

WONALANCET OUT DOOR CLUB

Newsletter



November 2010

Caring for the Sandwich Range since 1892

Tracking *Ursus americanus* or In the Tracks of the Bearcamp Trackers Chris Conrod and Chele Miller

In the mid-1700's, when the King of England held claim to all our lands and offered cows and other incentives to settlers who would accept land grants to venture into this wilderness to homestead, a small group of surveyors set up camp along a river that tumbled out of Sandwich Notch and then flowed southeast toward the Atlantic through Sandwich and Tamworth. One evening the surveyors returned to find their camp decimated by a bear. That was more than just a disappointment. The loss of supplies complicated their work and threatened their survival. The river became forever thereafter known as the Bearcamp River.

In 2004, when a group of sixteen local citizens with a common interest in wildlife joined together between the Sandwich Range and the Ossipee Mountains, the Bearcamp Trackers seemed a fitting moniker. During the next ten months and under the skilled guidance of Vermont Keeping Track Founder Susan Morse™, the members received intensive field training in wildlife lore, habits, behaviors and the various means of detecting the presence of many species, especially the wide-ranging focal species--black bear, river otter, fisher, bobcat, lynx and moose.

Now in our 7th season, the Bearcamp Trackers meet monthly from September through May to carry out wildlife reconnaissance in selected areas. We believe a better understanding of the ways various species rely upon and utilize the land will benefit all residents; landowners, outdoorsmen, hikers and hunters by promoting long-term sustainability of animal populations. We also monitor, on an on-going basis, an established transect which runs east-west across Lunt Ledge, a uniquely diverse habitat and important wildlife area in Tamworth between Hemenway State Forest and Cleveland Hill Road. This is part of a large swath encompassing western Tamworth and eastern Sandwich that has been identified by the NH Fish and Game

Wildlife Action Plan as some of the highest ranked habitat in the state. Our tracker roster has added 24 Friends of Bearcamp Trackers who receive notice of our reconns with a standing welcome to join us. Since the Bearcamp Trackers were initiated, two additional Keeping Track™ groups have started up in the Squam and Newfound areas.

Tracking involves much more than slogging along with downcast eyes. Foot, paw and hoof prints are interesting, useful and relatively easy to spot when the substrate is compliant, but it's all the other, often more subtle signs of animal passage and land use—scrapes, spraints, mounds, rubs, barking, beds, browse—that really tell the story.

If you're interested in tuning in to tracking, get started the next time you're in the woods. Equipped with interest, alertness, careful observation, a beginning sense of *search imaging* and the following bear lore, you have all you need to get your feet wet tracking our local *Ursus Americanus*.

The Wonalancet area is a bear paradise. The southern slopes of the Sandwich Range offer plentiful fall food in the form of mast-producing trees, primarily beech and oak, and the loose, well-drained glacial

till on these wind-protected slopes provide excellent winter den opportunities with plenty of hobblebush cover. Forest management clearings and wooded seeps produce early spring buds and greens essential to the nutrition of a bear recently awakened from a long winter dormancy. Later in the summer, these clearings are a smorgasbord of fruit and berries.

To long-time residents and perennial visitors, it comes as no surprise to learn that New Hampshire Fish and Game rates this area as having one of the highest bear densities in the state. Nonetheless, the casual visitor on a day-hike or an overnigher rarely sees a bear. But be assured, if you spend any time in the woods the chances



Jennifer and Chris get up close and personal with scat.

are excellent that one or more bears have sensed your presence and adapted their behavior to avoid you. Although bears have poor long-distance vision, their auditory and olfactory senses are highly developed and they use these senses to avoid confrontations. In spite of the fact that bears are in the taxonomic order Carnivora (meat-eating predators), evolution of the black bear has made it a vegetation-centered omnivore historically persecuted by other bear species of the genus *Ursus* and occasionally by other top predators. Hence their alertness and stealth are highly honed. Humans and natural extinction have managed to eradicate the black bear's enemies in the Northeast and we are now the primary threat to an individual bear's safety. Provided we don't entice them with food, the black bears give us as wide a berth as their ancestors gave the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*; includes grizzlies and Kodiak bears) and saber-tooth tiger.

Maybe you won't see any bears on your hike in Wonalancet, but an observant eye will notice plenty of bear sign. Bears are champions at letting each other know where they have been. The following is a discussion of some of the obvious signs of a bear's passage.

