



Threats from Afar

When conserving land isn't enough

—Jerry Bley

The Pierce Pond Watershed Trust has excelled in conserving land over the past 30 years, successfully eliminating development rights in the Pierce Pond watershed. Today, our full efforts are focused on acquiring lands to greatly improve stewardship of the watershed.

However, even when we achieve our objective of owning most watershed land, there will be many threats from afar – most notably those posed by invasive and introduced plants and animals that have the potential to disrupt the watershed's natural ecosystems. To better understand today's and tomorrow's threats, we spoke with two experts; Biologist John McPhedran of the Invasive Aquatic Species Program of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (Maine DEP), and Assistant Regional Fisheries Biologist Elizabeth Thorndike, who is based in the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (Maine IF&W) Region D Office in Strong.

Known threats in Maine

Under Maine law, eleven plant species have been designated as invasive aquatics: introduced foreign plants that can grow rapidly, displace native species, and disrupt ecosystems. The most notable invasives on this list are two types of milfoil – variable-leaf milfoil and Eurasian milfoil – along with hydrilla. All three are

submerged aquatic plants that, when introduced into a lake or pond, can quickly expand to create dense beds and mats.

According to the Maine DEP, milfoil infestations, “have the potential to be devastating with dense mats impairing boating, fishing and swimming.” Hydrilla (an invasive native to Africa, Australia, and parts of Asia) is a prolific weed that forms stems up to 30 feet long which can dominate freshwater ecosystems quickly. All three can reproduce from fragments created by boats, swimmers, or animals. DEP states that “the introduction of one single fragment of this plant can result in the infestation of an entire lake. Once introduced into a lake, they are virtually impossible to eradicate.”

When asked about the vulnerability of Pierce Pond and other ponds in the watershed, DEP's McPhedran noted that the watershed has the following factors working in its favor that reduce the risk of invasive species infestation:

- ◆ Most reports of aquatic invasives have been within the southwest quadrant of the state on ponds that are far more accessible than Pierce Pond. However, McPhedran notes that there has been a documented report of variable-leaf milfoil in Big Lake in Washington County. Grand Lake Stream, with its renowned landlocked salmon fishery, flows into Big Lake from West Grand Lake.
- ◆ The most common aquatic invasives favor shallow areas (<20' deep), so would not likely thrive in most of Pierce Pond.
- ◆ Pierce Pond has limited public boat-access points. Travelers to the most utilized boat access site, Lindsay Cove, must pass the gatehouse, where the keeper is trained to inspect incoming boats and educate users.
- ◆ Many of the boats used in Pierce Pond and the outlying ponds are rental boats from



A Variable-Leaf-Milfoil-Infested Lake in Maine



Northern Pike, Torsey Pond, Readfield, Maine
Once a non-native fish species is illegally introduced, that water is forever changed.

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Message from the President

We are entering our 31st year with a new name, a name that clearly and unequivocally expresses our mission and focus: the Pierce Pond Watershed Trust. Nearly *half* of our members took the trouble to send a postcard, e-mail, or call to share their opinion and comments, and 94 percent of those responding voted in favor of the new name. People on both sides of the issue submitted impassioned comments. Some felt that the history and spirit of “Maine Wilderness Watershed Trust” should not be abandoned, but most felt strongly that our name should reflect our mission, which is “to protect the wild character, natural resources, and scenic beauty of the Pierce Pond watershed, and preserve traditional public recreational use of the area.” Some members told us that they would have joined a long time ago if they’d known that Pierce Pond was our focus. By far the most common comment was “Yes! Change the name!!!” So we are now “doing business as” Pierce Pond Watershed Trust, while Maine Wilderness Watershed Trust remains our legal name, preserving the validity of pre-existing legal instruments. Special thanks are owed to Allison (Peluso) Mathieu for designing our new Pierce Pond Watershed Trust logo in a way that both updates and maintains consistency with our previous MWWT logo.

Other recent developments include the following:

- ◆ We have been offered the donation of a strategic one-acre parcel of land from the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust (MATLT). It is adjacent to the Appalachian Trail corridor as well as to Harrison’s Camps.
- ◆ We have completed much-needed repairs to Otter Pond Cove Road to ensure that people can drive to Otter Pond Cove and the Otter Pond Mountain trailhead. Also, Bud Meader and his crew cleaned and renovated the caretakers cabin.
- ◆ In 2019 we were pleased to welcome a new director to the Board, Anne Stallman Dougherty. Anne’s grandfather, Charles Abbe,

first came to their Abbe Island camp in the 1940s, and Anne and other members of the extended Abbe clan have enjoyed Pierce Pond ever since.

