2025

ANNUAL REPORT



ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST

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


Church Land

CARING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

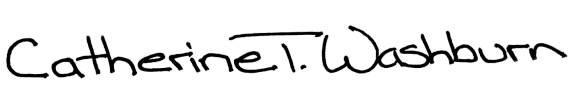
Reflecting on 2025, Island Heritage Trust (IHT) has achieved some important milestones. For the first time in the organization's history, we have effectively had more than two full-time-equivalent professional staff dedicated to stewardship. This includes a year-round Conservation Director and Land Steward, supported by a seasonal Summer Stewardship Assistant and an AmeriCorps/Maine Conservation Corps-sponsored Shore Corps service fellow — along with more than 40 dedicated stewardship volunteers.

Over IHT's first 35 years, the organization grew to protect nearly 1,500 acres, while staffing evolved from volunteer-only stewardship to a half-time steward and, eventually, a three-quarter-time steward with a summer assistant. As IHT's conservation success has continued, so has our responsibility to care for these lands in perpetuity. In 2026, our conservation responsibilities stand at around 2,300 acres. Over the last seven-plus years, we have made a considered, intentional effort to ensure our capacity keeps pace — providing safe and enjoyable access to existing preserves while responsibly taking on new projects. Protecting land is only the beginning; caring for it is a commitment we make for generations.

In 2025, we also received a multi-year grant to expand our Environmental Education staff as we prepare for the retirement of our much-loved longtime educator, Martha Bell. The transition was designed to support Martha and our local schools through administrative and staffing changes while ensuring a succession grounded in trust and strong relationships. With this support, we welcomed Torri Robbins to work alongside Martha and help prepare for the next chapter of IHT Environmental Education.

Strengthening the organization has helped us build new partnerships, increase grant support and project opportunities, and deepen our involvement with the towns of Deer Isle and Stonington, as well as regional efforts through the Hancock County Planning Commission and Downeast Conservation Network.

At the end of 2025, IHT's Board completed a new five-year strategic plan, informed by feedback from our members and the broader community. As we look toward IHT's 40th anniversary and re-accreditation, we are optimistic about where the organization stands and are deeply grateful for all that has come before to make today possible. None of this work happens without the people who have cared for this organization, these lands, and this community along the way — including you. Thank you!



CATHERINE WASHBURN
Board Chair



JULIA ZELL
Executive Director

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2025

1. IHT PURCHASES FOX HOLLOW

Island Heritage Trust (IHT) kicked off January 2025 with our most ambitious project and timeline to date: the purchase of Fox Hollow. This 48-acre property on Crockett Cove features vital water sources and habitat, including clam flats and bird feeding and nesting areas. After five months, thanks to the remarkable collaboration of numerous donors and supporters in our community, IHT closed on the project. Part of this success included a generous $300,000 partner loan from The Conservation Fund, which we repaid in early September 2025. IHT is currently developing a long-term plan for the property and its buildings to ensure we have the resources to care for the land for generations to come.

The future of the Fox Hollow Preserve, with its pristine shoreline, lush meadow, dense woods, and historic buildings, is secure thanks to the local community's far-sighted efforts and the Island Heritage Trust's commitment to conservation and stewardship. The beautiful homestead on Crockett Cove is now protected and will be available for all to enjoy - a celebration of Deer Isle heritage for generations to come!" *- Melissa Mial, Deer Isle community member and IHT volunteer*



Fox Hollow

2. COLLABORATION WITH WABANAKI COMMUNITIES

In 2025, IHT participated in First Light, a collective that serves as a bridge between Maine-based conservation organizations and the four Wabanaki communities: Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac. The goal of First Light is to expand Wabanaki access to and stewardship of once-native land, and to work with organizations like IHT to create a stronger conservation movement that includes and reflects Indigenous expertise and perspectives.

Conservation Director Alex Drenga and Board member Anna Goff were invited to join the First Light Learning Journey (Cohort 3). This experience helped form new ideas about what co-stewardship can look like, and Alex has since joined the Island Access Working Group, which addresses cultural and physical access issues while intentionally returning Wabanaki self-determination about the narratives of coastal Maine islands.



