



Update

F.O.P. Newsletter, Winter 2008, V. 22, No. 1

From the President

Greetings,

I trust everyone enjoyed the holiday season and was able to put all the snow to good use! A great deal has been going on with regard to FOP and I will do my best to cover a lot of issues in a reasonable manner and, I trust, without creating confusion.

Before moving on to happenings in 2008, a reflection on the closing months of 2007 is in order. At our Annual Meeting in Winchester, on Nov. 20th, Bill Roberts announced that he would be retiring from his role as President of the FOP after many years of dedicated service. He thanked the Council members and numerous FOP members for their many hours of volunteer service and support. Bill will remain active as a Council member of FOP for a while, filling a vacancy. Bill was presented with a walking stick and a Pisgah tree with thanks from the Executive Council. Cliff Struthers, Deb Hogancamp and Gary Montgomery are new Council members with Gary graciously agreeing to take on the Vice President's position as I agreed to assume the President's post vacated by Bill. Nancy Miller will continue as Treasurer and Bob Smith agreed to remain as Secretary. Thank you! Thank you to all!

We were fortunate to have George Bald, Commissioner of the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) take time from his busy schedule to make the journey from Concord to Winchester in less than fair weather to speak to the FOP. Commissioner Bald spoke of the organizational structure of DRED, stressing that a good environment and a good economy are mutually inclusive and that a collaborative process of management can be enhanced by encouraging public in-put. He advised us of the creation of the State Park System Advisory Council. The Council is charged with the task of creating an overall Park System Master Plan to carry the state forward for the next ten years. The Commissioner anticipates that the plan will be completed within the year. In response to a question, the Commissioner replied that there are no current plans to return management of Pisgah to the Parks Department from its location in the Trails Bureau. (Ed. note: Pisgah was moved from Parks to the Trails Bureau a few years ago.)

Senator Molly Kelley, the scheduled speaker for the Annual Meeting, was unable to attend owing to a family problem. She did attend our December Council meeting. Senator Kelley has been instrumental in the process of developing future management plans for the Park. Her attendance was appreciated and provided valuable in-put to the Council.

Regarding timber harvests in Pisgah, one of which is near completion (see also pages 5 and 6), there is an ongoing process of collaborative work of a group called the Pisgah State Park Technical Team in assisting the NH Division of Forest and Lands (DFL) in creating a long term management plan for Pisgah State Park. The Technical Team is collecting ecological, cultural and recreational use data to be incorporated into such a management plan. The Technical Team consists of representatives from Antioch University – NE, Franklin Pierce University, Ashuelot Valley Environmental Observatory (AVEO), Moosewood Ecological and the FOP as well as representation by the state from DFL, the Department of Fish and Game, the Natural Heritage Bureau and Natural and Cultural Resources. A great deal of time and energy from this dedicated group of people has gone into the process.

DRED also has established the Pisgah Park Management Plan Steering Committee, comprised of area residents of varied interests and backgrounds, as a format for public dialog in the creation of the final comprehensive management plan that will be officially sanctioned for the Park by the state. The first meeting of this group is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 19th at 3:00 p.m. at a location to be announced.

There are two other scheduled events related to the project as well. On Saturday, Feb. 16th (tentative date – call the Park for final date) at 11:00 a.m. there will be a hike into the site of the recent timber harvest led by someone from DFL. We will meet at the Visitor Center on Old Chesterfield Rd in Winchester prior to the hike. On Thursday, Mar. 13th from 7 – 9 p.m. at a location to be announced, there will be a forum led by DFL as a follow-up to the timber harvest visit. Please make an effort to attend these events as they will provide a great opportunity for public in-put to be incorporated into the final management plan. As we move through the process there will be an opportunity to get involved in helping to support activities such as gathering of data. Let me know if you would like to be on a “call” list for this work.

With the New Year has come renewed focus on Budget plus Planning and Strategy. A budget proposal for 2008 is in the process of being finalized with a strong recommendation to continue such yearly budgets. Thank you to Council Member Nancy Miller and FOP member Bob Miller for putting in an incredible amount of time and energy in creating the proposal.

