The rich diversity of life – the variety and variability of all living things – in and around Squam is nothing short of extraordinary. Organisms are sustaining themselves throughout Squam – deer are browsing on buds and woody plants, bear are bulking up for winter, and families are hiking the Squam Range and picnicking with spectacular views. Moreover, complex interactions between organisms and their environment are playing out across the Squam watershed. Beavers are building dams and creating wetlands, eagles are preying on spawning fish in early spring, and kids are reaching their first peak to view the fall colors. These are the untold stories of Squam.

The Squam Lakes Conservation Society – its members, volunteers, landowners – works hard to protect the land, water and animals in the watershed, but sometimes we forget about those ongoing interactions and stories. Once a property is conserved, the very conservation values identified during a property’s acquisition can quickly be taken for granted as the focus shifts to new acquisitions. There is a tendency to lose sight of its importance in the area for wildlife habitat, water quality protection, encouraging forest systems, and maintaining cultural features and low-impact recreation. But the conserved property continues to be the source of untold stories.

SLCS has been working with the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center to develop a strategy for exploring and sharing these untold stories. StoryMaps are web-based applications that allow users to share exciting stories by developing immersive and interactive experiences. StoryMaps are a way to bring previously conserved lands to life through videos, audio, photos and dynamic maps. This interactive look at a conserved property will shed light on what occurs on a property, including the human activities, history and wildlife.

After deploying a game camera on one of SLCS’s conserved properties, I went out to retrieve the photographs and see what we’d captured. A fascinating story was unveiled that would never have been noticed if not for this project. At 10:49 a.m. a beautiful six-point buck was photographed browsing on woody vegetation. The deer continued to browse for the next several minutes on camera, before walking out of sight at 10:52 a.m. Nine minutes later, at 11:01 a.m., that same six-point buck was seen bounding back the way it had come – something had scared it. Two minutes later, at 11:03 a.m., guess who walked into the frame? Me. Examining the tracks, it was clear something had been there recently...really recently. But I never would have known it was two minutes earlier if not for the photographs.

The untold stories of Squam are important messages for each of us to keep in mind. Easements decades old have been sustaining these stories year in, year out. A property conserved today ensures future generations will have the opportunity to observe the same complex interactions we witness today. StoryMaps can be one vehicle for us to capture these stories and assure they will be there in the future.
Questions of Balance...

Conservation is a term with multiple meanings. A popular definition is: the ethical use and protection of valuable resources, such as land, water, and energy.

As a land trust, we inherently focus on land. To quote the mantra from the Land Trust Alliance's Rally that I recently attended, “Land is the answer.” Perhaps an oversimplification, but I agree with the point that protecting land solves many issues by ensuring clean water, healthy forests, wildlife habitats, and places for spiritual refreshment, all critical to community health.

The Squam Lakes Conservation Society is logically at the center of local efforts to protect our natural resources; it’s what we do. However, we increasingly face questions that challenge our traditionally narrow focus on land conservation.

Should SLCS advocate for “conservation” by supporting renewable energy projects that will reduce our carbon footprint and promote prudent uses of our natural resources? What if those proposed structures are on lands considered permanently protected, or on lands now in consideration for protection?

Recently, we participated in a state-wide forum on this very issue. Pete Helm shared our conservation easement language to deal with renewable energy structures. Our stance is that siting such structures should be located on land that is outside the permanent protection zone. But, we include an allowance for situations whereby producing power on conserved land may be acceptable if the power is related to the property’s conservation purposes, such as agriculture, forestry, education, or low-impact recreational use. It’s a tricky balance, but the task of planning for forever is always a question of balance.

