

The four subwatersheds of the Warner River Watershed.

The Warner River Watershed encompasses 149 square miles within the towns of Bradford, Goshen, Hopkinton, New London, Newbury, Salisbury, Sutton, Warner, Washington and Webster. Mount Kearsarge, Mount Sunapee and the numerous rolling hills within this Dartmouth-Sunapee region have an estimated 210 miles of streams that drain to compose the Warner River which eventually flows into the Contoocook.



Biologists and volunteers sort and count macroinvertebrates collected from a stream to determine its water quality.

Our Team of local residents, students, the Warner Conservation Commission, Basil W. Woods, Jr. Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the NH Fish & Game Department are working together to develop and implement conservation strategies to protect our wild brook trout, aquatic ecosystems, and water quality within the watershed. Our electrofishing, habitat studies, and road-stream crossing surveys indicate wild brook trout inhabit two-thirds of the watershed sites evaluated! Volunteers have donated over 1000 hours on these assessments!



Basil W. Woods, Jr. Trout Unlimited  
 PO Box 3302  
 Concord, NH 03302-3302  
<http://www.concordtu.org>

# The Warner River Watershed Conservation Project

A partnership of the  
 Warner Conservation Commission,  
 Basil W. Woods Jr. Trout Unlimited  
 & the NH Fish & Game Department



# The Warner River Watershed Conservation Project

Wild brook trout are our cause. High quality waters are our goal.

Our Results describe a high-quality watershed that is well worth preserving. However, this watershed has been identified as one of the most likely to suffer from diminished water quality due to the loss of private woodlands, future housing development pressures and climate change. Therefore we are taking a proactive approach, promoting land practices that preserve both the resiliency of wild brook trout and water quality.



Perched crossings prevent fish from reaching critical spawning and nursery habitats. In addition, water gains velocity and more erosion occurs, risking structure failure and flooding.

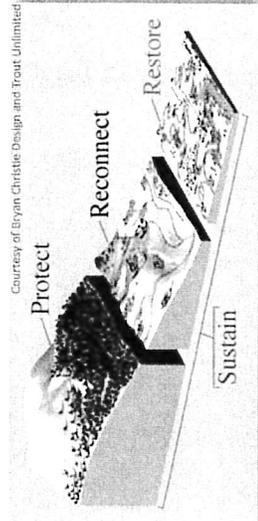
We will build on grassroots interest, and help identify specific actions to protect, reconnect, restore and sustain trout habitat throughout this valuable watershed.



Our native eastern brook trout, *Salvelinus fontinalis*.

Our Mission is to promote stewardship of these valuable streams by making local citizens and landowners more aware of how various land alterations influence water quality and aquatic habitat. We aspire to educate local residents about the value of our native brook trout streams and seek to identify opportunities and resources to protect our water quality and this valuable watershed.

Join us this summer! Come experience how rewarding this kind of conservation work is! After all, we all depend on good water quality and these beautiful wild brookies are our state fish - and indicators of excellent water quality!

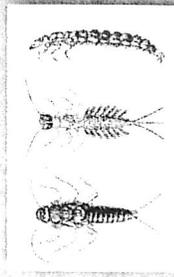


Courtesy of Bryan Christie Design and Trout Unlimited

Our conservation strategy for this watershed.

For more information and to follow our progress, scan the QR code below with your smart phone to visit our blog: [www.warnerwatershedconservationproject.wordpress.com/](http://www.warnerwatershedconservationproject.wordpress.com/). We train volunteers for the following:

- Assist with electrofishing
- Stream crossing assessments
- Aquatic macroinvertebrate collection and identification
- Water quality sampling



The FSC Logo identifies products which contain wood from well managed forests certified in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).  
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Note: This map was made using the USGS Hydrography Data on the National Map.



# WARNER RIVER VRAP TEAM

## SIGN UP & TRAINING!

A group of local professionals and volunteers have met with NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to reinstitute their Voluntary River Assessment Program (VRAP) water quality testing of the Warner River and major tributaries. Volunteers are needed to conduct monthly testing throughout the summer season in Newbury, Sutton, Bradford, Warner, and Hopkinton (if enough people sign up and train, each volunteer will only do one assessment per year). Make a difference and volunteer and train alongside your neighbors and some of our finest watershed professionals! Students welcome!

