



CHATHAM CONSERVATION FOUNDATION, Inc. BULLETIN

Fall 2022

The Chatham Conservation Foundation preserves land for the benefit of the people, plants, animals and ecosystems of Chatham.

Opening of Mill Pond Overlook Trail

*by Julie Baca
Director of Land Stewardship*

It started with a swim through porcelain berry covered honeysuckle. Yes, the invasive vegetation was so tangled and thick, Dorothy, our former Executive Director, and I crawled atop it until eventually our feet could touch the ground and we commenced bobbing and weaving through underbrush. Huh, look, apple trees! Well, I later learned they were pear trees, but I was impressed to find some stately mature trees including black cherries, oaks, pitch pines, and dogwoods. Persisting in our acrobatics for hundreds of feet – we certainly weren't traveling as the crow flies – and enduring repeated hat snatching attempts by branches, we emerged at a grand oak tree, its limbs stretched out broadly. And, from beneath that oak, we looked out on a panoramic view of the Mill Pond from the

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Julie Baca, Director of Land Stewardship, cuts the ribbon held by Bob Lear, President of the Board of Trustees, and Carol Odell, Trustee.

Photo by The Cape Cod Chronicle

Thank you for a successful 60th anniversary summer!



Christy and Jay Cashman

Photo by Kim Roderiques

Our summer season was busy with more trail walks, our Annual Meeting at Wequassett Inn and the first of planned events to celebrate and inform our donors. We would like to thank all the volunteers and staff, Wequassett Inn and our guest speaker, Board Chair for Mass Audubon and summer resident of Chatham, Beth Kressley-Goldstein.

We offer our extra special thanks to Jay and Christy Cashman for hosting our first donor celebration event at their home on Strong Island and for providing transportation for the eight trail walks over the season. Having our most spectacular property be an island adds a layer of complexity to accessibility. We are extremely grateful to the Cashmans for their kind generosity.

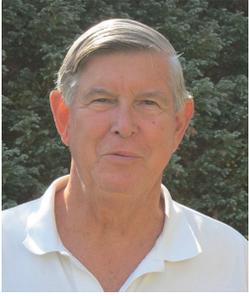


l. to r. Julie Baca, Sarah Cooper, our summer intern, Lauren Arcomano and Ellen McKey all worked to make the Annual Meeting at Wequassett a very special event.

Chatham's land trust since 1962

President's Message

by Bob Lear



This edition of the CCF Bulletin allows me to reflect on a very special year: the Foundation's 60th Anniversary. We expanded our trail network, our educational programming and public events, and have focused on building stronger ties with the Chatham community

through outreach to local civic groups and participation in town events throughout the year. Many thanks to all our members and donors who value our organization and have generously supported our endeavors this year. We will continue to expand on the enthusiasm generated this year by offering more opportunities for our members and the general public to enjoy our properties and gain knowledge from our programs to be able to help preserve and improve our environment.

One aspect of our current strategic planning development mentioned in Lauren's message will be to consider how to collaborate with other organizations, both governmental and non-profits, to develop projects that will benefit Chatham and many other coastal communities. These arrangements do not

need to be complex and formal, and may be generally described as outreach through education and advocacy. For example, a recent column in the New York Times entitled "Lights Out, America! (Songbirds are Counting on Us)" described an initiative to reduce night lighting to create safe passage for migrating birds. Our trustee Lee Gatewood offers up ideas on page 5 of this newsletter which we can implement immediately.

Another more complex project is still in the early stages at Frost Fish Creek with involvement by state and county agencies (Mass DOT & DER) as well as Chatham's Natural Resources department. As we learn more of the extent of this project we can commit more resources to study the impact on that complex ecosystem.

We welcome suggestions from and participation by our members for other activities which are compatible with our conservation mission.



Executive Director's Report

by Lauren Arcomano

As we continue to celebrate our 60th Anniversary, I can honestly say it's been quite the year. Taking over the helm of this wonderful organization this past spring was a daunting endeavor, but with the able assistance of Julie Baca, Ellen McKey and the trustees, I believe we are on a course to see the CCF continue its important and inspired work well into the future.

