this project and see if we can build on it in future years.

If you want more information on any of our trail projects contact Jack 323-8913, jackw@g4com.com or Fred 284-6919.

WODC members responded to our call last season to perform **Wilderness Monitoring** stints in the Sandwich Range Wilderness. Maintaining that wilderness environment and spiritual refuge requires dedication and effort on our part. Thanks to Fred Lavigne, Chele Miller, Doug McVicar, and Jennifer Wiley for pitching in last year. We'll need volunteers again this season to spend a day monitoring the Wilderness for the values we hold so dear. If you'd like to help, contact Jack.

Annual Meeting: We'll hold our Annual Meeting on Sunday August 17 at 6:30PM in the Chapel. There will be a Potluck in the Grove at 5:00PM.



Photo of the Season!

Sara Korpi took this dramatic photo of a female snowy owl in flight. She denies any special talent, saying that it was primarily a matter of being in the right place at the right time, but that **Martha Chandler** deserves credit for being the first to spot the owl and pass the word along.

Sara's photo took me back to the only time I've seen a snowy owl in the flesh. It was a huge, pure white male, on the fist of a fellow grad student, Peter Grant, an ornithologist in training. As we walked towards each other along a corridor, I assumed that it was a stuffed specimen, until it got near and spread its wings. Wow! The wingspread of a snowy owl has to be seen to be believed. I know it wasn't literally wall to wall, but it felt like that. Since then, Peter and his wife, Rosemary, have become scientific icons for their 30 year long study of the continually changing and unpredictable evolution of Darwin's finches, on a small Galapagos island. As for the owl, which had blundered into Peter's barn during a snowstorm, it recovered and was released. I was lucky enough to see it during its single day of captivity. That was half a century ago, and I've never forgotten it.

(You can see Sara's photo and all others in the newsletter in color by going to our website at: www.wodc.org.)

3 (VERY DIFFERENT) WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE WOODS, BY 3 LOCAL POETS

The Ballad of Porky Pine and Hedgie Hoggess by Chris Conrod

To appreciate this poem, it might help to be familiar with noted northern New England naturalists and the ecological relationship between porcupines and fishers. And maybe even that won't do it. But here it is. C.C.

Porky Pine went out to dine
With charming Hedgie Hoggess.
They chose a beech they both could reach
Along the slopes of Paugus.
The maitre d' could plainly see
Their spiked and pointy hairdos.
He wrote them off with scowling scoff
As punky-rocky ne'er-dos.
He led them back behind a rack
Of dirty busboy-goo trays;
And there they sat among a pack
Of raucous crows and blue jays.
The waiter was a fishy cat.
He claimed he was an otter.
Hedgie spat from where she sat,
"And I'm a monkey's daughter!
Pointy jaws and no webbed paws;
You're staring at my belly
The way my pudgy Porky pines
For hemlock-needle jelly!"
She swung her tail and without fail
She nailed him in the kisser.
Porky spun and his tail won
The throat of that mean fisher.
They plugged his butt and stuffed his gut
With apple sauce and pretzels.
And just for fun when they were done,
Faxed photos to Tom Wessels.
With pointed glee they happily
Slow-roasted him til August.
Then Porky Pine commenced to dine
With charming Hedgie Hoggess.

Got Turned Around by Dana Steele

Thought I ought to go one way
Turned out to be the wrong way
Ended up in the middle of peckerwood city
Even the trail I was on got lost
Needle of the compass spun like the eyes
of certain weird characters I know
(Abandoned junkyards in their heads?)
The sun was nowhere to be seen
The trees resorted to their old ploy
of looking exactly like one another
Brooks flowed uphill. Stone wall, laid out
like the streets of Boston, started,
ended, started again, finally called it quits
Uphill led to ridges with no views
Downhill led to deep mosquito-y swamps
hiding the bones of many an old trapper
Traveling sideways led in a circle of sorts
the outline of which certain physicists
have speculated the universe might be shaped like
I sat down on a flat rock
ate my half squashed tuna sandwich
said to myself, hey, it's only the crazy Ossipees
No more thinking about where you think you are
because that's back there, some time ago
or else it's ahead of you, some other time
or maybe you're in between places
and in between times, an anachronism
and you can't get there from here anyhow -

Set out again with an open mind
Ended up only two miles from my car.