**OUR RIVER  
OUR WATER  
OUR PRO\$PERITY**  
*our time...*  
**our kids' future  
OUR CHOICE!**

**NHDES Warner Watershed VRAP Training**

**Tuesday, May 23, 2017 5:30 - 7:30pm**

**Warner Town Hall, Warner, NH** *Please RSVP by  
Friday, May 5th!*

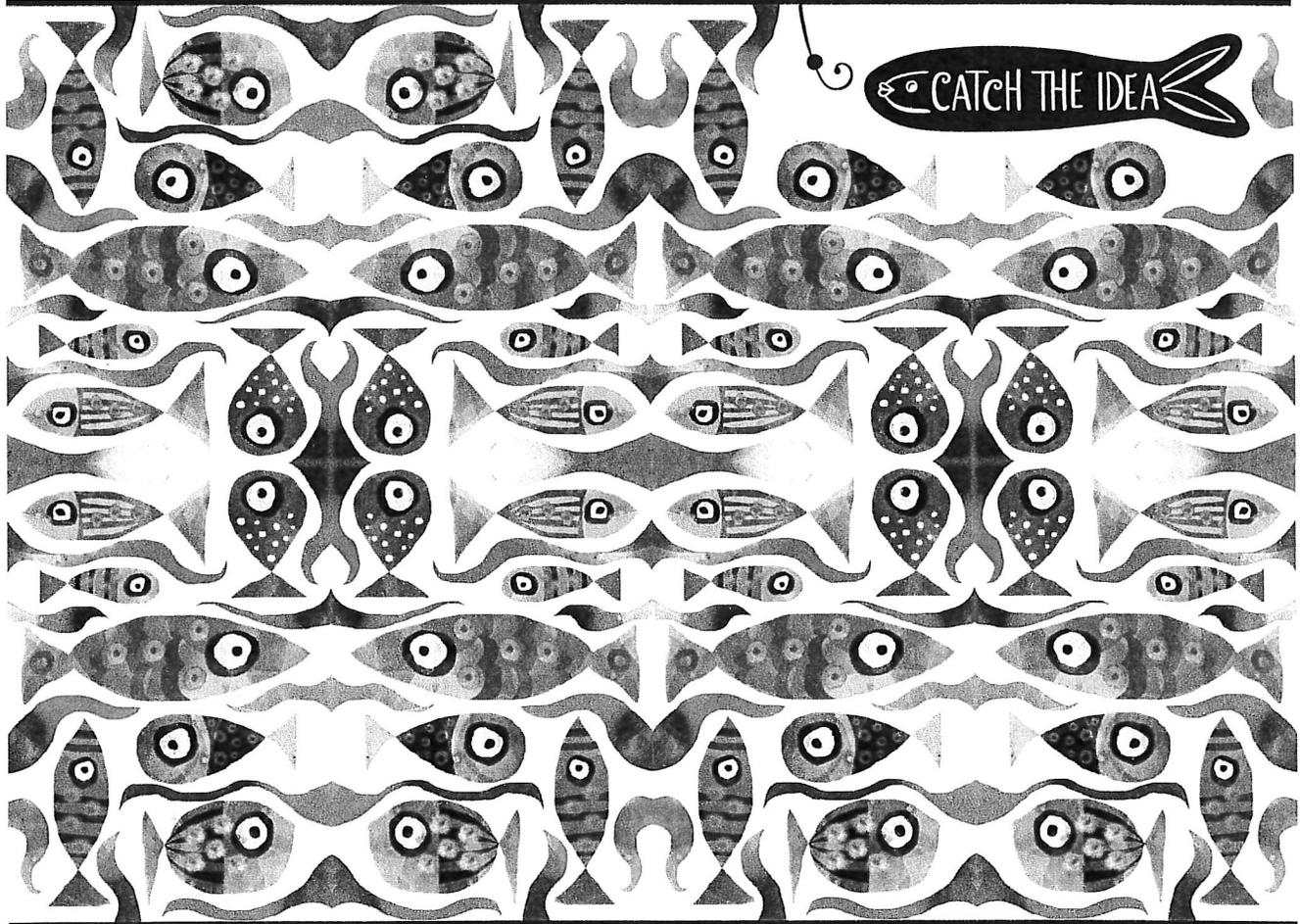
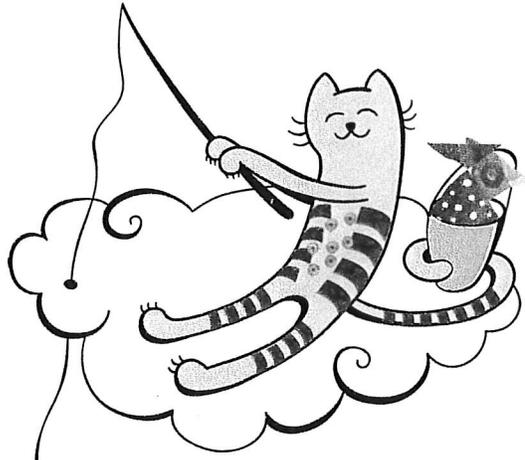
RSVP by emailing Basil Woods TU with 'VRAP' in the subject line at [concordtu@yahoo.com](mailto:concordtu@yahoo.com) - or call Bob Ball at 715-5342 by 5/5/17!



