



# PASSUMPSIC VALLEY LAND TRUST

Volume Fourteen

Number One

Spring, 2008

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## One of Vermont's most pristine ponds conserved with the Land Trust's help

Through a combination of conservation-minded generosity, dogged negotiation and hard work a virtually undeveloped pond on the Danville/Peacham line will remain so, an emerald in the Northeast Kingdom crown. As of the close of 2007 nearly all the perimeter of Keiser pond has been conserved.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has acquired a package of shoreland parcels totaling 39 acres and including 3,800 feet of pond frontage from neighbor Wil Merck. This acreage augments VTFW's existing ownership around its Access Area on the southeast shore. The acquisition is part



of a larger transaction that includes a conservation easement on 65 acres of farm- and forestland north of the

pond, where Merck's easement donation to the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont **continued on page 2**

# Keiser Pond conserved through PVLТ effort—from page 1

Housing and Conservation Board protects 800 feet of frontage on the pond and 1,500 feet along Joes Brook with buffer zones 100' and 50' wide, respectively. The whole project represents a team effort by the VLT, VHCB, VTFW and PVLТ and reflects Merck's strong conservation motivation. PVLТ, as part of its Riparian Land Acquisition Project, contributed \$50,000, one-quarter of the purchase price which was well below market value. PVLТ's Project is underwritten by a grant from the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund managed by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

As if this was not enough of a conservation accomplishment, through a generous land donation by Mary Burdick and her brother Stephan, PVLТ has acquired an additional 16 acres of forested wetland at Keiser Pond. The Burdick parcel, located in Danville, is the valley bottomland between Sawyer Brook and the Keiser Pond Rd., and abuts VTFW's new acquisition near the pond's inlet. The parcel has been in the Burdick family since the 1960's, and was once part of a large tract of family land occupying the north-east facing slopes above Keiser Pond. This acquisition affords additional protection to Keiser

Pond's water quality and valuable wildlife habitat.

Thirty-three acre Keiser Pond is in the Joes Brook drainage, a part of the Passumpsic River drainage. It is relatively shallow, ringed mostly by softwood forest, and fed from the west by Sawyer Brook and an extensive wetland area that supports high ecological and wildlife value. Keiser's fish community consists of yellow perch, chain pickerel and brown bullheads. Furbearing mammals such as beaver, mink, otter and muskrats, and resident and migratory waterfowl and wading birds abound. Below the outlet of Keiser Pond, Sawyer Brook drops steeply down to Joe's Brook. Various natural communities including several sensitive plant species are represented in this complex of open water, wetland and upland.

With the exception of a single residence tucked along the northeast corner of the pond, there are no structures near the shoreline of the pond. Two private owners along the southwest shore maintain their lots in well-vegetated condition. Their residences are along the road, set far back from the pond.

The Burdick parcel, located in Danville, abuts the new State Wildlife Management Area at Keiser Pond and includes the valley

bottomland between Sawyer Brook and the Keiser Pond Rd.

Much of the property is a classic, and largely undisturbed, example of a northern white cedar swamp. Elizabeth Thompson's description, in her book *Wetland, Woodland, Wildland: A Guide to the Natural Communities of Vermont*, perfectly conveys the feeling of the Burdick property: "The dark, cool interior of the Northern White Cedar Swamp is an intriguing place. Mossy hummocks, water-filled hollows, the occasional sound of water gurgling just below the surface, and the chance of finding a rare plant or beautiful orchid have long attracted naturalists to these swamps."

The health of these communities depends on minimizing alterations to the natural evolution of the hydrologic regime that supports them. The Burdick donation and conservation of Keiser Pond shoreline are important acquisitions in assuring such protection.

In gifting her land to PVLТ, Mary Burdick expressed the desire that residents of our area might have a chance to experience these intrigues.

# Floodplain forest in Lyndonville conserved

In December PVLVT purchased 24.43 acres with over 2,000' of frontage on the Passumpsic River in the Village of Lyndonville. The property adjoins Powers Park and has multiple ecological functions and values.