The Planning and Strategy Committee has been revitalized and is focusing on “ways and means” to increase our income and support for FOP, which in turn supports the Park. Some of the issues being discussed include: how to increase FOP membership, establishment of a web site, availability of FOP-related items at the Visitor Center, a decal for cars to foster recognition. These are just some of the ideas that the group is brainstorming. The Committee already has met a number of times under the chairmanship of John Summers, supported by FOP members Matt Edson, Nancy and Bob Miller, Gary Montgomery and Laurel Powell. Maybe some of our other FOP members would like to get involved. If so, we certainly encourage anyone to contact us (if you can’t get me, try Laurel Powell – her contact information appears in several places in this issue of the Update) with ideas or requests to participate at meetings.

I guess it is fair to say that we have been busy! Please feel free to come to Council meetings (first Tuesday of the month at the Visitor Center, 7:00 p.m.), get involved on workdays on trails or historical documentation or simply enjoy this beautiful Park we are so fortunate to have her in our communities. After all, the days are getting longer so there’s more time to get outside!

Please feel free to contact me and enjoy the Park!

Kathy Thatcher (603-363-4482)

Around the Park

General

Timber cutting is being completed in the Park. This approximately 80 acre cut is visible off Old Chesterfield Rd on the right side before one gets to Jon Hill Rd. Some photos of the cutting are shown on page 5. According to Sen. Molly Kelley, no more timber harvesting is planned until a management plan is completed by the State. (Also see article on page 6.)

If you have been out during our many snow storms since December, you may have noticed that the plowing of the parking lots in the Park is being done by a contractor, Gary Chase of Winchester. Norma has had difficulties for some years with the State truck and this new procedure will ensure that the Parking lots are plowed in a timely fashion.

If you have been up to the Visitor Center since the Annual Meeting, you will note that a vista with a view of Mt. Monadnock has been re-opened just north of the building as promised in the Trails report in the Fall Update. Also, relative to clearing, note the comments under Trails and on page 6 concerning the clearing of the brush in the Apple Orchard north of the Visitor Center and just below the Doolittle Trail.

Midweek Work Days

Our Volunteers on the Midweek Work Crew provide assistance to the Staff on one Wednesday a month from April to November and did so again in 2007. The Crew normally is not active during the winter. However, Crew members often hike in the Park in the winter, especially when the going is easier with no or little snow on the ground. You might see them around.

As usual, our Crew enjoyed an end of the season/end of the year pizza party at the Visitor Center in mid-December. The Midweek Work Crew will start up again in the spring. If interested, contact Park Manager, Norma Reppucci, at the Park Office (239-8153).

The work done by the Volunteers is just another illustration of the assistance that the FOP provides to Pisgah Park. Your membership supports these efforts.

Matt Donachie

Trails

We continue to have our second Saturday workdays and occasional other ones. On Nov. 10, 2007 we had 14 people working at the Visitor Center, most of whom helped with restoring the view of Mt. Monadnock. We cleared the woods between the barn and the view and made the view about 3 times more visible from the road. Photos of some of the work and workers are on page 5. On Dec. 8, 2007 we only had 2 people for our Saturday work day so we walked and cleared some things along Davis hill trail, and looked at some of the work done over the years.

On Dec. 22, 2007 we had 10 people (Upward Bound students and other volunteers) at the Visitor Center. It was a cold day and the GPS work we had hoped to do was dropped as the GPS unit's batteries went dead! However we worked on the Doolittle orchard adjacent to the Visitor Center clearing the brush from the crab apple trees which were getting very grown in. (A few years back the State planted some crab apple trees next to a few of the remaining apple trees that once graced the Doolittle Orchard. Both the young saplings and elder trees had become choked by overgrowth such as thorns and vines.) We got really cold by noon so we spent the last two hours eating and doing various other jobs inside. There is still work to do on the orchard once the snows melt as spring arrives. Workers will be needed to assist Clark and Joanne Dexter who have volunteered to help us weed whack down the remaining overgrowth.

On Jan. 12, 2008 we had only 3 people at the Trails workday because many others went to the Visitor Center to work. So we just cleared the Davis Hill trail to Baker Pond. Got back early but it was a beautiful day, very sunny.

