CHOCORUA LAKE CONSERVANCY
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Chocorua Lake Conservancy

FALL 2021/WINTER 2022 NEWSLETTER

Artist: John Marin; Title: Mt. Chocorua No. 1; Date: 1926; Medium/Support: Watercolor and charcoal on heavy white wove paper; Dimensions: 17 3/16 x 22 1/16 in. | *Credit: Mt. Chocorua No. 1, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, William M. Prichard Memorial Fund; ©2021 Estate of John Marin / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Photo ©President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1928.5. Persistent Link: https://hvrd.art/o/306410.* Read more about this painting on page 2.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear CLC Members and Friends,

This past summer, I woke up early on a beautiful Saturday morning and joined a guided paddle on Chocorua Lake led by Lynne Flaccus, CLC's Stewardship Director. I'd been canoeing on Chocorua Lake every summer since I was a little child and assumed that I'd seen everything there was to see. As usual, however, Lynne helped me see things I'd never seen before, including fascinating carnivorous pitcher plants in a marshy area near the dam.

So much is not evident as we spend time in the Chocorua Lake Basin. A deadly virus is everywhere yet not visible to anyone. Invisible parts of our air, carbon dioxide, continue to make our planet warmer and warmer.

Each of these things, while not observable to everyone, is evidence that our individual well-being is linked to everyone's welfare. We may have the occasional illuminating moments—like mine on that beautiful morning on the lake

following Lynne—but as a rule, unless we learn to pay attention, the interconnected character of our shared relationships remains invisible.

It is our job to understand that these invisible relationships join all of us, and to have the inquisitiveness to uncover how things connect. As Susan Goldhor describes on page 3, trees in the forest are interconnected by extensive mycorrhizal networks of fungi. Trees depend upon mycorrhizal fungi for water and soil nutrients and in return provide the fungi with sugars.

As Kit Morgan describes on page 10, the recent gift of the 47-acre Theodore and Alice Browne Memorial Forest connects the 150-acre Brown Lot, owned and managed by the CLC, to our 67-acre Charlotte C. Browne Woods, and creates an important corridor for wildlife to move from one habitat to another.

Charles Colten and his daughter Leila demonstrated this interconnectedness and reciprocity with the natural world while searching for a Christmas tree last winter, as he describes in his story on page 11.

I enjoy the process of discovering connections in the natural world that I knew nothing about. There is something almost unbelievable and sacred about a world that evolves to beautifully support mutual thriving.

Let us go together through our human and natural worlds and look for interconnections. Know that whether we see it or not, we are all connected. Becoming more aware of these interconnections is a practice that will serve us well as we continue feeling the effects of climate change or when the next pandemic arrives.

Alex

Alex Moot
Board President
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INTERCONNECTIONS: ART & PLACE

The painting on the cover of this season's newsletter is from 1926, by early American Modernist artist John Marin. Born in New Jersey in 1870, Marin went to art school in Philadelphia and New York, and then early in the 20th century spent a number of years traveling and painting in Europe. He had his first exhibit at photographer Alfred Stieglitz's gallery in New York in 1909, and in 1915 he spent his first summer in Maine. For the rest of his life, he returned to Maine to paint the sea and the sky—he died there in 1953. He also traveled throughout the White Mountains, paintbrush in hand, and made a number of paintings of Mt. Chocorua; an exhibit of his White Mountain paintings was on display at Menconi + Schoelkopf in New York this fall.

We were contacted in September by Joachim Homann, the Drawings curator at Harvard Art Museums, asking if he could include an image of our 2021 spring/summer newsletter in the slide show for a talk he was giving on two of Marin's Mt. Chocorua paintings—the cover featured a watercolor of the lake and mountain by Tamworth's Ann Borges, and he wanted to speak to the connections between land conservation, places of beauty that inspire humans to see anew, and ongoing traditions of art-making in the White Mountains.

His talk is wonderful. He speaks about the paintings themselves in detail—color, line, shape, movement—and sets them in a context of Marin's connection to Stieglitz, to modernity, and to influences from Kandinsky to Cezanne. He speculates, too, about one particular patch of blue in the painting. Marin liked a road trip, Homann tells us, and so in August Homann himself decided to take a road trip north to learn more about the paintings by seeing the place where they were made. He found himself on a beautiful wooden bridge facing a lake with wooded shores and a mountain that rises from the lakeshore up to a stony top. But it wasn't quite the spot from which the painting was made, so he went up the hill, and found the Chocorua Lake Basin View Lot, and when he saw the glimmer of lake, that patch of blue, from up there...well, you'll have to watch the talk, which you can find at bit.ly/marin-chocorua.

