Blazing a New Trail

“Whitten Woods continues to delight the hiker, dog walker, and even the environmental scientist! In a mere few hours on this remarkable landscape, I was able to find old growth trees four feet across, dramatic cliffs over 30 feet high, at least two rare plants, a bobcat den, a new northern record for an uncommon dragonfly, a black bear cub ambling by, carved boundary stones from 1867, a perfectly shaped stone well 10 feet deep, a burned out hulk of a pine with fresh bear claw marks, and views that span from Mt. Kearsarge to Mt. Shaw, to Sandwich Dome to Mt. Moosilauke. Truly a remarkable treat for any visitor, I can’t wait to explore Whitten Woods in all the other seasons!”

Rick Van de Poll, Ph.D
Ecosystem Management Consultants

“What a beautiful place! Glad to hear it’s being protected for all to enjoy. We need peaceful places like this. Thank you!”

“I spy Mt. Prospect, Sandwich Dome, Livermore, Chocorua, Squam Lake and changing leaves. We love this trail and so do our pups!”

“I am so grateful for the community who protects this land and our ecological heritage.”

On October 28, 2015, SLCS, our conservation partners and campaign chair Barry Gaw announced the purchase of Whitten Woods from Bill and Nancy Dailey. Thanks to over 130 donors and broad community support, this purchase marks the completion of the first phase of the project. Moving forward, the New England Forestry Foundation will own the title and manage the timber resources, SLCS will hold a conservation easement to ensure the permanent protection of the land, and the Squam Lakes Association will hold a trail easement allowing for the design and maintenance of a universal public access trail system. If you haven’t already, it’s time to explore Whitten Woods!
**Onward . . . Thoughts From Our Executive Director**

**Whitten to Washington**... the dream of hiking from the shores of Squam to the highest summit in the Northeast is one step closer with the acquisition of the Whitten Woods parcel and the ongoing conservation efforts in the abutting Beebe River watershed.

Both are components of the larger and visionary Squam Uplands Initiative, whose goal is to conserve land in the Squam watershed above 1,000 feet in elevation and to permanently protect key abutting lands, such as the Beebe River watershed.

While we are still in the early stages of the overall project plan, the greatest take-away so far is that projects such as Whitten Woods and Beebe River are as much about building stronger communities as it is about the permanent protection of these special places.

David Preston, a longtime advocate of protecting Squam, recently explored Whitten Woods: “Barbara and I didn’t have a clue about the incredible view from the top. It’s wonderful to have a new place to discover, and the possibility of an ‘All People Trail’ is the clincher.”

It’s an exciting time to work on the conservation of this special place, and to take substantial steps forward as a united Squam community. We are leaving a legacy few other places on earth will be able to claim. I am grateful to all our members for leading the way to a sustainable and brighter future. Onward...

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**Climb to the Top**

With the acquisition complete, the next phase of Whitten Woods is to raise the funds to plan and build the trail network. This effort is being called the “Climb to the Top.” Squam Lakes Association has set a goal of $100,000 for the trail system.

To help with this next phase, local businessman Alex Ray has offered a special matching fund challenge—something he jokes he learned from NH Public Radio—to help reach the “Climb to the Top” goal. Speaking to donors Alex explained, “There is work to be done for the next phase of this project. We have some consensus what public access to this property will look like, including the adaptive trails, giving access to people who otherwise would not have it. So, I would like to offer a jump-start to this next phase with a $25,000, matching fund challenge that will go until the end of the year.” Every dollar raised before December 31st, up to the $25,000 ceiling, will be doubled!

