

Acadia Senior College Schoodic to Schoodic course -- PDF #1

by Ben Emory (bemory770@gmail.com)

Spring 2020



Schoodic to Schoodic (S2S) map courtesy of Maine Coast Heritage Trust 2017

Note to readers: *This is the first of four written pieces on the Schoodic to Schoodic (S2S) ecological corridor, to be distributed weekly through April. These substitute for the Acadia Senior College course I was to teach this month at the Wendell Gilley Museum in Southwest Harbor and, hopefully, will be interesting, enrich, and distract during a difficult spring. Although now circulated to a wider audience, these, nonetheless, are tailored to the Acadia Senior College community -- older people living in Hancock County, Maine, with varied backgrounds, interests, and levels of knowledge about conservation topics.*

The final two pages of this document present a short article already distributed to registrants for the original course and to some others. Now that this will circulate more widely, some readers will not have seen the article I wrote three years ago for Northern Woodlands magazine (a favorite of mine!). If you have not already read my piece on Schoodic to Schoodic in Northern Woodlands, you may find turning to it first a helpful introduction.

Comments, questions, and corrections of any errors are welcome. For those who don't know me, my bio is on page 10. I am honored by your interest in these written pieces, and I salute Acadia Senior College for all it does to enrich lives in our part of Maine.

Stay healthy!

Ben



Schoodic Mountain over Hancock Point, from Salisbury Cove on MDI.

A spiritual view for the author!

Acadia National Park planner John Kelly educated me, and probably others too, to the conservation significance of the Schoodic area as well as the importance of “corridors” in habitat preservation. We were in a small room sided in dark, old varnished boards in downtown Winter Harbor’s landmark Hammond Hall, now a center for arts and performances. As we looked at a map, John pointed out the large areas of undeveloped and lightly developed forests, wetlands, lakes, ponds, and bogs stretching away to the north from the Schoodic District of Acadia National Park. John underscored that all the undeveloped land provides a connection for animal and plant species between the ocean and North Woods.

John was thinking big and might have impressed even E.O. Wilson, Harvard’s famed evolutionary biologist. Said Wilson in an interview published in *Smithsonian* in 2014, “. . . people haven’t been thinking big enough – even conservationists. . . I see a chain of uninterrupted corridors forming, with twists and turns, some of them opening up to become wide . . .”

Preserving a land corridor for animal and plant movement is the absolute essence of the Schoodic to Schoodic (S2S) undertaking. It is land conservation at landscape scale, vital to increasing species resilience in the face of a changing climate. S2S is a determined effort to help preserve biological diversity in eastern Maine in an era when the consequences of extinctions are ever more understood. Fortuitously for people, the corridor also offers opportunities for superb outdoor recreation.

Importantly, discussing the S2S story offers a framework for touching on a broad range of issues and for examining a wider geography – from forests farther north and northeast to out into the Gulf of Maine. This course will stick mostly to the area shown within the red line on the map, but in the final missive I will discuss the broader geography and marine issues related to S2S.

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“Truly unique.” That was the frequent message of the Forest Society of Maine’s late executive director, Alan Hutchinson, when speaking of the eastern Maine forests that still meet the sea with only minimal disruptions, some of the most important of which are the forests in the S2S corridor. Unbroken woods extending from the interior to the ocean “. . . are like no place else on the Atlantic seaboard,” he pointed out when keynote speaker at a conference hosted by Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park. He strongly endorsed the S2S concept of a conserved ecological corridor stretching north 16 miles from Acadia National

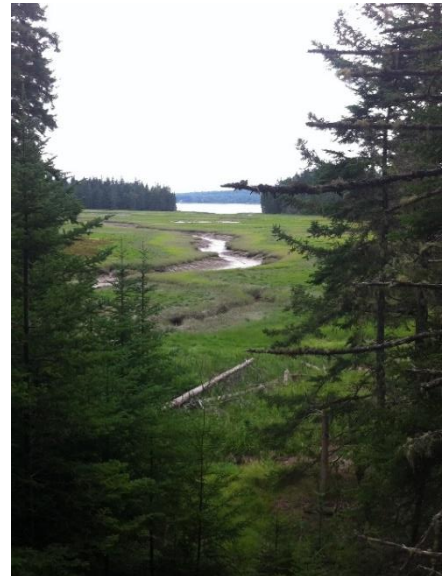
Park's Schoodic Point to Schoodic Mountain (Schoodic to Schoodic!) in the State's Donnell Pond Unit. He saw too the potential to extend the corridor farther north.