Learn more here: <http://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/vrap/>

## Ingredients:

- 1 Small Pond (brook fed)
- + 300!!! Brookies (just stocked)
- + Free use of Fishing Rods (or bring yours)
- + Free Worms (ya its a wormfest!)
- + Free (legendary!) Instruction
- + Grilled Food, Drinks (and sweets-steps away)...



## Youth Fishing Day

April 29th, 2017 9am - 3pm  
Merrill Park Pond, Concord, NH



Located nearby to support NH F&G's Discover Wild NH Day  
Next to Quality Cash Market (11 Eastman St, Concord NH)

learn more at [www.concordtu.org](http://www.concordtu.org)

Grab your kids and head over to Merrill Park Pond for Youth Fishing Day - it's FREE!  
Rods, tackle, bait, food and instructors are ready for kids up to 16! Keep up to two fish!



## Warner River Watershed Conservation Project Flood Resiliency & Community Action Workshops, June 14 & 28, 4-6:30pm Warner Town Hall Lower Meeting Room

**What are these workshops about?** In the fall of 2016, Basil Woods Trout Unlimited, NH Fish & Game and numerous local volunteers completed an assessment of all culvert and bridge stream crossings within the Warner River Watershed. This data has been evaluated to screen each culvert for Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP), Geomorphic Compatibility (GC), and Hydraulic Capacity (flood tolerance). Thanks to a grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Trout Unlimited's (TU) New England Culvert Project's Colin Lawson and Gabe Bolin are presenting the data and providing technical expertise and support to interested watershed towns in two upcoming workshops. NH Fish & Game Department biologists continue to provide technical assistance and recommendations. Basil W. Woods Jr. TU members, interns and local volunteers continue to provide community outreach and engagement, assess and make recommendations for landowners who have wild brook trout streams on their property, and stand ready to assist with future culvert replacements and other conservation projects. FEMA and NH Central Regional Planning Commission will also be attending.

**Why do these workshops matter?** The Warner River Watershed spans an area of approximately 148 square miles across both Merrimack and Sullivan Counties. Headwater streams drain slopes of Mt. Kearsarge and Mt. Sunapee to compose the Warner River which cuts and meanders for 18 miles to its confluence with the Contoocook River in Hopkinton. The watershed has a tremendous diversity of terrestrial and aquatic habitats, including forest, wetlands, small streams and open space that support a variety of critical wildlife, as well as a variety of recreational hot spots for people. Two-thirds of the watershed streams assessed are home to wild brook trout, a marker species indicating a healthy watershed; yet, only about one-third of culverts enable trout and other wildlife to access critical habitats that are located up- or downstream - and over half of culverts screened are predicted to fail in a 100 year flood.

**How will these workshops help the watershed communities?** By understanding the condition of road stream crossings across the entire watershed, town officials, communities, state agencies and conservation organizations will have the information needed to conduct successful culvert replacement projects that will improve infrastructure, resilience and ecological connectivity. An understanding of this watershed-wide infrastructure condition will also strengthen the relationship between community, state and federal partnerships opening up a variety of opportunities from different funding sources.

**Who should attend?** A working team of your town's officials, perhaps including Selectmen, Road Agents, Hazard Mitigation personnel, Conservation Commission and Planning Board members.

**Please RSVP by 5/26** to Chris Connors at [concordtu@yahoo.com](mailto:concordtu@yahoo.com), with 'Flood Workshop' in the subject line and the team members who will attend from your town. Thank you.

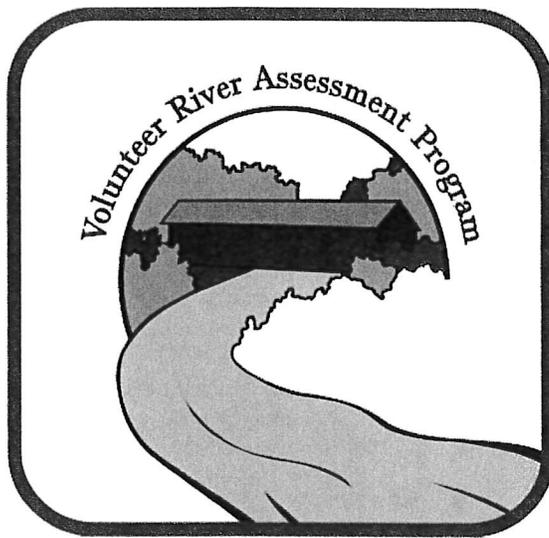
**For more information, please contact:**

