

The Merrymeeting News



Winter 2006 VOLUME XVI, No. 1

The Newsletter of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • Box 233 • Richmond Maine 04357



Friends of Merrymeeting Bay

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Our mission is to preserve, protect and improve the unique ecosystems of the Bay through:

Education

Conservation & Stewardship

Membership Events

Research & Advocacy

Support comes from members' tax-deductible donations and grants.

www.friendsofmerrymeetingbay.org

The Merrymeeting News is published seasonally by Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB) and is sent to FOMB members and other friends of the Bay.

For information call:
Ed Friedman, Chair,
at 666-3372.



VIXEN CROSSES OVER

Vixen was out in the moonlight, hunting for some fresh meat. It had been a long hungry winter, with the world locked up in snow and ice, but lately there had been a new scent in the air. Tonight the breeze was southerly, and there was a salt tang in it. Vixen knew the other creatures sensed a promise of Spring, and maybe they too would be out tonight. Foolishly.

“Looking for a chance to cross over,” Vixen chuckled to herself. And who better than she to hasten them along?

But it was mighty slim pickings. Snow was still deep in the woods, and the furtive Little Ones were sticking to their burrows and winter trails under the white blanket. Vixen could hear them chattering and scurrying beneath the snow, and it made her furious. Time and again she leapt up and down on the rotten crust, plunging into the rodent highways, only to hear them scuttling away. She almost thought she could hear them laughing at her.



Vixen Crossing Over
Photo & sculpture: Bryce Muir

Vixen was getting snappish. Not only was she working up an appetite, but her coat was soaking wet, and nothing made Vixen more cranky than wet clothing. You see, Vixen was always a natty dresser, all decked out in formal attire, even when she was foraging for a feed, or giving the local dogs a run. It was a particular matter of pride for her to look her best when she was helping some other soul to cross over.

“The least I can do,” she thought, “is show them a little respect.”

But the only crossing Vixen seemed fated to make tonight was over the river. When her usual haunts proved hopeless hunting, Vixen decided it was time to check out Farmer Berry's hen yard. That meant taking a stroll across the river ice.

It was very late in the season to be ice-dancing, though. Smelt had long since gone downriver to his spawning grounds, taking his song with him. Now the heavy ice was all rotten and fractured. In places the river surface was just a jumble of broken ice pans, jammed together by the tide. But it was still a passable road for Vixen, if she minded her step, and listened carefully for breaking ice.

Vixen tip-toed across the river and crept up on the Old Berry Farm.

The declining Moon was just kissing the tree tops when Vixen snuck through the woods behind the hen yard. The faint southerly breeze rattled the last stubborn Beech leaves still clinging to their branches. Way off you could hear Owl hooting for his breakfast. But the farm dogs were too busy twitching and yipping in their dreams to hear Vixen's soft tread. She haunted the shadows along the tree-line, and made a careful reconnaissance of the hen yard fencing from downwind.

Usually the fence was quite secure, and Vixen often came away from a chicken hunt with nothing more than hunger pangs and a

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Vixen Crosses Over

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sour disposition, but tonight she was in luck. The last big northerly blow had topped a dead pine abutting the yard, and a downed widow-maker straddled part of the fence, making a bridge into the yard. Farmer Berry had intended to clear away the mess and mend fence, but he had lots of irons in the fire, and the hens weren't prone to wander while there was snow outside the yard. So the fence was still laid low.

"Ain't that grand?" Vixen thought, contemplating the convenient bridge the limb made. Vixen jumped onto the bridge and danced across it into hen country. She could hear the fowls in the henhouse fussing and muttering in their sleep.

"Dream on," she whispered to herself. "You'll meet the Dream-maker soon enough."

The next step was a bit tricky. Farmer Berry always shut the birds up at nightfall, but the door of the coop was only secured by a bit of bailing twine wrapped around two nails. On more than one occasion Vixen had hungrily watched from the woods while Farmer Berry buttoned up the coop, so she knew just what to do. Grabbing the bitter end of the twine in her teeth, she rotated her head and unwound the latch. Another yank, and the door swung open.