Every project we do is a learning experience, even with 130 projects now under our belt. With every new opportunity, we strive to perfect an approach that will help deliver a healthier and more sustainable community by balancing what is best for the environment with responsible uses of land. For supporting and participating on this journey, I remain grateful to you, and heartened about our future. Onward...
Burleigh-Owl Brook

Many thanks to Burleigh Land Limited Partnership for the contribution of a conservation easement protecting 47 acres on Owl Brook, adjacent to Perch Pond Road in Holderness. This donation complements abutting forest land previously conserved by Burleigh. With 2,600 feet of frontage on pristine Owl Brook, a clear running cold water trout stream flowing from Mt. Prospect, this is indeed an important step in land and water conservation of the northern slope of Squam. Among other features, the Burleigh-Owl Brook Conservation Area contains a significant vernal pool wetland, and supports a wide variety of wildlife. Bird species identified include the regionally uncommon willow flycatcher, the declining Canada warbler, and the rose-breasted grosbeak, a species alarmingly absent from the 2016 spring breeding bird census. The valuable wetland floodplain filters road and development runoff, and provides stream access for animals moving from the upslope areas of the protected Burleigh working forest. The conservation easement terms allow forestry activities consistent with a forest management plan, and will be managed sustainably by a professional forester in conjunction with the other Burleigh lands.

Angier-Livermore Cove

We are pleased to report the permanent protection by conservation easement of a significant tract of high quality wetland and forest in Holderness, between Rt. 113 and Squam. This 12-acre tract, to be known as Angier-Livermore Cove after the family of the donor, Susan Beeson, has over 300 feet of frontage on Squam and an extensive wetland extending far inland. In addition to providing habitat for an extraordinary range of plants and animals (42 bird species identified including the state recognized declining brown thrasher), the wetland acts to filter highway and upland runoff and traps sediments before entering the lake. Angier-Livermore Cove is especially significant as a buffer to the adjacent Holderness Town Beach. In addition, the easement provides for relocation of existing shoreline septic systems to an upland area adjacent to Route 113, further protecting water quality.

When asked why they put this parcel into conservation, Susan said, “We have two grandchildren who love the lake. We want it to be here for them and all future generations.”
I received an email from my son a few weeks ago. It simply said, “Check out this video we made of our trip to British Columbia.” The three-minute YouTube clip was awesome. Breathtaking views, hiking in the snow (wearing shorts), and an exhilarating ride on a mountain bike. What fun.

While the mountains in British Columbia are very different from the mountains in our area, it got me thinking of how the Squam Range and surrounding hills provide for some really good, local, and low-cost adventuring. Helen Keller said, “Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.” I’m sure you, like me, are not going to hang from a rope 100’ in the air over the edge of a cliff or take a whitewater trip in the Congo. Exaggerations aside, it did make me think about how our work conserving and monitoring land forever is pretty daring, and indeed adventurous.

Consider these two email snippets I received this fall from a couple of expert monitors: From Laura Nash, “just to let you know we’re not lost in the woods...although we were for a bit” and “it was raining SOOOO hard, we just grit our teeth and started in.” And from Jennifer Beal, “As I was returning from a venture out to the very northern tip, I came around the house and gradually became aware of a smell. It was bear. I stood stock still as I tried to see where it was!”

A few weeks ago I made a monitoring visit with Tom Stepp on a bushwhack straight up the west side of the Squam Range looking for some stone markers in the woods that were set in the early 1900’s. In case you didn’t know it, there is A LOT of stone up there! And it gets steep, too! As we caught our breath, we imagined an early adventurer (surveyor) sitting high on the side of the ridge back in 1916, chiseling his initials in the stone we found. Talk about history. We continued all the way to the Crawford Ridgepole Trail and eventually worked our way back down through the woods (with no trail in sight). We left the woods feeling good about our adventure, and connecting with the past.

SO...if you are desiring to get out more and would like to do some adventuring with SLCS, please let me know. Perhaps we can help you achieve your goals while you help us look after the growing portfolio of conserved land that helps keep our water clean, is home to many trails, and makes this special place...well, special. There are all kinds of things to see and find out there, and the more you get out, the more experienced and comfortable you become with getting off the beaten path. And the more experienced you become, the more fun you’ll have. You know you want to adventure. Give us a call and get your name on the list for next year!
2016 Davenport Award...A Family Affair

Ken Evans

One of my favorite jobs as Stewardship Committee chair is presenting the Davenport Award each year at Annual Meeting. Created in 2007, this award recognizes an individual or individuals for their exceptional commitment and service to the Squam community as stewards of its protected properties.

