

Quincy Bog Notes

Conserving Land, Connecting People with Nature

Winter 2023-2024

Volume 31 Number 2

Once Upon a Bog: Happy 50th Birthday, Quincy Bog Natural Area

Betty Jo Taffe

What do you think of when you hear the word “bog”? For some, the word calls up feelings of being bogged down, mired in muck, caught in the quagmire, or just plain swamped. For a land developer, it might prompt thoughts about filling wetlands and building houses to wring some dollars from a “useless” parcel of land. In June 1970, farmer Phillip Comeau sold a 65-acre “tract of bog swamp woodland in the Quincy section of Rumney”, known as Cranberry Pond, to Massachusetts developer Stanley Shmishkiss. Bulldozers immediately began constructing an access road for a new housing development. In July 1970, contractors blew up two beaver dams in order to drain the wetland. Former Rumney resident Marguerite Burne reports that the community response began when John Coffin heard blasting, came to talk to his brother Charlie and her, and together they decided to go to Joe Kent.

Not everyone loves a bog, but the late George N. “Joe” Kent, a retired United States Air Force Officer and Rumney resident, considered it a beautiful place with a glacial-age pond, insect-eating plants, big trees, songbirds, wildflowers (including lady slippers and bog orchids), and wood ducks. In response to the Coffin brothers’ report, Joe obtained studies on the bog’s sediments and flora on both sides of the access road that confirmed the road penetrated into an ancient wetland. He shared these findings with the developer and the Rumney Planning Board and Conservation Commission. This effectively stopped the bulldozing. Mr. Shmishkiss put the 40 acres of bog marsh wetland on the market.

To more permanently protect the bog, the community needed to buy the land, but with what money? While planning next steps, Joe kept the movement to save this tract of bog swamp woodland, now known as Quincy Bog, in the public eye by generating a stream of articles in the local *Record Citizen* and statewide *Manchester Union Leader*. In June 1974, a group of local citizens that included Joe and Ann Kent, Guy Jaquith, Emma Kelly, and George Wendell, filed Articles of Agreement to establish the nonprofit entity they called Rumney Ecological Systems (RES) with this aim: “To acquire a tract of bog swamp woodland in the Quincy section of Rumney, N.H. The tract shall be open to the public, especially area school children, without charge. Scientific research within the area will be encouraged.” The incorporators wanted everyone to be able to visit and enjoy this unique area, to learn about wetlands by close acquaintance, and to understand this feature’s natural heritage of woods and pasture, brook and pond. Donations from Friends of Quincy Bog provided, and still provide, support for RES activities.

Developer Stanley Shmishkiss eventually sold the property to RES for \$10,000, gave the group a long-term mortgage on the property at a low interest rate, and contributed one-third of the payments. He joined the RES Board of Directors in 1975, serving for over two decades. With the wetland protected from the immediate threat of development, RES turned attention to keeping the natural area open to the public without charge and providing basic facilities for visitors. Two years after incorporation, the RES Board of Directors voted to construct a museum/nature center overlooking the water. The local Jaycees (Junior Chamber of Commerce) donated their labor to build the museum. RES funds provided building materials. Dedicated in 1978, the Quincy Bog Nature Center offers the public a natural history library, presentation room, toilet, spacious porch, and large windows for viewing the natural area.



Above: Joe Kent looks out on his beloved Bog.
Below: A view of the wetland from this season.



In the late 1970s, assisted by a loan from The Nature Conservancy, RES purchased two undeveloped building lots adjacent to the cul-de-sac above the Nature Center, preventing further development from encroaching on the wetland. In the mid-1980s an abutter donated an additional small area of land, so that RES owned much of the property surrounding the water body. Eventually, in 1997, RES was able to purchase the last parcel of private land along the bog perimeter, allowing completion of the nature trail around the pond. With this additional land, visitors could circumnavigate the wetland without leaving the natural area. The rest is history: a wonderful, scenic, happening!

