

View from

Listening Point

Newsletter of the **Listening Point Foundation, Inc.**

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Dedicated to preserving Listening Point and advancing Sigurd Olson's legacy of wilderness education.

Change and Succession

By Kevin Proescholdt

As an ecologist, Sigurd Olson recognized that change and succession were constantly underway in his beloved Quetico-Superior wilderness, as well as in all other ecosystems. This basic ecological awareness is found throughout his writings.

The following short essay, "The Pine Stump," comes from his 1969 book, *The Hidden Forest*, which Sig produced with his good friend and nature photographer, Les Blacklock. Many of Sig's essays in this book describe ecological change in some way or another, as he tried to write about the processes or components of the canoe country ecosystem that may not be immediately evident to most visitors at first glance. Les' wonderful photographs illuminated many of the same things.

"The Pine Stump" provides a wonderful glimpse into how Sig could read either a broad landscape or a specific spot through the trained eye of an ecologist. His view takes us back 10,000 years to the end of the last glacial retreat and how this particular bog changed through the millennia to the point when tall pines surrounded the bog when the town of Ely first began to develop down below. He interprets the changes after the pines were logged, and how the changes continued to the present while observing the decaying pine stump and the old log beside it.

"These are the reminders that the forest means change and succession, and that there is no permanence except in the stream of life itself," Sig concludes. "This is the pattern of the future, a symbol of the design for all living things on earth."

As change and succession continually occur in the Quetico-Superior Wilderness, so too do change and succession come to the Listening Point Foundation itself. Elsewhere in this newsletter is news of the Foundation's upcoming change and succession.

*Kevin Proescholdt is the conservation director for Wilderness Watch, a national wilderness conservation organization (www.wildernesswatch.org). His most recent book is *Glimpses of Wilderness*, a collection of wilderness essays set in the Quetico-Superior, available at www.kevinproescholdt.com.*

The Pine Stump

by Sigurd F. Olson

Caribou Creek has its source in a bog of sphagnum moss and heather. In the spring its black pools are bright with marsh marigolds and the crimson of blossoming tamarack. In the summer blue and white violets bloom along its edges, and in the fall, when the ash trees turn lemon-yellow and the tamaracks to smoky gold, the pools are dusted with their sheen.

Around the bog is a gravel ridge on which once grew red and white pines. Ten thousand years ago, when the continental glacier began its retreat, a great block of ice settled and, when it melted, left the hollow of the bog. For centuries a pond was there, but in time it became covered with vegetation. Through the bog ran trickles from springs and seepages which gathered themselves together and escaped toward the lake a mile below. The beavers built a dam across the creek, and it spread out into a placid pool, where in the early days hunters waited for caribou to come and drink.

The bog is still there, but the big pines around it are gone; only the old stumps remain. Some still show gray and weathered wood, but most are covered with mosses and plants that have taken root. All of them are going into decay, and each speaks of the past and the glories it has known.

First settlers told me how the pines looked in the early days, when the town below was a rough mining camp hewn out of the woods: how tall and straight the trees were, so close that the sunlight barely filtered through to the deep layer of needles and duff below.

Before me is one of the largest stumps, fully five feet across the butt. Part is still hard, the rest green and soft in its mossy covering. It is as though the bog itself were reaching up to reclaim what is left of the tree. In that green, invading tongue of moss is a patch of wintergreen with bright red berries and waxen leaves. At its base is a log covered with the vines of partridgeberry, and on stalks of spores trailing down the slope.



continued on page 3

Change Is In The Air

As I write these words from our old 1930's cabin in the Pine Point woods, change is in the air. The basswoods have long since dropped their leaves. The maples have passed their brightest brilliance and the last of the foliage they hold will not last the advancing cold front. The tamaracks still hold forth in all their golden glory, and of course the red oaks will cling to their scarlet cloaks until nearly spring. But the woods are changing, and all can feel it.

The red and gray squirrels are more active and industrious than ever. Most of the ducks have migrated down the great Mississippi flyway. The herons have moved along. A kingfisher rattled from deep in the back bay a few days ago, but I have not heard him since. The nightly lows are lower. The winter stars come around earlier in the evening and begin to claim the summit of the night sky. By the time these words are read, snow will likely cover the ground, and Old Man River may be once again locked in ice.

