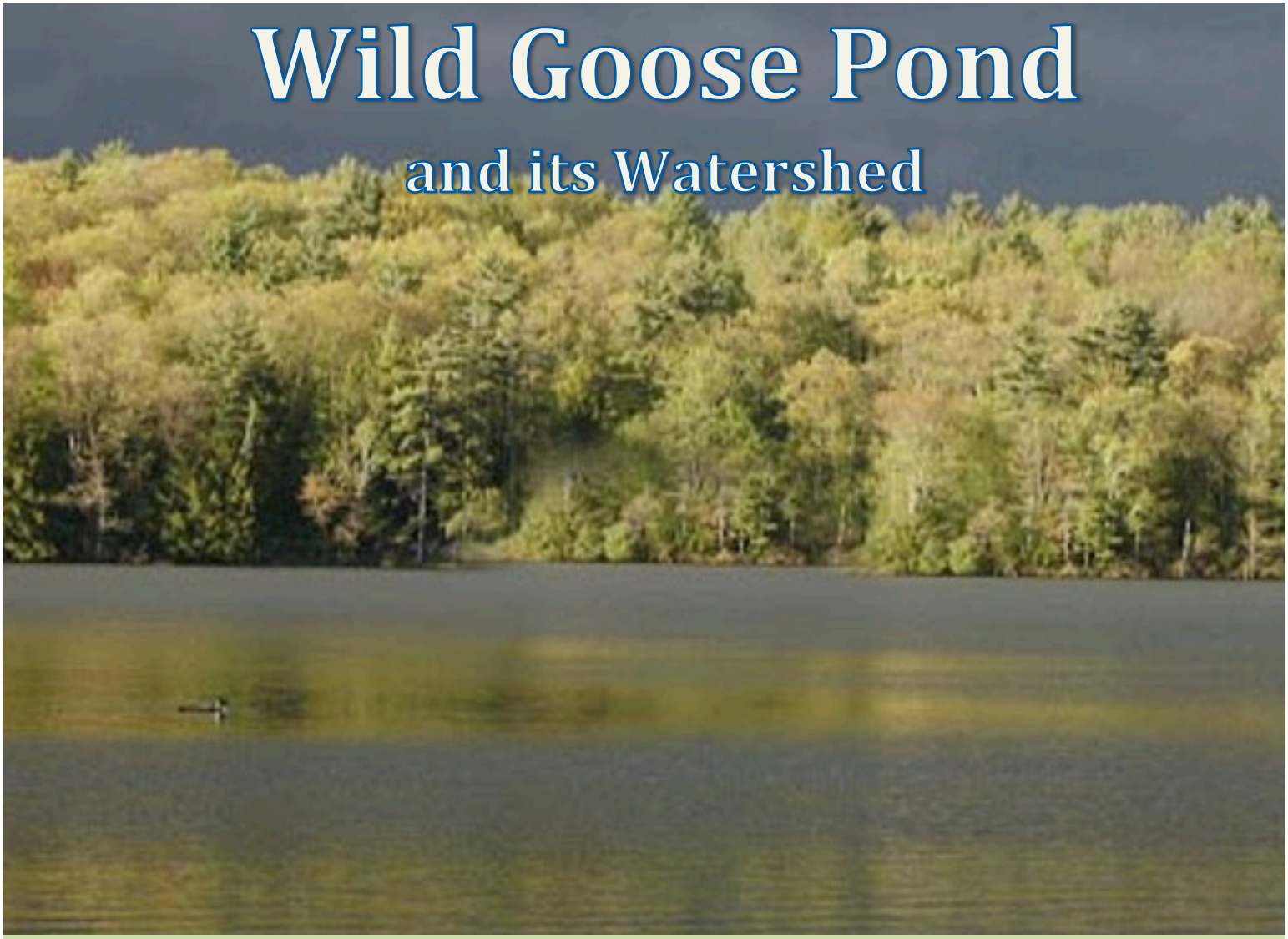
# Wild Goose Pond

## and its Watershed



## *A Story of Water, Wildlife, Woods, People and Place*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**Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), a common understory shrub in the Wild Goose Pond watershed. Unlike most other plants, it flowers in the fall—note the spidery yellow flowers.**

*Wild Goose Pond and its Watershed: A Story of Water, Wildlife, Woods, People and Place was prepared for Carl Wallman, Pittsfield, New Hampshire*

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*Graylag*: cover--Wild Goose Pond, picnic table; pg 4—Wild Goose Pond; pg 9—beaver lodge;
*Ellen Snyder*: cover--hemlock, red eft; pg 2—witch-hazel; pg 10—Shinglemill Brook; pg 11—wood frog eggs; pg 13—Thompson Road, wintergreen; pg 14—tornado damage; pg 17—pink lady's slipper
*Mike Marchand*: pg 14—Blanding's turtle
*Susan Geib*: pg 16—Graylag historical images

February 2014

# Summary

This story is about the Wild Goose Pond watershed and its inhabitants—people, plants, animals, woods and wetlands. The highest point in the town of Pittsfield, New Hampshire, population 4,100, is the top of 1,331-foot Catamount Mountain. The mountain's wooded eastern slope forms the headwaters of the Wild Goose Pond watershed. As the names of the mountain and the pond suggest, this was (and remains) wild country, where hare, moose, beaver, and likely bobcat, still roam. Dirt roads and trails thread through the hilly, mostly forested, landscape. People hunt, hike, harvest wood, snowmobile, and live on this land that feels remote, yet lies in the heart of New Hampshire.

Wild Goose Pond, at 118 acres, is one of the largest bodies of water in Pittsfield. The water is clear and free of the invasive aquatic plants--as far as we know--that plague many other New Hampshire lakes. The average depth of Wild Goose Pond is 14 feet and is 20 feet at its deepest—great for swimming, fishing, boating, and enjoying nature.

