

WATERSHED VIEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE KEZAR LAKE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

SUMMER 2022



BRI's team of biologists venture out on thin ice to rescue five loon chicks trapped in pools of fragment water after ice over. Without sufficient open water, the birds are unable to get the running start needed for flight. Once coaxed onto the ice with a gillnet, the last chick is captured (r) and transferred to shore (l),

Rescue on Thin Ice

text and photos by LAURA ROBINSON

Ice-in angst. It lurks in the hearts of all loon-a-tics as nighttime temperatures plummet. What we hope NOT to see are loons whose open water runways close up leaving them trapped in ever-shrinking pools of fragment water. Bald eagles relish the opportunity.

While Lower Bay iced over without a hitch this year, when scouting Upper Bay, Heinrich Wurm spotted three loons trapped in separate pools of open water.

Other states have avian experts ready to undertake such dangerous rescues, but until this year, Maine has not. So I was shocked when my call to Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) was met with a long-dreamed-for response, “We’ll be there first thing in the morning.”

The next day broke with ideal weather and dicey odds. As BRI’s seasoned team of avian biologists assembled outside New England Frontier Camp, two loons were just visible in the distance, trapped as far out as the ice was thin. Eagles lurked patiently in the trees until a sudden swoop at one of the loons jolted the team’s preparations into high gear.

With ice cracking under their feet and lifeboats in tow, BRI’s team of three set out in a careful hustle. Spirits afloat with jolly banter, they kept their distance from one another so the cracks under foot would remain isolated.

But when they arrived at the first site, the impossibility of the task became clear: brittle ice surrounded the pool and the dip

net proved too frightening for the skittish chick, who repeatedly dove beyond its reach. The risk in such a rescue is not just human, as a frightened bird can dive so far that it becomes trapped under the ice. A new strategy was needed.

A return trip to shore for a 100’ gillnet allowed two team members to stand at opposite ends of the pool on stable ice, while a third crawled toward the chick to coax it into the net. Ultimately disoriented by the jiggling motion of the net, the loon became lightly entangled: just enough to land it on the ice. With the bird safely enclosed in a transport container, the team pushed on to the second pool where the other bird—a chick as well—was eventually netted. With the success of the experimental gillnet technique, and no team members taking an accidental swim, the air was filled with glee.

But four hours and two birds into the rescue, things were about to get more complicated. Heinrich, who had set off down an unplowed road to scout for additional birds had been gone quite a long time. And just as the team arrived onshore with the two rescued chicks, he returned with news that he had located three more trapped loons, best accessed about a mile down the snowed-in road.

Buoyed by their double success, the team arrived at the second site well aware of the limited daylight. The ice was even thinner, reducing their approach to a weight-spreading crawl on all *continued on page 3*



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Kezar Lake Watershed Association

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President's Message

by RICK PILSBURY

Betting on Kezar's ice-out date is for suckers. It doesn't lend itself to scientific measure and everyone has a different answer. But ice out this year didn't go unnoticed. I saw many hearty anglers on day one of open water, which may or may not have been April 12. Ask around. Whatever the date, ice out didn't lack for visual drama as seen below.

Our first Bass tournament was April 23 and if it's any indication, this should be a strong fishing season. There were big hauls both in quantity and size, all dutifully returned alive to the lake. Check Maine.

gov/IFW for the remaining six tournaments this year. Weigh in is usually 4 PM at the Narrows. It's quite a sight. And while you're there, say hello to our friends from LIPPC who check all tournaments boats for invasive species.

Your KLWA Board has grown with four additions over the winter bringing our count to 15. New Directors are Mark Bernfeld, Lower Bay; Kathleen Birch, Upper Bay; Amy Crow, Upper Bay, and Debbie Mann, Horseshoe Pond. Meet them at KLWA's Annual Meeting on July 20 at Old Saco Inn. Details are below. And be sure to read Director Laura Robin-

son's lead story on saving five loon chicks stranded in the Upper Bay by sudden ice in. It reads like a novel.

You probably know the Town of Lovell has been dealing with new challenges and outside issues in recent months. Be assured the KLWA is vigilant and fully aware of these developments and how they may affect the Watershed and our mission. This vigilance is made possible by your continued support and by the hard work of our Board of Directors. Thank you and thanks to the KLWA Board. ♡



RICK PILSBURY

KLWA 2022 ANNUAL MEETING - Members and Friends Come Meet The New Directors

This year we are again honored to hold the KLWA Annual Meeting at the Old Saco Inn Barn, July 20, 5:30 to 7 PM. Mark your calendar now.