George Embley, Conservation Chair  
Basil Woods Trout Unlimited  
[gtembley@gmail.com](mailto:gtembley@gmail.com)  
603-456-2315

Ben Nugent, Lead Biologist  
NH Fish & Game Department  
[Benjamin.Nugent@wildlife.nh.gov](mailto:Benjamin.Nugent@wildlife.nh.gov)  
603-774-5470

Colin Lawson  
Trout Unlimited  
[clawson@tu.org](mailto:clawson@tu.org)  
603-228-2200





Recently, members of Basil Woods TU, professionals from NH Fish & Game, and local residents have been working with the NH Department of Environmental Resources (NH-DES) to reinstate the Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP) in the Warner River Watershed. Volunteers will be trained to assess water quality monthly from June through October in Newbury, Sutton, Bradford, Warner and Hopkinton. With enough volunteers, each team will only have to do one day during the testing period.

NHDES adopted the program in 1998 *'to help establish awareness and education of the importance of maintaining water quality in NH's rivers and streams.'* Free training is provided in order to practice state-approved, scientific means and methods to assess river and stream water quality. The results are made available on VRAP's web site here: <http://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/vrap/data.htm>.

If you are a watershed resident or student interested in assisting with this program, please contact your conservation commission or email [concordtu@yahoo.com](mailto:concordtu@yahoo.com). Please put 'Warner River VRAP' in the subject line, provide your contact information and week day availability. Should you have questions please contact Bob Ball at 715-5342.

Incidentally, the Nomination for the Warner River to be adopted into NH's Rivers Management and Protection Program has received support from the towns of Bradford, Sutton, Warner, Webster and Hopkinton and numerous others! The nomination will be submitted to the State this May. Learn more here: [www.warnerrivernomination.wordpress.com/warner-river-designation/](http://www.warnerrivernomination.wordpress.com/warner-river-designation/).

## Warner River Designation & 2016 Stream Crossing Assessment and Outreach Campaign

### Warner River Designation

Local enthusiasm to further explore and sustain this high quality watershed continues this year as the towns of Warner, Bradford, Sutton, Webster and Hopkinton pursue designated status for the Warner River within the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP)! This program was established in 1988 to give communities a stronger, collective voice to preserve the outstanding natural and cultural resources of their rivers.

A seed grant from the New England Grassroots Foundation has enabled the group to receive assistance over the winter from Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission to compile the documentation required for the nomination. With the nomination document near completion, the group has scheduled the first public information session for 7pm, April 20<sup>th</sup> at the Warner Town Hall.

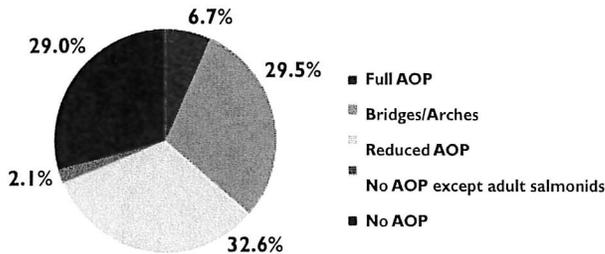
If the Warner River receives the local support necessary to achieve designated status, the legislature and governor will adopt the Warner River into the RMPP and a Local Advisory Committee (LAC) would be formed. Made up of volunteers representing a variety of river interests and each of the communities within the watershed, the LAC would be responsible for developing a River Corridor Management Plan which would document the river's existing conditions and make recommendations to sustain the river and its watershed for generations to come.

The designation of the Warner River will compliment the already designated Contoocook River, to which it is a main tributary. More information about NH's RMPP can be found here: [bit.ly/nhdesrivers](http://bit.ly/nhdesrivers). Learn more about NH's designated rivers and their respective management plans here: [bit.ly/designatedrivernh](http://bit.ly/designatedrivernh). The Committee's meeting minutes are here: [bit.ly/1pO1IW3](http://bit.ly/1pO1IW3).

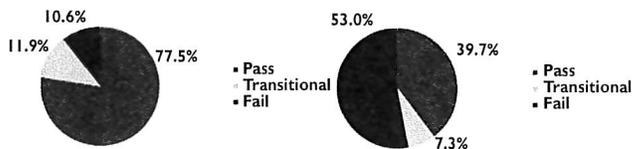
# 2017 Community & Landowner Outreach Campaign

Our 2016 Stream Crossing Assessment & Outreach Campaign was a tremendous success, thanks to our student intern, Tyson Morrill, and the continued support of local volunteers. We completed all remaining stream crossings assessments within the entire watershed - surpassing our goal! Trout Unlimited (TU) and NH Fish & Game (NHF&G) have input our data into an engineering model to screen for Aquatic Organism Passage and Geomorphic Compatibility (ability to withstand floods). Below are some of the results.

