



ROYAL RIVER  
CONSERVATION TRUST

# Currents

Conserving land for people, wildlife, clean water, and the future

## Lit by the Moon, Pisgah Hill Hike Becomes a Celebration

It sounded like an inviting idea at the time—a full moonlit snowshoe up Pisgah Hill. So in October, when we were constructing our winter calendar of events, we knew the lunar cycle but little about the other major pieces that would make this event successful—enough snow, clear skies, and enthusiastic hikers.

That was the practical side of our brains at work.

Meanwhile our hearts told us we should share our excitement following our largest conservation acquisition to date, by showcasing the Pisgah Hill Project regardless of weather conditions.



During the impressive snowstorms in January and February, RRCT put the final touches on the acquisition of two key parcels totaling 120 acres in our Pisgah Hill Project. If you remember a previous newsletter article about our Pisgah Hill Project fundraisers, you'll recall that intense weather has played a prominent role in this project. Anxiously, we monitored forecasts during the February full moon week in case we needed to cancel the Friday event.

Besides, the convergence of a full moon, record breaking snow pack and our long anticipated closing on the project's largest parcel would likely never occur again.

Supported by dozens of area families, several foundations, and three government grants, Royal River Conservation Trust conceived of the Pisgah Hill Project to protect wildlife habitat and enhance recreational opportunities in the region.

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## ANNOUNCING RRCT PHOTO CONTEST



Let your inner shutterfly go wild!  
Be on the lookout for RRCT's first  
bi-annual photo contest.

Check out the web site this May  
for information and instructions.

[www.rrct.org](http://www.rrct.org)

**Prizes for the  
winning photos!**

## Pisgah Hill Hike, cont.

When complete, it will connect to and expand the emerging network of trails linking Bradbury Mountain State Park to the Pineland Public Reserve. Conversations with people all over the watershed during our campaign confirmed a growing interest in this type of conservation infrastructure right in our backyard.

It rained the day before and the day of the full moon hike. Perhaps no one would show up. Kyle Warren, RRCT's Stewardship Coordinator, and RRCT Vice-President Eugenie Francine had carefully scouted the best snowshoe route to the summit several days in advance. Kyle had even built a snow table to support a depot of baked goods and hot cocoa on the top of Pisgah Hill. The winter's first warm, wet spell was not going to thwart our celebratory hike!

When 33 people showed up with their snowshoes and headlamps eager for an adventure, the skies had just cleared, revealing a setting sun levering the rising full moon. And after the 90-minute round trip, everyone was thrilled to have seen Pisgah Hill in all its glory. It turns out the full moon hike was as good an idea as the project itself!

Note: for a terrific, personal account of this wonderful mid-winter hike, go to RRCT's website and click the link to Tux Turkel's Portland Press Herald article.

RRCT wishes to acknowledge the generosity of Nancy & Terry Dewan, Jane Arbuckle and Everett Blake for allowing us to hike on their land.

For more information about the Pisgah Hill Project, please visit [www.rrct.org](http://www.rrct.org).

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Henry G. Nichols <i>Executive Director</i>	Kyle Warren <i>Stewardship Coordinator</i>
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## Letter from the President

Mud season is here! Not everyone's favorite "season" in Maine but it is a time when it's possible to find excitement in new growth and the wonders of spring. One fascinating opportunity to see nature at work is in the vernal pools that can be found in our local woodlands. What appears to the untrained eye as perhaps nothing more than a large muddy puddle reveals, upon closer inspection, a very active place where certain species, including some frogs and salamanders, begin their life cycles. It never ceases to amaze. Pulling back a bit from the close-up view, we see the vernal pool as one aspect of the landscape that we at RRCT are working to protect. We recognize their connection and vital importance to the overall health of the ecosystem of our region. (If you'd like to know more about vernal pools, see page 5.)



In our current economic and political climate, traditional sources of public funding for land protection are in jeopardy. Some of these, for example the Land for Maine's Future program, have been instrumental in helping Maine become a leader in land conservation and locally have helped RRCT with many of our projects. With the pressure on public sources of funds, private sources of funds become even more valuable. We depend on grants, on donations from businesses and on the generosity of our members. We depend on those who have the vision to recognize the importance in the future of what we do, or do not do, today. Whether you donate your time through volunteer activities, make a membership or annual fund donation to your local land trust or decide to protect property that you own, your contribution is important. Vernal pools, woodlands and scenic vistas are what make the Royal River watershed such an outstanding place to live and work. As you experience the renewed wonders of this season, we here at RRCT hope you will join us in our ongoing commitment to the preservation and protection of the wild places in our own backyard because that is where it all begins...one muddy puddle at a time.