Wonalancet Night: Four Seasons by F. W. (Skip) Nason

Hear the air; restless sighs Through Conifer and Beech Cold branches wavering, Each vying for reach. Shadows gather and mingle In fragmented light Snow is the canvas On a Wonalancet night.	Feel the air on your face Storm clouds blowing in Birds fleeing in warning Lightning crackles again; Skies clear, the moon smiles In flickering light Worth getting wet On a Wonalancet night.
Smell the air, freshly mowed In the yard of headstones Where the stars shine like diamonds And the dead rest their bones When the hatch is arisin' And the trout start to bite It's the right place to be On a Wonalancet night.	See the air, moving leaves As they dangle and dance Hanging on while they can But there's soil to enhance. Whiteface stares like an idol As if judging a fight There's a bit of the whimsical On a Wonalancet night.



Editor's Ramble: Before Henry David Thoreau died of tuberculosis at the age of 44, he kept journals -- close to 2,000 pages of careful observation of the plants, animals and climate of his time and place. These notebooks were saved but, since they were not literary, and therefore of little interest to most researchers, they remained essentially hidden for close to 150 years. Ten years ago, Boston University Professor Richard Primack tired of working in Southeast Asia, and decided to look at climate change effects on ecosystems back home. His problem was that to document change you need a base line, and none existed for the eastern U.S. (The notes of Aldo Leopold and family provided a baseline for some of the West.) That is, we had evidence that the climate had warmed, but we had no evidence of its ecosystem effects. As Primack and Abraham Miller-Rushing wrote, "The lack of examples gave the impression that climate change was happening far away, which diminished its relevance to the citizens and leaders of this country." So their first goal, even before looking at today's ecosystem, was to find local data on yesterday's ecosystem. In East Asia and Europe, changes in the timing of seasonal biological events (known as phenology) are maintained by governments in central locations. This was not the case here. Individuals and amateur clubs had maintained records of bloom times, bird arrivals, leaf out dates, etc. according to their interests, but those records were usually hand-written (Thoreau's handwriting was especially difficult to decipher) and scattered. Although they were soon told about Thoreau's tables on flowering dates in Concord from 1851 to 1858, for over 500 species of plants, it took five years for them to learn about his data on bird arrivals, which existed as a single copy in Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology. Still, they persevered and were able to show that bloom times in Concord today are ten days earlier than they were in Thoreau's time. However, they found a great deal more than that. They found that many plant species had disappeared (27%) or become very scarce (36%); that there were fewer native and more nonnative species, and that certain bird species were no longer visiting. Should we care? If we can only keep one aspect in mind, it should be that an ecosystem is a network of organisms. So it's not just that we're losing certain plants; it's that the entire ecosystem is falling apart. Some plants are ruled by temperature and others by daylight. Nonnative plants are more likely to be ruled by temperature, so as the climate warms, they flower earlier and shade out the natives. And, they now have a longer season in which to spread. Purple loosestrife, an extremely aggressive invader, shifted its flowering date by several weeks, but most native lilies and orchids did not shift at all. Consider the following: if a plant, whose flowering time is ruled by daylength, depends on a pollinator insect, whose emergence is set by temperature, that plant may not get pollinated. If an insect pest emerges according to temperature, and has historically been controlled by a bird which migrates on a daylength schedule, a minor pest may become a plague. This year's cold, late spring is what we should be used to, but all the complaints I hear mean that we've rapidly adapted to earlier warmer seasons. Too bad our native species can't do the same.

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