There was sudden silence in the hen house as a cool breeze wafted into the fowl fug. Vixen slipped in with the chill. She seized the fattest layer she could see, and bolted for the door. Pandemonium broke loose. The uproar was stupendous. Terrified hens and the outraged cock screamed bloody murder.

The farm dogs woke up fuzzy-headed, and before they even had their britches on Vixen was back over the bridge and legging it for the river, with a struggling hen under her arm. Vixen raced on.

The hen was squawking frantically, and Vixen had all she could do to hang on and sprint for safety.

"Hush now, Darlin'," Vixen admonished the bird, between gasps. "It's time to cross over, and you doing it in style. So just hush." But the hen kept screaming. Vixen raced on.

What with the squawking fowl and the baying hounds on Vixen's trail, the hullabaloo was raising the whole neighborhood. In that early hour many's the critter – hunter and hunted alike – took bets on their favorite side.

Some for Vixen, and many against. Vixen raced on.

The hounds were gaining fast on the burdened Vixen, and there was no point in her doubling back, or trying any of her usual ruses, with that bellowing bundle under her arm. She just streaked for the river. Vixen raced on.

It was nip and tuck. In fact, the lead hound almost took a nip out of Vixen's tail as she leaped on the first pan of ice. Once on the river, Vixen had the edge, however. Leaping and dashing across the loose ice, step-and-copying over pieces too small to carry her weight, Vixen quickly out-foxed her pursuers. Vixen raced on.

One young dog tried to follow over the small pans, but panicked when they up-ended under him, and he fell in, barely scrabbling his way back onto the stuck ice by shore. The other dogs came to a stand and howled in frustration. Vixen raced on.

The sky was beginning to lighten, and the warm south wind was picking up. Vixen ran more slowly now, trying to catch her breath. The hen was still raising Cain, however.

"It won't be long now, Honey," Vixen promised the hen, and she shifted her grip to ease a kink in her arm.

As it would happen, Vixen was just then prancing across a frail bridge of window-pane ice. Feeling Vixen's grip loosen, the hen squawked and shook herself loose. Vixen grabbed at the escaping bird, but in the uproar she didn't hear the ice breaking under them. In an instant Vixen was in the river floundering to stay afloat, her soaked coat and tail dragging her down. And the hen was loose. The stupid bird flopped helplessly in the icy water. Still screeching.

Vixen managed to grab hold of a floating pan, and after much splashing and crashing through the fragile pane ice, she finally wrestled herself up onto it. Sopping wet and shivering cold. By the time she was wrung out and shaken dry enough to think about recapturing that hen, the bird was silent. And gone.

On a perch high above the river, Eagle had been woken by all the hoorah, and had admired the whole show in the dawning light. When Vixen went overboard and the hen got free, Eagle had dropped out of his tree, dove onto the waterlogged bird, dug in his talons, and flown back up with his prey. Now Eagle was tearing apart the finally silent captive.

Vixen barked angrily at Eagle. The great raptor just shrugged. So the weary and bedraggled Vixen tip-toed the rest of the way across the river, and made her sorry way home. The Sun was just coming up.

Which is why you must listen carefully when crossing the Spring ice. And why you can never be sure who will be your final guide when it comes time to cross over.