Joe Kent’s actions were pivotal in establishing many of the protections now in place at Quincy Bog, and in raising public awareness about the natural area. For over two decades, Joe offered a series of guided tours in the natural area, including birding and botanizing in summer, and snowshoeing in winter. He encouraged area schools to use the site as an outdoor laboratory, leading student field trips to explore the pond, wetlands, and surrounding forest, and fostering a deep connection to the natural environment. He was involved in hiring summer interns to conduct research on various aspects of bog life and to share their knowledge with visitors. And, to keep the public informed about interesting birds, plants, insects, tours of the bog, visitors, studies in progress, and other relevant news, Joe founded *Quincy Bog Notes*, as “an occasional publication” now in its fifth decade. For many years he chaired the RES Board, raising funds to pay expenses as well as recruiting Board members and experts to volunteer their time.

Joe’s passing in 1989 marked the end of an era, but not the end of the Quincy Bog Natural Area or RES. Acquisitions of Quincy

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President's Perspective

Gino Infascelli

"There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter."
- Rachel Carson

The Bog is resting now. The birds have mostly migrated, and the silence is profound. Winter is working its seasonal magic.

Quincy Bog Natural Area is a perfect place to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and to anticipate and plan for the New Year to come. Throughout 2024, please keep an eye on our website and social media for information about our 50th Anniversary celebrations!

Last summer at the Nature Center, we offered educational programs on history, nature, and music to folks of all ages. These programs are the result of a team effort by the Board of Directors, volunteers, and presenters, dedicated to advancing the knowledge and enjoyment of our community.

The Pemi-Baker Land Trust has recently completed two new easements and amended another to provide further protection of valuable natural places within our watershed area. We registered these deeds after careful, efficient, and diligent teamwork with the landowners to achieve common goals. The new easement documents are consistent with others we hold and provide details for conserving and monitoring these properties in perpetuity.

During the past five years, I've shared my perspective as President in this newsletter, often reflecting on how much this organization offers to our community, and on the positive responses to the efforts of our Board members and many, many volunteers. I've heard a range of different views expressed by Board members, its committees, and associates. I generally find that, by taking the time to listen and to not pre-judge, we reach consensus and accomplish our goals in harmony.

This January, I am pleased to pass the President's baton to the very capable Marguerite St. Laurent-Crowell, who has been serving as our Vice President.

We send a heartfelt thank you to departing board member Jess Halm for her years of service on many of our committees, and especially for her thoughtful efforts regarding the education of our younger visitors.

Thank you to all of the visitors, friends, and volunteers who are part of this community. I hope to see you enjoying the fresh air at Quincy Bog, Baker Forest, and Quincy Pasture Forest during the upcoming seasons.

Gino Infascelli has been a member of the Executive Committee for the past nine years. Visiting Quincy Bog is one of his favorite pastimes.



The Board of Directors thanks Gino for his leadership over the past five years.
Photo by Mike Boisvert.

Monitoring Conservation Easements

Janice Mulherin

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust that permanently limits uses of the land to protect its resource values. In our case, we are the Pemi-Baker Land Trust (PBLT). A conservation easement allows the landowner to continue to own and use their land, sell it, or pass it on to heirs, but not to develop it. Once the work of getting a conservation easement signed and recorded is complete, the fun begins! It is the land trust's responsibility to ensure that the conditions of the easement are being followed. This requires that the property be visited at least once every year and that the land trust and landowner chat periodically.

PBLT likes to do our annual visits in the fall, hopefully before much snow covers the ground. When we visit our easements, I am reminded of the generosity of landowners who donated these properties to ensure that they will be free from development in perpetuity. Sometimes I try to imagine just what these landscapes might look like if not for the protection of the easement.



Janice Mulherin and Lisa Doner on a monitoring visit. Photo by Mark Runquist.

The easements held by PBLT are diverse. One is a small property that protects a lake shore and the architecture of a lake camp. Another is located near a school that still uses the property as an outdoor classroom and running trail. Others are large, forested or agricultural tracts that will provide wildlife habitat, wood or food products, limited recreational opportunities, and an unbroken landscape *forever*.

If you are interested in discussing how to protect your property, email us at PemiBakerLandTrust@quincybog.org. We'd love to chat with you about your property and the process of getting it conserved.