Celebrate, we did, at our Annual Meeting at the beautiful Wequassett Inn on a fine summer evening. It was inspiring for me to meet so many of the dedicated members who have made the CCF a part of their lives for decades. The feedback from you, our members, has been positive and heartwarming and my goal is to engage more of you who have a multitude of talents and the time to share with us through our volunteer program.

My tenure, thus far, has gifted me with so many rich experiences and I hope the work we do enhances your life, whether walking at Frost Fish Creek or joining Julie to clear and prepare our latest trail. I loved the opportunity to monitor a plover nest on one of our properties, paddled the Muddy Creek with volunteers and walked many trails. Seeing so many community members turn out on a Fall day for the ribbon cutting of the newest trail was proof that what we do matters to many. Thank you!

We are expanding our community outreach activities, including offering more walks and talks, increasing our educational activities and collaborating with our neighbors

and sister non-profit organizations. Communication with our members and the community at-large continues through our email newsletters, attendance at the Farmer's Market and speaking engagements with civic groups.

Our many members, donors, volunteers and trustees have been instrumental along the way in helping us achieve all that we have accomplished, but rest assured, we are not letting grass grow under our feet. We are undertaking a critical look at our future through an extensive Strategic Planning process to determine how your foundation can best position itself to tackle, head-on, some urgent areas of need in our local environment.

We cannot expect 'mother nature' to continue to nurture us; we must help in every way possible to protect, preserve and remediate the damage which has been done to our waterways, marshes and uplands. Chatham's lands and water bodies are inextricably linked to our quality of life and we must do all that we can to leave a legacy of protected space and clean water for our children and grandchildren.



Director of Land Stewardship's Report

by Julie Baca



We took a few big steps forward this growing season at the Menekish site at the corner of Shore Rd and Old Harbor Rd. Since we achieved good invasive control in the area cleared last year, we transplanted native shrubs, including bayberry, inkberry, sweet pepperbush, and others, this spring. Once again, we

called on the help of a professionally operated mini-excavator to launch phase 2 (in the latest iteration of counting) of our restoration by scraping up the primarily invasive and aggressive-non-native ground cover. In a marathon workday with stewardship stars Tim, Scott, and Paul, we raked out and seeded the area with a native grass mix. With no supplemental water, I was surprised that spring-seeded grass survived - perhaps there was adequate shade or the thin layer of straw we spread captured just enough water- but I'll take it. Plans to add a few native trees to this area were put on hold by the drought.

We also reached an important milestone in the CPA-funded restoration at the Nickerson property along Rte 28 in

North Chatham; numerous shrubs and a few trees were planted in the meadow at the end of September. We are hopeful that the rainy weather since then will help them establish roots.

The Mill Pond Overlook Trail building took significant project time and opened access to cutting invasive vines out of trees. We recently added a pole pruner to our toolshed and started exercising some muscles in our necks and backs that we forgot we had.

As always, if you want to join in our stewardship activities, please reach out to me at landsteward@ccfinc.org. It's a good excuse to be outside and may increase your chances of wildlife observations. Wrestling with a large bittersweet root in a, shall we say, aspiring meadow, I was startled by a rustle. Surely my tugging at the root couldn't have made that noise, but nothing was in sight. *shrug* As I turned back to the root, a red-tailed hawk exploded out of the grasses with a rodent, carrying it to a Norway maple limb. I got to watch it dine and then wipe its beak off on the branch as I kept working and thinking to myself "Who can call weeding boring?"

Mini Meadow Update

by Cathy Weston
Trustee

All of our gardens have been devastated by drought and water restrictions this year and the meadow planting at the Mayo House is no exception.