Tracks and Scat:

These two are easy. If it's big, it's a bear's. Unless it's a moose's, and we all know what moose tracks and poop look like, right? Well, maybe not. At some times of the year – especially during spring and early summer – moose aren't depositing those neat, oblong pellets that are characteristic of the deer family. A diet of grass and new, succulent, aquatic plants produces something more akin to a cow patty; although of all the spring moose poops I've stopped to admire, I'd say a moose's has a little more consistency than a cow's.

And sure enough, during the spring a bear's diet is very similar to a moose's diet and, consequently, their scats can be very similar, especially if they've been rained on. But fear not; there is a way to tell them apart as long as you don't mind getting up close and personal. Moose are ruminants and have a very complex digestive system. In comparison, a bear's digestive tract is darn near a straight shot. This difference results in two distinct products. It's all about texture. Digested moose fodder has been milled to something barely short of flour. It has a very fine texture and you won't be able to identify any of the green plant or seed components in it. A bear scat, on the other hand, will contain and some seeds and shreds which will be identifiable as such, often even by species.

The texture test will never fail you, but why break open the dissecting probes and dig in if you don't have

to? Even when a moose is eating all this mushy stuff, it's still trying to produce pellets and these proto-pellets are often distinguishable even when they are in a solid mass. And the bear really wants to pinch out the perfect log; so if you get there soon enough, you might discern a cylindrical quality before it sags or crumbles into chaos.

What is a bear tree?

Maybe the question should be “What isn't?” Bears are animals of the forest and they make use of many tree species. The first time I heard the term “bear tree,” it was associated with the smooth, light-gray bark of a beech sharply contrasted with dark scars of a bear's claws climbing up the trunk, so let's start with the beech tree. Beech nuts are the ultimate autumn fat and protein food in the northern hardwood forest. Unless an animal is the strictest of carnivores, it loves beech nuts. Bears are no exception. In those years when the beech nuts haven't fallen by the time the berries have gone by, a bear gets impatient and climbs the tree for the nuts, leaving modest pin-pricks of light wood exposed. As the tree continues to grow, the wounds heal into a black, wrinkled spot that also grows. So don't measure these old scars to determine the size of the bear that made them. There are no bears in Wonalancet with a paw span of nine inches.



Repeated climbing by bears has left a mosaic of pock marks on the smooth bark of this beech tree

The claw marks aren't always the first thing you will notice on a feed tree climbed by a bear. From a distance, the most prominent feature may be the “bear nest.” Bears, weighing up to 400 pounds, know better than to shinny out on thin branches. When they get up to a comfortable fork in the tree, they begin pulling nut-laden branches in and down toward them, ultimately

breaking the limbs. If the leaves are still alive at this time, they will remain stuck to the branches after they wither, sometimes for as long as a year. During winter, a substantial bear nest in an otherwise leafless beech stand will be visible at over 100 yards. But if this isn't enough for you, or if you don't like straining your neck when

looking up at the treetops, there will also be “hangers” (branches that broke loose and then hung up before hitting the ground) and “sleepers” (the ones that made it to the ground). These signs of bear will be shouting at you when you take a walk in a beech grove



Much of this tree's crown has been torn down by bears collecting beechnuts. This is popularly known as a bear nest, although it is not used as a nest..

shortly after the first snow. Beeches aren't the only trees that bears feed in; they just happen to be the most common and they most readily show the signs of feeding. Oaks, shad bush and birches (for catkins) are also likely to take a beating from bears and, unfortunately for many of my neighbors, apples are a favorite. Small bushes sometimes fare better because bears are surprisingly dainty eaters when the food is within reach, but pity the branch – or the bush with the branch – that is just out of reach. Here's a case where you might see a “walkover.” Picture the bear as a bulldozer. The walkover is also something a bear might do just for a lark, or to drizzle a little urine on when she wants a prospective mate to be able to follow her trail easily.

