

Dedicated to Conservation and Education in the Somes Pond Watershed

Summer 2016 Issue No. 17

SOMES-MEYNELL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Founder

Virginia Somes Sanderson 1898 - 1990

Board of Directors

Don Cass Brian Cote William Ferm Robert Fernald E. Pat Foster Maureen Fournier **Judith Goldstein** Dan Kane David MacDonald Jerry Miller Carole Plenty Chris Petersen Roberta Sharp, President Julianna Reddish

Director William Helprin



Message from the Board

by Dan Kane

One evening in early May, a loud rap-rap-rap in the nearby woods distracted me from my work rehabilitating our 100 year old front door sill. The weather was beautiful, and the black flies were in a lazy mood, so I stopped and listened. It didn't take long to spot the large pileated woodpecker working its way around a dead snag 75 feet away. It haphazardly explored much of the upper trunk busily engaged in its own spring chores.

Earlier that day, I hunted down and removed Japanese barberry (Berberis thunbergii) from our property. This invasive shrub is best removed in the spring when the soil is soft and it is easy to identify because it leafs out earlier than most plants. Early removal also prevents its seeds, which are easily spread by birds who eat the distinctive oblong red berries, from forming. If left alone, Japanese barberry spreads to form impenetrable spiny thickets that crowd out native plants. Some think it also provides a favorable environment for ticks.

Wildlife, of course, pays no attention to property boundaries. My encounters with both the pileated woodpecker and the Japanese barberry got me thinking about how interconnected everything is. The Somes Pond watershed is an ecosystem that extends from Somes Sound to Long Pond and encompasses all of the surrounding area. I was able to see that pileated woodpecker because it has a large healthy habitat. It, in turn, improves habitat for songbirds, owls, and even mammals when it hollows out its curious large rectangular holes in trees. The Japanese barberry was likely transported onto our property by birds, and if I don't remove it, it will continue spreading to all of the adjacent land.

We are fortunate to have director Billy Helprin to help us all be good stewards of the Somes Pond watershed. Billy has years of experience working with Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Acadia National Park, school groups, and many volunteers on invasive species control and he has already increased community awareness of these problem pests. He's also gearing up for a summer of courtesy boat inspections at the Long Pond boat ramp to help prevent aquatic invasive plants from entering our watershed and degrading fishing, swimming, boating, and water quality.

In his short one year tenure at the Somes Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary, Billy has run educational programs for hundreds of local school children of all ages. The programs span fields from art to biology, and their common thread is an appreciation and understanding of the outdoors. Ultimately, this is the best way to keep our ecosystem healthy over the long term. This next generation of stewards will already appreciate how lucky we are to have this resource in our backyard, and they will understand how to keep it healthy.

I look forward to seeing you on the trails or perhaps out on the Somes Pond rock this summer.

Director's Message

When I think about the work of the Sanctuary and all the projects we are engaged in throughout the year the first word that comes to mind is *cooperation*. In order to accomplish our goals of learning about the Somes Pond – Long Pond watershed (and beyond), sharing information, and protecting this special place, we rely on the help of so many people and other organizations. We in turn try our best to be of service to others. This give and take is fundamental to healthy relationships of all types.

I recently watched a TED Talk by Robert Waldinger, entitled: What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness (posted December 2015). Robert is the fourth Director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development which has studied 724 men, and eventually their wives and children, since 1938! This is the longest study of adult life that has ever been done and is remarkable because of how difficult it is to get pictures of entire lives. Sixty of the original participants are still alive and mostly in their 90s now.

The three biggest lessons:

- 1) Social connections are really good for us. Those with more social connections are happier and live longer.
- 2) It is not just the number of friends but the quality that matters good, close relationships are protective. Those who were most satisfied with their relationships at age 50 were the healthiest at age 80.
- 3) Good relationships are good not just for our bodies but for our memory function and how we perceive pain.

Those who have fared best in the study of happiness have relied on life-long efforts to create strong relationships, not quick fix elixirs, fame, or accumulated dollar wealth. Having close friends and partners you can really count on when the going gets tough is most important.

While watching Mr. Waldinger's talk I was thinking about how relationship-focused the work of the Sanctuary is, and of all the effort that goes into creating stronger connections with the land and with each other.