Most of Wild Goose Pond and its watershed lie within the town of Pittsfield. Although less than six percent of the town is permanently conserved, Pittsfield residents cherish the town's rural atmosphere and patchwork of woods and fields, as noted in the 2010 Pittsfield Master Plan. It is visually appealing and maintains a link to the town's agricultural past. The variety of open spaces, wetlands, wildlife, and varied topography provide scenic vistas, places for hunting, hiking, fishing and enjoying nature, and important services such as aquifer recharge that supplies drinking water.

Unfragmented forest blocks are large areas of habitat with few or no roads, houses, or other development. A large unfragmented block of habitat typically has greater capacity to support interior forest species (e.g., scarlet tanager, wood thrush), greater ability to sustain natural processes, including resilience to natural disturbances, and often encompasses a diversity of habitats in close proximity to each other. Wild Goose Pond watershed, at more than 2,000 acres in size, is relatively unfragmented. East of Clough Road the watershed is part of a 3,000 acre unfragmented landscape. That portion of the watershed is also adjacent to and serves as a connection to some of the largest forest blocks in southeastern New Hampshire: a 6,000-acre block that includes Evans Mountain to the east in Strafford and a 16,000-acre block to the north.

Nearly all the roads in the watershed are unpaved, dirt roads, except for the Province Road on the far eastern edge of the watershed. In addition, the amount of impervious surfaces—pavement, buildings, concrete, severely compacted soils, and other hard structures—is low in the watershed, an indication of a healthy watershed.

As the community of Pittsfield is recognized as "The Gem of the Suncook Valley," so too is the Wild Goose Pond watershed a gem within the far-flung corners of Pittsfield, Barnstead, Strafford, and Northwood. A ramble about the watershed—whether on trail or off-trail—will reveal much about this place: where the water flows and beaver are active, how trees respond to a planned forest harvest, what creatures live in the hills and valleys, the streams and wetlands.

Continue to take care of and enjoy these lands and waters—whether a resident or a visitor. Your thoughtful stewardship is a gift to everyone, especially those who live downstream.

# Wild Goose Pond

The highest point in the town of Pittsfield, New Hampshire, population 4,100, is the top of 1,331-foot Catamount Mountain. The mountain's wooded eastern slope forms the headwaters of the Wild Goose Pond watershed. As the names of the mountain and the pond suggest, this was (and remains) wild country, where hare, moose, beaver, and likely bobcat, still roam. Dirt roads and trails thread through the hilly, mostly forested, landscape. People hunt, hike, harvest wood, snowmobile, and live on this land that feels remote, yet lies in the heart of New Hampshire.

Wild Goose Pond, at 118 acres, is one of the largest bodies of water in Pittsfield. The water is clear and free of the invasive aquatic plants--as far as we know--that plague many other New Hampshire lakes. The average depth of Wild Goose Pond is 14 feet and is 20 feet at its deepest—great for swimming, fishing, boating, and enjoying nature. Although there is no public boat access, Wild Goose Pond is popular with anglers pursuing warm water fish such as largemouth bass, pickerel, and bluegill. Many of these anglers stay at Graylag (a private, lakeside vacation spot) and access the pond from its shoreline.

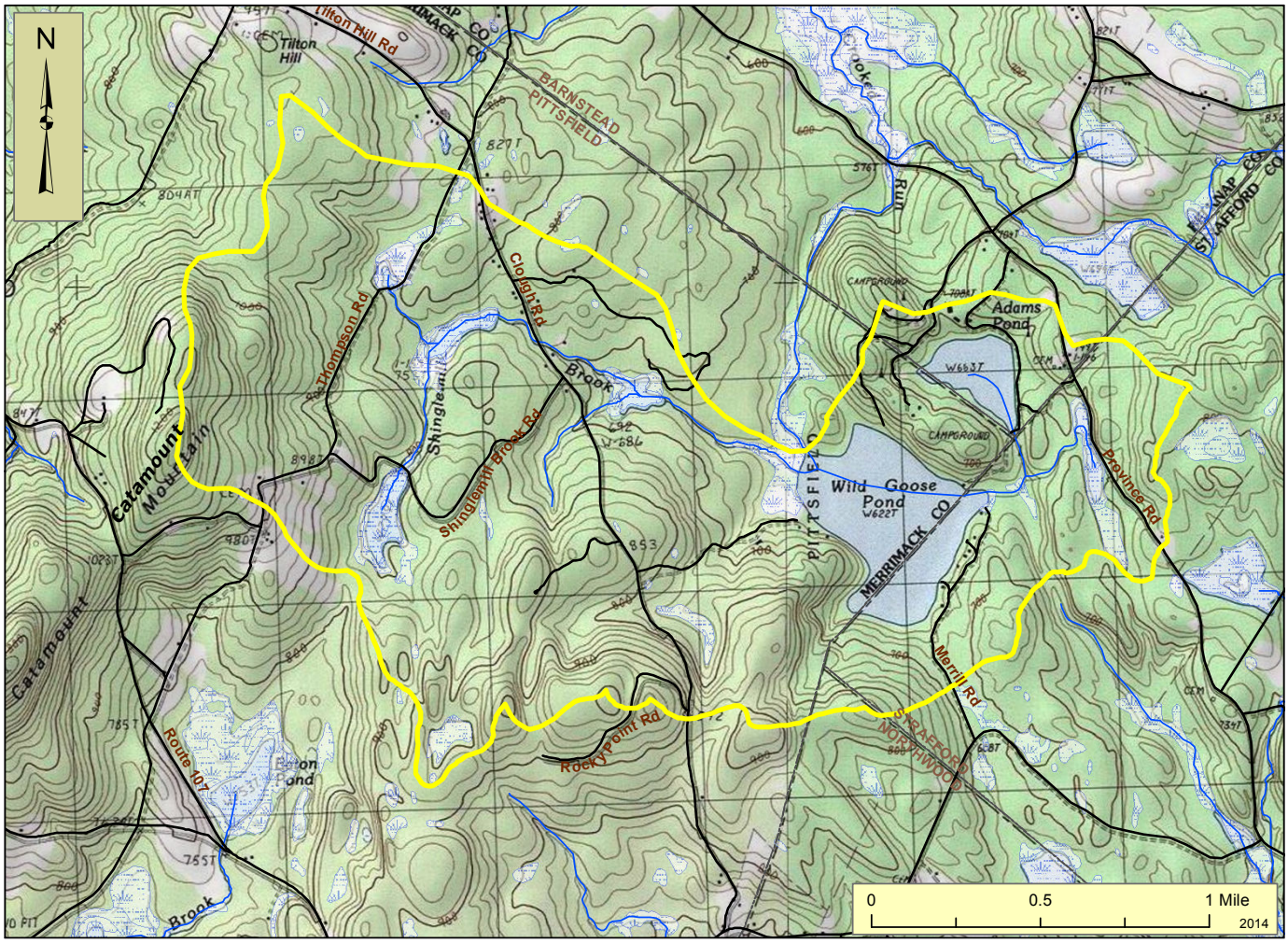
More than half of Wild Goose Pond is bordered by two major ownerships: Graylag and the Boy Scouts of America—Boston Council (TL Storer Camp). The latter is a year-round camp situated on more than 700 acres. The remaining shoreline is host to about a dozen other residential year-round or seasonal homes.

