



# BERKSHIRE APPALACHIAN TRAIL NEWSLETTER

Issue 15: April 2021

## WILDLIFE TRANSECT TRACKING

*By Jim Pelletier*

On March 5th, seven brave souls ventured out into the AT "wilderness" in the Knee Deep Pond area north of Webster Rd to see what the wild things are up to. This is the first time we've done such an inventory in this area and we were not disappointed! We started into the woods a bit east of the AT crossing where the snow plow stopped plowing and had cleared out a small area to park in. We soon hit our first sign: mouse tracks, squirrel sign and turkey tracks. By the time we were done we added: deer, porcupine, otter, coyote, mink, bobcat, chipmunk, racoon, grouse and likely bear marking. Highlights were:

- Lots of the coyote tracks appeared to be a pair....it's mating season.
- Upstream and on the trail north side of the AT bridge is an extensive colony of porcupine. Several dens were found and many hemlocks had nip twigs beneath. And we spotted a youngster in one of these hemlocks.
- Just a short distance upstream of the AT bridge is a good size area that the deer have dug up extensively foraging for acorns.
- No sign of recent beaver activity and the pond is essentially drained. Despite this we observed that there are 2 streams flowing out of the "pond". The far west end of the large marshy area had no shrubs and looked almost devoid of vegetation above the snow. When the beavers return it is evident that they will need to rebuild 2 dams.
- On the south side of the marsh, not far uphill there is a large hop hornbeam with a large cavity in it. The bark was well worn suggesting animals are rubbing against it. Did not appear that the cavity was in use. The bark did have recent claw marks in it. Good spot for a trailcam I think.

Two in our party headed back to the cars around noon as the cold and wind were getting to be a bit much. Surprisingly, we found a cozy spot on the "shore" of the pond out of the wind for lunch and the afternoon although cold was much less windy.

I reinstalled a trailcam at the Shaker Campsite and at the bear nurse tree nearby at the swamp edge. Lots of recent sign in the area but no indication the bears are out yet. The hillside seeps are snow free and either open and flowing (the bigger ones) or thinly frozen over (the smaller ones).

*If you are interested in joining in on a wildlife transect for some off trail work you can email Jim at [wanderer0131@yahoo.com](mailto:wanderer0131@yahoo.com)*

# HISTORY THROUGH STORIES

*By Pete Rentz*

Great Barrington Tornado - Memorial Day, 1995

On May 29, 1995, a tornado took shape in New York State and made its way East into Massachusetts. It was quite destructive, tearing down trees and structures, including the garage of our own George Osgood, West of Great Barrington. It damaged the cemetery and fairgrounds, south of town. It knocked down all the ski lifts at Butternut. It twisted off all the trees along about a quarter mile of Appalachian Trail on both sides of Route 23. It killed three people from Eagleton School who were in a Volkswagen Beetle, then proceeded east, where it blew itself out in Monterey.

The land on the south side of Route 23 is owned and managed by the National Park Service. Their word was that this had been an act of nature, and that the Appalachian Trail Committee was to clear the AT of down limbs and just throw the slash to the side. We put two of our chainsaws in the repair shop with the extensive cutting required.

The land north of Route 23 is managed by the Massachusetts DCR (DEM). Their idea was that this was a windfall, and that a professional logger should be brought in so that the lumber would not go to waste. It took about a year for this to happen, and in the meantime, the AT was relocated on a section of blue-blaze trail available west of the destruction site. Finally, the AT was given a new route through the DCR salvage area where it remains today.

Now (25 years later) it is hard to see any difference in the two sides of Route 23, even though the initial management was quite different. Nature heals the worst of devastation, and new growth has appeared which will eventually become a mature forest, replacing what was lost.

*Tracks spotted during wild life transect tracking. Photo taken by Jim Pelletier.*



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Josh Weeks has been an avid outdoors person since an early age. Residing in Pittsfield, he was a member of the Boy Scouts in middle school and was exposed to the AT at an early age.

When his son Aaron started getting involved in Service projects when he was 11 years old, Josh began to get involved as well. Josh began volunteering with us in 2009. Aaron's Eagle Scout project in 2011 involved the whole family. Josh's daughter Hannah and brother in law Kevin Swail began to volunteer as well to assist with the project. As a whole, the family helps to maintain a very large portion of the Northern section in Massachusetts. These trips and volunteer projects became a great family bonding experience.

