

## The Heath Trail: A Trail for All Seasons

by Lisa Durrell

In all seasons, the ¾-mile trail around the Heath at the Cathance River Preserve is filled with variety that makes a walk around this flat loop a delight. The boggy heath with its early purple rhodora is covered by white cotton-grass later in the season. After a long winter, the beech buds reveal fan-like unfolding leaves, which in the fall bring a golden glow to parts of the trail. At the same time, other deciduous trees are reflecting their color in the water-filled quarries. Hemlocks provide welcome blue shade in the summer and the balsam firs add forest fragrance. The brown fertile fronds of the cinnamon ferns disappear by summer, leaving the green sterile fronds that persist until the winter cold.

The wetter sections of the Heath Trail include many bog bridges, which were repaired last summer by

the hard work of the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, the easement holder of the Preserve. Their trail crew repaired the bench at the Heath Overlook and built a new bench at an entrance to the Heath Trail.

Not long after the snow recedes, hikers will be welcomed by the white bells of the trailing arbutus, then by the purple wings of the fringed polygala, and finally, by the long-awaited pink lady's slippers.



The Heath at the Cathance River Preserve (photo by Jim McCarthy)



Fringed polygala  
(photo by Valerie Chow)

These spring wildflowers all take advantage of the sunlight coming through the leafless trees. Just another moment in the annual cycle of nature on the Heath Trail.



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### Upcoming Events

For the latest information about the following events, visit our website: [www.creamaine.org](http://www.creamaine.org)  
~ Annual Meeting in May ~  
Join us to hear about highlights from the past year and our plans for the coming year.

~ Summer Fest on July 8 ~  
Maine Maritime Museum

A time to bring family and friends together for an evening of fun in support of CREA.

~ CREA's Online Auction ~  
October 22 - November 9

Offering an exciting mix of unique goods, services, and experiences. Many of the auction items will make great holiday gifts!

### Head of Tide Park Grand Opening

On National Trails Day (June 2), the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust (BTLT) and the Town of Topsham are planning a Grand Opening of the Head of Tide Park on the Cathance River. CREA staff will lead a walk to the celebration from the Ecology Center that day. Check the CREA or BTLT websites for more information in the coming weeks.

## Community Programs Offer New Approaches to Experiencing Nature

Have you noticed the new community programs we are offering at the Preserve? Perhaps you enjoyed a peaceful morning on a mindful walk with Heather Goulette, photographed eye-catching scenes or features with Jim McCarthy, listened to a recording of frogs at night along our self-guided Smart Trail, strolled under a full moon with Lisa Durrell, or learned how to sketch in nature with Carol Evans. These are just a



Jim McCarthy kneels to take a photograph during his walk last fall

few of the many approaches we are using to expand our community programs and opportunities to engage more of you in nature-based experiences. We are piloting these programs under a grant from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation. We hope to learn about the different ways our community realizes the many benefits of nature-inspired experiences. Stay tuned as we invite you to participate in more opportunities to enhance your well-being in nature this spring!

### StoryWalk® to be Launched at the Preserve



A StoryWalk presents the pages of a book – often a picture book – along a trail to encourage reading and exercise. We are joining organizations from all over the world that are using this innovative approach to promote early literacy learning, to engage families outdoors and in nature, and to encourage well-being in communities. StoryWalks were created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, Vermont, and developed in collaboration with the Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition and the Kellogg Hubbard Library.

Joe Beale, a 2017 graduate of Mt. Ararat High School, constructed 10 portable interpretive sign platforms for CREA in 2016 as part of his Eagle Scout project. This spring, we will use these platforms to display pages of StoryWalk books along the trails at the Preserve. We are collaborating with the Topsham Public Library to select books that will be featured on these StoryWalks through the seasons. Be sure to check out this new and fun activity!



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Please select CREA as your charitable organization when ordering from Amazon!



Your contribution makes everything in this newsletter possible. Please consider a donation to CREA by visiting [www.creamaine.org](http://www.creamaine.org). Thank you!

**Cathance River**  
EDUCATION ALLIANCE  
P.O. Box 187  
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The Cathance River Education Alliance connects people with nature to improve the well-being of both.

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Many thanks to Carey Truebe, Sarah Rodgers, Erik Nelson, and Lisa Durrell for contributing to this issue of our newsletter.

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## A Message from Our President

As this newsletter goes to press and after an active winter season at the Cathance River Preserve, we look forward to the harbingers of spring and CREA's hallmark programming that encourages all generations to connect with nature.