First Light Learning Journey
credit: dawnlandreturn.org

3. EXPANDED EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

IHT welcomed another experienced educator and valued member of the community, Torri Robbins, to the team in 2025. Torri contributes a wealth of knowledge and experience facilitating multi-age learning activities, making education engaging and empowering for students.

Torri, along with environmental education team member Martha Bell, helped lower the staff-to-student ratio in the classroom, increase the number of field trips offered, and enhance the educational experience for Deer Isle families. During the fall semester, our environmental education team was able to collaborate with the Deer Isle-Stonington High School (DISHS) marine biology program. They helped design lesson plans, provide instruction, lead field trips, and connect students with local scientists and research institutions to illustrate the potential for further opportunities in the field.


Torri Robbins at Scott's Landing

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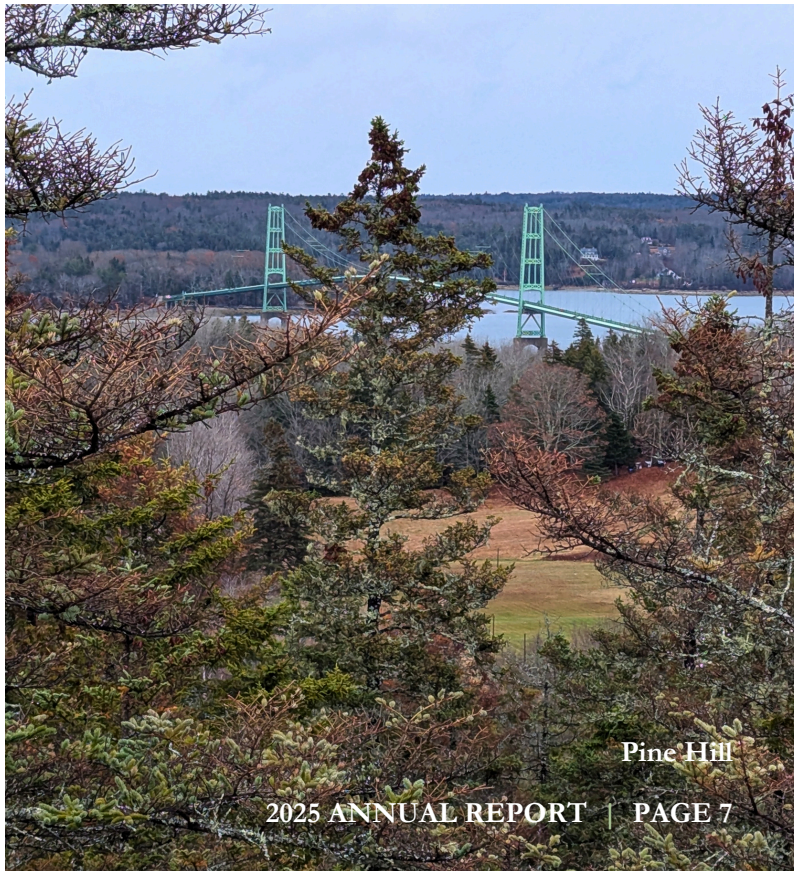
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The names listed in this report reflect gifts and pledges from the 2025 fiscal year, which ended October 31, 2025. Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you find an error, please let us know, and accept our sincere apologies.



Mark Island

OUR MISSION

Island Heritage Trust (IHT) contributes to the well-being of the island community by conserving its distinctive landscapes and natural resources, maintaining public access to valued trails, shoreline, and islands, and by providing educational programming for all ages.