Within our small budget, Sanctuary staff, Board and volunteers try to make the Sanctuary as valuable as possible to our community — our visitors, neighbors, area schools, partner organizations as well as the varied plant life and wildlife species who call our watershed home. From our loon and alewife project work, to creating learning and stewardship opportunities for students young and old, we strive to build and maintain as many strong relationships as possible. The strength of our interdependent system is a product of all of these connections and, thanks to you, continues to grow.

It has been a great joy for me to meet with neighbors, volunteers, visitors, students, teachers, and scientists in wide ranging fields over the past year. I have certainly learned a great deal and hope that the Sanctuary continues to provide a rich learning environment for others as well. I believe our cooperative efforts are worthwhile investments in our future best selves. Here's to the value of our relationships and the health of ourselves and that of our beloved natural community!

Big Project Help

Thanks to area contractors Eric Henry Builders including crew members Steve Hudson and Larry Wilson for carrying out the significant project of replacing the largest of the picture windows and rebuilding the rotten wall at Sanctuary headquarters; Eric Henry & crew and Mainely Vinyl for storm damage repair; and Alan Hamblen at the Town Hill EBS for securing the donation and reduced cost purchase of a pallet of sandbags for improving fish passage along Somes Brook this spring.

Infrastructure maintenance is not a glamorous part of Sanctuary work but is fundamental to our operations. Our next big project on this front is septic system replacement for the HQ building to ensure proper facilities for visiting school groups, public events, and water quality protection. We have multiple estimates for this work suggesting it will be in the ballpark of \$15,000. Help towards tackling this bigger cost project, and, of course, all of our operations is greatly appreciated!



Steve Hudson prepping headquarters building for window replacement.



Eric Henry and Steve Hudson retrofitting for window replacement.

Volunteers, Assistants, Partners

The Sanctuary has had great help in 2016 from many new volunteers, experienced "old hands", and new staff assistants. Sanctuary activities and programs aided by this diverse group include alewife fish passage maintenance and counting efforts, trail work, loon monitoring and nest platform deployment, Courtesy Boat Inspections (CBI) for aquatic invasive plants, and data analysis.

Heidi Wueste has been our Summer Field Assistant since mid-May and has been a huge help in many ways. Soon to be senior COA student Colleen Holtan has started an internship more recently and is helping the Sanctuary as well. Thanks to volunteer JF Burns for a huge effort during the recently concluded alewife run upstream. JF checked, counted, and moved over 20,000 alewife into Long Pond during this migration, oftentimes requiring three visits per day to handle the large number of fish going all the way to Long Pond this year. All of this while teaching at Ellsworth High School during the day! Volunteers John Correa, Jim Perkins, and Gilly Gilmartin have helped with a number of projects since winter time.

We have a great group of loon observers around MDI with over fifty individuals and families participating. Thanks to all of them for helping us monitor loon status and educate others.

Many of our new volunteers are participants in the Maine Master Naturalist Program, offered this summer on MDI. MMNP folks Bo Greene, Tom Adams, and Claire Daniel have joined John and Jim in counting alewife and observing loon nest success and chick survival efforts.

I am thankful for the collaboration of many educators around MDI in efforts to create meaningful learning experiences for our area youth over the last year including Jennifer Riefler, Brian Cote, Amy Philbrook, Bonnie Norwood, Lynn Bean-Ingram, Jasmine Smith, Bethany Anderson, Megan McOsker, Julie Meltzer, Tim Garrity, Natalie Springuel, Julie Taylor, Michael Marion, Jesse Wheeler, Camilla Seirup, and former Sanctuary Director David Lamon. I look forward to our continued work and meeting new education partners.

As always, significant help has been provided for alewife and loon projects by partners Bruce Connery and the rest of the Biological Staff at Acadia National Park, and Professor & SMWS Board member Chris Petersen and College of the Atlantic students.

Thanks are also due to all the Sanctuary Board members, Somes Pond and Long Pond neighbors, residents around the island, and partners in other organizations who have helped me learn more about this wonderful place.



Volunteer Jim Perkins in position to help with wood duck box spring maintenance.



David Lamon sharing alewife migration overview with his students from Mt. View Elementary School.



