

## **SNAKE MEADOW HAPPENINGS**

*News, Stories and Tidbits from*

**Snake Meadow Club, Inc.**

Moosup, Connecticut

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### ***New members***

Kevin T. Bentley, 50, of 69 Warren Street, New London, works as an electrical engineer and is a charter boat owner/captain. He is married to Amy. Children are Erik, 23; Kevin, 20; Jessica, 17; Sarah, 14.

Kevin Coffee, 41, of 50 Lori Drive, Plainfield is a commercial printer and union president of Steelworker's Local 655 in Versailles, Conn. He is married to Susan. Children are Nicholas, 20 and Sarah Bachand, 22.

Snake Meadow Club currently has eighty-three members.

### ***Some issues for Snake Meadow to ponder***

*By Tom McAvoy*

I recently had a discussion with one of our club members, at which time we considered the future of Snake Meadow Club.

We spoke at length about the general tenor of the meetings and the focus of the membership. Over the past several years we have made a great deal of progress with capital improvements to our facilities. We have been faced with a few challenges; the most significant was the restoration of the failed dam at the lower pond. The improvements to the clubhouse, a new garage and restoration of the dam were completed at significant expense, leaving the club and its future membership with a mortgage.

As with many American families today, we have leveraged our future and have yet to moderate our spending.

On many occasions I have heard that we are a "hunting and fishing club," however I wonder if, in fact, we are a "social club," organized to provide social events for members and guests to raise money for the financial survival of the club.

Why would I even suggest such a thought, you might ask?

First, we are managing our club in a manner that requires that we begin each year with an obligation to raise money through steak dinners, raffles, a Fishing Derby, an Annual Hunting Banquet, Game Dinner, and other special events.

One may argue that these are great social networking opportunities. Others may say that it is necessary to raise money because we do not want to reduce programs or raise the annual dues to cover the expense. In order to make these events successful however, we need volunteers who are able to participate and give of their time and talents. Herein lies the challenge.

First, I question that the fundraisers are membership social events. In the past several years I have participated at several social events, such as a Christmas dinner. Sadly, these events have been poorly attended. There were some attempts to re-establish a Valentine's Dinner and create a special night to share with our spouses or significant others; this too meet with little or no support.

So that leaves us with the question: why do we have steak dinners, and other events? We need to raise money to meet the budget expenditures. On the surface, this is not such a bad idea; however, it seems that the same twenty percent of the membership is doing all the work.

It is difficult for me to support a budget each year that anticipates a shortfall in revenue and requires fundraising to meet expenditures. Even more difficult for me is to understand why we profess to be a hunting and fishing club yet rely on our members to volunteer to work at fundraising events in order to fund the expenses to keep the club open.

If we were to consider the cost of travel for most members who volunteer, it might be less expensive

to simply pay an additional \$50 per year and not have the fundraising events.

We should also consider that there are many members who are not able to commit the volunteer time for a variety of legitimate reasons. Clearly there are a small group of very hard working volunteers who have made the fundraising efforts successful; however there is evidence in recent emails that the level of frustration with these members is growing. How much longer can these volunteers continue giving so much of their time to make the events successful? Many members are simply not able to volunteer, and I am concerned that some animosity will develop between those who can volunteer and those who cannot.

Is it fair to expect that we can continue in this direction?

What are our options?

Would it be unreasonable to develop a budget that provides for the core expenses of the club, i.e. taxes, insurance, utilities, maintenance, and other general operating expenses, in addition to a modest supply of birds and fish? A budget should be developed based on dues and should cover all anticipated operating expenses. A second component of the budget could be fundraising, and based on the actual amount collected, could be used to support additional expenditures, such as birds or fish for the next fiscal year.

I joined the club to “hunt and fish”, and in the past 5 years, I have only fished once, and in the past two years, have only hunted 3 times. Yes, my busy schedule has precluded me from being more engaged in these activities, and more importantly, has prevented me from being able to volunteer at many of the fundraising activities.

What I have seen develop over the past several years is a growing animosity of members based on how much time you can spend volunteering and helping out. This is a dangerous trend and has the potential of creating a divide between groups of members; those who can volunteer to raise money and those who can't—or choose not to.

There are some members who are not able to afford increased dues; there are those who don't want to charge additional fees for the use of “birds or fish,” and there are those who are unable to

volunteer and raise money to make up the difference.

I am hopeful that the board of directors and committee chairmen can consider these challenges and develop some options for discussion as we prepare for a new fiscal year.

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### ***This 'n' that***

*Editor*

**Opening Day.** The sun and cloudless azure heavens radiated across the sprawling property below to the north and east. You could not imagine a finer picture of a rolling Connecticut landscape. The wooded hills, vales and water all came together in one glorious scene. It's ours, I reminded myself, to enjoy and reflect on our heritage and our forebears who enhanced this land.

They cleared the forests into pastures for cattle to graze. They tilled the fields. But soon they left their agrarian past and went away. And then the next generations of users came. They cut back some of the regenerating forest. They mined some of the gravel and reclaimed the spoils. Dammed into fisheries, the snakes disappeared from the meadows surrounding the Snake River.

Such were my thoughts as Billie, Greg and I stocked upper Heart Attack on Opening Day. I thought of the image—A. Lassell Ripley's *Pheasant Shooting*—that appeared in a previous issue of *Snake Meadow Happenings*, an almost dead ringer for the spectacle below, except that now the farmhouse of times past had forsaken most of its Victorian aura—as pictured in our hallowed dining halls—to become the clubhouse of today.

As we three paused to contemplate what lay before us on that bright September 26 morning, Opening Day, I remarked, “Do we absolutely need the gun to appreciate what we have?”

**Northern Journeys.** Vermont and Maine were the out-of-state choices this bird-hunting season for this Nimrod-editor. The two venues were vastly different in terms of sightings. I was too early in the Northeast Kingdom for the migrants. My host, Dave, his son and grandson were moderately successful the week before I arrived (Oct. 12). They were probably seeing native woodcock. My fate: too late for the homebodies; too early for the incomers. We

moved but few grouse, not surprising because of heavy spring rains. The later-hatching woodcock broods were supposedly not adversely affected.

In the Milo area of mid-central Maine, Greg Teifert, Ken Dugas and I experienced fair numbers of woodcock points, about sixty in four days of shooting that produced an ample game bag—twenty-four of the longbills. As for the upland king, only fifteen were seen in four days (rained out two)—generally a sub-par year for grouse (depending on the particular area’s exposure to excessive spring rains). Overall, our shooting wasn’t the best, but in addition to the woodcock, we managed to bag three “pa’ttridge.”

Ken, Rich Falvey and grandson Zachary Acunzo did a cast & blast out of the 1823-established Upper Oxbow camp on the Little Southwest Miramichi in New Brunswick. They delighted in three days of gunning in extremely thick covers around the towns of New Castle, Sillikers, Rogersville and Sunny Corner. They bagged twenty-one woodcock and one grouse—the latter managed by Zach. I’m sure the focus of that venue for Rich and Ken was to further Zach’s love of the sporting life (hardly necessary with this young man’s outdoors acumen!)



Rich, Zach and Duchess with a day’s bag

Sometimes—and maybe always—fish and game harvested should be a secondary goal (just being there, dog work and ample sightings being the most important), whether or not you’re giving instruction and support to a young sportsman. This was clearly the case when Ken hooked *Salmo salar* and unhesitatingly, but with instruction, turned the rod over to Zach who landed the giant thirty-six-inch hen

salmon after a marathon battle in the fast-dropping Stillwater Pool of the Sevogle River. Nice—and noble. As a result of mentor largess and good sportsmanship, Zach shot a good share of the game realized. Congratulations to Zach and to the good sportsmanship of Ken and Rich!



Zach, *Salmo salar*, guide Sandy and Ken on the Sevogle River in central New Brunswick

**Charley Soares**, sports editor for the Fall River, Mass., *The Herald News*, wrote in his weekly column on October 25 of his memorable pheasant hunt with our Frank Tameo, Bill Kuchy, Jr. and Bill’s area-famous wonder dog, Buck. Soares gives a brief early history of Snake Meadow Club, which, incidentally, would serve as a meaningful primer to new club members. He talks about our “modern” clubhouse, our programs, the birds he bagged—he missed a “pool-table shot”—and above all, the “steady-to-shot” Buck. Myriad birds were killed over lunch at an area restaurant where the threesome realized ducks, geese, pheasants and a few deer, all in excess of limits! (Talk’s cheap!) The author states “we had to tip the waitress a little extra for cleaning up the pile of feathers we left under our table.”...

**Club Matters.** Wow! Tom McAvoy brought a lot of stuff to the table in his opening column. In follow-up, permit me to make a few points. Let’s look at steak dinners. Unaudited net income (dinners themselves, bar, raffle) for the fiscal year ended 3/31/09 was about \$13,500—\$1500 per dinner. (Keep in mind that cost of beverage purchases for steak dinners alone cannot be broken out; they have to be estimated.) \$13,500 divided by 83 members = \$163 per member. Assuming no reduction in spending, this is the amount dues would have to

increase if we eliminated steak dinners. Germane to this subject is the method by which we call (plead) for help to expedite the dinners. The Kitchen Committee (Kevin) e-mails a request for help—not all members have e-mail—a few days prior to the dinners. This never happened in the days when “serving committees” were set up in advance, i.e. servers and other help agreed to participate at the beginning of the fiscal year. Their responsibility was to help at two or three of the nine dinners. If you agreed to be on a committee of six to eight members and you couldn’t attend, say, because of a conflict, it was your responsibility to arrange for someone else to take your place. Why was this method of procuring volunteers discontinued?...Some of the other events that Tom mentions are not really social in nature. We have the Game Dinner, which is clearly a fundraiser. The Hunting Banquet is, well, sort of like a grand finale for bird hunters, a great gathering with social overtones. It’s not really a fundraiser. And yes, members need to pitch in and help... Do we want to become an exclusive club where all we do is hunt and fish? If the answer is “yes,” then maybe we should seriously consider raising the dues to \$1000, as has been proposed by certain members. How many would we lose—twenty-five percent, half our membership? If all did renew @ \$1000 and funding of our programs ceases to be a problem, would the club fail because of lack of camaraderie and “socialization?”...As Tom mentions, some members are very busy; they just don’t have the time to commit to the club as much as they would perhaps wish. This is understandable, and we shouldn’t discriminate against those who cannot be at the club all the time. *We all have our particular talents that can be useful to the club. It’s up to us to make the best use of these talents, whether they be “administrative,” “behind-the-scenes” or “hands-on.”*... Our dependence on fundraising sources of revenue is subordinate, in part, to the number of members. Increasing the membership to 100 dues-paying members would realize another \$8,500, plus what we presently call first-year initiation—\$5,100. The board of directors recently appointed a Membership Committee to devise a methodology to attract new members and to spread the cost of the \$900 to join. Let’s move on this. As we presently

exist, good or bad (or neither), are we any different than other sportsman’s club? Do any of them rely strictly on membership dues for their programs, or do more than twenty percent do the “grunt” work? After a mandated maximum, i.e. ten birds per participant, is there a per-bird or fish charge to reduce club expense at our brethren clubs? Are fishing and hunting programs “extra-funded” by the members at some?...I like Tom’s idea of dividing the budget’s income stream between two main sources—dues and fundraising. Dues would cover all fixed expenses and maybe a minimum for programs of the club; fundraising, would determine the ultimate size of our hunting and fishing programs, rather than vice versa.

**Steve Curry Update.** Steve had a relapse in his battle against AML, but he is now under control and doing better. The two or three visits per week to Yale-New Haven Hospital have been reduced to one. He really wishes someone would run his Lab to satisfy her longing for a pheasant or two at the club. What say you flushing dog owners? We ask for your continued prayers for Steve.

**Editor diatribe.** It’s too bad we can’t have more timely participation in the writing of this newsletter. Sometimes I feel like a dentist pulling teeth! There may come a time in the not-too-distant future when the newsletter will cease under my editorship; in the meantime, please put up with some of my ramblings.

### ***From the gamemaster***

By Stan Ward

Please take note that all club members should pay attention if you should see two women walking their dogs on club property. If you do see them, approach them and in a nice way, tell them that they are trespassing on Snake Meadow Club property. Explain that there are club members hunting for birds and deer and there is a possibility that they could get shot. The law says when hunting season is open you must wear orange when walking in the woods. But you are still trespassing on club property, however. If they give you a hard time, try to get a name and address and then call police.

The Hunting Banquet happens Sunday, Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>, rain or shine. Price is \$45; same price for a guest.

Sixteen participants have signed up as of Dec. 2.

The Beans and Roast Dinner, scheduled for Dec.12, is sold out.

Keep in mind the January 15 Game Dinner. Cost is \$35.

Thanks to all who participated in the Tim Brennan Hunt held October 10. It was a good time for all.

Always remember, first and foremost, practice safety in the field, especially before you pull the trigger on that target.

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### ***Annual Veteran's Day Hunt***

By Tom Dufficy

Snake Meadow Club held its Seventh Annual Veteran's Day Hunt on Wednesday, Nov. 11. In attendance were nine members and seven guests. Breakfast was provided at 8am, after which Dave Bogle asked for a moment of silence for deceased service members. I led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chuck Merritt's daughter Chelsea then sang the National Anthem for our veterans. Everyone commented that she did a fantastic job and also brought a few tears to some eyes.

Dave Bogle's guest, Lyle B. Gabor, U.S.N. Ret. from Griswold presented the club with a plaque expressing appreciation for the club's support of veterans. This plaque is now hanging in the main dining room.

All enjoyed a great morning hunt. Bob Perry's wife made a nice bread pudding for members to enjoy after their hunt.

Thanks to Kevin and his kitchen crew for a great breakfast and to all members who helped stock birds and helped make this event a success.

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### ***Fishing column***

By Don Greene

With the mild November, trout continue to be caught in the upper pond with many holdovers expected for ice fishing and early spring fishing. With good ice being unpredictable, there are no plans to have an ice fishing derby. There will be a stocking as soon as the ice is out and possibly we will have another "Ice-Out" Trout Derby. The initial stocking will be by Rowledge Pond Hatchery and will be mostly large brook trout and some browns. The

remaining stockings will be by Hy On the Hill and will be brookies, browns and rainbows.

The new overflow grates were fabricated by Boudreau's Welding and they will be installed in the next couple of weeks. These will greatly alleviate the need for constant cleaning and help keep the ponds at the desired levels.

Permits have been applied for from the state for application of weed control chemicals to help keep certain areas of the upper pond free of weeds. Application will be done in late April before the weed growth gets started. Introduction of grass carp is not an option because extensive grating systems would be required for the lower pond overflows. The state requires that the grass carp cannot escape from any body of water in which they are introduced.

Good growth has been seen in the brown trout in the lower pond and fishing for these should be good come springtime. I will recommend that we continue to purchase a certain amount of smaller trout (8-10") each year for stocking in the lower pond. These fish will be stocked in the summer and can be fed through the fall to provide good ice fishing and a population for early spring fishing the next season.

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### ***Single Action Shooting Society (SASS)***

By Greg Teifert

A friend of mine at another sportsman's club—I use to be on his skeet team—went to a "cowboy shooting" event and was so impressed that he joined the Single Action Shooting Society, perhaps five or six years ago. I remember bumping into him and asking what was new? He said he went to this outdoor range shooting event which was stage-set-up to shoot six guns, a rifle generally using the same bullets as the pistols and a shotgun. In addition there was a dress code where you had to wear boots and a cowboy hat. The shooter would come up to the firing line when it was his turn, say a line, and the timer would go off. The shooter would go through a scenario of shooting two single action pistols (five rounds each), a rifle (9 to 10 rounds) and a shotgun between 4 and 8 rounds; all at steel targets.

After a couple of years, this friend set up a practice set of stages for cowboy shooting with written stage shooting scenarios. Being pretty handy, he had manufactured steel-plate targets and scheduled a shoot once per month.

So, perhaps three years ago, I went to the Ledyard Sportsman's Club the first Saturday of the month to try it out. I borrowed pistols and rifle and used one of my side by side shotguns for the first few shoots. It was a lot of fun and I started to get the bug to get boots, hat, Ruger Vaquero single action 45 long Colts and a reproduction Winchester model 1873 in 45 long Colt. Then I joined SASS.

It turns out there were a lot of women going to these SASS matches to shoot, get into period dress and enjoy this relatively new shooting sport with their husbands or significant others.

My early experiences were to have fun shooting this sport, but I was not really into the cowboy way, so to speak. My wife had never shot a gun before when I took her out with the cowboy guns. Now she likes it and can't wait until the next match or simply practice.

Lessons learned:

- 1.) If you try this sport and do some research, chances are you may get hooked.
- 2.) If you ask your wife to try it out, she may surprise you.
- 3.) When it comes to buying equipment, do your homework on guns, leather and practice techniques. I know most shooters will purchase three or four sets of holsters before spending the extra money for a rig that is cut right and that fits them for this sport. The same thing for guns. I know folks that have two or three sets of pistols, several rifles and shotguns.
- 4.) There are a number of Websites with links to everything from clothing, leather rigs and guns to make your head spin.
- 5.) If anyone is interested in this new sport, simply go on-line to SASS and go to a few cowboy shoots (see the SASS Web

site under affiliated clubs in New England and across the United States). Speak with shooters who seem genuinely interested in helping new shooters get started into this sport.

There is a "posse" in Manville, RI that may be looking for a range at which to shoot, and it might be an interesting opportunity for them to lease space from the Snake Meadow Club for their once-per-month shoots. The Hartford Gun Club leases to the Connecticut Valley Bushwhackers for \$10 per shooter per event.

In the meantime, check out the Single Action Shooting Society Website and if you get a chance, go to a shooting event to see what this sport is about. The Ledyard Sidewinders shoot the first Saturday of each month, year round. This club is located off of Colonel Ledyard Highway; then off of Whipple Road, Ledyard, Conn.



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**For Sale:**

I hope to have several autographed copies for sale of my two-years-in-the-making book, *Meanderings of a Snake Meadow Editor* at the January 2010 board of directors meeting. Many of the chapters in this illustrated 215-page dust jacketed hardcover appeared as much shorter versions in *Snake Meadow Happenings* over the past twenty-two years. In addition, there are a few short stories and witty correspondence from a Maine sportsman. Six of the chapters/stories have previously appeared in sporting magazines/journals. Price is \$24.99 plus tax.

For the club,  
Lonesome Paul

Aphorism of the day: After sixty, if you don't wake up aching in every joint, you are probably dead!