Alan loved my tale of a moose encounter close to the estuarine shores of Gouldsboro's West Bay in the S2S geography. He thought the moose sighting perfectly symbolized this eastern Maine connection between the Gulf of Maine's ocean waters and the fabled North Woods. In late afternoon grayness the day before Thanksgiving I had been picking my way along a narrow, abandoned road, trying to keep my LL Bean boots from completely submerging in the gray-brown water filling deep ruts of unknown depth. Not that afternoon but on a visit a few years later I was to find the road's puddles full of green frogs, peering up with their bulging eyes as I passed by. On the November visit, though, what caught my attention was sudden noise of large animal movement, tempting me through trees to a beaver pond. There, across the little pond, a bull moose raised his massive antlered head from the calm water. Tingling with the thrill of his presence, I retreated into the woods.

The moose and I were separated from salt water by less than a mile of thick, primarily spruce and fir forest on the 600-acre Gouldsboro Unit of Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge. I had negotiated the purchase of the original part of the Gouldsboro Unit years earlier when I represented The Conservation Fund in Maine. Now I was investigating the 400 acres of forest for sale on the other side of the old, muddy road. Lacking authority and funds for the purchase of this tract but recognizing the importance of wildlife habitat blocs being as large as possible, then-Refuge Manager Charlie Blair was ardently encouraging its purchase by the local land trust, Frenchman Bay Conservancy, a transaction which indeed subsequently happened thanks to the foresight of the trust and the generosity of a number of private individuals. Charlie stressed that with so much forest fragmentation along the Maine coast, remaining intact blocks of forest habitat are ever more vital to species such as the forest interior nesting wood thrush, a songbird in severe decline, and to widely ranging mammals, like moose and bobcat. The moose at the beaver pond, a federal conservation agency (US Fish & Wildlife Service), a national non-profit (The Conservation Fund), a state-wide non-profit the local land trust (Frenchman Bay Conservancy), a host of committed people, generous of expertise, time, and money, and the resulting successful land preservation project -- which nearly doubled the size of this conserved habitat bloc -- are collectively an illustrative piece of the S2S story.



Where author sighted moose, now the Frances Wood Preserve of Frenchman Bay Conservancy



Forest meets sea at Gouldsboro Unit, Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge

This preserve of Frenchman Bay Conservancy, known as the Frances Wood Preserve, and the contiguous National Wildlife Refuge land are among an increasing number of preserved land parcels between what might be considered the S2S bookends – Acadia National Park’s Schoodic District at the south end and the State of Maine’s Donnell Pond Unit of the Public Reserved Lands on the north. As said above, Schoodic Mountain lies within the Donnell Pond Unit.



Schoodic Mtn summit in foreground, looking south to Frenchman Bay and Schoodic Point (photo courtesy Bob DeForrest, Maine Coast Heritage Trust)

Native Americans:

What does the intriguing word “Schoodic” mean? It appears in many Maine place names -- Schoodic Point, Schoodic Island, Schoodic Lake, Schoodic District of Acadia National Park, Schoodic Head, Schoodic Peninsula, Schoodic Mountain, Schoodic Bog, Schoodic Institute, even doubly in Schoodic to Schoodic. The word certainly has a Native American derivation. There are varying definitions from multiple sources. *Auke* reportedly means “place.” The Daughters of Liberty in their 1904 *Historical Researches of Gouldsboro, Maine* stated that for the Passamaquoddies *Skut-Auke*, from which “Schoodic” may derive, means fire place or land that has burned. David Cook in his *Above the Gravel Bar: The Native Canoe Routes of Maine* has stated, referring to a stream elsewhere in Maine, that *schoodic* there means “trout place.” That has consistency to what is stated in an appendix to Thoreau’s *The Maine Woods*—that *schoot* means “rush,” and with *auke* meaning place, *schoot-auke* or “schoodic” means “place where water rushes.” That could indeed be a trout stream. Local historian Allen Workman in his fine history *Schoodic Point* suggests that the word may come from the Native American *esquodek*, meaning “‘the end’ of land to be navigated.”

Navigating a canoe through the exposed and often rough waters surrounding Schoodic Point would have been on many days a dangerous challenge for Native Americans headed east or west along the coast. Fortunately, they had an alternative route with manageable portages, through Jones Pond in West Gouldsboro, and there were other portage possibilities closer to Schoodic Point.