Bryce Muir

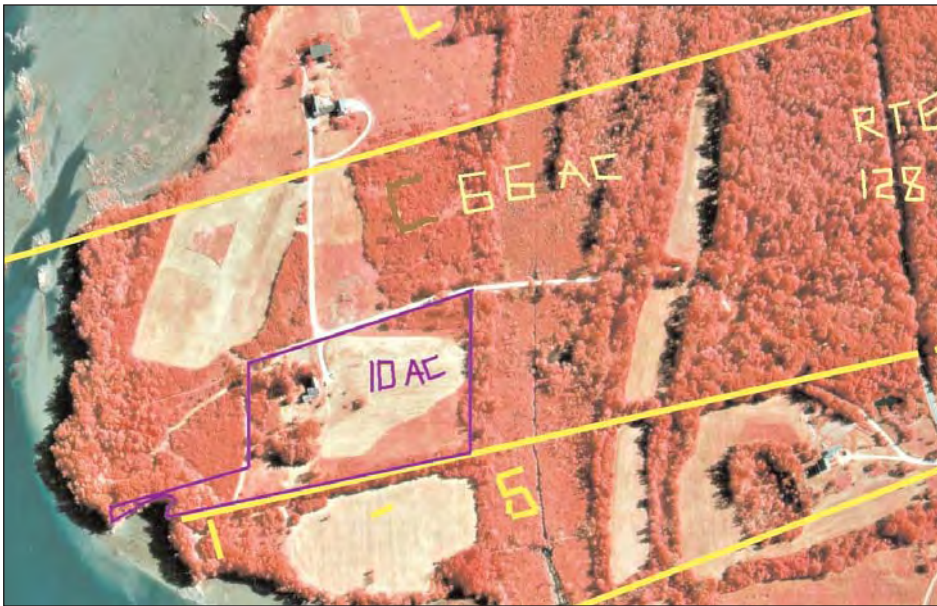
Editors Note: Bryce Muir broke through Cathance River ice and drowned while skating in early December. This story and others are reprinted with permission, from his book Local Myths. In his memory we are asked by his wife Peggy to do something for a local artist. We encourage you to explore the nature of the man and his work at www.brycemuir.com. He is sorely missed.

Elegy for Bryce

skates flashing in the
bright light,
moving toward a
darker night,
on a day of eagles.
no one sees you fall as
you travel far beyond us,
toward the mouth of the river;
toward the sea.
you have seen the face
of the river goddess.
you were one of
her favorites and now
she is glad to see you,
you can never go
home, never come
back to us, all
moving down river;
toward the sea.

Gary Lawless

Historic Thwings Point Conservation Property For Sale in Woolwich



Thwings Point Aerial: FOMB

This is probably the most historic property on Merrymeeting Bay and one that Friends of Merrymeeting Bay [FOMB] along with The Nature Conservancy [TNC] worked over a year to protect. It is now owned by TNC. On this site once stood Thomas Ashley's home where Plymouth Colony interests brought many of the Kennebec settlers together on 15 May, 1652 to form the first civil government for the region. It is also the site of Hutchinson's house during the Cork period, ca.1719-1722. Archaeologically/historically it is one of the most important properties in Maine.

The entire parcel is 76 acres and in an area where most of the surrounding properties are protected or in the process of becoming so. The 1850's twin chimney Cape sits on a hill overlooking the Kennebec River. Open fields, large kitchen and dining room with built-ins, wood floors and a Post and Beam ell for future expansion. Set on 10 acres with over 200 ft. of water frontage. Property can not be subdivided.

The conservation plan is to re-sell the house and 10 acres subject to a conservation easement held by FOMB.

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife plans to purchase the rest of the property in large part to protect bald eagle habitat however purchase of the entire parcel by a private buyer is not totally out of the question. In this second scenario the conservation easement would cover the entire 76 acres and would still not permit subdivision.

The sooner we can make the sale, the sooner conservation assets tied up here can go to work protecting other valuable habitat in the area. Price is \$695K. Please pass this message on to anyone you feel might be interested.

While TNC did list the property with a broker [at reduced commission], we are happy to show it as well and have many more photos available. The broker does have a complete packet on the property. There is a 60' x 20' vented concrete "root cellar" dug into a hill on the property. It's worth it for this alone!!