**2017 Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP)  
for Stream Crossings in the Warner River Watershed**



**2017 Ability to Accommodate a 2 Year and 100 Year Flow Event  
for Stream Crossings in the Warner River Watershed**



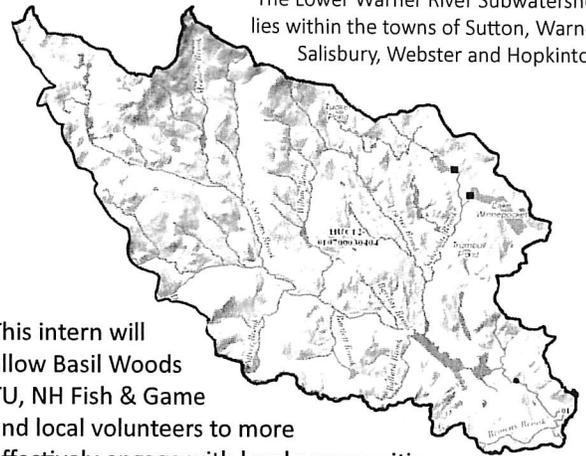
This June, TU's Colin Lawson and Gabe Bolin, of the New England Culvert Project, will join Basil Woods TU, NHF&G and others to provide two workshops for watershed towns. We will provide each town's results and assist in prioritizing culvert replacements and restoration projects in the watershed.

Local enthusiasm to further explore and protect this high quality watershed continues this year as we reach out to Webster, Hopkinton, Bradford, Sutton, Newbury and New London to encourage communities and landowners to consider wild brook trout, other species of greatest conservation need and water quality when making land use/land management decisions. We also will continue to conduct brook trout surveys and water quality assessments for interested landowners with brook trout streams on their properties. Follow our progress on our blog and Facebook. Join us this summer!

## Embrace-A-Stream Grant Awarded

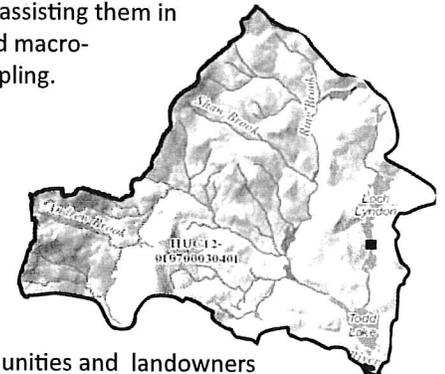
Adding to the momentum, this March, Basil Woods TU was awarded a TU (National) Embrace-A-Stream Grant to hire a full-time, local student intern to coordinate a new community and landowner outreach campaign in the Lower Warner River subwatershed and additionally assist with stream crossing assessments planned in the Andrew Brook Subwatershed.

The Lower Warner River Subwatershed lies within the towns of Sutton, Warner, Salisbury, Webster and Hopkinton.



This intern will allow Basil Woods TU, NH Fish & Game and local volunteers to more effectively engage with local communities and landowners with property adjacent to wild brook trout streams by assisting them in electrofishing and macro-invertebrate sampling.

The Andrew Brook Subwatershed lies within the towns of Sutton and Bradford.



Our intent is to encourage communities and landowners to consider wild brook trout, other species of greatest conservation need and water quality when making land use/land management decisions. By continuing our work and providing a series of educational opportunities locally, we anticipate a higher level of awareness and appreciation for our aquatic systems. We will refine this campaign to take to other watershed communities in future years.

Join us this summer! Follow our blog here: [https://warnerriverwatershedconservationproject.wordpress.com/!](https://warnerriverwatershedconservationproject.wordpress.com/) Discover why the Warner River watershed is so valuable!

# Recognizing headwater streams

Headwater streams are small streams and wetlands at the highest end of a watershed. Some are so small that they don't show up on maps. If a river network is the circulatory system of the landscape, headwater streams are the small capillaries that fan into the larger veins and arteries.

Headwater streams can start as small forested wetlands, beaver impoundments, or cascading mountain streams, varying according to the topography and geology of the surrounding landscape. Topography and geology influence the speed of water flow, the river bottom material, the plants growing around the streams, whether the stream sometimes or always contains water, and which wildlife species live in or use the stream.

## Mountain streams

Mountain streams tend to have large rocks, steep grades, and flash floods. Stream salamanders, brook trout, and certain aquatic invertebrates are well adapted to these dynamic habitats.



Mountain stream



Valley stream

## Valley streams

These streams flow through broad, flat valleys. They tend to be slow-moving and surrounded by wetland plants and shrubs. Beaver activity creates a patchwork of wetlands around the streams, including shrub swamps, wet meadows, and ponds. Wildlife are drawn to these areas including ducks, geese, turtles, amphibians, and fish.