You'll see a visual presentation of our activities and have a chance to ask questions, meet the new

Directors and understand our enthusiasm for the future. The Barn is roomy and has plenty of free parking. There will be hors d'oeuvres, beverages, and a cash bar. If you have any questions or comments, email us at kezarwatershed.org. Don't miss this important meeting.



LAURA ROBINSON

Lee Attix examines one of the chicks, held by rescuer Bill Hanson.



LAURA ROBINSON

Heinrich Wurm holds one of the chicks as BRI's Lucas Savoy measures the bird prior to banding.

continued from page 1

fours. Two hours passed as the team's brazen courage, gentle patience, and the newly discovered gillnet technique worked their magic. Finally, the last bird came up on the ice on its own, where it was easily netted, topping off the record-breaking rescue at five loons in one day. When the birds were brought in, the news was extraordinary: all healthy, and all chicks.

As it turned out, one was banded, identifying it as our own little "Foxtrot," one of the two chicks from Fox Cove. The others? Chicks migrating from other lakes, with a story that makes sense. Hatch-year loons undertake their first migration typically after their parents have left. Kezar's North End, one of the deepest and therefore last bits of open water to freeze over in the area, must appear from the air as a welcoming stopover. Unfortunately, a night of low wind and cold temperatures changed all of that.

With each bird in a transport container, the team brought them back to Frontier Camp, where they were banded and then driven on to Avian Haven for medical exams before being released to the ocean. Three of the birds were deemed ready for release the next day, including our little Foxtrot, who was healthy, although X-rays revealed fish hook fragments in its gizzard: a daunting reminder that a tough-to-remove hook left in a fish may well end up lodged in a loon.

Ultimately, all five chicks were released into Belfast Harbor, with one of the last released spotted by a photographer a few weeks later in Camden Harbor in the company of two other young loons. Perhaps the Kezar kids have stuck together? We will never know, but if any do return after their early years at sea, their bands are in place as a clue to their wanderings.

Curiously, January 2022 will be remembered for record numbers of iced-in loons throughout New England. Not all birds were chicks, and both New York and New Hampshire had iced-in adults who were flightless. While adult loons typically molt at sea where food is plentiful and flight not required, these birds had molted their flight feathers on fresh water, leaving them in a dire situation when the ice closed in.

Since migration via carpool van is hardly sustainable, Kezar's January 13th rescue will be long remembered as a day of extraordinary luck for five little loons. Heinrich's vigilance combined with BRI's patience, innovation and jolly grit, topped off by Avian Haven's expert medical care, demonstrated what an open-minded drive for good will can produce. We began the day hoping that at least a few of the birds could be captured - we didn't dare dream that all five would be saved. ♡

KLWA is Proud to Support the Community that Supports Us

Lindsay Shute Awarded Joan Irish Scholarship

Congratulations to Lindsay Shute, a graduating Fryeburg Academy senior who is the recipient of this year's Joan Irish Scholarship. Lindsay will attend Unity College, Unity, Maine, where she will study Environmental Science. This summer she is volunteering for the US Forest Service.

Camp Susan Curtis

As we have in the past, KLWA will again provide Camp Susan Curtis with a camper scholarship. Located on Trout Pond, Camp Susan Curtis provides a transformative camp experience that nurtures self-confidence and a sense of belonging to Maine children facing economic challenges. KLWA is honored to support this very worthwhile organization. And what could be better than a summer on Trout Pond.