For more information please contact:

Ed Friedman at 666-3372 or edfomb@gwi.net or Andrea Galuza at 725-8505x1111 or ww.galuzahomes.com

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay 2005 Accomplishments

Media

Print: Approximately 20 articles: Archaeology, Education, DEP Enforcement, Caged Mussels, Land Conservation, Atlantic Salmon Endangered Species Petition, Fish Restoration, American Eel kills, Circulation Study, Outings, Sludge, Androscoggin

Television: Local Cable: Merrymeeting Bay

Volunteers

Minimum 452 volunteer days
138 volunteers

Membership

329 members [43 new members this year]
Speaker Series - 282 people
Outside 2005
[Paddle Series & Walks - 127 people]
Newsletters - 4

Funds Leveraged

\$1,530,000 [land acquisition]

Grants

\$10,000 [staff], \$9,000 [Current Study], \$7,100 [Caged Mussels]

Outreach Presentations

Androscoggin Source to the Sea Trek [20 people]
Calendar Displays, Multi-Town Club Day, Eastern Mt. Sports, Augusta

Education

Two Bay Days [232 students]
Hall-Dale on the Bay [80 students]
Mid-Coast Senior College Kennebec Course-[30 students]
School Visits-15 [382 students]
Critter Visits-17 [250 students]
Web site updates-extensive additions to Cybrary & Friends of Merrymeeting Bay links

Conservation and Stewardship

Total Protected - 116 acres, 6,700' of shoreline

From the Chair: Passages in 2005

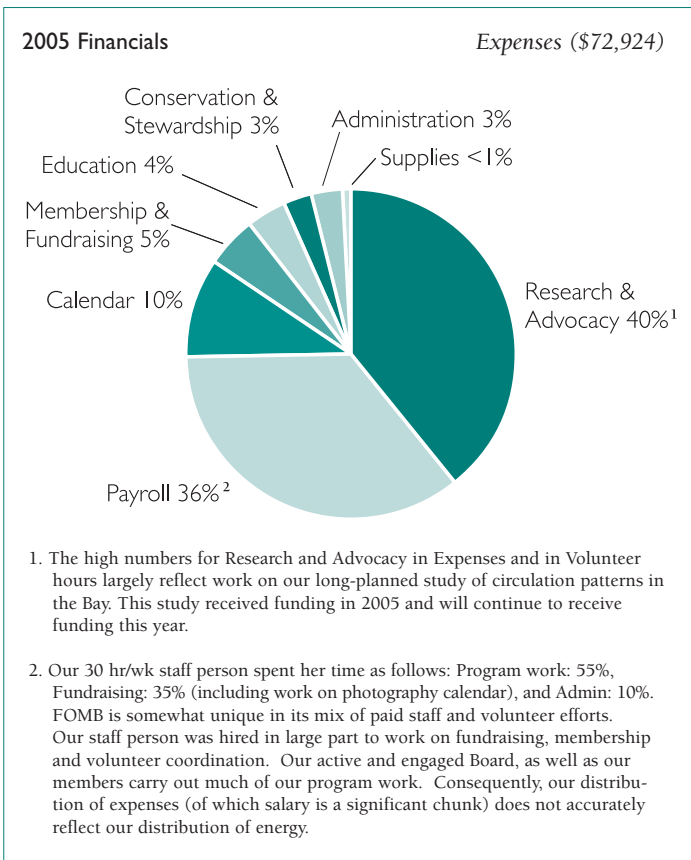
2005 has brought more than its share of mindful passages to FOMB. From the program work standpoint the year was our busiest thus far. Our long-planned Current Study began, using drifting buoys to better understand circulation patterns in the Bay and tributaries. This large project joined follow-up caged mussel work on endocrine disruptors from pulp mill wastewater, an archaeology dig, expanded water quality monitoring, a successful series of summer outings and winter speakers, school outreach visits, ongoing land conservation accomplishments, and continued advocacy work on American eel, Atlantic salmon and Brunswick sludge issues.