At our Jan. 3 FOP Council meeting, we decided to have a Trail Activity Committee to try to plan hikes and set work project priorities. It was agreed to do this but no meeting has been held yet. We now have more time available, so if anyone has input on workdays or hikes/outings that would be interesting, we want to hear from you. We will try to set them up in order corresponding to what needs to be done. My favorite trip is kayaking on Pisgah Reservoir; hope to do that this summer.

Call John Herrick with your ideas at 256-6301.

John Herrick (Trails Chair)

Friends of Pisgah Historians

It's been a quiet winter so far for the Friends of Pisgah Historians (FOP-H) team but a few historically based projects are in the works. Brittany, an Upward Bound student from Turners Falls, MA, has been working on a sketch of the kitchen fireplace and all its pots and utensils. This talented young lady has taken the project on with great seriousness. Once completed, the sketch will be on display accompanied by written descriptions explaining the workings of the most important place in a colonial kitchen.

Amy has helped with many projects, one being the covering of our hardcover books in the FOP Reference Library. These books are available for loan to the public.

Cody worked with Bob Miller to install lights and an outlet in the FOP-H workroom. Cody was a great apprentice and his help was much appreciated by Bob.

A bound book of Cliff Struther's surveying maps of Old Chesterfield Road in Winchester and all the foundations and stone walls will soon be on display at the Visitor Center. Over the last year, many volunteers have helped Cliff survey all the way from the entrance of Pisgah State Park to the intersection of Jon Hill Road. This fall, Ginny Knapp and Cliff surveyed about half of the perimeter of Fullam Pond in preparation for the next project, surveying the remains of the summer camps that once were on the shoreline of Fullam.

The FOP-H will continue to meet at the Visitor Center in Winchester on the third Wednesday and fourth Sunday of each month unless noted differently in the following calendar. There will be a slight adjustment in our focus this new year. We have some high school students available to work for us. They are interested in coming on a Sunday so the times will be extended to meet their needs. Our meetings are advertised in the Keene Sentinel's Bulletin Board and, as noted above, we meet on the 3rd Wednesday (4 - 6:30 pm) and the 4th Sunday (1 to 5 pm). Our schedule through June 2008 is:

January 16 & 27

February 20 only

March 19 & 23

April 16 & 27

May 21 & 25

June 18 & 22

We hope you will be able to join us! Come along and learn some new things about our great Pisgah State Park. Thank you. I appreciate your involvement. You can contact me, Laurel Powell, by mail at 587 Chesterfield Rd, Hinsdale, NH 03451, by phone at

603-336-7479 (h), 802-579-5825 (c) or via email at cpowellbks@cheshire.net or lpowell@sau29.org

Laurel Powell (History and Education Committee Chair)

The Secrets of Pisgah State Park: A Pisgah Forum with Tom Wessels

On Tuesday, Nov. 13th, over one hundred people crowded into the Keene Public Library auditorium to hear about the ecology and history of Pisgah State Park. This was the first in a series of forums to get public input about the future management of the park. The speaker was Antioch University Professor and local ecologist Tom Wessels. Wessels has been spending time in the 13,500 acre Pisgah State Park since the early eighties.

Although Wessels does not have a particular spot that is his favorite, any time he goes bushwhacking into the forest he finds amazing new sites. Pisgah is graced with an incredible amount of wetlands and lakes and a diversity of tree communities according to Wessels who finds the Pisgah Ridgeline one of the most interesting spots in the Park. The bulk of old growth forest is centered in this core region. Some of the trees may be over 270 years old in this area – one red maple at North Round Pond is 224 years old! There are also some interesting cultural sites in this area, such as a cellar hole on a ridgetop that is two miles from the closest cellar hole. It's an interesting find so far from civilization, and Wessels suggests that this family might not have wanted to assimilate with the surrounding culture.

To Wessels, this area feels the most “wild and remote.” The exposed granite summit bears pitch pine, red pine, huckleberry, and blueberry. Wessels showed slides from a recent autumn hike along this loop, with the brilliant burgundy of huckleberry swimming amidst a sea of multicolored hardwood trees and the dark green canopy of hemlocks and pines.