Change is in the air. But then, it always is.

During the months when Orion rules the night, we will be attuned to the slightest upturn in temperatures, the advancing minutes of daylight. We will watch the ground turn bare on the south side of the big White Pine trunks. We will listen for the first tell-tale drips from the eaves and the first whisperings of running water, the "Spring's here!" call of the chickadee. We will feel something quicken in our blood with the first warm zephyrs from the south, and restlessly await the arrival of geese and redwings, bluebirds and swallows, goldeneyes and buffleheads.

Change is always in the air.

Sometimes it arrives more unexpectedly than with the predictable cycle of the seasons. But it is never totally unexpected. Or at least it shouldn't be. It may arrive as a wild storm, toppling old friends. Or as a bright, breezy, sunny day, kicking out the last rags of clouds from a lingering low-pressure system.

And of course, change arrives in our human lives as well, in our families and organizations, in all the things we care about and love. As it arrives, we undertake the constant but always new process of dealing with it—with birth and loss and growth and evolution; with joy and sadness and concern and excitement. All are a part of the seasons of life.

For our Listening Point Foundation, this is particularly a time of change. Our beloved Boundary Waters Wilderness faces perhaps the greatest challenge yet to its viability and integrity, while wild and natural areas and creatures nationwide bear the brunt of new policies and actions from Washington that threaten hard-won gains that may have once felt permanent. Caring citizens throughout the upper midwest and coast to coast are engaged in efforts to direct the constant reality of change in positive directions. The LPF—guided by its twofold mission to preserve Sigurd Olson's Listening Point and advance his legacy of wilderness education—will be navigating these waters in the months and years ahead. And we will do so in the context of even more change.

LPF's long-time Executive Director Alanna Dore, for years the heart and soul and face of the organization, is taking early retirement. I say "early" because whatever her age (she may be over 35) and length of tenure, it would always feel like she should have stayed "just a little longer." That will always be the case when a person gives as much of herself—of her love and care and personality and devotion—as Alanna has done. Her accomplishments on behalf of this organization are unrivaled and too numerous to list in full. From yeoman-like fundraising toward the purchase of the old Olson home as our new headquarters; to acquiring much needed grants for much needed projects; to overseeing historical refurbishments and restorations to the iconic cabin; to truly expert archiving and management of ever increasing historical resources; to organizing large scale annual spring and fall events, dinners, fundraisers, gifts and auctions; to creating the ongoing "visits to Listening Point" program; to—and most importantly—dealing with an endless stream of personalities, needs, wants, desires, and obligations in her graceful and positive interactions with the members of LPF and the public in general, well... as I say, a full accounting of all Alanna has done and meant to the Foundation is impossible to present here. Suffice to say, she will be greatly missed.

But not yet. For another part of this change is our welcoming on-board of new Executive Director Steffi O'Brien. Introduced at our annual Fall Dinner in Ely, Steffi has been chosen to continue in Alanna's footsteps for many reasons, not least her brilliant smile, engaging personality, outstanding educational background, achievements and skills. Much more will be shared about Steffi in this space in the future, but for now I will simply add that Alanna and Steffi will be working together for the first six months of the new year, as Alanna shares ALL she has learned and mastered in her tenure, and Steffi soaks it ALL up. And begins to add her own touches.

So... change is with us, as always. In the midst of it we feel challenged, and beckoned, and uncertain, and reassured. As always. As human beings will forever feel on this beautiful planet Earth we call home.



Doug Wood Illustration

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The Pine Stump *(continued from page 1)*

Several orange fungi have taken root on the log, as well as a clump of dwarf dogwood with white four-petaled flowers. In the fall the red berries of dogwood, partridgeberry, and wintergreen will provide a feast for the grouse and migrant songbirds coming through.

The vines of Linnaea and cranberry are woven through the network, and at one point a striped maple is struggling to get its share of the sun. The log and stump are crowded with plants: gold thread, windflowers, a stalk of Labrador tea, and several grasses and sedges, in a complex interweaving of one into the other to form a mat that not only protects the shallow bed of humus from erosion, but holds the moisture for a while before it trickles down into the reservoir of the swamp.