Josh is serving as the Northern Maintainer Coordinator as well as adopting the Noepel Shelter. Recently, he has moved up into the Vice Chair position and will be the Committee Chair in two years time. Additionally, Josh recently received his apprentice sawyer certification in order to help with trail management with a chainsaw.

Josh recently retired as a physical education teacher at Taconic High School. However, he still coaches track and field as well as the CPR/ First Aid courses. In his retirement, he goes out for trail maintenance about two to three times a week.

We are grateful to have Josh volunteering with us! Thank you for all of your contribution to the trail and our community!

*A photo of Josh Weeks.*



# UPPER GOOSE POND COORDINATOR POSITION

The Upper Goose Pond Cabin Maintenance Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the Cabin, outbuildings, privies, camping areas, docks and other infrastructure associated with the Cabin are in working order and safe for use by the public and volunteer caretakers, and maintained to agreed standards. Repairs to the Cabin and other site infrastructure may be undertaken individually, or with the assistance of AT volunteers. The Coordinator will keep the AT Committee informed on any work needed or performed. The Coordinator may also take part in training and mentoring of new UGPC Caretakers.

Estimated time required: In-season (mid-May to mid-October), as much as 4hrs per week not including travel. Off season: 4hrs per month.

Further description of duties is detailed below:

- Assess the condition of the property and associated structures and plan and execute work to keep them in good repair. Larger repair or maintenance projects are planned in consultation with the AT Committee Volunteer Coordinator.
- Make or assign regular visits to the site during the operational season, check-in with Caretakers to inquire about issues or concerns with the Cabin and larger site and address those concerns as soon as possible.
- The Coordinator will direct volunteers in the opening of the Cabin for the season, and subsequent closure and securing the site for the off-season. Make or assign occasional off-season visits to monitor conditions.
- Provide a written or verbal report to the AT Committee at its regularly scheduled meetings, and whenever there are significant issues or problems at an overnight site.
- Develop or continue relationships with neighbors and residents on the lower pond. In particular, work with Leisure Lee managers to maintain access to the Leisure Lee boat launch when needed.
- The Coordinator needs to be available to respond to emergencies, unusual events or queries from Caretakers. The Coordinator should be prepared to serve on short notice as a temporary Caretaker. The Coordinator may assign, and as needed, train volunteers living in the region who are also available to respond in a timely manner to incidents at the Cabin.
- The Coordinator is encouraged to serve a number of shifts as a weekly Caretaker to gain knowledge and appreciation of Caretaker duties and challenges.

You can contact us at [at@amcberkshire.org](mailto:at@amcberkshire.org) to inquire about open leadership positions and more ways to be involved.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Our trail schedule for this season is now live! You can view the schedule by following the [link!](#) Be sure to sign up via [outdoors.org](https://www.outdoors.org) and obey all local and federal policies in regards to COVID-19.

We ask that you maintain 6 feet of distance, wear a mask, and bring hand sanitizer for all work trips.

Here are a few highlighted events over the next few weeks to those who may be interested!

**4/16-17 Warner Hill brush clearing-** Moderate one mile hike to worksite. Thick brush and rocky terrain at worksite.

**4/27 Hazard Tree Removal-**Chainsaws will be involved. No experience required since there will be work to do moving logs and limbs once they are down.

**5/1 Clearing Viewpoint at Tyringham Cobbles-** Short moderate hike to cutting and clearing brush around worksite with hand and power tools.

**5/22 Women's Day Project-** There will also be a mixed group project on the same day. We will be doing boundary maintenance which includes clipping brush, painting blazes, and installing signs. This will be on very difficult terrain.

**5/29 Waterbar clearing-** We will be using hand tools to clear the waterbars along the trail. This will be slow paced hiking on moderate to steep terrain.

## HOURS REPORT

After volunteering please enter your own hours regularly. You can use this link to easily input them yourself:

[2020/2021 Hours Report](#)

## CONTACT US

Email us at:

[at@amc-wma.org](mailto:at@amc-wma.org)

Like us on Facebook at:

[Massachusetts Appalachian Trail Management Committee](#)

Check us out at:

<https://amcberkshire.org/getting-involved>