An incredible amount of volunteer effort enables our accomplishments. This year 138 individuals put in over 3600 hours of work in support of our goals. FOMB's school programs reached over 700 students, both young and old. Our land conservation efforts protected an additional 116 acres and 6700 feet of waterfront around the Bay. Innovative and transferable research efforts like the Current Study and endocrine disrupter projects continue. We are working on animated visualizations of our drifter buoys while awaiting tissue analyses of caged mussels from our partners at the St. Lawrence Center of Environment Canada.

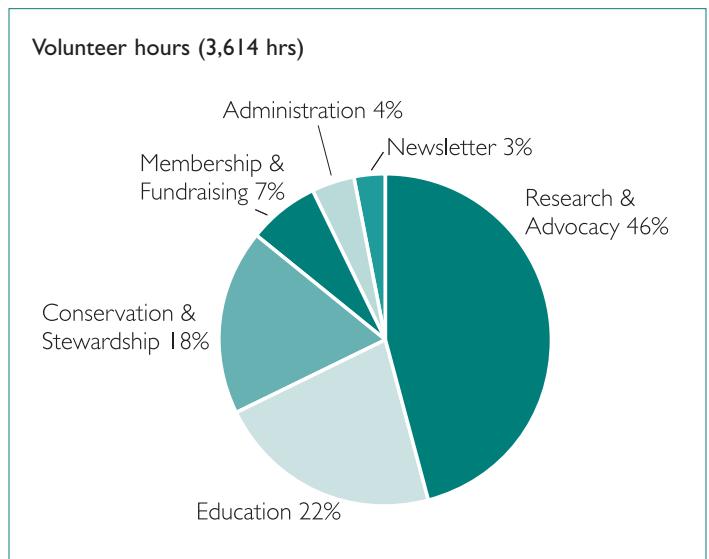
carver Ed Gamble of Brunswick, USFWS Special Agent Tommy Cloherty and of course beloved local artist Bryce Muir, all of whom contributed over the years in various ways, died in 2005 and early 2006. Tommy, working on the front lines of federal fish and wildlife law enforcement, and Bryce, probing the cutting edges of art, music, writing and observation, passed away prematurely but doing what they loved. They leave behind legacies of passion, commitment and accomplishments from which we all can learn, and serve to remind us of how we, as individuals can, and need to, in these trying times, make a difference. They also remind us that we all skate on thin ice. On behalf of all the Friends my heart goes out to the families of these four.

Passing from the banks of the Abbagadasset River to the town of Brunswick this past year was someone sometimes referred to as the Ambassador of Merrymeeting Bay. Very much alive but struggling with the aftermath of some small strokes, a couple of falls, the onset of Alzheimer's and mostly bad hearing aids, is Linwood Rideout. It's difficult to think of Merrymeeting Bay and not think of Linwood. Lin is very engaged and would love your visit or your mail.

Finally, denied upstream and downstream passage around most hydro-electric dams in the state, American eels continue to be slaughtered by the thousands as they seek to migrate on their only spawning opportunity and find the way blocked by spinning turbine blades of steel. Complicit in the continued trend towards extinction of this amazing species are the state and federal natural resource agencies who have the power to provide safe passage but who refuse so far to do so. The Department of Environmental Protection continues to deserve its other moniker, Department of Economic Protection, as it moves on from holding secret meetings with pulp mills to catering to the needs of the hydro industry while actively working against the [in this case fish] species it should be protecting.

