

# Alexandria Town Forest

## Facts and History

Hutchins Hill Road, Tax Map 407, lot 11



The present Pitman Town Forest has been known by various names in the past- the Chapman Lot, the Pitman Lot, perhaps other names as well. After the death of Alexandria resident John Pitman in 1981, the property passed into the hands of the town of Alexandria. A vote was taken in 1986 to make the property a town forest. Many present day residents remember that the vote passed. However, no action appears to have taken place after the vote to further formalize the town forest. Additionally, no written records from that year's voting results can be found anywhere in town, county, or state records. Therefore in 2014, the Alexandria Conservation Commission began work on presenting the town forest to voters once again, with the intent of reaffirming what citizens and the town officials wanted in 1986. In March 2015, a warrant article was voted on and again passed, making the Pitman lot a town forest, with the Alexandria Conservation Commission as stewards.

At this time, the property is in the process of being surveyed. When the survey is completed, an accurate map of the forest will be available, and further activities involving the property can begin. No legal boundaries are presently marked, and no final map has been made.

Since the March 2015 vote, Conservation Commission members have visited the lot several times, hiking it extensively with the hope of seeing what possibilities this property has for the town. This particular property is one which can provide excellent outdoor activities- walking, hiking, xc skiing, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing, birdwatching, tree and plant identification opportunities. Most notable is the absence of rocks on the property. Unlike many New Hampshire forests, our town forest has had the bulk of rock removed. Stone walls mark many of the boundary lines.

Many small streams can be found on the town forest property.



### Animal species

Seen and noted in May-July 2015 visits were: black throated blue and green warblers, American red-starts, red eyed vireo, blue headed vireos, oven birds, hermit thrush, deer, moose, bear, and turkey.

### Tree species

Red maple, yellow birch, beech, poplar, hemlock, white pine sugar maple, ash

Grafton County Forester David Falkenham and Grafton County Extension wildlife biologist Matt Tarr joined the Conservation Commission on an additional walk of the property in July, 2015. The purpose was to have a professional assessment of the property with special attention towards woodlot and forest health, and wildlife population.

### Forester Report, Summer 2015

The Pitman forest is considered middle aged, with some larger specimens of red maple, yellow birch, beech, poplar. It is a very homogenous forest, and the timber types vary only slightly across the property. Many rocks have been removed and it is noted for the absence of the usual rocks seen in typical woods of the area. It presently provides very easy walking.

However it was noted that with more diversity of plant life and growth within the forest, there is the potential to attract even more desirable wildlife. The forest lacks the needed browse/berry component and is also lacking in structural/size diversity in tree cover.

With all this in mind, it was recommended to cut one third to one half of the total forest area, and leave it to regenerate. A patch clearcut with sizes from one to five acres would meet the goals mentioned above. This would provide the needed browse, shrubland and young forest components to aid wildlife, yet leave enough of the current forest for easy walking and recreational enjoyment.

Birds that require shrubland and young forest for nesting include chestnut sided warbler, prairie warbler, common yellow throats, yellow warblers, towhees, white throated sparrows, ruffed grouse, and woodcock. All of these would benefit from such a cutting plan.

### Town Forest Future

The Conservation Commission will discuss and plan for further activities in the forest once surveying is complete. Whether to do a cut based on the forestry report, which areas to choose from, and when a cut might take place are still to be decided. Trails, map making, and other activities involving the forest are presently in the early stages of development. However, residents can be assured that progress is ongoing, and several specific town forest activities will be offered by the Conservation Commission by the end of the year.



Signs of woodpeckers



A sample of John Pitman's work- now a decomposing woodpile. This is one of many found throughout the woods.