The pine stump with the log beside it is the story of old age and the passing into the forest floor of a great tree, but in the bright new colors, the verdant green and richness of many plants growing upon it, is the story of rebirth. These are the reminders that the forest means change and succession, and that there is no permanence except in the stream of life itself. This is the pattern of the future, a symbol of the design for all living things on earth.

Calendar

2017

December: Appeal

2018

January: Steffi O'Brien comes on board

February 10: Board Meeting, Ely

April 14: Annual Luncheon, St. Paul

April: Earth Fest, Mt. Iron, MN (tbd)

May 12: Board Meeting, Ely

June: Great American Canoe Festival (tbd)

July 27, 28, 29: Blueberry Arts Festival, Ely

September 7: Annual Northwoods Dinner

October 27: Board Meeting, Ely

Please check our website and Facebook page for additional activities and dates.

"The solution to man's probing and puzzlement is really as simple as sitting outdoors and looking at a sunset, feeding squirrels and chickadees, or caring for trees and flowers."



– Reflections of the North Country, p 51

Onward and Upward!

The Listening Point Foundation will soon undertake an important change. Our Executive Director, Alanna Dore, has served LPF for the last twelve years and has seen our organization grow and prosper as it fulfills its mission to further Sig's legacy of wilderness education. Under Alanna's able management, we have seen the Listening Point Foundation develop its programs, increase its membership, and acquire the Sig and Elizabeth Olson home in Ely for our permanent headquarters. We are grateful to Alanna for her devoted work, and we are happy to know she will continue to stay close to LPF in her retirement, beginning July 1, 2018.

The Listening Point Foundation board is happy to announce that a new executive director has been chosen to continue the work of the organization. We are delighted and proud to introduce Steffi O'Brien. She will begin to work with Alanna in January to learn the many roles of the Executive Director, and she will assume the full responsibility of the job in July, 2018, when Alanna steps down.

Steffi is a graduate of Colgate University with a B.A. in Geography and Music. At Minnesota State University at Mankato, she received her M.S. in Experiential Education, as well as her Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Science (GISc). She will complete work for her Professional Science Master in GISc, in May 2018.

Steffi brings myriad skills to her new position, not the least of which is her love of the North Country and the works of Sigurd Olson. In 2015, Steffi took an important step to help advance Sig's wilderness legacy. At the LP headquarters in Ely, she worked with Sig's extensive map collection as part of a capstone project for her Master's degrees. Through this work, she has been able to tell an important part of the story of Sig's influence on the preservation of important natural and wilderness areas across North America

and Canada. Sig's philosophy has significantly contributed to her views of how humans connect and relate to the natural world, and the important role that wilderness plays throughout our lives.

Steffi brings intelligence, energy, organizational skills, and strong leadership ability to any task she undertakes. In addition to her skills integrating geospatial technologies and experiential learning, Steffi can pull together research and active learning experiences to design plans and programs that will help the Listening Point Foundation develop its own technologies to best implement its goals for a vibrant future. She has strong analytical skills and excellent people skills, having worked as a wilderness guide at YMCA Camp Warren, where, in addition to introducing young people to the wilderness world, she directed the Counselor-in-Training program and worked in other leadership roles.

LPF friends and supporters have had a chance to meet Steffi when she was our keynote speaker at our spring luncheon in April, 2017 in St. Paul, and at our fall dinner in Ely in September. Her presentation "Wilderness Journeys Past to Present: Exploring the Map Collection of Sigurd F. Olson" was enjoyed by all.

We are delighted to welcome Steffi to the Listening Point Foundation!



Quote from Sig:

The Foundation's "year of the young" was inspired by the following quote from Sig that he shared in "The Wilderness World of Sigurd Olson" dvd:

Sig's words regarding the "young" of the world.
(From *The Wilderness World of Sigurd Olson*)

Young people come to me and they ask me "What is your hope for the world?" And I always answer that the hope for the world is you. You are the new generation, I am the old generation. Just like this little tree here. This is a sapling, right beside it is one of these enormous red pines. This sapling epitomizes you and the hope of the world. So when you wonder how things are going, just remember that.

You have your task to do. You've got to carry on the battle to preserve such beautiful places as this, the battle goes on endlessly. It's your task. You've got to see that you keep the flame alive - no matter what obstacles. The whole world depends on you!