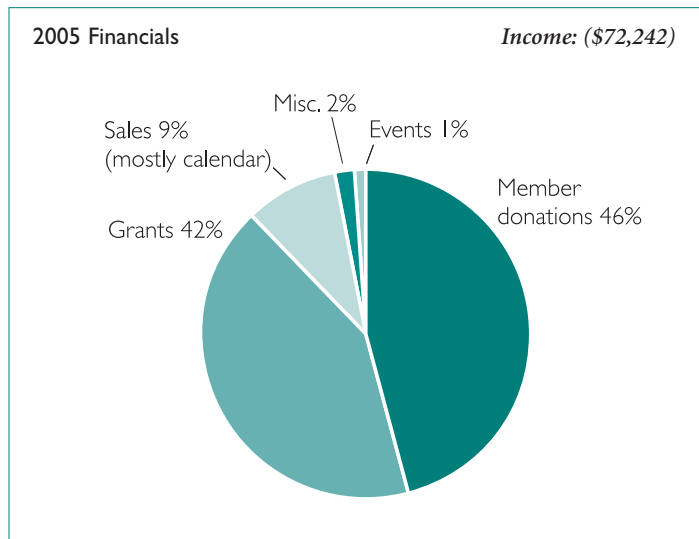


Good friends and some long-time supporters had their final passage this year. Richard Schager of Dresden & Ohio, bird



While the various state agencies [DEP, DMR, and IF&W] are culpable in not fulfilling their obligations, it is direction from the Governor's office that probably is in large part to blame. With a simple call from the Governor to enforce the law of the land these agencies would go ahead and do the right thing. Appropriate leadership is lacking here in the environmental field as in many other areas including creative sustainable economic development, health care and tax reform. Too often forgotten, and sometimes purposefully segregated [divide and conquer], it is our obligation to remember that like the six rivers of the Bay and most ecosystems, our different societal areas are integrally connected as well. We cannot have substantive action, passage, or lack thereof, in one area without affecting the others. Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ed Friedman 2/14/06



2005 Accomplishments *continued from page 3*

- Acquisitions [with The Nature Conservancy & Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition]
- Leyman/Detweiler - 40 acres, 2500' Abbagadasset R. shoreline, in Bowdoinham
- Thwings Pt. Farm- 76 acres, 1600' Kennebec R., 2,600' inland wetland in Woolwich
- Stewardship — All easements monitored

Research

- Completed & released final report on Sediment Study
- Umberhind/Leyman-Detweiler-LMF Archaeological Dig with MHPC
- Completed first phases of Circulation Study
- Completed field portion of Caged Mussel Endocrine Disrupter Study
- American Eel organochlorine & trace metal assay completed
- Assisted MDIF&W with bald eagle breeding surveys

- Documented willfully ignored excessive uranium radiation on Highlands Property
- Water Quality Monitoring – 17 Standard & 4 Fecal Coliform sites

Advocacy (postings, letters, testimony, etc)

- Channel Speed Limit Signs
- Merrymeeting Bay Wildlife Sanctuary Signs
- Land for Maine's Future Bond
- American Eel Protection-Endangered Species Act Comments, BEP Petition
- Kennebec Atlantic Salmon-filed Endangered Species Act Petition
- Dioxin Monitoring Program/Surface Water Ambient Toxics Program
- Fish Consumption Advisories
- Gulf Island Pond
- Kennebec Gravel Mining
- Utah Wilderness Coalition
- Center for Environmental Health & Justice
- Anadromous Fish Re-stocking
- Confiscation of Public Lands
- Brunswick Aquifer Protection Zone-Sludge Spreading
- Androscoggin Upgrade
- Land Conservation Donor Tax Changes-US Senate & House
- Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- Shoreland Zoning
- Tax Reform/Revenue Generation

Primary Partners

- The Nature Conservancy
- Bowdoin College Environmental Studies
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Maine Natural Areas Program
- Department of Marine Resources
- Friends of Casco Bay
- Maine Toxics Action Coalition
- Applied Biomonitoring
- Maine Rivers
- Maine Historic Preservation Commission
- Environment Canada
- Maine Coast Heritage Trust
- Maine Wetlands Protection Coalition
- Patagonia Outlet, Freeport
- Grand View Neighborhood Group
- Land Trust Alliance
- Maine ECO
- Androscoggin Alliance
- Friends of Kennebec Salmon
- Maine Maritime Museum
- Mid-Coast Senior College
- Brunswick Pesticide Watch
- Toxics Action Center
- Maine Rural Water Association
- SAD 75