- ◆ The Board of Directors, recognizing the importance of the next generation to the preservation of our watershed, approved a **new \$5 youth membership** for those 17 and under.
- ◆ We were able to accelerate trails renovation work thanks to a generous match-grant opportunity from Glen and Linda Grigerek, and the generosity of members who stepped up with qualifying gifts to meet the match! A total of 31 members donated gifts of \$1,000 or more to be used for future care and stewardship of the watershed, thereby enabling us to obtain a \$50,000 grant for trail renovation and construction.



Trail-Day Volunteers, July 2019

- ◆ Last summer’s (2nd Annual) Trail-Clearing Day was once again a great success. Loyal volunteers showed up on July 27 armed with tools, work gloves, and bug spray to clear and blaze a rerouted trail from Upper Pond to Kilgore Pond. The old trail to Kilgore follows a low, wet route. The new route is on high-and-dry ground that makes for a really nice hike. This trail is the first segment of a planned five-mile loop trail that will link Upper Pond, Kilgore Pond, King Pond, Split Rock Pond, and Middle Pond. The loop will use a combination of existing trails, rerouted trails, and the woods road along Pierce Pond, as well as some new sections of trail. The loop trail will be the first of its kind in the watershed, providing a high quality hiking route that connects numerous watershed ponds.

The continued and growing support (both financial and physical) for our trails development activities reflects the generational changes taking place within our membership. Our anglers are being joined by family-oriented members seeking different ways to enjoy the watershed and the ponds. Their involvement is strong and growing, and they are part of the future of the Pierce Pond Watershed Trust.

Carl Freeman

Rediscovering Paradise

—Kyle McCaskill

I caught up with Ben Gale recently and asked him why he has always been so supportive of the Trust. This is what he told me:



Ben Gale at 18, with Eddie Pierce

When I was little, my grandmother Blossom in Florida had a gardener—a man named Eddie Pierce, who taught me how to fish, drink beer, smoke cigarettes, laugh at dirty jokes, etc., and became like a second father to me. We fished together from the time I was five years old until I was 50, when he died.

He'd built a small cabin on the water, near Salerno—no plumbing, electricity, television, or phone. We fished on the moon: we'd fish from moonrise till dawn, and then sleep during the day. It was paradise. However, Eddie hadn't owned the land he'd built his cabin on, and in the 1970s the cabin was bulldozed by the landowners.

I first visited Pierce Pond in August of 1989, with my wife and adult children. We had spent a week in Bar Harbor before heading up to Cobb's Camps. The road was dirt all the way from N. New Portland, and it took a lot

longer than we expected. It grew dark, and we were becoming nervous. Suddenly we came over the hill and saw the water. "Holy smoke," I said, "This place is absolutely beautiful." When I got out of the car, I had a sudden flash, and was flooded with memories. I knew this would be my new paradise.

I joined the Maine Wilderness Watershed Trust during that first visit to Pierce Pond. I told them I sat on a charitable foundation that might be able to help. I wasn't able to get back to Cobb's until 1996, but I never forgot that special place, and was able to procure the first grants for the Trust in 1993 and 1995. I have visited the Pond nearly every year from 1996 until now. Additional grants have followed over the years. I love Pierce Pond so much that I have directed as much Foundation funding as I could to the Trust. I knew every penny would help. I have also volunteered as a Director on the Board since 2005.

From the beginning, I have urged the Trust to raise the funds to buy the watershed lands. I have provided whatever I could monetarily to help achieve that goal. I'll never forget the peace and splendor of my youth that was bulldozed down. Over and over I've said, "If you want to protect a place, you have to own it." Maybe that explains my peculiar and fortunate history with Pierce Pond.



Counting Loons

—John Abbe

In July of 1974, our Aunt Ellie McPherson joined us for our annual trip to Pierce Pond. She was an amateur birder from the Midwest, and had never seen a loon. Before the trip, she asked us all about loons, and she and my mom would spend cocktail hour trying to imitate loon calls.

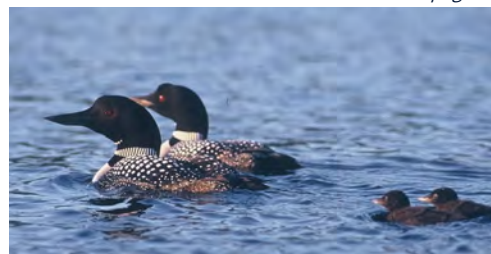
We arrived at Lindsay Cove, and Ellie saw her first loon that night while fly fishing on the south shore. She was impressed with how long loons can stay underwater, and how big they are. She heard loon calls overnight and realized that the cocktail-hour calling hadn't even been close.

