

## 2017 John Thalheimer Volunteer of the Year Award

*As presented by Rebecca Suomala and Phil Brown at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 23, 2017.*

The John Thalheimer Volunteer of the Year Award has been presented annually since 1997. This award is dedicated to the first recipient, John Thalheimer, whose outstanding service to New Hampshire Audubon exemplified volunteer commitment, strengthened the organization, and provided an inspiring example for others.

The 2017 award is presented to Joanne and Kevin Jones.

Joanne began volunteering in 2011 at the McLane Center. She began assisting with the Book Sale and quickly became indispensable – taking over as the coordinator of the sale, sorting all incoming donations, and bringing all kinds of helpful ideas. As a retired librarian, Joanne also provided assistance in NH Audubon’s library and on the Library Task Force helping to determine the future direction of the library.

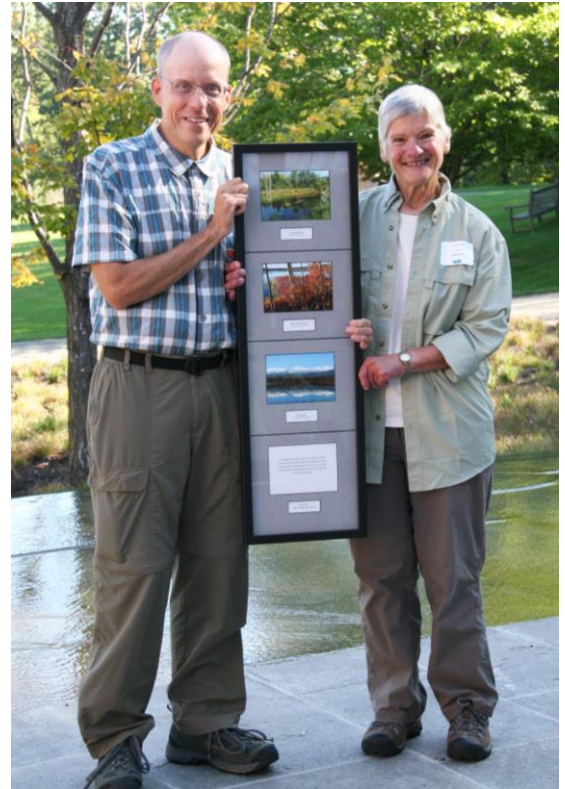
But it is her organization skills and attention to detail that have proved invaluable in helping the Conservation Department and NH Audubon organize our grant files and procedures. She began by sorting and consolidating files, both paper and electronic but it grew from there.

The disarray has been transformed into a well-organized, functional system that allows us to take maximum advantage of all grant opportunities each month, thanks to her hard work and persistence. This is critical for the Conservation Department since we are dependent upon grant and donor funding.

Joanne is also a good proof reader? She has helped review the *AField* and *Notes from the Field*, as well as other publications. After helping to proof read the *Notes from the Field*, she and Kevin were so impressed that they helped fund the publication.

When her husband, Kevin retired from work, it was only a couple of weeks before he appeared at the McLane Center, where a list of tasks had already mysteriously appeared! However, Kevin was lured into the outdoors by Sanctuary Director, Phil Brown.

Volunteer Sanctuary Stewards are critical in helping NH Audubon achieve its mission as it relates to land stewardship because we own and steward nearly 8,000 acres of land across the state. Over the years, NH Audubon has been fortunate to have many such talented and dedicated individuals who typically help with trail work, recreation and wildlife management and other aspects of land stewardship...but there are very few stewards who have taken on this task for multiple sanctuaries – and who have done it so well. Joanne and Kevin are members of this select few. It began at the Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge. Through hiking, the Jones (avid hikers of the White Mountains and beyond) discovered Pondicherry. David Govatski, President of the Friends of Pondicherry, quickly recognized their interest



*Joanne and Kevin Jones receiving the 2017 John Thalheimer Volunteer of the Year Award*

*Photo by Dyanna Smith.*

and, in 2011 or so, began to cultivate them for trail work on the Little Cherry Pond Trail, a trail that has been designated as a National Recreation Trail. It was blowdowns galore as the spruce/fir forest began to unravel before their eyes, and Kevin was never far from his handy axe, and later, his trusty Silky saw. The Jones decided that they could take on more, and, in 2013, they expanded their trailwork to include the Shore Path and Rampart Path, both along the edge of Cherry Pond.

With Kevin's retirement a few years later, the Jones still hungered for more...or, so it seemed...so Phil Brown approached them about an out of the way, forgotten little sanctuary in Landaff. Eager for adventure, the Jones decided to take a hike at the 100-acre Scotland Brook Sanctuary and discovered its wet, brushy trails which seemed more often filled with moose tracks than human tracks, and charming mixed forest types. Joanne and Kevin knew right away this place needed some help, and in 2014, they became its Sanctuary Stewards. The Jones take pride in their work and have organized several volunteer trail days with the Ammonoosuc Chapter and have helped NH Audubon make connections to the Lisbon HS "PAWS" group, a volunteer outdoors club, which provided some much needed grunt work in carrying and placing bog bridges.

The Jones are in constant communication with Phil about stewardship needs, and they have funded several of the larger improvements at the Scotland Brook Sanctuary over the past two years including bog bridges and trailhead restoration. They helped with NH Audubon's development of our Sanctuary Passport for Pondicherry through writing and photography (Kevin's Pondicherry photo even made the cover). They have stocked trail guides, placed signs, and established relationships with individuals in town in each of these sanctuaries' respective communities. Joanne was instrumental in designing, writing, and laying out a new trail guide for Scotland Brook, which she and Kevin also funded.

But, the Jones' involvement doesn't stop at just *two* sanctuaries. As Joanne volunteered on Tuesdays with Becky Suomala in Concord, and with his recent retirement, Kevin became the Sanctuary Steward of the Silk Farm Sanctuary in 2015 and has found this to be a dynamic and exciting stewardship challenge. He has helped bring the highest level of stewardship to this property in many years. Forest management over the winter of 2015-16 left the woods and trails a little messy in places, but Kevin's response, even in the coldest of winter weather, helped us re-open the trails in a timely way. Additionally, Kevin has removed several hundred feet of barbed wire fencing, a remnant of sheep pasturing days gone by, mapped trails with a GPS, watered chestnut tree plantings, cleaned up heavy debris, and of course, he continues to clear blowdowns with his Silky saw and trusty axe on a weekly basis. Joanne, for her part, has fulfilled her role as Sanctuary historian, providing information for a trail guide that she designed, wrote, and laid out.

When Joanne and Kevin decided to move full-time to Bethlehem, it was a great relief when they told us they still wanted to continue volunteering at the McLane Center. They both still provide invaluable assistance to NH Audubon.

We are thrilled to present Joanne and Kevin Jones with NH Audubon's 2017 John Thalheimer Volunteer of the Year Award. It is well deserved.

