THE MASHANTUCKET LAND TRUST INC. · 1968 ·

MASHANTUCKET TRAILS

P.O. Box 49
Old Mystic, Connecticut 06372

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

SPRING 1992

Peachtree Hill Open Space

In September 1991 Mr. Joseph A. Lozier, now mayor of Ledyard, conveyed to the Land Trust the two large parcels of open space in his Peachtree Hill Subdivision on Center Groton Road (Route 117), Ledyard. The two parcels, totalling 19.168 acres, run approximately parallel to, but downslope from the new road, Peachtree Hill Avenue. The larger parcel (13.779 acres) fronts for about 384 feet on the east side of Center Groton Road approximately 800 feet north of Lambtown Road. The parcel includes the low area surrounding a tributary to Haley's Brook and is joined to the smaller (5.389-acre) parcel by a short 30-foot pedestrian easement. The parcels can also be reached from Peachtree Hill Avenue.

This preserve is mainly red maple lowlands but has areas with majestic tulip trees. This is a fragile area but one worthy of careful exploration. The boundaries of this area have been posted and some of the signs can be seen from the roads.

May Gardiner Hoxie Open Space

The 4.71-acre open space in the Hoxie Subdivision on Jerry Browne Road, Mystic was recently conveyed to the Mashantucket Land Trust. The parcel abuts the west boundary of the Mystic Water Company for its entire length of nearly 1500 feet. The outstanding feature in this parcel is an entire small white cedar swamp at the southern end, visible from the road. The remainder of the parcel is a 30- to 50-foot wide corridor along the granite ledge to the northern end where the parcel opens into an area of maples and cedars.

This parcel helps to continue the wildlife corridor concept initiated with the 1988 gift to the Land Trust of the Perkins Wildlife Corridor, 4 acres of hardwood forest and wetlands preserved as open space when the land on the south side of Jerry Brown Road was subdivided.

The Perkins Wildlife Corridor, in turn, abuts the 18-acre Pequotsepos Preserve which is next to the land of the Denison Society used by the Pequotsepos Nature Center. In addition, the Land Trust also owns 44 acres (the Pequotsepos Brook Preserve) extending north from the northwest corner of the Denison Homestead. Many efforts of land preservation are connecting to make significant areas of open space, wildlife habitat, and corridors.

ANNUAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1992
5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Blonder Pavilion at Colonel Ledyard Park
Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, CT

(Please see article on page 3.)

Stillman Open Space

Mr. Robert L. Stillman recently conveyed to the Land Trust the 14.057 acres of open space is his subdivision on Old Stonington Road, Stonington. This parcel is the missing piece to a green belt extending from Noyes Avenue east to Wamphassuc Road along the Amtrak right of way. Mr. Stillman's gift contains a cattail marsh along the embankment of the railroad tracks and extends inland to include a portion of the slope north of the marsh. West of the Stillman parcel is Lords View Marsh, 6.59 acres of marsh with some hardwood uplands received from Lords View Limited in 1987. East of the Stillman parcel is the Platt Marsh, 5.79 acres of salt marsh, fresh water swamp, and uplands received from Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Platt in 1986.

The entire area in this green belt now comprises 26.437 acres and has long been a part of Stonington Director George Campbell's vision for Stonington -- a series of green belts separating various areas of development.

Vernal Pools

What is a Vernal Pool?

Vernal pools are temporary bodies of fresh water that provide important habitat to many species of wildlife. The word "vernal" means spring, and indeed, many vernal pools in New England are filled by spring rains and snowmelt, then dry up completely during the hot dry months of summer. Other pools fill with water in the Fall, only to dry up in the summer also. Vernal pools are typically small; they rarely exceed 150 feet in width and are usually shallow. Many vernal pools that support rich communities of amphibians and invertebrates measure only a few feet across. Since vernal pools are temporary bodies of water, they cannot support fish populations, a factor which plays a large role in their unique ecology.

Where are Vernal Pools Found?

Vernal pools are common in Connecticut, probably occurring in every town in the state. Vernal pools may be found in areas where small depressions, swales or kettle holes collect spring run-off or intercept seasonally-high groundwater tables. Although vernal pools are frequently associated with more extensive wetland systems, many constitute small, isolated wetlands in and of themselves. The majority of vernal pools may also be found in habitats such as meadows, sand flats, river floodplains and coastal dunes.