Carl Wallman, owner of Graylag, has seen a lot of wildlife from his shores, including young Canada geese (for which the pond is presumably named). Common loons, their eerie calls echoing across the pond, raise their young here. In the spring and fall, many other ducks—mallards, black ducks, buffleheads, and mergansers—stop over to feed and rest before migrating on. Great blue herons hunt for small fish along the shore, while green frogs and red-spotted newts ply the shallows in search of insects and other small prey.

Surface water flows into Wild Goose Pond in several places. The pond is fed from the west by Shinglemill Brook, a small stream that gathers water from the eastern slope of Catamount Mountain, winds its way north and east for nearly 2 miles, and then flows into the northwest corner of the Pond. To the northeast a tight ring of hills surround the 29-acre Adams Pond (on the Boy Scout property), which drains a small area before entering at the northeast corner of Wild Goose Pond. Water also flows into Wild Goose Pond from the low hills to the southwest.

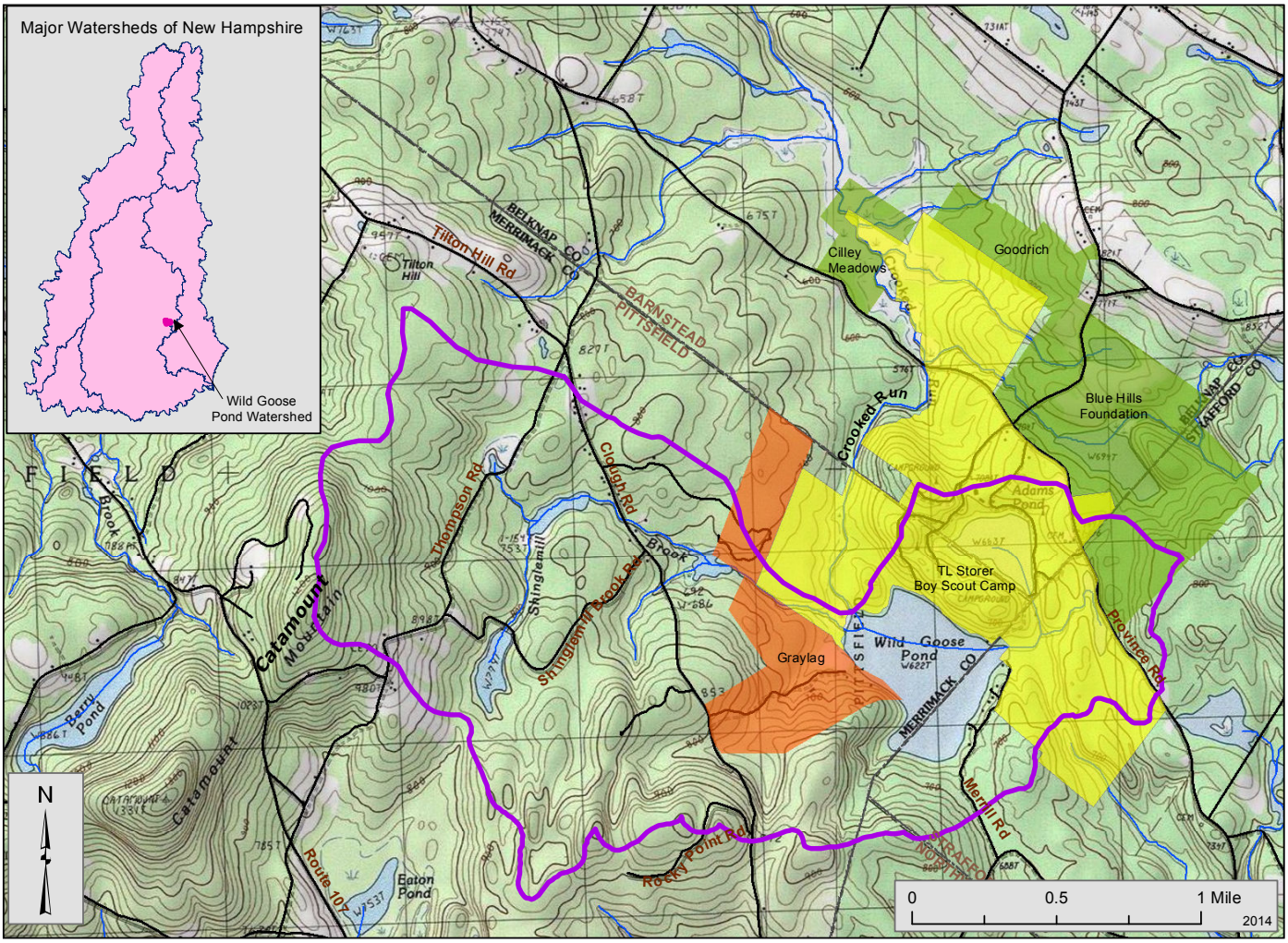
**Wild Goose Pond**

On a sunny June day, if you paddle a canoe into Shinglemill Brook, you will likely hear or see many songbirds that breed in the woodland wetlands that border the brook: song sparrow, common yellowthroat, yellow warbler, tree swallow, Baltimore oriole, and kingbird, among others. However, a beaver dam may block your canoe trail, as they are active in this stretch of the brook.