The next day, Aunt Ellie made us kids take her out in the boat to look for loons. We

didn't see any. We did see a Canada jay, another elusive bird on her lifetime list. She was happy. I haven't seen another Canada jay since.

Back then, I remember really only one pair of loons, usually on Lower Pond. Fast forward to winter, 2018. I was checking out the Maine Audubon website and saw an article about the annual loon count. I was intrigued, and sent off an e-mail. They responded that they would love to have me count loons at Pierce Pond. Instructions were given, and I waited for July.

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Pearning

—Sarah Corbett (reprinted from New York Magazine with permission)

Each July, a very small group of friends and I spend seven days together on a remote, miles-long pond in Maine. (I don't know why it's called a pond as opposed to a lake.) To get there, you drive about two hours on the highway, then another hour on country roads, then 20 minutes down a dirt logging road, and then you catch a boat to this place — an old Maine fishing camp, though none of us fish. There's no Internet and no cell service there. We stay in little cabins and spend our days on one of a series of tiny, uninhabited islands reached by canoe, sitting by the water in folding chairs, surrounded by tall trees, with not a sound around us — no airplanes overhead, no cars or even roads for miles. We are truly disconnected. We read books and play cards and start cocktail hour at 5 p.m. and sleep better than we do all year long. Nobody has a phone to check or an email to return for seven straight days. We've done it for more than 20 years now, and every year — as the technological noise has increased — it's mattered more and more to have seven days of true silence and community with close friends. (Even our teenagers love it. And each year we literally pray that nobody builds a cell tower on one of the surrounding mountains.)

Anyway, about this time of year exactly, all of us — each one of us a working professional, overburdened, maxed out, and thoroughly sick of winter — starts doing something we call "pearning." It's basically "yearning for the pond." It's trying to summon the feeling of taking a midday nap on your beach towel on the pine needles, just listening to the breeze in the trees and the loons calling on the pond. It's longing to be unreachable and fully present in exactly one place in one specific moment. It's about the deepest and most specific form of longing I know.

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Our Work Depends on You.

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 We are pleased to recognize the following **PIERCE POND GUARDIANS**, who have generously included PPWT in their estate planning:
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Loons

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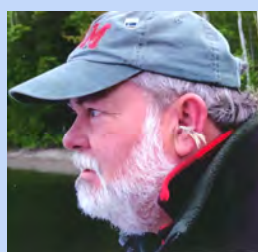
I arrived two days before the official counting day, which is the third Saturday of July, when the birds are most likely to be nesting and rearing their young. My sister-in-law Judi, who was also intrigued, joined me for the count as forward observer.

We did reconnaissance the day before at the designated time, seven to seven-thirty in the morning. A short observation window is used to get a snapshot of the population, and to eliminate the possibility of double-counting. We saw five loons in Lower Pond and none in the air. We boated a half-hour loop from our dock to Otter Pond Cove, Lindsay Cove, Gull Rock, and back to the dock. We checked the small coves and the rocks and islands closely, looking for nesting action (using standard loon-observation precautions). We didn't see any. We would stop the motor every couple of minutes to look and listen quietly.

On Saturday at seven a.m. we did the same loop. We had been listening all morning to a loon right off the point of Abbe's island. We saw it immediately and moved on. We saw several more single loons, and raft of four in Otter Pond Cove. In front of Cobb's we saw one flying south. Coming back from Gull Rock, we saw two flying north, making that special call they make only when flying. We saw a total of eleven loons in Lower Pond, more than I had predicted. So, in my entirely unprofessional opinion, we have a healthy loon population, especially compared to our informal observation in 1974. Aunt Ellie would be happy.

Note: No evaluation of loon health can be made without years of observation. We will be counting loons again next year. We could use additional Pierce Pond volunteers to cover Middle and Upper Pond: visit www.maineandubon.org/projects/loons/annual-loon-count/ for more information.