2025 FINANCIALS

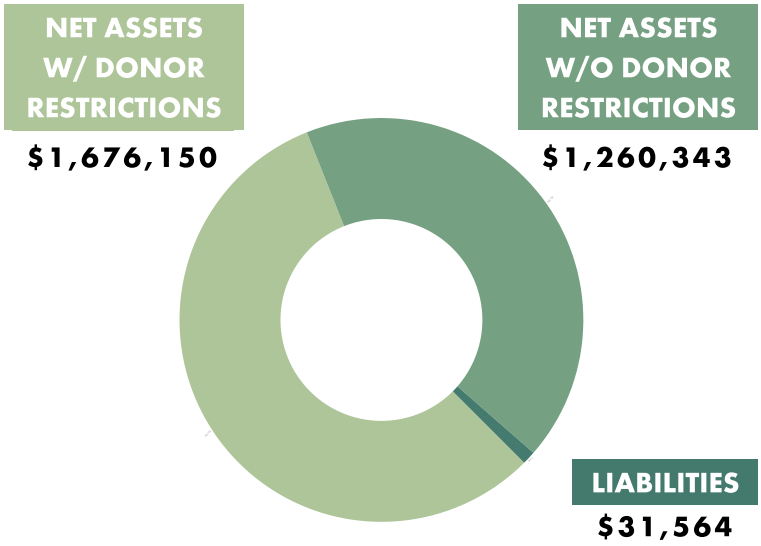
2025 was a year of remarkable growth and investment for Island Heritage Trust. Total **revenue reached $1.988 million**, an increase of $831,000 over the previous year, reflecting the extraordinary generosity of our members, donors, foundations, and grant partners. Much of this support was directed toward acquiring the Fox Hollow property and other critical conservation and stewardship initiatives. During the year, we also transitioned our investment portfolio to a new investment manager, resulting in a one-time realized gain of $261,326, which contributed to our overall revenue.

Our total **expenses were $1.454 million**, including $732K in payments for the acquisition of Fox Hollow. 85% of all expenditures directly supported our mission through land conservation, stewardship, and environmental education. Administrative and fundraising costs remained low, reflecting the efficiency of our staff and the Board's commitment to responsible financial stewardship.

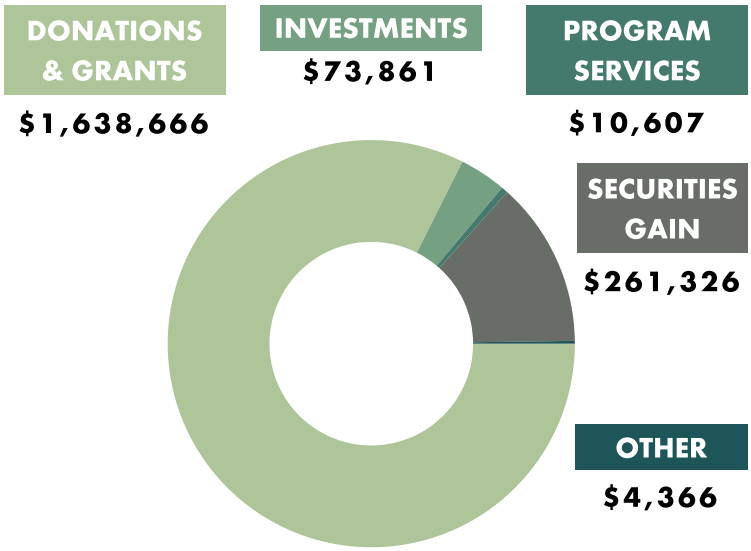
Thanks to strong donor support, grant funding, and positive investment performance, Island Heritage Trust ended the year with significantly stronger net assets. These resources will help fund future land conservation opportunities, expand stewardship efforts across our preserves and islands, and enhance accessibility through ADA-compliant trails.

Island Heritage Trust is well-positioned to continue protecting the lands and waters that define our Island and maintain our Land Trust Accreditation as we grow. We are deeply grateful to every member, donor, volunteer, foundation, and community partner whose generosity makes this work possible.

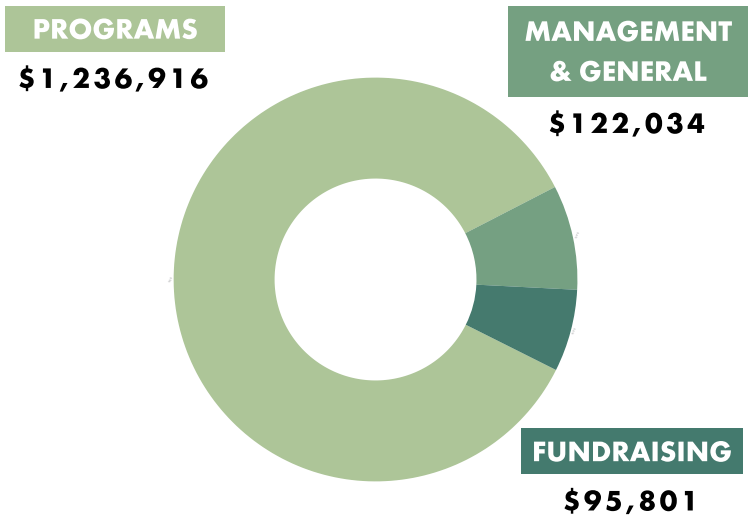
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS: $2,968,057