Heidi Wueste records notes from Courtesy Boat Inspection at Long Pond. More volunteer inspectors are needed to help keep aquatic invasive species out of our high quality lakes. Contact the Sanctuary for more info.

2016 SUMMER & FALL PUBLIC PROGRAMS

THURSDAY MORNING BIRDING/ NATURALIST WALKS

Every Thursday through summer, fall, and even into winter, from 7:30 - about 9:00 in summer.

Meet at Sanctuary headquarters to explore Sanctuary trails, and sometimes beyond, looking for whatever the group is inspired by and working on our bird ID skills by sight and sound. Join the camaraderie of the group by sharing your recent sightings around the island and growing our collective knowledge of nature.

"YOU MUST BE PATIENT" -STORIES FROM TEN YEARS OF WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Thursday, July 14th at 7:00

For the past 10 years, John Rivers has combined his passion for nature with his love of photography. Birds in particular attract his lens - bringing the joy of finding, hearing, and seeing these amazing creatures. Long periods of waiting are interspersed with brief moments of action leaving behind the images and stories which John loves to share. Join us for a few of the tales and some wonderful images!

FULL MOON PADDLE

Tuesday, July 19th at 7:00

Watch the moon rise over the mountains from the vantage point of kayaks or canoes on Somes Pond. Open your senses to the sights and sounds as we transition from dusk to moonlit night. Listen for our resident loon pair calling across the pond, hopefully catch a glimpse of bats or muskrats. Catch up on what has been happening around the pond from Sanctuary staff. Please call for details.

DRAGONFLY MERCURY PROJECT Wednesday, July 27th at 7:00

Mercury is a toxic pollutant that is deposited across the landscape, largely from fossil fuel emissions. Even though mercury sources are distant from Acadia, atmospheric pollutants don't respect park boundaries and Acadia has elevated mercury in some fish, frogs, and dragonflies. Larval (immature) dragonflies in particular are proving to be excellent "early warning" organisms that are helping scientists working in parks across the US to identify waterbodies most at risk to mercury pollution. Sarah Nelson, Director of the Program in Ecology and Environmental Sciences at the University of Maine, Orono will present results and implications from some of her research.

THE STATE OF MAINE'S LOONS

Tuesday, August 2nd at 7:00

Maine Audubon Outreach Educator and Tufts veterinary student Emily Berman will update us on the latest regional population information and other important loon topics including avian malaria, climate change implications, and lead poisoning prevention efforts. Sanctuary staff will share the latest on MDI loon status.

NATURE JOURNALING WORKSHOP

Saturday, August 13th 9:00 to 11:30

Master Naturalist and SMWS Board President Roberta Sharp will lead a field session on how to make the most of your nature observations by sketching and note taking. Sure to bring out the details of your time spent in nature and have a personal means of sharing with others. Basic techniques will be covered at Sanctuary headquarters, then we'll head out into the woods along the beautiful shore of Somes Pond. Basic materials included, limited to 12 people.

ALEWIVES: PROLIFIC AND POLITIC FROM PURITANS TO POST INDUSTRIALISTS - WHY RIVERS CONTINUE TO DEFINE MAINE.

Wednesday, August 24th at 7:00

Join Dwayne Shaw, Executive Director of the Downeast Salmon Federation in a discussion of coastal Maine alewife ecology and the history of human use and regulation surrounding this important species of river herring. Sanctuary staff will also provide an update on this year's Somes Brook alewife migration.

MAINE COASTAL ISLANDS SEABIRDS

Wednesday, August 31st, at 7:00

The Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge manages 60 islands from Cobscook Bay to the New Hampshire coast. Many of these islands are important seabird nesting islands. Many challenges confront birds nesting on these islands including mammalian and avian predators, limited nesting habitat, and changing forage fish species availability. Join Refuge Wildlife Biologist Linda Welch to hear the latest on nesting status and movement patterns of iconic Maine species including puffins, razorbills, gulls, cormorants, and common and arctic terns.

MAINE'S AQUATIC INVASIVE PLANTS AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO LIMIT THEIR DAMAGE

Friday, September 9th at 7:00

Roberta Hill has been active in lake protection efforts and community outreach in Maine for twenty years, and is the Invasive Species Program Director for the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program. She is the originator and coordinator of VLMP's Invasive Plant Patrol (IPP) program. Working in close collaboration with lake associations, conservation groups and State Government, the IPP program has trained over 3,700 individuals, including volunteers and professionals, to screen Maine waterbodies for the presence of these plants. The VLMP's IPP program is widely seen as a model for citizenbased early detection, allowing for rapid response. Roberta will talk with us about protection success stories and challenges still coming our way.

