



SOMES · MEYNELL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Dedicated to Conservation and Education in the Somes Pond Watershed

Summer 2013

Issue No. 14

SOMES-MEYNELL
WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

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1898 – 1990

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Message from the Board

by Dan Kane

Every week my 3 ½ year old daughter hikes the Sanctuary's peninsula trail on the north end of Somes Pond. As soon as she steps off of the Oak Hill Road, she's engrossed in her search for wintergreen, the low shrub with dark green waxy leaves that is common on Sanctuary trails. Once she finds a leaf or two, she tears them in half to make sure they smell good and "minty." During blueberry season, she manages to find and eat a surprisingly large number of berries. Our observations this spring indicate that there will be a good crop later in the summer. She always checks in on the lone pitcher plant growing on our favorite rock ledge before we sit and watch for loons. Two weeks ago, we were fortunate to observe the mother and father loon with a single chick swimming on its own for perhaps the first time.

Earlier this spring, I participated in the annual alewife survey that the Sanctuary has coordinated for the last 8 years. I was particularly struck by the large groups of enthusiastic local students that helped with the survey. David Lamon, our executive director, worked with teachers from both Mount Desert Elementary and MDI High School to bring classes out into the field to help with data collection and research. One of the high school biology classes collected scale samples and analyzed them under the microscope to determine the age of the fish passing from Somes Pond up the fish ladder into Long Pond. The scales, easily removed without harming the fish, have annual rings much like trees which allow the age of the fish to be determined. The Maine Department of Marine Resources integrates that data into a more complete snapshot of the health of our valuable fisheries.

The Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary is dedicated to the health of the Somes Pond/ Long Pond watershed. The pond, its outlet and its tributaries, and the surrounding land which nourishes the watershed are a beloved community resource for recreation, an important wildlife habitat, and a valuable education resource for people of all ages. I've witnessed firsthand how another generation of environmental leaders can be inspired by the Sanctuary and its work.

On behalf of The Board of Trustees, I thank you for your ongoing support of our efforts. The Sanctuary wouldn't exist without the numerous supporters in our community. If you are able, please consider a financial contribution to help maintain our ongoing education, research, and stewardship programs.

I hope to see you down at the pond this summer!



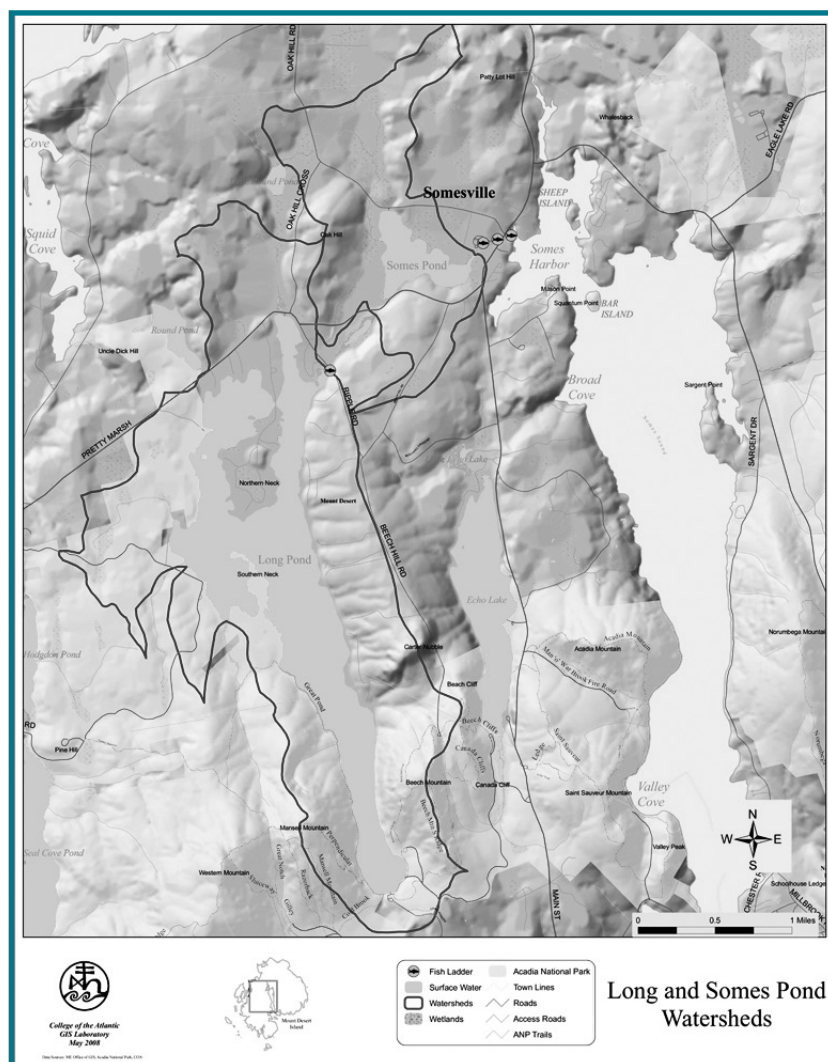
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN RIVERS