This was the first summer that the Basin View Lot was open to the public after the CLC secured a conservation easement that allows ongoing public access to the view and created a safer off-road parking area and a beautiful place to sit for a while. It is lovely to feel the threads of appreciation for this magical landscape weaving backward in time, and to know that artists and others will have access to this landscape in times to come, as well.

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Why Are Big Pines So Big?
OR In Praise of Non-Charismatic Fungi

BY SUSAN GOLDHOR

It seems to be a basic human trait that we set up scales of value for everything in our world. What do we value and what do we denigrate? Let's forget the vast majority of folks who devalue the whole kingdom of fungi, and look only at mushroom foragers. Of course, the term "mushroom foragers" says right there what's most highly valued: fleshy fruiting bodies. Not woody polypores, or microscopic endophytes, or the mycelia of mycorrhizal fungi, despite the fact that they may be the ones supporting the ecosystem. No, we want collectibles and—most of all—edibles. Because humans are hierarchy-makers, even edibles have a great chain of being in our eyes, with morels at the top and a whole stew pot of undistinguished boletes, honeys, and slightly buggy or hardened sulphur shelves or hens that we picked too late at the bottom. (Personally, I wouldn't put morels on top, but I understand their allure, so I'm not going to argue.)

For the inedible fleshy fungi, there turns out to be a separate hierarchy of values. Though few of us would eat an amanita (even an edible one, so powerful is their aura of danger), amanitas warrant awe and admiration. Foragers are more apt to gather round in silent worship than to kick or destroy these elegant beings.

Not so Russulas. What is it about these colorful mushrooms, which often provide decoration when everything else has gone underground, that makes mushroomers so likely to kick or hurl them? Is it their brittle texture, so that they fragment (instead of gluing a slimy layer to your boot)? Is it the difficulty of identifying them or the fact that if you *do* identify them, they are unlikely to be edible? The newsletter of a mushroom club (I refrain from naming it) once published an article about Russulas, which included the following: "People have developed very creative ways of using Russulas...when you are walking through the woods you can see Russulas that have been used to relieve stress... those are the ones that have been kicked. The rest of the Russulas you can see will have been already plucked and turned upside down and used as trail markers." And this quote is far gentler than one from a mushroomer who suggested collecting as many Russulas as possible and incinerating them.

Mount Chocorua from Greycroft. Might this pine painted by Charles G. Loring nearly 100 years ago have been surrounded by *Laccaria bicolor?* | *Charles G. Loring*

However, Russulas don't exist to be kicked or incinerated; they are their own selves, mycorrhizal and playing at least one unique role in our forests. If you've ever admired the white flower of Indian pipe (*Monotropa uniflora,* also known as Ghost pipe), you can thank the Russulas. Indian pipe is one of the rare plants without chlorophyll, which

means that it cannot make its own sugars, but must be parasitic on green plants. But Indian pipe doesn't simply glom onto the roots of another, greener member of its kingdom and suck out a little sustenance. The conduit between the green plants and the white ones turns out to be members of the Russula family. One could ask all sorts of interesting questions here; for example: Does the donor plant know where its sugar is going? (No answer yet.) Which green plants are donors? (We don't know.) Does the Indian pipe give something to the Russula in return? (So far, no one has found that something.) What signal does the Indian pipe give the Russula's mycelium to induce this nutritional handshake? How does the Russula decide how much sugar to share—and is this under its control or the control of the parasite? Again, no answers to any of these questions, but you can see why researchers have been fascinated by this relationship, to which entire careers could be fruitfully dedicated.

When we decide that certain mushrooms are boring or worthless, we do it from our limited viewpoints and our profound lack of knowledge. Apart from appearance, we know very little, but we live in an era of new techniques capable of enriching our understanding to an extent that would have been unimaginable twenty or even ten years ago. The Bible says, "seek and ye shall find," but mycology, like the virtuous life, suffers from a paucity of seekers, although the relatively small number out there are doing amazing stuff and finding wonders.