Janice Mulherin leads PBLT's easement monitoring visits; she enjoys these yearly walks in the woods with landowners and their beautiful properties.



Junior Naturalist Corner

Marguerite St. Laurent-Crowell



Happy Birthday, Quincy Bog!



Quincy Bog was originally known as Cranberry Pond, as seen in the top photo on the right that was taken around 1900.

Cool Fact – At the end of the most recent Ice Age, a block of glacier was left behind. When it melted, it left a flooded depression that people called Cranberry Pond.

But wait, why does the photo say Quincy, NH?

The site was originally a village called Quincy on the southeast side of Rumney. You can see the foothills of Stinson Mountain in the background.

In the 1970s, a small group of people living in the area knew this was a special place. With help, they saved Cranberry Pond from being turned into a place to build houses. The name of the newly protected site was changed to Quincy



The Bog, past and present



Photo by Peter Bloch

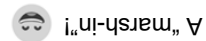
Bog Natural Area. The trail around it was built by young adults in the NH Conservation Corps.

Cool Fact – For 50 years, the water quality, wildlife, and plant communities of Quincy Bog have been protected within the Quincy Bog Natural Area. Wetlands are also protected by State and Federal laws.

Who takes care of Quincy Bog Natural Area?

The site is managed by almost 30 volunteers who give their time and energy to help preserve this special place. There's lots of work to do! Trails to maintain, invasive species to tackle, programs to offer at our Nature Center, and land to protect.

What do you call an alien that lives in a bog?



Marguerite St. Laurent-Crowell is the new President of the Quincy Bog Board of Directors.

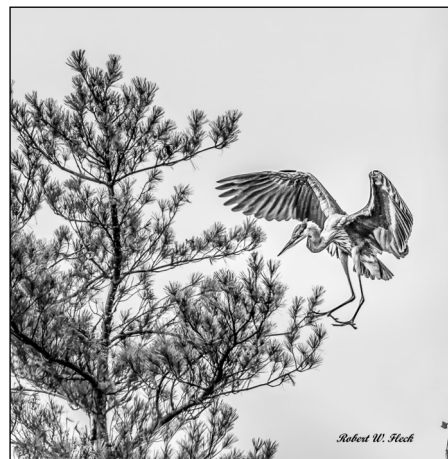
Books We're Reading at the Bog: Seasons at a New England Bog – A Photographic Essay

Local photographer Bob Fleck showcases the many moods of Quincy Bog in this recently published book. Take a tour across the seasons with nearly 200 pages of beautiful color photos, from scenic views of the Bog to close-up glimpses into the lives of many different animals, plants, and fungi that make QBNA their home. Descriptive captions accompany the images to narrate the journey through the year.



Visit the author's website at www.rwfphotos.com to order a copy—shipping is free to any of the 48 states within the contiguous U.S. If you live in New Hampshire, check the event listings for upcoming book signings and presentations, where you can pick up a copy and meet the author in person.

If you treat yourself or another friend of the Bog to a copy of this book, you can also feel good about helping protect natural places—the author is generously donating 50% of his profits to the Pemi-Baker Land Trust.



Support Quincy Bog & PBLT with a Donation



You can help us celebrate Quincy Bog's 50th year as a protected Natural Area, and support future efforts to conserve land and connect people with nature! Please consider sending a check in the enclosed donation envelope or contributing online via PayPal at our website (www.quincybog.org). We rely on and greatly appreciate your support - thanks in advance from all of us at the Bog.

Save the Date: Spring Bird Walk

Join us on Sunday, June 2nd at the Quincy Bog Nature Center for our annual Spring Bird Walk. Starting at 7 a.m., Iain MacLeod, Executive Director of the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, will lead us on a trip around the Bog and help us identify birds by sight and sound. We'll return to the Nature Center around 9:30 a.m.