This whole world depends on this little pine in a sense. Just like at one time, it depended on these enormous trees here.



A sampling of the “young” who helped us celebrate our “Year of the Young”

Eli's Project

Eli sees some similarities between himself and Sigurd Olson. The love of nature and the serenity that comes from being in wild places. The desire that wilderness areas will be available for people now and into the future.

Eli is a fifth-grader in a Wisconsin charter school that prepares students for current and future challenges related to global awareness, entrepreneurship, civic and health literacy and environmental stewardship. Students complete several interdisciplinary projects throughout the school year. They write a proposal, ask questions, find resources, collect facts, ask more questions, seek more information, then write and present their project.

Eli chose Sigurd F. Olson to be the subject of his first project, the one on environmental stewardship.



Listening Point Foundation Contribution Form

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☐ My contribution is in (select one) honor/memory of:

Listening Point Foundation is a 501(c)3 educational organization that welcomes charitable contributions that support its educational mission and preservation efforts. Giving opportunities include annual support, memorials, planned giving and in-kind donations. For more information on giving, please contact us at 218-365-8889.

CONTRIBUTION AMOUNT

- ☐ \$35 ☐ \$250
☐ \$50 ☐ \$500
☐ \$100 ☐ (other) _____

Please send your check payable to
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Or use the PayPal or GiveMN
options on our website
www.listeningpointfoundation.org

A sampling of the “young” who helped us celebrate our “Year of the Young”

Documentary about The Boundary Waters

We are grateful to the generations of brave conservationists who share in Sigurd Olson's understanding of the importance of human interaction with nature. Because of their efforts, we have access to one of Earth's most precious natural landscapes, The Boundary Waters. Having been inspired by both our own experiences and Sig Olson's conservation work, we decided to create a film to share stories of those who have been impacted by The Boundary Waters. Our story follows BWCA guides, Ely residents, small business owners, youth mentors, and more as they give us a glimpse into their world. While our film only captures moments in their life, it helps to paint the picture of how their work and life are shaped by this natural phenomenon.



Ryan, Brendan Harris (producer), Keith

Voyageur Outward Bound School works on service projects

New staff at the Voyageur Outward Bound School, in Ely spent the day working on service projects at the house in town as well as at Sig's cabin on Burntside. The morning activities centered around clearing old brush and debris from the grounds at the historic home. In the afternoon the cabin roof, at the Point, was cleared of pine needles and moss. Trails were also cut back and swept. The volunteers enjoyed a picnic on the point and read aloud some of Sigurd Olson's prose. Olson's words were especially potent while sitting at the site of his inspiration. It was great to do service that was connected to the legacy of such a amazing writer and conservationist!



Writers Among Our Readers

Deep Waters, Wild Waters, A Memoir by Douglas Wood

In his memoir, *Deep Woods, Wild Waters*, Doug Wood tells us, wind, water, wild creatures, and weather can shape us into better people. "...The universe itself becomes more accessible. Awareness expands." We pay attention; we end up seeking "the moment when the connection is complete." Since we came from nature, we must be deeply connected to it.

Deep Woods, Wild Waters may be the year's best read for lovers of the North Woods. Written by Douglas Wood, the president of the Listening Point Foundation, the book condenses a lifetime of thinking about the importance of nature and wilderness and its influence upon the human spirit.

"Birds, fish, wildlife, the flowing of water and the movement of clouds, the rise and fall of landscape, all these elements reflect and mirror the landscape within, and help to bring it into focus." It is this ability to relate the outer world of nature to the inner world of meaning that elevates Wood's work above other nature writers who may amaze or entertain us, but who often fail to touch our inner personal lives.

Wood, who suffered with ADHD and dyslexia as a child, defied all odds by becoming a best-selling author, singer/song writer and a wilderness guide. As a child, Wood had found solace in the fields and forests. When fishing with his grandfather or exploring the fields or forests, he escaped the pain and frustrations of school.

During the struggles of his early adult life, Wood's wife Kathy suggested he read *Listening Point* by Sigurd Olson because of his love for natural things. Wood was shaken to the core by Olson's writing. "Here was someone who saw the world as I did!" he recalled. Wood wrote to Olson to thank him for his writing, and Olson, who had also struggled in his early life, responded immediately commenting on the quality of Wood's writing and encouraging him to pursue it. This encouragement became central to all that followed.

