



# take action

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New England Wild Flower Society's mission is to promote the conservation of North American flora through education, research, horticulture, habitat preservation, and advocacy.

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## The Society in the Field— WITH YOUR SUPPORT

In the struggle to protect native plants and their habitats, they're "on the ground" throughout New England: the deeply committed Conservation Staff and volunteers of New England Wild Flower Society.

The team doesn't do this critical work alone. Our collaborators include federal and state agencies, sister conservation organizations, professionals, and citizen groups. Some of our projects are supported fully or in part by sources as varied as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service and the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, while others depend on the generosity of individuals and private foundations.

Yet some projects receive partial or no outside funding at all—like the drive to rid New England of Japanese stiltgrass (see adjoining article).

We count on your support to continue and expand our conservation initiatives. Read on to learn how you can help defend our native plant heritage.

## Trying to Stop Stiltgrass

### FUNDING NEEDED

Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) has unfortunately developed some outstanding abilities to grow in a variety of habitats and amidst a variety of competitors. Arriving in Tennessee around 1920, as packing material in boxes of porcelain, stiltgrass has steadily expanded its range towards the Northeast.

Stiltgrass, an annual grass, can grow in diverse habitats, from the edges of wetlands dense with sedges or *Phragmites* to drier upland communities dominated by trees, shrubs, and densely growing blackberries. Look closely in these habitats and you will notice it spreading even under grape vines, skunk cabbage, and any densely growing vegetation.

Over time, the grass grows into a dense carpet, eliminating native plants. Each plant produces up to two hundred seeds and can self pollinate. Service vehicles, ATVs, and pedestrians traveling along power lines, gas lines, and trails with mature grass can spread these seeds for many miles.

The New England Wild Flower Society first became aware of the presence of stiltgrass in Massachusetts about seven years ago. (It entered Connecticut over 20 years ago.) Since then, the Society has committed significant resources to monitoring its presence and removing it from known sites, mostly by hand-pulling. Plant Conservation Volunteers (PCVs) and Conservation Department Staff have waged an aggressive effort to eradicate the stiltgrass before it gets a significant foothold in the habitats of native plants. Initial efforts began in the Springfield area and soon the department recorded populations in Bedford, Sherborn, and the Millville-Blackstone area.

Our PCV force, Conservation Staff, and other citizen volunteers, with funding from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, have significantly reduced the stiltgrass populations in West Springfield and Bedford, but consistent attention is needed to win the battle. Herbiciding of power lines and cutting of roadsides has reduced the populations in Millville-Blackstone, but new growths in the same areas have been discovered. Last year we discovered additional populations in Amherst and Conway and initiated control efforts.

Unfortunately, stiltgrass has moved beyond the "early invader" stage, when control is most effective—and cost effective. The question now is: Can we control this species in Massachusetts and stop its spread northward? ●

By John Burns, Plant Conservation Volunteer (PCV) Corps Administrative Coordinator



It's clear that the Society cannot stop this invader by itself. Considerable resources and large coalitions of town conservation commissions, land trusts, governmental agencies, and the public are needed. We will discuss the urgency and practicality of stiltgrass control issue with the conservation community in the coming months. None of us wants to look back in 20 years and think, "If only we'd tried to control it back in 2008."

## HOW YOU CAN HELP



### Support Conservation

The work is important—and so are YOU. Your support helps us protect native plants across New England. To make a contribution, call Dianne Butt at 508.877.7630, ext. 3104.

### We Welcome Volunteers

Conservation volunteers work throughout New England, or support the activities of fieldworkers through administrative tasks. Join a remarkable, dedicated community and receive full training—no previous experience required. To volunteer, contact John Burns at 508.877.7630, ext. 3204. ●

## MEET A VOLUNTEER: Deborah Lievens



A Plant Conservation Volunteer for 10 years, Deborah Lievens often says that her activities with the Society have been life changing. Her PCV conservation training

and fieldwork inspired her to obtain a Certificate in Native Plant Studies from the Society. She parlayed her studies and commitment into serving on the Conservation Commission of Londonderry, her hometown, and on the New Hampshire Invasive Species Committee.

“I’m unabashedly curious,” says Deb. “Working in the Society’s conservation program has given me the wonderful opportunity to satisfy my interests and see unusual plants, learn constantly, and work with committed and knowledgeable people.

“Through my plant conservation work and studies with the Society, I understand better the importance of biodiversity and the urgency to protect rare plant species,” says Deb. “It’s great being able to contribute and at the same time have fun and learn.”

