

ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST

The Conservation Land Trust of
Deer Isle and Stonington, Maine, and Surrounding Islands



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Island Preserves as Science Labs

Deer Isle-Stonington Elementary School Principal, Mike Benjamin, is also a licensed forester, so he understands well that the Island preserves are ready-made for science education. IHT's School Program is being created to serve this very purpose. "It's great that we have this connection," Benjamin said.

For years volunteer naturalists have contributed countless hours to passing on their knowledge and enthusiasm for natural history to Island school children. They are the forerunners of the IHT's School Program and continue to serve as teachers, advisors and consultants. These efforts are now being formalized thanks to a grant which has enabled IHT to contract with Mary Murphy to develop lesson plans for grades K-8, using IHT's preserves as laboratories for environmental education. Murphy notes, "If a student learns about the life cycle of a hermit crab while actually holding a live one, it is going to stick in their memory a lot longer than reading about it in a textbook. And, of course, it's more fun!"

Murphy has lived on the Island off and on since she was a teenager homeschooling herself while living with her uncle and aunt, Peter and Anne Beerits. She went on to graduate with honors from Mt. Holyoke College and has worked all over the U.S. building trails, facilitating wilderness therapy for teenagers, educating the public about gray wolves, and guiding backcountry expeditions. An avid proponent of relevant, hands-on learning, Murphy is enthusiastic

about creating lessons that are interactive, lively and fun.

Murphy's first opportunity to teach came unexpectedly when she got a last-minute call in February the evening before the kindergarten class was scheduled to spend a morning at the Reach Beach. In a couple of hours she rapidly devised some activities that would teach the children about teamwork, tidal movement, organiz-



Mary Murphy
Murphy takes advantage of snowshoes and beautiful day to research deer ecology at Tennis Preserve.

ing natural objects by color, and animal characteristics. Despite frigid temperatures and top speed preparation, teacher Darlene Allen said, "It was the BEST presentation we ever had!!," noting that Mary did a "wonderful job" generating very interesting activities that were developmentally appropriate. Benjamin stresses that the IHT curricula must meet the "parameters of essential instruction" (PEIs) mandated by the Maine Learning Results. Comment-

ing on a presentation Murphy made to elementary school teachers about her plans, he noted, "She was right on the mark. I was impressed."

According to Murphy, "Most environmental education is designed to be applied anywhere, often indoors. What's unique about IHT's program is that it is designed specifically for Deer Isle." At Mariners Park third graders will find abundant evidence for the study of glacial geology. Fourth graders will explore vernal pools and study the life cycle of wood frogs and spotted salamanders at Shore Acres. Sixth graders will learn about marine organisms and biological classification at Barred Island's tide pools.

As students pass from one grade level to the next they will learn both about a different Island preserve, and the particular ecological lessons it has to offer. IHT's Executive Director, Mike Little, looks forward to creating an ongoing program that is an integral part of public education here on the island. Critical to this effort is a volunteer cadre of School Program Docents to implement the curricula that Murphy has drafted. Age-appropriate lesson plans—all include a pre-packed box of goodies from shells and skulls to hand lenses and binoculars - are designed so that any interested volunteer who enjoys both nature and children will readily be able to offer a fun and memorable experience.

Docent training is offered in both spring and fall—no experience needed! Contact Mike at 348-2455 if you'd like to learn more about it.



From the Executive Director

A legacy is a gift from an ancestor or a predecessor. This year the people of Deer Isle came together to give a gift to their descendants – the gift of the Lily Pond Beach. This generous action will be remembered as long as people swim at the beach.

IHT spearheaded the effort, and will own and manage the property (with advice from a special Lily Pond Beach management committee), but the acquisition

was made possible by individuals who wanted to leave something of value for their children, grandchildren, and all future generations. Land for Maine's Future helped with the purchase. What is that program but a statewide legacy machine fueled by the vision of protecting what Mainers think important through state bond issues? The Lily Pond Beach purchase was that legacy money (voted for by the voters on Deer Isle) returning to our community.