While Wood's memoir naturally reflects the values and sentiments that are reflected in Olson's work, *Deep Woods, Wild Waters* claims its own literary style and establishes Wood as a nature writer in his own right.

The book traces Wood's childhood influences through his life as a musician, a children's writer and a wilderness canoe guide. Following the muse of the natural world, he confronted each key decision in his life by opting for choices that kept him connected to the wild lands that nurtured his spirit.

Wood's writing always strives to find the connection, learn the lesson, grasp the deeper meaning of what nature reveals. "The vast rhythms and tempos of the natural world—sunrises and sunsets, the songs of wind and the crashing of storm waves. All the pregnant smells, sights, and sounds to which we are so often closed... Each is a language, each an instruction ... biologically rooted in the heritage of the earth."

Testing ourselves against water, wind and weather, Wood writes, prepares us for other challenges in life. "The worry over challenges to come is almost always worse, and lasts far longer, than the actual difficulty itself," he writes. "Without fear, and the overcoming of fear, there is no adventure. And without adven-

ture, life is a very weak brew."

His description of a wildflower, the Pale Pink Corydalis, encapsulates many of the ideas that permeate the book:

"Here, on the exposed bedrock, with little to no soil, baking in the summer sun, absorbing the gray-fisted blows of howling nor'easters with their shredding winds, vulnerable to the inundation of winter snows and the unseen, rock-breaking assaults of frost, thawing, and re-freezing ... This is where it grows. This is where it stands and flaunts its little flag of color. To everything it is exposed, to every element, in every season. With only the tiniest of cracks and footholds to cling to, it stands. Delicate. Vulnerable. Tough. Defiant. Beautiful. And, brilliantly, it holds to all these charms at once. And therefore, it is, to me, inspirational, and a messenger to the heart."

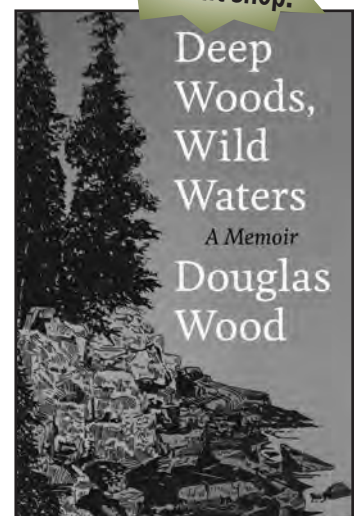
Wood's writing quite naturally extends an environmental message. "We all live downstream," he tells us; "...everything that anyone does—be it laundry or mining or logging or driving a car or riding a bus or flipping a light switch or purchasing a product—has an effect on someone else downstream. ... Our only excuse for not knowing such things now is not wanting to know—the excuse of cowardice, of willful ignorance—which is, of course, no excuse at all. ... It is our task to engage not just in the work of preservation, but of restoration."

This is a book that cannot help but cause us to reflect upon what is significant in our own lives. In a culminating chapter, "The Stars of Sandfly" Wood explores the existential challenge of finding meaning in life. "I felt keenly two separate feelings. One was the sense of being at home, alive and well upon the Earth, my favorite part of the Earth, in a place of extraordinary beauty. The second feeling was nearly the opposite—as if I were at the very edge of being lost—totally lost—in a universe vast beyond imagining, terrifying and impersonal in its scope and in all the unknowns it represented." With a flair for unwrapping paradox he managed to connect the deep cold silence of the universe with the intimacy of private perception and creativity.

We spring from nature; we must be connected to it. By fully encountering nature, Woods tells us, we are "... seeking the moment when the connection is complete." It is what we all search for he reminds us, and loving and protecting the natural world is the path towards significance in our individual lives. "We grow only if we accept the reality of distant thunder, and all of the fear and adventure it portends."

— by Steve Voiles

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Attractive paperback versions of seven of Sigurd Olson's most loved books.