This year the Committee honored a woman who has been committed to advancing land conservation in the Squam watershed for over three decades. Barbara Beal has served as a SLCS Board member and Board officer, a property monitor, a stewardship committee member, and a volunteer wherever and whenever needed. It is hard to recall a time when Barbara wasn’t the first person to greet me at the Annual Meeting check-in table! But perhaps most impressive has been Barbara’s desire to pass on her passion for conservation to her family. Squam is about the tradition of generations. Barbara, Tom and their family are one of the finest examples of how passing it on means so much more than the buildings and boats and docks on the lake.

Nurturing the Next Generation

Penelope Beal

My parents are first generation inhabitants of Squam Lake, but they have been coming to the lake for almost 60 years. Now we are three generations who have wrapped the cores of our lives around the seasonal cadence of the lake. We never fail to experience that rush of excitement every mid-April when ice-out is declared, and subsequently we always wonder how the loons know to arrive on that very same day. All summer long, we gaze at the same sunsets remarking to each other that no two sunsets are ever identical. At night, we are lulled to sleep by the nighttime chorus of the bullfrog’s throaty croaking, the resident barred owl’s “who-cooks-for-you?” invitation, and the distant cries of the calling loons. In the mornings, we wake up and look across the cove to see the mist slowly burning off the lake. As we walk back from the sleeping cabin through the woods with the white birch trees and their peeling bark, our feet sink into the cool, soft moss and we breathe in deeply the sweet smell of the wintergreen plants strewn along the well-worn path. The lake has taught us to appreciate the beauty of seasonal change. We embrace the changing colors of the shoreline’s leaves as they slowly but surely mark the passage of time, from early spring’s lustrous greens to mid fall’s incandescent golds.

Little has changed over the years – the water that we swim in still feels like silk, the islands’ beaches still parade their extravagant color variations from the almost volcanic black sand of Big Loon to the tropical white sand of Yard, and always by mid-July it’s all about the blueberries. But there are more people, more boats and more houses too. Like the rhythm of the seasons, our family has a thematic flow that resounds through us to protect the open spaces we love so much. The hiking trails on the Squam and Sandwich Ranges that my parents first led us on are what initially gave us our love for open space, and now we need to save those same upland areas in order to preserve our beloved lake and its surroundings. My parents have always looked towards the future in their focus on the nurturing of the next generation, both in their own family as well as the larger community’s children and grandchildren. They have shown us all that preserving these places is not about preserving the past, but instead it’s about determining, and even welcoming, our future. That is their legacy to us.
Picture Perfect Day

The weather could not have been better or the view more spectacular for our 2016 Annual Meeting. Many thanks to Laurey and Jinks Millspaugh for hosting a wonderful meeting. Thanks also to John Moulton of Moulton Farm for fresh fruits, vegetables, coffee and cider doughnuts.

Congratulations to Patsy Carega and Martha Macomber on being re-elected to a second three-year term. Congratulations also to President Carl Metzger, Vice Presidents Anne Lovett, Frank Stevens and John Thompson, Treasurer Angus West and Secretary Patsy on their election as our 2016 Board Officers.

Finally, we thank retiring Board members Sam Laverack and Molly Whitcomb. Both Sam and Molly have served nine years on the Board. Their enthusiasm, guidance and hard work will be missed!

New Board Directors

Leo Dwyer and his wife Kathryn Field live in Sandwich where Leo is a management consultant and Kathryn is a professional artist. They enjoy hiking, kayaking, cross country skiing or simply exploring the woods to discover cellar holes, stone walls or abandoned roads. Leo has served Sandwich as a Selectman as well as a member of the Planning Board.

