

NEBC FIELD TRIPS 6-8 June 2003
Paul and Lois Somers, Recording Secretaries, *pro tempore*

Over 50 Club members and other naturalists joined together in Ashburnham, Massachusetts, in order to survey the flora and fauna of several sites in the town. Assisting NEBC in hosting the event were members of the Ashburnham Conservation Trust, the Campaign for Watatic, and the Athol Bird and Nature Club. Camp Split Rock in Ashburnham served as the headquarters for meetings, meals, field trips, and species identification. Camp chef for the weekend was Ernie Schori, who served the Club so well in this capacity at the August 2002 Yale Camp outing in Connecticut.

On Friday afternoon, June 6th, the group explored the Lincoln Pond area led by Paul Somers and Chris Gagnon, a local conservationist. Lincoln Pond is a pristine site with an extensive bog. While half the group hiked around the pond and bog, the other half explored the bog itself as well as the upland and spruce swamp on its western side. All were impressed by the numerous shrubs of *Rhododendron prinophyllum* and *Vaccinium myrtilloides* in the woods adjacent the bog, as well as the flowering *Calla palustris*, *Ledum groenlandicum*, *Kalmia polifolia*, *Chamaedaphne calyculata*, and *Rhododendron canadense* present in the bog. One uncommon sedge in Massachusetts, *Carex limosa*, was reported by those who visited the bog. While exploring an area of black spruce-dominated forest, a small contingent of botanists encountered clumps of tussock cotton-grass, *Eriophorum vaginatum* subsp. *spissum*, a relatively uncommon species in the state. The best find of the day was not a plant, but *Williamsonia fletcheri*, an Ebony Boghaunter dragonfly. It was discovered by Michael Veit, and is the first record of this state endangered species from Ashburnham.

Saturday, June 7th, was dedicated to surveying Mt. Watatic. Local guides Dwight Horan, Diane Wright, Eugene Dionne, and Bob Leary, all from Ashby, and David Hilbrook, David Leary, and Dick Lampula, residents of Ashburnham, led hikes up the mountain. The groups made their approaches from different sides of the mountain so that the many different ecological communities could be observed. Although the day got rainier hour by hour, the naturalists returned to camp excited about their findings, which included a *Betula lenta* tree with a dbh of 113 cm. Some other botanical highlights: Don Lubin found the first record of *Dryopteris campyloptera* for Mt. Watatic, Art Gilman reported seeing *Lycopodium lagopus*, and Alice Schori spotted *Corallorhiza trifida* during a trek through a hemlock-dominated swamp on the western side of the mountain. In the evening, while some of the participants logged findings or gathered around scopes to examine their specimens, the musically inclined joined Lois Somers in performing folk tunes into the night.

Sunday morning, June 8th, the naturalists set out with local guides Dan and Woody Johnson, Brian Mulroy, Bob Feen, and Howard LeVaux to survey portions of a 450-acre tract of land that the Ashburnham Conservation Trust and other conservation groups are working to conserve. Three outings occurred simultaneously to cover as much ground as possible. Species lists for these surveys were compiled by Robert Bertin, Georgia Hall, Paul Somers, Lisa Standley, Art Gilman, Melanie Schori, Don Lubin, David Lovejoy, Sue Williams (bryophytes), Noah Siegel (fungi), and Jacob Morris-Siegel (birds). Discovery of *Botrychium matricariifolium*, only known currently from a handful of sites in Massachusetts, was one of the highlights. Hemlock-dominated swamps in the lowlands were explored yielding *Dalibarda repens*, and rock outcrops on uplands of Bush Hill provided habitat for species such as *Carex platyphylla*, *Oryzopsis asperifolia*, *Corydalis sempervirens*, *Schizachne purpurascens*, and *Poa saltuensis*. While only a small percentage of the tract was surveyed it was evident that the native species diversity was relatively high and that the number of non-native species was extremely low due to the largely natural surrounding landscape. Art Gilman noted that the site appeared to be important moose-wintering habitat as evidenced by the heavy browsing of *Viburnum lantanoides*.

More complete accounts of some of the outings were recorded during the weekend. These journal accounts as well as the species lists compiled will be posted on the NEBC website <http://www.huh.harvard.edu/nebc/>.