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- *Listening Point*
- *The Lonely Land*
- *Runes of the North*
- *Open Horizons*
- *Reflections from the North Country*
- *Of Time and Place*

..... \$16



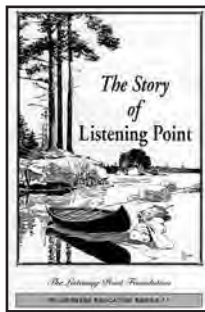
The Wilderness World of Sigurd F. Olson DVD
A digitally remastered version of the classic film "The Wilderness World of Sigurd F. Olson" includes more than two hours of conversations with Sig as he speaks about the craft of writing and life in the wilderness. You'll also hear Sig's wife Elizabeth and their son Sig Jr. speak candidly about Sigurd, his profession, and life in the north woods.

..... \$15



Wilderness Days
University of Minnesota Press has published a new paperback edition of *Wilderness Days*—a collection of Sig's writings that depicts the essence of the magnificent woodlands and waters of the legendary Quetico-Superior region that borders Minnesota and Ontario.

..... \$18



The Story of Listening Point
This 28-page booklet, written by Sig's son Robert K. Olson, tells the inside story of how Listening Point came to be and why, what it meant to Sigurd Olson, and what it continues to mean to wilderness lovers and loyalists. Features dozens of historical photos and images.

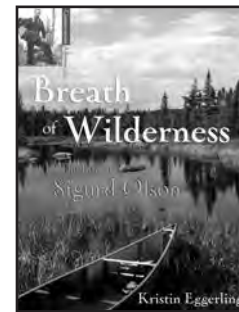
..... \$5



For Kids

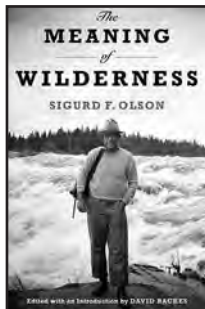
Sig Olson's Wilderness Moments
For Kids! Five selections of Sig Olson's writings, with "Points to Ponder" and "Activities" following each section. Excellent opportunity to introduce Sig to the younger generation. Includes blank pages at the end of the book for several of the activities—journaling, mapping, etc.

..... \$5



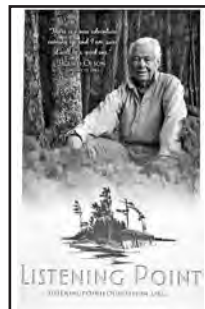
Breath of Wilderness
By Kristin Eggerling. A must have for your Olson library. The story covers Sigurd Olson's love of wild places and how that love transformed his life. It is a book written for middle school students, but can be enjoyed by all. 92 pages.

..... \$13



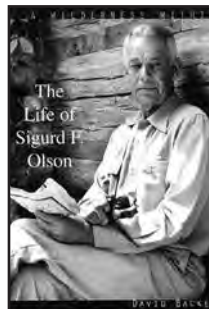
The Meaning of Wilderness
Now available in paperback! First published in 2001, this book features a collection of Sigurd F. Olson's articles and speeches. It offers a lively look at the evolution of one of environmentalism's leading figures and is essential reading for Olson fans, historians, and outdoors enthusiasts around the country.

..... \$18



Sigurd Olson Poster
The image, taken by Bryan Stenlund, may well be one of the last photos of Sig before he died. The 11" by 17" poster includes Sig's last type written words: "A new adventure is coming up and I'm sure it will be a good one." A must have for Sig fans.

..... \$16



A Wilderness Within
The authoritative portrait of one of the greatest environmentalists of the twentieth century. The book is a stunning look at a man with a vision for the natural world and for himself. Essential reading for Olson fans.

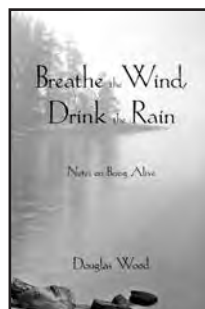
..... \$23 (paperback)



Simple Journal
Simple journal, blank pages (6.5h x 4.5w) with SFO quote "There's a new adventure coming up and I'm sure it will be a good one" on the cover! Great for canoe trips.

..... \$15

New!



Breathe the Wind, Drink the Rain
Doug Wood's personal recipe for being truly alive—for arriving at the ground beneath your feet and feeling at home in the universe. Great to take on a canoe trip. Pen & ink drawings by Doug as well. 52 pages.

..... \$10



Firewood Happens
by Mike Lein. A series of short essays, humorous, knowledgeable stories for those who love to hunt, fish, or sit on a lakeshore.