**The Wild Goose Pond watershed, outlined in yellow, lies in the northeast corner of the Town of Pittsfield, New Hampshire. Set against a topographic map, the watershed's hilly landscape and stream inlets and outlet to Wild Goose Pond are evident.**

(Map by Ibis Wildlife Consulting; data from ArcGis Online and NH GRANIT, February 2014)




**Inset: Location of Wild Goose Pond watershed within the Merrimack River watershed in New Hampshire.**

**Large map: Key parcels within and adjacent to the Wild Goose Pond watershed; parcels in solid green are permanently conserved (also see map on page 8 showing location of Pittsfield town forests within the watershed).**

(Map by Ibis Wildlife Consulting; data from ArcGis Online, NH GRANIT, and Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, February 2014)

## The Town of Pittsfield

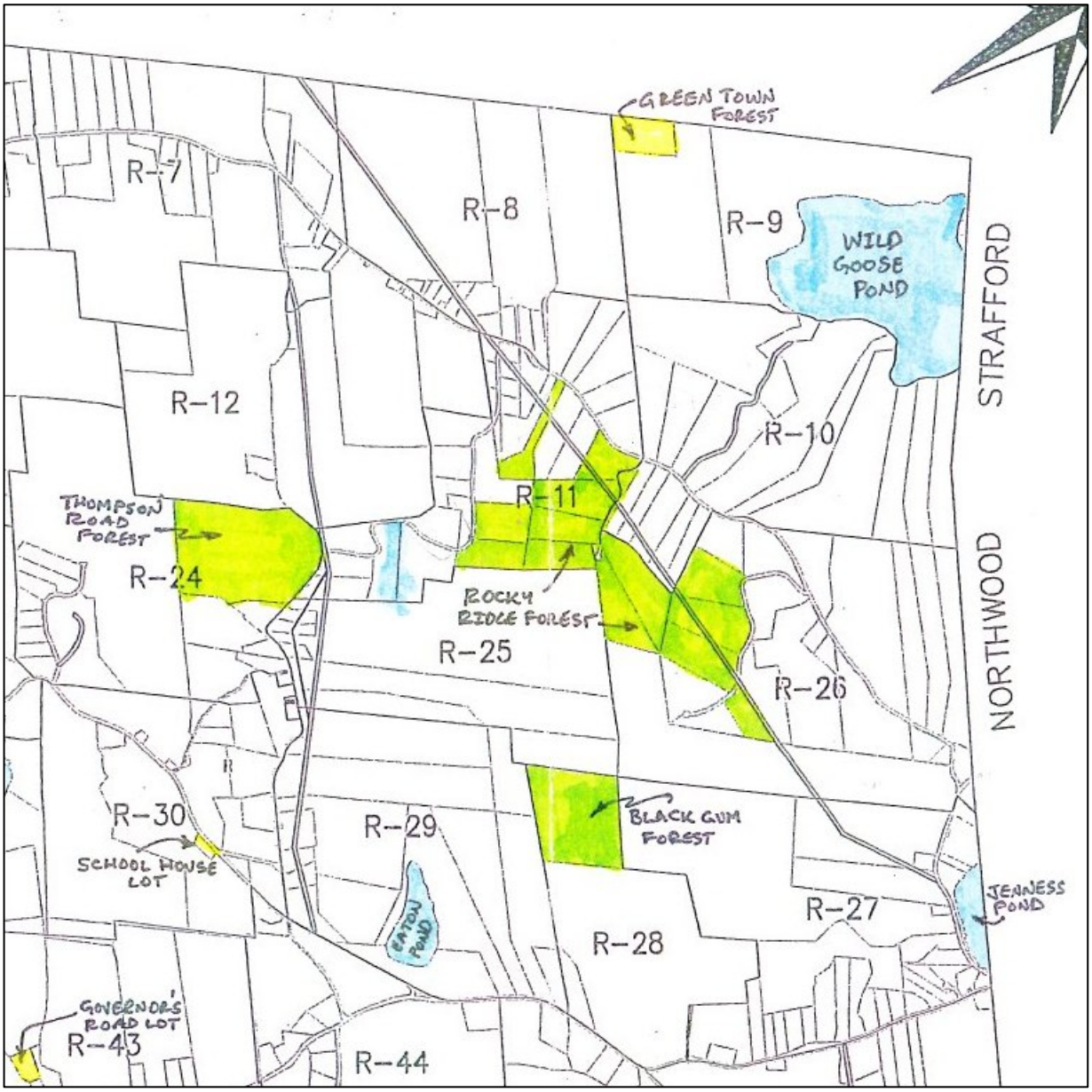
Most of Wild Goose Pond and its watershed lie within the town of Pittsfield. Although less than six percent of the town is permanently conserved, Pittsfield residents cherish the town's rural atmosphere and patchwork of woods and fields, as noted in the 2010 Pittsfield Master Plan. It is visually appealing and maintains a link to the town's agricultural past. The variety of open spaces, wetlands, wildlife, and varied topography provide scenic vistas, places for hunting, hiking, fishing and enjoying nature, and important services such as aquifer recharge that supplies drinking water.

By the 1700s, Pittsfield was a collection of farms situated around several small centers of activity. The town was incorporated in 1782 with the "Lower City" along the Suncook River the main town center. The population grew significantly in the 1800s, supported by industry that included grist mills, cotton mills, and shoe factories, as well as farming. In the late 1700s, John Tilton farmed on what was known at the time as East Catamount, and is now called Tilton Hill.

