HMCA Activities Update

by Diana Todd

for sharing at the July 13, 2015 meeting of the HPC

1. HMCA added a new Director added to the Board, Amanda Whiting. Amanda is a Marlboro College graduate who has helped with the ESH project and the UMass bird migration antenna installation. She lives in Brattleboro and works as Events Coordinator for the Brattleboro Art Museum.
2. We have a new email address: hogbackvt@gmail.com
3. Marlboro Elementary School’s Hogback Day was a hit with the students and teachers. HMCA Director Carol Berner organized the morning activities, recruiting adult leaders. Directors Bob and Nancy Anderson helped with management on the day of the event.
4. The trail committee has designed a bridge for the stream crossing on the Douglas Trail; it will be installed soon. Plans are underway to create and install trail signs on the north side of the conservation area.
5. The Vermont Land Trust hosted a professional conference of easement stewardship managers on June 3 that featured a hike on Hogback. Directors Diana Todd and Staley McDermet led the hike. The issue of unauthorized snowmobile use came up in the discussions; many of the other conservation areas represented at the conference also deal with this situation. The added complication in Hogback’s situation is that the National Grid lease covering access to their tower lets them travel in snow machines on the Tower Trail in winter. Those tracks might be leading recreational users to assume that snowmobiling is allowed on trails other than the VAST trail. The idea of asking the National Grid to install an access gate and sign was suggested.
6. Aaron Hulsey, the field manager for the UMass bird migration study has asked whether they could do the fall bird banding on Hogback. The HMCA Directors heartily endorse the idea.
7. Lyndon State College student Connor Hunt has begun his study on Hogback involving ticks, mice and Lyme disease. He doesn’t have any permanent equipment on the mountain. His gear is set out at dusk and collected again at dawn, so it’s unlikely that anybody will ever see any of it.
8. HMCA has used the funds set aside in this year’s budget for the Early Successional Habitat project to hire Conner Hamilton to create three openings on the Great White Way. That will make it easier for volunteers to clear additional growth in the fall. Conner runs a landscaping/firewood business and he has professional insurance for chainsaw operations. Conner will do the work after Aug. 1 (after nesting/fledging season is over) and before Labor Day (when volunteer work on the ESH project will commence).
9. The Tom Wessels Talk/Walk is scheduled for Sunday afternoon, Aug. 9.
10. Three walks are planned for summer and early fall, co-sponsored by BEEC. These include two fern walks with HMCA Director Patti Smith, on July 18 and 25, and a mushroom walk with Justin Garner on September 20.
11. HMCA will lead three hikes during the SVNHM Wildlife Festival: Staley McDermet focusing on the ESH project, Diana Todd focusing on the history of the ski lift technology, and Marcia Hamilton on the history of the Pease farm north of the Old Hogback Road.
12. HMCA has submitted an application to the IRS for federal non-profit status.