

Inside Outside
By Allen Young

Melted Snow, Spring Rains Enhance Waterfalls
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When the current snowfalls end, and it all melts, as we all know it will, and spring rains come, as we know they will, it will be an excellent time to appreciate the waterfalls of the North Quabbin Region.

There are eight familiar to me that I'm mentioning in this column, but there may well be others that are more cascading brooks and streams than actual waterfalls.

Royalston, the town where I reside, is known for its three very different waterfalls, all of them considered attractions on the 22-mile Tully Trail. They are Doane's Falls, Royalston Falls and Spirit Falls.

Though there are no studies that I'm aware of, I presume the best known and most visited is Doane's Falls at the intersection of Doane Hill Road and Athol Road, just north of the Athol town line.

Because it is located near a roadway, Doane's is extremely easy to visit. In recent years, the property-owner, the pioneering conservation organization known as Trustees of Reservations, in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has developed special handicapped accessible trails to both the lower and upper falls. I suggest you take someone you know, of any age, who uses a wheelchair, walker or cane, for a visit to both the upper and lower falls.

Royalston Falls was the subject of an Inside/Outside column published in this newspaper Nov. 27, 2009, and reprinted in my book "The Man Who Got Lost: North Quabbin Stories." I entitled the column "Royalston Falls – Not Yosemite but Close to Home."

This is the highest falls in the region and is also a Trustees of Reservations property. It is accessed from Falls Road or Athol-Richmond Road (Route 32) near the New Hampshire state line. A hike into the woods of at least an hour and a half is required. Falls Brook drops 45 feet and it's an awesome sight in all seasons.

Spirit Falls in Royalston is mostly the property of Harvard University, located within the Tall Timbers tract of Harvard Forest, but conservation land in the area includes acreage owned by the Trustees of Reservations and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This falls, over granite cliffs, with water that flows from Little Pond and an adjacent bog in Royalston, offers the visitor a sort of wilderness experience. It's a mere trickle in dry summer spells, but dramatic in the spring.

Another waterfalls owned by the Trustees is Bear's Den in New Salem, accessed from Neilson Road. The stream that flows over dramatic 75-foot high granite boulders at Bear's Den is the middle branch of the Swift River. The water you see when you visit could flow from someone's tap in Boston or Cambridge some day, as this river flows into the Quabbin Reservoir

The Devil's Washbowl on Hodge Brook in Warwick requires a hike of about 45 minutes into the woods from Gale Road through the Arthur Iversen Conservation Area owned by the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. Like all waterfalls, the quantity of water varies according to the season, so only in the summer can one see the smooth carved rock surface that gives the falls its name.

Lynne's Falls on Lyons Brook is located within the Hidden Valley Conservation Area in Wendell, a Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust property. It is easily accessed via the New England Scenic Trail in the Ruggles Pond area of Wendell State Forest.

I discovered a waterfall by surprise one day in the Farley section of Erving, as I was hiking on the Metacomet & Monadnock trail (now the New England Scenic Trail) on my way to visit the Hermit's Cave in Erving State Forest. This falls, on Briggs Brook, drops over the eastern edge of the Farley ledges seen by westbound drivers on Route 2..

Cascades on Thousand Acre Brook in Athol, near the Phillipston line, are my newest discovery in the waterfall category, thanks to Bob Curley of Athol, founder of the North Quabbin Trails Association (NQTAA). To get to these deep-woods cascades, can one take the Thousand Acre Brook Trail within the Bearsden Woods trail system. To do this, drive up South Royalston Road off Route 2A and continue to Willis Road, Phillipston, where the passable road ends. Or hike from South Royalston along the south side of the Millers along the new Quabbin to Monadnock (Q to M) trail, also known in this section as the Millers Baguag Trail. Watch for new helpful maps to be published soon by the NQTAA.

Be thankful for all this unpolluted water, which many people on our planet do not have. I am thankful for government programs, non-profit conservation organizations, and conscientious land owners who help protect our water.