The Bay Ambassador

Recently I received an email from Ronald Ligon, an FOMB member now living in Tennessee. The email offers a small glimpse into the life of Linwood Rideout, and is reprinted here with permission of the author. Linwood's condition is somewhat variable and his specific location in the Brunswick health care world may change daily. Before a visit you may want to check the latest status with his son Mark at 666-5990. Mail may be sent to:

Linwood Rideout
56 Baribeau Drive, Room 221
Brunswick, Maine
04011

Ed Friedman

Howdy Ed,

About 25 years ago or so, I read an article in a magazine on Linwood. I picked up the telephone and called him. After our telephone visit, we set a date on my coming up and duck hunting with him on the Bay.

It was a new adventure for me using a sneak boat. I asked Linwood what clothes the hunt would require, and his answer I can hear today. He said, "Bring what you got and all you can borrow." Along with his Maine accent, this was among many sayings this "sport" from "away" came to learn and enjoy from Linwood and others on the Bay.

From a guide and hunter relationship, we flowed into a friendship that has lasted over the years. I was fortunate to know Mrs. Rideout; and Marty, my wife, has gotten to know the whole family and has joined them on many gatherings. All my sons have experienced the Bay with Linwood.

Water fowling on the Bay is not all we have experienced. Snowmobiling on the frozen Bay with Miriam and Linwood



Lt. (JG) Linwood Rideout; D Day- 6 June 1944 Normandy. Officer in Charge LCT 539. Photoweb credit: 2006 NavSource Naval History

was a first for us. We have cruised the Bay many times and have done several trips to Boothbay with Yachtsman Linwood. Linwood has shared some of his favorite views of the Bay with us.

I cannot fail to mention some of the baymen and characters we have enjoyed getting to know like Buster, Ronnie, Al and many more. Also, on the CBS TV show, "Sunday Morning," they would do features on Maine personalities. Linwood would know them, so we got to meet the Tug Boat Captain, the Plane Maker and the Bird Carver, plus many more.

Our last outing with Linwood was to see the alewife migration from the sea.

On all of our visits to Maine we have always had time to be with Linwood. Most years, my worst duck hunting of the season was on Merrymeeting Bay, but I kept returning; because time with Linwood was fun, education and priceless.

Linwood is a good friend, and we love him.

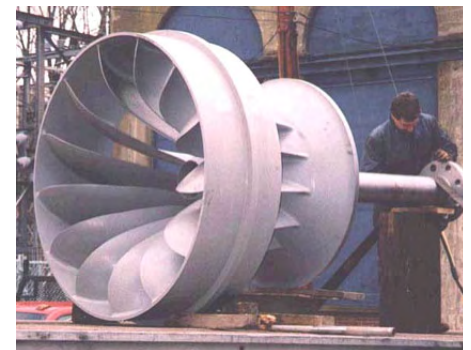
Ron Ligon

Eel Update 2/14/06

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay [FOMB] and Doug Watts each have petitions before the Board of Environmental Protection to request [through license modification] safe up and downstream eel passage around dams on the Kennebec and Androscoggin. Eels are in large part blocked by dam barriers from their necessary upstream habitat. Those that over the years have gotten past these obstacles are being slaughtered as they attempt to out-migrate through the dam turbine blades on their one and only spawning run to the Sargasso Sea. Turbine mortality can vary between 5-100% per dam and each river has a multitude of dams leading to a predictably fatal cumulative effect on the species.

One set of petitions covers the Kennebec River, the other the Androscoggin. There was a preliminary hearing set for each river. These hearings were, in theory, to decide if in fact we had presented enough evidence to move forward to a full adjudicated hearing.