According to Wessels, even compared to the most remote mountains in the Whites, the Adirondacks, or the Greens, in the Park “If you get up into the summit of Pisgah and you look to the east, it is the most wilderness summit view I have seen anywhere in New England if you look to Monadnock, there is just one farmstead you can see way off on a distant ridgeline, and that is all you can see just one.” There are no roads, no houses, no sign of buildings, no power lines it is “quite phenomenal.”

Pisgah has a rich history of land use, but the most striking feature of the park is that, unlike most of that region in the 1850s, a large chunk of the western side of the park was never deforested for agricultural purposes. On the western side, there is a large holding of thousands of acres that was owned by the Dickenson family who logged in Pisgah as a family business. According to Wessels, they really did it quite sustainably because they were doing single tree selection — cutting individual trees here and there — and doing group cuts, plus there is no evidence to indicate past clear cutting. The Dickenson family was able to log in there for a long time — from the middle of the 1800's to the 1900's — and maintain a good business and healthy forest and also preserve a lot of old growth tracts. Wessels doesn't know if this was intentional on their part or those areas were just less accessible.

In any case, the fact that Pisgah has thousands of acres that were never cut for agriculture makes it the largest contiguous block of lower elevation forest that was never cleared in the region. Many of our forests that were opened for agriculture have come back in a very homogeneous way in terms of species composition and structure, but the western side of Pisgah has a very different feel because it doesn't have that homogenization and there is a lot more diversity. In fact, though it has been altered by logging, it is probably our best example of what the forest may have been like and one of the few places that has never been clear-cut.

Of all his adventures in the Park, one particular occasion sticks out for Wessels. Last Spring, he was leading his Principles of Sustainability class over snow-covered ground to the old growth section of the forest. As they were hiking into the forest, there was a little burst of grapple — snowflakes that fall through a super-cooled cloud and get covered in rime ice and look like little Styrofoam balls. The burst lasted nearly five minutes and about a half minute later, the group encountered some bear tracks. There was grapple lying on top of the snow all around the tracks, but none in the tracks — because the bear's paws had melted it — and Tom realized that the bear must have passed by just before he and the students arrived!

Over time, many students have been attracted to study Pisgah State Park. It is one of the largest and least developed state forests in New England. Compared to other State parks, Pisgah does not get much use. Wessels guess is that the park is mostly used by people in the surrounding towns, including Keene and Brattleboro. Pisgah holds very special significance, especially for the people that live around here.

Gazing ahead, it is really hard to predict what Pisgah will look like in the years to come because our forests are affected by a variety of elements — natural disturbances such as hurricanes, snow and ice loading, fires, and human disturbances such as the spread of invasive plants and insects, logging, and development. One example of an invasive insect that can cause major changes is the Hemlock wooly adelgid aphid which could transform a forest in ways that are unpredictable. Although there could be threats with changes in the climate, Pisgah would probably not be hit as hard as other forests because a lot of the species in the Park are species that extend much further southward — there are not a lot of sugar maple or other trees that require more specific growing conditions.

Bonnie Hudspeth

(Ed. Note: Bonnie is an MS candidate at Antioch)

**FOP Monthly Saturday Trails Work
Opening A Vista to Monadnock – Nov 2007**



Carrying Off Cut Branches (l to r, Upward Bound students Brittany, Eveline, & Amy plus leader Rhonda Weingarner)



The Volunteers (standing l to r, Matt Edson, John Herrick, Eveline, Amy, John Hudachek, Ginny Knapp, Art Savory; kneeling l to r, Laurel Powell, Rhonda Weingarner)



Some of the Volunteers (standing l to r, Eveline, Amy, Laurel Powell, Ginny Knapp; sitting l to r, Debbie Hudachek, Rhonda Weingarner, Brittany, John Hudachek)

(Vista Cutting Photos Courtesy of Debbie Hudachek)

**State of New Hampshire Authorized Logging
Pisgah Park Winter 2007 – 2008**



One of the Log Trucks on Its Way Out of the Park (Old Chesterfield Rd, approaching the Visitor Center)



Forwarder Working in the Harvest Area (Trees are being placed in the "bunk")



In the Logged Area on the Road Created for the Harvest

(Timber Harvest Photos Courtesy of Norma Reppucci)

Timber Harvesting In Pisgah

As you may have read in the newspapers in the past several months, the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) announced a planned timber sale in Pisgah Park, the first since the Park was created in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first timber harvest began this winter after a lengthy public involvement process. The approximately 80 acre tract is just off the east side of Old Chesterfield Rd about a mile north of the Visitor Center. The harvest was sold through a competitive bidding process to Cutting Edge Timber Harvesting of Marlborough, New Hampshire.