How is it that IHT is here to protect the Lily Pond Beach? It is

the legacy of a small group of visionaries who formed a land trust in 1987 to protect land and educate landowners on Deer Isle about their options to protect the land they love. And that is what IHT is really all about—building a legacy to hand down to future generations. A legacy of clean waters and open space; a legacy of resources conserved and protected so as to provide a living for those to come; a legacy of a way of life Downeast.

◆ Annual Shore Dinner – Sat., July 31 – Save the Date! ◆

Keep in Touch

You receive this newsletter each spring and fall. And now, thanks to a growing e-mail list and the desire to keep members abreast of IHT news and activities year-round, we are sending a monthly news update by e-mail. Please help by keeping us current on your contact info, and let us know if you want to save us paper and postage costs by getting this print newsletter via e-mail.

Deer Isle is a year-round photo opportunity and many of you take outstanding photos regularly, or by chance. We're always looking for images of the beauty and wonder of the island, and would love to share yours with our readers. We can't promise to print everything, but will happily credit you if your photo appears. Bob Wilson, Sunshine, captured (digitally) this Barred Owl that paused in his yard late this winter to snack on a plump vole.

Contact info/jpegs to mlittle@islandheritagetrust.org



Bob Wilson



ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST NEWSLETTER

The mission of the Island Heritage Trust is to conserve significant open space, scenic areas, wildlife habitats, natural resources, historic and cultural features that offer public benefit and are essential to the character of the Deer Isle area.

420 Sunset Road
PO Box 42
Deer Isle, ME 04627
207-348-2455

iht@islandheritagetrust.org
www.islandheritagetrust.org
Mike Little, Executive Director
George Fields, Stewardship Director

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The Lily Pond Beach Project:

An Unqualified Success

The Lily Pond Beach Project, begun as a Herculean undertaking to secure the beach property for future generations of Islanders, culminated successfully in the transfer of ownership from the Haskell family to IHT March 31, 2010.

While it was an extraordinarily ambitious and challenging endeavor for the Trust to embark upon, with plenty of skeptics and naysayers at the outset, there were many who were determined to achieve the goal. A highlight was the Lock-Up, held January 10, 2010, at the Community Center in Stonington, which capped the Trust's year-long fundraising effort and "pushed it over the finish line," according to IHT Executive Director, Mike Little. The goal to raise \$361,290 was achieved, in part, through a grant from Land for Maine's Future, but it was the wholehearted support and generosity offered by individual Islanders as well as by many local organizations such as the Fishermen's Wives Association, both town governing bodies, and the Island Community Center that saw the project to its successful completion sooner than anyone might have imagined.

That the fundraising effort was undertaken during one of the nation's most prolonged and

deeply felt economic recessions makes its success that much more astonishing and gratifying. "People really came through," said Little. Since the Lily Pond Beach has been a treasured Island feature for many years, community support developed and grew significantly, particularly once IHT made it clear that public access to the beach was paramount. Noted Becca Emerson, "There was a fear of [the beach] being sold privately. Each and every person on the Island has a connection to Lily Pond."

Until the Project, many people had had misperceptions about IHT and its role in the community, said Roger Bergen, chair-

"There was a fear of [the beach] being sold privately."