Over the past year, the CREA Board and staff expanded our educational programming to encourage adults to experience nature with inspiration in the arts and personal well-being. Our outreach to local schools, training both students and teachers in nature-based learning, continues to be an important focus of our mission. Mt. Ararat High School students completed their 13th year of research at the Preserve, contributing greatly to our database of local natural history knowledge. Our Ecology Center, "the building that teaches," continues to serve as the focal point for CREA's programs that reach more than 3,000 community members each year.

All things can become fresh under new leadership. Wendy Van Damme, our Executive Director, brings new perspectives and capabilities to CREA, while we welcome new Board members who bring much valued and varied skills to the organization. We are grateful to our devoted volunteers and supportive members who share and inspire enthusiasm for learning and appreciating the natural world.

We look ahead to 2018 with excitement and determination to bring more people into the ring of learning and the prospects for improved well-being through nature-based experiences.

Ed Lovely, CREA President



## CREA Educators Participate in WinterKids Outdoor Challenge at Bowdoin Central School

by Sarah Rodgers and Carey Truebe

In January, CREA Educators were excited to partner with Bowdoin Central School during their "family and community involvement week" as students tried to log as many hours as possible being physically active outdoors. This event was part of a healthy lifestyle challenge sponsored by WinterKids, a non-profit organization based in Portland that helps children develop healthy lifelong habits through education and fun outdoor winter activity.

CREA Educators led a snowshoe walk for students to explore the

forest behind the school. Everyone had a good time as they identified animal tracks, found mouse holes and tunnels in the snow, picked ice crystals off the tips of branches, and penguin-sledged down the hills. A few of the students had never been on snowshoes before. CREA Educators also assisted Bowdoin Central by providing snowshoes for their Winter Carnival, an outdoor celebration of winter activities.

CREA was happy to find these new opportunities to connect children to nature on their own campus.

## Volunteer Profile: Lisa Durrell

by Sarah Rodgers and Carey Truebe

When Lisa started volunteering for CREA, we had no idea what a gold mine we were getting! A former teacher in the classroom and outdoors, Lisa came full of creative ideas and skills to enhance our programs.

She helped lead our 2nd grade "Animals" field trips at the Preserve last June, guiding students through a scavenger hunt of animal artifacts to help them discover how animals are categorized. She even brought some bones and books of her own to add to the lessons. Many teachers commented about Lisa's enthusiastic and engaging approach and CREA staff found Lisa's work to be invaluable.

When field trip season was done, Lisa wasn't! She spent many days restoring order to the Ecology Center by going through boxes and organizing supplies so we could find what we needed. The end result is a much more usable and functional working and teaching space that keeps improving.

At CREA's December celebration, Lisa created a "12 Evergreens of CREA" display, a new twist to the verses of the 12 Days of Christmas that included photographs and descriptions of evergreen plants found on the Preserve. This was an example of Lisa's desire to educate people in new and fun ways and her ability to see a project through to completion.

Lisa also serves on CREA's Board of Directors and Program Committee, leads community programs - such as a Full Moon Walk - at the Preserve and writes newsletter articles (see Heath Trail article on next page). We cannot thank Lisa enough for all the hard work, creativity, and inspiration that she has given to CREA.

## Erik Nelson: Our Newest Board Member



At Bowdoin I teach courses on environmental economics and policy and on the economics of land use, including the benefits and costs of setting aside land for conservation. Research in this field has documented time and time again that most conservation areas, especially in suburban and urban landscapes, generate biodiversity, environmental, human health, and recreation benefits in dollar terms that are much greater than the foregone development benefits. Therefore, I am attracted to CREA and its nature preserve for professional reasons.

But, I also love to hike and had tramped on CREA's nature preserve several times before becoming a board member. Also, my son has enjoyed the summer camps at CREA; for a while he was very interested in snapping turtles after he encountered one at the nature preserve.

I believe that helping protect undeveloped nature and advertising its many benefits is one of the most important jobs we have in the modern world.

Many thanks to the Alfred M. Senter Fund, the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, and the Merrymeeting Bay Trust for supporting CREA's programming



*"The program increased my connection with nature as Lisa's walks always do! This particular walk made me aware of our lack of color discrimination at night, the winter life of several animals, especially the beaver, and substituting the sense of touch for our sense of sight".*

Participant of Lisa's Full Moon Walk in November

## There are still some openings in our Summer Camp!

We offer 6 week-long sessions of camp between June 25 and August 10, including one week of Science Camp. CREA's camps help foster your child's natural curiosity in the outdoors, the sciences, and the arts. Please visit our website to learn more and to register.

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