I've been fascinated for a while by a small non-charismatic mushroom called *Laccaria bicolor (Lb)*. *Lb* is of no culinary interest, having been judged "edible but not palatable." It's not particularly beautiful; the violet coloration that gives it its name fades early on. However, unlike most ectomycorrhizal (forming a particular type of association with tree roots) fungi, *Lb* can not only be grown in culture, but it can also connect with the roots of its partner trees (conifers; generally pines) in vitro, and it was this trait that led to its becoming a sort of fungal laboratory rat and the subject of numerous

Russulas brightening the autumn woods. / *Juno Lamb*

studies, including being the very first ectomycorrhizal fungus to have its entire genome sequenced in 2008.

Looked at very simply, mycorrhizal fungi supply their tree partners with water and soil nutrients in exchange for sugars (since only photosynthesis can make a sugar; all the rest of us can only build on what the plants have made). As everyone who's ever bought fertilizer knows, the major nutrients that plants need are N-P-K (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium). So it's no surprise that the major nutrients supplied by the plant's fungal partner are nitrogen and phosphorus, which fungi generally get by digesting decaying plant material. The *Lb* genome shows a greatly reduced number of cellulases—enzymes that can digest that decaying plant material—although it does have cellulase type enzymes analogous to those in plant pathogens. After all, pathogens are the specialists in breaking down living plant defenses, and it is this type of enzyme that allows a mycorrhizal fungus to gain entry to its partner tree's roots. On the other hand, its genome shows an enhanced number of enzymes that can digest protein, as well as the kind of carbohydrates that might be found in animals or bacteria. And, most surprising of all, it seems to be able to produce something resembling a snake venom.

The *Lb* genome was published in 2008, but John Klironomos, a researcher who has specialized in surprising findings about fungi and their ecosystems, was seven years ahead of the geneticists when he noticed that *Laccaria's* hyphae (those tender threads that are the permanent bodies of mycorrhizal fungi) was not eaten by the small soil invertebrates, such as springtails and mites, that normally dine on fungal hyphae. When other fungi were grown with springtails, the springtails thrived and multiplied. But when the springtails were grown with *Lb*, the springtails died, and all of those dead springtails were found to be internally infected by *Lb*. Innocuous-looking above-ground, *Lb* is a real predator underground. It first immobilizes the still living unfortunate springtails—John and his co-author suggested that *Lb* might produce a

toxin to paralyze its prey before hyphal invasion. (Presumably this would be the enzyme resembling snake venom seen seven years later in the genome and surprising those scientists.) By adding pine seedlings to this micro-system, they were able to show that *Lb* can extract nitrogen from both living and dead springtails; that much of this nitrogen was then transferred to the pine seedlings; that 25% of the seedling's nitrogen was animal in origin (but transferred only by the fungus), and that the pine seedlings grown with *Lb* gained more biomass than the pine seedlings grown with other species of (kinder, gentler) mycorrhizal fungi.