Why are Vernal Pools Valuable?

Vernal pools constitute a unique and increasingly vulnerable type of wetland that is inhabited by many species of wildlife, some of which are totally dependent on vernal pool habitat for one or more stages of their life cycle. Therefore, the alteration or destruction of a vernal pool may result in the extinction of local populations of certain species, such as the wood frog and the four local species of "mole" salamanders (Spotted, Blue-spotted, Jefferson and Marbled). The absence of fish predation is crucial to the successful breeding of these species, which breed almost exclusively in vernal pools and return faithfully to specific pools year after year. In dry years, these pools may suffer catastrophic losses of a particular year's progeny if the pool dries up before their larval stages can complete development and transform into terrestrial juveniles. However, the adult stage of these amphibians is long-lived and these species are adapted to withstand occasional years of little or no recruitment of new members into the population. Several other amphibian species, including the Spring Peeper, Gray Treefrog, Green Frog, American and Fowler's Toads, Four-toed Salamander and Red-Spotted Newt often breed in vernal pools, although they regularly utilize permanent wetlands also.

Vernal pools support a rich and diverse invertebrate fauna, which includes various types of crustaceans, insects, snails and tiny clams. Microcrustaceans, such as water fleas and copepods, and aquatic insect larvae are the primary food items of salamander larvae in varnal pools. Some invertebrate species, such as fairy shrimp, spend their entire lives only in vernal pools, primarily because of the fish-free environment provided by these pools. As the pools dry up, these species die and leave behind drought-resistant eggs at the bottom of the pool. The amphibians and invertebrates found in vernal pools constitute a rich source of food, which attracts various species of birds, mammals and reptiles to the pools. Dispersing juvenile amphibians, which fall prey to a variety of predators, also serves as an important means of transporting food energy from the pool to the surrounding terrestrial environment. Despite their small size and temporary nature, vernal pools are highly-productive ecosystems.

-- Paul Rothbart
DEP, Marlborough

Reprinted with permission from the Eastern Connecticut Landowners Association Newsletter, September/October 1991, Volume XII, No. 3.

Editor's Note: Look for vernal pools on the West Tract of the Avery Preserve (Avery Hill Road, Ledyard), the Perkins Wildlife Corridor (Jerry Browne Road, Mystic), and the Pequotsepos Brook Preserve (Pequotsepos Center Road, Mystic).

Salute to Amos Avery

Mr. Amos Avery, Land Trust founder, charter member director, and steadfast supporter, resigned from the Board of Directors this past Fall. Mr. Avery was named a Director from Ledyard at the founding meeting of the Mashantucket Land Trust held on March 18, 1968. He has been a Director ever since -- for 23 years.

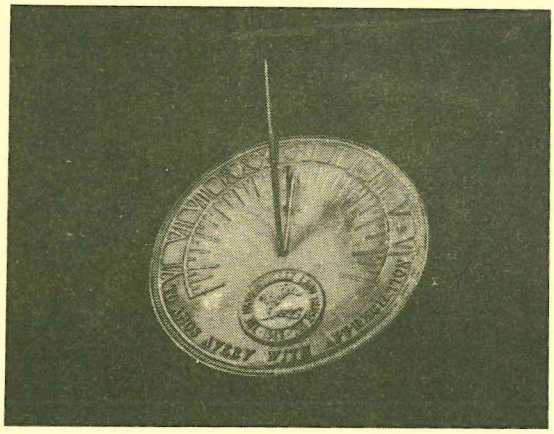
In 1970 Mr. Avery entrusted the Land Trust with its fourth and largest parcel at that time -- the 78.53-acre West Tract of the Avery Preserve. This is one of the most used parcels due to the extensive trail system that has been established there.

In 1977 Mr. Avery added to his previous gift by donating the 22.37-acre East Tract, the Land Trust's tenth parcel. This parcel contains an excellent stand of native rhododendron, which Mr. Avery reports is full of buds, promising a fine display in July.

In recognition of Mr. Avery's many years of service to the Land Trust, the Directors presented him with a bronze sun dial bearing the Mashantucket Land Trust logo and the inscription, "To Amos Avery With Appreciation." The sun dial was designed and donated by Mrs. Phyllis Borges owner of the Mystic Foundry after she had been contacted about producing one for the occasion.