In loving memory of
Steven Rowell Abbe,
1953-2020
—The Abbe Family



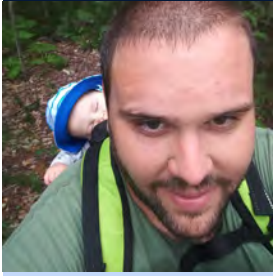
Steve was a kind soul. Hunter, fisherman, raconteur. He loved telling long stories (he rarely had short ones), and told us many stories about his early days at Pierce Pond. He told us about the time in the early 60s when he went to camp with our grandfather, Dutch Abbe—probably Dutch's last trip. Dutch was driving a Ford Thunderbird and got it up to 70 mph on the "new road" (Long Falls Dam Road). He let Steve and Jeff hang on for dear life in the back seat. They fished with Iral Bean and caught some whoppers.

Steve would often pitch an army tent in back of the cabin so that he could go fishing early in the morning without waking up the whole camp.

As an adult, for many years he enjoyed bringing friends Dick M. and Gary M. to camp on Memorial Day. He would prepare (with Gary's help!) large meals on the front table, complete with flowers and decorations, and then take a picture of the spread.

Steve loved sharing Pierce Pond with new people, especially kids. He would fill their heads with all the old stories that we had heard a hundred times. We would roll our eyes, and then usually listen.

We will miss Steve. He taught us to enjoy the three parts of a trip to camp: the excitement of the planning, the time at camp, and the memories. Thanks to Steve, we have many great memories. We hope you do, too.



Angler Takes a Hike

—Brent West

Having grown up spending my summers at the family camp on West Carry Pond,

I know just how special Pierce Pond is. My youth was spent with a fishing pole and *Delorme Gazetteer*, exploring the many ponds and streams in the region. The Hex hatch was my kryptonite as I spent all my gas money racing up to Lindsay Cove to make the dusk hatch. Ken was the gatekeeper back then, and luckily he never worried about how late I would come back out. If you have never caught a salmon by headlamp, you are missing out!

I spent years working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Maryland, until my wife Krysta and I decided to move back to our home state of Maine. We landed in the friendly town of Readfield, and I was lucky enough to meet Jerry Bley when I joined the local conservation commission. We inevitably spoke about Pierce Pond, and he told me about a great new addition to the Pierce Pond Watershed: the Otter Pond Mountain Trail.

This past summer, my wife and I decided to check it out with our 12-month-old son

Gregory. We made it to the trailhead after a slow ride on the back roads. It always amazes me what a small world it is, because as we started hiking, we bumped into an old acquaintance, Tabitha, who works at Cobb's.

Tabitha told us we were in for a treat and that the middle ledge was her favorite spot. The trailhead is marked by a hand-painted sign, which seems to match the character of this place. The beginning of the trail is easy but interesting, as it passes by huge glacial erratics



and offers views of the pond. The stone bench halfway up was a welcome sight, as Gregory demanded a bottle. The air was swirling and unsettled, which made me think we might not make the ledges.

We pressed on, as it was not much further to the middle ledges. The next section of trail winds through some old-growth forest, which is a nice change of pace from the normal even-aged scrub that is common throughout most of the area. Part of the trail follows a moose run, and I wondered if we might give Gregory his first encounter. We came to another painted sign telling us we had reached Middle Ledge. We could see Bigelow reaching into the clouds, looming over the choppy waters of the pond. I left Krysta and Gregory to enjoy the view while I continued to Upper Ledge. The upper ledge offered less of a view, but did help to extend the hike. We hiked out to the sound of a snoring baby and tales of the many Pierce Pond adventures of my youth.

Thank you for your diligence in protecting this special place. It was nice to have this trail so close to camp. I would love to spend most of my time hunting and fishing, but this offered an activity my whole family could participate in. As Gregory grows up, we will teach him to fly-fish, paddle, and camp on Pierce Pond, but for now, short hikes and motor-boat rides let us experience this country and be immersed in nature.

Volunteer for Trail-Clearing Day!

Each July for the past two summers, Pierce Pond volunteers have gathered to clip and clear brush and paint blazes on new and renovated trails. The work was hard but fun enough that volunteers urged the Trust to make it an annual event. There are many trails in the watershed that need some work, so **mark your calendars for the last week in July next summer** and stayed tuned for announcements!



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

Be A Good Steward. Clean. Drain. Dry.

StopAquaticHitchhikers.org

Preserve Maine waters! Before moving boats between water bodies:

CLEAN off any mud, plants, and animals from boat, trailer, motor and other equipment. Discard removed material in a trash receptacle or on high, dry ground where there is no danger of them washing into any water body.

DRAIN all water from boat, boat engine, and other equipment away from the water.