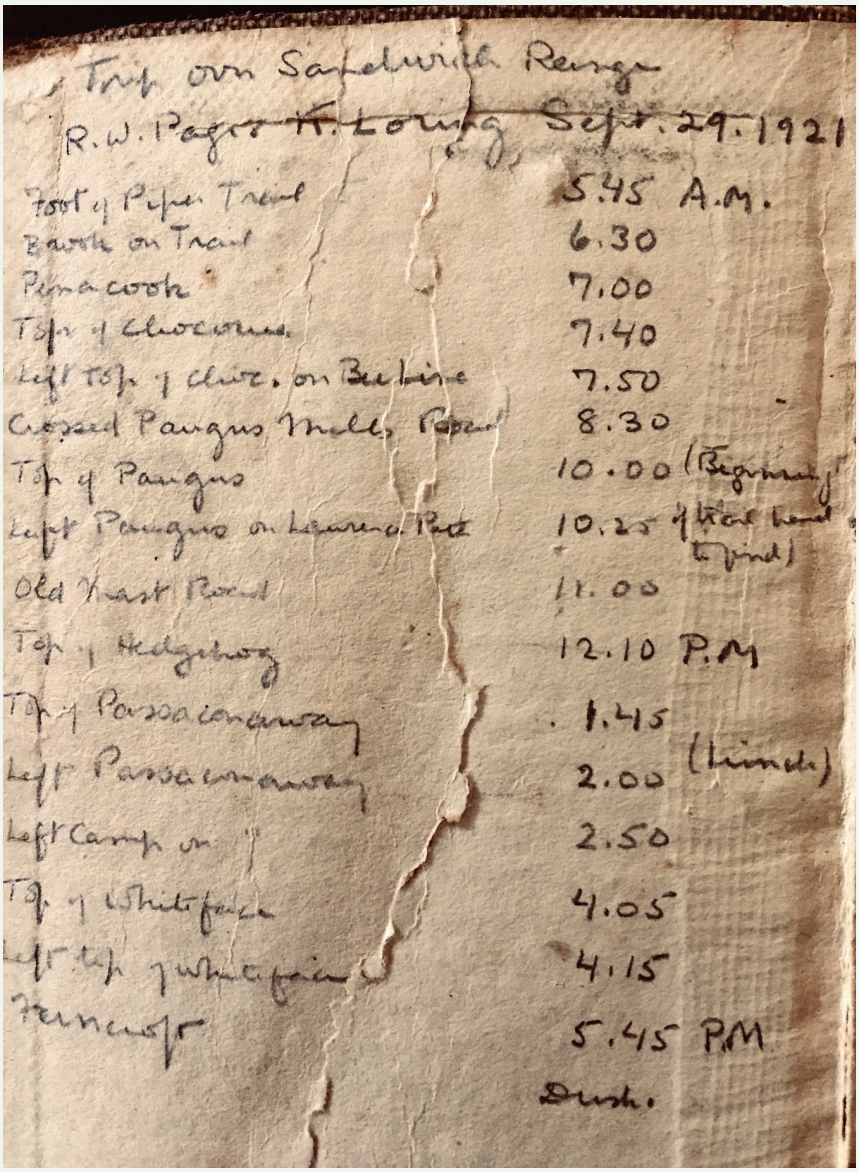
I do most of my foraging in the town of Tamworth, whose boundaries include a conservation property called "Big Pines"; a lovely area for hiking that does indeed contain a lot of really big white pines. In fact, it contains what is believed to be the largest white pine in New Hampshire and perhaps in New England. Why do white pines grow so large so rapidly? Well, now we know. It's all the fertilizer they get from their undistinguished little companion fungus, *Laccaria bicolor.*

Proust said (heavily edited and paraphrased), "The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." So, before we kick, incinerate, stomp on, or sneer at some mushroom for being inedible or drab or difficult to identify, perhaps we should stop and look at it with new eyes.

References:

- N. Klironomos & M.M. Hart, 2001. *Animal nitrogen swap for plant carbon.* Nature 410: 651.
- F. Martin et al. (more than 60 colleagues!), 2008. *The genome of Laccaria bicolor provides insights into mycorrhizal symbiosis,* Nature 452:88-92. doi:10.1038/nature06556)
- Tom Volk's *Fungus of the Month for August 2010:* http://botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms_fungi/aug2010.html

Susan Goldhor is a biologist, President of the Boston Mycological Club, and a contributing editor and columnist for Fungi *magazine.*



SANDWICH RANGE, 1921

Just about 100 years ago, in late September, 1921, Katherine Loring hiked the Sandwich Range from Mount Chocorua to Mount Whiteface. Earlier this year, her grandchildren found the timeline of her hike inside an old copy of the AMC White Mountain Trail Guide. "We were thinking about trying to repeat the climb," one of her grandchildren said, "but decided to sit on the porch…looking at the four mountains, and toasting her feat with a gin and tonic." */ Photo: Christopher Hadden*

Shore Buffers & Interconnected Watersheds

BY LYNNE FLACCUS
Stewardship Director

We are all connected. One way, perhaps less obvious than others, is within the watersheds where we live. A watershed is any place that sheds water—from the roof on our houses to the larger landscape around us. We all live in a watershed, upstream and downstream from others. How we care for and relate to the land where we live affects ecosystems near and far through the connection of water.

The headwaters of the Chocorua River originate on the south and west side of Mt. Chocorua. Springs and rainwater collect in drainages and flow into larger streams and wetlands as water makes its way to the lake. The lake is not the end of the Chocorua River watershed: the Chocorua River flows on to the Bearcamp River, into Ossipee Lake and Ossipee River, then into the Saco, and eventually to the ocean. The habitats in and around Chocorua Lake are connected to the ocean miles away, and the smallest seeps at its headwaters.