The sun dial was presented to Mr. Avery at his home during his family's celebration of his ninetieth birthday, but the sun dial had been on view at the Annual Winter Pot Luck Get-Together in January.

Mrs. Maggie Philbrick (l.) and Mrs. Lois Tefft present sun dial to Mr. Amos Avery.



Sun dial designed for Mr. Amos Avery by Mrs. Phyllis Borges.

Sandy Point

Once again, the Stonington Community Center (Como) has agreed to manage the summer patroling of Sandy Point for the Land Trust. Representatives of both organizations met in April to discuss the 1992 season and agreed to continue the program in much the same manner as before.

Due to the heavy use of Sandy Point during the summer, the Land Trust felt it was important to establish a presence on Sandy Point to inform users of its primary function as a wildlife preserve, to advise people to use the island carefully, and to inform people that Sandy Point is owned by someone -- the Mashantucket Land Trust.

This program, plus the signs that must be replaced each year and the taxes owed to the Town of Westerly, represents a considerable expense that cannot rightly be supported by general Land Trust or Como memberships. Thus, a schedule of fees has been developed for those who use Sandy Point. This schedule has not been changed this year, even though fees collected to date have not fully supported the program. Season memberships for members of the Como or the Land Trust are $15.00 for an individual, $20.00 for a family. For those who are not members of either organization, the season membership fee is $30.00 for an individual, $50.00 for a family. For those who visit Sandy Point rarely, a daily user's fee of $5.00 per day for one to four people ($1.00 for each additional person) has been estabished. Memberships are available at the Como, Cutler Street, Stonington, CT 06378 (Phone: 535-2486) or from the patrol on Sandy Point.

It is hoped that users of Sandy Point will cooperate with the patrol and share a portion of the expenses to maintain one of the area's prime beaches. It is truly a privilege to be able to use this area -- a privilege that comes with a responsibility, not as a right. Sandy Point is still private property with a very public access.

Annual Meeting Wednesday, May 20, 1992

The Mashantucket Land Trust's Annual Meeting will be held at 5:30 p.m. on May 20 at the Blonder Pavilion in Colonel Ledyard Park on Colonel Ledyard Highway in Ledyard. This area has playing fields and areas to walk so you can come early and enjoy the park.

All the business of the Annual Meeting will be transacted -- election of Directors and presentation of Annual Reports. Please come and hear what has happened this year. We welcome your comments and discussion of the Land Trust and area conservation issues.

Please bring your own picnic supper. There are grills for cooking. Please also bring a dessert to share. We look forward to seeing you.

Wildlife Alert: *"Abandoned Babies"*

The Department of Environmental Protection motto for the treatment of "abandoned" wildlife is "If you care, leave it there." Often, baby birds and mammals appear orphaned, but their parents are usually in the area and will return to care for their young.

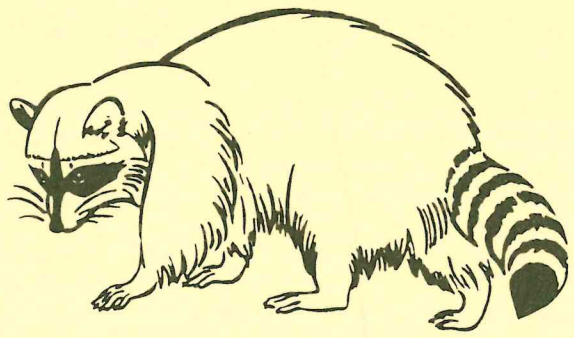
If you discover a baby bird or mammal, follow these guidelines:

- If you find baby birds that are not fully feathered and can't hop about, put them back into the nest (if you can find it) or make a "foster" nest in a tree near or under the original nest. Use a berry basket or similar container, lined with dry plant material (bark and dried grass). Do not use green plant material, as this will chill the birds. Don't worry, young birds will not be rejected just because they have been touched by humans.
- If you find baby birds on the ground that are feathered, calling, hopping around, and can barely fly, they probably have just fledged (left the nest). Keep pets away and get out of the area so the parents can locate and take care of them. Some parent birds, such as mourning doves, only feed their fledged babies once a day, so allow 12 to 20 hours before making a decision to pick up the bird and take it to a rehabilitation center. Call the center first.
- Baby mammals, such as squirrels, raccoons, and rabbits, that are fully furred, can walk rather than crawl, and whose eyes are open are usually old enough to take care of themselves, even though they are quite small. Be kind -- leave these babies in the wild where they belong.