When we first planted the meadow in 2018, we installed irrigation to ensure the plantings were well established. Starting the following year, we decreased the supplemental watering each year, and this year our plan was to provide no supplemental water unless the plants were in acute distress. This happened in early July after 5 months of below-average rain. We gave the meadow an hour of drip irrigation a week for about 4 weeks before the mandatory water restrictions went into effect. For most of August and September, the meadow received no supplemental water at all.

Many of our plants look just fine - the grasses, goldenrod, spotted bee balm, sweet fern shrub, and mountain mint. Several plants have gone through their life cycles early and have shed leaves and seeds in August and September rather than their usual October - butterfly weed, bee balm, Joe-Pye weed, and the sweet pepperbush. We expect all those plants to be resilient, meaning they will come back from this stress if they get enough water before next spring.

The most severely impacted plants are the wild strawberry and the bayberry. The wild strawberry that was planted in the sun shed most of its leaves early in the season, while the plants in the shade have done just fine. On a promising note, with the recent rain, the plants in the sun have already put out new leaves.

More distressing are two of the three bayberries with most of their leaves dried out already. These were planted two years ago, but it appears they need more time to get fully established. We will be hand-watering them throughout the fall to encourage more root growth for next season. In the spring, we will examine the branches to see if new growth emerges, and if not, we will prune back the dead branches.

We will be taking all of this into account as we think about the future of the meadow in light of potential ongoing droughts. Perhaps we need more drought-tolerant plants, such as low-growing cinquefoil or barren strawberry as ground covers, clumping grasses such as little bluestem and purple lovegrass for the meadow itself, and perhaps some sunflowers and asters as accents. Even in nature, meadows evolve for the conditions, and the meadow at Mayo House will too.



The Mini Meadow on Main will evolve to handle the drought condition of this summer.

Who Is Living in Our Woods?

by Cathy Weston
Trustee

Since CCF's mission includes preserving habitat for the benefit of wildlife, we were curious – what larger animals are actually living in the upland woodlands that we and the Town of Chatham are preserving? To find out, CCF has installed a wildlife camera in several locations around town, and we did a brief survey of trustees, staff, and volunteers to learn what wildlife they have seen and where. It is a surprisingly rich list of sightings, considering how small Chatham is.



Photo by Kathy Garwood

A coyote looks longingly at a flock of egrets just moments before they fly away.

create dens for breeding. There was a den of foxes on Bridge Street and the male fox regularly traversed the Stage Neck conservation area on his foraging route. They have declined, probably due to a combination of mange disease and competition from coyotes. They may be coming back, however – there were recent sightings in town conservation land off George Ryder Rd and in South Chatham.

Another surprise was the frequency of sightings of fishers, river otters, and weasels – all three are nocturnal creatures, but have been spotted within a half-mile of downtown Chatham as well as other woodlands near freshwater ponds. We also have sightings of either the animals or their spoor at White Pond, Frost Fish Creek, Stage Harbor and South Chatham.

Fishers are quite solitary and secretive, and we feel lucky to have caught one on camera. They are about the size of a large cat, but low to the ground. They typically eat smaller mammals and rodents and have the distinction of being one of the only predators to attack porcupines. They have retractable claws and hind paws that can rotate 180 degrees, so they can climb trees and descend headfirst, and can navigate snow and ice easily. They have a large foraging range, so it's not clear if Chatham has multiple fishers, or if there is one who has been seen in multiple places.

continued on next page



Photo by wildlife camera

A doe and fawn were caught on our wildlife camera in their home territory of mixed deciduous forest near downtown Chatham.

Deer are, of course, quite common and we have reported sightings throughout Chatham. Deer in the wild roam open areas as well, seeking the kinds of grasses, weeds, and herbs they prefer to eat; our neighborhoods fill this need perfectly.

Coyotes are also frequently seen in Chatham as they roam our open areas in search of prey. Historically inhabiting semi-open grasslands, they have adapted easily to our man-made roads and open residential landscapes. In this part of the country, we are seeing the Eastern coyote, an animal with both coyote and wolf parentage.

Several years ago, red foxes were commonly seen around town. They prefer open, highly vegetated areas, although they



Photo by wildlife camera

A fisher is caught on camera also near downtown Chatham.