S2S is rich in Native American history. Humans have been on this landscape from the time the glaciers receded 10,000 and more years ago. A map in *The Swordfish Hunters* by Dr. Bruce Bourque, long-time chief archaeologist of the Maine State Museum, shows cemeteries in Maine of the Red Paint People of 4,000 years ago. The easternmost such cemetery on the Maine coast is shown as being close to Tidal Falls between Sullivan and Hancock.

The upper Frenchman Bay area, including its northeast corner, Flanders Bay between Sorrento and West Gouldsboro, has numerous extensive middens, or shell heaps, left by later peoples. Warren King Moorehead reported on these in his *A Report on the Archaeology of Maine*, published in 1922, and around 1940 the Abbe Museum published reports by Wendell S. Hadlock on his archaeological investigations in the area. It is notable that preserves of both Frenchman Bay Conservancy and Maine Coast Heritage Trust contain important middens. A new preserve of the latter organization in the western portion of upper Frenchman Bay (just west of the S2S geography) is the largest Native American village site found during Warren Moorehead’s eight seasons of Maine research. To the extent that

S2S is a story not just of twentieth and twenty-first century conservation but also a story of people, the Native American history is the beginning of that.

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Why is a corridor important?

Corridor ecology is at the root of the S2S effort. Large blocks of undeveloped land are increasingly being fragmented in coastal Maine and everywhere else. Houses, roads, shopping centers, industrial facilities, schools, all these needs of mankind require land. These requirements are often met by developing what previously had been part of a large block of intact habitat for wildlife and plants. As I recounted above in mention of Frenchman Bay Conservancy's securing the 400 acres abutting the Gouldsboro Unit of Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge, then-refuge manager Charlie Blair had strongly argued that with so much habitat fragmentation along the Maine coast, the remaining blocks of intact forest habitat are ever more vital.

Corridors connecting blocks of habitat play an important role by providing routes for species that can use them to move between blocks. Such species may thus avoid debilitating effects of genetic isolation and, hopefully, survive in the face of environmental changes and natural disasters that may have damaged one block but not others to which there are migratory connections. Corridors with a north-south axis and, in the Northern Hemisphere, a rising elevation as they trend to the north -- like S2S -- seem especially significant in this time of trying to increase species resilience in the face of a warming climate. The S2S corridor is doubly important, for it not only leads north toward higher latitude but also provides a path southward toward the coast, which the ocean keeps cooler than the interior in summer.

The S2S vision includes maximizing contiguity but also conserving "stepping stones," non-contiguous habitat parcels that may be expandable and connectable as future opportunities arise. Certainly, birds, insects, and many plant seeds can migrate between stepping stones. Whether it will ever be possible to have a continuous corridor of protected land from Schoodic Point sixteen miles north to Schoodic Mountain and on beyond is unknown now, but more and more stepping stones in between are being conserved. Where newly protected stepping stones abut already preserved land, achieving the continuous corridor of protected lands becomes closer to success. An example of one of the S2S stepping stones is the above mentioned approximately 1,000 acres of combined Gouldsboro Unit national wildlife refuge and Frenchman Bay Conservancy's Frances Wood Preserve land. Another of the S2S stepping stones is the Gouldsboro parcel now owned by Frenchman Bay Conservancy running from Route 1 north to Lower

West Bay Pond described in my short article in *Northern Woodlands* magazine (at the end of this document).

