

THE

Oak Leaf

A PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE OAK LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

WINTER 2010

More Than Just Porcupines on This Hill

by
SCOTT MORRISON,
WHITE OAK PRESIDENT

Porcupine Hill, one of White Oak's newer properties, already offered visitors beautiful woodlands and moments of quiet contemplation. Now, with a good 2.5 mile trail, a new four-car parking lot, and a brand-new sign, visiting Porcupine Hill is even better. While the official opening ceremony will take place sometime in late spring, Porcupine Hill is now open to the public.

Recently, Scott Morrison, White Oak's new board president, hiked the property, located on Paxton Road (Route 31), between Holden and Paxton. His discovery there will provide another good reason to hit the trail. Here are his observations from that experience.

Every day starts by bringing Lili, my Newfoundland dog, for a walk. She always senses when the weekend is here, and eagerly anticipates her extra-long weekend walks. She gets excited as soon as I begin to get dressed, and is at the door before I can even grab her leash. On New Year's Day of 2010, I decided that we should explore Porcupine Hill. I figured that, after the New Year's Eve snowstorm, we might make the first tracks along the trail there.

Upon arrival, we observed the new blue and white sign that was recently installed, marking the entrance drive and parking area. Pulling off Route 31, there were no tire tracks, and I quickly confirmed that no one else had arrived by vehicle since the storm ended. However, while unloading Lili, I immediately observed numerous animal tracks passing through the parking area, so I guessed that we would not be making the first tracks after all.

The beginning of the trail is cut through some very dense mountain laurel, which provides easy access through the understory for



humans and wildlife alike. Lili was off like a shot from a cannon, sniffing each tree and stump as if each one had a steak hidden beneath it. I suspect that animals use these for scent marking posts as they utilize this trail. I quickly inspected each track to see if I could figure out what animal had passed by, trying hard to remember the lessons I learned during a tracking class I had taken years ago.

In the first fifteen minutes, I observed fox, rabbit, snowshoe hare, bobcat, and deer tracks, and wondered how far off these animals were. They could have been thirty feet away, hidden in the dense laurel, for all I knew. Lili and I headed out on the trail to do the entire loop out to the high point of the property, where during the winter one can see the Kendall Reservoir through the trees well below Porcupine Hill. As we approached the loop of the trail, I saw some very large tracks in the snow. Upon further inspection these were moose tracks—what I consider to be the

holy grail of tracks in the snow. Lili was quickly hot on the trail of this moose and I followed for a while before deciding that I should not stray too far from the trail.

As Lili and I made the turn and headed back to my truck for the return trip home, I thought about how each and every one that made this land acquisition possible should get out and experience this beautiful property. Whether alone, with your dog (as I was), or with your family, I highly recommend that you get out and enjoy this property. If you do, please keep your eyes on the yellow and blue trail markers—not previous footprints in the snow!—because I tend to stray away when hot on the trail of some interesting animal tracks. We would love to hear from you about your experiences at Porcupine Hill or other White Oak properties; please write to us with your story at info@whiteoaktrust.org. 🍂



White Oak was sad to learn recently of the passing of Robert Price, the founding lawyer of the organization, who died in January at age 94. Robert helped write our articles of incorporation, served on the board for many years, contributed mightily to the annual winter carnival, and, more recently, placed a conservation restriction on his acreage along Malden Street, in Holden. We will always remember his positive impact on conservation in our community.

A Retrospective on 31 Years of Conservation

Recently, White Oak bid goodbye to two long-serving members of our board. George Dresser, a co-founder of the organization in 1978, and Anthony Costello, who worked tirelessly for White Oak for nearly a decade, both retired from the board in November. In honor of their efforts, we are highlighting some of White Oak's accomplishments over the past thirty-two years, many of which would not have happened without George and Anthony.

In the 1970s, George Dresser and Huck Truesdell perceived a need to preserve what remained of the open space in town. These two locals, who grew up in the forests and fields of Holden, founded White Oak Land



White Oak co-founders George Dresser and Huck Truesdell at the White Oak 2009 Annual Meeting.

Photo by Jo-Anne Crystoff

the Waterman Broadcasting Company gave White Oak a new property on Salisbury Street. The rest of the decade brought more good news, with the opening of the White Oak Trail, a series of CRs donated along South Road, and a draw-down of Eagle Lake that reduced its growth of aquatic vegetation.

Recently, White Oak has added Porcupine Hill—Anthony's most visible achievement; the Zimmerman lot off Salisbury Street; and a CR at the former Camp Kinneywood—George's latest project—to our roster of protected land. Altogether, White Oak now protects 448 acres of land in Holden.

Thank you, George and Anthony! This is your legacy. 🌿



Retiring board member Anthony Costello and Ed Yaglu.

Photo by Jo-Anne Crystoff

Conservation Society in 1978. They quickly attracted dozens of like-minded individuals, who donated money and pitched in to volunteer for numerous projects, including the purchase of White Oak's first Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), at Griff Farm. Events such as the annual White Oak winter carnival soon began, as well as a plethora of meetings, talks, and walks concerning the impending construction of I-190.

The 1980s saw White Oak receiving its first Conservation Restriction (CR) from the Lundquist family, off Kendall Road, overlooking Eagle Lake. During this same period, the Lundquists offered ownership of Eagle Lake to the town of Holden. At the time, White Oak was eager to receive title to the Eagle Lake dam and millpond. Fortunately, other than fears about gypsy moth infestation and acid rain, most of White Oak's other news was positive in the 1980s. The Mason family donated a parcel on North Street; White Oak volun-

teers began a series of successful summer environmental education programs; and White Oak purchased the Stubblebine property. For a brief period, White Oak owned a large dairy farm on Maple Avenue in Rutland, but played a complicated shell game in order to reach the ultimate goal of permanently protecting the farm for agricultural ownership and use.

