
2018 Cooperator of the Year

Amy Bodwell & Carol Saunders of Roxbury, NH

Each year the Cheshire County Conservation District honors an individual, business or organization with the “Cooperator of the Year” award. This is done to celebrate the efforts the recipient has undertaken to steward the natural resources on their land in cooperation with the Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This year we are happy to announce Amy Bodwell and Carol Saunders of Roxbury, NH as our 2018 Cooperators of the Year.



The Property

Their property “Woodland Views” is comprised of 235 acres of mature and early successional forests, vernal pools, upland meadows, forested wetlands, a perennial stream, a renewed apple orchard, and prime shoreland along Spectacle Pond. The land supports a headwater stream to the Minnewawa Brook, which eventually helps to form The Branch. These waters are all part of the Ashuelot River watershed. It is a refuge for wildlife including black bears, bobcats, grey fox, frogs, birds, flying squirrels, and many types of pollinators including bees, butterflies and bats.

Developing a Conservation Ethic

Both Amy and Carol grew up in the Northeast region. Although they have traveled and led tours throughout the world, they have always felt a close attachment to this region with its fresh water, gentle typography and familiar animals.

From her early childhood days, Carol enjoyed Girl Scouts, rearing all sorts of odd pets, and camping with her family in New England. Her mother was a graphic artist and encouraged Carol to explore hobbies such as nature photography and sketching. Meanwhile, Amy grew up watching her parents support conservation organizations in New Jersey. But her love for nature really blossomed in the 1980s when she began volunteering at Zoo Atlanta. Since then, Amy has focused her career on adult education. She served as Assistant Director and Education Director at the Belize Zoo in

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Belize, Central America for six years, followed by working eight years at Brookfield Zoo near Chicago doing exhibit design and program management. Amy enjoys encouraging people to be outside making connecting with nature in various ways, as well as to looking at their own lifestyles in order to make good choices for the health of the planet.

Carol's career has also been devoted to wildlife and biodiversity conservation. When working on her PhD at Cornell, she spent a year walking with wild baboons in Kenya studying their behavior. She then accepted a position at the Chicago Zoological Society (Brookfield Zoo) as a primate education specialist. She was instrumental in expanding Brookfield's investment in evaluation, one of the first zoos to have such a program. While leading creative visitor stud-



ies research with teams of interns, Carol co-founded the field of Conservation Psychology. The field of Conservation Psychology is a network of researchers and practitioners who work together to understand human-nature relationships for the purpose of encouraging conservation. Carol then developed programs and exhibits based on conservation psychology principles and measuring their success. More recently she served as a research faculty for the Department of Environmental Studies at Antioch University New England where she has taught graduate courses, and mentored Masters and PhD students, and helped launch a series of training institutes and webinars.

In the Midwest, where both were employed by the Chicago Zoological Society, they were active members of the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network. Amy also volunteered with the River-Watch citizen science program, and she assisted with various prairie habitat restoration projects. Once settled in the Monadnock Region, Amy wasted no time getting civically involved, volunteering for the Monadnock United Way Allocations Committee, serving on boards for Healthy Monadnock and the Conservation District, and six years as the chair of the Roxbury NH Planning Board.

"Both of us love wildlife" Amy explains. *"With Carol, butterflies and smaller creatures are a strong attraction while I bonded with the playful otters."* Now, thanks to that love and commitment to butterflies, otters, and so many more creatures big and small – all find a home at Woodland



Views.

Carol commented that *“Although I studied primates, focusing on smaller and common creatures such as butterflies was a better avenue for encouraging the public to make connections in their own backyards. No matter what, animal behavior has been the basis for my personal and professional interests.”*

She observed that *“For me, Conservation Psychology came from a place of passion. I’ve been interested in observing wildlife and engaging with nature ever since I was a little kid. I wanted to understand those experiences and how they transform us. I still do. Beyond understanding, I wanted to turn those experiences into some kind of positive action on behalf of the natural world. This reciprocal relationship between humans and the rest of nature is the essence of how Conservation Psychology was defined.”*

In terms of what she personally could do, Carol stated that *“my biology and psychology background put me in a good position as a bridge-maker. Zoos, aquariums, natural history*

museums and nature centers are wonderful ways to communicate with the public. I found that I could facilitate connections between educators, conservation biologists, psychology researchers, evaluators, and artists. Linking research & practice is an important part of Conservation Psychology—each perspective informs the other.”