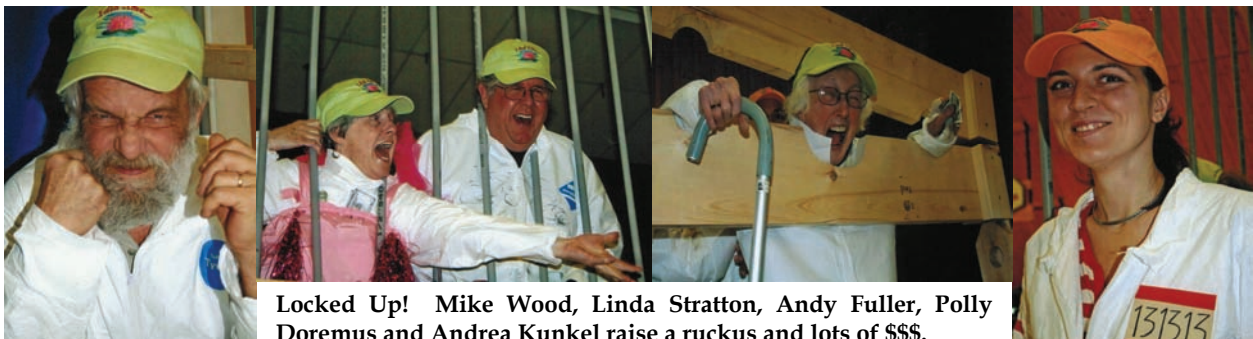
Becca Emerson

man of IHT's committee for the Lily Pond Project. Bergen added that the Project's completion was "a real coup" for IHT, resulting not only in securing the beach, but in putting IHT "in a better light in the community." According to Bergen, Mike Little was largely responsible for gaining community support. "He was really the kingpin," said Bergen, adding, "None of this would have happened without Mike."

"We were determined to establish and maintain communication among the committee, the [IHT] board, and the public," said Little. "We wanted to be transparent and have a focused project: to acquire the Lily Pond Beach." He emphasized that having a clear, well laid out plan was essential.

Perhaps nothing in the fundraising activities so illustrates the community's enthusiastic participation as did the Lock-Up, an idea conceived by Becca Emerson to help raise the last of the funds. Various members of the community volunteered to be "locked up" at the Community Center, in a makeshift jail constructed by Linda Campbell and Sarah Doremus. Pledges were solicited. In what developed as a contest between the two, Linda Stratton and Andy Fuller alone raised \$1,700. The DIS school children raised \$300, "penny by penny," said Emerson. All told, the Lock-Up added over \$7,000 to the Lily Pond Beach fund.

The next step: Establishing a committee of 7-10 community members, headed by Pat Gross, that will oversee the management of the beach. Although IHT will be the legal owner of the property, the beach will, for all intents and purposes, belong to everyone on the Island, continuing to remain the treasured and idyllic locale for swimming lessons, ice skating, and picnicking, it has always been -- precisely the goal established by IHT at the outset.



Locked Up! Mike Wood, Linda Stratton, Andy Fuller, Polly Doremus and Andrea Kunkel raise a ruckus and lots of \$\$\$.

Little Deer Isle's Big, Easy Conservation Easement

IHT Director Mike Little paused to talk about the area's latest conservation easement the day after the season's first warm (mid 40's), rainy night, when he and six other "two-leggeds" joined quacking wood frogs and salamanders preparing to "congress" on an annual migration to a vernal pool behind Doug Wilson's Little Deer Isle metal studio.

Elsewhere on Little Deer, the community's newest easement includes a large vernal pool: a temporary, spring-time pool that provides essential breeding habitat for wood frogs and spotted salamanders. The Weiss family, who owns the land, devised an easement in consultation with IHT that also protects a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile swath of shoreline on Penobscot Bay and Swain's Cove, and over 40 wooded acres surmounted by ledge-y Mt. Kezer. The terms provide for two existing buildings on the property, tucked way back from the shore, and for a forester's management plan permitting log harvest and forest revitalization, but not clear cutting. Protecting 43 acres of the 47 acre parcel from development, the easement sets aside a building envelope for one future home site, should the family choose to sell a piece of the property in the future.

The Weiss property's financial value under the easement, as with farmland or lakeshore property protected forever from development, is less than it might be if sold for maximum development potential. Its real value is deemed priceless by its owners.