In the 1990s, White Oak began to realize the tough work involved with managing Eagle Lake dam. Funding and partnerships began falling through, but White Oak tightened its belt, raised money, and continued with required repairs for the dam. White Oak sponsored environmental education programs in local schools by funding a MassAudubon educator to provide regular nature lessons. The *Oak Leaf*, White Oak's long-running newsletter, lay dormant for several years.

The year 2000 arrived: a new millennium, bringing new board members, including Anthony Costello. The *Oak Leaf* was revived, and

Wild Saturday

Saturday, March 6 at 11 a.m.

at the

Holden Senior Center

Dr. Mark Pokras, Director of the Tufts University Wildlife Clinic in Grafton, MA, will present "Wildlife and Development in Conflict?"

Event is **FREE** and open to the public.



WHITE OAK
LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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White Oak is a member of the Land Trust Alliance and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

Welcome, New Officers and Boardmembers!

The new officers elected for 2010 are Scott Morrison, President; Erich Mierzejewski, Vice-President; Nancy Rocheleau, Secretary/Clerk; and David Saborin, Treasurer. The board also welcomed two new members, Jennifer Leith and Ralph Peck.

Jennifer moved to Holden in 1976, after landing a teaching position in Rutland, and has been teaching for a total of 36 years. Currently, she works at Mayo Elementary as a fourth-grade teacher, where her big project is an immigration simulation. This and her other classroom innovations led to Jennifer's award as Massachusetts' 2009 Preserve America History Teacher of the Year.

Jennifer is also actively involved in con-

servation and outdoor education, and for years has collaborated with White Oak board-member Nancy Wilson in teaching students to respect their environment. Jennifer would like to see more kids and teachers involved in outdoor education; she hopes to retire in June so she can volunteer in the Holden schools as an outdoor educator. She credits her grandfather, a forest ranger, for teaching her to feel comfortable in the wild.

Ralph Peck also arrived in Holden in the mid-1970s. Ralph and his wife, Jane, had just finished their graduate degrees from the University of Michigan, and both landed jobs in the area: Ralph as a real estate lawyer and Jane as a librarian. Ralph, a self-described "tree nut," recalls numerous intense experi-



Ralph Peck, New White Oak Board Member

ences with nature, beginning with his childhood growing up in the wilds of Western Massachusetts. He remembers a particularly impressionable trip at age 14, when his family camped all throughout the National Parks of the western U.S.

As an adult, Ralph brought his love for trees and camping to his role as Committee Chairman for Boy Scout Troop 180, with which he worked for 14 years. With the Scouts, Ralph led camping trips at Trout Brook, where he taught wilderness survival skills and trained another generation to value the preservation of open space. 🌿



Photo by Jo-Anne Crystoff

Incoming Board President Scott Morrison chats with Karen Eisenhauer, Outgoing President.

White Oak, Aldrich Astronomical Society, and Galileo

by
STEVE JASPERSON

On the evening of October 9, a small but attentive group of White Oak members along with a similar number of children were treated to a highly energetic presentation by Dr. Jim Zebrowski, an outreach presenter for the Aldrich Astronomical Society, on a variety of astronomical topics. Because of rainy, overcast conditions, the star-viewing portion of the program was postponed to a time to be announced later. But in the meantime, Dr. Zebrowski held the audience in rapt attention for nearly two hours as he recounted stories and showed pictures of Galileo's use of the

telescope in various astronomical discoveries, most importantly the moons of Jupiter, followed by discussions of several Apollo missions (including NASA's lunar experiment earlier that very day to detect water on the moon) and the Hubble telescope. On numerous occasions, Dr. Zebrowski directed his remarks specifically to the children in the audience in underscoring what is so exciting about doing science and making new discoveries, and that detail made this presentation all the more memorable for the adults as well.

White Oak sponsored this presentation in honor of the 400th anniversary of Galileo's

discovery of the moons of Jupiter (his astronomical discoveries, published in 1610, and based on observations with his improved version of the recently-invented telescope) which forever changed our cosmic perspective!

For more information regarding astronomy and activities of the Aldrich Astronomical Society, please check out the following website: <http://www.aldrichastro.org/>.

Steve Jasperson is a retired member of the WPI Physics Department, White Oak member, and long-time Galileo fan. 🌿



New Year, New Member Benefits

White Oak is pleased to announce new benefits for our members.

We have partnered with the following local businesses to offer:

- **\$3 off** any arrangement from **Edible Arrangements of Holden** with a special White Oak discount code. Email info@whiteoaktrust.org to request the code.
- **10% off** purchases at **Busy Bee Nursery** with presentation of a White Oak membership card.
- **10% off** any installation project with **Ideal Landscape Maintenance and Construction**. Some restrictions may apply. For more information, contact Chris King of Ideal Landscape, at 978-833-6653.
- **10% off** (up to \$50) any **Whitney Street Books** book being sold on Amazon.com. To purchase your selection with your member discount, please contact Whitney Street Books directly, at 508-829-4829.

Your new membership card should be included with this newsletter. If your membership is current and you have not received your card, please email info@whiteoaktrust.org to request a new card. Otherwise, if there is no card, your membership has recently expired or you are on our courtesy mailing list. You can renew your membership now by visiting www.whiteoaktrust.org and clicking on "membership".

Printed on recycled paper with soy ink



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