

Highstead

To the Members and Friends of Highstead



Last month I spent a week in Washington, DC, joining scientists, conservationists, policy makers and agency leaders seeking to advance research and collaborative efforts to assess the ramifications of global change and advance the conservation of natural resources and landscapes. At each event I was struck by the way in which efforts emerging from Highstead are resonating with activities around the country.



The first morning in Washington, a group met in the Members Meeting Room at the Library of Congress to address an emerging national issue that is relevant to New England – the Future of Large Landscape Conservation. Organized by new Highstead Senior Fellow Jim Levitt in his position at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, the small gathering brought together land policy experts, academics, and conservation and agency leaders of diverse representation: the Sonoran Institute, The Trust for Public Land, Universities of Montana, Arizona and Alaska, Pew Trust, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior and many more. Around the room were many colleagues, including Bill Toomey, Highstead Director, and Kathy Lambert, another new Senior Fellow at Highstead. Also participating were Keith Ross from LandVest and Lynn Lyford, president of the New England Forestry Foundation--both key players in the Wildlands and Woodlands initiative. We heard the outlook from various perspectives – practitioners, funders, the administration and academia – that the conservation of the land is inextricably bound to major pressing issues including energy policy, transportation, resource utilization, public health and even international relations. Presentations from Senator Susan Collins from Maine and Representative Peter Welch from Vermont made clear that land conservation has solid bipartisan backing as well as deep roots in New England.



David Foster is Director of the Harvard Forest at Harvard University and President of the Board of Highstead Foundation.

Over the next two days in Washington, I worked with Kathy Lambert to convene stakeholder discussions advancing a new research project –Forest Scenarios: the Future of the U.S. Forest – in which scientists from Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, the Great Lakes, the Rockies and New England are examining fifty-year futures for these regions and the nation's forests. At the Heinz Center for Science, Economics and the Environment and the National Council for Science and the Environment, scientists elicited input from decision makers, land management leaders and major conservation groups regarding the political, economic and natural forces that shape American landscapes. The Forest Scenarios study will examine the effects of these forces, including land and resource use, conservation, and climate change on forests. The research group will share results regionally and at future meetings in D.C.

Despite major differences in the landscape, history, people and politics across the nation, it is clear from these activities and others that there is a deeply shared passion for the land and its future, and for the benefits that the land brings to individuals and society. Highstead is seeking to cultivate that passion in New England and to learn from and collaborate with similar efforts across the country.



From the Director

Bill Toomey



Dear Highstead Members and Friends,

In an effort to help reconnect Americans to the great outdoors and generate ideas and actions to conserve our nation's natural resources for future generations, the Obama administration initiated its America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative. Through 51 listening sessions held across the country during 2010, the Administration launched a robust public conversation about the future of conservation in America. The report, released in February 2011, has helped stimulate national and regional conversations on the importance of conserving large functional landscapes. Highstead will be participating in a new national network of practitioners who are working in important large landscapes across the country and will continue to advance critical large-scale conservation action in New England.

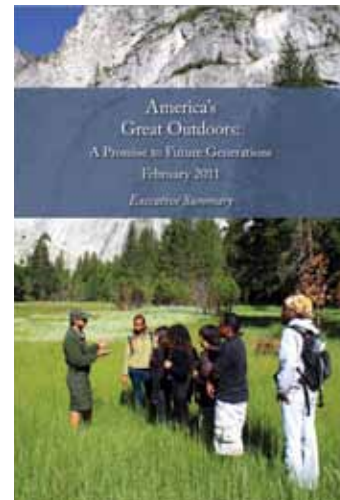
This year, we will be increasing our capacity in several areas in order to advance the goals of the Wildlands and Woodlands Initiative and support key themes of the America's Great Outdoors Report.

Communication Director: Highstead recently hired Carol Buckheit to be our new Communication Director to assist Highstead and the Wildlands and Woodlands Initiative in communicating the importance of forest conservation to landowners, decision makers, partners and the general public.

Senior Fellows Program: Highstead initiated a Senior Fellows program in January 2011. Jim Levitt and Kathy Fallon Lambert are the first recipients of the Fellowship. Highstead will be working with Jim and Kathy to advance actions in the areas of conservation finance, science, and policy.

Expanded Internship Program: Building upon the success of our internship program, Highstead will be adding an additional internship position this year for a total of five interns to assist with our regional conservation, ecology and communications programs.

I believe that you will find Highstead's expanding role in advancing large scale land and forest conservation work compelling, and I hope that you will continue to actively support Highstead and join us at one of our exciting events this year.



The America's Great Outdoors website can be found at <http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>.