The timber company primarily uses 2 pieces of equipment to harvest timber, a “cut-to-length harvester” and a “forwarder”. The harvester is a track mounted machine that grabs each tree that is selected for cutting, cuts the tree from the stump, limbs the tree and then cuts the stem into logs and pulp segments. The forwarder then picks up each segment and loads it into the “bunks” and transports them back to the yarding area located along Old Chesterfield Road.

The above equipment is preferred for this operation because it is very light on the ground. The feller buncher’s tracks exert very low ground pressure, and it can directionally fell each tree to minimize damage to the remaining trees. The trees are transported in log lengths instead of tree lengths which also protects the remaining trees. The forwarder is equipped with rear bogey wheels that flex and conform to the ground conditions, lower ground pressure and protect the soil resources on site.

The harvest was temporarily suspended for a short time during an unusual warm weather event in order to protect the site. Once the weather returned to seasonal cold temperatures we were able re-start operations.

Ken Desmarais, Chief NH Division of Forests & Lands

(Ed. note: DRED has indicated that one of the objectives of the timber cut is to expand habitat for bird species such as the Ruffed Grouse. Some years back you may remember that a few areas in the Park were brushed out with the same objective. There has been much concern about the current timber sale since it had generally been assumed that Pisgah State Park (designated a Natural Park when created) would be left to return to a largely wilderness condition after the state acquired the land for the Park. However, another driving force for timber cuts in the Park might be the opportunity for the state to generate new income. Check out the President’s message on pages 1 and 2 for other information on what’s going on in Pisgah. For more information on the timber cutting in Pisgah, you may wish to consult: www.nhdfl.org [Div. of Forests and Lands web] or www.dred.state.nh.us [DRED web] sites.)

About the Doolittle Orchard

Some years ago, Rod Doolittle, our historian for many years, provided a short history of Pisgah in which he mentioned the Doolittle farm and the orchard during a presentation to the Winchester Women’s Club.

“It was a nice farm. It had a cider mill where we made cider the old time way, with a wooden press, etc. We put in good apples, picked up some of them that were a little brown, but it made good cider so they said. It was ground up and we made cider vinegar, too. On my father’s farm there used to be a lot of apple trees and they were a lot younger, but must be all gone. They died and have fallen down. The State has worked in there some, doing some trimming.”

(quote taken down at *Pisgah History* as presented to Winchester Woman’s Club by Rodney Doolittle, April 6, 1989)

Laurel Powell(History and Education Committee Chair)

Membership

It’s 2008 and **membership renewals are due**. If you have already renewed your membership, a membership card is attached to this newsletter. If you did not receive a 2008 card then you should complete the application on page 9 and send it along with your check to the Treasurer at the address shown.

We have a new membership fee structure as of 2008. A **student** category has been added. There is a **single member** (non-student) category and the one-address category is now **family** covering all people at a single address. **Group** or club membership is also available.

This will be the last newsletter you will receive unless you renew your membership for 2008. **An N on your label indicates a need to renew now.**

Web Site Planned – Your Input and Help Needed

The FOP Planning and Strategy Committee has diligently worked over the early winter months finding creative ways to increase membership and use of the Park. It has become evident that prospective visitors often rely on the Internet as a way to get information about the Park. We would like to create an FOP website. We need experienced designers who could guide and support our efforts. Please contact Laurel Powell at 336-7479 or email cpowellbks@cheshire.net. Thank you in advance.

Wanted

Our Friends of Pisgah Work Station has been outfitted with some needed tools and equipment which enable us to do much educational work that documents, protects and displays the history of Pisgah at the Visitor Center and in the barn's museum. We could use a working office chair for our devoted volunteers. Contact Laurel Powell (see article above for contact information).

