

## A Summer Respite

Join me on a tour of Hebron's newest open space acquisition! This adventure takes a peek along the southern border of the fascinating 215-acre forested property known as the Bernstein Preserve.

Our journey begins at the Air Line Trail (ALT) at its Grayville Road crossing. Limited parking here, but no worry, there is ample parking a short distance away at Grayville Falls Park, another gem. Walking south along the ALT, we are soon greeted by an elder stand of hemlocks that grace Grayville Falls.

The northern boundary of the Bernstein preserve is soon approached on the east side the trail. Listen for the wood thrush songbird that makes the forest its paradise. Our walk continues toward Judd Brook ushered by varied landscapes: views of the Bernstein forest, a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees, punctuated by numerous crisscrossing stone walls, evidence of past New England farming.

Nearly reaching the southern Bernstein boundary, we encounter wildlife of special concern enjoying the warmth of the afternoon sunshine. Let's leave our friend unstartled and continue on. Just a few more yards and we have reached the bridge at Judd Brook.

Let's take a quick detour to an area of respite and solitude. Just after crossing the bridge, a path takes the adventurer upstream the Judd. First, a great sycamore tree securing the streambank is encountered. A touch of its bark reveals cooling sensation to the hand...go on, try touching it! Onward we head. The path ends at an impressive stone foundation, one of many along the Judd banks, somehow pieced together long ago.

Take in the flow of the stream here. Its ledge bottom, its curvy form, its adorning hemlocks. Stay here for a few quiet minutes, to refresh the soul and soothe the mind. Ok, we are ready to continue the adventure after the essential detour.

Heading back across the bridge, a path leads one along the northern side of Judd Brook. The Bernstein southern property boundary weaves itself along and across the path to the northern bank of this scenic watercourse, highlighted by large glacial erratics stranded long ago. A streambank walk reveals more impressive stone foundations and native plant life only seen on the forest floor. Jumping back on the path,

it heads steeply uphill. A grand view of Judd Brook awaits us at its peak. Great time for a pic and short rest. Further along the path a woodland frog sits, frozen as he considers himself invisible, if he does not flinch. Out comes the camera for this little forest inhabitant. Continuing along, the upland forest of this open space gift awaits exploration for another day. The walk concludes a bit further along the path (an unimproved Eversource right-of-way) at a sun-splashed wetlands crossing. After spotting a few turtles hanging out and absorbing some rays, it is time to head back recalling all that we have witnessed and appreciating what this open space land offers us.

*Frank Zitkus, Secretary of and Planning and Zoning Commission Representative to the Hebron Open Space Land Acquisition Committee*

Author's Note: Post adventure research reveals that these foundations were erected to allow for rock excavated from upriver to be hauled little by little to help support construction of the massive ALT viaducts in Colchester and other portions of the Air Line Trail Railroad.