Tracking Water Quality is Big Science

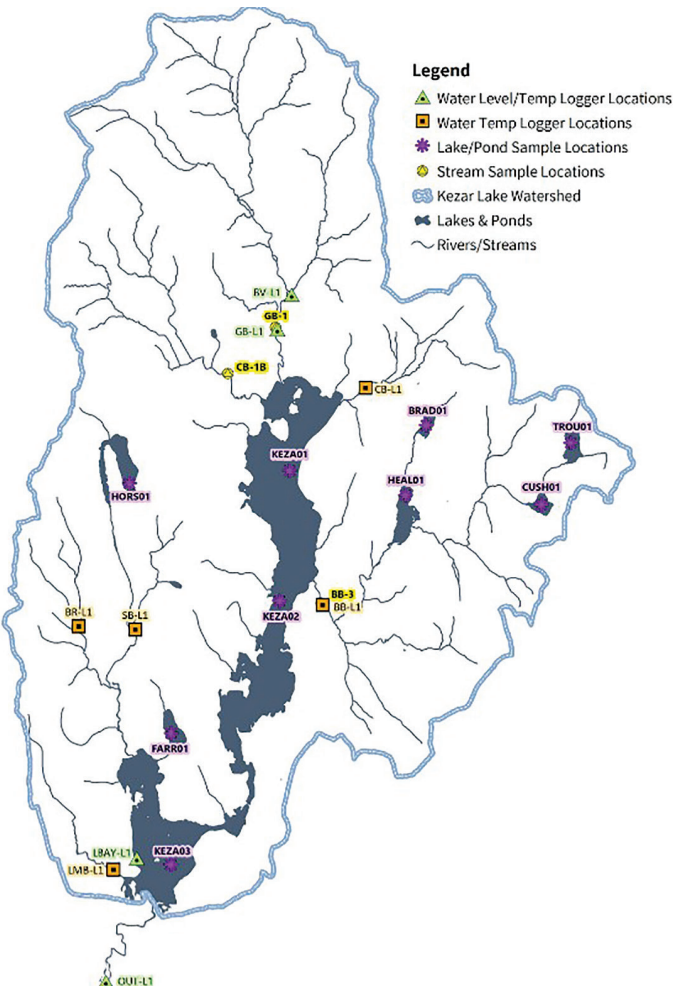
by STEVE LEWIS

A major focus of the Kezar Lake Watershed Association is tracking the quality of our watershed lakes and streams. You may be surprised at the scope of this program and the science required to analyze the data. We gather data from 250 water samples in 21 locations and have them analyzed by professionals in Portland and Augusta, Maine. Check out the full 2021 Water Quality report on our website, kezarwatershed.org.

I come from the Midwest where vast farming fields are bountiful but often produce runoff that has turned many lakes into thick pea soups. We are fortunate that most of the Kezar Lake Watershed is well forested and modestly developed, particularly in terms of manufacturing or other historically “point source” pollutants.

There are still threats to water quality, however, in the form of “non-point sources” pollution like runoff from roads and disturbed and/or fertilized shorelands. These are some of the reasons we put priority on water quality monitoring.

KLWA has a multi-pronged approach to WQ monitoring. While volunteers do some of the work, they can’t cover the entire watershed on a set schedule; after all, who wants to spend time gathering water data during precious vacation time. Also, the testing procedures require ongoing training to assure accuracy and sample integrity. So, we have contracted with a respected environmental consulting firm, Forest Bell Environmental (FBE) in Portland, to do many monitoring projects for us.



Lakes and Stream monitoring locations monitored and maintained by FBE

KLWA 2022 Water Quality Test Schedule				
	June	August	September	Total
Lake/Ponds				
Kezar				
Upper Bay	6	6	6	18
Middle Bay	6	6	6	18
Lower Bay	2	2	2	6
Bradly	6	6	6	18
Cushman	6	6	6	18
Farrington	6	6	6	18
Heald	6	6	6	18
Horseshoe	6	6	6	18
Trout	6	6	6	18
Total	50	50	50	150
Major Brooks				
Great Brook	5		5	10
Boulder Brook	5		5	10
Cold Brook	5		5	10
Total	15		15	30
Smaller Brooks				
Beaver	5		5	10
Sucker	5		5	10
Bradley	5		5	10
Long Meadow	5		5	10
Coffin	5		5	10
Kezar Outlet	5		5	10
Lower Bay	5		5	5
Total	35		35	70
Grand Total	100	50	100	250

The exhibits above shows when and where water samples are taken

Lake and Stream Water Quality

FBE visits the watershed three times a summer with their team of scientists who sample various parameters from all six ponds: Bradley, Cushman, Farrington, Heald, Horseshoe and Trout, and from the upper, middle and lower bays of Kezar Lake, as well as these tributaries of Kezar Lake: Great Brook, Boulder Brook, and Cold Brook, plus seven smaller brooks.

Samples are taken to measure water transparency, the amount of Phosphorus (the nutrient that supports algae growth), the amount of microscopic plant life, pH (acidity), Oxygen and temperature at various levels. For the streams, samples are also taken to determine bacteria levels that could alert us to faulty septic systems.