An Editor's Thoughts

One of the major concerns for FOP should be that the state has drastically diminished the financial and managerial support for Pisgah Park in the past 4 years. The current business downturn is likely to diminish state income and so it may be some time before the state will rectify this situation in the largest park in the state park system. Furthermore, the reduction in income may well promote more sustained attempts to raise income from the Park in the form of, for example, further logging. Many folks are concerned that recreation has become a secondary operation of state parks and that the forest industries have claimed such resources as their domain. FOP needs to continue to work for increased state support for Pisgah and to assist the Park and Park Manager in Park operation. Pisgah is a great place to visit and a significant asset to the southwest NH region.

On another front, the proliferation of groups ostensibly working on state park management may tend to obscure the role that has been the principal one for the FOP since its organization in 1987. We have supported the Park through volunteer trail work and other projects (such as the building of trail heads at Kilburn Pond and on Rte 119, donations of equipment and time by John Summers and others), fund raising and labor for building construction (FOP built the Visitor Center and re-erected and renovated the barn), and have provided tools and other small equipment for better Park operation. We even paid for a weekend person to staff the Visitor Center during nearly half of 2007. However, FOP does not have a consistent source of income other than membership dues and income from some investments. We pay taxes on the Dort property which we own and manage. Outside groups have sought funding from FOP for various projects in the past and FOP has responded as best it could. However, our expenses exceeded income by over \$4000 in 2007. The preparation of a realistic budget now in progress should enable FOP to continue to help keep Pisgah well managed yet as undeveloped as possible in the future (as envisioned by the people of southwest NH over 20 years ago at public hearings).

The new interest groups (Pisgah State Park Technical Team, Pisgah Park Management Plan Steering Committee) will greatly dilute the role which FOP has played for over 20 years. I have no real understanding of the origin of the Technical Team but the state has instituted the Plan Steering Committee. With only one vote on each of these committees and many organizations/interest groups represented, the FOP which has provided so much tangible support to the Park may be relegated to a minor role in the future. Some of these groups or subgroups within the Technical Team have sought support from FOP. While the goals of the subgroups are worthy, it is difficult for me to see that FOP will have the funds to sustain our current level of direct support for the Park let alone subsidize other organizations. FOP needs to concentrate on direct support for the Park and expansion of state support to prior year levels before spending its limited investment funds on other groups for which Pisgah is but one of many interests.

Matthew Donachie

(The above thoughts are the editor's and do not necessarily represent a position of FOP.)

Snowshoe Hike Planned

If this issue of the Update reaches you in time, please think about joining the Conservation Commissions of Hinsdale and Chesterfield and The Friends of Pisgah for a snowshoe hike on the Bear Mt. Trail. Meet at the Kilburn Trailhead in Pisgah State Park off Rte 63 on Saturday, February 2nd, 2008. The hike is scheduled for 10:00 am – noon.

The Bear Mt. Trail is a section of the Wantastiquet - Monadnock Greenway Project and this trail section has been dedicated to Charlie Powell. Rain, snow or shine! For information call the Chesterfield Conservation Commission, 256-6082. Lunch at Tom Duston's home after the event.

Planning and Strategy

The Planning and Strategy Committee is again meeting on a regular basis. All activities can not be reported for space considerations. However, several meetings were held in December 2007 and a few of the items resulting from the meetings follow.

Increase membership by fostering programs which will draw people to the Park and to locations where Membership Applications can be available. Responsibility for increasing membership ranks will be handled by Vice President Gary Montgomery. Under consideration are more trail hikes as well as lecture tours by locally known authorities.

Develop a computer website to provide information about FOP events. Responsibility for the website to be handled by Laurel Powell. Establish written education programs which can be used as material to request grants. Provide information pamphlets, etc. for use in these programs. Laurel will coordinate this program with Park Manager, Norma Reppucci.

Evaluate our long term plans for the Dort property.

The above are just a few of the topics under consideration. We would appreciate any feed-back or ideas you can contribute.

John Summers, Planning and Strategy Chair

Animal Tracks in Winter

Now that cold temperatures have returned and there still is quite a bit of snow on the ground, perhaps you'll be taking a ski/snowshoe/hike or a snowmobile tour in Pisgah. Keep your eyes open! Here and there, sometimes in solitary array and sometimes in profusion, there are the tracks of the critters large and small that inhabit this Park we all care about so much. I am no tracking expert but at least the snow does tend to highlight the tracks that otherwise might be missed in the grass/dirt of the other seasons of the year. Thus, I am more aware of the animals in the winter than in any other season. I was skiing on a pond on the periphery of the Park this past week and noted only a few tracks, unusual for this time of the year. A big hare had hopped across the pond from the direction of Pisgah to the woods on the southeast side. I am sure I'll find more tracks when I get into the Park soon.