This information is being distributed by the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center and has been reprinted with their permission.

Editor's Note: Recent developments due to the spread of rabies into Connecticut have caused the State to require wildlife rehabilitators to refuse the treatment of raccoons, skunks, and oppossums so it is best to leave those animals alone and hope their parents will care for them. The risk of contracting rabies is too great.

Rabies vaccinations are being obtained or considered by many individuals who handle animals, both wild and domestic -- even those who shear sheep!



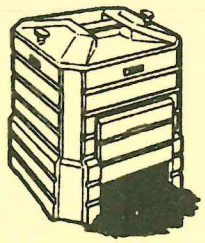
Backyard Composting and the Soilsaver Composter

The Stonington Recycling Coalition and the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center are encouraging backyard composting by selling the Soilsaver Composter. The Soilsaver comes complete with composting guide, specially designed turner blade, and a toll-free number for composting guidance.

Backyard composting makes sense because it diverts up to 30 percent of household waste from the waste stream headed for the incinerator or land fill. Composting eliminates the need to put leaves, food waste, and grass clippings in plastic bags. Well-aged compost is one of nature's best fertilizers and can be used as a mulch or a soil enricher.

The Soilsaver Composter can be used to compost yard waste -- leaves, grass clippings, etc. -- and food waste -- fruit and vegetable waste, egg shells, coffee grounds, tea bags, etc. The Soilsaver is a continuous process composter. Yard or food waste is simply placed in the top and in approximately six weeks the finished compost is ready. This fast-acting compost process is aerobic. There is no smell and no chemicals are used.

The Soilsaver Composter can be ordered from the Stonington Recycling Coalition, c/o Town Hall, P.O. Box 352, Stonington, CT 06378. Please enclose a check for $49.00 made out to DPNC by May 31. Composters may be picked up in June at the Nature Center on Pequotsepos Road in Mystic.



Soilsaver Composter

Birding on Landtrust Properties

Land Trust properties are providing some magnificent areas for bird habitat and, thus, bird watching. A record of bird observations in the area -- earliest arrivals, latest departures, and unusual sightings -- is published quarterly in "Records of Southeastern Connecticut Birds." This publication is prepared by Bob Dewire of NatureScapes and Larry Reiter and is distributed through the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center.

The 1991 Summer "Record" noted that a new heronry was established on South Dumpling Island (New York). The colony contained Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, Little Blue Herons, and Black-Crowned Night Herons. It was thought that these birds were probably "spill-overs" from the heronry on Ram Island. The first recorded nesting pair of Black Skimmers in Rhode Island was discovered by Bob Dewire on Sandy Point. He noted that no young were fledged, presumably due to predation by

(Continued on page 5)

Many Thanks, Volunteers!

During the past seven months Mashantucket Land Trust volunteers have given greatly of their time and energy.

Over 30 people, men and women, young and old, came with chain saws, strong backs, loppers, and strong arms to repair the damage done by the Fall hurricanes and storms on three of the Land Trust's major parcels with trails -- the Avery Preserve, the Hoffman Evergreen Preserve, and the Perry Natural Area. With so many volunteers, only one morning's work was required at each site, but the amount of work accomplished was impressive. Many trees were down across or within sight of trails, and *everything* was cleaned up. Five teams, each with a chainsaw, were at work on the Hoffman Evergreen Preserve. Most people were Land Trust members, but six members of the Mystic Rotary Club directed their capable energies to the Perry Natural Area and helped to leave the area in fine shape.

The Annual Pot Luck Winter Get-Together was a big success and progressed smoothly due to the volunteers, many of them Directors, many of them family members and Land Trust members, who set up the room, kept the dishes hot, served both main course and dessert dishes, and then cleaned it all up afterwards. This is our largest function and a time when names on the mailing list become real faces and friends.

Nine other volunteers have helped to post some long boundaries on newly acquired parcels. Over 90 signs were placed on the open space in Peachtree Hill. This property is very well monumented and all the monuments were found. Over 105 signs were placed on the 111-acre Eleanor and Flood Reed Memorial Woodlands in North Stonington. One of the great challenges was to locate as many of the old drill holes in the stone walls as possible.

Other groups of volunteers help Membership Chairman Beth Clark on a regular basis so that, at last, all the information is on the computer and membership functions can be maintained more easily.