The second most prominent bear tree is commonly called a “mark tree.” Bears are popularly known as solitary creatures but in truth they have complex social networks. Bears want to know who their neighbors are and where they are. Mark trees are a bear's bulletin boards, as Susan Morse likes to say. To leave a post-it on the bulletin board, the bear assumes a standing position, gives the tree a strong hug, rakes its claws along it, gives it a bite or two, and then uses the trunk as a back scratcher. The result is a heavily scarred trunk that often has hairs stuck into the crevices of bark and torn wood. Bears have their favorite trees for this behavior. Conifers are preferred over hardwoods and the red pine is the top choice. White pines and spruces are

often used, occasionally balsam firs, but hemlocks don't appeal to the bears. Of the hardwoods, white birch is the only species I've seen used on a consistent basis. One introduced species, *Polus utilitum*, has proven to be very popular with bears. You can find these branchless trees



This white pine has been used as a mark tree for so many years that it has developed an hourglass shape. It's a wonder that the tree is still alive.

evenly distributed along roads; power companies like to hang wires from them. And what does a mom do when the kids are driving her nuts and she wants some time to herself? She chases them up a babysitter tree and goes off on a one-bear foraging spree. Babysitter trees are subtly nuanced. It takes careful scrutiny of the bark to see numerous small scratches made by many cub trips up and down the trunk. Randomly choosing trees to inspect will prove to be frustrating, so here are some “search imaging” (© Susan Morse) tips that will improve your odds. Large pines and hemlocks with plenty of foliage to hide in are preferred. Those near places where mom might want to do some stealthy foraging and/or have minimal coverage where the cubs can't easily hide are your best bet. You won't find them anywhere there is background noise like a highway or fast-moving water. Think pond, marsh, field, orchard or landfill.

My favorite time to look for a babysitter tree is when I'm visiting a marsh. I look for the tallest, fullest pine right on the edge with just the right amount of cover; enough to hide in but not too dense to easily walk through. When the tree has multiple branches way down low (which some folks say is an important feature of a babysitter tree), the best place to look is on the tops of branches where they meet the trunk. These are natural paw-holds that the cubs are automatically going to grab.

Look for sets of four or five scratch marks with at least a 2-1/2 inch span, but remember that raccoons and porcupines also do a lot of tree climbing. Telltale signs on the ground can include beds (matted down areas with logs and sticks pushed to the side), scats, and mangled saplings and bushes. When mom returns to collect the cubs, she is apt to rest her back against the trunk for a nursing session, so look for black hairs stuck in the bark. Sometimes there will be one or more mark trees nearby but not always.

Ground Foraging:

Knowing what bears eat and when they eat is necessary for finding their foraging signs. Bears have an incredible range of food sources, so let's limit this discussion to a few common, easily recognized examples. Ants, wasps, and assorted other insects provide a significant source for a bear's protein needs. As you can imagine, to make it worthwhile for a bear to collect such small organisms, it must seek out places with dense concentrations; that's one reason why the colonial species of wasps and ants are so popular. 2009 was a good year for ground wasps and we found many nests dug out for the wasps, their pupa, larva and eggs. Keep in mind that raccoons have also been reported to do this, so look for other evidence that it was a bear that dug up the nest. A large, broken root is good evidence of bear, as are black hairs snagged in the hole or other nearby bear sign.

Other places with high concentrations of insects are under rocks and in or under downed wood, such as a fallen tree. A large flipped rock, readily apparent when it rests beside the depression it was pulled from, or a partially decayed log that has been torn to shreds is strong evidence of a foraging bear. To illustrate the power of an adult black bear, I recall a 30" yellow birch that had broken at a height of ten feet and long-ago fallen across a transect line I established during a three-year study at Hubbard Brook. To get past the dead-fall, I had to squeeze between the standing snag and the prone trunk. One morning during my second year, I arrived to find the first six feet of the trunk shredded to a consistency suitable for mulch. The fresh, new end of the fallen trunk showed sets of claw marks that spanned five inches. I hope the bear found a good meal in that decayed log, for I certainly appreciated the improved ease of passage it provided to me.

A wise naturalist once said, "Wildlife is neat, is a good excuse to get out in the woods, and is worthy of thoughtful preservation." If you agree and you choose to enrich your next hike with some beginning tracking, chances are you'll confirm the passage, or if you're lucky maybe even the presence, of bears. And if you

enjoy this added dimension and really want to get into it, visit <www.keepingtrack.org> and learn more about Susan Morse or call 323-8328 to be added to the Friends of Bearcamp Trackers email list.



Cedar trees attract bears like catnip attracts cats. The one above was a healthy 5-inch diameter northern white cedar before a bear hugged and nibbled it into oblivion. The photo below shows a good sized bear footprint with a bobcat print within it. Why should the bobcat waste energy breaking trail?