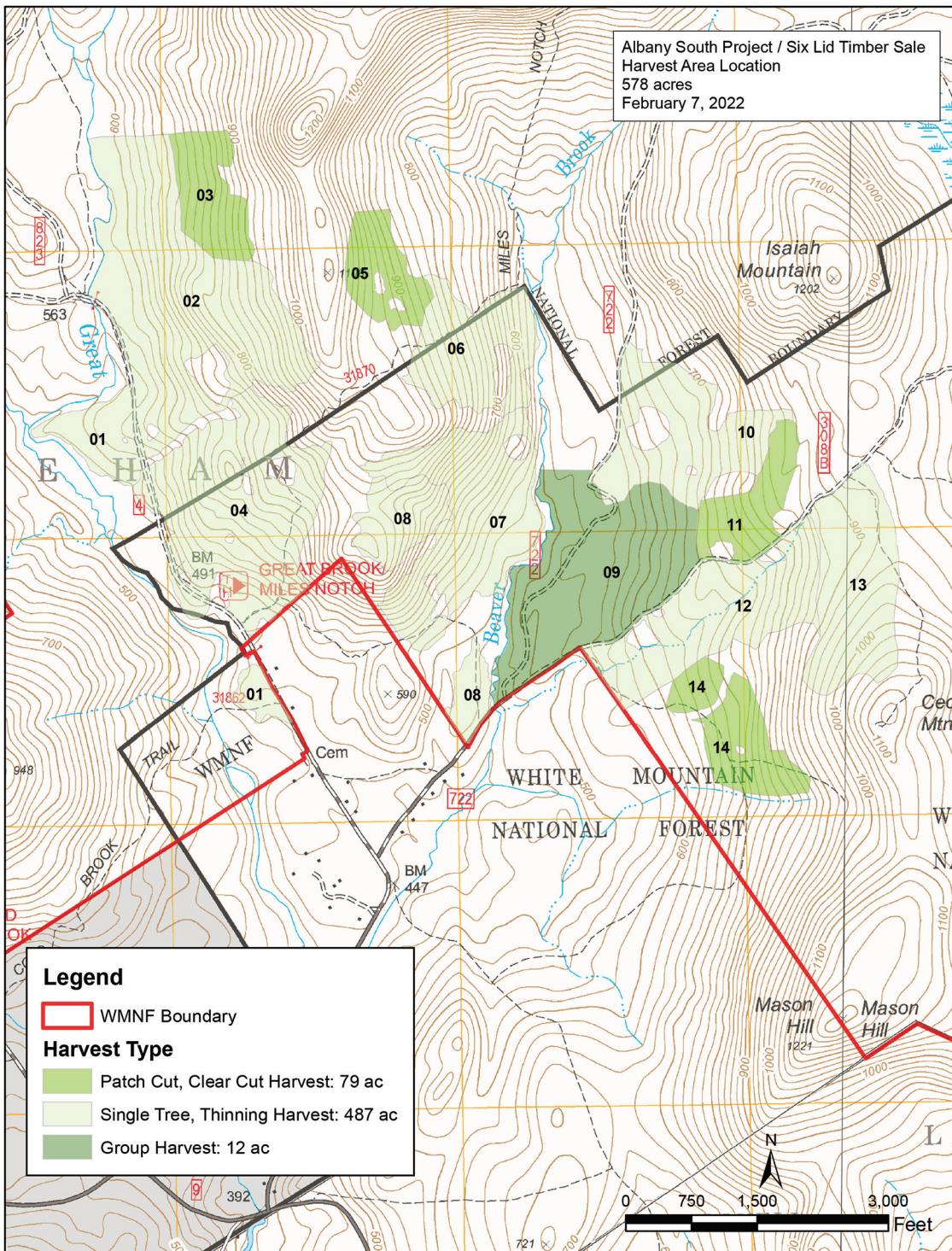
Lake Continuous Loggers

Temperature and dissolved Oxygen measures are useful, but it is important to know how these behave over time. In 2017, continuous monitors of these parameters were deployed at regular depths beneath large, orange buoys: one in Upper Bay at the deep spot of about 150 feet and one in the shallower Lower Bay. The buoys are deployed each spring, checked, maintained, and data downloaded throughout the summer, and then retrieved and stored in the fall.

Stream Continuous Loggers

Continuous temperature and water-level loggers are also deployed in the watershed’s eight streams and the Kezar Outlet. These are deployed in the spring, flow calibrated, maintained, downloaded, and retrieved in the fall. The data is also used by our Climate Change Observatory, a separate KLWA Project.