This newsletter would not reach you without additional volunteers who fold, staple, apply labels, and prepare bundles for mailing.

Your Land Trust is grateful to all of you. Thank you!

(Continued from page 4)

gulls. Unusual breeding warblers were seen on other preserves -- two pairs of Worm-Eating Warblers on the Hoffman Evergreen Preserve and a pair of Canada Warblers on the Avery Preserve (Ledyard).

The 1991 Fall (Autumn) Record also included several sightings on Land Trust properties. The Hoffman Evergreen Preserve (Stonington) always holds surprises, large and small, for the quiet walker. Migrating birds have found the Knox Preserve (Stonington) especially to their liking in both Spring and Fall. Black skimmers, oystercatchers and an unusual Parasitic Jaeger have been seen at Sandy Point. One Land Trust property was the site of the only known nesting pair of Yellow Breasted Chats in Connecticut. They successfully fledged two young -- a very special event. A ruffed grouse nest was located on another preserve.

As you walk on the various preserves, please look around carefully to observe the wildlife and be especially careful not to disturb nesting birds. If you notice something unusual, please let the Land Trust know or call the Nature Center at 536-1216.

Mashantucket Land Trust, Inc. Directors 1991-1992

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- Mr. Karel den Tex
- Ms. Alexandra Moore
- Mr. R. Quincy Robe

Groton
- Miss Joellen Anderson
- Mr. William F. Hermann, Jr.
- Mr. Brae Rafferty

Ledyard
- Ms. Nancy Avery
- Mr. William R. Haase IV
- Mr. Harry O. Tobiassen

North Stonington
- Mrs. Kathy Bishop
- Mrs. Anna Coit
- Mrs. Anne H. Nalwalk

Preston
- Ms. Carol Hervey
- Miss Mary Ann Melgey

Stonington
- Mr. Deane C. Avery
- Mrs. Victor T. Boatwright
- Mr. George L. Campbell

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Directors at Large
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- Mr. Dana Hewson
- Ms. Amanda Lindberg
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- Mrs. Thomas Tefft

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Vice President: Margarett Philbrick
Treasurer: Vicky Connor
Secretary: Mary Ann Melgey
Membership Chairman: Beth Clark
Acquisition and Stewardship Committee Chairman: Harry Tobiassen
Newsletter Editor: Anne Nalwalk
Legal Counsel: Frank N. Eppinger, Esq., of O'Brien, Shafner, Bartinik, Stuart & Kelly, Groton

Invite A Friend To Join!

The MASHANTUCKET LAND TRUST, Inc.
P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, Connecticut 06372

Membership Categories

INDIVIDUAL	**$ 6.00**	____
JUNIOR	**$ 1.00**	____
FAMILY	**$ 10.00**	____
SUPPORTING	**$ 25.00**	____
PATRON	**$ 50.00**	____
LIFE (individual)	**$200.00**	____

ORGANIZATION

SUSTAINING	**$ 25.00**	____
SUPPORTING	**$100.00**	____

NAME(s) _____

STREET _____

TOWN _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

Upcoming Events

Sunday, May 3, 9:00 a.m. -- Spring Wildflower Walk on the Hoffman Evergreen Preserve, Route 201, Stonington. Led for the Pautipaug Audubon Society by Maggie Philbrick. Land Trust members are welcome. (This newsletter is too late for this event, but it will be publicized in local newspapers.)

Saturday, May 16, 7:30 a.m. -- Birding and Breakfast Walk on the Perry Natural Area, North Anguilla Road, Stonington. Returning warblers should be in residence. We will continue our walk to Randall's Ordinary for breakfast and then return to the trailhead. Held in conjunction with the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center and led by Maggie Philbrick, the Center's Director. Free to members of the Nature Center or the Land Trust; $3.00 for non-members (applicable toward membership). Please call 887-5878 if you plan to stay for breakfast so we can reserve tables. Each participant is responsible for his or her own breakfast.

Sunday, May 17, 5:30 p.m. -- Late Spring Afternoon Walk on the Preston Preserve, Krug Road, Preston. Stop your Spring chores early and watch the late afternoon sun on the early foliage; stay late for a sunset from one of the Dumplings. Led by Anne Nalwalk. Call 887-5878 if you have questions.

Wednesday, May 20, 5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. -- Annual Meeting. Please see notice on front page and article on page 3.

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P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, Connecticut 06372

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