A Watershed Approach

Since its founding in 1985, the mission of The Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary has included environmental conservation and scientific research within its watershed. This is a rather broad task, since the watershed encompasses all the living things that are linked together by a common water course, in this case the Long Pond/Mill Pond drainage system (see accompanying map). This watershed system is one of the largest on Mount Desert Island and supports a diversity of plant, animal and human communities.

The Sanctuary's current activities demonstrate a watershed approach to environmental conservation by engaging in projects that both monitor and enhance the overall health of the environment. These include:

- The Mount Desert Island Loon Monitoring Project. Now in its twelfth year, this project has collected data on the health of MDI's common loon population, an important indicator species for environmental health.
- The Somesville Fish Passage Restoration Project. Now in its eighth year, this project has opened up spawning access to Long Pond and Somes Pond for migrating sea-run fish species (such as alewife). These fish have a significant impact on the health of the watershed. Ongoing research on fish population numbers and health is conducted each spring.
- A courtesy boat inspection program that is conducted each summer at the public landing of Long Pond. This program helps to protect Long Pond from the potential devastation of invasive aquatic plant species and also helps to educate the public on the importance of inspecting their watercraft for any plant material before launching.
- Ongoing water quality testing to measure nutrient levels in our lake water. Changes in these levels can indicate poor water quality and potential threats to lake health.
- Annual screening surveys for invasive aquatic plants. Sanctuary staff performs annual surveys on both Long Pond and Somes Pond for the presence of any invasive aquatic plants.



The dark gray line on this map designates the watershed area for the Mill Pond Drainage System (which includes Long Pond and Somes Pond)

A watershed approach is community based and the Sanctuary's programs depend on its connections within the community. For all of the projects listed above the Sanctuary collaborates with a variety of other local non-profit and government organizations. Local residents help accomplish much of the monitoring and research work as a dedicated corps of volunteer "citizen scientists." And the Sanctuary receives a significant portion of its operational revenue from individual donations.

When we think of the larger threats to the health of our environment we often become overwhelmed by their complexity and disillusioned by the failures of top-down solutions. Having local organizations dedicated to the betterment of our environment empowers us to take action in tangible ways that have real and lasting positive impacts.

The Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary is an example of one of those organizations whose roots are sustained through the water that flows through its own landscape—its watershed.



2013 SUMMER PUBLIC PROGRAM SERIES

FERN WALK

Sunday, July 21st 3PM

Join Roberta Sharp for a leisurely walk along the Sanctuary's trails as you learn to identify common fern species. Roberta, who serves on the Sanctuary's Board of Directors, is an avid outdoor enthusiast and is currently enrolled as a student in the Maine Master Naturalist program.

FULL MOON PADDLE ON SOMES POND

*Monday, July 22nd, 7:30PM &
Tuesday, August 20th, 7PM*

Open your senses to the sights and sounds nighttime has to offer while paddling under a moonlit sky. Watch for muskrat, bats and listen to the loons calling across the pond. Group size is limited –please call ahead for details.