Board of Directors

Rumney Ecological Systems
administrators of
Quincy Bog Natural Area
and Pemi-Baker Land Trust

President Marguerite St. Laurent-Crowell, 2012, Plymouth

Vice President Gino Infascelli, 2012, Campton

Secretary Kerry Yurewicz, 2008, Plymouth

Treasurer Barbara Laflamme, 2021, Holderness

Directors

Scott Bailey, 2022, Plymouth

Mike Boisvert, 2022, Thornton

Charlie Chandler, 2023, Warren

Lisa Doner, 2014, Plymouth

Amy Dupuis, 2019, Rumney

Reed Harrigan, 2022, Campton

Virginia Howlett, 2022, Rumney

Widge Kent, 2002, Plymouth

Janice Mulherin, 2011, Rumney

Mark Runquist, 2019, Campton

Susan Sepenoski, 2021, Rumney

Betty Jo Taffe, 1994, Rumney

Paul Wilson, 2018, Bridgewater

Names are followed by the year of joining Board.

Founding Director

George (Joe) Kent*, Rumney

Directors Emeriti

Patricia Barker, Laconia

Robert Berti, Rumney

Robert Bulkeley, Campton

Allan R. Keith*, Chilmark, MA

Warren King, Ripton, VT

George "Al" Ports, Concord

*member of original Board

Editors: Lisa Doner & Kerry Yurewicz
Contact us: bognotes@quincybog.org



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Quincy Bog Notes is a twice-yearly newsletter of information, announcements, and news about the Quincy Bog Natural Area and Pemi-Baker Land Trust.

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Quincy Bog Notes

(Continued from page 1, Taffe)

Pasture Forest, in 2002, and Baker State Forest, in 2003, expanded the scope of RES's land conservation activities. In 2004, RES became a regional land trust that helps landowners protect properties through creation of conservation easements and benefits the public by preserving open space. RES currently owns 140 acres, including the Quincy Bog Natural Area and nearby properties. Operating as the Pemi-Baker Land Trust (PBLT), RES also holds fourteen conservation easements that protect more than 900 acres of privately owned and town lands.

RES is still an all-volunteer organization, with no paid staff. Working together, our Board of Directors, Bog Hosts, Trail and School Volunteers, Land Trust Stewards, and Board Affiliates carry out the mission of the organization, conserving land and connecting people with nature. While the name Rumney Ecological Systems is still used in legal documents, better known are the names Quincy Bog, or the Bog, when referring to the place, and Pemi-Baker Land Trust when referring to the land conservation arm.

To those who know and love Quincy Bog, the word "bog" is indeed as beautiful as it was to Joe Kent fifty years ago when visions of "lady's slippers, bog orchids and a pair of woodducks" compelled a group of Rumney citizens to save a tract of bog swamp woodland, keeping it open to the public especially area school children without charge. We hope you will celebrate Quincy Bog's landmark 50th birthday with us throughout the year.

Author's Note: Except for the word "bog," words in quotations are taken verbatim, without attribution, from the Articles of Agreement, press releases, and other documents from the Bog's archives.

Betty Jo Taffe joined the RES Board in 1994.

Musical Programs at the Bog in February

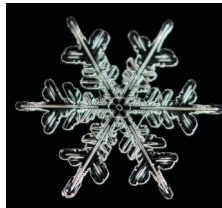
Join sisters Claire & Molly McCahan for immersive musical gatherings at the Quincy Bog Nature Center. Pre-Registration is required at <https://spiralsongs.ticketleap.com/imbolc/>

- * Saturday, February 3rd (11am-12pm):
Spiral Songs for Kids: Imbolc & Deep Winter

This family-friendly event includes sing-alongs, stories, and songs about deep winter. Chairs and light snacks will be available, and guests should be prepared to take care of their physical comfort indoors and outdoors. The event is free-of-charge! (Storm date February 10th).

- * Saturday, February 3rd & Sunday, February 4th (2-4pm):
Spiral Songs: Imbolc & Deep Winter

This event, appropriate for ages 12+, features classical and folk songs melded with group singing, outdoor exploration, and guided mindfulness work. Guests should be prepared to maintain their comfort in the winter temperatures and conditions while outside. \$15 Ticket Fee. (Storm dates February 10th & 11th)



For all programs:

Guests are requested to complete a day-of COVID test. Masks are encouraged but not required.

Additional contributions will be happily accepted to support future Spiral Songs events and the Quincy Bog Natural Area.