FBE is responsible for our annual Water Quality report. All FBE work adheres to DEP standards so the information can be used in legal matters should the need arise. FBE is a long-term and valued asset to the KLWA. Our water quality monitoring is the biggest part of the KLWA budget that your donations support. And we thank you. 💧



This map, from February 2022, was updated to exclude harvest units that were dropped last winter. Since then, Units 2, 3, & 4 have also been dropped, as well as the northern part of Unit 1. The Forest Service emphasized that this is a working document and that changes could be made right up until the Six Lids timber sale is finalized, though no additional harvest units can be added.

Putting a Lid on Albany South

by LUCY LACASSE

KLWA is excited to announce that logging within our watershed from the Albany South Project will be on a much smaller scale than originally planned.

As you may recall, Albany South is an “integrated resource management project” of

the White Mountain National Forest. The large Project Area extends from behind the north end of Kezar Lake to Route 5/35 toward Bethel. Albany South was first proposed in 2011 and their final 2016 plan involved extensive timber harvest plans within our watershed.

Logging within Albany South has been divided into three separate timber sales. The Chestnut Sale, a small area off of RT 5/35, was completed last year. The Lombard Sale, behind Keewaydin Lake, started this past winter and, though it’s a 5-year contract, may be completed next year.

The Six Lids Sale, which is mostly within the Kezar Lake

Watershed, was Albany South’s largest timber sale but, within the last few months, it has been significantly reduced in size. This is great news!

This winter, 388 acres were dropped from the Six Lids sale because the Forest Service has implemented new and stricter standards for bridge construction. They had originally proposed constructing a large permanent bridge across Beaver Brook for logging truck access but, with the new standards in place, those costs had become prohibitive. So, instead, they will be erecting a simple temporary bridge for skidders to get across Beaver Brook. This is a big change – instead of major road construction on the east side of Beaver Brook, there will only be skid trails.

Then in mid-May, the Assistant District Ranger called to tell us about an additional reduction of approximately 240 acres. Jason Lyle explained that in an effort to minimize the number of headwater stream crossings the Forest Service has dropped all of the harvest units along Hut Road, except for the southern portion of Unit 1.

This represents a huge change of impact on our watershed and is very welcome news! Thank you WMNF!

A contract for Six Lids will likely be awarded this fall, with harvesting beginning next winter. Logging in Six Lids can only occur during the winter when the ground is frozen, and not on weekends or holidays. Road construction and improvements can begin as soon as the contract is awarded. They will modify the junction of the Great Brook and West Stoneham Roads to provide a safer turning radius for logging trucks.

Representatives from KLWA will meet with the White Mountain National Forest in early June to review the current plans for Albany South. We are fortunate to have such a good working relationship with the Forest Service.

If anybody has questions, you are welcome to contact me: Lucy LaCasse wnder@aol.com. ♡



DEBBIE MANN

Kezar Lake from Speckled Mountain

Maintaining Kezar's Charm

by TOM GILMORE

In an article for *Maine Times* published in 1989, author Edgar Breem described Kezar Lake. He began with: "The great god Nature bestowed upon Kezar Lake secret, subtle charms uncommon even among the charmed lakes of Maine. Other Maine lakes may be larger and wilder, some more remote, but none more beautiful than Kezar." I am struck every year by the comments of refugees from other lakes who, after having discovered Kezar, remark on its beauty, peacefulness, and safety. This is not lost on KLWA membership as in every survey conducted to name top concerns, water quality and safety head the list. Lake Patrol exists to help keep the lake safe.

Again this upcoming summer, Turf Ramsden will be on the water manning the familiar Lake Patrol boat. We are fortunate to have Turf back again bringing his calm and friendly competence to the lake. Keep your eyes out for him. If you pass your boat safety inspection, you may receive the coveted and highly sought after KLWA plastic whistle as proof of compliance.

In coordination with the Navigational Aids desk at Maine's Bureau of Parks and Lands, Lake Patrol will monitor all of Kezar's 47 buoys on a bi-weekly basis and report results to the state. Kezar is scheduled to have 20 mooring chains replaced this spring, part of an ongoing maintenance program. Statewide concerns surrounding boating and lake safety are focused on a number of areas but jet skis, loud boat music and fishing tournament behavior head the list. Please be responsible if you are involved in any of these activities.