INVASIVE PLANT PATROL PADDLE – LONG POND

Saturday, September 10th

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

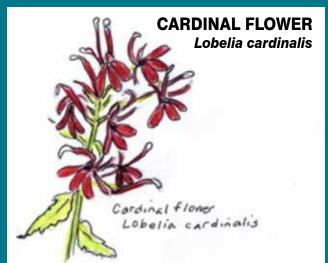
The IPP Plant Paddle is a 3-hour guided exploration that takes place on shore and on water. Participants will learn how to use field guide keys to help identify suspected invaders, become familiar with some common native plants, and practice the skills needed to be an effective early detector. Novices will be paired with experienced "IPPers." This program will be led by the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program and co-hosted by VLMP, Acadia National Park, Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary and other partners. Group size is limited – please call for details. Opportunity for continued survey work on other lakes on Sunday the 11th.

RARE BIRDS OF MDI: WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?

Thursday, September 15th at 7:00

We all know the common birds—Mallard, Bald Eagle, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, American Robin, and Northern Cardinal likely tops among them—but did you know that MDI has a long history of not-so-common visitors. An Ivory Gull shot in 1940 in Southwest Harbor was the third state record. No less than six Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks visited in 2013! And the list goes on and on. Come join ornithologist and naturalist Rich MacDonald to hear the tales of some of MDI's rarest birds.

Species Spotlight

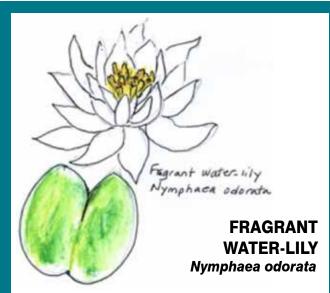


This member of the lobelia family displays intense vivid scarlet red flowers that are pollinated by the ruby throated hummingbirds. The reproductive development of the flower is staggered to discourage self-pollination, a process called protandry. Male stamens appear from a tube that projects above the petals. Hummingbirds brush against the tube as they suck nectar from below. As the stamens wither the female pistals emerge and become pollinated. It has been described as a queenly flower clothed in stateliness as well as beauty, standing out like a scarlet tanager in the high treetops.



PITCHER PLANT Sarracenia purpurea

This carnivorous plant is also known as the Huntsman's cup, or trumpet pitcher. single large round leaf attracts insects with its bright colors and sweet nectar covered alands on the outside of the trumpet. Footing is tenuous at the mouth where the nectar is greatest. Bristly hairs on pitcher shaped leaves point downward on the inner surface and become slippery and smooth near the pool below which prevent insects from escaping. Once in the pool, the plant secretes digestive enzymes and acids which breakdown the dead insect to provide the plant with nutrients.



This aquatic beauty has a white to pinkish large showy fragrant flower with petals that are slightly tapered at the tip. Once fertilized, the flowers are literally pulled underwater until the seeds mature. The nearly round leaves with a base cleft float on water and connect underwater by long stalk to rhizome that grows from the bottom of the pond. When the flower dies, the fruit sinks below water into the muck. Rhizomes provide tasty morsels for beavers and muskrats.



The grass pink is distinct from other orchids due to the position of the yellow bearded lip at the top of the flower. A pollinator bee will land on the yellow hairs of the pollen bearing stamen, and get tossed down a curved column where it contacts the pollinia with masses of sticky pollen. The flowers are magenta pink with a solitary grass like green leaf.

Alewife Migration Project

The start of the alewife river herring migration season was a slow one after a mild winter but a very cool spring. The cool air temperatures kept Somes Brook and Somesville mill pond water temperatures cool until May 10th. Although we started checking the fish ladder for arrivals on April 25th we didn't have our first fish until May 12th, when three fish arrived. Three more came through the gate on May 13th.