Chris Grant and wife Martha first fell in love with Squam when their children were young and the family would visit his parents’ summerhouse in Tamworth. As their children grew the family spent many hours exploring the lake and surrounding trails. In 1998, they bought their own house in Sandwich, moving there permanently in 2013. Chris is on the board of Prism Education Group and serves as an alternate for the Sandwich Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Susan Gutchess has a life-long love of and interest in Squam Lake, spending as much time as possible at her family’s house in Sandwich since she was a baby. Morning swims, exploratory canoe rides and ice fishing are just a few of the ways she has enjoyed Squam. She has spent most of her professional career working for conservation and preservation organizations.
One for the Books!

Ham (Hamilton) Coolidge, one of our founders and most loyal supporters (contributing every year during our 56 year history), has made a most extraordinary gift in support of conserving his beloved Squam. Ham has donated a complete and rare set of John James Audubon’s *The Birds of America, From Drawings Made in the United States and Their Territories*. This legendary collection of ornithological art is one of the great American color plate books, which set a new standard for depicting wildlife in a naturalized setting. It would take Audubon over 14 years to finish the publication, and years more to market his extraordinary work, selling more copies in Europe than in the United States. Ham’s uncle, Oliver Coolidge, acquired the set in the early 1900’s. Ham, who recently transitioned from being a life-long summer camper on Hoag Island to a year-round resident of Ashland, felt that this was a good time to move along this very special set of books. It is in excellent condition and will be auctioned through Whitmore Rare Books (www.whitmorerarebooks.com).

Ham’s wishes have always been that proceeds from the sale of these books would go toward conservation and stewardship of Squam. It is a happy coincidence that the proceeds will be directed to a new effort called the Squam Sandwich Project. This is one of the most sensitive and important ecological areas within the Squam watershed. The goal is to build upon the conserved land in the area between Squaw Cove and Barville Pond and between Route 113 and Sandwich Bay, the majority of which has been stewarded by Coolidge Family members.

Thanks Ham for making your gift, “one for the books!”

Making Life Easy

In early October we received a donation. Not an unusual event for a land trust and not an unusual source – longtime donors. But this donation struck a note because this couple decided to make their lives easier by becoming monthly sustaining donors.

Anne Richards and John Coolidge are property monitors, regular attendees at Annual Meeting, willing volunteers, and John serves on the Stewardship Committee. They are also “almost yearly” donors. The *almost*, as Anne explains, is usually due to a misplaced envelope or day-to-day life getting in the way. To remedy this Anne has set up sustaining gifts with other non-profits over the years. She calls it “the lazy person’s way to donate.” She was thrilled when she recently discovered she could do the same with SLCS and that the website gives the donor the option of covering the credit card fees, thus not reducing their intended donation.

“Supporting conservation at Squam is important to us. I’m so glad that we will now make a gift every month without me having to think about it or even lifting a pen! It also provides a monthly, rather than yearly, boost to the organization. I encourage others to do it too! It’s good for Squam, it’s good for SLCS and it is easy for me!”
The 2016 Squam Watershed Conservation Maps Are Now Available!

A great gift for family, friends or yourself!

These 30” x 30” maps come with a 1/4” black edge frame and mounted tabs for hanging.

$100/each

We have a limited number of maps in the office but we can take orders.

Please email: alicia@foreversquam.org

Make Conservation A Holiday Tradition

Share your love of Squam with your family and friends this Holiday Season by giving a gift membership to the Squam Lakes Conservation Society. Each new member will receive the Squam Lookout, information on events, and updates on projects throughout the year.

A great way to encourage family and friends to get involved in land conservation at Squam!

The Society’s mission is to preserve the unique quality and character of the Squam watershed by protecting lands for present and future generations.

Squam Lookout is printed on 100% post consumer recycled paper manufactured from sustainable raw materials and free of chlorine chemistry.