Lynne Flaccus

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services has rules, regulations, and permit requirements for activities in and around lakes, ponds, rivers, and wetlands, in order to protect vegetation, soils, and water quality. Whether or not a permit is required for shoreline activities, we can consider basic ecological concepts when living and planning activities along waterways: "Everything is connected to everything else" and "Everything must go somewhere."

That everything is connected is demonstrated along the shore of the lake—natural vegetation buffers between water and land provide shade along the shore that keeps water edges cooler, protect the shore from erosion and run off, and provide native foods for wildlife. A buffer of groundcover and thick vegetation provides cover for wildlife moving into and out of the water and "highways" as they move through their territory. Mink, otter, birds, squirrels, and deer are less likely to cross open areas, and will use the cover for moving in between and through different habitats.


The shoreline of Little Lake viewed from the Narrows Bridge. / *Lynne Flaccus*

Paddling around the edge of Chocorua Lake, you'll notice various shrubs growing at water's edge. Buttonbush, highbush blueberry, male berry, and alder are low- to medium-sized shrubs that not only provide cover and hold the shoreline in place, but provide important food sources for a variety of birds and other wildlife. Look for cedar waxwings at the north end of the lake when fruits are ripe. You might see these birds eating berries, and then flying out over the water to glean emerging damselflies from the water's surface, taking advantage of two food sources that are both connected to water.

Along the northern shore, near the river inlet, you might also notice the high bank with thick vegetation. The winter winds and ice act like a plow, pushing up against the shore. Erosion is controlled by the tangle of roots of the shrubs growing there. Sediments torn loose in storms and those carried into the lake by the river settle in the shallow waters, providing nutrients for aquatic plants. Those nutrients are a result of growth and decomposition upriver and along the shore—everything must go somewhere!

When buffers are removed or lawns grow to the edge of water, opportunities for erosion increase. A "less messy" waterfront doesn't provide cover for wildlife corridors. Fertilizer or pesticides may filter through the shallow root systems into the water and end up downstream as someone else's problem. Open sunny areas provide places for invasive plants to outcompete the natural and native plant communities. The wildlife of these areas evolved with native plants, not those that have been brought to the area more recently, either intentionally or accidentally.

When landowners keep ecological concepts in mind while stewarding land, we help keep connections intact, maintain water quality, and support wildlife both in and out of the water.

If you have questions about your shorefront property, please contact CLC. We can share a wealth of resources to help you care for the land where you live—after all, all of us are just temporary stewards here!

Dam Repair at Chocorua Lake

BY SHELDON PERRY

I was the "Dam Steward" from the fall of 2019 to May of this year. It is a pleasant task, choosing one of several paths to the outlet for both the Chocorua Lake and the "Little Lake," a beautiful place where the dam controls the level of the lake before it becomes the continuation of the Chocorua River as it meanders south to the more well-known dam in Chocorua Village. While the dam and sluiceway have an influence on lake levels, the greater influence is the weather itself.

My initial inventory of the dam revealed a dam in reasonably good shape. Its last repair, patching up the top surface of the cap with cement, was done in 2014. I noticed several minor areas of failure and numerous hairline cracks on the cap, but otherwise the abutments, the sluice, and the essential structure were healthy.

My periodic monitoring typically noted the date, the lake level in relation to the cap, how many boards were in the sluice (there are only two possible) and the recent weather pattern, most notably the amount of precipitation. I also noted items of interest, such as beaver activity (yes, they are busy) or any encroachment of lake ice during the winter. Typically, the lake levels are near or above the cap with flow going over it, year-round.

Last winter I noticed that the lake level was below the cap, which allowed for snow to accumulate on the cap. After melting in April, I was surprised and disappointed to notice significant defoliation of the cap's surface. Could it be that the exposed cap caused mechanical weathering from freezing and thawing cycles?

Although the damage was superficial, several inches deep or less, I notified the NH Department of Environment Services (NHDES) Dam Management Bureau for advice. It was quickly determined that this would be a dam "repair" and not a "reconstruction,"

Above: Winter damage to the top of the dam. **At right:** Stumps of newly-cleared pines are visible above the abutment. / *Pen Hallowell*

which was good news.