DRY anything that comes into contact with the water. Drying boat, trailer and equipment in the sun for at least five days is recommended if rinsing your boat, trailer parts and other equipment with hot, high pressure water is not an option.

Things to remember while fishing in Maine:

- ◆ Always dispose of unused bait on land or in a trash can, NOT in the water.
- ◆ Follow fishing regulations. They are there to preserve Maine fish.
- ◆ If you see someone keeping fish alive, transporting fish, or releasing fish they didn't catch, call 1-800-253-7887 (1-800-ALERT-US).
- ◆ If you catch a fish species you think is not native, take a picture and don't release it.

Threats from Afar

continued from page 1

Cobb's and Harrison's Camps, limiting the number of boats coming from other (potentially infested) waters.

The primary cause of new infestations by invasive plants is the transport of plant fragments on boats and motors, as well as in bilge and other water tanks. DEP helps to coordinate a statewide courtesy boat-inspection program involving scores of organizations and water bodies. The 80,000-plus boat inspections that occur every year have been successful in preventing the infestation of many water bodies. McPhedran reported that inspections found invasive plants on boats that had last been used on waters as far away as Connecticut and Wisconsin, as well as the St. Lawrence River and Lake Champlain! To prevent the transport of invasives from one water body to another, Maine has adopted the "Clean, Drain and Dry" protocol publicized by StopAquaticHitchhikers.org (see box on p. 6).

When it comes to animal invasives and introductions, IF&W's Thorndike is clear that, at present, the greatest threat to Maine water bodies is the illegal introduction of non-native fish species that will either prey upon or compete with native fisheries. This includes game fish such as northern pike, bass, and crappie, as well as bait fish including species of smelt.

The Belgrade Lakes represent one of the worst examples of the effects of illegal fish introduction. At one time they boasted a land-locked salmon fishery that rivaled the Rangeley Lakes. Then northern pike were introduced, the salmon fishery declined, and now salmon have been virtually eliminated.

According to Thorndike, most illegal fish are introduced by shorefront camp owners who want to fish for species from other places that they are familiar with, so they bring some to camp and dump them into the water. Bait fish introductions tend to result from someone using live bait where it is not allowed, or dumping a bait bucket into a pond.

Thorndike believes that Pierce Pond is better protected from such introductions than most water bodies. There are very few camp owners on the pond and all are part of the "Pierce Pond family." In addition, in 2019, Maine IF&W changed their general fishing regulations to prohibit the use of live bait in northern Maine waters, with designated exceptions. While this will still permit live bait

use in many lakes and ponds, it will hopefully educate the public on the danger of live bait to valued trout fisheries. It must be said that Pierce Pond already has its own introduced-fish problem resulting from the mistaken stocking of lake trout many years ago. Lake trout compete with brook trout and salmon up to this day.

Pierce Pond fisheries have also been affected by infestations of copepods. While not truly exotic invasives, these small parasitic crustaceans latch onto fish and in high numbers can place significant stress on fish health. They are sometimes known as "fish lice" or "gill lice." A copepod species particularly attracted to brook trout showed up in high numbers in the Pierce Pond watershed approximately twenty years ago, though numbers have declined over time. High concentrations of copepods have at times been connected to fish hatcheries, and according to Thorndike can also be carried from one pond to another by fish-eating birds such as loons and kingfishers.

Potential Future Threats

There is no shortage of scary invasive plants and creatures that are not yet known in Maine, but are not too far away. Some examples include:

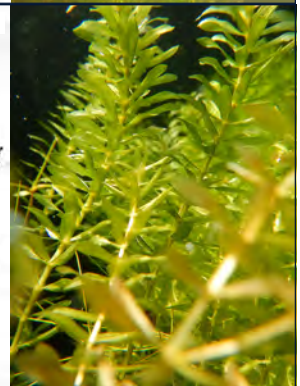
- ◆ Spiny water flea, an invasive exotic zooplankton species, was first detected in North America in 1982 and has recently been found in Vermont's Lake Champlain and New York's Lake George. Zooplankton are small animals that live in the water column and drift with the currents. Fisheries biologists fear that the spiny water flea will compete with native zooplankton as well as smelt and disrupt the food chains for native fisheries.
- ◆ Viral hemorrhagic septicemia, known as "VHS Virus", is a deadly infectious fish disease. VHS was found in European freshwater trout in the late 1930s and continues to cause epidemics in European trout farms; it first appeared on the U.S. West Coast in 1988. According to Thorndike, it is frequently transmitted by bait fish and is currently found in several lakes in New York.
- ◆ Zebra mussels are small freshwater mussels originally native to the lakes of southern Russia and Ukraine. Their known impacts include killing off native freshwater mussel



Eurasian Water Milfoil



Variable-Leaf Milfoil



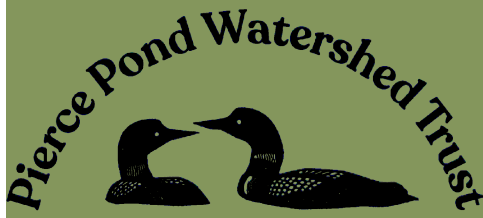
Hydrilla

Illustrations by IFAS, Center for Aquatic Plants, University of Florida

populations and disrupting food chains and nutrient levels in water bodies. They are currently known to exist throughout the Great Lakes region and as far east as New York and Vermont.

According to McPhedran, advances are being made in both the detection and control of invasives, including increasingly sophisticated water sampling techniques that may, in time, be able to identify the presence of a range of invasive organisms in a water body. But despite such advances, the challenge of aquatic invasives continues to grow, even in remote, pristine locations such as Pierce Pond. The Trust urges all Pierce-Ponders to be vigilant.

For more information, see **Maine DEP Invasive Aquatic Species:** www.maine.gov/dep/water/invasives/index.html, and **Maine IF&W Illegal Fish Introductions:** www.maine.gov/ifw/fishing-boating/fishing/laws-rules/illegal-introductions.html



SINCE 1989

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The Pierce Pond Watershed Trust is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to protecting the wild character, natural resources, and scenic beauty of the Pierce Pond watershed and preserving traditional public recreational use of the area.

We hope to see you at
MWWT's 31st

ANNUAL MEETING, Banquet, & Auction

Saturday, March 7, 2020
Harraseeket Inn, Freeport, Maine

The King of Pierce Pond

Steve Estes, as told to Kyle McCaskill

In 1951, Great Northern Paper (GNP) put in a road to Lindsay Cove and built camps and a 50-horse logging shed in preparation for timber harvesting. Robert Estes, Sr. was 38 when he became the logging boss for this operation. Not being a drinker or a card player, Bob would spend his evenings walking the edge of the pond and roll-casting. In the process, he fell in love with Pierce Pond.

After winter roads had been bulldozed for the horses, logging was begun along the south shore below Bates Ridge. Bob sent a "cruiser" out to do a wood estimate. The cruiser came back and told him about two HUGE pine trees. Bob went to see them, and was so impressed that he ordered them to be left standing.

Then came the Pierce Pond fire of 1952, which burned much of the forest GNP had intended to cut, so they halted the operation. The company offered Bob Estes a bonus for his efforts, and he asked if instead he could have a lease along the south shore of the pond. When the lease was granted, he took an old WWII pickup truck and drove it as far as he could go on the winter logging road nearest

the shore. When he couldn't go any farther, he commenced building his camp, using the remains of the logging camps and dining hall.

Fast-forward to around 1975, after GNP had sold their holdings around Pierce Pond to Scott Paper. Gary Cobb had long ago noted the two enormous pines standing tall above the other trees above the south shore of the pond. When Scott Paper began doing selective cutting there, Gary went down to talk to the woods boss about saving the pines, and together they walked up and flagged them. Shortly afterwards, as Gary stood looking southward from Cobb's Camps, he saw one of the majestic pines go down. He jumped into a boat and sped down the lake to the cutting operation. The cutters said they'd thought the tree was flagged for cutting! Luckily he got there in time to save the second giant pine.

The Estes Family still regularly visits their Pierce Pond camp. In the winter of 2018/19, Bob Estes' son Steve noticed that the cutting activity on Bates Ridge was headed toward the region where the "King Pine" still towered above the other trees. Steve contacted the



current landowner, Weyerhaeuser Corporation, and told them the history of the tree. He asked if they would spare it again. Then he hiked up, flagged the tree, and put up a sign saying the tree was not to be cut. At this writing, the tree is still standing.

The tree grows in a jumble of boulders on a steep grade, which may be part of the reason it escaped cutting in horse-logging days. It sits right on top of a boulder, its massive roots wrapping around it in pursuit of earth. It's hard to believe that the tree has withstood the fierce winds up there for so long—a prominent landmark that can be seen from almost everywhere in Lower Pond. Based on a measurement of the tree's circumference, Steve estimates that the King Pine is approximately 265 years old.