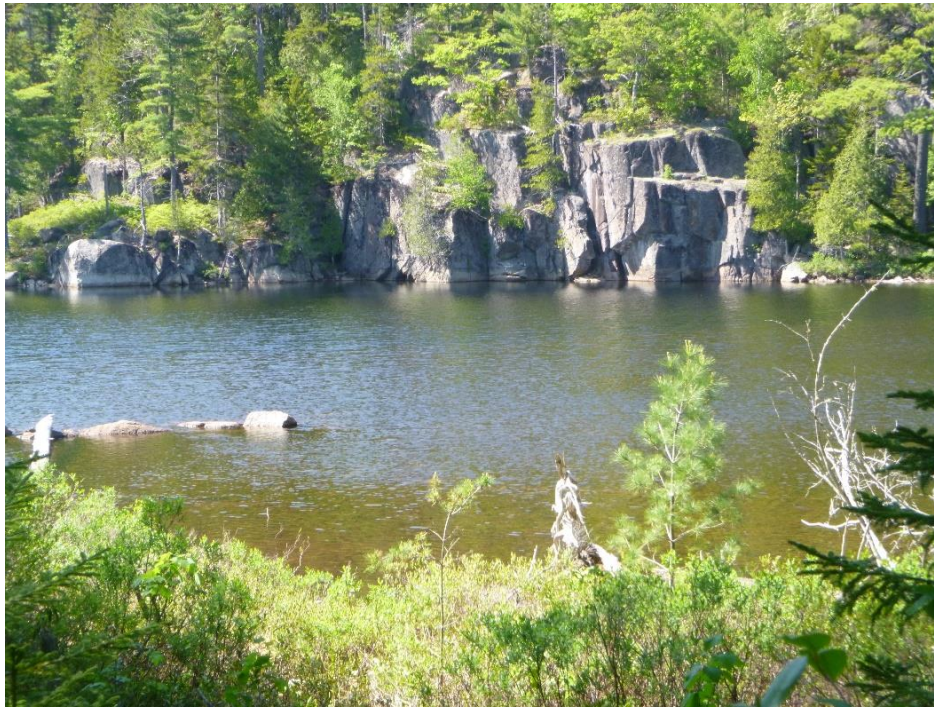
Islands are important stepping stones in S2S even though water will always separate them from the mainland corridor. Schoodic Island to the east of Schoodic Point belongs to Acadia National Park and is important habitat for nesting seabirds. To the west of the point and at the entrance to Winter Harbor and Frenchman Bay is Turtle Island. Heavily wooded it has been a rookery for great blue herons, and in 1963 it became the first Maine island to be acquired by The Nature Conservancy, the purchase to forestall clear-cutting to supply the then-operating pulp mill at Bucksport. Farther up Frenchman Bay are islands partially wooded and partially open, which offer nesting for a variety of birds including songbirds and eagles. Stave Island is now partly owned by Maine Coast Heritage Trust and partly privately owned, the private properties subject to conservation easements held by Acadia National Park and Maine Coast Heritage Trust. (More will be said about the conservation easement technique of preserving land in the second PDF.)

It has become ever more apparent that the S2S corridor is part of a world-wide effort to preserve biodiversity. Said *The Economist* in its recent publication *The World in 2020*, “The climate element has taken centre stage in recent years, but to ecologists biodiversity is no less critical. Humans rely on there being a diversity of plants and animals to feed themselves. Indirectly, this biodiversity is also a key contributor to health, through medicines which are often inspired by molecules found in nature, and other basic needs such as clean water. . .” These are human-centered arguments for biodiversity preservation and omit moral arguments for preserving nature for nature’s sake, but they, nonetheless, underscore what is at stake. The article goes on to point out that since the degradation of ecosystems is responsible for 23% of global emissions, discussions of climate change and biodiversity should be brought together.

The significance of the S2S forests, wetlands, and soils in regard to climate change is underscored by these extracts from a recent Open Space Institute piece entitled *Finding Climate Solutions in the Land*: “With forests and other land sequestering more than 10 percent of US carbon emissions each year, conservation organizations clearly have an important role to play . . . Mature, mixed-species forests provide the greatest carbon benefits . . . More carbon is retained in the soil and trees when it is permanently conserved and managed with light harvests or with long rotations . . . Sequestration is highest in eastern US forests . . . Land conservation matters – not only for those who will enjoy and rely on protected land today, but for all of us determined to help heal the planet for the long run.” Add to that what Karin Tilberg, executive director of the Forest Society of Maine, recently wrote, “The trees in Maine’s forests store hundreds of millions of metric tons of carbon in just the portions of the trees that are above ground. Much more carbon is

stored in the stumps and roots. And lots more carbon is stored in the forest soil. To understand the significance of these numbers, it is currently estimated that 50% or more of Maine's total CO2 emissions are being stored by Maine's forests each year." S2S is an important part of eastern Maine's carbon sequestration.

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Pond off Tunk Mountain trail in State of Maine's Donnell Pond Unit

It Takes a Village:

The land conservation efforts of S2S showcase how Maine's outstanding system of federal, state, municipal, and non-profit conservation agencies and organizations partner effectively with each other and work closely with communities and landowners. The effectiveness of this system is a model for the nation. The list of players that have held or, in most cases, still hold S2S real estate interests includes the Hancock County Trustees of Reservations, Acadia National Park, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Winter Harbor Water District, the Town of Gouldsboro, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Frenchman Bay Conservancy, the National Park Foundation, and the Downeast Salmon Federation. In advisory and assisting roles have been Friends of Acadia, the Forest Society of Maine, and the New Hampshire-based, conservation-oriented

timber investment group Lyme Timber. Then, too, there have been the funding sources – Land for Maine’s Future Program, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Land and Water Conservation Fund, mitigation dollars from a power line project, foundations, and donations of cash and real estate interests from generous individuals. Towns involved and the State have adopted plans and regulations recognizing the importance of preserving rural character, large, unfragmented blocks of habitat, and riparian areas. Cooperative landowners have facilitated sales and gifts of land and conservation easements.