The Weiss easement terms, in between "forever wild" protection, with virtually no use permitted, and complete logging, as

in the Northwoods, suit the families' needs. As Little says "as long as it's written into the easement you can do it." An easement could allow for cutting two cords of wood for personal heating, for example, or no wood cutting at all, if this is what the owners and IHT agree upon.

Luckily for IHT, among the three Weiss siblings' families, is Orono environmental leader David Clement. Asked to join the board of the Orono Land Trust in 1999, he has volunteered as the



**Conservation-minded landowner
David Clement, Orono and
Little Deer Isle**

organization's active president/de facto executive director for the past three years. While not on duty as an anesthesiologist at St. Joseph Hospital, he has coordinated among 20 some organizations on the Caribou Bog-Penjawoc Project, a conservation and recreation corridor connecting Bangor, Veazie, Orono, Old Town, Alton and Hudson.

According to Little, the Weiss family "was a pleasure to deal with and did a wonderful job" reaching agreement about what it wanted and what it considered acceptable before even approach-

ing IHT about the easement. The family had already done the hard work to come to a mutual understanding among its members, leaving the Trust with minimal questions and suggestions, and Little grateful for an unusually "easy easement."

Little says an easement can take two years, often longer, to complete. While he says there is "no place for IHT to come in before the family comes to agreement," he invites anyone with questions about protecting a beloved piece of property to call the office and arrange for a discussion about what IHT can do to help protect the land you love.

Properties protected by easements *do* stay on the tax rolls, though there may be both income and property tax benefits depending on the particulars involved. For example, land that is "permanently protected" is eligible for a tax abatement. Little feels the Weisses "gave the community and residents a gift in protecting the parcel, a little jewel." He dares to hope their easement might encourage a cycle of area neighbors adding to the protected land around Swain's Cove.

The Nature Shop

Summer hours:
Daily 10-4 PM

NEW!

- ◆Expanded shop & inventory
- ◆Upgraded Deer Isle map
- ◆Lighthouse passports
- ◆Dozens of field guides for birds, amphibians, marine life, flora and fauna
- ◆Exhibit of archeological findings from Scott's Landing

Conservation Easement

A legal agreement between a landowner and land trust that permanently limits the uses of land in order to protect its conservation values: scenic, natural, marine, historic, agricultural, or open space.

Landowners use conservation easements to “conserve” what they value about a particular piece of land: a stretch of shoreline that is still untamed and beautiful, a vernal pool that provides essential breeding habitat for wildlife, a working forest, a scenic spot that has been a local favorite for generations, or simply a piece of land that is so well-loved that protection is a natural imperative. An easement allows landowners to continue to own, live on and use their land, and sell it or pass it on to heirs. All future owners, whether they are family or purchasers from the open market, will be bound by the easement’s terms. This legal agreement (recorded in the Registry of Deeds) is given to, or held by, a land trust whose job it is to see to it that the terms are honored, forever. A big job. This is what stewardship is all about.

Conservation easements offer great flexibility. A property containing rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development, for example, while an easement

on wooded land may permit commercial forestry. An easement may apply to all or a portion of a property, and may or may not include public access.

Easements may yield tax benefits, as restricting development usually lowers market and/or assessed value. For example, an easement can make a critical difference in one’s heirs’ ability to keep land intact, by lowering the potential estate tax.

Land trusts were formed, in part, to hold and steward easements, monitoring them in perpetuity and ensuring that the terms are understood and kept by both original and successive landown-

ers. The land trust has an interest in conservation: protecting habitat for wildlife, preserving property with special meaning to the local community and, ideally, providing public access. In turn, the landowners are assured that key aspects of their property are permanently protected.

IHT holds 30 easements, including 10 on nearby islands, in addition to managing the 18 properties it owns. Part-time staffer, George Fields, oversees stewardship on all 48 properties. If you are interested in learning more about conservation easements, contact Mike Little at 348-2455.



