

# The Weld Observer

Created by  
the Weld Recreation  
Committee

August, 2024 – 3rd Edition



## Life In Weld, How Sweet It Is

by April Demers

**Y**ou may know Joe and Diana Demers and their extended family here in Weld. The Demers family has been a staple in town for over 100 years. French Canadian Zephraim Demers moved from Canada to Lewiston to pursue millwork, but it was not for him, so he moved to York, Maine to try his hand at cut-

ting wood. Around the campfire at night, he heard stories of a place called Weld that was known for its beauty and heavily wooded forest. In time, he ventured to Weld to cut wood and settled here, initially purchasing about 300 acres.

The next generation of Demers eventually acquired almost 900 acres in the Chase Corner area. Walter (Joe's dad) and his wife Lillian and their five children lived in

a very small home on the original old homeplace site, now 1125 Phillips Road. When Joe was five years old, the family moved down the hill and into what the locals call the "old Chase family farmhouse." The farmhouse fell into disrepair and was control burned by the Weld Fire Dept in the early 2000s.

### Life In Weld

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## Weld Community Pantry

*Take what you need. Give what you can.*

Started many years ago by the late Barbara Baker Smith and local residents as a way to help neighbors. Volunteers stock the pantry with dry and canned goods. Donations are always welcome!

Located outside the Weld Free Public Library on Church Street. For more info, phone Deb Smith at (207) 585-2587



# Bald Eagles on Webb Lake

by Lise Bofinger

**P**erched on the Northeastern shore of Webb Lake, a truly remarkable sight awaits—a majestic eagle nest. This site, a testament to the eagles' resilience and the Conant family's unwavering commitment to preserving a way of life, is part of the land that has passed through generations. Most of this large tract of land, including both shorefront, fields and forest land, still rests in the hands of family members. It is on this undisturbed section of shorefront where the eagles have built and maintained a nest for almost 20 years, thanks to the active involvement of the Conant family and the community in preserving their habitat.

Viewing the nest from the lake is a popular summer activity that brings our community together. As I sit on my dock, it is fun to watch the pontoon boats come around the lake, veer in to check out the nest, and hope to glimpse the eagle. Family members have front-row access, as we have a path that travels right along the lake edge directly under the nest tree. When my daughter and her cousins were young, we often walked the path, looking for signs of what the eagles had eaten, branches cast off while nest building, and other signs of eagle life. I often wondered if they thought everyone lived next to Bald Eagles.

A new generation of young Conant descendants are paddling out to check on the eagles. The pictures show Finley Arp, his sister Sydney, and their mother, Beth Gallagher, heading out to investigate the eagle



ROB ARP

nest. Finley and Sydney are Great Great Grandchildren of Caroline Conant, who once held the Boston Can for the Town of Weld. Finley and Sydney shared some eagle stories with me. Their family spends time here in the winter ice fishing on the lake, and they have seen the eagles come down to the ice and steal fish from them after they have caught them. I asked them if that made them angry, and they just laughed, so I assume they are happy to share! They also told me about watching the eagles carrying large sticks back to the nest. We talked about how big the nest is and how many sticks are on the ground under the nest.

Early this spring, I watched as the eagles worked diligently to sure up their nest, spending most of March supplying new branches

and other vegetative materials for the existing nest. Then, it seemed that the pair had indeed mated and was getting ready or had laid eggs. They began to spend time on the nest; for over four weeks, it seemed every time I walked by the nest, one of the eagles was on it, and I never saw the two of them in the air together. Unfortunately, a few weeks later, I began to see the nest empty and the two adults flying together. Once again, our nesting pair has had an unsuccessful breeding season for the second year. The leading causes for lack of breeding success are inadequate food supply, weather, territorial intrusions and predations, human activity, bacteria, fungi or other micro-organisms, or age. Whatever the reason, we certainly wish them success in the future.

## Interview With The Librarian: Wendy Ames

Questions by Ina Toth, Weld Free Library Board President

### How did you begin as a library director?

After being away from this area for 16 years, in 1999 I began venturing to Weld and visiting my relatives who lived in town. During my time of venturing and visiting, I quickly realized two of my dreams: To own our family land and to be involved with and eventually work at the local library.

In 2007 we moved onto the land and in 2009 we built our new home.

I began my journey to becoming the Library Director in the fall of 2007. I first became involved as a volunteer and Friend of the Weld Library. We produced the Weld Community Calendar until the last year, 2018.

In conversation with the new Library Director, I inquired what services were needed. Lawn care and snow removal were my first paid positions. I eventually became a substitute librarian. I looked forward to any chance offered to work inside the library.

In 2015, when everything was in place for the renovation of the library to begin, the former director resigned. The library closed after the holidays of 2015, and the renovations began mid to late January of 2016.

When the position of library director advertised in the spring of 2016, I began my process for applying. I had my interview in April of 2016. I accepted the position of the new Library Director soon after. The library re-opened on Thursday, April 21 of 2016.

Now, after eight years, I feel like a pro. I have gained valuable knowledge from trainings offered through the Maine State Library. I continually learn and improve. I absolutely enjoy the library, my library family and community. I expect I will remain the Director for Weld Free Public Library



PHOTO BY LIZ BOYLE

for as long as I love it and being in Weld.

### What is your favorite book?

Do I really have to pick one? Currently, *The Women* by Kristin Hannah. An all-time favorite is *Untamed* by Glennon Doyle. I enjoyed *Untamed* so much, I had to have my own copy. It was on the bestseller list for 70+ weeks. My favorites list continues, along with my list of "want to read."

### How has the library changed since you have been on board?

The library changed drastically from the renovations in 2016.

Inside renovations included restoring the original ceilings and floors. Furniture was refinished, bookcases were repurposed. A custom circulation desk was built. A section with shelves for new release items was added.

Outside renovations have included a new patio area and the handicap ramp. A recent land purchase made way for a parking lot extension and upgrade. My custom work area was completed within the last year. Everything coordinates perfectly. We have one of the most beautiful libraries in Maine, inside and out.

### What would you say to someone that has never visited a library?

A library exists for you. Please use

it to your advantage. A library can connect you with resources, no matter what community you reside in.

### What would you say to someone who has never visited the Weld Free Public Library?

I would say, "Welcome to the Library and Welcome to Weld" if they are also new in town. I am still fascinated that every now and then, someone from town will come in and say, "we've lived here for X number of years, and this is our first time in the library." Then I definitely say, "Welcome."

### When you visit other libraries, what stands out?

How friendly the Library Director is and how this library compares with Weld Free Public Library.

### What was the largest fine for not returning books in time that you have ever experienced?

The answer to this question came about very recently. Books that were seemingly lost were finally returned. Six-to-seven items were checked out for over three and a half years. The total came to \$715.55!

### Tell us about the artwork and paintings in the building.

There are two pictures of our first librarians. Another photo includes me and the librarians who worked here prior to me. Other paintings in the library are by local artists. Some photos include people that have a founding or monetary connection to the library.

### What is the bird on display in the dome?

It is a Passenger Pigeon.

### The display of glass birds is beautiful. How long have you had it and where did it come from?

We've had it for more than 40 years. It was here when I was a student at Weld Elementary School. The description on the display card tells the birds were collected by Charles F. Rowell in 1869-1870 and mounted by his mother Mary S.K. Rowell.



# Maine's Own Seed Keeper and Gardener Coming to Weld

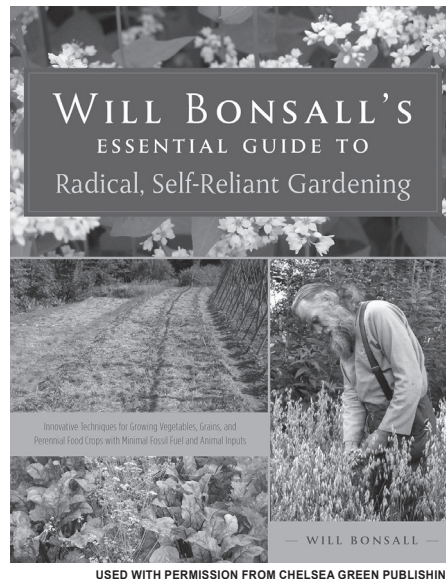
by Norma Hiday

You never know where reading a book will lead you. Have you ever heard of “seed keeping”? I had not, until last summer when I read a library book that included the practice of saving non-genetically modified seeds of vegetables, grains, herbs and flowers for future use.

At the same time, I stumbled upon a story in *Down East*, “The Maine Farmer Saving the World’s Rarest Heirloom Seeds” (Laura Pop-pick, April, 2020) featuring Maine’s very own seed keeper and organic gardener, Will Bonsall. She commented on the different specializations of seed keepers and noted that Will’s interest is in the rare and novel varieties.

“Among his alphabetized envelopes are plenty of heirloom seeds that no one is particularly clambering to plant, but Bonsall compares his collection to a library -- he doesn’t get rid of something just because no one has checked it out in a while.”

In 1981, he launched the *Scatterseed Project* which



USED WITH PERMISSION FROM CHELSEA GREEN PUBLISHING

has been covered in multiple books and one Emmy-nominated PBS documentary.

Then in another coincidence, I discovered that Will, who grew up in Waterville, has lived near Weld in Industry, Maine since 1971. Even as a non-gardener, I was hooked and wanted to know more. By the end of last summer, I was in email contact with Will and, with Library Board approval, invited him to speak at the Weld Free Public Library.

But wait, the coincidences continued. While visiting “The Hatchery” in Weld, I learned that Mark Schneider and Dawn Girardin had a copy of his book and, wait for it, coincidentally, they also knew Will !!! They encouraged me to invite him to Weld and I became more determined than ever to bring Will’s knowledge and dry wit to Weld.

On Thursday, September 5th at 4pm, our Weld Free Public Library will be hosting a talk and book signing by Will Bonsall. He will share stories and talk about his book, *Will Bonsall's Essential Guide to Radical, Self-Reliant Gardening*.

## The Lone Loon Of Webb Lake

by Dorothy L. Hall

Every year the loons on Webb Lake are counted. Loons mate for life. That means most of the time the count is an even number. But in recent years the count has been an odd number, which means there’s one Lone Loon without a mate.

I was told the Lone Loon’s mate was run over by a motorboat. I didn’t see it happen. It might be a made-up story—maybe by someone who doesn’t like all the motorboats on the lake—but it could have happened.

When I was a young mother, I rented a farmhouse in Cheshire, Connecticut. We had many animals



along with two ducks that were always together. You never saw one without the other. One day the two ducks waddled down to the brook near our house. Suddenly there as an awful ruckus. A dog was barking, and the ducks were squawking. My oldest child, Troy, ran down to the brook and scared off the dog. But now there was only one duck. Troy brought the surviving duck back home. The

duck looked everywhere for the other duck. It was very sad. The family realized we had to do something. Troy held the duck, and we took her to the barn where our cow was all alone, too. Troy placed the duck on a pile of straw next to the cow. The duck never left the cow’s side. They became best friends.

Every summer we come to Weld and stay in a cottage on the lake. I always look for the Lone Loon, and in a day or two he shows up. Sometimes he is with eight or ten fellow loons but never with anyone for him. I can hear him singing at night. I can feel the loneliness. But every year he is all by himself.

# Weld's Metal Man

by Liz Boyle

Just across from the Weld Free Public Library is a home with two vintage Willys Jeeps in the driveway. In the back, there's a garage marked by a wooden cutout shaped like an anvil above the garage door. David Slater lives at this address with his wife Gail. When I first met David, he was in his driveway, leaning over the engine of his 1963 Willys Wagon, thinking about how he would restore this very decayed vehicle.

In his free time, when he's not working at his job at the Rangeley Lake State Park in the summer, driving a public transit bus in the winter, or doing handyman work in Weld, David is making things. "I'm a metal fabricator, blacksmith, knife maker and metal artist," he told me. "It blows my mind that I can make things that people want to hang on their walls." David is still learning to open up and let people know what he does.

He did his early blacksmithing underneath a willow tree on the Wilton/Weld border where he grew up with two brothers. Their father left when he was four, and their young mother worked at Bass Shoe in Wilton, so money to live on was tight. The three boys made many of the things they needed or wanted. They enjoyed tinkering, inventing, and competing with each other in the process.

When David first got started with metal work, one of his two sons would follow him out to the workshop to hold all the bits and pieces. David didn't have enough hands to do the work on his own. His son was four or five at the time, and David found tiny safety goggles for him to wear, and men's work gloves that came all the way up to his son's shoulders. Eventually his son moved on so David fashioned equipment with foot treadles and other adaptations so he could work alone.

He isn't held back by a lack of equipment. "A forge



David holding a gift he made for his wife.

can be built from any number of things," he says. His first forge was made from a tire rim and cement. It ran off of a Volkswagen heater motor, a battery, and an extension cord. "You don't need an anvil; you just need an anvil-like object—something very heavy. You can build up to having more tools as you go." David's first anvil was the hitch off the back of a Caterpillar tractor. He made do with a common ball peen hammer.

When David makes a knife, he can work on it for 40-to-50 hours. He tries to be aware of the hours he works because the sound travels and he doesn't want to disturb his neighbors.

He often comes home to find objects that Weld residents have left on his stoop. Sometimes there's a note telling him about the needed repair, but other times he has to guess. He may not even know who's left the item. During our meeting, I had the good fortune to see a beautiful set of cast iron pots that David had just finished restoring for a client. They looked better than new, with a patina created on an outdoor grill.

He learned many of his skills at a blacksmith class taken in Arkansas and through a course given by the Western Maine Blacksmith Association and The Wilton Historical Society. He had a dedicated mentor named Ray Tiltan.

David often makes tools for blacksmithing to further his own abilities and always tries to improve his hammering skills. He's currently building a propane gas forge specifically for knife-making. His workshop is crammed with all kinds of tools he's made and objects he'll be incorporating into his art, such as a giant saw blade that came out of a mill in Strong when the mill closed down and an old film reel from a movie theater in Waterville. Because it's a very crowded work environment, his dream is to find a larger work space somewhere in Weld.

## Weld's Metal Man

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People find out about David's work via word of mouth or on Instagram (@d.slater7). A lot of folks come to his shop after watching The History Channel's "Forged in Fire," a com-

petition television show where skilled bladesmith contestants re-create historical weapons. He is amazed that these visitors think they can learn blacksmithing in a few hours.

He is very humble and still considers himself a "professional beginner blacksmith." Towards the

end of our meeting, David showed me a piece of driftwood from Rangeley Lake that he plans to make into a work of art.

There might be a dragonfly and a turtle sitting on the wood. It's going to be something good if David crafts it, that is for certain.

## Life In Weld

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Joe and Diana Demers met while earning teaching degrees in Washington County State Teacher's College in Maine. Joe taught math and computer science and Diana was a substitute teacher and homemaker for 27 years before returning to Weld. In 1992, they began building a house on their property where they raised four children, in the same exact spot where the "old homeplace" once stood (where Joe grew up).

Joe attended school where the Skoolhouse Variety store is now; he served on the Select Board for many years; and he worked at the Kawanhee Boy's Camp doing computer work and accounting. Diana was born in Yarmouth. She was the Weld Town Librarian for 10 years and was an active member in the Weld Extension Club and the Weld Historical Society.

Joe's mom, Lilian (Gram) and many Demers family members attended Weld's Bicentennial Dance in the Town Hall, in 2016. It was a magical blessing to be able to celebrate such a monumental milestone for Weld with her. Gram passed just a few months after the event. The family property was divided after her passing.

Joe and Diana carry out many

family traditions that have been passed down through the generations such as maple sugaring. They began boiling sap and bottling syrup about 30 years ago. They started simply with buckets, graduated to large vats, and eventually built a sugarhouse. (They drove all the way to Canada to purchase an evaporator.) This year's sugarbush consisted of about 400 taps and was a very productive year.

The process takes patience and hard work. They have to watch the sap boil very intently for hours, and they must lug heavy pails and stock pots. If they burn a batch, it takes hours to clean out the evaporator to remove all of the burnt, stuck-on syrup. The post-bottling clean-up is a chore, too. EVERYTHING gets extremely sticky.

About 40 gallons of sap are boiled down to make one gallon of syrup. Despite the challenges, they love grading the finished product and the sweet aroma that saturates the sugarhouse as the boiler is running. Holding up the syrup to the sun and beholding the beautiful amber glow is very satisfying. They prefer and specialize in the darker, more pronounced flavored syrup. Dark Robust is their most requested syrup.

They use it on pancakes and crepes and make homemade maple fudge, maple popcorn, and ma-

ple walnut ice cream, among other treats. Maple syrup is healthier than white sugar. It contains many beneficial trace minerals.

They learned from their mentor, Al Bolduc, from practicing, and from reading books. Two of their favorites are by Helen and Scott Nearing: *The Maple Sugar Book, Together with Remarks on Pioneering as a Way of Living in the Twentieth Century* and *Living the Good Life, How to Live Sanely & Simply in a Troubled World*.

Joe and Diana did business as Brambleberry Farm for many years. Their 205-acre homestead was passed on to their son Dan and his wife April. They changed the name to Pope Mountain Homestead (a large portion of their property is on Pope Mountain). Joe and Diana have been showing them the ropes of the homesteading life. Currently, the homestead features numerous gardens, a new greenhouse, chickens and bees. They have broken ground on an orchard and plan to tap even more trees. Evalyn, their great granddaughter, resides on the homestead as the Demers family's 6<sup>th</sup> generation. The Demers always have a maple syrup booth on Lake Day and Heritage Day. For a history of maple syrup and to learn about how maple syrup is made, go to <https://mainemapleproducers.com>.



## The Myth...You Are Only Three Feet From a Spider

by Carol Conant

Feeling whimsical on these damp midsummer mornings. One will notice different flat shaped webs throughout one's yard, often in the shadiest spots. The moist water droplets display all over the webs of a Funnel Spider or Grass Spider (genus: *Agelenopsis*). Webs become noticeable when the morning dew presents itself after water vapor in the atmosphere condenses onto cool surfaces.

Be brave.... Walk slowly and quietly to the web and peek at these little forms of mother nature's artwork. The non-sticky webs, like a circus tent stretched out from many blades of grass, pine needles, or even pinecones with multiple anchor points. As your eye sees the many layers and thickness of the web, it smooths out and swirls to a funnel hole that just about touches the ground. The hole at the bottom of this funnel is about the width of your thumb. If you were quiet and still enough while approaching the web, you might see the brown spider at the end of the funnel...waiting for another bug or a snack. Funnel spiders, like other spiders, take the sit and wait approach. These spiders are a natural way of keeping other bugs in check within the landscape.



### AUTUMN SONG

Murky, mellow clouds portending frigid tomorrows  
The weight of future months  
I see in ponderous rolling, leaden pillows this noontide.  
For it is autumn once again in the time of my todays  
The verdant spectral wonderment  
Perhaps, the grandest, for all its brevity.  
The summing total of all my learning yesterdays  
Have brought me to mystic revelation  
To the enrapturing dawn of the palette of natural essence.

Bright gilt edges of sodden, gathering billows  
O'er head the brilliance on limb and twig  
Shimmering in elusive, temperamental solar peekings.  
The flute tune dances through the air  
As fluttering, wind borne colours  
Dance to the rhythm of our implacable mother of mothers.  
Her winged wonders gathering for annual and ancient  
Migratory habits for sustaining survival while awaiting  
Yet another breeding season.

Gentle zephyrs hint at future shivering gales  
And the hoarfrost of morn shall evidence soon.  
As harvest and ripening seasons turn to rust and gold.  
Woodsmoke wisps, betray the busy splitter's maul  
And garden's bounty yeilds its final reap  
Of those last, and enduring of thermal tantrums.  
Provisions for putting by and larder  
For a different dancing soul in me  
I am a child of all autumns and the season is within.

Impressionist hours... to days... to weeks  
I perceive the minutest of palette blendings  
As whirlwinds harmonize crimsons of the utmost glory. With  
all manner and intensities of yellows, oranges and greens  
This ambiance created...milieu of spectral wonderment  
Renoir days in shimmering morning mists.  
Van Gogh days in vivid twilight sunbeams  
All manner of the Cezanne vision dance about the noontide  
And this Autumn's song is sung.

October 10 through 24, 1985

by, *Red Simanel*

## MAPLE SYRUP BONUS CONTENT

CDL Maple Syrup Supplies and classes  
in Wilton, Miguel and Brady Ibarguen

CDLUSA.com

[Mainemapleproducers.com](http://Mainemapleproducers.com)

Coloring book by Jean Fischer, *Welcome to our Sugarhouse*

YouTube video: *Where does maple syrup come from?* SciShow Kids

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p\\_Ob1q\\_a4xo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_Ob1q_a4xo)

Still Deep and Sweet: Henry David Thoreau on Maple Sugaring, (out of print)

*Evening in a Sugar Orchard*

By: Robert Frost

From where I lingered in a lull in March  
Outside the sugar-house one night for choice,  
I called the fireman with a careful voice  
And bade him leave the pan and stoke the arch:  
'O fireman, give the fire another stoke,  
And send more sparks up chimney with the smoke.'  
I thought a few might tangle, as they did,  
Among bare maple boughs, and in the rare  
Hill atmosphere not cease to glow,  
And so be added to the moon up there.

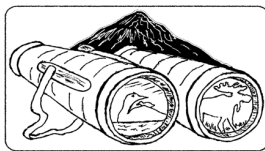
The moon, though slight, was moon enough to show  
On every tree a bucket with a lid,  
And on black ground a bear-skin rug of snow.  
The sparks made no attempt to be the moon.  
They were content to figure in the trees  
As Leo, Orion, and the Pleiades.  
And that was what the boughs were full of soon.



Tap Sap Lap  
By: Amy LV

I am  
Tap tap tap tap  
Tapping.  
Trees are  
Sap sap sap sap  
Sapping.  
Soon we will be  
Lap lap  
Lapping  
Syrup  
With our pan pan  
Cakes!

## HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN



# The Weld Observer

We invite you to contribute content: articles, letters, drawings, cartoons, photographs, and other materials of interest.

We publish in black and white. Captions and descriptive information are helpful.

Please provide your contact information with your submission.

Via e-mail: **weldrecnews@weld-maine.org**

or drop your submission in the Weld business box

in front of the **Weld Town Office** located at **23 Mill Street in Weld.**

Attention: **Weld Recreation Department**