

2020

ANNUAL REPORT



ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST

420 Sunset Road, Deer Isle, Maine 04627
www.islandheritagetrust.org

FOCUSING ON GRATITUDE

Looking back on 2020, despite the complete upheaval from what we might have considered “normal,” the feeling that stands out is an overwhelming sense of gratitude. Despite heartbreaking loss, significant challenges, and having to adapt our programming and stewardship activities, we are rounding a corner as an organization even stronger than when this all began. We are so grateful to be in this position.

Throughout 2020, when safe outdoor spaces became more critical than ever, we prioritized keeping our preserves open and trails accessible to the public. We saw unprecedented levels of use, which presented its own set of challenges. Not only did we keep up with public use and typical trail maintenance, but we also made significant headway removing browntail moth infestations and invasive plant species, both critical for the safety of our visitors and the ecological health of the islands. And while many were staying home to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, we adapted our programs to an online format that allowed for increased participation. This included working with our local schools and conducting educational programs for all ages, such as our collaborative webinar series, *Friends from the Field*, with Blue Hill Heritage Trust.

We also forged ahead on some major projects. Building on our efforts over the last several years, we have recently submitted our Accreditation Application to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. We successfully collaborated with Island Workforce Housing to raise acquisition funds for the property on Oliver’s Pond, which will include a 14-acre parcel of land donated to IHT in the near future. And finally, we updated the Lily Pond Dam Emergency Action Plan and hired a civil engineer to assess seepage at the dam, involving critical community partners – such as the Deer Isle Fire Department – in the repair or reconstruction.

2020 was an opportunity for learning and growth in so many ways, as an organization and as individuals. We have found that even through the darkest of times, our community is there for us with their support and encouragement.

We are so grateful for your support that enables this work.

Thank you.



BILL WIEGMANN
Board Chair



JULIA ZELL
Executive Director



Church Land



1. Oliver's Pond



2. Bridge Relocation at Shore Acres



3. Great Blue Heron Webinar



4. School Nature Trail

ACHIEVEMENTS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020

1. In collaboration with Island Workforce Housing (IWH), we successfully raised funds to help secure a property on the Sunset Crossroad and Oliver's Pond to further both our organizations' missions. While IWH will retain a portion of the property for the first phase of their workforce housing construction, a 14-acre parcel will be conserved as a public preserve along the shore and wetland of beautiful Oliver's Pond.

2. We maintained safe access to our preserves throughout the pandemic lockdown, as Maine considered outdoor recreation an "essential activity." We agree and saw unprecedented use of the trails throughout the year! Our ability to keep trails safe and open would not have been possible without our stellar volunteers! We were grateful and proud to offer these resources in support of the

physical and mental health of the community in these challenging times.

3. We started a collaborative educational webinar series with Blue Hill Heritage Trust called *Friends from the Field*, which reached thousands of participants! We are continuing this program into the future because we found that it removed barriers to access for those who traditionally cannot attend workshops in person and also welcomed speakers from outside the immediate area.

4. The second phase of the School Nature Trail was completed, finally connecting the Deer Isle – Stonington Elementary and High Schools. This provided critical outdoor education space throughout the pandemic, including a bird feeder station that delighted the students!

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

500 +
STUDENTS SERVED

In 2020, Island Heritage Trust, led by Environmental Educator Martha Bell, engaged more than 500 students both virtually and when they returned to in-person learning. Martha also facilitated the completion of the second phase of the multi-year School Nature Trail project. Students, community volunteers, and contracted local help built the new trail, along with support from multiple agencies and organizations. Students used The Nature Trail for research projects, including a bird feeder station, skunk cabbage temperature study of thermogenesis, and daily soil temperature monitoring to track seasonal changes. The trail also served as an outdoor classroom and a much-needed daily respite for the entire school from indoor COVID-19 restrictions.

Early in the year, Martha Bell graduated from the year-long, intensive Maine Master Naturalist Program, which led to *Stump the Naturalist Thursdays*. This project tasked students with going outside to find something that Martha had to identify. Encouraging kids and adults alike to get outside during the stay-at-home order and throughout the pandemic was a critical part of IHT's environmental education work over the last year.



School Nature Trail Opening in 2019



Building Bird Feeders



Lisa Tolman Wotton Nature Preserve

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PUBLIC ACCESS LAND

IHT PRESERVES OPEN FOR USE:

1. Bowcat Overlook
2. Causeway Beach
3. Church Land
4. Crystal Cove
5. Lily Pond Park
6. Lisa Tolman Wotton Nature Preserve
7. Pine Hill
8. Reach Beach at Gray's Cove
9. Scott's Landing
10. Settlement Quarry
11. Shore Acres

PRESERVES CO-MANAGED BY IHT:

12. Barred Island
The Nature Conservancy
13. Crockett Cove Woods
The Nature Conservancy
14. Holt Mill Pond
Town of Stonington
15. Edgar M. Tennis Preserve
Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands

OFF-SHORE ISLANDS OPEN FOR USE:

16. Bradbury Island
17. Carney Island
18. Whig Island
19. Polypod Island
20. Mark Island
21. Wreck Island
22. Round Island
23. Millet Island



4

PRESERVES CO-MANAGED BY IHT

21

MILES OF PROTECTED SHOREFRONT

21

OFF-SHORE ISLANDS CONSERVED BY IHT

25

PRESERVES OWNED BY IHT

37

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

1,450

ACRES OF PROTECTED LAND

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

STEWARDSHIP

2020 marked the first year in Island Heritage Trust's history that we had a dedicated, full-time land steward. This increased capacity allowed for more comprehensive stewardship and planning to meet our obligations as a land trust.