Shore of Tennis Preserve

Elke Dorr

I want to contribute to the Stewardship Fund by endowing an acre

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation

____ \$435 for 1 acre ____ \$870 for 2 acres ____ Other

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Summer address _____

Email _____

Thank you for joining this effort!

Island Heritage Trust, PO Box 42, Deer Isle, Maine 04627



Anne Beerits

As a non-profit, Island Heritage Trust depends on membership, donations and grants to fund programs, and volunteer time and expertise to keep them running. Whether it's dollars or dimes or simply time, all help is appreciated and put to good use.

One way some supporters, such as Monie Lonergan, have chosen to contribute is to "endow an acre." From her perspective Deer Isle is a "marvelous island" and IHT is doing important work "to keep the land in its natural state." She first came to Deer Isle

Endowing a Acre Yields Benefits Forever

with her family in 1984, and has been coming to stay "from Memorial Day to hunting season" most years ever since.

For her, the Endow an Acre Program is appealing because it will, over time, create an endowment, the interest from which can fund ongoing stewardship activities: signage, survey and legal work, trail maintenance, insurance, and staff time.

A long-term effort, the Stewardship Fund ensures proper oversight and maintenance of IHT's holdings. Moreover, as a responsible member of the community, IHT makes an annual payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT), to the towns of Stonington and Deer Isle, at a rate slightly above the tax rate for land under forest management. One goal of the Endow an Acre Program is to

ensure that resources continue to be available for the "payment in lieu of taxes." The stronger its roots in the community, the better IHT can serve the Island and its residents, be they year round or, like Mrs. Lonergan, part-time.

Ultimately, as the Stewardship Fund grows, then monies raised through other IHT activities such as its annual campaign can be used to expand programs for schools and for residents, as well as visitors to the Island. As Mike Little points out, a healthy endowment ensuring proper stewardship is a win/win for everyone. And from Monie Lonergan's point of view, the \$435 it costs to "endow an acre" is money well spent, a contribution that will continue to benefit the Island for generations to come.

Destination: Breeding Habitat

Deer Isle is the destination of choice for thousands of tired and hungry visitors every May. They're called warblers and, though weighing only a miniscule third of an ounce, these tiny birds have just flown thousands of miles from winter grounds in Mexico, Central or South America. They come north to breed and to feed on the many protein-rich insects we have to offer this time of year.

The annual Wings, Waves and Woods Festival, sponsored by the Deer Isle-Stonington Chamber of Commerce, the Downeast Chapter of Maine Audubon and Island Heritage Trust, is timed to correspond with this very exciting migration. Warblers are the most colorful of all the songbirds and with a little training, one can learn to distinguish both their distinctive plumage and individual calls. There is no more entertaining and well-informed teacher than Bob Duchesne, founder of the Maine Birding Trail. He will be on hand for the entire weekend, May 21-23, joining local experts to lead birding trips on land and water. His captivating talk last year, *Birding by Ear*, following the annual local foods chowder supper at the Congregational Church, had listeners on the edge of their pews. Seriously!

The Festival celebrates not only birding, but also art inspired by this glorious habitat we all share. The weekend festivities begin on Friday, May 21, with an exhibit opening and reception at the Pearson Legacy Gallery on Dow Road, and several studio demos and exhibits are offered over the course of the weekend. One of Jackie Wilson's distinctive woodcuts is featured on this year's Festival poster.

All of the weekend activities are open to the public and many are free. Seamark Community Arts is sponsoring a birdhouse building workshop for children on Saturday morning, but the entire weekend is a great opportunity for local families to explore the habitat they share with some of nature's most beautiful creatures. A full schedule is found at www.islandheritagetrust.org or call Mike at 348-2455.



American Redstart

*"What you leave
behind is not what is
engraved in stone,
but what is woven into
the lives of others."*

Pericles



Greenlaw Cove shoreline

Anne Beerits

For 12 years Nancy Dewey and Mike Wood have been volunteer stewards of a property donated to IHT by an elderly friend of theirs, who trusted them to mind his property as he intended. As Nancy points out when people refer to IHT as "the Trust," "that word, 'trust,' is really what it's all about." While public access to the isolated 27-acre property they look after is permitted, it can be reached only by foot travel down a one mile stretch of private, barely passable road.

