

# THE WEIRS TIMES

AND TOURISTS GAZETTE

"How hillbilly might the bogie barn  
Chide, on the lake, the lingering mora!  
How sweet at eve, the lover's lute  
Oh me, when the groves were still and mute."  
—Lady of the Lake.

"Their wigwags that clustered o'er the vale,  
Have fled away like withered leaves  
Before the autumn gale;  
But the memory liveth on your hills,  
Their baptism on your shore."—Signonery.

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THE WEIRS, LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE, N.H., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2016

COMPLIMENTARY



Board members of the Belknap County Sportsmen's Association stand by the familiar sign in front of their clubhouse on Lily Pond Road in Gilford. The organization, now in its 85th year, has been instrumental in helping young and old to experience the outdoors as well as to educate them in environmental and conservation programs. Next year they are in danger of losing their clubhouse from where these programs are designed. (L to R) Andre Brochu, Herb Ainsworth, Vice-President John Kane, Bill Cott, President Ralph Scribner and Jim Barry.

BRENDAN SMITH PHOTO

## SPORTSMEN'S GROUP HOPING TO KEEP MISSION ALIVE

The Belknap County Sportsmen's Association (BCSA) was organized on April 16, 1931.

At that first meeting there were one hundred and thrifty enthusiastic residents.

Today, eighty five years later, there are four hundred and twenty-nine members and the organization is staffed today, as it has always been, by member volunteers.

Today they are also close to losing their clubhouse on Lily Pond Road in Gilford and may have to close down operations for good.

When the club was first formed there was no meeting hall and meetings were held in various grange halls. Their goal and mission statement then, as it is today, was in providing opportunities for people, young and old, to experience the outdoors as well as to educate them in environmental and conservation programs and the strict adherence to the Fish and Game Laws of the State of New Hampshire. BCSA actively participates with other organizations in projects that ensure the continuation of New Hampshire wildlife for future generations.

Eventually, an old unused barn on the Laconia Airport property was given to the club to use free of

charge by the Airport Authority and the City of Laconia. (The building was at the left end of the runway looking south across Lily Pond on Rte 11C.)

In 1986 the airport was planning a runway expansion and the club needed to be moved. Don Tabor, the Mayor of Laconia at that time, was instrumental in obtaining state approval to move the building to its current location.

The building to the right of the original club house was called the "Red Watson Building" and was a civil air patrol meeting hall owned by the Federal Government. It was eventually turned over to the club by FEMA at no cost.

In 1987 the club was moved to its current location on a 9 acre plot of land and a 30 year lease with the airport was executed. Lease payments were \$100 per year.

The BCSA owned a piece of land on Saltmarsh Pond which was sold to raise the funds for the move. The Geddes Building Movers of Epping NH was hired to do the work.

That lease is about to expire next year and the organization is currently in negotiations with the Airport to settle on a price. They have recently set up as a 501(c) 3 non-profit and are working on





*The Belknap County Sportsmen's Association's original clubhouse on Lily Pond.*

accepting donations and additional fundraising in order to purchase the land.

Their success in acquiring the land will help them to continue the good work the BCSA has done for the past eighty-five years.

Among the many accomplishments of the BCSA over the years are:

#### **Sled Dog Races**

Laconia Sled Dog Races were started in 1929/1930. They were sponsored by the New England Sled Dog Club. The races ended in 1938 due to the threat of WWII. In 1956, BCSA sponsored the comeback of sled dog races to Laconia. In 1957, Former members of Laconia Sled Dog Club formed the Lakes Region Sled Dog Club and have produced the race ever since.

#### **Winnepesaukee Summer Fishing Derby**

The Derby was started by BCSA in May of 1982 with the Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce as cosponsors. This is an ongoing annual event drawing thousands in the Lakes Region each year. Now organized and run by the Meredith Rotary Club.

#### **Archery Program**

In 2002 BCSA donated \$5,000.00 in support of the "National Archery In The Schools Program" to

the following schools: Gilford High School, Gilford Middle School, Laconia Christian Bible School, and Belmont Middle School.

#### **Kids Fishing Derbys**

The BCSA runs two kids fishing derbies annually, a March ice fishing derby on Lily Pond and a June derby at the Gunstock Mountain Pond. These events are completely free to all children 16 and under. Each participant gets a gift and the top three winners receive special awards. Food and drinks are also provided free of charge.