When the railroad arrived in 1869, Pittsfield became the commercial center of Suncook Valley. The community is still known as "The Gem of the Suncook Valley." Most residents of Pittsfield live in the downtown area where the Suncook River winds through town.

Today, with a general decline in manufacturing and a lack of major commercial activity, the town struggles to provide services at a reasonable tax rate; Pittsfield currently has one of the highest tax rates in the state. A major goal, therefore, of the town as stated in the 2010 Master Plan is "balanced, moderate growth to strengthen downtown and increase the economic base, while maintaining the rural character of the town."

Within the Wild Goose Pond watershed, the Town of Pittsfield manages several parcels as town forest or as natural areas. Some of these parcels have established walking or snowmobile trails, others are wild and trail-less, but can still be explored. These town forests include the 139-acre Rocky Ridge Forest that borders sections of Clough Road and the 54-acre Thompson Road Forest, both of which were recently harvested under the guidance of licensed consulting forester Charlie Moreno. The 38-acre Black Gum Forest is inaccessible by road and is a mix of hemlock forest and boggy black gum swamp with pitcher plants (*Sarracenia sp*.) and other wild things.




**A portion of map created by Charlie Moreno based on tax parcels, from *Forest Management Plan for the Pittsfield Town Forestlands, Pittsfield, New Hampshire* (2010). Areas highlighted in yellow-green are Pittsfield Town Forests.**

## The Wild Goose Pond Watershed

A watershed is an area of land bounded by mountains or hills (the highest points of elevation), where all the surface water within drains into the same river, lake, or pond. Watersheds can be large or small; smaller watersheds (or subwatersheds) join to become larger watersheds. The ridgeline that separates two watersheds is called the drainage divide. The Wild Goose Pond watershed sits on a major watershed divide, between the Merrimack River to the northwest and the Coastal watersheds to the southeast. Its topography is diverse and interesting with forested hills, grassy, open ledges, steep slopes, and networks of streams and wetlands.

We all live in a watershed. This story is about the Wild Goose Pond watershed and its inhabitants—people, plants, animals, woods and wetlands. Most of the 2,064-acre Wild Goose Pond watershed is located in the northeast corner of Pittsfield, which is situated on the eastern edge of Merrimack County, in east-central New Hampshire. The northeast corner of the watershed also reaches into a small section of the towns of Barnstead (Belknap County), and Strafford and Northwood (Strafford County).

As described earlier, Shinglemill Brook, Adams Pond, and the wetlands associated with these waterbodies are all part of the Wild Goose Pond watershed. These streams and wetlands are the "life blood" of the land, carrying the water that all life depends on. Although wetlands—marshes, swamps, peatlands, and open water--occur on a small portion of the watershed, they host a disproportionately high number of plants and animals, compared to the drier, upland forests. Along a stream or pond shore or wetland edge, you will discover a richness of plant life: mosses, grasses, sedges and rushes, a profusion of ferns, wildflowers, shrubs, floating and submerged aquatic plants. Among this plant-life lives a huge assortment of animals from microscopic aquatic animals to the much larger deer, otter, and other creatures.

The outflow to Wild Goose Pond forms Crooked Run, which drains a wide swath of gentle to moderately sloped terrain of Tilton Hill to the west, and the broad rise of South Barnstead to the east. Crooked Run begins in the northwest corner of Wild Goose Pond (not far from the Shinglemill Brook inlet), flows in a generally northerly direction, some four miles, before entering the Suncook River at Center Barnstead. The Suncook River, a major tributary to the Merrimack River, drains a large portion of east-central New Hampshire.

***Beaver***

Beaver are a key species in wetland systems. Plant and animal habitats undergo a cycle of change over many years or decades in response to beaver activity. This industrious rodent builds dams on perennial streams, flooding one or more acres upstream. This provides access to food, protection from terrestrial predators and shelter in winter, including underwater access to their lodge.

Beaver feed on aquatic plants (e.g., water lily, duck potato, waterweed, pondweed, and duckweed) and shoots, twigs, leaves, roots, and bark of woody plants (e.g., aspen, willow, birches, witch-hazel). They fell trees to get access to the tender leaves, twigs, and bark.

Eventually beavers abandon their pond, usually when preferred food plants become scarce. With beaver gone, the dam begins to break and the pond or wetland drains. In the nutrient rich muck, herbaceous plants flourish, forming "beaver meadows." Over time, shrubs and trees begin to dominate the area, eventually creating ideal habitat again for beaver. Beaver-influenced wetlands are dynamic, cycling through successional stages from flooded stream (pond) to marsh, shrubland, sapling, and swamp, and then back to pond when the beaver return.

Other wildlife that benefit from beaver-created habitats, also cycle through these changing habitat conditions. Wood ducks, tree swallows, flycatchers, woodpeckers, great blue herons, and other birds nest in the standing trees that are killed or injured by beaver flooding adjacent uplands. Emergent and floating-leaved wetland plants attract invertebrates that are favored by wood ducks and other waterfowl when they are rearing their young broods. Ducklings feed mostly on larvae of flies, caddisflies, mayflies, and other insects. Adult ducks eat the seeds of bur reed, sedges, pondweeds, and other aquatic plants, as well as insects and other invertebrates. Painted turtles, frogs, red-spotted newt, and river otter also use the emergent marshes. Shrubby wetland edges are home to song sparrow, common yellowthroat, swamp sparrow, catbird, and red-winged blackbird.

**Shinglemill Brook on each side of Shinglemill Brook Road; beaver are active on the upstream side of the road (left photo).**

***Headwater Streams***

The health of larger rivers and streams, lakes and ponds—including Wild Goose Pond--is dependent on the health of smaller streams and wetlands farther up in the headwaters of a watershed. These small headwater streams may make up 80 percent of the stream network in a region and include both seasonal and year-round streams. Headwater streams—such as Shinglemill Brook and other intermittent streams that dry up in summer--often begin as trickles, seeps, or depressions that overflow and are often not named or mapped. Yet, the quality and integrity of these headwater streams is critical to downstream habitats.