Artificial light impacting our avian population: Let's turn down our lights!

by Lee Gatewood
Trustee



Photo by Kathy Gatewood

Light pollution harms all wildlife - especially migrating birds

- you can help!

Did you know?

Every spring and fall, billions of birds migrate through the U.S., mostly under the cover of darkness. This mass movement of birds must contend with a dramatically increasing but still largely unrecognized threat: light pollution.

Did you know?

Migrating birds regularly fly up to 10,000 feet above ground, although seasonal timing and weather conditions dramatically impact their distributions.

- Turn off non-essential lights from 11 p.m. until 6 a.m.
- Turn off or dim lobby and atrium lights.
- Turn off or dim interior home lighting, or draw blinds to prevent light escaping.
- Turn off decorative landscape lighting.
- Turn off lights before leaving the home or office.
- Be sure outside lights are aimed down and well shielded.
- Install motion sensors on outside lights to minimize use.

For more information go to www.darksky.org

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Photo by Carby Weston

Eastern Box Turtle

Otters prefer to live in burrows with one entrance in the woods and the other in a freshwater pond or river. They can range widely, though, and have been spotted on Main Street in Chatham as well as traveling between White Pond and Oyster Pond.

The conservation areas between Rt. 28 and Queen Anne Road in South Chatham have been rich in wildlife sightings – a volunteer reports seeing raccoons, opossum, and skunks in the area, and they have heard great horned owls and barred owls. In the area around White Pond both mature and young bald eagles have been seen visiting!

Eastern box turtles have become rare and are now listed by the state as a species of special concern. However, there are still some around. The female in the photo to the left was a visitor from the nearby Stage Neck conservation area. Another box turtle was seen in North Chatham. Its preferred habitat is a moist woodland, with a ready supply of insects, worms, vegetation and berries to eat, and with loose ground cover to bury itself in for hibernation.

Last but certainly not least, in the area around White Pond both mature and young bald eagles have been seen visiting! So keep your eye out, and welcome the visitors to the habitats you have helped preserve!

Mill Pond Overlook Trail - continued from page 1

Old Village to the drawbridge.

This site certainly had potential for a new trail, supporting some stunning trees and culminating in a water view. Further, it was strolling distance from downtown, on the popular walking and biking “loop”, and next to the Atwood Museum. We could provide a woods walk close to activity hubs.

Though, gosh, was the thick vegetation daunting. Luckily, I don't tackle projects like this alone. The trail came to life through many hours of service by volunteers and AmeriCorps Cape Cod members and for me will always hold memories of folks who made it happen.

Because the parcel is almost edge-to-edge dense vegetation,

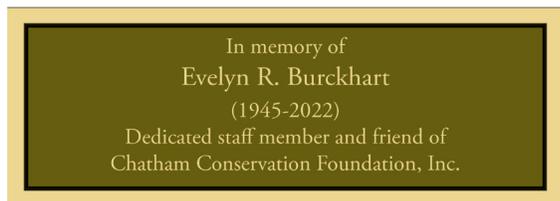
laying out the trail was no easy feat. Passersby may have seen me stumbling out of the tangle, hair flying in every direction, on more than one occasion. Shout out to surveyor Thadd Eldredge for providing me with contour data and to Tim Burt, Craig Schneeberger, and Cas Oakes for braving the brush to help me fine-tune and flag the route on the ground before cutting. Two years of AmeriCorps members

and multiple CCF volunteers have wielded hedge trimmers, chainsaws, loppers, mattocks, and root wrenches to cut the trail and remove tripping hazards, sometimes in the cold, and snow, and rain. Did I tell you about the day we had a whole truckload of woodchips dropped off at the entrance of the trail and I called Tim Burt and Scott Tappan – only Tim and Scott- to help me wheelbarrow and spread them along the first half of the trail? I'm not quite sure why they stuck with me; my arms were giving out by the end. Then there was the flurry of volunteers who helped plant native trees and shrubs



Photos by Carol Odell

AmeriCorps members Michael Andranovitch, Jodi Monroe and Cas Oakes, along with many volunteers, removed invasives cleared the trail and replanted native plants.