— Merrie Woodworth  
President, RRCT

## Member Profile

*Mark and Stacey Power, new RRCT members from New Gloucester, have contributed to our Pisgah Hill success. Mark has chaired the Pisgah Hill Campaign Committee for the past year and a half and Stacey has rolled up her sleeves each time we've hosted an event to showcase this wonderful project. This spring Mark and Stacey are donating a conservation easement to RRCT to be part of the eventual Pisgah Hill Preserve. The following are some tidbits about these terrific people.*

Mark and Stacey have lived in New Gloucester since 1998. She is from Old Town and he grew up in Falmouth. They have four children, ages 13 to 22. One is in college and the other three are on their way.

Mark is a professional engineer employed by the Trane Company in Westbrook. Stacey is a registered nurse employed by Maine Medical Partners.

Both came from agrarian roots and continue to pursue their interest in organic gardening. Mark is an avid fly fisherman and hunter. The family enjoys wilderness camping trips and the school-age kids are all active in multiple sports. Stacey is planning her first foray into free-range chickens this summer.

Mark volunteers as a member of the land management planning committee in New Gloucester and is active as a member of the group of citizens in the town supporting the Pisgah Hill



Conservation Project. Stacey volunteers for various fund-raising activities associated with the Yarmouth Middle School and their athletic fund-raisers.

"We moved to New Gloucester as it reflects the rural Maine and the open space that we grew up with and have always appreciated," Mark says. "At the same time it offers close-enough proximity to work and other activities that we find it provides for a nice balance.

"One of the concerns that we have, and the reason that we are passionate about curbing urban sprawl and preserving open space, is the fact that there is and will continue to be tremendous development pressure on this community for the same very reasons that we enjoy this area. While growth will happen, we need to be smart about it; and to preserve these special areas now while there is a small window of opportunity."

## Thanks, Banks!

New e-checking customers at Bath Savings Institution can designate a non-profit organization to receive a \$25 donation. They must state they were referred by the organization (RRCT, its executive director, or a member in our case); and we receive \$25. Simple, and many thanks to Bath Savings and to its customers who have designated RRCT!

Norway Savings has also been generous to RRCT, making its meeting room available for monthly board meetings. Again, we appreciate the bank's thoughtfulness!

## Upcoming Events

May 1 (Sunday), 2011

9am to noon: Explore Vernal Pools at the Pisgah Hill Preserve with RRCT's very own naturalist, Eugenie Francine. Meet at 161 North Pownal Road in New Gloucester, please pull off road onto wide shoulder. Bring rubber knee boots or hip waders, polarized sun glasses, hat with visor, camera, water bottle. Space is limited, so please sign up by contacting Eugenie at 207-776-8376 or [eugenie.francine@gmail.com](mailto:eugenie.francine@gmail.com).

May 14 (Saturday), 2011

Migratory Bird Watch at the Intervale, the region's most important birding area, with expert birder Bill Hancock.

June 2 (Thursday), 2011

8am-noon: Invasive Plant Management Workshop in Yarmouth—limited seating so please sign up. Free. Contact Kyle Warren, Stewardship Coordinator, at [kwarren@rrct.org](mailto:kwarren@rrct.org) or 207-632-6112.

June 23 (Thursday), 2011

RRCT Annual Meeting. For time and place check the web site, [rrct.org](http://rrct.org) or email [info@rrct.org](mailto:info@rrct.org).



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For more information about these events, check the RRCT web site, [www.rrct.org](http://www.rrct.org) or call Kyle Warren at (207) 632-6112.

## Dams on the Royal

Interest in the future of the two dams at the Yarmouth end of the Royal River prompted their owner, the Town of Yarmouth, to commission a study last year. Consultants from Topsham-based Stantec, Inc., looked at the condition of the two dams, the fishway at one of them, and the implications for water quality and fish passage if one or both of the dams were removed.

RRCT has taken no position on the dams and what should be done with them, but its longtime concern with the Royal River makes it a natural organization to foster discussion of the dams and their future. Any change in the dams would affect water levels, water quality, wildlife habitat, fishing opportunities and the species of fish in the river. There could be regulatory implications as well, such as the number of state and federal agencies that might have an interest

in the Royal River were it designated, for example, as habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon.

