

7/6/06

## FIELD TRIP NOTES

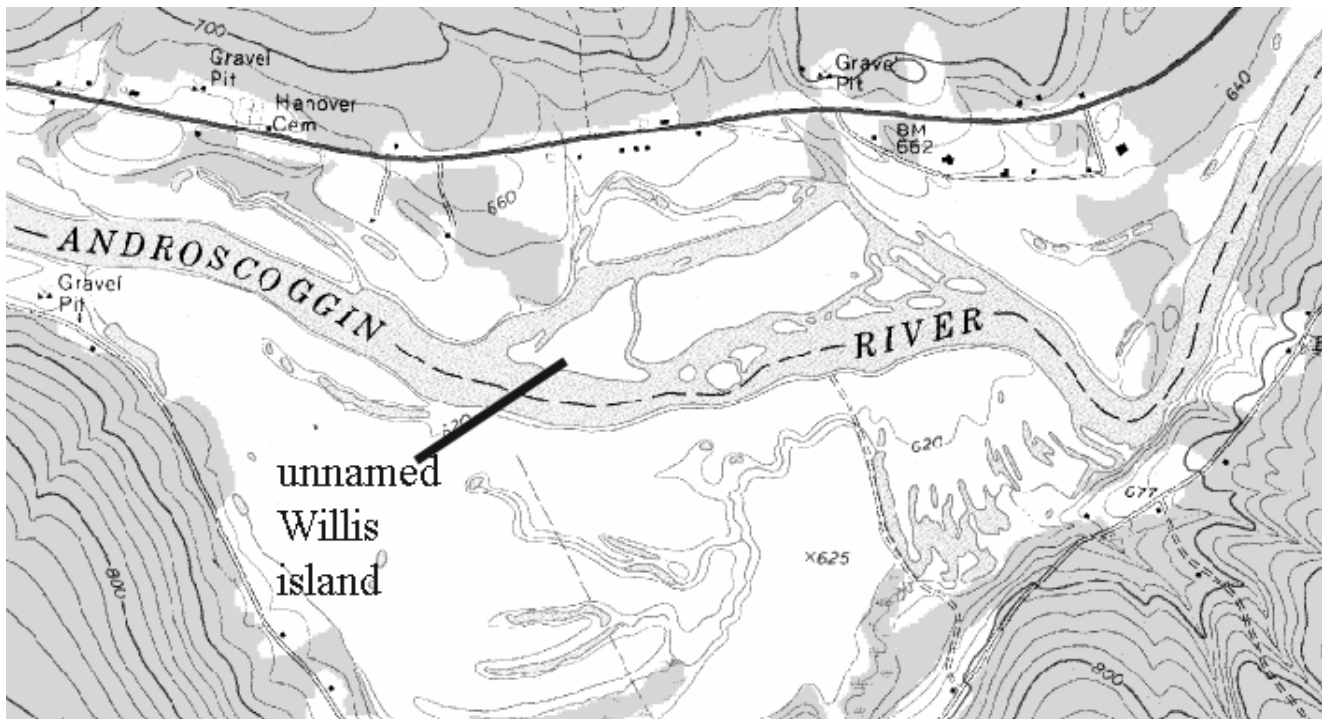
RE: unnamed Willis island  
FROM: Ken Hotopp

An island property of Mahoosuc Land Trust was visited on 7/4/06 by my wife Robin Gorrell and I. The unnamed island is the first in a series called the Willis Islands, just upstream of Hanover in the Androscoggin River, Maine.



Head of unnamed Willis island as seen from upstream (west)

The Androscoggin River flows from west to east past the island. During our 30 minute visit it appeared that the island is mostly rich alluvial soil, perhaps 300 meters long and nearly as wide. On shore to the south lies a large floodplain complex of farm fields and stream channels near the mouth of Otter Creek, with Intervale Road in the distance. To the north lies floodplain, upland and Rt.2.





gravel bar on upstream end of island looking east

The island's upstream end is a low gravel bar. Midway, the island's south side is steeply cut by the river, and at the island's downstream limit is a steep, narrow channel (5-10 meters) that separates this island from the next.

The island is densely vegetated with grasses, vines and forbs, with scattered hardwood trees above. Most of the island is approximately 3 meters above the river, and larger trees show ice scars low on their trunks. We did not see sign of recent agricultural or other intensive uses.



Lush cover, including Virginia creeper and reedtop, under a sparse canopy of mostly silver maple.

A preliminary list of vegetation appears below. Silver maple is the dominant tree species. In the herbaceous layer, poison ivy is present, but not abundant, on the south side of the island where we landed. The island has a number of non-native plants including the invasives purple loosestrife, Japanese knotweed and reed canary grass. Ostrich fern is abundant above the back channel.

some plants of unnamed Willis island

*Acer saccharinum*

*Alnus cf rugosa*

*Asclepias syriaca*

*Agrostis gigantean\**

*Eleocharis cf palustris*

*Eupatorium cf purpurpurea*

*cf Euthamia graminifolia*

*Fallopia cf convolvulus\**

*F. japonica\**

*Fragaria sp.*

*Fraxinus americana*

*Iris sp.*

silver maple

speckled alder

purple-flowering milkweed

reedtop

creeping spike-rush

joe-pye-weed

grass-leaved goldenrod

black bindweed

Japanese knotweed

strawberry

northern white ash

unidentified iris

<i>Lysmachia terrestris</i>	swamp candles
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i> *	purple loosestrife
<i>Matteucia pennsylvanica</i>	ostrich fern
<i>Oenothera cf lacinata</i>	evening primrose
<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>	sensitive fern
<i>Oxalis europea</i> *	oxalis
<i>Panicum</i> sp.	panic grass
<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	Virginia creeper
<i>Phalaris arundinaceae</i> *	reed canary grass
<i>Salix</i> sp.	unidentified willow
<i>Scirpus</i> sp.	unidentified rush
<i>Sicyos angulatus</i>	bur-cucumber
<i>Solidago</i> sp.	unidentified goldenrod
<i>Spiraea latifolia</i>	meadowsweet
<i>S. tomentosa</i>	hardhack
<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i> *	tansy
<i>Tilia cf americana</i>	basswood
<i>Toxicodendron radicans</i>	poison ivy
<i>Ulmus rubra</i>	slippery elm
* non-native	

Although it was mid-day during our visit, a few birds were still singing, including red-eyed vireo, catbird, song sparrow and yellowthroat. Bank swallows flew over the river and tracks of raccoon, white-tailed deer and moose were seen in the mud of the back channel. Invertebrates included the common whitetail (dragonfly) and the dusky arion (slug).

Superficially, the island appears to support a rich - though typical - floodplain flora and fauna. Readers should note that this report is cursory, not a thorough account of this MLT property, but may provide a useful starting point for future exploration and management.



Channel at downstream end of island (looking south)