Many diverse players have been engaged in S2S land conservation. Indeed, it is “taking a village” to keep advancing S2S goals. Subsequent PDFs will provide more details about the players, projects, techniques, funding sources, and public benefits.

Next week’s written piece for the ASC S2S course will go on to the S2S “bookends” – Acadia National Park’s Schoodic District at the south end of S2S and the State of Maine’s Donnell Pond Unit of the Public Reserved Lands, which includes Schoodic Mountain, at the north end – as well as more commentary about stepping stones in between.

Pages that follow provide a bibliography of books, reports, and videos that I have found interesting in their elaboration on issues touched on in this course. Final pages are a short article I wrote for Northern Woodlands three years ago. The land parcel featured in that article is a significant “stepping stone” in the S2S corridor.

Because not everyone has seen my bio as presented by Acadia Senior College, here it is:

Ben Emory received his A.B. from Harvard and M.B.A. from Dartmouth. A former executive director of Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Land Trust Alliance, he has served on several land trust boards, the Land for Maine’s Future Board, and the Acadia National Park Advisory Commission, as well as chairing the Schoodic to Schoodic Coordination Committee. Ben taught “Joy of Boats” for ASC in 2019. He is the author of *Sailor for the Wild – On Maine, Conservation and Boats*.

Suggested Books, Papers, and Videos for Additional Information and Insights

(with some indications of relevance to S2S; Ben Emory can advise anyone interested about where to obtain)

Bourque, Bruce, *The Swordfish Hunters: The History and Ecology of an Ancient American Sea People*, Bunker Hill Publishing 2012. Demonstrates Red Paint People of about 4,000 years ago were as far east as S2S region, shows how marine ecosystems of Gulf of Maine, including those bordering S2S land, have evolved over millennia and are still evolving.

Braun, Duane and Ruth, *Guide to the Geology of Mount Desert Island and Acadia National Park*, North Atlantic Books 2016.

Brett, Alex; Longworth, Gordon; Peterson, Chris, Editors, *Frenchman Bay Atlas*, College of the Atlantic 2012. Interesting maps including showing terrestrial and marine resources.

Bryan, Robert, *Robert Bryan: The Flying Parson of Labrador and the Real Story Behind Bert and I*, Down East Books 2014. Includes some history relevant to rusticators in Tunk Lake area and to the conservation of it.

Conkling, Philip W., Editor, *From Cape Cod to the Bay of Fundy: An Environmental Atlas of the Gulf of Maine*, The MIT Press 1995.

Cooper, S. Josephine, Editor, *A Bicentennial History of Sullivan Maine*, The Sullivan – Sorrento Historical Society 1989.

Emory, Ben, *A Proud Accomplishment – Acadia's Conservation Easement Program*, unpublished article 2018; available from author on request.

Emory, Ben, *Sailor for the Wild: On Maine, Conservation and Boats*, Seapoint Books 2017. Includes a chapter "Schoodic to Schoodic" as well as coverage of land conservation techniques, eastern Maine land conservation, missions and activities of some of non-profits and government agencies involved in S2S, evolution of Maine land conservation, Land for Maine's Future Program, etc.

Emory, Dianna K., *Bonding with Nature: Responding to Life's Challenges and the Aging Process*, Seapoint Books 2018. Chapter on volunteerism includes descriptions of missions of most of non-profits and government agencies involved in S2S. Discusses the importance of natural lands such as at S2S to human health and approaches to using nature to promote one's well-being.

Foster, David, et al., *Wildlands and Woodlands, Farmlands and Communities: Broadening the Vision for New England*, Harvard Forest 2017.

Gambill, Isabella; Levitt, James; Mahung, Karena, *Landscape Scale Conservation in the Schoodic to Schoodic Region of Maine, USA*, Harvard Forest 2014. Report by graduate students on specifics of land conservation projects in S2S.

Hadlock, Wendell S., *The Taft's Point Shell Mound at West Gouldsboro, Maine, and Three Shell Heaps on Frenchman's Bay*, Bulletins of the Abbe Museum, 1939 and 1941.