Tales From the Trails: the Animal Issue

When I take city friends on the trail, I'm often surprised by their fear of large animals. My usual response is along the lines of, "we should be so lucky", because in my experience, it's rare to meet anything larger than a chipmunk. I've had some great animal sightings but they've been from a car; not on the trail. The most amazing fauna I've encountered on the trail was on a warm, late autumn day on a trail near the Pemi. Almost the entire trail (which was only about a mile long) was decorated with snakes, lying on the flattish rocks along one side. I think they knew winter was coming and they were out soaking up sun, and they were along the trail because it was more exposed and warmer than anything in the woods. It was a lesson in how many animals are out there, normally unseen.

So, it's not surprising that experienced hikers, who've spent time adding up to years in the woods, should have so few memories of meaningful animal sightings. Even when we don't see the other animals in the forest, just knowing that they're there adds a dimension of awe to the experience. And when we do see them, it's striking how powerful those sightings are, and how we remember them when everything else about that hike is forgotten. Paul King told me about becoming the filling in a moose sandwich as he headed up Old Jackson Road on Mt. Washington, where a mother and daughter boxed him in. No consequences -- they allowed him to walk away unscathed, except that in Paul's memory, this stands out, years later, as a moment of great drama. Whining and nagging by yours truly got others to write up their experiences, and here they are.

Chris Conrod on "The Hiker as Curmudgeon":

Animals? They're a nuisance. I've been chased down the trail by an irate mother grouse (apparently she didn't buy into the broken wing stunt), driven off the trail by a porcupine (he was muttering what I think were obscenities at me as he passed), cut off by a bull moose who would have walked right through me if I hadn't yielded the trail to him, and I've had my sleeping bag commandeered by a skunk. But my greatest indignity was inflicted by a bear who, unwilling or unable to operate a zipper, visited me in my tent by tearing through the canvas wall (this was before nylon had been invented). When I complained to the park ranger that Yogi destroyed my tent, all he said was, Let me know if he does any serious damage.

Animals should keep off the trail and stay in the trackless puckerbrush where they belong.

Judith Reardon on "Curious Animal Onlookers":

When walking on (and off) our Wonalancet trails, I sometimes realize that we are being watched. The chipmunks are the most visible and playful watchers -- they love to tease our dogs as we walk by. (I'm sure their chattering means "Haha, you're on a leash and

can't get us!" -- and the dogs try to prove them wrong!) The bears are more subtle -- certain trail signs receive significant claw marks by the bruin who wants to make we know that he owns that territory, not us. The black flies even respond, coming forth when we disturb the hobblebush leaves or waterbar duff that they are hiding under.

But I think the birds are the most interested. Once we bushwhacked up the West Spur of Mt. Whiteface, pushing uphill a LONG time through thick growth -- with Fred Lavigne, of course! When we got to the top, and sat panting under the pinetrees, the chickadees quickly gathered overhead and chattered at us. They seemed very surprised that we had come all that way. Similarly, an owl perched above our campsite along the Lawrence Trail, and watched us quite awhile as we talked quietly after dinner.

I'm always proud that I've come somewhere that is worthy of their interest!

Barbara Sidley on "Territorial Tolerance":

Years ago, on an exploratory walk up Forest Road 337, I came to a section of road overgrown with blackberry bushes. Since I could see a clear road ahead, I decided to continue my walk, and so plunged into the brambles. There were suddenly loud noises, a huffing and puffing and grunting. I was not the only living thing in this patch, and it was obvious that the creature sharing it with me was not happy with my presence. I decided to back out and wait, hoping that whatever was there would leave. I waited; there were no noises, only silence. I returned to the brambles and, once again, there was loud huffing and puffing. It was obvious that something did not want me there, and I retreated. On my return, my neighbor, Ed French, enlightened me. Those sounds had come from a bear!

I was greatly impressed with that bear's restraint and its ability to communicate. It told me that I must not come into its berry patch, but that I might sit on the side of the patch if I wished.

Ellen Hamilton Farnum on "A Magical Encounter":

My magical encounter happened as I was leaving the high forest where I had camped for four nights. I was descending slowly and dreamily through spruces when I heard the distinctive nasal call of a boreal chickadee. I had often glimpsed these small, elusive birds as they foraged in the pines, but had never seen one close up.