Our preliminary hearing on the Kennebec was held 1/19. We were successful with a 5-3 vote [against DEP staff recommendations] by the Board in favor of moving ahead to a full adjudicated hearing. At the preliminary hearing it was only in the last minutes after the Board had already voted, that the Assistant Attorney General [AAG] advised the Board on a possible but untested conflict with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission [FERC] jurisdiction. [And where else in life do you get 30-50 year licenses issued that are next to impossible to modify?]. She suggested to



Hydroelectric dam turbine before it starts killing fish in its blades. Photo: Watts Brothers

the BEP, that even if they heard the case and decided the state Water Quality Certification [mandated by the Clean Water Act] should be re-opened to benefit eel passage, FERC might not recognize the state's jurisdiction in the case and nothing would change.

At the [2/2] Androscoggin hearing, the AAG was even more assertive in her insistence that the BEP *might* have to bow to FERC in this matter, and wrapped the Board's heads with speculation about what could *possibly* happen with FERC if they went forward [again, the only question for a decision to be based on was supposed to be sufficiency of evidence presented]. The BEP and DEP have argued the opposite side when it suited them in the past.

Two of the board members who voted with us last time were absent and so the vote was 4-2 to dismiss our Androscoggin petition. DEP staff [supposed protectors of the environment] once again took the very strong position that the BEP should dismiss our petitions without a full hearing. Who hears the fishes cry...not the DEP, or the BEP who demonstrated the arbitrary and capricious nature of their proceedings in changing hearing rules mid-stream and granting one further hearing while refusing the other.

Doug [without counsel] will probably resubmit his petition adding an additional 2 dams, using the DEP's contradictory Findings of Fact [written beforehand] against them. FOMB is using counsel and we will move forward aggressively in the court of public opinion and at the full Kennebec hearing for which there is at this point no scheduled date.

If the natural resource agencies would step up to the plate and do their job this problem would be solved. According to the Federal Power Act, any of the state or federal fish and wildlife agencies can petition FERC anytime to modify a dam license to benefit wildlife. DEP can, under Maine statute, enforce and modify state water quality certificates for dams. None of them are taking any of these actions.

For more on the outrageous behavior of the DEP/BEP and what you can do to help these incredible animals, stay tuned. Please contact Ed Friedman at 666-3372 or edfomb@gwi.net with questions and read up on the issue in the "cybrary" portion of our web site [under both eels and legal issues] at: www.friendsofmerrymeetingbay.org.

Ed Friedman

FRIENDS OF MERRYMEETING BAY

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Ed Friedman666-3372

- Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator
Bill Milam443-9738

Executive Coordinator

- Sarah Wolpov721-0941
45 Page St. Brunswick ME, 04011

Thank you to Tom and Martha Mitchell for designing this issue of The MMNews & to all our contributing writers.



Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, P.O.Box 233, Richmond, Maine 04357

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

- Input boxes for membership levels: \$ Other, \$20 Smelt, \$50 Alewife, \$100 Shad, \$250 Striped Bass, \$500 Wild Salmon, \$1,000+Sturgeon

Name
RR# or Street Address
Town /State/Zip
Phone Email

Input box for \$7.00 enclosed for a copy of Conservation Options: A Guide for Maine Landowners. (\$5 for the book, \$2 for postage)

- Input boxes for Renewal, New Member, Please send me information about volunteer opportunities

Friends of Merymeeting Bay
P.O. Box 233, Richmond, ME 04357
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Job Opportunity with Friends of Merymeeting Bay!

FOMB seeks an Education Coordinator for 10 hours/week, year round. This person will primarily be responsible for coordinating and expanding our two major educational programs: Bay Day and School Outreach (arranging presentations on Bay-related topics in local schools). This is a paid position with flexible hours. A more detailed job description will be available in the near future. Please spread the word to anyone you know who may be interested. Contact Sarah Wolpow at 721-0941 (fomb@gwi.net).