Yarmouth town manager Nat Tupper, who arranged for last year's study on



behalf of the Yarmouth Town Council, said the configuration of the river's lower end, where the existing dams sit on or near former waterfalls, means removing the dams wouldn't affect water levels as dramatically as might be the case if the waterfalls weren't there. He also said he had been told by the

state Department of Marine Resources that the Royal wasn't a particularly good candidate for designation as critical Atlantic salmon habitat, making the regulatory implications of a change less dramatic than they might be. (The consultants did conclude that other fish species including alewives and shad would benefit from removing the dams.) Finally, Tupper noted that the town council, presumably reflecting public opinion in the town, appeared divided on what to do about the dams and whether the town should spend money on them at this time.

In hopes of raising interest in the dams and promoting informed public discussion about them, the Royal River Conservation Trust plans to hold a forum on this topic later this year. Information about this event will be posted on RRCT's web site, [www.rrct.org](http://www.rrct.org).



Summit of Bradbury Mountain by David Segre with assistance from pilot, Field Rider.

Many people enjoy the open air and views from Bradbury Mountain in Pownal. When complete, RRCT's Pisgah Hill Preserve will offer a similar experience to hikers. Weathered granite outcroppings are a feature of Pisgah Hill. RRCT plans to do some selective tree thinning to allow views of Mt. Washington and possibly Casco Bay. People wishing to support the Pisgah Hill Project contact Henry Nichols at 847-9399.



Chandler Brook crossing by Kyle Warren

This past winter the Maine Department of Conservation installed this bridge across the Chandler Brook in Pownal, a key component of the Bradbury to Pineland Corridor trail system. RRCT monitors easements along the Corridor; its predecessor organization, the Pownal Land Trust, led the effort to conserve this outstanding regional resource. Plans are underway to cross Thoits Brook, a neighboring tributary, in a similar fashion providing trail enthusiasts miles to enjoy.

## A Tall Morel Tale

*On a cold winter night in early March, forty people gathered at Skyline Farm for an RRCT-sponsored event to learn, listen, and share stories of the late Sam Ristich's extraordinary life. We were treated to an outstanding presentation by his daughter, Jodee, who regaled us with highlights of his distinguished career and snippets about growing up with Sam, a renowned naturalist. Below, which was read aloud that evening, is a piece that Sam wrote and was subsequently printed in the Wells College Magazine Express, no doubt to their delight.*

In the 70s I led a bird walk for the Ornithology class at Wells College in Aurora, NY. Wells is a girls' school. We were in the gorge for an hour when the girls decided they wanted to explore another habitat. While the girls followed the narrow trail to the plateau my friend Charles Burch and I lingered, examining the mosses. Suddenly the girls began yelling, "Look at these strange things we have found."

When I got to the plateau I was mesmerized—and suddenly uttered my "holy cow—I haven't seen that

many morels in 50 years." In this combination of American crabapple and volunteer apple trees, the morels were so thick you needed stilts to prevent crushing. And no one had a bag—so I took off my shirt and began filling the shirt. The girls followed suit—what a sensational picture on the two-mile return trip—11 girls in their bras and skirts carrying shirts full of morels! Getting back in the dorms was something else—they dumped the morels on the bus floor, put on their shirts and came back with paper bags!

I went back the following year and two years later, but never found another specimen. Mycological Brigadoon!

—Sam Ristich



## Vernal Pools—Critical Wildlife Habitat

With the days getting longer and the sun's rays growing stronger, the snow is melting and small pools are appearing on the landscape. These small bodies of water are commonly referred to as vernal pools. They are typically short-lived and often dry by midsummer. Vernal pools are critical habitat for a number of wildlife species such as the wood frog, spotted salamander, blue spotted salamander and fairy shrimp. These species are completely dependent upon the pool for parts of their life cycle. Although vernal pools may vary in appearance, size, water regime and plant and animal content, the unifying characteristic is the absence of predatory fish. The wet-dry cycle prevents fish from becoming established, which enables species' eggs to reach maturity.

The pools are home to a wide variety of species that live in the water column or beneath the leaf litter on the pool bottom; still more wildlife use the pools for food and water. The habitat surrounding the pool is also very important. Wood frogs and spotted salamanders spend the majority of their life in the surrounding woodland and are vulnerable to disturbances such as loss of habitat due to fragmentation from roads or general development. In 2007 Maine began protecting significant vernal pool habitat under the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA). To learn more about these dynamic biological communities, visit the Maine Department of Environmental Protection website at [www.maine.gov/dep](http://www.maine.gov/dep). Another valuable resource is [A Field Guide to the Animals of Vernal Pools](#) by L.P. Kenney and M.R. Burne.