The upper reaches of the watershed store water, recharge groundwater, and reduce the intensity and frequency of floods. Small streams are a critical link between land and water. Not only are they linked to upstream and downstream portions of the watershed, but water flowing from the land into the stream carries insects, leaves, soil, branches, and other material that are the start of a food chain. This exchange between land and water occurs in a transition zone along the edges of stream

channels, called a riparian area. Connectivity between stream channels, stream bottoms and banks, and the riparian area is important to protect water quality and aquatic habitats. Much of the cleansing action and nutrient cycling in a stream occurs in saturated sediments, at the interface between stream water and the channel bottom and stream bank. Maintaining a natural stream channel and associated riparian habitat of tangled roots, fallen tree limbs, shrub, trees, and herbs is key to sustaining the health of these waters.

***Vernal Pools***

Vernal pools are ephemeral (temporary) wetlands that fill in spring from rainfall, snowmelt, or rising groundwater. Some pools also fill in the fall after autumnal rains. These pools are typically small in size, ranging from less than 1/10$^{th}$ acre to more than 2 acres. Size, however, is not always an indicator of the importance of a vernal pool to the animals that live there. Most vernal pools completely dry out by the end of summer and therefore can not support fish populations, which makes these pools safe for breeding amphibians. The Wild Goose Pond watershed and the Crooked Run watershed support many such vernal pools.

**Wood frog eggs in a vernal pool.**

These small wetlands harbor fairy shrimp, wood frogs, and spotted salamanders. Smaller organisms such as bacteria, fungi, zooplankton, caddisfly and other insect larvae, crustaceans, and insects are all food for the larger animals. Vernal pools embedded within the woodlands are important "stepping stones" for many wildlife species as they move about in search of food and breeding sites. Foraging turtles (including wood and Blanding's), raccoon, mink, deer, herons, and other wildlife use vernal pools in this way.

Wood frogs and spotted salamanders travel to vernal pools in the spring to breed, and then spend the rest of the year (11+ months) in the uplands, typically within 1,000 feet of the pool. Canopy shade, deep leaf litter, and fallen trees and stumps are used by frogs and salamanders as cover and therefore are important habitat features in the upland surrounding a vernal pool.

***A Largely Unfragmented Watershed***

Unfragmented forest blocks are large areas of habitat with few or no roads, houses, or other development. In southeastern New Hampshire, blocks of 1,000 acres or more are considered regionally significant. A large unfragmented block of habitat typically has greater capacity to support interior forest species (e.g., scarlet tanager, wood thrush), greater ability to sustain natural processes, including resilience to natural disturbances, and often encompasses a diversity of habitats in close proximity to each other.

In their 2006 Wildlife Action Plan, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG) identified development (residential, commercial, or industrial) as one of the most significant risk factors to the State's wildlife and habitats. Development causes the fragmentation of habitat into small, unconnected parcels. Songbirds, small mammals, and other wildlife species are more susceptible to mid-sized predators such as fox, raccoon, and skunk in small blocks of habitat. These "generalist" predators adapt better than other species to a fragmented landscape. Habitat blocks

crisscrossed with residential roads and houses expose wildlife to high rates of road mortality, increase conflicts with humans and pets, result in increased contaminated runoff, and offer more opportunities for invasive plants to spread to natural areas.

Wild Goose Pond watershed, at more than 2,000 acres in size, is relatively unfragmented. Nearly all the roads are unpaved, dirt roads, except for the Province Road on the far eastern edge of the watershed. In addition, the amount of impervious surfaces—pavement, buildings, concrete, severely compacted soils, and other hard structures—is low in the watershed. Studies from around the country show that streams and water quality become degraded as impervious surfaces increase beyond ten percent. Impervious surface increases the volume of stormwater runoff and reduces groundwater recharge—the amount of water that seeps into the ground. This results in more frequent flooding, higher flood peaks, lower base flow in streams, and lower water tables. Wild Goose Pond watershed has far less than ten percent impervious surface, an indication of a healthy watershed.

Unplanned development can lead to increased fragmentation of habitat, more impervious surfaces, which can degrade water quality, and impacts to the quality of life now enjoyed by residents and visitors to this watershed. Retaining this large block of unfragmented habitat is also critical to many wide-ranging species in the region such as hawks and owls, fisher, otter, black bear, moose, and bobcat.

There are some significant lands within the watershed that are likely to remain as open space, including several Town Forests managed by the Pittsfield Conservation Commission, Graylag, the Boy Scout camp, and the Blue Hills Foundation lands (in Barnstead), although most of these are not permanently conserved. The Boy Scouts are currently working to conserve a large portion of their lands through a conservation easement. This would permanently protect an ecologically important area along Crooked Run, and the outlet to Wild Goose Pond, among other contiguous lands, while the Boy Scouts would continue to own and manage the land.

The Boy Scout property and the Wild Goose Pond watershed (east of Clough Road) are part of a 3,000 acre unfragmented landscape. This region is adjacent to and serves as a connection to some of the largest forest blocks in southeastern New Hampshire: a 6,000-acre block that includes Evans Mountain to the east in Strafford and a 16,000-acre block to the north.

## The Woodlands of the Wild Goose Pond Watershed

Central New Hampshire (and thus Wild Goose Pond) sits at the northern edge of the Eastern Deciduous Forest, a vast habitat that covers eastern North America south of the St. Lawrence River. This is the domain of temperate-climate conifers, including white pine and hemlock, and various hardwoods, including maples, birches, oaks, and beech trees. The underlying bedrock consists of granite and metamorphic rock types that are resistant to weathering and tend to produce acidic soil conditions typical of central New Hampshire.