## Spring-fed brooks

These small streams flow through glacially deposited sand and gravel and originate from natural springs. Their year-round supply of cool water provides a stable environment for brook trout, particularly during hot weather.



Spring-fed brook

## Warm rocky streams

The riffles and pools of these rocky brooks are reminiscent of mountain or brook-fed streams, but they are too warm to support cold-water fish. They often flow between beaver ponds in hilly terrain, serving as corridors and hunting grounds for mink, northern water snake, and other wildlife.



Warm rocky stream

# Why are headwater streams important?

Many headwater streams are scoured by ice in winter, flood in the spring and fall, and are dry in the summer. Wide variations in water flow and temperature make life difficult in headwater streams. A unique group of plants, amphibians, and insects are adapted to survive in these difficult conditions. These small streams also have a large impact on the health and integrity – both for water quality and wildlife – of major rivers downstream.

Headwater streams are places where forest and stream habitats converge, leading to high densities of insects around the streams. Stoneflies, mayflies, and dragonflies, whose larvae live underwater, are found alongside upland insects such as moths, beetles, and grasshoppers. This concentration of food attracts predators from the surrounding forest including northern long-eared bat, red-shouldered hawk, raccoon and ribbon snake.

Small streams also help remove excess nutrients, such as nitrogen, from a watershed, helping ensure cleaner water downstream. Wood in the small, upriver streams traps leaves and other nitrogen sources, preventing them from accumulating in the lower reaches of the river.

Eastern brook trout may live year-round in tiny streams, feeding on both upland and aquatic insects. They may also travel over 20 miles from larger rivers to headwater streams during the fall spawning season or, if the streams have enough water, to find a cool refuge during the summer months.

## Refuge streams

Many species take advantage of the relative safety of headwater streams for reproduction. Green frogs and spring and two-lined salamanders lay their eggs in intermittent, fishless streams. Common white suckers and rainbow smelt, two fish species, migrate every year into small streams to spawn. Headwater streams also can act as travel corridors for wildlife such as mink, otter, beaver, forest birds, and forest-dwelling bats.

The isolation and harsh conditions of headwater streams can also provide native fish with a refuge from introduced species. Natives such as banded sunfish, redbfin pickerel, and redbelly dace can thrive in headwater streams, but are over-run by introduced fish in the more stable and often degraded habitats of larger rivers and lakes.

## Overlooked streams

Despite their ecological value, headwater streams are often overlooked by conservation efforts and are not covered by New Hampshire's Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act. Their small size makes them vulnerable to human impacts, particularly those caused by human development. Use of groundwater by residential or commercial wells can cause streams to dry up. Roads, driveways, and poorly designed or placed culverts fragment streams, causing sedimentation, and isolate wildlife populations. Runoff from paved surfaces can introduce pollutants, increase flooding, and cause spikes in stream temperature. These and other threats are compounded by the tendency to dismiss small streams because they don't command the same recreational and aesthetic appeal of larger lakes and rivers, and because they are often considered too small to provide important habitat.