Hilty, Jodi A., Lidicker, William Z., Jr., Merenlender, Adina M., *Corridor Ecology: The Science and Practice of Linking Landscapes for Biodiversity Conservation*, Island Press 2006.

Maine Department of Conservation, Bureau of Public Lands, *Downeast Region Management Plan*, 2007. Provides excellent detail about the State's approximately 15,000-acre Donnell Pond Unit within which lie Schoodic Mountain, others of the so-called Black Hills, and numerous ponds and bogs.

Moorehead, Warren King, *A Report on the Archaeology of Maine: Being a Narrative of Explorations in That State, 1912-1920. Together With Work at Lake Champlain, 1917*, The Andover Press 1922, Reprints from the collection of the University of Michigan Library. S2S has a rich Native American history that this book helps illuminate.

Mytar, Misha, *Schoodic to Schoodic: Planning a Wildlife Corridor*, a report for Frenchman Bay Conservancy 2007. The author, a graduate student at the Muskie School of the University of Southern Maine at the time and now Maine Coast Heritage Trust's land conservation staff member for Mount Desert Island, addresses issues related to the importance of S2S and the perspectives of area residents gained from interviews.

Narula, Svati Kirsten, "The Fate of the Forest" in *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* (Jan-Feb 2020): "Maple, beech, birch, spruce, and fir dominate the landscape . . . But as the climate of northern New England changes, those species aren't guaranteed to continue thriving."

National Park Service, *Schoodic: Draft General Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement*, 2004. Contains much interesting information about history and natural resources.

Neill, Peter, *The Once and Future Ocean: Notes Toward a New Hydraulic Society*, Leete's Island Books 2015. Makes strong case for need to look at landscape and environmental protection from top of watersheds to depths of ocean; it all connects.

Perlman, Dan L. and Milder, Jeffrey C., *Practical Ecology for Planners, Developers, and Citizens*, Island Press and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy 2005.

Rich, Louise Dickinson, *The Peninsula*, Chatham Press 1958, 1971. Beautifully written, Rich describes with passion the people and landscape of the S2S area south of Route 1. Chapter 5 educates the reader to the evolution of the land from pre-glacier times through the 10,000 years since the glacier retreated.

Smallidge, Allan, *Mosquito Harbor: A Narrative History of Winter Harbor, Maine 1790-2005*, Ironbound Press 2006.

Workman, Allen K., *Schoodic Point: History on the Edge of Acadia National Park*, History Press 2014.

Videos:

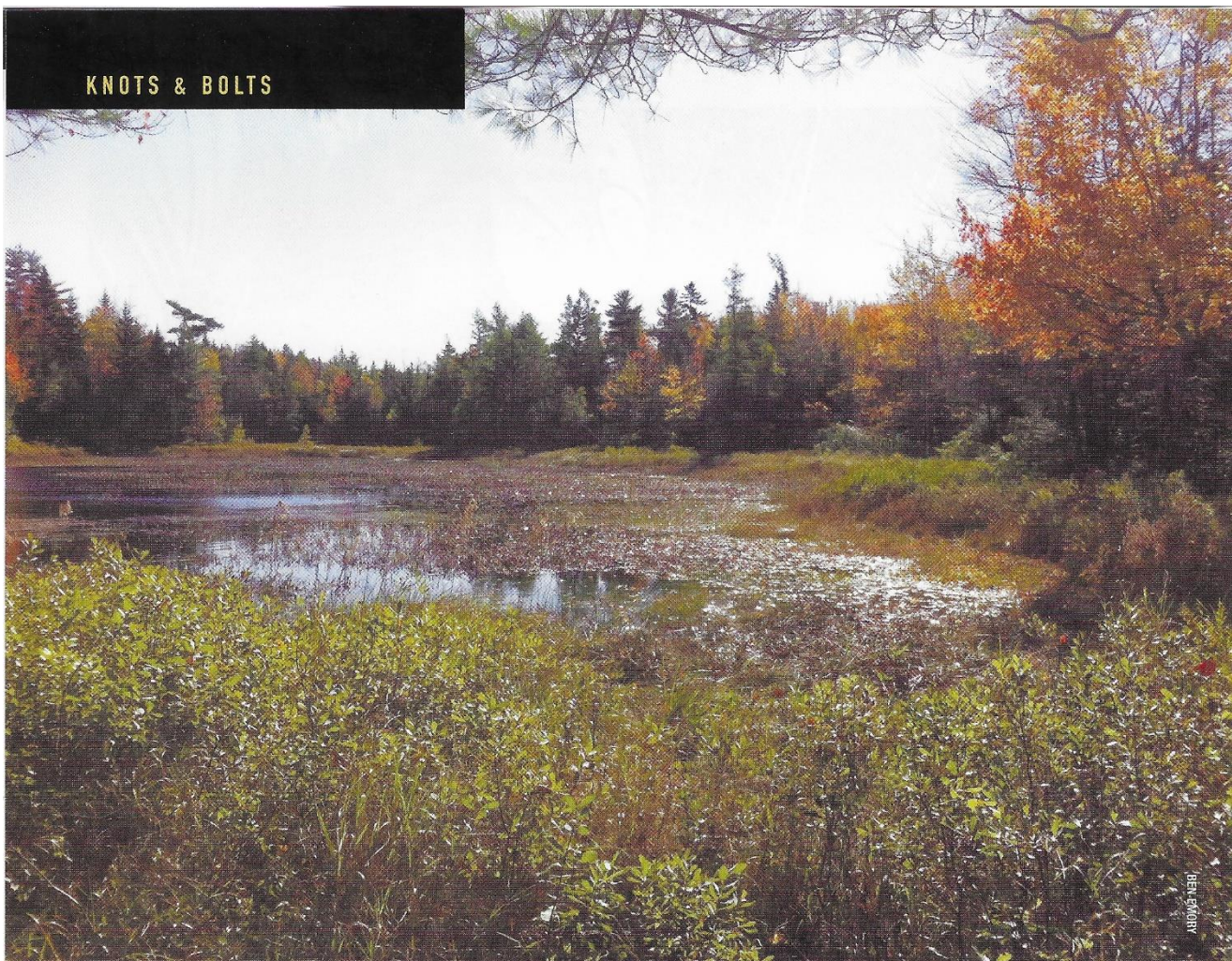
Alan Hutchinson, late Executive Director of the Forest Society of Maine, talk about eastern Maine at Schoodic Institute 2014 (If following link does not work, google “Alan Hutchinson youtube Schoodic”)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=B6tEP_kPt5g

Dr. Robert Steneck, University of Maine, professor of marine biology, oceanography, and marine policy, TED talk about Cashes Ledge (If following link does not work, google “Robert Steneck TED talk Cashes Ledge”)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svWIwQDBX2g>

Schoodic: Where Sea Meets Land, 57-minute documentary on DVD, produced by Accompany 2004



BEN EMMERY

Lower West Bay Pond in Gouldsboro, Maine.

[STEWARDSHIP STORY]

Where Forest Meets the Sea

Eastern Maine is the last place on the East Coast where large tracts of forest still meet the sea. On a blue-sky October day at the height of foliage season, I went to explore one such tract – a critical 300-acre parcel that Frenchman Bay Conservancy was considering for purchase. On a landscape scale, conserving it would have been one more step in maintaining the connection between the fabled North Woods and the shores of the Atlantic. On a smaller scale, as a long, undeveloped stretch of Route 1, the property was important to preserve as a wildlife crossing. I stepped past the steel gate and started up the woods road that not long before had provided access for logging trucks and harvesting equipment. Then, I trudged northward past various harvest areas toward the uncut shore of Lower West Bay Pond, identified by the Maine Natural Areas Program as important inland waterfowl and wading-bird habitat and alewife run. Not a soul was around as I reached the sun-drenched shoreline and worked my way toward a lovely cove of shallow marsh, hardwoods along the edge ablaze in red and orange.

Many conservation projects in the Northeast are trying to conserve natural land linkages between critical ecosystems and habitats. The Schoodic to Schoodic project (S2S) seeks to preserve an ecological corridor running

north from Acadia National Park's famed Schoodic Point to the 15,000-acre Donnell Pond Unit of Maine's Public Reserved Lands, which includes Schoodic Mountain. The vision of Schoodic to Schoodic includes conserving contiguous tracts of forest, associated wetlands, and non-contiguous parcels that can serve as "stepping stones" for mammals, birds, insects, and plant seeds to travel. Corridors can help species that range widely, can minimize the debilitating effects of genetic isolation, and can enhance survival in the face of environmental changes. Corridors with a north-south axis allowing poleward movement seem especially significant in species' adaptation to a changing climate. The S2S corridor is doubly important, for it not only leads north toward higher latitudes but also provides a path southward toward the coast, which the ocean keeps cooler than the interior in summer. While benefiting flora and fauna, the S2S corridor offers many opportunities for the public to enjoy a wide variety of outdoor recreations.