We started the year hosting volunteer workdays to eliminate Browntail Moth webs from several IHT preserves. This effort helped reduce the total population of moths, lessen the infestation impact on our preserves, minimize the health risks to visitors, and educate community members on how to manage the moths. Our *Pole Pruner Lending Program* allowed community members to tackle the webs on their own properties.

Although our *Trail Tuesday* program paused during the stay-at-home order, IHT staff was able to steward our 62 properties and easements, and worked to co-manage four others, keeping them safe and open for public use. Thanks to our Summer Stewardship Assistant Terry Real we tackled several projects over the summer months. Along with volunteers, IHT led an islands clean-up day with the Maine Island Trail Association, erected a kiosk at Lisa Tolman Wotton Nature Preserve, relocated the bridge and trail away from the eroding shoreline at Shore Acres Preserve, and tackled several non-native invasive plant species, including Black Swallow-wort, Japanese Knotweed, Japanese Barberry, and the Yellow Flag Iris.



Browntail Moth Clipping



Island Cleanup Day



Lisa Tolman Wotton Nature Preserve

22
TRAIL TUESDAYS

30+
STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS



Shore Acres Preserve

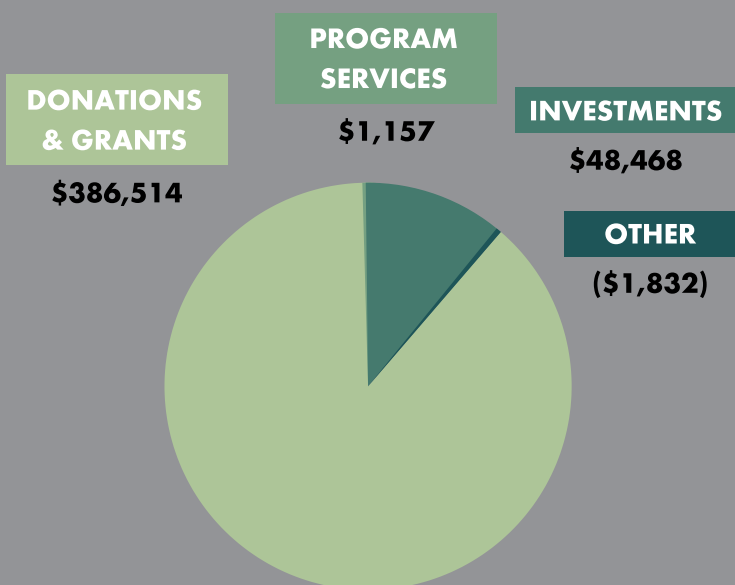
**NET ASSETS WITH
DONOR RESTRICTIONS:**
\$737,550

**NET ASSETS WITHOUT
DONOR RESTRICTIONS:**
\$466,278

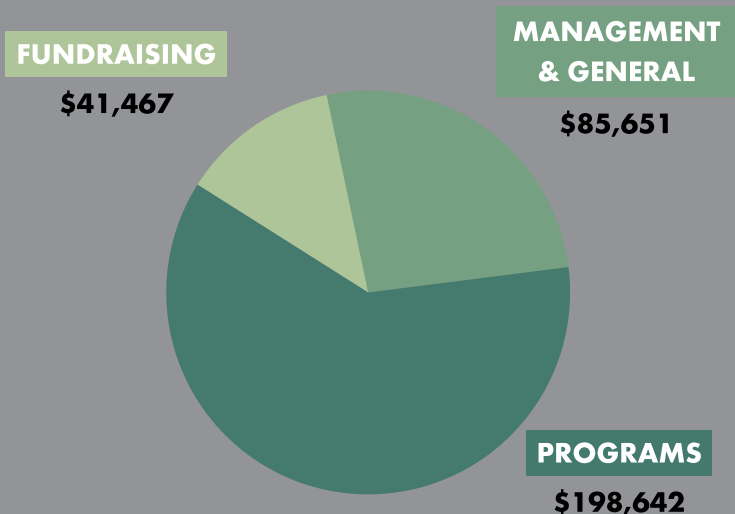
LIABILITIES:
\$14,723

TOTAL: \$1,218,551

TOTAL REVENUE: \$434,307



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$325,760



2020 FINANCIALS

It seems odd to say that 2020 was a good year, but in fact it was for our bottom line - thanks to the generosity of our donors. Our revenue totaled \$434k which was \$95k higher than our fiscal year ending in October 2019. Of our donations, 30% came from donor-advised funds, while 70% came from our individual donors, including \$18k from 110 new donors.

On the expense side, the staff diligently kept a careful eye on our expenses and sought opportunities to use new technologies. They were able to hold our expenses to a total of \$325k, which is \$15k or 4% under the previous year. Most of the savings were achieved by moving to video, online activities, and electronic communications. These efficiencies provided other benefits that will likely carry into the future.

Our net income for the year exceeded \$108k. This allows us to prepare for the future and be better able to meet unexpected challenges. We are grateful to our contributors for their confidence and for allowing us to maintain a solid footing in difficult times.





STAFF

Julia Zell, Executive Director

Alex Drenga, Stewardship Director

Terry Real, Summer Stewardship Assistant

Jacob McCarty, Outreach Manager

Martha Bell, Environmental Educator

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Open Space
Open Minds

Church Land
Front Cover: School Nature Trail