From the suggested Dam Bureau's lists of engineering firms to deal with such issues, the Lake and Property Management Committee (LPMC) has decided to work with Michael Sievert, a structural engineer with Horizons Engineering. His initial on-site visit, inspection and report suggests the need for a more comprehensive evaluation. This would include:

- Determining the cause of the damage.
- Evaluating the extent of the damage.
- Evaluating the need for repair.
- Selecting the repair method and material.

At this moment, further evaluation is a work in progress. The LPMC is asking questions to seek the best path forward. Please know that the Chocorua Lake Conservancy (CLC) takes the civic responsibility of properly maintaining the Chocorua Lake dam very seriously. To this end, the CLC is grateful for the efforts of Leah Hart and Tristan Williams, our current dam stewards!

Stay tuned for future developments...

Sheldon Perry is Vice-President of the CLC Board, and Chair of the Lake and Property Management committee.

Clark Reserve Stewardship

BY HENRY HODGMAN
Clark Reserve Steward

Three years ago I began noticing that Chocorua Lake Conservancy had openings for property stewards. I did not know much about the CLC and not much more about any property in their care. Having settled in Tamworth recently, I would find CLC newsletters in my mailbox at regular intervals. *The Conway Sun* periodically carried CLC announcements of events that usually included mention of stewardship opportunities. That combination of prompting along with my childhood roaming a large New Hampshire woodland property, and graduate study in geography, led me to contact Lynne Flaccus and express interest in stewarding the Clark Reserve property.

After attending a CLC presentation at Cook Library, I spoke with Lynne and we agreed to have me fill out the necessary paperwork outlining my role and responsibility as steward for the Clark Reserve property. That spring I began walking the Clark Reserve off Fowler's Mill/Chocorua Lake Road. Usually, I would spend a couple hours every few weeks becoming more familiar with the terrain and its forest community. The trails were sufficiently open to provide easy access for various off-trail explorations to the Reserve's nether regions and boundaries.

Coursework years earlier in biogeography, geomorphology, hydrology, and wildlife biology informed my observations on these rambles. I do not consider myself to be a scientist. My observations are merely that, and my sense of the land is generally quite impressionistic. However, I do notice small things like a Phoebe nest tucked into a rock face where moss and ferns largely cover quartzite. Or, one spring day while clearing a fallen tree from the Old Mail Road, hearing a frog choir over the hillock and thinking there must be a vernal pool in that direction, my next venture confirming the pool's presence. On another walk I found relatively fresh bear scat off trail and wondered where it had found such a concentration of blackberries that their seed made up the whole of its deposit; I have not found that berry patch yet.... One late autumn day while following faded boundary blazes through boggy ground I happened to spy frost crystals framed in pitcher plants. Another day I came upon beds recently vacated by a bear sow with cubs, their night-time excretions denoting size and count.

A rock construction in the Valley of the Boulders, CLC Clark Reserve. / *Lynne Flaccus*

The Clark Reserve, though somewhat tamed by trails and recent logging, requires substantial wood-sense for cross-country travel without navigation aids. Not only are there numerous hills and draws with varying slope and aspect (a term denoting compass direction), there are thickets, wetlands, talus, and boulder-strewn hillsides—each requiring good spatial orientation and balance when traveling off-trail. The southern areas of the Reserve that have been logged just a few years ago provide some tricky footing as there is much slash remaining on the ground—not a good area for looking around. Bickford Heights is rather rough going on trail-free slopes; there is a significant amount of bedrock talus and deadfall—hand over foot terrain. Higher ground up the Hunter's and Highland trails is largely hardwood stands and quite open, offering a few distant glimpses once the leaves have fallen. The best long view, however, is toward the west from the bedrock slabs at the top of Bickford Heights. The trail begins at Fowler's Mill/Chocorua Lake Road and follows the Old Mail Road to the junction with Bickford Heights Trail before climbing to the low summit where trail-side observation can expand to a wider vista. As steward of Clark Reserve, every day out has been rewarding.

If you would like to become a CLC property steward and have the opportunity to come to know a piece of land deeply, please contact Lynne Flaccus, lflaccus@chocorualake.org.