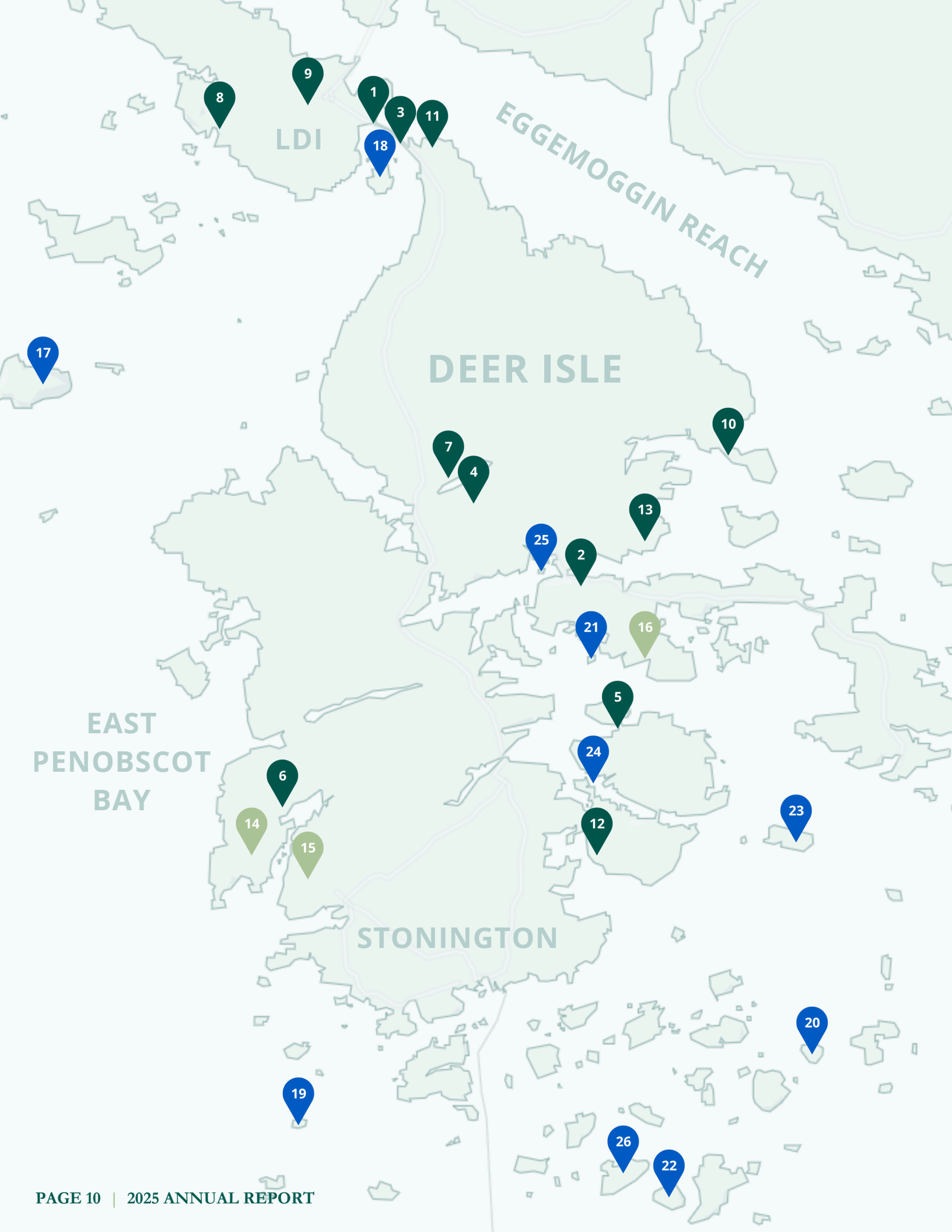


TOTAL REVENUE: $1,988,826



TOTAL EXPENSES: $1,454,751




LDI
EGGEMOGGIN REACH
DEER ISLE
EAST PENOBSCOT BAY
STONINGTON
1
2
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26

PRESERVES

PRESERVES OPEN FOR USE:

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

CO-MANAGED PRESERVES:

14. **Barred Island**
    The Nature Conservancy
15. **Crockett Cove Woods**
    The Nature Conservancy
16. **Edgar M. Tennis Preserve**
    Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands

OFF-SHORE ISLANDS:

17. **Bradbury Island**
18. **Carney Island**
19. **Mark Island**
20. **Millet Island**
21. **Polypod Island**
22. **Round Island**
23. **Sheep Island**
24. **Walker's Barred Island**
25. **Whig Island**
26. **Wreck Island**


Fox Hollow


Edgar M. Tennis Preserve


Wreck Island

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

STEWARDSHIP & LAND

As 2025 came to a close, Island Heritage Trust (IHT) was awarded a $250,000 grant through the Maine Trail Program (MTP), a statewide initiative that supports the development, restoration, and maintenance of motorized, nonmotorized, and multi-use trails across Maine. Established by the Maine Legislature in 2024, the program is administered by the Bureau of Parks and Lands within the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

The awarded grant — *the maximum available through the program* — will fund accessibility improvements at Barred Island and Lily Pond Park, two of Island Heritage Trust's most heavily visited properties. IHT was one of just 45 organizations selected for funding from a highly competitive pool of 108 applications during the program's inaugural grant cycle.

"This award speaks to the effort and determination of our volunteer groups and their love for Deer Isle," *said Conservation Director Alex Drenga.* ***"We look forward to sharing Lily Pond and the upper Barred Island trail with everyone."***

Expanding accessibility to Deer Isle's natural spaces will remain a priority for Island Heritage Trust in the years ahead, ensuring that more people can experience and enjoy the Island's remarkable landscapes.



Lily Pond Park

VOLUNTEERING BY THE NUMBERS:

50
VOLUNTEER EVENTS

40+
STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

21
MILES OF TRAIL MAINTAINED

CONSERVATION BY THE NUMBERS:

2,338
TOTAL PROTECTED ACRES

34
PRESERVES

44
CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

40
MILES OF PROTECTED TIDAL SHORELINE

50k+
PRESERVE VISITS PER YEAR



Crystal Cove

The data points in this report reflect our stewardship team's increased technical knowledge of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for mapping, measuring, and analyzing spatial data. Thanks to the expertise of our Land Steward, Eli Forman, we more thoroughly accounted for the rugged coastal terrain, resulting in a significantly more accurate measure of protected tidal shoreline.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

With Torri Robbins joining longtime environmental educator Martha Bell on IHT's Environmental Education team, this dynamic duo cultivated stronger connections with local youth and families and the next generation of land stewards. They were active in both Deer Isle-Stonington Elementary and High School's classes, field trips, and Nature Trail exploration. During the summer, they stayed busy with "Kids in Nature" programming, field trips with Camp Kooky, and summer school. They also held weekly Hiking Clubs to get active and curious adults onto IHT trails, learning about local history, flora, and fauna.

Environmental Education 2025 highlights include:

- **Hurricane Island Field Studies:** Marine Biology students participated in multiple-day trips to Hurricane Island, conducting hands-on research including water sampling, scallop spat surveys, kelp growth monitoring, and plankton analysis.
- **Plankton Investigation:** Students collected plankton samples using methods developed by Maine's Department of Marine Resources and measured water temperature, salinity, and clarity. Back in the classroom, they learned about their role in the marine food web and the impacts of harmful algal blooms on both human health and the local shellfish industry.
- **Intertidal Ecology Study:** Students conducted an intertidal transect survey at Bridge End Park, using quadrats to measure seaweed cover and identify marine species from the low to high tide zones. Their observations highlighted the rich biodiversity of Maine's shoreline.
- **Squid Dissection Lab:** Students explored squid anatomy through hands-on dissection, examining external adaptations such as chromatophores and fins, as well as internal structures including the heart, gills, beak, and ink sac.
- **Microplastics Research Experience:** During a visit to the Shaw Institute in Blue Hill, students met with scientists studying microplastics, toured research labs, and used scientific equipment to better understand the environmental and health impacts of plastic pollution.