At a finer scale within the Wild Goose Pond watershed, the pattern of where tree species grow reflects local variations in topography, soil types, and human settlement. For example, steep, rocky southern slopes tend to have lots of red oak, which excels where conditions are relatively dry and warm. Hemlock competes well with other tree species due to its shallow rooting habitat. It grows on steep northerly slopes or rocky, more poorly drained soils; these conditions are common around Wild Goose Pond, and, therefore, it is no surprise that there is lots of hemlock here.

Much of the Wild Goose Pond watershed is forest, primarily hemlock-beech-oak-pine forests, which grow on well drained soils. The forest understory—shaded by the canopy trees—is often sparse. A few ground-dwelling plants are commonly seen on a woodland walk including Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense)*, partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*), starflower (*Trientalis borealis*), and various lichens and mosses. Or you might spot some of the lovely woodland flowers such as pink lady's slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*), red trillium (*Trillium erectum*), or trailing arbutus (*Epigaea repens*).

**Left: Class VI section of Thompson Road. Right: Wintergreen, a common, small shrub that grows on the forest floor.**

The dominant trees (hemlock, beech, oak, pine, or some combination) in any given spot depends greatly on how people have used the land over time. Land use history, including farming, farm abandonment, and logging, as well as major storms, affect forest composition as much or more than the physical traits of the land itself. For example, white pine is common on recently abandoned farm fields, and in areas where logging and site features favor pine regeneration (such as few competing hardwood tree saplings). Pastures and other farm fields are more common outside the watershed—such as on Tilton Hill in Pittsfield and along the Province Road in Barnstead—in places where soils are likely better drained and more productive for agriculture. Still, within the watershed, some landowners maintain small farms and gather resources from the land, such as firewood, blueberries, maple sap, and wild mushrooms.

This part of New Hampshire experiences cold winters, hot summers, and intense storm systems. Although not usually *this* intense, in July 2008, a tornado swept through the state, including a portion of the Wild Goose Pond watershed, leaving a half-mile wide and 50-mile long swath of downed, twisted, and broken trees. Evidence of the tornado is visible at Graylag. In *Life on Tilton Hill, Pittsfield, NH*, P.C. True writes of several tornadoes that touched down in this region in the 1800s.


**Tornado damage at Graylag entrance, July 2008.**

**Uncommon Plants and Animals in the Watershed**

Most of the plants and animals that live in the Wild Goose Pond watershed are common to the state. That makes them no less important or interesting, as we want to keep common native plants and animals common. Along with the common, there are some unusual plants and animals in the watershed, and some of these are rare in New Hampshire.

Giant rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*), a large evergreen shrub, grows along the southwest shore of Adam's Pond, within the Wild Goose Pond watershed. It is a rare plant in New Hampshire, being at the northern edge of its range here. This shade tolerant showy plant grows 15 to 20 feet tall beneath a canopy of hemlock, white pine, and red maple on about 1,000-feet of Adams Pond shoreline.

Another more southern species—black gum—grows in stagnant swampy wetlands within the watershed. This tree is at the northeast margin of its North American range in New Hampshire. As a relic of a once warmer climate, black gum may fare better with a warming climate than northern, cold-climate species. Black gums are some of the oldest living trees in the state and many are more than 500 years old.

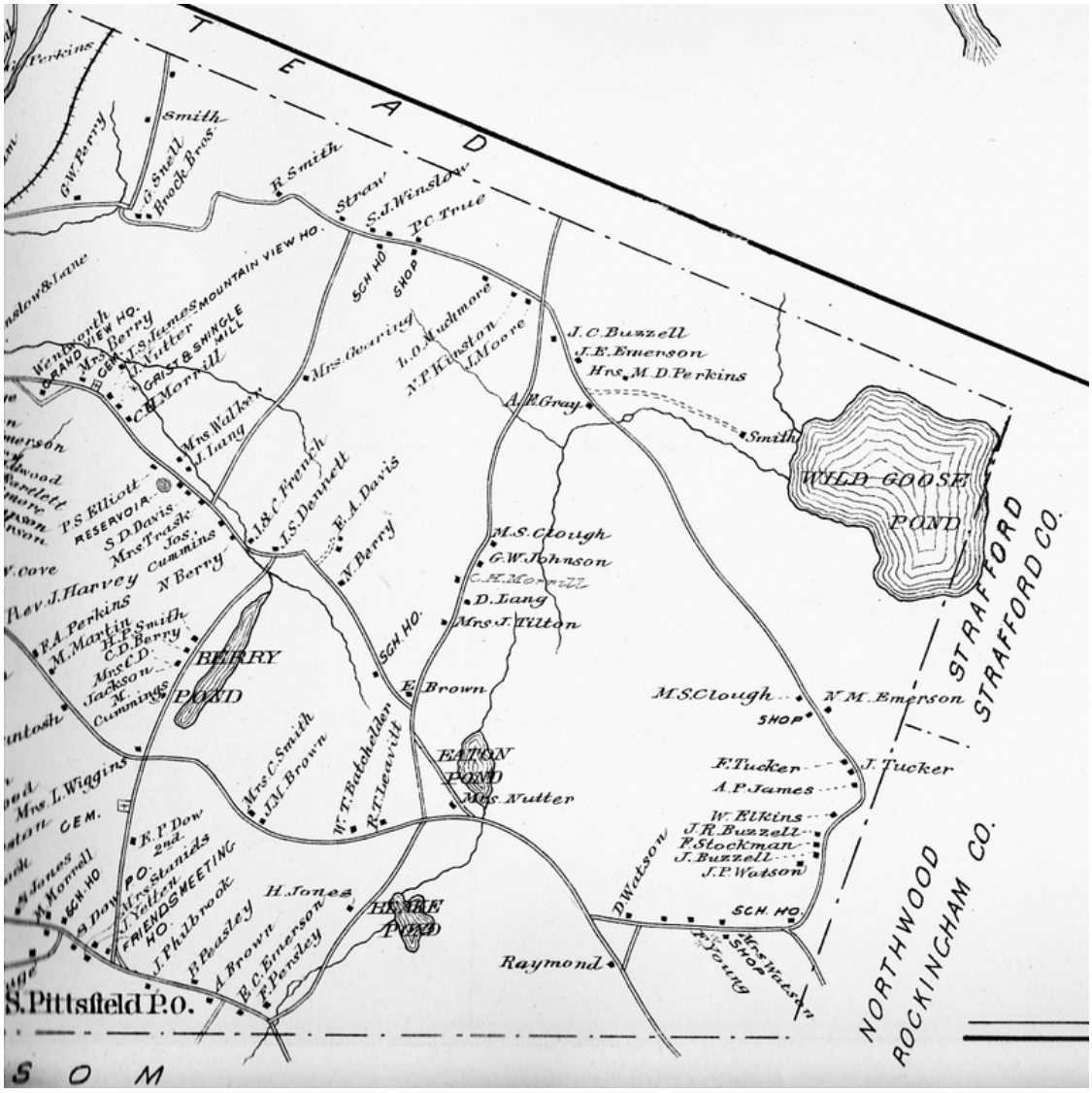
A couple rare animals live in the watershed too. The state endangered Blanding's turtle is a large turtle with a highly domed shell sprinkled with yellow specks. Its bright yellow throat is also distinctive. Blanding's turtles can live a long time and do not start breeding until age 14-20. They also require large unfragmented habitat with a mix of wetlands to survive, as they are vulnerable to road mortality. The extensive wetlands associated with Wild Goose Pond and the Crooked Run watershed provide excellent habitat.