..... \$12

New!



LPF Mug
3 finger handle. With logo, website, and "Sig's legacy...pass it on!" Available in black or white.

..... \$10

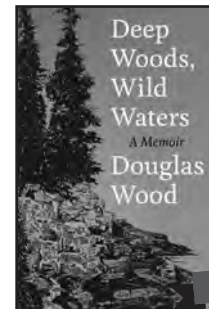
New!



LPF Hats

For your wearing pleasure! 100% cotton, embroidered with the Listening Point logo. Choose from cranberry, cream, loden green, sea foam green and sky blue. Adjustable leather strap.

..... \$18



Deep Woods, Wild Waters, A Memoir
by Douglas Wood. A joy to read - Wood shares bushwhacking skills, hurtling down wild rapids, crossing stormy lakes, or simply navigating treacherous currents and the twisty trails of everyday life.

..... \$23

New!

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☐ *Wilderness Days* @ \$18.00 = _____

☐ *Wilderness World of Sigurd F. Olson* DVD @ \$15.00 = _____

☐ *Story of Listening Point* booklet, by Robert Olson ... @ \$ 5.00 = _____

☐ *Wilderness Moments* booklet @ \$ 5.00 = _____

☐ *Breath of Wilderness* @ \$13.00 = _____

☐ *A Wilderness Within* @ \$23.00 = _____

☐ *Solitary Shores* audio CD @ \$18.00 = _____

☐ Sigurd Olson poster @ \$15.00 = _____

☐ *The Meaning of Wilderness* @ \$18.00 = _____

☐ LPF Hat - (choose color) @ \$18.00 = _____

cranberry, cream, loden, sea foam green, sky blue

☐ LPF Mug (choose black or white) @ \$10.00 = _____

☐ *Breathe the Wind, Drink the Rain*, by Douglas Wood @ \$10.00 = _____

☐ *Firewood Happens* by Mike Lein @ \$12.00 = _____

☐ *Deep Woods, Wild Waters* by Douglas Wood @ \$23.00 = _____

☐ Pocket Journal with SFO quote @ \$15.00 = _____

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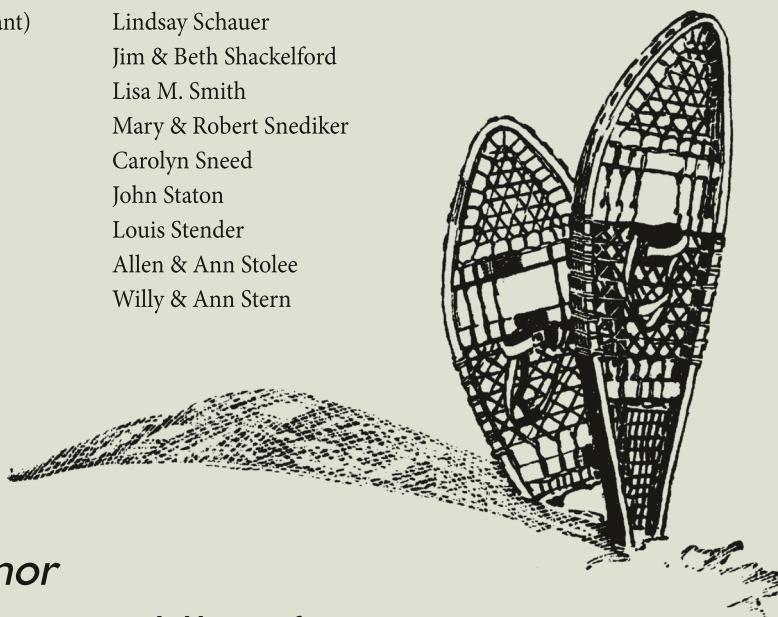
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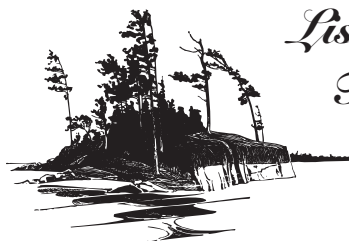
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Listening Point Foundation, Inc.

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Still missing in action!

LPF is in search of a copy
of the 2014 Fall Newsletter

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