Finally, at the start of another boating season it is worthwhile to review Maine's most important boating laws so here's a summary:

Boats under 16'

- One life jacket per person. Children under 10 must wear a life jacket at all times
- One fire extinguisher with needle in the green
- One sound producing device (whistle, horn or bell)

Boats 16' to 40'

- All of the above plus a throwable flotation device

Canoe, Kayak and Paddleboard

- One lifejacket per person
- Whistle

Water Skiing and Tubing

- Must wear a life jacket
- Not allowed between one half hour after sunset and one half hour before sunrise
- Must have a spotter at least 12 years of age
- Boats allowed within 200' of shore to pick up or discharge skiers/tubers only

Unlawful

- Headway Speed ONLY means exactly that
- Reckless operation or operating to endanger
- Operating to molest or endanger wildlife
- It is a criminal violation to operate a vessel while intoxicated. No one under 21 can drink and drive a boat

Emergency

- Call Maine State Police dispatch in Gray, ME
1-800-228-0857

And finally, an important Call to Safety. Remember, a safe summer on the water doesn't just happen automatically. Safe boating is an active, not passive activity. Take a moment every time you get into your boat to realize that it is your responsibility to bring everyone back to shore safely.

Have fun and have a great summer! 💧

Notes from the Greater Lovell Land Trust

by ERIKA ROWLAND, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Spring is here and the insects that form the foundation of our aquatic (and terrestrial) ecosystems have emerged ... much to the human community's dismay. In the face of this annual adversity, GLLT's stalwart staff and volunteers are taking advantage of the warming days—tidying our trails and sprucing up our signage in anticipation of the summer to come.

We did not spend our winter in hibernation. GLLT's Tuesday Trackers were out in all weather tracing the winter patterns of wildlife through the snow, including one day following a bobcat to its branch-based lookout. The 2021-22 Tuesday Trackers season was especially notable because our former intern, college senior Emily Carty, joined the group as part of her research on how amateur naturalists interact with non-human species. The Tuesday Trackers were the stars of (and guinea pigs for) her senior thesis at Bates College.

Outdoor programs and events of all kinds go on throughout the year. From birding and plant identification to trail runs and paddles, sign up on our website to get weekly email updates: gllt.org/events.

We were also busy grant-writing for GLLT's most ambitious land purchase project to date. The 1,300-acre project in the Kezar River watershed will conserve nearly 6 miles of river and brook frontage, a 20-acre pond, significant vernal pools and wetlands, all buffered by forested uplands. And it contains a myriad of outdoor recreation options. Opportunities to support and enjoy the Kezar Corridor Lands are coming soon.

Early 2022 brought the culmination of critical behind-the-scenes land conservation work too. After long hours over the last five years—organizing records, establishing policies and procedures, creating and updating management



LEIGH MACMILLEN HAYES

Bates College senior and former GLLT intern Emily Carty joined Tuesday Trackers each week to learn how to track mammals while also documenting how amateur naturalists interact with nonhuman species.



Black-throated Blue Warbler photographed by Reed Robinson, recently named ABA (American Birding Association) Young Birder of the Year.

plans—GLLT submitted its formal application to the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission. The efforts of many went into this huge lift, and preliminary reviews point toward earning this important recognition by summer's end.

GLLT's mission is to protect and preserve the ecosystems of the Kezar Lake, Kezar River, and Cold River watersheds for the benefit and enjoyment of the natural and human community in the towns of Lovell, Stoneham, Stow, and Sweden today and as a legacy for the future. Our 19 properties and 15 miles of trails welcome all to enjoy the lakes, ponds, mountains, and forests of this spectacular region of western Maine. Stop by the office, sign up for a program, get to know us, and join our conservation work. Hope to see you on the trails! 🌿

Corporate Sponsors

The KLWA has enjoyed a long tradition of partnership with local business. Each of these Corporate Sponsors has made a much-valued contribution to the financial stability of our organization and to the programs that we support. We are most grateful for their continued commitment and for their recognition of the many benefits that a vibrant and sustainable watershed brings to our community.

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LAURA ROBINSON

Hmm, this one looks different. . . In late May, Kezar was visited by a vagrant Red Throated Loon—the first of its species to be recorded in Oxford County. Be on the lookout for its swordlike, upturned beak and habit of diving frequently. About that red throat? The bird is in its non breeding plumage, so its classic red throat is currently white.

Kezar Lake
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