#### **Hunter Safety Course, Spring and Fall**

A two and one half day course focused on how to hunt safely, responsibly and ethically. Emphasizing safe gun handling knowledge of firearms and ammunition, wildlife identification, conservation and wildlife management. Over 4500 participants have been trained in the last 30+ years.

#### **Becoming An Outdoors Woman (BOW)**

This is a chance for women to learn outdoor skills such as learning how to survive in an outdoor emergency situation. Learn how to fly fish, tie flies, and cook over an open fire, wildlife track



*The BCSA's present clubhouse which may have to shut down in 2017 if they can't purchase the land.*

identification. This program is taught by Fish and Game. BCSA sponsors 3 women per year.

#### **Laconia Scholarship Fund**

BCSA contributes \$2000 each year to award scholarships to students who are furthering their education in the field of environmental sciences. Over \$30,000.00 has been contributed to date.

#### **Sig Sauer Course**

BCSA contributes \$100.00 for up to 3 women per year to take this gun safety course.

#### **Spring Clean-up of Gilford Beach**

Gilford Beach is left open for ice fishermen and snowmobilers who use it for access to and from the Lake. This is made possible because BCSA has made a commitment to the town of Gilford that the club will completely

clean the beach of all debris left by the ice fishermen and snowmobilers in the spring.

#### **Hiking Program**

In 2006, BCSA began sponsoring a program where participants can earn a patch by hiking all 12 mountains in the Belknap Range. Over 600 patches have been earned to date.

One of the most significant accomplishments the BCSA has done over the years was in saving the Barry Conservation Camp in Berlin, NH.

Barry Conservation Camp (BCC) is operated by the UNH Cooperative Extension 4-H Program in cooperation with the NH Department of Fish and

Game. It is located in the White Mountain National Forest at the Berlin Fish Hatchery. BCC provides a close-knit community for its 38 campers and 22 staff. There are 6 cabins, each housing up to 7 campers and a counselor. Campers are grouped by age and gender. There are central toilets, shower facilities and a dining hall complete with kitchen.





Practicing Archery at the Barry Conservation Camp in Berlin, NH which Mike Normandin of the Belknap County Sportsmen's Association helped to save from extinction.

rebuild and reopen Barry Camp.

Normandin contacted and coordinated the efforts of over twenty clubs and organizations for volunteers and donations to rebuild the camp infrastructure. Six buildings were repaired and renovated, replacing rotted wood, installing new screens, doors, and windows in addition a brand new covered shooting range was constructed.

In recognition of Mike Normandin's outstanding effort Fish and Game awarded him it's highest honor the "Ellis R. Hatch Jr. Award Of Excellence."

Barry Camp Reopened The Summer Of 2011, and has been at full capacity ever since with over 1,100 graduates to date.

The Belknap County Sportsmen's Association has actively supported their community for over 85 years.

They now need the com-



One of the popular Kids Fishing Derbies sponsored by the Belknap County Sportsmen's Association.

Barry Conservation 4-H Camp is a great program for kids who love the outdoors, enjoy hands-on learning in environmental and conservation programs and can benefit from participating in a small camp. The Staff takes pride in creating a special place where kids can discover their individual strengths. Campers and staff work together as a team in the hope

that everyone leaves camp with a greater awareness of themselves and the world around them. Six themed weeks are offered: 4H shooting Sports, Mini Camp (for younger campers) , Fish Camp, On The Wild Side (outdoor skills), Hunter Education, and North Country Adventure. It was announced that Barry Camp would close after the 2009 season.

Fish and Game was strapped for cash, major renovations were required because of deteriorating building infrastructure and years of deferred maintenance improvements. Mike Normandin, President of the BCSA at the time, decided that was not going to happen, that we would not lose this valuable asset. A place where NH youngsters can



go to learn about hunting, fishing, environmental and conservation efforts. Where they enjoy the great outdoors and the magic of community camp life. A camp that provides the outdoor education for the next generation of future environmental stewards. He vowed that Barry Camp "Would Not Close". The BCSA under Mike's guidance took the lead and started by donating \$4000 in a campaign to

community's help to allow them to continue their mission of outdoor education. Every donation large or small will be gratefully accepted. If you'd like to help them with the purchase of the land from the Laconia Airport Authority, donations can be made to:  
Belknap County Sportsmen's Charitable Fund  
PO Box 214  
Laconia, NH 03246  
[www.belknapcountysportsmens.org](http://www.belknapcountysportsmens.org)