Inexplicably, on this day, one appeared before me. This bird was perched in a branch a foot away. I froze in my tracks and watched spellbound as he regarded me with bright eye, fearlessly gazing at me and chattering. I noted the soft cocoa colored cap and delicate wings and watched as the bird ruffled his feathers and shifted his weight on tiny, perfect feet. A feather out of place, lacy and delicate, each vein of the shaft etched like a

crystal of frost, was smoothed down with a graceful shrug of his body. All the while, this tiny creature crooned soft chick-a-dees at me, cocking his head--impudently surveying me. A whir of feathers, and he shifted to a branch to the left, then another whir and he was beside me again, tilting his head to listen to the soft bird calls I was making, watching out of those bold, dark eyes.

I stopped calling and listened earnestly. I felt sure he was speaking to me about something important! Filled with the raw wonder of the moment, I watched him and listened to his message. Then with one last flick of wings, he vanished.

Athena Holtey on "Early Morning Moose"

We did not expect great fall foliage for our hike, it was predicted to be early and drab. But nothing could have been farther from the truth! It was at its peak and beautiful. Thus began our three-day hike, logging about twenty rocky miles reaching two "braggable" summits, four if you want to stretch it, the views well worth the effort.

On October 1st we meet Mike at the Zealand trailhead and hike into a hidden campsite he knows. We do an unwise thing in the White Mts. . . camp well off the trail, but in an area obviously "marked" by a moose.

OK, we wanted to see a moose; maybe even "experience" a moose, but when the tent began to shake at 5:30 am from a moose tripping over our tent stakes, we saw how big he was and counted ourselves lucky that he was a courteous host.



And we're lucky that Athena is so good at Photoshop!

Your Fearless Editor on "The Other Side of the Story"

Believing in the validity of all viewpoints, it seemed useful to find out what bears think about humans on the trail. While *Ursus americanus* tends to be uncommunicative with almost everyone except Ben Kilham and Barbara Sidley (and, of course, the Bearcamp Trackers), there's a bell-shaped curve for every biological trait, and I was lucky enough to find a sociable female to interview. The following is my rough transcription of her remarks.

"Grrr. Rmiph. Sniff. Slurp. Mushroom! Slurp. Ant eggs! Slurp. Rmiph. Berries! Animals on trail? Trail is what? Many animals. Two legs? Strange pelts or no? Smell funny? Sometimes with four leg animal? Rmiph. Grrr. I know. . . I smell. I go in woods. . . they see me . . . scream, run . . . weak! Stupid! Always same place. Place is trail? Rmiph. Mushroom! Slurp. Sniff.

"Honey! HONEY!!! . . .sniff . . . close! Here!"

I quickly realized I'd made a tactical error in bringing a poorly wrapped honey and peanut butter sandwich for lunch. "It's for you", I lied. It was the work of a minute to grab the sandwich and throw it onto the trail. We were insufficiently intimate for hand to paw contact. "Thanks for the interview", I called as I ran.

The next **Tales From the Trails** topic is "**Lost (or Injured or Rescued) on the Trail**". And please note that we welcome poems on all nature and hiking-related subjects. Send to: susangoldhor@comcast.net.

The Trails Report

As I write, the fall foliage in Wonalancet is just passing peak. Hard to believe that all those gorgeous leaves are going to head like magnets for water bars. Soon the snows of winter will bury the leaves, the water bars, and the trails until next Spring.

The 2010 Trails season was very productive. Jed Talbot and his Off The Beaten Path crew spent 5 weeks on the Blueberry Ledge Trail turning gullies into rock staircases. Cristin Bailey of the USFS may submit an article to The Wilderness Journal detailing Jed's pathbreaking (well, actually path enhancing) methods for working with rock in Wilderness. Jed's crew logged over 800 hours.

Fred Lavigne spent a lot more than five weeks organizing and supervising our trail maintenance efforts this season. Members and friends of WODC have logged 600 hours of trailwork so far. We've done maintenance on all our trails including 45 hours on Sleeper and 71 hours on Square Ledge. Fred led our four Volunteer Work days. He also led some youths from our community on trailwork days to fulfill their community service requirements. Fred's best idea was pooling some money from WODC and Friends of the Sandwich Range to pay two trail workers this summer. That resulted in another 179 hours of trailwork, including an overnight on Square Ledge.

Our trails are in very good condition, as attested to by the hikers we encounter.

A heartfelt Thank You to Fred and to all the members and friends who made 2010 such a productive trailwork season.

Jack Waldron, Trails Chair

ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

President Jack Waldron called the 118th Annual Meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. at the Wonalancet Chapel, following a potluck supper in the chapel grove. 34 members and guests were present.