Senior Fellows Appointed

Conservation, Finance,
Science, and Policy

Highstead Initiates Senior Fellows Program

Conservation Finance and Landscape Scale Conservation



Jim Levitt, Director of the Program on Conservation Innovation at the Harvard Forest.

Building the Science-Policy Bridge



Kathy Fallon Lambert, co-author of the Wildlands and Woodlands report and Director of the Project for Science and Policy Integration at the Harvard Forest.

In January, Highstead invited Jim Levitt and Kathy Fallon Lambert to be our first two Senior Fellows. Kathy and Jim will be conducting high level research and policy work in the areas of conservation finance and environmental policy.

Conservation Finance

Advancing the Wildlands and Woodlands Vision for the New England landscape will require significant sources of capital in order to protect 70% of New England in forest. Since 2006, Jim has engaged various public, private, non-profit, and academic institutions across Massachusetts and beyond to consider a strategy for financing the conservation of the Commonwealth's forests. Jim will continue to advance this work which will be relevant to other New England states aiming to conserve large segments of their standing forests.

Large Landscape Conservation Practitioners Network

Through his half-time position with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Jim will be working with Highstead, Harvard Forest, the Harvard Kennedy School, the Sonoran Institute, the Center for Natural Resource and Environmental Policy at the University of Montana and the Center for Large Landscape Conservation to establish a practitioners' network focused on large landscape conservation. This network will include conservation professionals from approximately 28 regional groups across the U.S. representing the Southwest, Rockies, Upper Midwest, Southeast, Mid-Atlantic region, New England, Canadian Maritimes and Boreal Forest. Highstead will be helping to support this effort and be one of the 28 participants in this newly formed network.

Future Scenarios of Forest Change

Kathy is working with a team of scientists from the Harvard Forest, the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and several other academic institutions to launch a new project analyzing the combined impact of future development, climate change, and biomass harvesting on the forests of New England and four other U.S. regions. The results will depict how conservation, land use planning and policy decisions influence the ability of forests to provide the open space, biodiversity, clean water, and climate stabilization on which human and ecological communities depend.

Northeast Science and Policy Partnership

The gap between scientific research and environmental policy has long been recognized as an obstacle to sustainability. Since 2000 Kathy has been working with scientists to implement programs aimed at bridging this divide. She is now advancing a partnership among four National Science Foundation-funded Long-Term Ecological Research sites in the Northeast focused on synthesizing and communicating ecological science for environmental policy and conservation. The partnership will focus on large scale issues such as land use change, regional pollution, and climate change. The scoping effort for the science and policy partnership is building toward a design workshop in fall of 2011.



Laura Hammett

Emily Silver

Dave Grunzel

Steven Murphy

Building upon our success: Expanded Internship Program 2011

Highstead Interns – Where Are They Now?

Laura Hammett

Conservation intern 2009

Currently I am serving as a community and organizational development volunteer with the Peace Corps in Albania. I work with local municipalities in my hometown of Lezhe on capacity development, tourism and social services projects. While at Highstead I helped with a strategic communications plan, and I am now helping the development office at the municipality to develop one of their own. In addition, much of my work outside of the municipality takes on an environmental and regional development focus similar to the projects I took on while in Redding. I help lead an outdoor education club with high school students in town and serve on a national committee of volunteers working to found and register a national environmental education NGO.

Emily Silver

Conservation Intern 2008

After leaving Highstead, I became a research assistant for the Suburban Ecology Project at Brandeis University. While there, I discovered a passion for forest ecology and management and went on to pursue my M.S. at the University of Minnesota's Forest Resources Department. Currently, my thesis work involves re-sampling an old-growth red pine stand in Itasca State Park that was first measured in 1923. In addition to researching the structure and spatial pattern of the forest, I am being trained as a dendrochronologist to reconstruct the age of the red pine. I hope to use my Master's degree to pursue a career in extension and outreach for forest landowners as well as land protection and management.

Highstead has provided 16 conservation and ecology internship opportunities and hands-on work experience to college students and recent graduates since 2004.

Dave Grunzel

Ecology Intern 2008

Following my Forest Ecology Internship at Highstead, I went on to work as a wildlife field technician for different organizations and universities. I have studied population ecology of deer and coyote, but mostly songbird populations and migration through banding and nest monitoring. My greatest personal interest, born of research at Highstead and Harvard Forest, is how habitat degradation by deer browsing affects songbird populations. As my first field experience after college, my internship at Highstead sparked a zealous interest in wildlife research that has taken me to many beautiful places across the country.