Climb to the Top may be the moniker of the effort to fund the construction of the Whitten Woods trail network, but it also embodies the vision to climb from the shores of the Squam Lakes all the way to Mt. Washington on conservation land. Here’s to climbing to the top…and to all of the amazing folks helping us get there.
Beebe River Uplands: A Fish Story
By Nancy Bell • The Conservation Fund

In May of 2014, with the encouragement from and partnership with SLCS, The Conservation Fund (the Fund) purchased the Beebe River Uplands property with the intent of protecting the 5,432 acres—owning and managing the land as working forest until such time as a conservation disposition is realized. As with SLCS’s Squam Uplands Initiative, a main focus for the Beebe River Uplands’ landscape protection is the watershed. Both sub-watersheds of the Pemigewasset River, the Beebe River and Squam Lakes watersheds meet along the high ridges of the Squam Range.

There are 279 sub-watersheds in New Hampshire—only 21 (7%) have water quality to support naturally reproducing wild trout. The Beebe River is one of these. Eastern brook trout are a Species of Concern in NH and a top priority for conservation. The NH Fish & Game Department (NHFGD), with volunteer assistance from the Pemigewasset Chapter of Trout Unlimited, conducted stream assessments, water quality studies (it’s Excellent) and researched brook trout presence and numbers in the summers of 2014-15. All of the headwater tributaries on The Fund’s property are spawning wild brook trout!

The Fund is working with NHFGD to restore connectivity from the main river into the tributaries, installing bridges to replace undersized and “perched” or raised culverts that prevent fish passage from the river into the cooler waters during the summer. The Fund’s commitment to continue to improve water quality and habitat while managing a forest for timber production is the exciting challenge of balancing nature and commerce on the forested landscape with the watershed in mind.

The Fund and Burleigh Land LP have submitted an application for Forest Legacy Program funding to conserve a total of 6,372 acres with conservation easements. The Fund thanks SLCS for their outstanding support. For more information please contact: Nancy Bell at nbell@conservationfund.org or 802-492-3368.

Squam NRHP Accomplished its Goals

The Squam National Register committee has achieved its major goals and will be winding down its activities during 2016. The project has created a heightened appreciation for the many historic farms and camps around the lakes and their important contribution to Squam’s unique cultural landscape. Since the project started five years ago, ten properties have been listed on the National Register and six more are being nominated. Together these properties represent more than 300 structures and over 1200 acres of land. Listings include Rockywold-Deephaven Camps, Church Island, and the Shepard Hill cottage district. This effort has helped to preserve our heritage and assure that future development around Squam will be in keeping with its historic traditions. For more information about National Register activity around the lakes, go to the SLCS website and click on the ‘Conservation’ link.
All Things Stewardship . . .

Fair Winds and Following Seas…

Pete Helm

The ‘Steward Ship’ is under full sail here at SLCS! All hands are on deck and were making great speed racing against time before the winter gales begin. It has been a great ride so far!

Our First Fridays invasive plants removal gatherings saw good success this year, and good company as well. SLCS plans to continue this work next year from May to October. Many thanks to Larry Blaine and George Gurney for their efforts in making five of the six events! We hope you’ll join us next year for a day or two as we continue to improve this important lakeside resource.

We were also on the waters of White Oak Pond for an evening paddle and picnic with picture perfect weather! All of those who attended had a fabulous time. The votes are in and it is unanimous…we’ll do it again next year!

The all-important monitoring of SLCS conserved lands continues at a good pace, and with new parcels being conserved regularly, we can always use more help. We’ll be running a monitor training workshop next spring for those of you who enjoy being outside, have an interest in reading surveys, and learning how to use a compass or GPS. All we ask is that you be a member of SLCS and that you use your new skills to monitor one property (or more if you’d like!) for SLCS. It really is fun…just ask any existing monitor! Monitoring can be a great activity to do with kids, too!

And speaking of kids and next generations, we really do need to ensure that the Squam we all treasure will be here for them to treasure, and steward as well. Think about ways you can instill an increased sense of responsibility for this place of refuge and joy.

For me, my first holiday gift to my kids this year will be their own membership to SLCS. I want to ensure that they, being in San Francisco and Montana, receive updates and remain connected to all that goes on even if they can’t be here at this busy time in their lives. It’s a good investment for their future (and it’s a lot cheaper than college!). I’ll probably encourage them to invest in the membership in a year or two. Wouldn’t it be great if all of our offspring engaged now, embarking on a long voyage with SLCS?