VERNAL POOLS

Thursday, July 25th, 7PM

Due to their small size and ephemeral nature, vernal pools are often overlooked or ignored in regards to the biodiversity that they support. But if you are in the right place at the right time, vernal pools can be teeming with breeding amphibians and other organisms that exploit the unique features of these temporary habitats. This talk will focus on those amphibians in Maine that rely on vernal pools for their continued existence and current efforts in Maine at the state and local level that seek to keep vernal pools intact. Steve Ressel is a professor of biology at the College of the Atlantic and academic director of the Dorr Museum of Natural History, and has been involved with vernal pool surveys for the Town of Bar Harbor for four years.

KIDS DAY!

Saturday, July 27th

Join the Sanctuary staff for a fun filled day specifically for children. Activities will include a naturalist walk, games, and nature based art. The day will include two sessions, one for younger children (ages 5-7) in the morning from 10:00-11:30AM, and an afternoon session for older children (ages 8-12). Group size is limited; please call ahead to reserve a space.

MAINE MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM / FROGWATCH USA!

Thursday, August 1st, 7PM

The Maine Master Naturalist Program is dedicated to developing a network of trained naturalist volunteers to teach natural history and encourage the stewardship of Maine's natural environment. The program offers participants comprehensive instruction and field experience focused on ecological principles; wetland and upland ecology; identification of Maine's flora and fauna; geology; and teaching skills. Cloe Chunn is a naturalist, outdoor educator, former high school and college teacher, and Registered Maine Guide. She is a founding faculty member of the Maine Master Naturalist Program. Author of "Fifty Hikes in the Maine Mountains," Cloe has hiked the entire Appalachian Trail, and has explored wild country as far afield as Antarctica. Cloe will also speak about the Maine chapter of FrogWatch USA.

LOON APPRECIATION DAY

*Saturday, August 3rd
Open House, Noon to 3PM &
Evening Presentation at 7:00 pm*

Interested in loons? Would you like to find out more about the latest research and information on the loon population of MDI and throughout Maine? Join us for our annual appreciation day dedicated to loons. Stop by the Sanctuary Headquarters on Somes Pond during our Open House or join us for an informative evening presentation. Registration is required for the evening program.

GEOLOGY OF MDI

Tuesday, August 13th, 7PM

Sarah Hall is a faculty member at College of the Atlantic who's research interests are quite broad, including mountain building, past glaciations, active faulting, and the erosion of landscapes. Sarah will give an overview of MDI's geological past to help us better understand its present landscape.

WORLD OF THE BEAVER

Thursday, August 15th, 7PM

They're the ultimate ecosystem engineers. The role that beavers play in aquatic habitat structure has long been misunderstood. Join Sanctuary Director, David Lamon, for a closer look at the natural history of the beaver, North America's largest rodent.

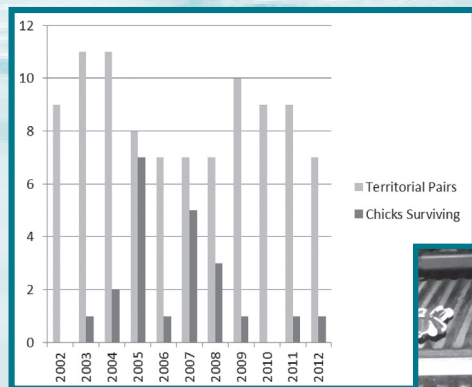
Space is limited and registration is required.

For more information or to register, please call 244-4027 or email us at wildlife@gwi.net

Local Loons Face Challenges

The Sanctuary's ongoing research project on the reproductive rate of Mount Desert Island's common loon population has revealed some thought-provoking results over the past eleven year's. Overall productivity on MDI has been about 0.25 chicks hatched per territorial pair (see accompanying chart). For loons, 0.48 chicks surviving per territorial pair is a well-established medium; above is considered self-sustaining and below is not.

MDI's loon population is struggling due to a number of factors, some of which include human disturbance issues, predation pressures, and suitability of nesting habitat. There are other areas of Maine with low productivity, particularly in parts of northern Maine and MDI is similar to those regions. By continuing to collect data and monitor MDI's loons researchers are better able to evaluate the health of this species and their environment.