Steven Murphy

Ecology Intern 2009

After my time at Highstead, I obtained a position working jointly for Penn State University and the National Park Service (NPS) as a forest-monitoring technician. The position involved hiking through eight national parks in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey and establishing and monitoring long-term permanent forest plots. I worked with a crew collecting data on the trees, shrubs, herbs, and soil properties of these plots. The data that I helped collect are being used as part of a much larger national effort by NPS to understand and monitor the forested regions of the United States. The methods and goals of the study have many parallels to work that is being conducted at Highstead. Today, I am a graduate student at Ohio University working towards earning my Master of Science degree in plant biology.

Highstead Happenings

You are invited

Highstead welcomes members and non-members alike to participate in these events. If we do not already have your email address, please send it to info@highstead.net.

**Saturday,
June 11th:**
10:00 am to 1:00 pm:

Highstead Open House and Trails Day

Walking trails will be open for self-guided tours and visits to the Laurel Collection in bloom. For those who prefer a guided tour, Highstead Ecologist, Ed Faison will lead a walk for visitors from 10:30 to 12:30.

1:00 pm to 2:00 pm:

Coyote at the Kitchen Door: Living with Wildlife in Suburbia

Stephen DeStefano, Ph.D. is a Research Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and USGS Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Leader. He will be discussing his new book, "Coyote at the Kitchen Door: Living with Wildlife in Suburbia". Dr. DeStefano will be addressing the effects of urban and suburban development on the landscape, wildlife and people.

**September 10th –
October 28th**

Viewing is weekdays
9:00 am – 4:30 pm

Art Exhibition: Nature's Remedies – Plants, Animals and Minerals

Guild of Natural Science Illustrators -
Greater New York Chapter.

**Saturday,
September 10th:**
10:30 am to 1:00 pm:

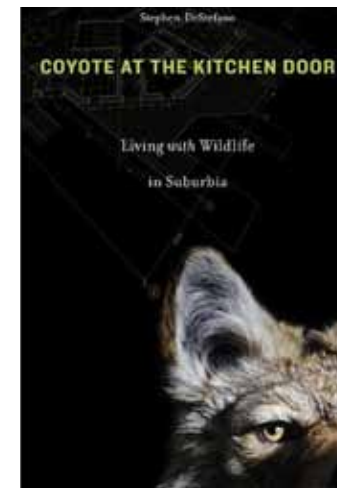
Nature's Remedies – Plants, Animals and Minerals
Artists from the Artists from the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators - Greater New York Chapter will be at Highstead to show and discuss their work on display at the Highstead Barn. Join us for the opening and learn the stories and inspirations that gave rise to the artist's work.

1:30 pm to 2:30 pm:

Preserving Native Plant Knowledge for the Future
Arthur Haines is a plant biologist and research botanist with the New England Wild Flower Society. Arthur's presentation will focus on interesting examples of wild food and medicine that grow here in New England. He will also demonstrate how wild plants can promote healthy living for the generations to come.

November 2011

Forest Ecology Symposium
Join us for the 2nd biennial ecology mini-symposium in November. The symposium is designed to inform the general public of current basic and applied research on forest ecosystems in the Northeast. It will include a series of short, informative, and accessible talks by scientists on important topics of forest disturbance and change.



Coyote at the Kitchen Door: Living with Wildlife in Suburbia, Stephen DeStefano



Artist: Mary Christiansen



website: <http://www.arthurhaines.com/>

Stewardship Science

Ed Faison
Highstead Ecologist



Highstead Ecology: Examining the Interactions of Land Conversion and Large Herbivores

As Highstead works to stem the tide of forest loss in New England, our ecology program seeks to understand the reverberations of land conversion on forest dynamics in the remaining forest blocks. This summer Highstead's Ecologist, Ed Faison and two interns will study how white-tailed deer are interacting with forest fragmentation to influence forest understories. We know deer are generally more abundant in warm, suburban areas like Fairfield County than in cool, more forested areas like northwestern Connecticut; but it's less clear whether differences in deer

numbers can be attributed primarily to variation in forest fragmentation, climate, or hunting.

Forest fragmentation may aid deer and indirectly affect remaining forest in a number of possible ways. A landscape with small forest patches surrounded by agricultural crops and suburban gardens may offer abnormally high nutrition for deer, thereby enabling more deer

to thrive in a fragmented area than would otherwise occur if the landscape were largely forested. Natural predators of deer such as coyote and black bear, although reasonably well-adapted to fragmented areas, still generally occur at higher densities in more intact landscapes.

Deer hunting, of course, can also influence variation in deer densities. Hunter density and deer harvest rates in Fairfield County are above average for the state of Connecticut, but southwestern Connecticut continues to support some of the highest deer densities in the state. Thus, other factors besides hunting appear to be influencing deer numbers, which gets us back to land conversion.