## Working with Three Land Trusts in Western Mass

Our Conservation Staff and Volunteers teamed up with the Minnechaug, Opacum, and Sheffield land trusts in Western Massachusetts to conduct botanical inventories of their nature preserves. Thanks to funding from the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, we collaborated with local volunteers this summer to catalog the flora at these sites and map invasive species. We are also working with the land trusts to develop invasive species management.

- Our work with the Minnechaug Land Trust brings us to the Rice Nature Preserve and Minnechaug Mountain in Wilbraham, MA. With the help of an enthusiastic crew of volunteers (including a five-month-old and a greyhound!), we made great headway in cataloguing the species at Minnechaug Mountain and Rice, where richly forested areas and rocky ledges are home to diverse plant assemblages. Although there are established populations of invasive species at both sites, the Land Trust’s volunteers are ready to take them on at our planned management days this fall.
- We also spent three days taking a botanical inventory of the Opacum Woods in Sturbridge. At the rich network of wetlands sandwiched between a new housing development, Route 84, and the

Massachusetts Turnpike, we found dozens of the rare buttercup species bristly crowfoot (*Ranunculus pensylvanicus*). We identified two rare fern species: lanceleaf grapefern (*Botrychium lanceolatum*) and bluntlobe grapefern (*Botrychium oneidense*).

- Cosgriff Farm in Sheffield, which is part of a Massachusetts Area of Critical Environmental Concern, contains at least 40 state-listed rare and endangered species. Since the site is rampant with invasive plants, we focused on invasive species management. With students from Mt. Everett Regional High School, we spent a sunny day pulling garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and oriental bitter-sweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) from the steep banks of Schneob Brook. Later this fall, this same team will tackle larger invasive species at the site, including Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) and multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), as well as more garlic mustard.

Each of the sites that we surveyed is unique in its biological diversity and ecological importance. These surveys point out the critical need in the land trust community for inventories of their protected properties, which will help them understand both what they’re protecting and threats to their lands, such as invasives. We hope that our inventorying and invasive species management will help keep these natural areas healthy for years to come. ●

By Kaya Schmandt, Lovejoy Conservation Fellow

## Seedbanking Throughout New England

The Society’s seed banking activities continue full force in two areas: our seed bank of rare and endangered New England taxa, and our role in the international Millennium Seed Bank Project of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (U.K.) and its U.S. counterpart, Seeds of Success (Bureau of Land Management). Seed banking is one of the best ways to guarantee the long-term survival of many plant species while preserving significant genetic variation and ensuring availability of viable propagules for research and habitat restoration.

Current activities of the Society’s seed bank include viability testing in our new growth

chamber of collections made over the past 20 years through germination trials.

As a partner institution of the Millennium Seed Bank and Seeds of Success, our duties include collecting seeds of habitat restoration value, obtaining associated data and herbarium vouchers, and shipping them to the U.K. and domestic seed banks. We have to date collected nearly half of the 150 Northeastern species assigned to us.

In August, we collected seeds of four species for the Millennium Seed Bank Project at Merck Forest and Farmland Center in Rupert, VT. We also collected 11 species at the Society’s Hobbs Sanctuary in Lyman, NH, including many of New England’s most important ferns. ●

By Tristram Seidler, seed ecologist

## Success at Vermont's Eshqua Bog

### FUNDING NEEDED

New England Wild Flower Society and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) jointly manage the Eshqua Bog Natural Area. Tucked in Hartland, Vermont (approximately three hours north of the Garden), the sanctuary consists of eight acres of calcareous wetland, surrounded by 32.8 acres of forest. In 1988, New England Wild Flower Society and TNC acquired the property, which the two organizations co-manage.

Despite its name, Eshqua is not a bog but actually a rich fen. A bog has little or no water inflow and low nutrient levels, while a fen has water flow that increases nutrient levels. Minerals leach out of the upland area into the fen and feed the plant diversity. Rich fens are a rare community in Vermont.

Eshqua, like other rich fens, supports populations of many interesting plants. Most visibly, there is a large community of showy lady slippers (*Cypripedium reginae*). In early summer, these blooms make a magnificent display. This year, we counted 671 plants within five feet of the boardwalk. The showy lady slippers, classified as a “rare and uncommon” species in Vermont, are naturally restricted to nutrient rich wetlands, like Eshqua. From 1994 to 1998, complete inventories of two plots were taken every year. Then in 2004, four plots were established, and every year we count the lady slippers within each plot. So far the population shows no signs of declining. Definitely worth a visit in mid-June!



White snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) is among Eshqua's native plants

Other plants of interest at Eshqua are the yellow lady slipper (*Cypripedium parviflorum* var. *parviflorum*), the white bog orchis (*Platanthera dilatata*), the green bog orchis (*Platanthera huronensis*), and purple avens (*Geum rivale*).

This year the Society and TNC have several projects underway at Eshqua. Teams of botanists surveyed the property throughout the summer. After two days, we recorded 315 species! Another fun, physical project is the removal of wall lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*), an invasive exotic from Northern Europe. Staff and volunteers and the Society met at Eshqua in late June to manually remove the wall lettuce. In the second year of managing this plant, we've succeeded in shrinking the population.

If you are near Hartland, Vermont, stop by and visit this scenic area! ●

By Kevi Mace, Atkinson Conservation Fellow

Simply protecting or “locking up” a natural area is no longer sufficient. It must also be managed—something that's often overlooked. There are, of course, costs associated with managing areas such as Eshqua. The Society seeks funding to support these critical projects.

## REGIONAL REPORTS

### New Hampshire

#### Mustard, Not for the Bun

Each spring and fall, several Plant Conservation Volunteers (PCVs) gather at the Society's Plainfield Sanctuary in Plainfield, NH, to rid the roadside of garlic mustard (*Allaria petiolata*). The teams gathered several trash bags of this rapidly spreading invasive and by the end of the day had a clear slate. It was disheartening to see both sides of the road leading to the sanctuary lined with dense patches of the mustard. Word is getting out as curious passers-by asked about our activities. Such moments present a nice opportunity to educate the public about the impact of invasive species on our native plant communities. Having heard the call, volunteers gathered to clear the town's public boat ramps of garlic mustard. ●

By John Burns, Plant Conservation Volunteer (PCV) Corps Administrative Coordinator

### Maine

#### Jewelweed in the Rough

On a soggy day in late July, six volunteers and I attacked the large Himalayan jewelweed (*Impatiens glandulifera*) infestation in Farmington, ME. This infestation, one of the westernmost occurrences of this invasive, has spread along stream corridors and a seepy bank in and near the University of Maine-Farmington campus. Although it's a tall (up to two meters), formidable plant, it has a shallow root system, and pulls easily out of the ground. By day's end, we filled five large lawn bags with the invasive. We had hoped that the Himalayan jewelweed population, which had diminished considerably the last two years, would continue to shrink, but our take this year matched 2007's total. We shall return in 2009! ●

By Ted Elliman, Vegetation Manager, Coordinator/IPANE

### Vermont

#### Wild Chervil

In June, a group of Plant Conservation Volunteers rallied like Ethan Allen's rebels deep in the heart of the Green Mountains to remove wild chervil (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) from a remote section of National Forest road. This member of the parsley family was just getting a foothold on this sparsely populated road, but the group cleared almost three miles of road frontage. Soon after, the local community, with the support of the Forest Service, continued the efforts along several miles above the town of Ripton. Chervil's presence in the valleys nearby is discouraging. It will take more support and community action to prevent its spread to more intact habitats. ●

By John Burns, Plant Conservation Volunteer (PCV) Corps Administrative Coordinator