The Treasurer's Report was presented and discussed in some detail. Some confusion is created by Grant reimbursements which occur in a different fiscal year than the year in which the work is completed and paid for. The Executive Committee will consider changing our Fiscal Year to address this issue. There was also discussion of the increasing Trails Budget. Most of that is due to increases in Grants that we have received rather than increases in the cash that WODC provides. After a thorough discussion the Treasurer's report was passed unanimously.

There was a proposed amendment to WODC Bylaws. This amendment incorporated a Conflict of Interest policy into the Bylaws. The NH Attorney General's office requires all Non-Profits to document such a policy. The Bylaw Amendment passed unanimously.

2012 will be the 120th Anniversary of the founding of WODC. In honor of that event we are planning to conduct a Fund Raising Campaign to support our trailwork efforts. A MOTION to endorse the concept and authorize the Executive Committee of WODC to begin planning for the 2012 fundraising campaign in support of continued trail maintenance passed unanimously.

On behalf of the Nominating Committee Martha Chandler presented the proposed slate of Officers for 2011: President – Jack Waldron, Vice-President – Chele Miller, Treasurer – Nelson O’Bryan, Secretary – Nancy Stearns. A MOTION to cast a ballot for the entire slate passed unanimously.

Jack Waldron presented the proposed budget for 2011. After a short discussion a MOTION was moved and seconded to accept the projected 2011 budget and passed unanimously.

Under Other Business, Susan Goldhor, our newsletter editor, asked for submissions to the “Tales from the Trails” column for the next issue. The membership applauded Susan’s successful first issue.

A MOTION to adjourn, made and seconded, passed unanimously. Jack adjourned the meeting at 8:05 P.M.

WODC ORDER FORM

PLEASE MAIL COMPLETED ORDER FORM TO:

**WODC MEMBER SERVICES
HCR 64. BOX 248
WONALANCET, NH 03897**

NAME

STREET

CITY, STATE, ZIP

PHONE (.....).....

EMAIL

QTY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	TOTAL
	1901 Guide to Wonalancet (Reprint)	\$10.00	
	WODC Map & Guide (3rd edition) Members Non-Members	6.00 8.00	
	Unfolded WODC Map & Guide	9.00	
	3 or more unfolded Maps - each	7.00	
	WODC Historical Collection (CD)	25.00	
	WODC Patch	3.00	
	Coolmax T-shirt <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> gray <input type="checkbox"/> Large <input type="checkbox"/> blue <input type="checkbox"/> X-Large	18.00	
	New Memberships (not for renewals!) <input type="checkbox"/> Pathfinder <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Blazer <input type="checkbox"/> Five Year	15.00 25.00 50.00 250.00	
Additional Contribution (tax deductible)			
<i>All prices include shipping</i>		TOTAL:	



Editor's Ramble

I'm writing this from the city of Cambridge; a lovely city as cities go, but a city nevertheless. And I've been thinking about why, surrounded by art and music and theatre, to say nothing of autumn foliage and the Charles River, I'm yearning so deeply for the woods of Wonalancet. I have an image in my mind's eye of a winter trail, with snow falling. I'm on snowshoes, going uphill, in a white, silent world. And I realize that the lure -- the unique thing that I'm yearning for -- is that silence, broken only by the crunch of my footsteps. Human constructs seem inextricably bound to noise, but only nature offers us silence; soothing, healing silence. (Or, as Oliver Wendell Holmes put it, "And silence like a poultice comes, to heal the blows of sound.") Isn't it extraordinary that the sounds of nature, whether they're birdsong or flowing water, blend into silence, while human noise -- even Mozart -- stays noise? We need to protect not only the trees, the animals, the fungi and the trails, but also the silence. Not just for the forest's sake, but for ourselves. Like air or water, it's only when we lose it that we recognize how deeply we crave and need it.

"Is it not unutterably human to think, in our arrogance, that we are the caregivers and Nature our submissive recipient? In actuality, the reverse is true. It is Nature, even damaged, scarred, beaten-back Nature, who restores us through offerings as subtle as a scent or a silhouette of a tree on a poster, so fully are humans and Nature meshed together. It is only our noise that deafens us to this understanding."

from: *Potato City* by **Sue Leaf**, 2004, Borealis Books.

Susan Goldhor



Wonalancet Out Door Club

HCR 64, Box 248

Wonalancet, NH 03897