To study how land conversion is influencing deer browsing effects, Highstead's ecology team will sample signs of deer activity (pellets, browsing, and antler scrapes) and forest regeneration characteristics (tree seedling and wildflower diversity and abundance) in a range of forest patch sizes and environments of Connecticut. We will also examine the amount of forest fragmentation in the broader landscape surrounding each forest block, as well as hunter activity and deer harvest numbers in these areas. Understanding the connections between human land use and deer browsing will go hand in hand with Highstead's larger conservation efforts.



above:
A southwestern Connecticut landscape with forest fragmented by agricultural fields and residential houses.

Regional Conservation

Bill Labich
Regional Conservationist



Building capacity for greater conservation

Highstead has been helping people and organizations work together more effectively in an effort to protect more wooded landscapes from development. As a result, people and partnerships across New England are collaborating more than ever. With Highstead's support, people are sharing lessons and best practices, collaborating across political boundaries, spawning new initiatives, and forming a larger, more networked conservation community. Our experience and research tells us that more land protection will result from greater coordination and collaboration. Here are highlights of some of our planned activities for 2011:

Coordinating the Wildlands and Woodlands Partnership

Having developed a growing New England-wide network, our partners now want greater coordination between activities, the chance to form new alliances, and the ability to track and evaluate success over time. Adding these functions to the W&W Partnership will be the focus of our June 2011 meeting (*see our website www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org for more information about this event*).

Demonstrating Conservation Success

At a regional conservation partnership gathering last fall, 45 people from across the Northeast came together to learn and discuss ways to protect more land. One popular idea was the creation of an "Atlas of Conservation Success" to show which strategies resulted in significant land protection gains. Highstead will be working with over 25 partnerships to develop the Atlas, which will be a focus of this year's fall gathering.

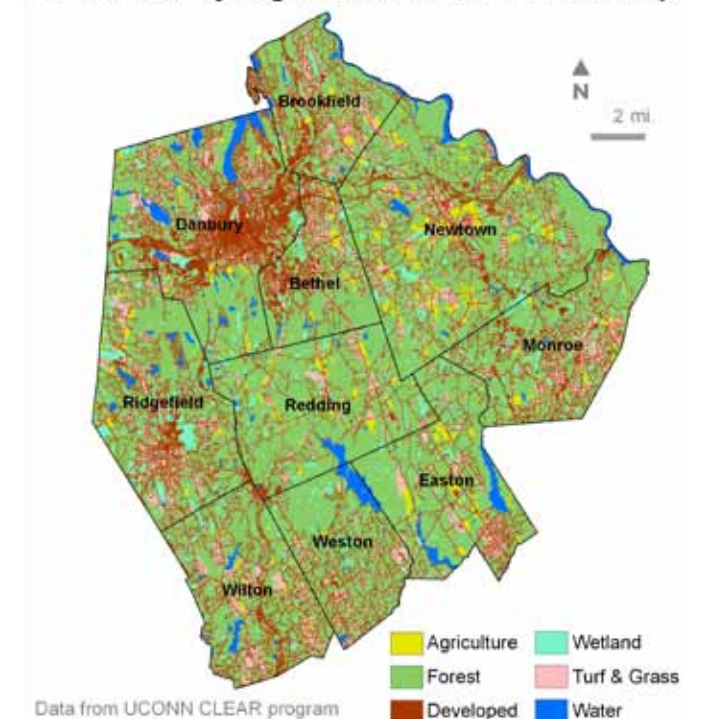
Building More Effective Regional Conservation Partnerships

Partnerships that raised money and protected land within their first five years share certain characteristics as compared to those that have not. Our research shows that leadership, region size, organizational design, planning, and partner skills are important factors to their success. With this understanding, we will be helping partnerships reach their conservation objectives through a series of focused trainings.

Bringing Forestry and Conservation Together

The Wildlands and Woodlands Vision will be realized from grassroots efforts energized with new alliances. Pending approval of a \$450,000 US Forest Service grant, Highstead will be helping partnerships of land trusts and state foresters in seven Northeast states reach thousands of family forest owners with information on how they can conserve their woodlands.

Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership



Forested areas with the 10-town region of the Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership.

Welcome to Highstead

Highstead

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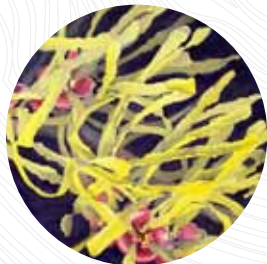
Events 2011



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Forest Ecology Symposium



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