Intertidal Transect Field Trip



Squid Dissection at DISHS

EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS:

25
ECO CLUB MEETINGS

40
SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

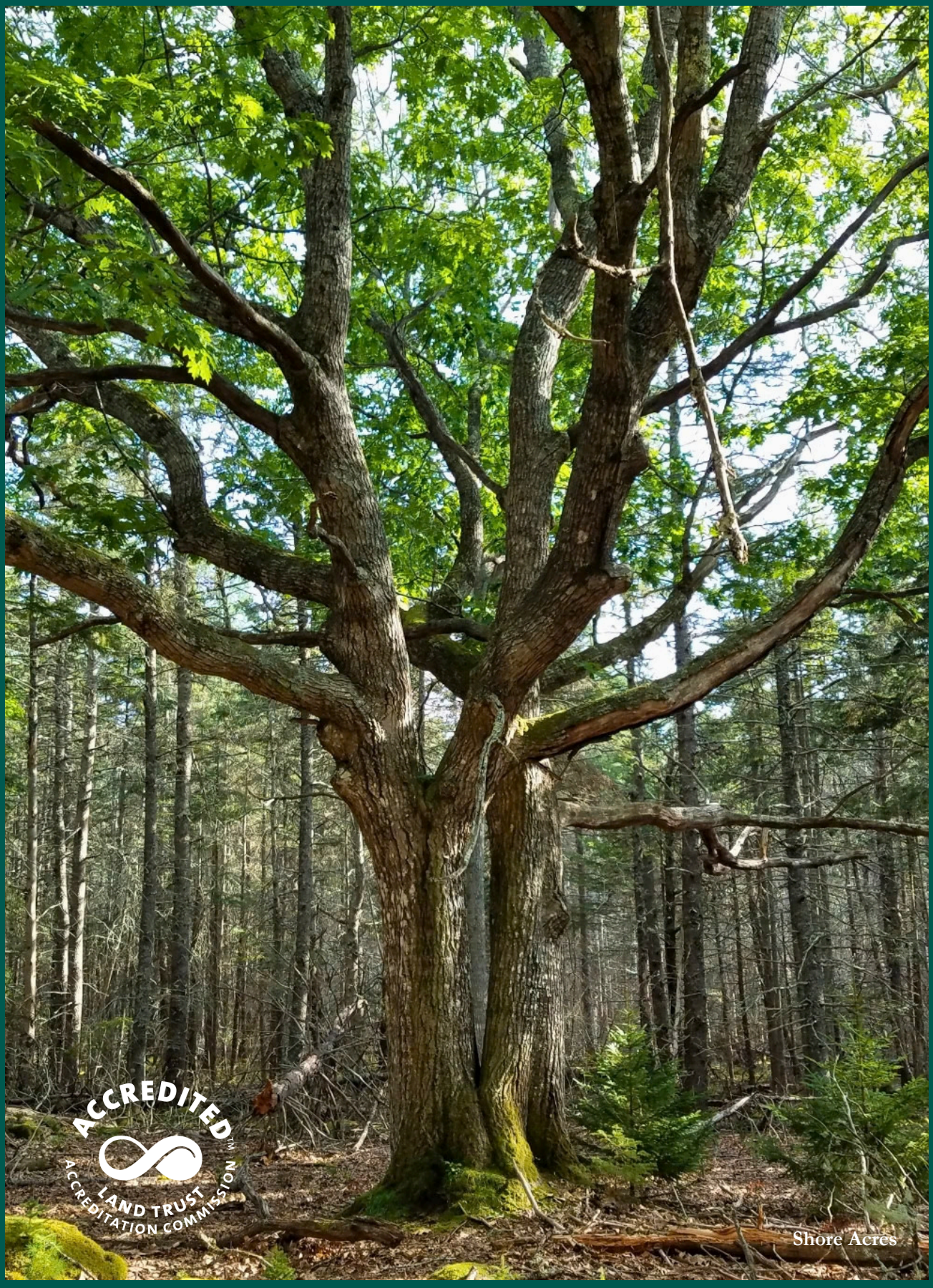
50
VISITS TO THE CLASSROOM

235
STUDENTS ENGAGED

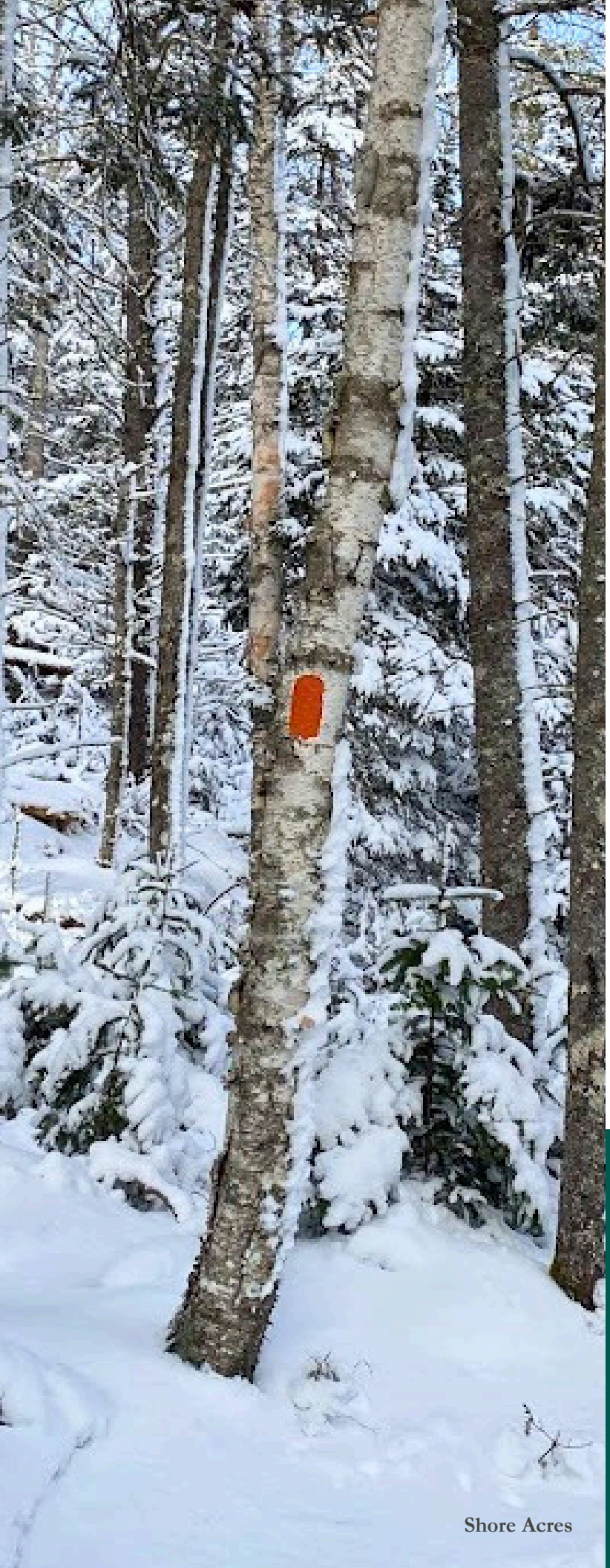
100%
K-8 STUDENTS ENGAGED



Kids in Nature at Lily Pond Park



Shore Acres



Shore Acres

STAFF

Julia Zell, Executive Director

Martha Bell, Environmental Educator
Larry Clifford, Development Director
Alex Drenga, Conservation Director
Eli Forman, Land Steward
Leah Givhan, Administrative Coordinator
Terry Real, Summer Stewardship Assistant
Torri Robbins, Environmental Educator

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Barred Island
Front Cover: Church Lands