A bench dedicated to the memory of Evelyn Burckhart will be placed on the trail at the overlook of the Mill Pond.

along the beginning of the trail and keep this area weeded. We thank our neighbors on either side of this narrow part of our property, the Atwood Museum and the Upsons, for graciously welcoming the trail.

After all this hard work by so many, it was special to celebrate the grand opening of the trail with the Chamber of Commerce,



Photo by Carol Odell

The entrance to the Mill Pond Overlook Trail off Stage Harbor Road by the Atwood House.



Photo by Julie Baca

AmeriCorps members removing roots from the trail.

CCF Trustees, and community members on September 17, 2022. I hope you will visit the new trail, which is about 0.5 mile round trip. The entrance is off Stage Harbor Rd, immediately to the left of the Atwood Museum property. There is no parking at the trailhead but there is a bike rack available, and the trail is a 0.5 mile walk from the Oyster Pond beach parking lot.

CCF Looking Ahead to Our 2023 Trail Walks



Photo by Ann Dickson

Bob Zaremba, botanist, identifies the various grasses growing on Strong Island.

We at CCF were delighted to increase our offering of trail walks in 2022 and plan on expanding this area of our educational outreach still further next year.

The highlights of the past season included a total of 19 walks involving over 250 participants, eight trips to Strong Island and free guided tours of the newly opened Mill Pond Overlook Trail.

Topics included botany, history, birdlife and conservation efforts on Strong Island, mushrooms and lichens, cultural practices and pre-colonial life of Chatham's First peoples, photographing nature and using the iNaturalist identification app.

This year CCF partnered with Chatham's Friends of Trees and the Friends of Sylvan Gardens for walks in the old village and at Sylvan Gardens.

Looking ahead to 2023, we intend to offer walks on these themes and more! We plan to increase the number of birdwatching trips and introduce a walk focusing on shellfish and coastal fauna. We are also designing programming specifically for children and families as well as kayaking tours to experience some of our CCF properties from the water.

As we start to design our 2023 offerings of walks and adventures, we welcome your input and suggestions on what you would be most interested in doing. You can send your ideas to: info@ccfinc.org.



Photo by Carol Odell

Mark Faherty, Science Coordinator at Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary led a walk focused on birds and informed participants on all flora and fauna of the area.

Thank you to the many leaders and guides for the 2022 season of walks offered by CCF

Lauren Arcomano
CCF Executive Director

Julie Baca
CCF Director of Land Stewardship

Oonie Burley
CCF Honorary Trustee

Tim Burt
CCF Trustee

Mark Faherty
Science Coordinator at Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary

Jane Harris
CCF Trustee

Marcus Hendricks
Wampanoag cultural wisdom keeper

James Junda
Ornithologist affiliated with Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary

Todd Kelley
Natural historian

Heather MacKenzie
Photographer

Linda Nixon
CCF Trustee

Carol Odell
CCF Trustee

Wesley Price
Founder of the Cape Cod Mycological Society

Beth Taylor
CCF Trustee

Peter Trull
Naturalist

Tom Walker
Lichen specialist

Bob Zaremba
Botanist



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Contact us at
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End-of-Year Appeal

Every November we send a letter to our membership asking that they make an end-of-year contribution to help us further our mission. Please look for the letter and be as generous as you are able; CCF appreciates all gifts, large and small. CCF is a 501.c.3 and your donations are tax deductible.

Tax Smart Giving from your IRA

You pay no federal income tax on your IRA withdrawal if you make a gift directly to CCF:

- You must be 70½ at the time of your gift.
- Your gift must go directly from IRA to CCF.
- Spouses must use their own IRA for gift.
- Gifts may not exceed \$100,000. per taxpayer.
- Gifts must be completed by Dec. 31, 2022.

