

## 2015 Volunteer of the Year Award

*As presented by Phil Brown at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 12, 2015.*

The Volunteer of the Year Award has been presented since 1997 and was created to honor those who through their dedication and hard work have made an outstanding contribution to the success of New Hampshire Audubon and its work. The 2015 award is presented to Bill and Carol Vose of Conway, NH.



NH Audubon is fortunate to have many stellar volunteers, including sanctuary stewards who care for some of the organization's most special places – places such as Willard Pond, Ponemah Bog, Massabesic, and the Dahl Wildlife Sanctuary.

*Bill and Carol Vose, receiving the 2015 Volunteer of the Year Award.*

*Photo by Beth McGuinn.*

Bill and Carol Vose have been Sanctuary Stewards of the Dahl Sanctuary in North Conway for the past six years. Since retiring and moving to Conway, they have taken an active interest in stewarding this natural gem along the Saco River in the busy shopping district of North Conway – which happens to be quite close to home. When they arrived on the scene in 2009, the Dahl Sanctuary was in the beginning phases of a major restoration effort: it was full of invasive plants; tall grass along the paths was a sure way to pick up deer ticks; a large unvegetated detention basin was being dug for flood control and wildlife; and frequent vandalism and litter plagued the visitor information areas. Admittedly, at the time, it was lacking in some charm. Fast forward six years, and conditions are now quite different. Because of the restoration work, the partnership of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and in no small part thanks to the efforts of Bill and Carol Vose, the Dahl Wildlife Sanctuary is now a wonderful place to visit.

Bill and Carol have an interest in all components of the sanctuary, from the marketing and environmental education to the trail work and wildlife habitat management. Armed with their trail tools, smiles, and good sense of humor, one can find them out on the 1.5-mile long trail system each week (during warmer months), mowing the grassy footpaths with a motorized brush-saw, monitoring any of the dozen or so nest boxes that they maintain for cavity-nesting birds, replenishing trail guides, meeting and greeting visitors, and installing new or repairing existing signage. The Dahl Sanctuary is never far from their hearts, even during the coldest stretches of winter. In winter, they are busy promoting the Sanctuary and making plans for repairs and upgrades, printing and drafting new trail guides, providing a key local point of contact with the snowmobile club, and town and state agencies that maintain the adjacent areas, and procuring equipment necessary for maintenance.

Bill and Carol bring both a personal and professional interest in marketing to NH Audubon and the Dahl Sanctuary. They have been instrumental in building and maintaining NH Audubon's relationship with Eastern Mountain Sports in North Conway through their twice-annual Club Day – an event which Bill and Carol usually “staff” a booth for one or more days at a time, meeting and greeting visitors, talking about the Sanctuary and educating visitors, soliciting membership in NH Audubon, sometimes leading a field trip, and generally, being ambassadors for the organization.

Bill and Carol are self-starters and know what their jobs are. With very little supervision and only limited face to face contact with NH Audubon staff (usually just a few times a year), they have lined up radio interviews and published short pieces about the Sanctuary that have appeared in local newspapers and magazines, and have worked closely with owners of an adjacent campground to encourage responsible and somewhat restrictive visitor use guidelines – which require constant vigilance. They also meet annually with the local snowmobile club and have successfully overseen and directed the winter usage for this user group – an unusual circumstance for NH Audubon's sanctuaries. Thanks to their presence, the club can be easily mobilized to respond to blowdowns and other trail problems that arise frequently. Bill and Carol have also worked in concert with the DOT to establish responsible vehicle access from busy Route 16 in order to maintain a parking area for the Sanctuary. Along the lines of being self-starters, they also compile an annual report for the Dahl Sanctuary, complete with photos, that is very helpful for our records and for detailing management and changes over the years. When I try to describe the breadth of possibilities that a sanctuary steward can be involved with, I ask myself “What do Carol and Bill do?”

They have helped with other tasks include leading field trips for special groups, coordinating annual brush-mowing and other management work, drafting the Sanctuary Passport section for Dahl, attending local meetings and public hearings on behalf of NH Audubon and reporting back to me, pulling invasive species, assessing and cleaning up storm damage, removing old barbed wire fencing, and monitoring wildlife species including a Bank Swallow colony along the Saco River.

NH Audubon and the Dahl Sanctuary have been fortunate to have such a team of eyes and ears on the ground. They have saved NH Audubon real dollars and have added considerable value to the organization, again making NH Audubon a relevant landowner in North Conway. Without their constant presence, there would be no way NH Audubon could keep tabs on the daily and weekly happenings on the Sanctuary, and I'm sure the Sanctuary would suffer for lack of it. Because of their stewardship and dedication, the Dahl Sanctuary is a fantastic destination, no longer one of the hidden gems of the Mt. Washington Valley.

NH Audubon is fortunate to have Bill and Carol's dedication to the Dahl Wildlife Sanctuary. Thank you for your huge contributions and congratulations on receiving the 2015 Volunteer of the Year Award.