**A Blanding's turtle crossing a road (Photo by Mike Marchand, NHFG)**

A much smaller creature, the dainty ringed bog haunter (*Williamsonia lintneri*), lives in a peatland (a "bog") within the Wild Goose Pond watershed. Not much is known about this state endangered dragonfly. It is named for the habitat in which it lives and for the eight orange bands that ring its abdomen. Females lay their eggs in sphagnum moss, a common plant in peatlands.

## Wild Goose Pond—A Bit of History

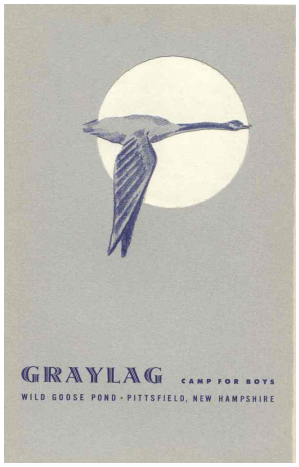
P.C. True, in *Life on Tilton Hill, Pittsfield, NH* writes (some time in the 1800s) about a large brook, called "Meadow Brook" that flowed into Wild Goose Pond and "was so famous in those days and many years afterwards for its abundance of large trout." In this, True was referring to Shinglemill Brook. He also writes of a farm called "Tommy Town," named for its owner Tommy Snell, located near the inlet to Wild Goose Pond. The farm included a 20-acre meadow through which both Shinglemill Brook and Crooked Run flowed. True then goes on to write the following in regards to the land around the northwest shores of Wild Goose Pond: "I have written at length of this neglected spot because it is a conspicuous point in the grandest scenery to be found in New Hampshire and around the shores of what was once the best fishing grounds." He went on to write, "I have long believed that this wild and neglected region will yet become a famous summer resort."

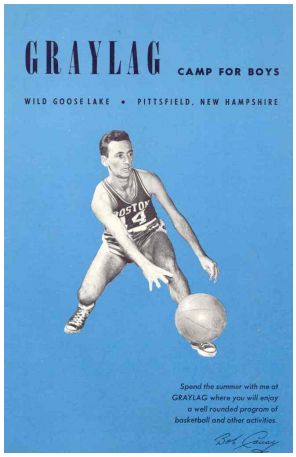



**Map from *Town and City Atlas of the State of New Hampshire*. 1892.**

Porter C. True was envisioning a fairly intense development around Wild Goose Pond with a graded road around the entire pond and an expansive resort. Although not quite so grandiose and perhaps more fitting to the site, Graylag, a camp for boys, was established on the shores of Wild Goose Pond by the Geib family in the late 1940s.

Susan Geib describes how her father Fred convinced his father, Jack, to start a boy's camp. They started acquiring parcels on Wild Goose Pond in 1946; the camp opened in 1949; and in 1953, Bob Cousy, of Boston Celtics fame, became a partner in Graylag and established its basketball program, which included three paved basketball courts, constructed to mirror college regulations, near the shores of the pond. The camp closed in 1971 and the property was sold off in different parcels. In 1995, Carl Wallman bought a portion of the camp and since has re-assembled 200 of the original 500 acres of Graylag. In 2006, he opened a rustic vacation destination and retreat for individuals and families.




**Above left: The first brochure for Graylag, a camp for boys. Above center: The brochure was updated after 1953 when Bob Cousy of the Boston Celtics became a partner. On right, Bob Geib (brother to Fred) leads a trail ride through a meadow; Wild Goose Pond is in the background. Images provided by Susan Geib.**

## Get to Know Your Watershed

As the community of Pittsfield is recognized as "The Gem of the Suncook Valley," so too is the Wild Goose Pond watershed a gem within the far-flung corners of Pittsfield, Barnstead, Strafford, and Northwood. A ramble about the watershed—whether on trail or off-trail—will reveal much about this place: where the water flows and beaver are active, how trees respond to a planned forest harvest, what creatures live in the hills and valleys, the streams and wetlands.

There are treasures to be found in these woods--a deer trail, a fresh beaver chew, a decaying tree with woodpecker holes, a flush of mushrooms after a summer rain, a fisher track in fresh snow. And hints of history--stonewalls and old mill sites and even a paved basketball court at the water's edge. Much of the land within the watershed is privately owned—some of that is open to the public and some is posted. It is always best to ask permission to walk on land, whether posted or not. It is respectful to the owner and the land.

Continue to take care of and enjoy these lands and waters—whether a resident or a visitor. Your thoughtful stewardship is a gift to everyone, especially those who live downstream.

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