Stonefly larvae



A "perched" culvert blocks wildlife passage in streams

# Stewardship Guidelines for headwater streams

- **Conserving land from development around headwater streams** will allow for the natural processes that prevent flooding, maintain water quality, quantity, and temperature, recycle nutrients, and provide food and habitat at the source and downstream. Maintaining intact, undeveloped headwaters may also buffer the predicted higher temperatures and increased flooding and rainfall associated with climate change.
- **Incorporating headwater stream protection into town and regional planning** through conservation easements and zoning ordinances will have lasting benefits by conserving species, protecting water quality and preventing flood damage.
  - When possible, **keep development, permanent roads, and driveways at least 300 feet away from streams.** Suggested development buffers vary, but a minimum of 300 feet is commonly recommended for protecting wildlife habitat along stream corridors. The benefits of riparian buffers increase with their width.
  - **Maintain pervious (permeable) surfaces** on as much of the landscape as possible. Natural ground is the best filter for storm water, but pervious pavement (as opposed to typical pavement) can reduce stream contamination from storm water in developed areas. Watersheds with as little as 4% of their land area in buildings and pavement have degraded headwater stream habitat.
- **Avoid the use of fertilizers or pesticides near any stream or wetland habitat.** Many pesticides are toxic to aquatic organisms. Excess nutrients from fertilizers pollute water by reducing oxygen levels, killing fish and other species.
- **Avoid culverts, drains or ditches that discharge storm water directly into streams.** Instead, apply designs that filter storm water into the ground, including porous pavement, gravel wetlands, or tree box filters. The UNH Stormwater Center is an excellent resource for the latest research in stormwater management.
- **Properly sized and installed stream crossings are critical for restoring or maintaining the function of streams of all sizes.** Before installing any stream crossing associated with development, consult the New Hampshire Stream Crossing Guidelines available from the UNH Stream & Wetland Restoration Institute and follow all NH wetland laws. For crossings associated with timber harvesting, see best management practice references below.
- **Timber harvesting around headwater and small streams should maintain enough shade and large trees** to maintain stream temperatures, filter run-off, and allow for woody material (dead and dying trees, leaves, branches) to naturally fall into streams. For headwater streams, buffers that maintain about 60% of the canopy in a zone as wide as the height of a mature tree (100 feet) are likely to maintain cold water temperatures and woody material in the stream. In larger streams, riparian buffers of 300 feet or more provide more effective wildlife travel corridors and habitat.
- When doing forest management work near headwater streams, minimize impacts by:
  - **Maintaining dead standing trees, overhanging vegetation, and downed branches and trees** to provide moist cover and shade for wildlife and insects;
  - **Maintaining downed logs** in streams to enhance trout pool habitat;
  - **Consulting the publications** *Good Forestry in the Granite State, 2nd edition* and *Best Management Practices for Forestry: Protecting NH's Water Quality*, both available from UNH Cooperative Extension.
- **Consult a licensed New Hampshire forester before conducting a timber harvest on your property.** Understand and follow all laws pertaining to tree harvesting near wetlands and waterbodies. Follow established best management practices, and harvest timber near headwater streams only when the soils are either frozen (winter) or very dry (summer).



Roadside salt and sand draining into stream

# Species Focus of conservation concern

## Eastern brook trout

Brook trout depend on clean, cold water and are well-adapted to living in small streams where they compete for feeding territories in small pools. During much of the year, brook trout eat insects such as beetles and spiders that fall into the stream from overhanging vegetation. In hot weather, brook trout may travel miles upriver to headwater streams seeking cooler water and to find spawning habitat in the fall. New Hampshire remains a stronghold for brook trout in the Eastern U.S., but even here, populations are declining.



Eastern brook trout

## Stream salamanders

Stream salamanders are the top predators in streams with no fish. These streams are often seasonal, drying up for part of the year, or they may be protected from upstream fish movement by a barrier such as a waterfall. Spring salamanders, two-lined salamanders, dusky salamanders, and eastern spotted newts are examples of salamanders that may be found in New Hampshire's headwater streams. Stream salamanders are considered indicators of good water quality and healthy stream habitat, but they are sensitive to upland habitat destruction beyond the stream corridor.



Dusky salamander

## Riffle snaketails

Riffle snaketails are dragonflies that live in streams and small rivers with gravel or sandy bottoms and lots of riffles. Riffle snaketails are very sensitive to damming, and although they are not rare, they are at risk from disturbance. Larvae burrow in the gravel and sand, feeding on aquatic invertebrates that share their sheltered space.



Riffle snaketail

## Wildlife found in headwater streams

The species listed here are some of the wildlife that use headwater streams. Be on the lookout for these species and follow stewardship guidelines to help maintain or enhance headwater stream habitats. Species of conservation concern—those wildlife species identified in the Wildlife Action Plan as having the greatest need of conservation—appear in **bold** typeface.

- American eel
- **Banded sunfish**
- **Blanding's turtle**\*\*
- **Bridle shiner**\*
- Caddisflies
- Craneflies
- Cusk
- Dusky salamander
- **Eastern brook trout**
- Eastern spotted newt
- Ebony jewelwing
- Fishing spider
- **Little brown bat**
- Louisiana waterthrush
- Mayflies
- Mink
- Northern long-eared bat
- Northern water snake
- Raccoon
- **Redfin pickerel**
- Riffle snaketail
- Spring salamander
- Stoneflies
- **Swamp darter**
- Two-lined salamander
- White sucker

\*state-threatened species

\*\*state-endangered species



Eastern spotted newt/red eft

## Where to get help

If you have information about a wildlife species of conservation concern, contact NH Fish & Game's Wildlife Division at 603-271-2461. Contact the UNH Cooperative Extension Wildlife Specialist at 603-862-3594 for technical assistance for landowners or your community.

Publications and assistance on forestry and wildlife topics are available through the UNH Extension Educators in Forest Resources in each county. Contact information for each UNH Cooperative Extension office is provided below. Additional publications, contact information, resources, and web versions of all brochures in the Habitat Stewardship Series are available on the UNH Cooperative Extension website at: [nhwoods.org](http://nhwoods.org).