The Browne Memorial Forest:

A Family History

Top: Dappled sunlight in the Browne Memorial Woods. / *Lynne Flaccus.* **Above:** Four of the grandchildren of Theodore and Alice Browne: Charlie Browne, Katherine Greenough, Mason Browne, Kay Hansen. / *Kit Morgan*

BY KATHY GREENOUGH

The most recent addition to the CLC's conservation lands is one with a strong family connection and history dating back more than 100 years. The Juniper Hill lot—now the Browne Memorial Forest—extends uphill on the south side of Washington Hill Road through second-growth white pine, hemlock, birch and oak forest. The woodlot is home to deer, bear, coyotes, and other wildlife, as well as varied and abundant plant life, streams, and a small pond.

The property was donated by the Browne family and is named for the donors' grandparents, Theodore and Alice Browne, who lived across the road in one of Tamworth's earliest houses—the oldest farm in the neighborhood, according to *If Walls Could Speak.*

Theodore Browne (1892-1973) first came to Chocorua in the summer of 1913, when he visited his theater professor at Harvard, the renowned George Pierce Baker. Professor Baker had just built Boulder Farm, with a magnificent view of Chocorua and the surrounding mountains, in the North Division of Madison.

Theodore was visiting with his mother and two sisters, and they all immediately fell in love with the beauty of the area. The following summer, 1914, the family rented the Pratt cottage on Washington Hill Road. The road was much more open than it is now, with fields and farms everywhere and very few wooded areas. Professor Baker gave the family a tip that a farmhouse was for sale on Washington Hill Road, and in 1915 Theodore bought that farmhouse and the adjacent barn, a place the family referred to simply as Chocorua. It also has a stunning view of Mt. Chocorua. In May, 1918, Theodore married Alice Towne Billings (1893-1985), who had graduated from Radcliffe in 1915, and they began to spend summers at Chocorua. The couple had three children and during the summers began to meet their neighbors and become involved in local affairs. Theodore was a chemical engineer and a patent attorney, and loved machinery of all kinds. He thus became a much valued neighbor and would enthusiastically tackle any mechanical problem. Eventually there were 12 grandchildren who came every summer for hiking, swimming, and canoeing

1958! / *Lynne Flaccus*

and loved the area as much as their parents and grandparents. One favorite family story involves a grandchild, age four, looking up at Mt. Chocorua with Alice and asking, "Grandma, was that mountain there last summer?"

Although Theodore and Alice were not hikers themselves, they cherished the mountains, lakes and fields in Chocorua and became early supporters of conservation and efforts to preserve open space. They were members of the Chocorua Mountain Club in the 1930s and Theodore was the CMC Board chair; they bought additional acreage to protect their land, and in 1970 put a conservation easement on the Juniper Hill lot to protect it from future over-development. They were also early members of the Chocorua Lake Conservation Foundation, predecessor to CLC, and were concerned about larger environmental issues, such as air and water pollution, and trash disposal. Theodore and Alice Browne were both intelligent and civic-minded individuals who loved the land and the people of Chocorua. This Memorial Forest is a worthy tribute to their lives and their values.

Kathy Greenough is one of the grandchildren of Theodore and Alice Browne.

VISITING THE BROWNE MEMORIAL FOREST

Here on the edge of the White Mountain National Forest we are blessed with an abundance of protected forest lands and the many resources they provide. Some, like the recently donated Theodore and Alice Browne Memorial Forest, have benefits that are not immediately obvious.

CLC Stewardship Director Lynne Flaccus led a "woods wander" in September on the woodlot, joined by four grandchildren of the Brownes and other explorers. The family members caught up on news, exchanged stories and family lore, and described their family's century-long connection to the land.

As we meandered up the hill from Washington Hill Road, the group was able to spot some unusual plants, an old dead tree torn apart in search of insects by a bear, vernal pools near the top of the hill, and a unique license-plate corner marker. We found a stream that had been partially dug out and dammed by Theodore Browne to provide water for the farm pond across the road. Near the top of the hill and the back boundary of the property, large pines towered over us. One family story is that Washington Hill was so named because the mountain could be seen by climbing the tall pines!

What couldn't be seen in the woods were the connections that this conservation land provides. To the west it abuts the CLC-owned 150-acre Brown Lot (no relation to the Brownes). It also connects to the Charlotte C. Browne Woods, wooded and open land on both sides of Washington Hill Road donated to CLC by the extended family in 2006. A conservation easement along the Chocorua River extends the protected land farther to the north and east.