For a hands-on introduction we hope you will join us for our annual vernal pool walk, scheduled for May 1, at the Pisgah Hill project site in New Gloucester. Visit the RRCT website ([www.rrct.org](http://www.rrct.org)) for further details or contact Eugenie Francine at 207-776-8376.



Wood Frog



Spotted Salamander

### How to Tell a Wood Frog Egg Mass From a Spotted Salamander Egg Mass

#### Wood Frog

- Up to 2,000 eggs
- Individual eggs smaller than those of spotted salamander
- Entire egg mass not surrounded by layer of jelly (individual eggs are), giving egg mass a lumpy appearance

#### Spotted Salamander

- Up to 250 eggs
- Individual eggs larger than those of wood frog
- Entire egg mass surrounded by layer of jelly (as well as individual eggs)

*Compiled by Will Johnston*

- Highest population growth rate for a Royal River town (New Gloucester) this past decade: **15%**
- Number of square miles in the Royal River Watershed: **141**
- Elevation difference between Sabbathday Lake and Casco Bay: **299 feet**
- Number of threatened and endangered species in the Royal River Watershed: **4**
- Number of Ls that William Royall, early settler, lent to the founder of a renowned sporting goods store in Freeport: **1**
- Number of Stephen King novels that use the Royal River as a setting: **2**
- Number of waterfowl and wading bird habitats in the Royal River Watershed: **8**
- Percent of population growth during the last decade of 6 Royal River communities: **8.8**
- Percent of housing unit growth during the last decade for 6 Royal River communities: **14.5**

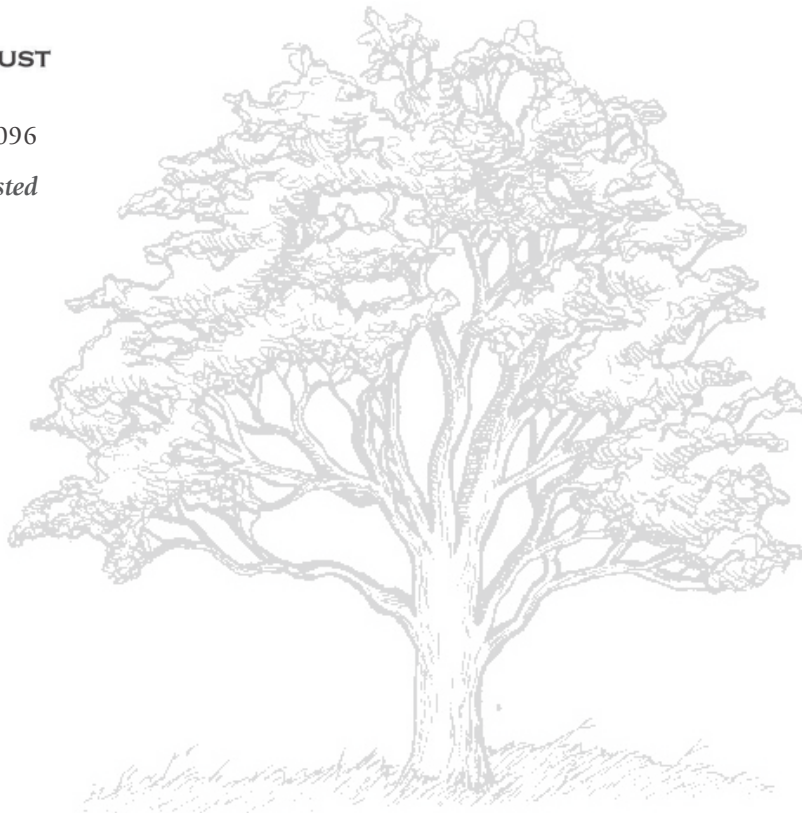
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*Return Service Requested*



### Membership Card

If you are not already a 2010 Member or 2010 Annual Fund Giver, won't you please support RRCT's programs with a donation today? Our success is directly attributable to membership support from people living, working and playing in the Royal River region. Please make a gift of \$35, 50, 100, 250, 300 or more today.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
I'd also like to help by volunteering.  
Please contact me.

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
I wish to make my tax-deductible membership gift  
of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ by the enclosed check

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_  
(Donations can be made by credit card on our  
website, www.rrct.org).

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
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CONSERVATION TRUST**

**THANK YOU!!!**

RRCT will not share your information with anyone.  
Member benefits include our biannual newsletter and invitations to special events.



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