Within the heavy forest there is not always much to see but along the trails or crossing them in the Park one often sees evidence of the otherwise hidden activity of the forest mammals. Shrews, mice, voles and other small mammals frequently cross the trail. Squirrel activity also can be detected. Sometimes we run across the tracks of the wild turkey, occasionally evidence of a coyote (from tracks and territorial markings) and frequently, particularly along the margin of meadows and fields, we see the tracks of deer. Moose also exist in the Park but, although I have had them in our yard on four occasions in the past, I have never seen them in the Park. The bears, of course seem to be taking the season off! As for bobcats, I have seen one on Old Chesterfield Rd (outside the Park) another time I heard one while skiing down the Broad Brook Rd. We even had a long sequence of tracks in our field with blood spots of the bobcat's victim visible along the route. However, I have never seen any identifiable tracks of the elusive cat in the park. We have not any porcupine tracks either this year on our 20 acres of land a mile from the Visitor Center although there have been deer tracks in our fields. However, we know that the mammals and birds are out there so keep your eyes open when traveling through the Park.

If you want to identify the tracks and interesting patterns that animals produce, there are several books which may be of interest. Track Finder (pamphlet by Dorcas Miller - Nature Study Guild), Scats and Tracks of the Northeast (Falcon/Globe Pequot), Animal Tracks (Peterson Field Guides), A Guide to Animal Tracking and Behavior (Stokes Nature Guides) or Familiar Animal Tracks of North America (Nat. Audubon Society Pocket Guide) can be very helpful. In addition, a most valuable book is Field Guide to Tracking Animals in Snow (Stackpole Books). Try your library or local bookstore for copies of one or more of these excellent books. If you want more general guidance to the natural world in winter, try A Guide to Nature in Winter (Little, Brown and Co). This book by Donald Stokes provides information not only on animal tracks but also on insect patterns, birds, weeds and flowers among others.

Matt Donachie

Join, Renew, or Give a Gift Membership in FOP

Please use the form below and send to the address shown if you wish to join FOP, renew membership or give one as a gift . The Friends of Pisgah maintain a nominal dues structure with the intent being to encourage as many individuals and families as possible to join. Over half of the student/single/family dues provides for printing and mailing the Update and the Annual Picnic notice, as well as for the fine food at the picnic. Dues are as follows: student - \$10, single - \$15 family - \$20, group (club) - \$30.

Cut here -----

If you are joining, renewing, or giving a gift, please use this form. Your dues support our Park efforts.

<p>Date: _____</p> <p>Member Name(s): _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Phone: _____ (Home)</p> <p>Phone: _____ (Work)</p> <p>E-mail: _____</p> <p><i>Questions? Call Kathy Thatcher (603/ 363-4482) or Matt Donachie (603/239-6590)</i></p> <p><i>Send form and check to:</i> Friends of Pisgah, Inc. PO Box 134 Chesterfield, NH 03443-0134</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Category</u> (Check applicable boxes)</p> <p>◇ New</p> <p>◇ Renewal</p> <p>◇ Gift</p> <p>◇ Student (\$10.00)</p> <p>◇ Single (\$15.00)</p> <p>◇ Family (\$20.00/address)</p> <p>◇ Group (\$30.00)</p> <p>◇ Donation \$ _____</p> <p>Name/Address of gift giver</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Willing to Assist On</u> <u>Committee for:</u></p> <p>◇ Annual Picnic</p> <p>◇ Educational Programs</p> <p>◇ History/Archaeology</p> <p>◇ Membership</p> <p>◇ Newsletter Articles</p> <p>◇ Planning & Strategy</p> <p>◇ Fund Raising</p> <p>◇ Public Relations/Park Info</p> <p>◇ Rails to Trails Advisory</p> <p>◇ Trails/Maintenance</p> <p>◇ Wantastiquet-Monadnock Greenway</p> <p>◇ Other _____</p>
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Old Winter Gear and Winter in Pisgah Today