Biodiversity Conservation and Stewardship

Amy and Carol have worked with Jeff Littleton, Principal Ecologist of Moosewood Ecological, to define their goals and to create and execute a management plan for wildlife on the land. An important part of that management is wildlife monitoring and during the past five years of monitoring over 30+ species of conservation concern have been recorded.

“I love working with Amy and Carol,” shared Jeff. *“It is exhilarating due in part to their tremendous curiosity and appreciation of the*

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natural world and the land stewardship values that we share. Stewardship runs deep for Amy and Carol; for them it seems easy. They have this wonderful ethic that exemplifies the careful and responsible management of Woodland Views, safeguarding and enhancing its ecological integrity. They appreciate how their property fits in with the larger landscape of the Monadnock region, but they certainly do not lose sight of its smaller wonders. From monarchs and bear cubs to bobcats and birds, Amy and Carol have developed an intimate relationship with Woodland Views. It's a legacy to be proud of and an example to be followed."

Amy and Carol both continue to seek out knowledge on best practices for resource stewardship. This quest for stronger understanding has led to relationships with foresters, wildlife biologists, and specialists to help them refine their plans and reach their goals. It is in this vein that their cooperation with NRCS and the Conservation District started in 2009. They worked with NRCS and CCCD to leverage their own resources, gain new perspectives from conservation planners, and increase the impact they could make on their property in a short timeframe.

Through the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program, they added a stone ford and improved forest trails and landing. They put in a 2-acre patch cut for wildlife habitat and planted native

shrubs. When they bought a neighboring property, and increased their land holding from 18 to 235 acres, they worked with NRCS and forester Geoff Jones of Loveland Forestry to create a Forest Management Plan through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. This same program helped to support their efforts controlling invasive plants, adding pollinator habitat, releasing apple trees, and installing bird boxes.

From 2015-2017 Amy and Carol participated in the Cheshire County Pollinator



Initiative spearheaded by the Conservation District. They added an additional acre of pollinator habitat and allowed monitoring on site for three years where 95 species of bees were identified.

This Fall, the Conservation Stewardship Program is helping support their establishment of monarch butterfly habitat. The Conservation Stewardship Program is set up to reward a high level of land stewardship and encourage landowners to go even

further and take that next step. Through this program, Amy and Carol will be documenting how they maintain soil quality; keep snags, den trees, and coarse woody debris on the ground; enhance forest understory; manage trees for improved mast production; continue to improve pollinator and bird habitat; enlarge the smaller patch cut; and overall increase the habitat potential of their property.

Sam Jaffe, Executive Director of the Caterpillar Lab, shared that *“Amy and Carol’s fields represent some of the best habitat I’ve seen in Cheshire County for meadow and early successional insects and caterpillars. The wealth and diversity of flowering plants and the ample edge habitat with native trees and shrubs growing in dense young groves, provide an important resource for native insects and other animals. These habitats have become less common in New Hampshire since woodlands have spread and taken over much of the historic open spaces.”*

Woodland Views in Roxbury is surrounded by conservation land including the Keene Watershed Land and other privately held conservation easements, and it sits in the Quabbin to Cardigan corridor, which conservation partners have identified as an ecologically significant region for wildlife passage. Amy and Carol’s long-term plans include permanent conservation of the land so the habitat they have fostered will continue to benefit biodiversity of the region for years to come. They have made arrangements for the ongoing monitoring of wildlife on their property through their partnership with Moosewood Ecological.

Educational Opportunities

But their stewardship doesn’t stop with

the land. They are also committed to sharing their experiences with the next generation of conservation planners, educators, and land managers. Each year they hire multiple interns from Antioch University New England’s Environmental Studies Department to assist with land management, monitoring, and trail building on their property. On top of this, they often open up Woodland Views for educational events in partnership with organizations such as the Conservation District and Cheshire Walkers. Through the internships and community education they hope to see the investment they have made in their land touch the hearts of many.

Mary Ellen Cannon, the lead NRCS Conservation Planner for their property shared that *“Amy and Carol care about land and creatures. They know so much about the natural world, are so willing to share their knowledge, and they open their land for workshops and education. They created a floral explosion from what had been an unproductive hayfield.... They take action. Nature responds. Amy and Carol are beautiful women who help butterflies, pollinators, birds, and other creatures thrive. They take care always for the land and water, and create beauty in the process.”*

Everyone at the Conservation District could not agree more. Both Amy and Carol have dedicated their lives to conservation and furthering connections to the natural world. They are an inspiration. It is with great honor that the Cheshire County Conservation District presents Amy Bodwell and Carol Saunders with the 2018 Cooperator of the Year Award.