Belknap County	603-527-5475	Grafton County	603-787-6944	Rockingham County	603-679-5616
Carroll County	603-447-3834	Hillsborough County	603-641-6060	Strafford County	603-749-4445
Cheshire County	603-352-4550	Merrimack County	603-225-5505	Sullivan County	603-863-9200
Coös County	603-788-4961				

### Authorship

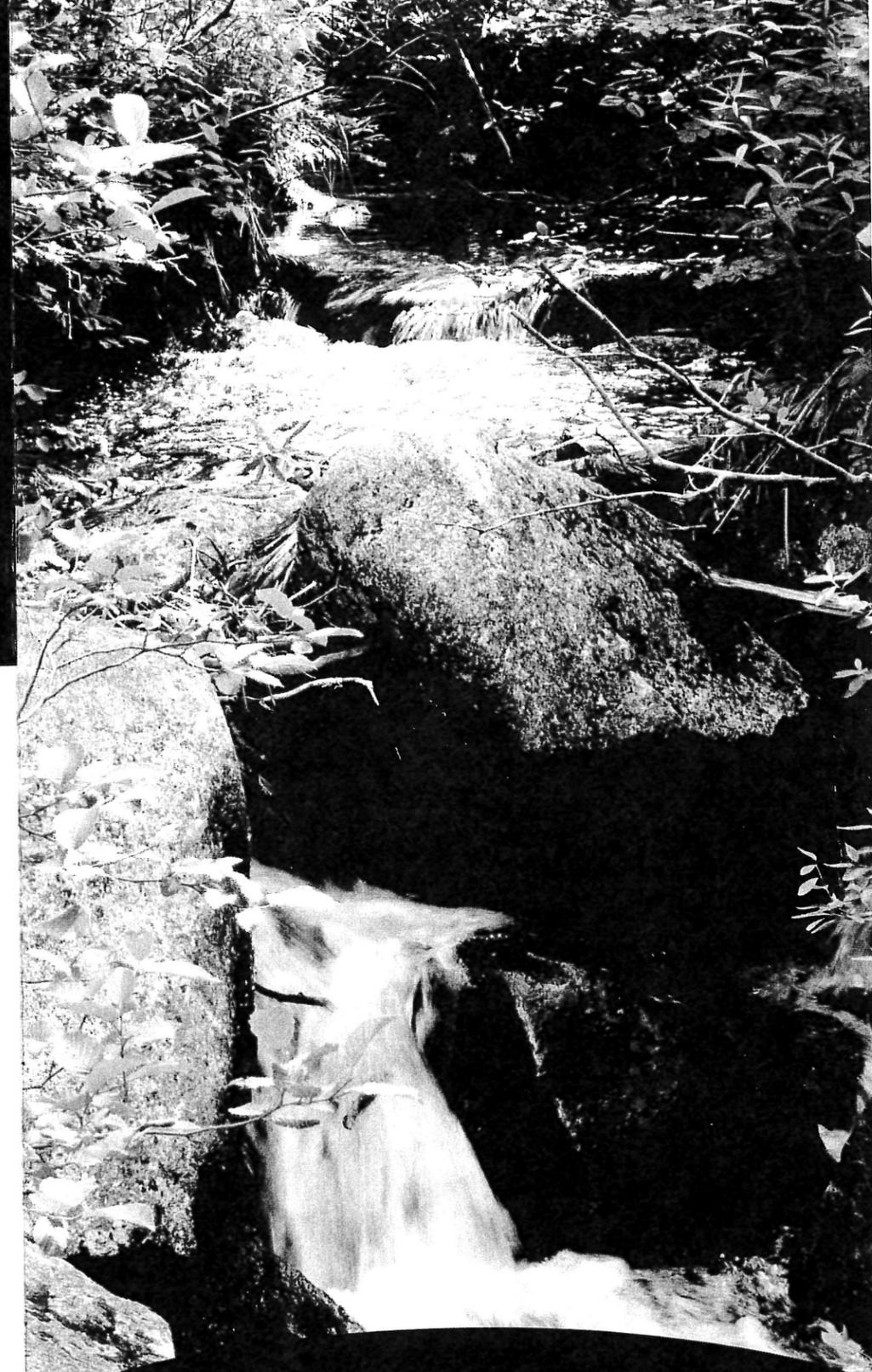
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### About the Habitat Stewardship Series

Much of the land in New Hampshire is privately owned. These individuals are the primary stewards of our wildlife and forests, and also our clean water, scenic views, fresh air, natural and cultural heritage, and recreational resources. The Habitat Stewardship Series has been created to help landowners and land managers recognize the habitats critical for wildlife species at risk, and to illustrate the role private landowners can play in sustaining those species through conservation, management, and sound land stewardship.

### Photo Credits

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# Headwater Streams

Habitat Stewardship Series  
NEW HAMPSHIRE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