If you have a New Year's Resolution about getting more exercise, don't forget that Pisgah offers much. This winter's snow has been absolutely perfect for skiing, hiking or snowshoeing so far. There are virtually unlimited places to explore if hiking or snowshoeing. Who needs a trail? Just go and let your curiosity and heart lead. If you want to minimize exertion, the roads are always good when the snow is deep and unused trails are still pristine. Just keep in mind that trails that are great for hiking or snowshoeing, as they dip into ravines and wind around trees and roots, may cause excessive delay or difficulty when on skis.

Trails of all degrees of difficulty and length can be followed in the Park. Loop trips are not difficult to create provided you are willing to go 3 – 5 miles on your trek. Even reasonable in and out trips on the same trail can be great fun as the scenery on the return trip often provides a glimpse of something you did not see initially. From the Visitor Center, a reasonable trek on skis (or hiking) can be taken by heading north on Old Chesterfield Rd to Broad Brook Rd. South on Broad Brook Rd to the Doolittle Trail and back east (more or less) to the Old Chesterfield Rd at the bottom of the first hill north of the Visitor Center and return to the parking lot there. The route suggested minimizes difficulties on the Doolittle Trail by avoiding downhill skiing on a narrow, sometimes curvy or root lined trail. The winter Doolittle Trail (for snow machines or skiers) passes over a swampy frozen area which avoids the (impassable) ravine to the right. Another trek from the Visitor Center is north on the Old Chesterfield Rd to Jon Hill Rd then east on Jon Hill to the Old Spofford Rd. North on the Old Spofford Rd a short distance to the parking lot and the Snow Brook Trail. West and north on the Snow Brook Trail to Old Chesterfield Rd a short distance past the junction with the Broad Brook Rd. Back to the Visitor Center via Old Chesterfield Rd (south) or via the Broad Brook Rd and the Doolittle Trail.

Speaking of winter, we have sleighs, a few pairs of skates and an old pair of wooden skis on display at the barn. Do you have any winter sports equipment or winter tools that you'd like to donate to the FOP Museum? Maybe you have some favorite memories of old games and winter activities? Share them with Laurel Powell at 336-7479 or email cpowellbks@cheshire.net.

Laurel Powell and Matt Donachie

Update is published occasionally during the year by Friends of Pisgah, Inc.
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First Class Mail

More on Barred Owls in New England This Year

Readers may recall the short article on and sketch of Barred Owls that appeared in the Fall 2007 Update. Some follow-up information regarding the Barred Owl has recently appeared courtesy of the Wild Bird Center of Yarmouth (500 Route One, Suite 9, Yarmouth, ME 04096, wildbirdcenter@yarmouthbirds.com 207-846-8002) and is abstracted below.

The quantity of sightings of Barred Owls being reported of late has been impressive. Unfortunately, it is not a good sign for the Barred Owl. Throughout New England this winter, there are reports of many more Barred Owl sightings than normal, including sightings of dead owls along the road. Owls in winter, especially food-stressed youngsters, often hunt along roadsides (where rodents find open ground and/or are forced to leave their snow tunnels to make crossings), and many owls end up being hit by cars. While young owls struggle each and every winter to find food (with first winter mortality rates up to 80%), the volume of reports this year has been exceptional. This is indicative of an irruption.

When birds irrupt from the southern Canadian forests, as they appear to be doing this year thanks to a crash in the Red-backed Vole population (likely a major reason for all of our Northern Shrikes this year as well), the Northeast gets extra Barred Owls to brighten a cold, winter day. (And, this may mean we'll be seeing other owls this winter!) (Ed. note: I live a mile from the Visitor Center and I saw what appeared to be a large white owl [snowy?] leaving the ground at my neighbors property the end of the third week in January. So the owls are around. I wonder if we will be having an influx of Barred Owls in the Park. Keep your eyes out for some along the Park roads when you are in Pisgah this winter and let Laurel know if you see any.)

Laurel Powell (History and Education Committee Chair)

Can you share stories of unique flora and fauna that you have observed in Pisgah? Please contact me at 336-7479 or cpowellbks@cheshire.net