The conservation of this corridor began in the late 1920s when private landowners donated Schoodic Point and it was added to Acadia National Park. Today, Acadia's Schoodic District comprises 3,500 acres and forms the end of the massive peninsula south of Route 1. The brutal Atlantic Ocean

frequently crashes spectacularly against the great sloping rocks at the tip.

On the north end, the Donnell Pond Unit was acquired by the state beginning in 1988. Its natural character is reminiscent of the better-known Mount Desert Island a dozen miles southwest. Prominent glacier-sculpted hills with much exposed granite rise above remote woods and clear lakes.

Once these bookends were established, conservation partners – federal, state, municipal, and nonprofit – began working in close cooperation to conserve linking parcels with fee acquisitions and conservation easements, sometimes by purchase and sometimes by gift. As of late 2016, the total mainland acreage permanently protected between Acadia National Park and the Donnell Pond Unit, excluding them, is about 3,300 acres in fee ownership and 3,100 acres under conservation easements.

For years, there was an elephant in the room between Acadia and the Donnell Pond Unit – 3,200 privately owned acres abutting Acadia. Acadia National Park Superintendent Sheridan Steele called the parcel “a dagger to the heart of Acadia” because the property spans almost the entire width of the peninsula, and too much or poorly sited development there could seriously impair scenic vistas and the ecological integrity of S2S. Years of effort by many parties to protect the parcel led nowhere until 2011, when an anonymous philanthropist bought the property. The conservation-oriented investment firm Lyme Timber facilitated the transaction. The southern half, mostly rough land dominated by red spruce, white cedar, and jack pine and recovering from hard cutting 20 years ago, has been added to Acadia National Park, with old logging roads transformed for biking.

Decisions about the final disposition of the northern half – arguably the most important part ecologically because of its extensive freshwater wetlands – are ongoing. The anonymous owners have already given permission for the Schoodic Institute at Acadia National Park to establish forest monitoring plots as part of a plan for such study sites from Schoodic Point to Schoodic Mountain. The Institute’s forest ecology program director, Dr. Nicholas Fischelli, explained that, “This area has a strong climate gradient driven by the maritime influence and thus provides a tremendous opportunity to study forest dynamics and change across the local landscape.” This research follows work done by University of Maine forestry students on the Schoodic Point area’s significant jack pine stands.

The north-south endpoints of S2S are easy to determine, but the east-west span is open to interpretation. Included in the corridor vision are coastal islands flanking the peninsula, for birds, some mammals, and some plant species easily cross narrow stretches of water. A milestone success in this geography was The Nature Conservancy’s first Maine island purchase, 129-acre Turtle Island, home to a rookery for great blue herons. Subsequently, many more islands east and west of the Schoodic peninsula have been preserved. Turtle Island was bought in 1963 to prevent its being denuded for the St. Regis pulp mill on the lower Penobscot River in Bucksport. Taking wood from Maine islands was still economically viable, although subsequently the economics became prohibitive. Today, that mill and others nearby are gone. A biomass electric generation plant in Jonesboro has also closed, adding to the challenge of profitably managing even mainland working forestlands in the area. So far, markets continue to

exist for sawlogs and, with additional trucking costs, lower-quality wood at more distant mills. In the S2S corridor, there are private commercial timberlands, large and small – many well managed – which hopefully someday will be protected with working forest conservation easements.

Leaving the cove, I struggled across slash left in a clear cut to reach the property’s other side, which fronts on a large marsh, much of which is on abutting property under conservation easement. Not only was this parcel important to wildlife crossing Route 1, but, significantly, it would enlarge a block already conserved and one with promising conservation opportunities to the north linking to the Donnell Pond Unit. If ever a property exemplified the importance of strategic connector parcels in preserving a corridor, this was it. This parcel that Maine Coast Heritage Trust spotted as an opportunity, and on which the conservation fund helped negotiate, was purchased by Frenchman Bay Conservancy 18 months after my visit, fabulously exemplifying the effective partnerships powering S2S.

Ben Emory has worked in Maine and national land conservation professionally and as a volunteer for nearly half a century. In his free time, he enthusiastically engages in all that the Maine outdoors offers on land and sea.



Schoodic to Schoodic; conserved areas shown in green.

Northern Woodlands’ “Stewardship Story” series is sponsored by the Stifler Family Foundation, in support of forestry practices that promote healthy and sustainable forests and wildlife habitat.