According to the state wetland ecologist, Shannon Morrison, much of the property consists of flood plain forest with flood shoots. Flood

shoots are areas that pick up the overflow during flood events and the forested wetlands dissipate the velocity of the floodwaters allowing suspended sediments from upstream to settle out rather than continue down river scouring out riverbanks and muddying the waters.

Like the Nile, the Passumpsic River's repeated flooding of this property depositing sediments and

nutrients has created rich alluvial soils in this forested wetland. This type of wetland has become somewhat rare in Vermont, due to the historical conversion of such forests to farmland. In addition to flood storage value and water quality protection, the parcel provides habitat for otters, small mammals, amphibians and birds. Habitat and values that will forever be protected now by PVLVT.

## Want to electroshock a river? Then come to this unique workshop

A workshop celebrating the Water Andric will be held from 10 am until 3 pm on June 28<sup>th</sup> at the Danville Town Hall.

The free workshop, sponsored by PVLVT and Vermont Coverts, will have three guest speakers in the morning, a flume demonstration and an afternoon field trip on the Water Andric.

The morning talks will be by River Restoration Scientist, Shayne Jaquith; Fisheries Biologist, Jud Kratzer and Aquatic Biologist, Jim Kellogg. A BBQ lunch will follow. The lunch will be provided by the Danville Conservation Commission with flume demonstrations by Shayne Jaquith.

The afternoon field trip will be to the Water Andric

where participants will electroshock fish, collect macroinvertebrates and see river geomorphology in action.

Shayne Jaquith, River Restoration Scientist, will be speaking about the dynamic

are being played out on that river.

Jud Kratzer, Fisheries Biologist, will be talking about the different fish found in the Water Andric and other local streams and rivers. He will be talking about what habitat features are important to fish and will electroshock fish on the Water Andric for folks to see them live and up close.

Jim Kellogg, Aquatic Biologist, will be talking about threats to the water quality of the Water Andric and other streams in Vermont, as well as the biota that live in them.

During the afternoon session he will point out different types of habitat and collect macroinvertebrates so we can see what life the Water Andric harbors at the bottom of its food chain.

### Unique River Workshop

**When:**

**Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 10-3**

**Where:**

**Danville Town Hall**

**Free BBQ Lunch**

nature of rivers and how human encroachments have consequences both up and downstream. He will have a flume where folks can see this process first hand and will be able to explain during the field outing to the Water Andric how some of these principles

## **PVLT President testifies in support of VHCB at VT Legislature**

In February PVLT's president Kellie Merrell testified in front of the House Fish, Wildlife & Water Resources Committee and House and Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee about how Vermont Housing and Conservation Board funding has aided PVLT on three projects. A drastic cut to the VHCB was proposed for this year.

The funding formula required by state law dedicates just under 50% of the property transfer tax to VHCB for affordable housing and land conservation. Since 2002 the Legislature stopped following the

funding formula in state law because of overall state budget shortfalls and VHCB has not been receiving its share of the property transfer tax. This year's proposed budget will not follow that funding formula and will cut the funding by 30% more. The Governor proposed to dedicate none of the remaining transfer tax revenue to VHCB's land conservation program. It is proposed to be a one-year freeze, but it is suspected that once halted, the land conservation side of VHCB will not be restarted

Examples of how VHCB has helped facilitate PVLT projects include:

The fishing platform on the Passumpsic River in downtown Passumpsic was purchased with VHCB funds. Subsequently PVLT, with funding from VT Fish and Wildlife, put a handicap accessible fishing platform and picnic area there.

Over 1,600 acres surrounding Cow Mountain Pond in Grandby were protected with help from VHCB funding. Anyone can now hike into Cow Mountain Pond for a remote feeling experience of an undeveloped pond.

**The contents of this issue were edited and designed with the help of Tabitha Fitzgerald**

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