## FUNDING NEEDED

### RARE & INVASIVE PLANT SURVEYS

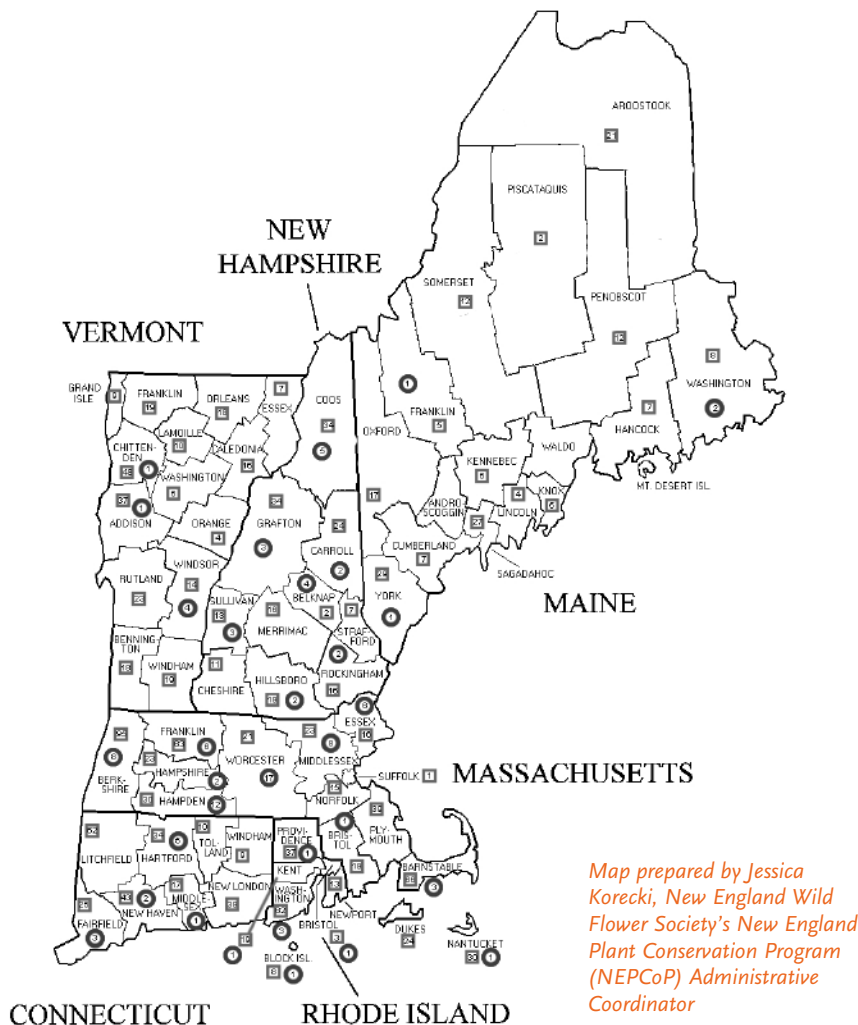
New England Wild Flower Society's Conservation Staff and many extremely dedicated volunteers have been busy in the field again this year. Freshly updated for 2008, this map shows our rare plant population surveys in all the counties of New England.

Squares on the map indicate the number of rare plant population surveys scheduled in each county. The Conservation team contacts landowners to obtain permission for the volunteers and staff to go to the rare plant sites and update the population record information, including population size and overall health. This data then goes to the Natural Heritage Program in the appropriate state.

Circles on the map indicate the number of work days the Conservation Staff has scheduled both in that county. Work days include invasive plant management and botanical inventory days.

The enormous amount of work we manage to accomplish on these days would not be possible without our volunteers!

Visit [www.newenglandwild.org](http://www.newenglandwild.org) for a larger, full-color version of the Rare & Invasive Plant Survey map



### SUCCESS STORIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

#### FUNDING NEEDED

#### Tackling the Water Chestnut in Essex County

Water chestnut (*Trapa natans*), a rooted, floating, aquatic plant, is native to Eurasia. After its introduction in the United States, it spread widely and is now considered a noxious weed in 46 states. Since 2002, the Society has managed a population of *Trapa* in Rowley, MA, the most northern occurrence of the species. Twice every summer staff and volunteers head out in canoes onto two ponds owned by the Essex County Greenbelt Association to pull *Trapa* by hand. This year we have seen a significant decline in its coverage! ●

By Kevi Mace, Atkinson Conservation Fellow

#### Dragon's Mouth Orchid Makes its Return

This June, Conservation Staff and a Plant Conservation Volunteer bushwhacked their way through a swamp to a promising but small population of dragon's mouth orchid (*Arethusa bulbosa*), monitored by volunteers since 2001, when they observed only a single flowering plant. Since then, the Society has worked with the Gloucester Conservation Commission to better protect this flower's delicate habitat. Last fall, we cleared the woody species that were shading out the *Arethusa*. This summer, we were happy to see four healthy dragon's mouth orchids growing in the sunshine. ●

By Kaya Schmandt, Lovejoy Conservation Fellow

#### Healthy Habitats at Fresh Pond Reservation

The Society's Conservation Staff and volunteers, the Cambridge Water Department, and contractors are transforming the area surrounding Fresh Pond Reservoir into a healthy habitat. Seeking to improve the city's largest open space, Cambridge designated funding and people to address the compacted soils and degraded habitats resulting from the long history of human use. The team has improved five primary wetland areas to better handle storm water, which flows into the reservation from the surrounding streets. ●

Jessica Korecki, NEPCoP Administrative Coordinator

#### 2008 ANNUAL MEETING

Celebrate exceptional achievements with us at New England Wild Flower Society's Annual Meeting.

**November 2, 1:30–5:00 p.m.**

**Garden in the Woods, 180 Hemenway Road, Framingham, MA**  
R.S.V.P. before October 29 to 508-877-7630, ext. 3001, or [cbennett@newenglandWILD.org](mailto:cbennett@newenglandWILD.org).

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