Stewardship: It's all about Trust

IHT's role in protecting land valued for its natural attributes varies, as each property is unique in terms of the access, features, and the precise terms of the easement. Occasionally, time-sensitive opportunities for outright purchase of important local places lead to community-wide fundraising and widely-celebrated protection of property of particular value to the community as a whole, such as Causeway Beach and the Lily Pond Beach.

Bob Fisk, the donor of the property for which Nancy and

Mike serve as stewards, wished for his land to be left undeveloped. When Fisk asked them what he should do with his property as he prepared to leave Deer Isle for the last time, they unhesitatingly suggested that he leave it to IHT, because they felt IHT could be trusted to honor his wishes. Although several islands had been transferred to IHT from The Nature Conservancy, Fisk's was the first donation of land to come from an individual. The property amounts to a gift of forever undeveloped land from a departing friend to his former community. In keeping with IHT's aim to protect fresh water resources, this property's wetlands, bordering on Toffet Pond, were of particular interest.

Nancy and Mike value people such as Bob Fisk "who quietly lead by example, do not push people around, and allow different generations and populations respect." Nancy states that her belief in IHT is "hugely due to Judy Hill," who left Shore Acres Preserve to IHT before her death, and Ann Hooke, who "respects local people first and who 'gets' learning from local people."

As Chair of the Stewardship Committee, Hooke asked Mike and Nancy to be the volunteer stewards for the Fisk property. As is common in rural Maine, verbal descriptions of property borders entail overlapping

boundary claims, and there are still some discrepancies that need to be clarified among adjoining landowners on the property. Nancy likens this scenario to a "scrunched up quilt that won't lay flat." Older and wiser now, IHT ensures that deeds and easements are clear and sound before accepting them. Meanwhile, Nancy and Mike are volunteering to keep the channels open and watch over this inaugural property.

Volunteer

Office/Nature Shop

Do you know your way around the IHT preserves? Become a volunteer at Heritage House and greet visitors, answer the phone, sell shop items and help visitors explore and enjoy the outdoors.

Land Stewardship

Serve as a steward for a conservation easement or preserve, ensuring compliance with easement terms or management goals.

Youth Education

Help create meaningful experiences for Island children through our School Program.

Preserve/trail maintenance

Clear blow downs and dead fall, mark and maintain trails, pick up trash, make signs.

Contact Mike at 348-2455 or mlittle@islandheritagetrust.org

Wings, Waves & Woods

A Festival of Birding & Art



May 21-23, 2010
Deer Isle, Maine
www.deerisle.com

Birding Workshops, Guided Walks, Boat Trips, Gallery & Art Events, Chowder Supper
Sponsored by the Deer Isle-Stonington Chamber of Commerce & Island Heritage Trust 207-348-2455

Birds seen during 2009 Festival:

American Redstart, Atlantic Puffin, Bald Eagle, Baltimore Oriole, Bobolink, Black Guillemot, Black-and-white Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue Jay, Catbird, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-capped Chickadee, Common Eider, Common Loon, Common Tern, Common Yellowthroat, Crow, Double-crested Cormorant, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Goldfinch, Grackle, Great Black-backed Gull, Hermit Thrush, Herring Gull, Laughing Gull, Magnolia Warbler, Mallard, Mourning Dove, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Osprey, Purple Finch, Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Red-winged Blackbird, Robin, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Song Sparrow, Surf Scoter, Swainson's Thrush, White-throated Sparrow, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Wilson's Warbler, Savannah Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler



ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST
P.O. BOX 42
DEER ISLE, ME 04627
(207) 348-2455

Address Service Requested



Eagles? Where, where?!

Bob Wilson