No matter what your ship looks like, or how many crew you have on board, I hope you’ll set your course for the horizon. SLCS is heading in that direction, too. While it may seem far away at the moment, we’ll see you there soon enough. Fair winds and following seas…
The Art of Seeing

Judy Mack

There’s a sign along the entrance trail at SLCS’s Unsworth Preserve describing beaver life and habits. It was put there several years ago because cut trees visible from the trails made it apparent that they were in residence and hard at work. It inspired me to set up my wildlife camera at the property a few years ago, pointing either at a scent mound, used by beaver to mark their territory, or at what looked to me like an animal trail to and from the water. I thought if I didn’t get a beaver I might get a muskrat or mink, but no such luck.

Walking with a dog can be a good way to locate a scent mound, as long as they don’t then roll in it. This year I was led to one quite near the SLCS canoe, visible in some of the daytime photos. The mound appeared to be in active use. From my notes I knew I’d used the spot without success three years ago, but I decided to try again.

The camera was in place from October 2-17, and gave me a good show this time: a raccoon, red and gray squirrels, a chipmunk that may have lived under the stump in the photos, one golden retriever, a short-tailed weasel, and—yes!—several visits by a beaver.

I was impressed by the bulk of its tail. According to Paul Rezende in Tracking and the Art of Seeing it serves multiple functions: storing fat for winter use, serving as a rudder or oar for swimming and maneuvering trees in the water, regulating body temperature, providing a prop when cutting down trees and balance when hauling building materials. The use we may be most familiar with, if we’ve been lucky enough to see beaver swimming, is the loud slap on the water that warns other beaver, perhaps scares away intruders, and certainly can startle nearby humans!

Judy and Will Mack are long-time members of SLCS, hosts of our 2012 Annual Meeting and 2012 winners of the Richard Davenport Award. Judy has served for many years on the Stewardship Committee, and they both are active land monitors.

A Special Visit

Luella D. Landis

As an amateur botanist residing in Connecticut, I’ve been interested in viewing the habitat of, and perhaps even finding, the elusive Three Birds Orchid (Triphora trianthophora). Having read about these wild orchids in Orchids of New England and New York by Tom Nelson and Eric Lamont, and in Wild Orchids Across North America by Philip E. Keenan, I’ve become intrigued by their unique features—a decrease in the average night temperature is the trigger for blooming 48 hours later; they bloom simultaneously within their meteorological area, with waves of blooms about a week or so apart; and their blossoms last less than one day.

Learning that Three Birds Orchids grow in the Squam Lake area, I contacted SLCS for more information about them. Although they flower during August, my husband, George, and I were unable to visit Squam Lake until September. SLCS was extremely helpful in allowing us to visit the site, and we are most appreciative of their guidance. After some searching, we were delighted to find a few of these special little plants, as well as evidence of their August blooms. The photo was taken on the date of our visit, September 9, 2015.
Annual Meeting

SLCS wishes to thank to Austin and Leslie Furst for hosting the SLCS 2015 Annual Meeting at their Center Harbor home, Hilltop. Over 150 SLCS supporters gathered on a beautiful summer morning to review the past 12 months and elect new officers and directors. Thanks also to John Moulton Farms for the farm fresh fruits and vegetables and to Cider Bellies Doughnuts for the amazing doughnuts.

Carl Metzger was elected President, and Frank Stevens, John Thompson and Molly Whitcomb as Vice-Presidents. Angus West was re-elected Treasurer and Patsy Carega as Secretary. Three new Directors joined the Board for three year terms (see below.).

There was a lot to report to our members (perhaps too much for one meeting...a lesson learned for next year!) Review of the history and conservation effort on Whitten Woods, introducing the Squam Uplands Initiative, recognizing of Rockywold-Deephaven Camps, and thanking outgoing Board Directors Tim Vaill, Betsy Whitmore and Barbara Grossman made for a very full agenda!