This chart shows the numbers of surviving loon chicks on MDI compared to the number of territorial loon pairs on MDI.

This young loon chick, born last year on Somes Pond, was the only surviving chick from MDI during the 2012 nesting season. It received a pair of individualized bands so that it will be identifiable in the field over the course of its life.



Wanted: Loon Counters

This year marks the 30th year that Maine Audubon has conducted its state-wide annual loon count. You can join the ranks of more than 1,000 volunteers who dedicate the early morning of the third Saturday in July to finding and counting loons. The count will run from 7:00 to 7:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 20th. We have lakes on MDI and in eastern Hancock County that need counters. If you're interested, please contact David Lamon for more information.

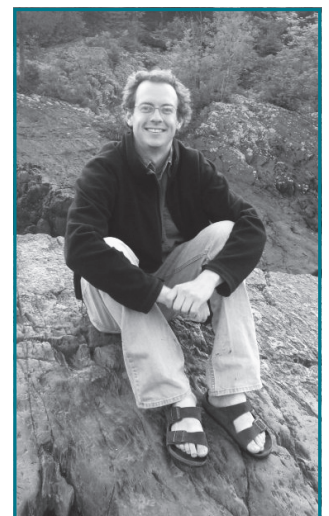
PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN RIVERS



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN RIVERS

Meet this summer's field assistant, Ian Collins

"I am so excited to be here at the Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary as this season's field assistant. My professional life has largely been in the field of environmental education. I truly enjoy teaching and have learned a lot through my experiences as an educator. I am now hoping to partner my experiences as a naturalist with the various field research projects here at the Sanctuary. I am particularly interested in learning more about loon behavior and how loons serve as indicator species for environmental stressors. My other interests include backpacking, rock climbing, and photography. As a newly established Maine resident, I am especially excited to explore MDI and the plants and animals that call it home."



Volunteer Profile: Chris Petersen

Chris Petersen follows the fish. His interest in fish reproductive biology has led him around the globe. It's this interest that brought Chris and his wife Helen to take faculty positions at College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor 22 years ago. Since then both Chris and Helen have been actively involved in the community, volunteering with a variety of organizations, getting their students involved with local projects and policy issues, and raising two daughters.

Chris' work with the Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary began several years ago through his marine ecology students that he involved with the Sanctuary's fish passage restoration project. The COA students researched historical records of the Somesville and MDI alewife fisheries and helped collect data during the Sanctuary's annual alewife count. "The alewife restoration project is an example of a win/win project," says Chris, "something both environmentalist and fishermen can agree on." It was while participating in the Sanctuary's annual alewife census that Chris got "hooked." As Chris puts it, "There's something very satisfying about seeing thousands of fish making their way upstream each spring."

Chris now serves on the Sanctuary's Board of Trustees and has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Sanctuary and its work. He sees the potential to engage his students with projects at the Sanctuary as a natural fit. "The Sanctuary is an important educational center in our community, helping to connect residents with a number of environmental issues," says Chris.



Chris Petersen with his wife Helen Hess and their daughters.

Volunteers Needed

The Sanctuary maintains several public access trails surrounding Somes Pond. Trail Steward Janet Christrup is always looking for volunteers to help with trail maintenance and construction. Please contact the Sanctuary if you're interested in being a volunteer trail steward.



Fundraising Goals

The Sanctuary's beloved deck overlooking Somes Pond is in need of repairs! Following is a list of current projects and programs along with our fundraising goals for this year. Please consider supporting your favorite project by indicating where you would like your contribution to go.

Deck repairs: \$16,000

MDI Loon Monitoring Project: \$5,000

Somesville Fish Passage Restoration: \$4,000

Long Pond Courtesy Boat Inspection Program: \$2,000



The Sanctuary's deck overlooking Somes Pond serves as a gathering place for nature observation and an outdoor classroom for visiting schools and groups.





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*Dedicated to Conservation and Education in the
Somes Pond Watershed*

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*Advance Placement Biology Students from Mount Desert Island
High School participated in this year's alewife migration research.*