Our first big day was on May 16th with 613 alewife entering the mill pond for their journey to Somes Pond and beyond. During the busiest part of the migration we had staff and volunteers checking the fish ladder, opening the gate door, and counting three times a day. The highest number of fish passing into the mill pond occurred on May 27th with 4,062 and the most concentrated migration occurred between May 26th and May 30th. In those five days 12,722 alewife moved through, 38.5% of our eventual total of 32,980 at the mill pond.

Higher up in the watershed, supervolunteer JF Burns (profiled in last year's newsletter) had his hands full. The most astounding feature of this year's alewife upstream migration was the high number and percentage that made it all the way to Long Pond. Due to the configuration of the



COA students working in stream.



Alewives.

fish trap at the top of the weir pools at Long Pond outlet, fish have to be hand netted and placed into the lake, and counted in the process. So, JF really did some physical work besides counting. To put things in perspective, last year 2,500 alewife made it to Long Pond. The prior all time high was 9,301 in 2012. This year 20,100 made it, meaning that 61% of the total run made it to Long Pond, instead of the usual 10-20%.

A couple of factors may have played a role in this high percentage. Individual volunteers, Park staff, COA students, and Sanctuary staff worked hard this spring to block off side channels leading to dead ends in terms of upstream migration. This kept more fish following the higher flows they key into as they move up the watershed with fewer casualties along the way. Sandbags provided by EBS in Town Hill were very helpful to this effort. Another factor may be that while alewife have been stocked in both Somes Pond and Long Pond, a far higher number were placed in Long Pond several years ago. So it may be that those fish stocked originally in Long Pond are seeking the water body they grew up in or came from on their first venture to the sea.

This alewife run has progressed a long ways since 2005 when a total of 361 fish were counted at the mill pond. A great deal of work, coordinated by former Sanctuary Director David Lamon, has certainly paid off with a generally increasing population trend. Maintenance is required to keep the weir pool structures, built only 10 years ago, in decent shape. High flows, freeze-thaw cycles, and ice damage all work to break down the structures built to help the fish get upstream and down.

Looking into the water at the edge of Long Pond in various places you can see many hundreds of tiny alewife, looking like dark tadpoles, flitting their little forked tails to stay in place. It brings a smile to my face to think of how this new cohort will help support many forms of life in our watershed and beyond. We had an increase of about 30% from last year's total number (23,078) but we are below the highest runs of 2013 (37,021) and 2014 (35,766). Still, it has been a good run with many people and other animals enjoying the wildlife spectacle and food source that these amazing fish bring to the watershed.

MDI Loon Update

As of late June, we have nine MDI chicks and hopefully more to come soon! One chick at Upper Hadlock, two at Round Pond, two from Southern Neck cove (west side Long Pond), two at Seal Cove Pond; two at Eagle Lake. The Long Pond Outlet pair has been fixing up their nest site and has mated, the Rum Island/ Northern Neck Cove pair is nesting at Rum Island. The Somes Pond pair is nesting (overdue). Recent nesting efforts have been made in challenging places—at the south end of Echo Lake and the north end of Jordan Pond. Please help inform visitors about loon sensitivities to disturbance from approach by people and dogs, and the dangers posed by lead poisoning from ingesting lead fishing tackle (#1 cause of loon deaths in Maine is lead poisoning). Visit the Sanctuary on August 2nd at 7:00 for a talk on loon status statewide.

Join us at the Sanctuary on August 24th at 7:00 to learn more about alewife and rivers statewide from Dwayne Shaw, Director of Downeast Salmon Federation.

Sanctuary staff will also share more of our results from this year's MDI runs.

Story of a Wayward Loon Chick

One of our Mount Desert Island loon chicks had a very interesting and lucky day recently. We should have been minus one chick for the season, if events didn't come together just right...

On the evening of June 21st I was at the Long Pond outlet watching the loon pair clearing submerged vegetation and muck away from their nest site on the small peninsula. I received a call from Summer Field Assistant Heidi Wueste who had been at Sanctuary HQ, where she took a call from Ann Rivers at Acadia Wildlife Foundation.

Ann said she picked up a small loon chick from Acadia Vets that had been delivered by someone who found it in the road, on Pretty Marsh Rd. The chick had no signs of injury, weighed 137 grams, and seemed fine. The person who picked up the chick was not more specific about location or other details and was unreachable by phone, perhaps not an MDI resident. Heidi figured the chick probably came from Round Pond assuming that there was only one chick with the adults there, where we know there had been two very recently. She went to RP and fortunately the loons were in view from the south end. There only appeared to be only one chick.

