
Sanbornton Conservation Commission

Committed to the Stewardship of Sanbornton's Natural Resources

Fall 2023 Newsletter

Mission Statement: The Sanbornton Conservation Commission will purposefully encourage and support the conservation of land, actively foster our community's stewardship of its natural resources, and work to sustain the rural nature of Sanbornton.

One hundred Acres to be Donated for Conservation

A very generous family has communicated their intent to donate approximately one hundred acres in Sanbornton for conservation! The Commission and landowner are working with Lakes Region Conservation Trust to complete the process. The acreage is being surveyed and documentation requirements are in process. More details will follow as the transaction evolves.

Sanbornton Trails Subcommittee: Sanbornton's landscape includes an expanse of trails that are diverse and serve as a recreational opportunity for many. The Conservation Commission provides oversight to several formal trails and has initiated the establishment of a *Trails Subcommittee* to support the continuity, promotion, and safe access to the network of trails in our community.

The Trails Subcommittee is committed to establishing a catalog of trails highlighting regulations for access and availability. The extension of this effort includes responsibility for maintenance, signage on conditions of use and publications of the network of trails. A key long term goal of the subcommittee will be to expand the number of hiking trails in Sanbornton.

The initial meeting with interested community members was a 'trail walk' on Eastman Hill leading to notable improvements for trail access as well as recommendations for promotion of trail awareness.

There are two principal and unique ways in which you can become involved with our trail efforts. First, there will be a formal Trails Subcommittee who will meet occasionally for planning and organizing. The Commission is actively seeking members for this subcommittee. Second, there will be trail workdays publicized where the community will get a chance to get out onto the trails helping to maintain them, adding signage and blazing, or even constructing new kiosks.

Don't like the thought of meetings? You can still join us on our trail workdays. You can be a subcommittee member, someone who occasionally helps on trail workdays, or both! If interested in supporting our trails efforts, email conservation@sanborntonnh.org or join us at one of our monthly meetings.

The following are examples of work accomplished this summer while clearing the 3.7 miles of trails in the Sanbornton Town Forest.



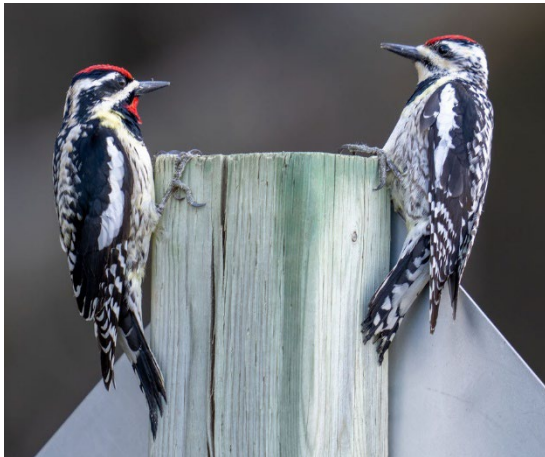
To the right, Don Noyes enjoys the views of Hersey Mountain while taking a break during a recent trail workday in the Sanbornton Town Forest. Don selected the design for this bench and donated the materials as well as the labor to construct it. It required that Don make three separate 1.5-mile round trips carrying the materials on his back! The Commission would like to thank Don for his generosity and hard work. We hope hikers will enjoy sitting while taking in the view.



Birds in Focus: *The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker*

This amazing Sanbornton bird is cursed with such a comical, even insulting, name that many people don't even believe it is a real bird. In truth, this master carpenter and our only migrating woodpecker is a keystone species. It creates feeding stations for all manner of forest creatures. Dozens of birds, bats, squirrels, porcupines, and especially the ruby-throated hummingbird feast on tree sap and insects from this woodpecker's sap well trees. It also provides homes for many species of birds and mammals when they are finished with their nest hole.

This cardinal sized woodpecker, like most of our woodpeckers, is white on black with a red crest for the male but on the side of its face it has one black stripe between two bold white stripes. It also sports a bold vertical white stripe on its wing. Unlike other local woodpeckers, the yellow-bellied female has red on her crest while the male also has red on his throat. It has a black bib with a white belly which is washed with light yellow. Its vocalization is a catlike whine and its drumming, unlike the regular machine gun like strikes of our other woodpeckers, is slower and irregular, like someone tapping out code. The yellow-bellied sapsucker will often drum on metal surfaces like roofs and even the old, covered milk can in my yard, really!



Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers - Male (Left) & Female (Right)

The yellow-belly's feeding is largely tied to hardwood trees; poplar, birch, and maple being its favorite, although hundreds of other species are used. It chisels small regular sap wells in nice, neat horizontal rows. Some of these holes are round and deep and others are shallower and rectangular. The woodpecker eats the cambium layer and laps up (it does not suck) sap from both the xylem and the phloem (which is much higher in sugar) with its bristly tongue. As a bonus, many insects are attracted to the leaking sap which are gladly eaten by the sapsucker. They maintain their sap wells,

cleaning them out when needed, and chiseling new ones when necessary. Maintaining sap flow is a difficult task which not even humans can duplicate, without a spigot. It is thought that the yellow-belly's saliva contains an anticoagulant to keep the tree from healing quickly. Although the sapsucker prefers eating at its sap well trees, it will also catch and eat insects on the ground as well as catch flying insects in mid-air. It eats fruits and nuts to balance off its diet.

Many birds and mammals benefit from the flowing sap wells the yellow-bellied sapsucker creates but none more than the ruby-throated hummingbird, another Sanbornton native. The sapsucker allows it to push the northern boundary of its breeding range. The hummingbird arrives a couple of weeks after the sapsucker in the spring. They have flown very long distances and are tired and hungry, but most plants have not yet flowered. The answer for many hummers is to locate and follow a yellow-bellied sapsucker to find its sap well trees where they can feast on the nectarlike sap and the insects the sap attracts. The hummingbird will often hang around these feeding stations, chasing off any birds and animals that attempt to feed there, except of course for the sapsucker, benefiting both birds.

The yellow-bellied sapsucker chisels deep nests in the heart of hardwood trees, preferably those with heart rot. From 2 to 7 eggs are laid on wood chips left over from excavation. The young birds are fed mostly insects (coated with sap of course). After the chicks leave the nest, the parents will continue to feed them insects and let them drink at the sap wells for another 10 days or so.

The yellow-bellied is one of four sapsucker species in the US but the only one east of the Rocky Mountains. The best way to find the yellow-bellied sapsucker is to listen for its drumming or to find its tree. Still can't find one? Maybe you could follow a hummingbird.



Sap Wells Made by a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker