

THOMPSON FREE LIBRARY

Quarterly Newsletter



JULY 2021



Magical Mural Celebrates Suzanne's Spirit

By Jon Knepp

The library has brought the outdoors in with a new mural in the children's section! The beautiful painting features many of the wildlife we enjoy here in Maine. The mural was commissioned in memory of Suzanne Stacy by her family. Suzanne was a longtime library patron, supporter, and advocate, who passed away on Christmas Day 2020.

Suzanne has been deeply missed in

Dover-Foxcroft, no place more so than at the library. She was a first-grade teacher for 34 years, and her passion for children's literacy carried over to her support of the library. For nearly fifty years, she remained a fixture at the library, whether helping with story hours, bulletin boards, or advocating for the library. In a 2008 letter to the editor, Suzanne reminded readers that "... there is another landmark this community is so fortunate to have and that's Thompson Free Library... our library has much to offer people of all ages."

After she passed, donations came into the library in memory of Suzanne from

many in the community. Because of her love of children and her commitment to their literacy, the library wanted to honor her by expanding its children's collection and programming as well as adding a meaningful, lasting addition to the children's section. After some discussion, we decided on a mural to replace the drab green walls in that area. "We chose a mural because murals add new life to the space," said Michelle Fagan, our youth services librarian, "they can highlight the wonderful talents of community members and can be enjoyed for years to come."

(continued on page 2)

(Mural, continued from page 1)

Local artist Lydia Rose Spencer was chosen to paint the mural. Because of Suzanne's love of the Maine outdoors, a woodland scene with a moose, loon, deer, and other forest flora and fauna was chosen. However, Lydia said she "didn't want to do a typical Maine scene that everyone's seen before. I wanted it to create atmosphere and add depth to the space. It was important to me that it gave an inviting and magical atmosphere to the children's section, and that it reflected the love that Suzanne had shown the library." Over four completely packed weekends going up and down ladders, Lydia realized how much work a 250 square foot mural is! "It's something people will be up-close-and-personal with. So you really can't skimp on the details . . . it has to feel real even when you're standing right beside it."

In the end, all the time and effort paid off. "It turned out even better than I envisioned," Lydia remarked, "everyone worked together and we created something wonderful."

The mural brightens and opens up the area and it carries on Suzanne's legacy, passion, and dedication to the library, especially its children.



Up-close: details in the new mural.



Big Foot, Bigger Event

By Jon Knepp

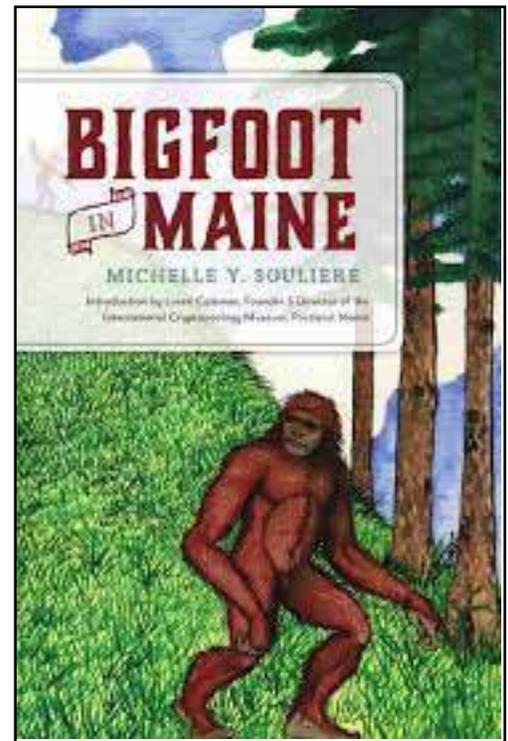
The old saying goes "love what you do and you'll never work a day in your life." While things like budget spreadsheets keep me from a life of eternal leisure, I definitely wasn't working while interviewing Michelle Souliere about her new book *Bigfoot in Maine* on June 24th via Zoom!

I've always been fascinated by cryptozoology, the study of yet-undiscovered species. While there are a lot of outright fakes, hoaxers, and attention-seekers in the cryptid community, there are a lot of people using a scientific approach to study creatures like Bigfoot and the people who've encountered them. Michelle Souliere is one such investigator.

Michelle is the owner of Green Hand Books in Portland and the author of two books, *Strange Maine* and *Bigfoot in Maine*, both available online from her bookstore. Her latest, Sasquatch-centric book contains some research into the feasibility of a creature so large living and staying undetected in the Maine woods, as well as a catalog of hoaxes, oddities, and people associated with Maine's most-elusive (and only) wild primate. The bulk—and most thrilling part—of the book revolves around nineteen eyewitness accounts from across the state.

Starting at an early age, Michelle was drawn to strange creatures, of which Bigfoot serves as an unofficial poster boy. For the last decade, she combined this passion with immeasurable research and interviews to write her latest book. She posits that Bigfoot is a real biological creature thriving unseen in perhaps the easiest state east of the Mississippi to stay concealed.

Michelle went into further detail on the eyewitness accounts, especially those who had extensive encounters, such as Suzy, who talked about her visits with "Wabou" her name for the hairy ape man



from her childhood. "Wabou" came from the sound they used to call each other.

We ended with a great Q & A session with questions about habitat, life cycle, and whether Champ (Lake Champlain's monster) and Bigfoot would be friends.

The positive feedback and impressive turnout show there is a groundswell of local interest in Bigfoot. Who knows, this may inspire other occasions to transform the TFL into Thompson "Freaky" Library.

(Watch TFL's Bigfoot in Maine program here <https://bit.ly/2TjkObk>)



Bigfoot author Michelle Souliere.

Paths to Story

By Kim Brawn

What if you could transform two of your favorite activities—walking in nature and reading—into one fun family adventure? That’s just what our two local story walks do! Thanks to the hard work, creativity, and persistence of TFL’s youth services librarian Michelle Fagan these story walks are ready to be enjoyed until the end of August.

TFL collaborated with PCSWCD on the story walk at the Law Farm which features the book *Up in the Garden Down in the Dirt* by Kate Messner. Her picture book talks about what is growing and what is under our feet in the dirt which ties in nicely with the soil demonstration pit at the farm.

Sedomocha’s Dot Warren Trail is home to the second story walk, in partnership with school librarian Carolyn Clark and the school itself. *Lifetime* by Lola Schafer is the featured book. It highlights reading and math while giving cool animal facts which kids and adults will love. (Both books are illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal.)

“Story walks are great. You get the



Story walk at the Law Farm (here & below).

best of both worlds: reading good books and being outside in nature taking in the animals and plants,” Michelle said. As you meander through the woods, give a grateful shoutout to Ms. Michelle who hammered and stapled well into the evening—a very hot and humid one—to get these up and running!

Inside scoop: A fall story walk is in the works for the Law Farm. The book *Woodland Dreams* will be highlighted.



Finding ConTENTment

By Kim Brawn

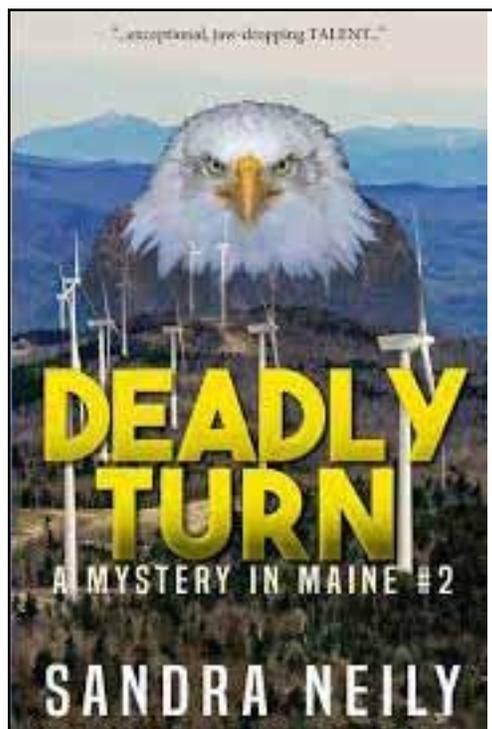
Set up at the end of April, TFL’s new event tent has been protecting participants from the sun and elements since its May inauguration. Thanks to everyone who checked the option to donate money to the Maine Public Library Fund on their taxes, the tent was made possible by grant money from that fund.

Oh, if those flaps could talk! What an array of topics discussed under the tent so far, from ongoing groups to author talks to children’s activities and more! TFL director Jon Knepp already sees the benefits. “The tent has been great. It would have been much harder to have any in-person events without it. Even as COVID has eased, it will be nice to be outside, especially for events like concerts.” Special thanks to all who helped with the tent’s construction!



The TFL Tent: before (above) and after (below) set up.





As the Deadly World Turns

By Kim Brawn

Sandra Neily (Sandy) revisited TFL on May 27 this time under the tent to discuss her latest novel *Deadly Turn*. The book is the second in her Patton Conover series which have been called “well-researched and exciting...blending conservation topics into a murder mystery.”

“Sandy’s talk was wonderful—very informative. She shared a lot about her perspective as a writer and how she tries to weave engaging stories that incorporate environmental issues into them, rather than the other way around,” said TFL director Jon Knepp.

As Sandy put it: “My page-turner goal is to take people on a deep, deep field trip into the Maine woods in a way they cannot put the book down or look away. I want readers to lean into the full ride of the novel...”

Sandy is an award-winning Maine author who brings her years of experience working with and for the environment. Her brand of environmentalism is approaching climate change from a money lost, jobs lost perspective. “She’s really adept at creating an intimate discussion of both her writing process and environmental issues. She adapted to those who came to the talk,” Jon noted.

(You can find *Deadly Turn* and her previous book, *Deadly Trespass*, at TFL.)

Worth the Hike: Moxie & More

By Kim Brawn

The tent worked well as the setting for TFL’s Philosophy Circle and Reading Group but how would it stand it up to Greg Westrich’s “Hiking Waterfalls” program on May 20 featuring a slide presentation? Thankfully, just fine. Although it took a bit of planning, tweaking, and troubleshooting by TFL’s director Jon Knepp to make it work.

“We had to configure a set-up that would allow us to use a projector in daylight—we borrowed a drive-in movie projector from the Center Theatre. I was crossing my fingers right up until showtime, but it worked,” Jon explained. “The program was great, and the turnout was awesome!”

Greg is a freelance writer and editor based in Glenburn who has written eight Falcon Guides, including his latest, *Hiking Waterfalls Maine*, which is easy to read with an accessible layout.

Whether you’re searching for your favorites or want to plan a new adventure, the book has lots of photos, maps, overviews, and specifics, along with



Author Greg Westrich

wonderfully vivid writing liked this description of Moxie Falls: The falls are more dramatic because of the way the black slate bedrock frames them . . . The mist from the falls keeps the rock wet and inky black. The lush vegetation atop the cliffs leans out over the void, soaking up the sun and spray.

Undoubtedly, Greg’s visit triggered memories of waterfall walks and hikes and inspired future plans. Michelle Fagan, TFL’s youth services librarian, was happy that Greg highlighted many family friendly hikes. “I had done many of the walks before but one I haven’t

done and would like to do is the Tumble Down Dick Falls, off the Greenville side of the Jo Mary Road,” Michelle said.

Thunderstorms kept Jon and his family from a Moxie Falls visit in May but it’s definitely still on the agenda, as is Piscataquis County favorite, Little Wilson Falls. Recently they did make it to Big Wilson Falls and enjoyed exploring the rugged grey ledges.

When it comes to Maine’s waterfalls, the saying “It’s the journey not the destination” rings true, half the fun is getting there! (Stop by TFL to check out Greg’s books.)

Maine in the Revolution: the Only Thing Successful was the Lecture!

By Jon Knepp

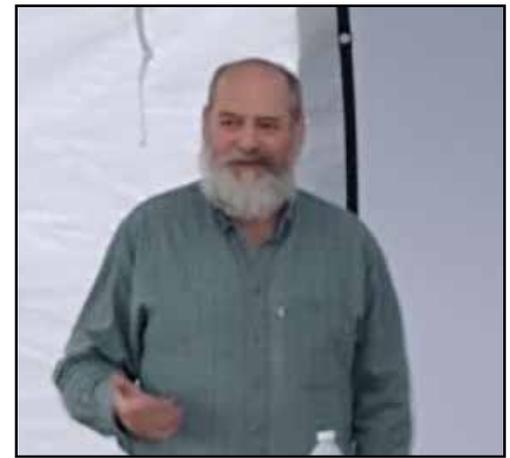
As part of our Maine bicentennial(ish) program, Jim Nelson presented his program “Blusters, Bunglers, and Boneheads” in the Thompson Free Library’s event tent on June 3rd. Jim has written over twenty maritime fiction and non-fiction books when he’s not busy on the high seas on traditional sailing ships like the Golden Hinde or appearing in History and Discovery channel documentaries. With such a busy schedule, we’re lucky to have lured him so far inland!

Jim gave the presentation its title due to the myriad of mistakes on Maine’s waters during the revolution. The British attempted to resupply Boston during the siege of the city by buying supplies in Machias; only to have the town seize the ships, kill the captain, and help seal Boston’s fate. As retaliation, the British burned Falmouth (later Portland) to the ground, a move that steeled American resolve and turned many indifferent or

loyal colonists toward the revolution. Later, in 1779, the Americans launched their biggest naval expedition of the war to retake midcoast Maine. The Penobscot Expedition seized defeat from the jaws of victory and ended as the worst American naval defeat until Pearl Harbor 162 years later.

The talk fascinated me on many levels! Like Jim, I really enjoy examining great military blunders. I loved Barbara Tuchman’s *The Guns of August*, which details how brinkmanship, outdated thinking, and egos in August 1914 created the First World War and then made it into the unwinnable quagmire of human suffering that lasted for over four years.

Years ago, I lived in South Boston, which at the time was known as Dorchester Heights, the place where colonists installed cannons to drive the British out of the city on Evacuation Day. I used to do the Freedom Tour through the city anytime anyone came to visit. I could probably still give a tour blindfolded, walking backwards in my sleep, so it was interesting to get another perspective on the events surrounding the siege of



Speaker Jim Nelson

Boston as well as Paul Revere, who at best was as incompetent as the rest of the Penobscot Expedition despite all the good things he did for the Revolution in Boston.

Jim’s talk was both informative and fun—a combination not always easy to pull off with historical topics! The key to creating engaging historical content is focusing on the people involved and the human drama. Jim understands this in spades, as evidenced by his talks and his books. (We have six of them at the library, by the way!)

Mainly Matt

By Kim Brawn

Matt Cost, multi-faceted Brunswick-based writer, known for his Goff Langdon Mainly Mystery series, stopped by the tent on June 15. His book *Mainly Power* was selected as the Maine Humanities Council’s Read ME fiction book of the year.

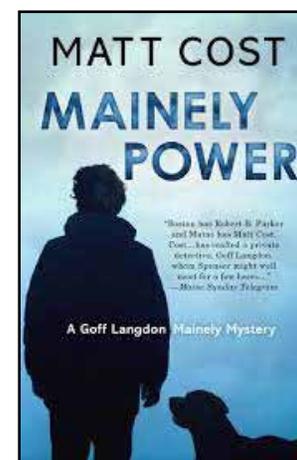
Matt has been busy working on his new Clay Wolfe Port Essex series and a historical novel called *Love in the Time of Hate: New Orleans During the Reconstruction* due out soon.

“Matt has an interest in a lot of subjects,” said TFL’s Jon Knepp who attended the talk. “He studied extensively to write his historical fiction novels which take place at the Battle of

Gettysburg, in Cuba during Castro’s revolution, and during the Reconstruction in New Orleans. On top of all that research, he’s been a teacher, a coach, run a mystery bookstore, owned a gym, and is now a fulltime author.”

Matt’s contemporary work—mysteries based in Maine locales he knows well—struck a chord with acclaimed writer Gerry Boyle, who recommended *Mainly Power* for Read ME: “It sometimes strikes me that as we look far and wide for suspense that will captivate us for the duration of a novel or a Netflix series we should look in our own backyard. Fact is, the ingredients of a good crime story—compelling characters, authentic setting, a twisty plot, and a liberal sprinkle of fun—are in our midst. Matt Cost knows this and he offers us new literary acquaintances

who lead us around a tweaked version of a place we know well. What better place for a private detective than Brunswick, and what better day job for that detective than a mystery bookstore? In *Mainly Power* things get very complicated very fast...” Stop by TFL to check out this riveting mystery!



Block (Printing) Party

By Kim Brawn

In May via Zoom Greta Schroeder (yes, THAT Greta!) hosted “Block Printing 101.”

Her first Christmas at TFL, Greta gave us cool handmade cards and said that they were made using block printing. She describes it as an accessible form of printmaking—a fun way to create unique artwork, stationary, and textiles.

During the program, Greta shared her block printing process from her home workspace in Williamsburg, Maine, where she has an impressive array of supplies and tools laid out on the draft table her father made.

Greta explained to the dozen or so faces and screens watching that the design comes first and that she often finds inspiration in nature. Next, you sketch the design, carve, then print your block. The process is much more involved, but Greta showed us step by step, frequently sharing close-ups of designs, projects, and supplies.

Besides its versatility, Greta also likes block printing because “it’s meditative—it helps me slow down my mind.”

She talked about positive and negative space: “pay attention to it as you create your design.” Block printing is a process with many steps and layers. I can see the thoughtful, meditative appeal that Greta mentioned, taking you away from distractions and keeping you focused on all the moving pieces.

Greta wanted to give us a sense of what it feels like to do block printing and create a pattern; she decided the project would be a simple form of it using a potato. Throughout the hour, participants asked questions and later, as they worked on the project, many showed the colorful patterns they created. Even TFL director Jon Knepp’s wife Kazia, mom Fran, and kids Andy and Cooper got in on the act!

This was Greta’s first time teaching an online interactive program, but no one would know. Her knowledge and enthusiasm made for an engaging and accessible workshop. (Thank you, Greta, for expanding your comfort zone & for the incredible handout! There are still copies available.)

(Watch Block Printing 101 here: <https://bit.ly/2TjkObk>)



Greta (above) displayed the versatility of her many block print patterns (below).



Andy Knepp (age 7) printed pandas.



Alicia’s Recyclable Art 101.

Old Books into Art Nouveau

By Kim Brawn

In April, TFL’s STEAM guide Alicia Millette showed us how to repurpose old books online via Zoom with “Recyclable Art 101.” Whether you chose to follow along and get crafty (kits w/ most supplies were available at TFL) or just watch the interesting demonstration, Alicia took us through the paces with her down-to-earth supportive style, punctuated with sly humor. Her years of teaching classes and workshops to all ages was apparent.

Using an extra camera to show close ups of her hand work, Alicia captured

the detailed steps involved. She covered making three projects out of old books: roses, a vase, and, finally, a diamond by folding pages.

Alicia wielded her X-Acto knife with skillful (and sometimes scary) precision; causing TFL director Jon Knepp to make a nervous worker’s comp joke! No worries, all went well as Alicia patiently revealed her creative process. She even reassured us that these types of designs “will look better if they’re not perfect—more like nature.” Her designs, of course, were beautiful and continue to win raves at TFL! (You can watch a recording of Recyclable Art 101 here:

<https://bit.ly/2TjkObk>)

A Reader's Best Friend



It's wonderful to have Erma and April back at TFL! Such a fun & comfortable way to increase children's reading self-confidence Thursdays 1-3 p.m. (Contact TFL to sign up.)

See the Forest for the Trees

By Kim Brawn

Our first IOI under the tent, “Practicing Good Forestry on Your Own Land” (co-sponsored with Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District) was an informative hour on a subject near and dear to many local residents. District Forester and PCSWCD board member Jim Ferrante discussed ways that landowners and homesteaders could enhance their property and achieve some of their woodlot goals.

Jim pointed out how important it is for landowners to know what their goals are (such as trail layout, wildlife habitat, water quality, cutting and selling timber, and/or aesthetics). People need to “steward the property—being thoughtful about the future.” He encourages them to be proactive and know what, where, when, and why. Jim is very knowledgeable and eager to help. (And, boy, is he a wiz at the white board!) He spoke on many topics and drilled down on a

few—always coming back to trees (it is forestry, after all) and woodlot management. He talked about crop trees—trees that produce or have the potential to produce the desired landowner benefits. He noted that downed trees are a messy but vital habitat (for hare and grouse, for example).

Open to questions throughout, the attentive group picked Jim's brain. Many asked for his business card so they could arrange a follow-up visit to their property. Jim offered to help assess their specific issues in person. He also created an info-filled handout, which is still available, that focuses on crop tree management, maple sugaring, and has a harvest planning map.

PCSWCD executive director Sarah Robinson brought informational brochures and provided updates on upcoming Soil & Water events and an overview of free forestry & landowner resources. Check out their website (<https://piscataquisswcd.org>), Facebook, or Instagram. TFL has new forestry/woodlot titles to check out too!



Cricut, Anyone?

By Kim Brawn

In April, a Cricut landed at TFL thanks to Friends of the Library. It's a machine that can cut, draw, and emboss a wide variety of materials to make cards, wall art, customized mugs, t-shirts, etc. Details are available at the library and Cricut has easy-to-follow YouTube videos to help you get started. Our STEAM Guide Alicia Millette is the Cricut Queen and, whenever possible, can answer questions and offer assistance—even tutorials—to advance your creative pursuits. We have white & colored card stock and patterned paper on hand for .20 cents/ea. Imagine a card for less than \$1.00! (Now that's something to chirp about!)

This versatile electronic cutting machine cuts and prints all sorts of designs from materials like paper, vinyl, card stock, and iron-on transfers. You can use the Cricut to cut almost anything you'd typically cut with scissors or an X-Acto knife. It uses Design Space software on a special laptop in the library. It's a fun and inexpensive way to make terrific cards, gifts, home décor, and personalize almost anything.

Stop by the library to learn more about—and try—this awesome crafting resource!



Pictured above are a variety of crafts created using the Cricut.



Media Shy Cryptid Caught on Camera: *TFL's director Jon Knepp had fun promoting the Bigfoot in Maine author talk with Michelle Souliere! BTW, Sasquatch fans were not disappointed!*



A Maine Adventure (Apologies to Renys!) *TFL's Alicia Millette has created an incredible Maine Nature STEM Kit you can check out just like a book! Kids & families will have fun exploring 6 activities: animal ID, beaver lodge, birdhouse, tree ID, seeds & plants. Looks of cool stuff included!*

Photo Gallery



Back by Popular Demand: *May saw two rounds of TFL's Ten Cent Book Sale—the first in over a year. It looked different with one-way aisles, masks, visitor limits, & separate entrances & exits but it was met with excitement and cooperation! (Friends of the Library sponsor these book sales. Proceeds fund children's programming. We need friends! Interested? Have ideas on how to make it better or for other fundraisers? Contact the library!)*



Puzzled? *Yeah, so pandemics & public puzzles don't mix but as restrictions ease & because our patrons & visitors are mindful of others—and we wanted more normalcy—one of our mainstays is back: the TFL puzzle. Here, Renee plots her next move as Kathy cheers her on.*



They Grow Up Too Fast: *So, the caterpillars in Alicia's science display made their chrysalis and then became butterflies. Soon they were ready to fly the coop. Ms. Michelle took the case outside and coaxed them out!*



The Box to Bountiful: *Piscataquis Regional Food Center's Kazia Knepp & Merrilee Schoen stopped by TFL with a Garden in a Box sample, part of their container gardener learning series. Don't let mobility, small space, or lack of resources stop you from growing your own food! Visit their website (<https://www.prfoodcenter.org>).*