Rattlesnake plantain, *Goodyera oblongifolia,* one of the local orchids. / *Lynne Flaccus*

These connections counter the harmful trend of fragmenting forest and other open space land into smaller parcels, which limits wildlife movement and in some cases breeding habitat. The new Browne Memorial Forest may in the future have a trail that would allow visitors to enjoy some of its hidden features while protecting the animal and plant life it harbors. What is certain is that it will forever be undeveloped open space, with all the benefits, both visible and hidden, that these spaces provide.

—KIT MORGAN
Co-chair of the CLC Land Conservation Committee

Listening to the Spirit (of Christmas)

Author's note: *When Covid shut down my daughter's preschool, I made the decision to shut down the programs I bring into schools (www.circle123.org), and dedicate my time to homeschooling. The word "homeschooling" is perhaps inaccurate, because we spent most of our time outside the home and it wasn't so much a "school" as an ad-hoc attempt to nurture and support whatever natural curiosity she showed. Our approach, each morning, was to make a list of what we wanted to explore that day and then learn from every human and non-human we encountered. The world was our classroom, curriculum, syllabus, teacher, and guest instructor. Our roles were those of stewards and students of life, guiding and following the currents of curiosity. The dialogue between and among all of these elements naturally led to an awareness that everything is alive...everything is interconnected... everything is worthy of respect...and everything has something to teach. This story, "Listening to the Spirit (of Christmas)," is one of many anecdotes that emerged. I hope you enjoy it.*

BY CHARLES COLTEN

We went out to the woods to find a Christmas tree the other day, and the only thing I cared about was to reinforce with my four-year-old daughter that we ask permission of the tree...to instill an ethos of relationship and reciprocity rather than a simple attitude of extraction and consumption.

This is something we've done whenever we go out into the forest or beaches, and she inevitably wants to bring things home. We ask Mother Earth and the rock, pinecone, stick, bug, shell, etc. if they want to come with us for a while, and if they give us permission to move them from this place.

As we trudged through the snow, which was sometimes up to her thighs, looking for a Christmas tree, the adults seemed to harbor a background goal-orientation...a "Let's get a good tree, go home and have a drink" kind of thing. We found a nice full tree that everyone thought would be good, and I encouraged my daughter, Leila, to ask for permission and then listen for the answer.

She got very close to the tree, whispered her question and then stood for a long time… listening. Some of the adults prompted, "What did it say?" "Did it say yes?" "I think it said yes." "Did you hear it say yes?"

She turned to the group, "It takes time for it to answer...it moves slower than we do," and she listened some more.

After a pause, while the wind sounded through the surrounding white pines, she said, "This tree said no."

Some of the adults tried to convince her that it was a good tree and maybe it said yes. It was snowing harder now, and the adult attitude began to border on "Let's just get the blasted tree, get back to the fire, and have a drink."

But Leila was firm. "No. It said no."

Trying to keep everyone happy (hmmmm…I need to look at that), I asked my daughter to listen one more time.

She did and, again, really took the time to listen, while most of the adults rolled their eyes and stomped their feet back and forth in the snow, pacing in place, trying to keep warm.

And then she calmly said, "It said no."

I reinforced for her that "no" definitely means no.

That's part of Mother Earth's body and she gets to decide what happens with her body, just like you get to decide what happens with your body, and our bodies are interconnected.

So, we continued to look, and in a couple of minutes she found this tiny, "Charlie Brown" Christmas tree that was only a few paces from where we previously stood.

It gave her permission and she joyfully announced, "This is the one!"

Top photo: "This tree said no." **Bottom photos:** "This tree said yes." / *Charles Colten*

She dragged it back in a sled, through the snow, all by herself. On the way she said how much she loved this tree, started talking about how she'd like to decorate it, and asked her cousin if he'd like to help...singing songs the whole way back.

The next morning, after the tree was home and adorned, she told me, "The tree is very happy I picked it."

This four-year-old is much much older.

And, of course, she's also four :-)

The Chocorua Lake Conservancy publishes and distributes an educational newsletter twice a year, in the Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter. Current and past issues are posted online at chocorualake.org/newsletters.

Have an idea for a newsletter article? Let us know!

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CHOCORUA LAKE CONSERVANCY
Land & Water Stewards Since 1968

The Chocorua Lake Conservancy is a volunteer-led land trust dedicated to its mission of protecting the natural beauty of the Chocorua Lake Basin and providing public access for present and future visitors.

Interconnections

Chocorua sunset. / *Pen Hallowell*

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