New Board Directors

“"I was delighted to find a way to become involved in an organization dedicated to preserving this beautiful area that I have known since I was a child. It is also an opportunity to meet and come to know others on the lake who feel the same way. Finally, it allows me to make a small contribution to the goal of passing my wife Sarah’s and my experience of Squam on to our children and grandchildren.”

Win Brown is a member of the Stewardship Committee and the new chair of the Governance Committee.

Peter Gross is a member of the Stewardship Committee and a certified land monitor.

“Sharing the natural beauty of the Squam region is one of the wonderful things that connects our family. My wife Diane and I experienced that bond over the years and have watched it develop in our children and now in our grandchildren. I am energized to help preserve, conserve and steward this remarkable resource and I can’t think of a better way to achieve that goal than through the work of the SLCS and its staff. I am honored to be part of that effort.”

“"My husband and I have been involved with SLCS for several years as supporters and as land monitors. I’m thrilled to become even more involved and look forward to working with other like-minded people and sharing my interest in protecting this beautiful place called “Squam” while helping SLCS in achieving its goals.”

Pam Simonds is a member of the Stewardship Committee and a certified land monitor.
SLCS would not have been successful in protecting 26% of the Squam watershed if it were not for the unique culture of conservation at Squam. The desire to live a simple camp lifestyle in tune with the nature was part of the fabric of the first families who arrived in the late 1800’s looking for an alternative to ‘summer in the city.’ This ethos has been carried on through the generations who continue to enjoy Squam in much the same way as their great grandparents.

One of these families was the Mary Alice Armstrong family whose descendants are now the Arthur Howes. Mrs. Armstrong, along with her good friend Alice Mabel Bacon, started Rockywold-Deephaven Camps (RDC) in 1897, a rustic resort for family-centered vacations offering simple cottages, low impact boating, and nature-based activities. For more than a century RDC has been introducing families to Squam and encouraging them to respect the lake and the environment, and to enjoy it naturally. Even with a short three month summer season RDC has touched thousands of people over the years. Campers, who now own property around the lakes tend to be good stewards of the lake and to get involved with the local non-profits.

Rockywold-Deephaven Camps was recognized for their significant influence on conservation at the SLCS Annual Meeting in August and again at the RDC shareholders meeting in September. Two maps showing conservation lands surrounding RDC were presented along with a donation of more than two thousand dollars for the Squam Environmental Preservation Fund (SEPF). RDC alums who now live in the Squam community made pooled contributions to SEPF as a means to honor RDC.

While ownership of Rockywold-Deephaven Camps is now spread among a group of shareholders and managed by a board of elected trustees, the Howe family is still very much involved. The Armstrong/Howe family deserves much credit for maintaining their rustic campus over the decades with great respect for the numerous historic structures scattered along the shores of Bennett and True Coves. The camps were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.

The conservation efforts of SLCS allow all of us who cherish the Squam area to know with some certainty that change will be slow and subtle. We all want our children and grandchildren to experience Squam and its exquisite beauty in the same way we do. It takes many people working together to achieve our goals, and SLCS is grateful to Rockywold-Deephaven Camps for helping with our conservation mission.
My appetite for spending time outdoors led me to pursue land conservation as a career with the hopes of protecting the places I love to play. Beyond seasonal New England activities—backcountry skiing, mountain and road biking, backpacking and swimming—I maintain a steady hunger for international travel. I have long gravitated to South America with its curious smells, sounds and colors, its expansiveness and diversity, its gentle people and extreme landscapes; this affection has grown over several trips culminating in three months in Peru, Bolivia and Chile during summer 2014. The contagious travel bug continues—I will be traveling to Thailand from December through January 2016 and am looking forward to experiencing different smells, tasting unfamiliar foods, and meeting the people of Thailand. Spending time in special places around the world gives me the perspective I need to protect the sounds and colors, the people, the lands I have grown up with—the places I am connected to.