We all figured the best outcome would be a quick reuniting of the family but light was fading with clouds in the western sky at 7:00. If the chick was not of that pair it likely would meet a horrible demise being pecked to death by the adults (Ann has witnessed this before).

I loaded my canoe, picked up Heidi, and headed for Ann and the rehab center. The chick was in a small box, vocalizing away, seeming pretty strong. As we drove to RP the chick was pecking at the walls and squawking every minute or so. At RP we found the adults and one chick near the western shore. We launched the canoe with the peeping box getting louder. One adult ventured toward the canoe very directly coming within 15 feet, uttering tremolos, then moved towards the eastern shore. I opened the box and laid it sideways above the water so the chick could come out without my touching it (Ann warned us about the possible effect of our skin oils harming the waterproofing of the chick's feathers). The chick left the box for the water.

The chick sat alongside the canoe for a minute or so, not immediately knowing where to go. Shortly though, it sped off for the vocalizing adult to the east of us, peeping along the way. The receiving adult lifted its right wing a bit and the lucky chick crawled its way up to settle behind the parent's neck. We knew we had made the right placement of this wayward little bird! The other adult steamed across the pond towards the others with the sibling chick on board, high and dry. All four united in the middle of the pond and hung close together, hooting and eventually fishing as the light continued to fade.

The closest section of Pretty Marsh Rd to the area of Round Pond deep enough to be used by the loons is at least 200 feet and there is a steep bank along the road. The fact that there were no wounds on the chick at all leads me to speculate that the chick was picked up by a raven or crow by the bill, not the talons of an eagle or other raptor, and dropped in the roadway. Amazing by itself. Perhaps more amazing is that someone spotted the dark little chick, picked it up, took it to the vet clinic, that Ann got a hold of it, and that we happened to be close by to take it back where it came from. The person who picked it up likely would not have known it was a loon chick. It is a long ways from looking like most people's image of a loon adult. Maybe we will discover the identity of the Samaritan and learn more details of this chick's situation.

Our loon observation network helped make this possible in part - by knowing what is going on with the MDI loon pairs, the number of chicks, places they frequent. We cannot have too many observations of any of these family groups and the birds



Round Pond loon chick.

and other animals they interact with. One or two, or three brief events that we miss (it is obviously not possible for us to be watching all the time) - a predation event by an eagle, an unwelcome visit by other loons to the territory, disturbance by unknowing kayakers, may have significant bearing on the number of chicks that are able to fledge later in the summer or fall. Fledging is no guarantee that the birds will make it to adulthood but it is certainly a prerequisite. Gaining a better sense of what the families are experiencing may help us take action to improve things or help us understand that there is nothing we can do in some circumstances, other than report our findings.

We have had many new volunteers join the veteran ranks of the loon observation group this year and that is helping us keep up to date on the status of their nesting success and survival. If you are interested in joining the group coordinated by the Sanctuary please contact us.

Contact information for Ann Rivers' wonderful wildlife rehab center: Acadia Wildlife Foundation (207) 288-4960, P.O. Box 207, Mt. Desert, ME 04660, www.acadiawildlife.org.





Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary Dedicated to Conservation and Education in the

Dedicated to Conservation and Education in the Somes Pond Watershed

57 Pretty Marsh Road PO Box 171 Mt. Desert, ME 04660 Phone: 207-244-4027 Email: somesmeynell@gmail.com www.somesmeynell.org

Find us on Facebook! facebook
Somes Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary

Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Bangor, Maine Permit No. 76

Please Help Support Our Work!

These items would help us provide better educational experiences and accomplish our research and management goals. Used but workable items welcome!

- Binoculars, spotting scopes, tripods for use by seasonal staff and visiting students
- Mountain Bike for seasonal staff to travel on carriage paths for loon observations
- Refrigerator for Sanctuary Kitchen
- Snowshoes of all sizes
- Chainsaw

All donations to the Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary are tax-deductible.

Thank You for your support!

COA Fishing Communities class and a few special others who conducted maintenance work to improve fish passage this past spring. It worked!

