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Join us in protecting Vinalhaven's natural beauty with your membership or additional contribution. Use this form or donate online at www.vinalhavenlandtrust.org. Annual dues (for each calendar year) are \$20 per person. Thank you!

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All donations, including dues, are tax deductible and will ensure that you receive VLT's newsletter and notice of special events. Contributions at all levels are greatly appreciated.

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Vinalhaven Land Trust promotes the conservation and appreciation of our island's significant plant and wildlife habitat, our water resources, and scenic or traditionally valued spaces in order to preserve the character of the community for generations to come.



SPRING 2016

NEWSLETTER

VOL. 29, NO. 1

Vinalhaven Land Trust

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FOCUS PRESERVE FOR 2016

The Perry Creek Conservation Area

Every piece of land has great stories from its past—about volcanoes, glaciers, tall forests, and people who lived there—but as time goes by, those stories can slip away from our collective memory. We tend to forget what shaped the land, who lived there, and how they lived. As stewards of land, part of our work at VLT is taking on the task of learning, collecting, and sharing those stories, and passing them forward.

This year, to celebrate thirty years since its founding, VLT will be featuring Perry Creek and the protected lands around it with walks and talks throughout the year. We hope you'll be able to join us at these events, to hear and see the many stories that Perry Creek has to tell.

From a small plane flying over Penobscot Bay, there are two unmistakable ribbons of water that always seem to catch your eye. The first of these is the Fox Islands Thorofare, a graceful S-curve that separates North Haven and Vinalhaven. The second is Perry Creek, a mile-long wrinkle between land and sea that forms a parallel arc with the Thorofare. These slender blue curves were born in the volcanic crucible of continents colliding long ago, but time, tide, and weather have softened them nicely. Today, these waters call to each of us—fishermen, sailors, artists, writers, and vacationers—in uniquely personal ways.

Two brooks feed the head of Perry Creek. The smaller drains a five-acre wetland, and if you look closely where the brook emerges from it, you'll see the disintegrating remains of a man-made dam. This goes back to the early days of white settlement in Maine, when the simplest way to create pasture for live-

stock was to dam a brook or cove and create a "meadow," either salt-water or fresh, behind it. Old dams like this are found all over the island, indeed, all along the coast of Maine.

The larger brook is called Indian Ladder Brook—where did that name come from? It suggests that there was some kind of a struc-



Looking east at the Thorofare and Perry Creek (image copyright 2016 Terrametrics; provided by Google Earth)

ture here, perhaps to help the Native Americans harvest the salt-water smelts that came here to spawn each spring. Walt Day remembers being a boy on Vinalhaven and going smelting with his father Henley at Indian Ladder:

We'd go right about this time of year, say mid-April to the end of the first week in May. We'd wait for a night when the tide was up sometime around 9 or 9:30, and then just go around checking all of these brooks. The smelts would run in all of them. Once they were running good, you could also go around 3:30 or 4 in the morning, before you went out to haul for the day—by then it would just be solid smelts, spawning all up the mouth of the brook, and you could get four or five quarts pretty easy.

Walk along the creek, and you might see the remains of an old shell heap. Whose doing was this? Archaeologists will analyze and carbon-date and offer a dizzying array of labels—Maritime Archaic, Ceramic, Eastern Woodland, Red Paint, Susquehanna—but if you ask a Penobscot, he'll probably just say "our ancestors." The islands of Penobscot Bay had special significance to native people—they divided their mainland into family territories, but the islands held such important food resources that they were treated as community property.

This belief—that certain places in the landscape are so rich, pleasant, scenic, or even sacred, that they should belong to all—is something that all men seem to share, and it's the reason why we've established national parks, state parks, and the whole range of smaller preserves. From those who hold the biggest visions, to those who support that effort with their donations, this shared belief is the great motivating force.

As early as the late 1960s, Senator Leverett Saltonstall began sharing his vision of preserving the land around Perry Creek with his neighbors. The idea took root, and things came to a head in 1984 when the 158-acre piece owned by the Terry family on the Creek's north shore was listed for sale. Concerned that the land might be sold for development and then closed to any public access or long-honored traditional uses, a group of neighbors and seasonal residents, calling themselves the Incorporators, reached out to Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) for help. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed, and, using funds raised by the Incorporators,

Perspectives After School

Photos courtesy PAS



A group of PAS kids off to go salamander hunting with Kirk Gentalen.



PAS students did basic plot studies on Granite Island preserve, counting lichens and mosses.



These PAS students look for signs of spring right in the schoolyard and beyond.

PERRY CREEK - CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE

Our Focus Preserve

MCHT was able to buy the land. As part of the agreement, MCHT promised to transfer ownership of the land if the local group could succeed in obtaining non-profit status by Jan. 1, 1987. It went right down to the wire...and then in the last days of December, 1986, the paperwork went through, and Vinalhaven Land Trust was born.

One other thing happened at Perry Creek in 1984, and though it was a small transaction, it was a "big deal." Lloyd Roberts gave MCHT a ¾-acre piece at the mouth of Indian Ladder Brook, dubbed the Anchor Parcel. It became, in legal parlance, the "benefitted property" that subsequently enabled the creation of conservation easements on three adjacent properties, totaling well over 400 acres, and protecting the whole south shore of the Creek. The largest of these, the A. W. Smith Preserve at Fox Rocks, provides hikers with scenic 360° views from the highest vantage point on the island.

From these auspicious beginnings, more and more pieces fell into place—the donation of the Saltonstall Reservation at the mouth of the creek, purchases of the Jenkins and June Day parcels on the north side of the creek, and additional conservation easements on Hopkins Point on the east and Crockett Cove on the west. The Perry Creek Conservation Area now comprises fifteen contiguous parcels of land, either owned outright or easement-protected by VLT and MCHT, with roughly six miles of trails providing public access to the land and water here. We thank everyone who has helped preserve this special place—founding visionaries, landowners, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and the people of Vinalhaven who support us in so many different ways—and we look forward to seeing you at Perry Creek this summer.

Kerry Hardy
Stewardship Coordinator

In sending this contribution, I would like to thank VLT for the support of the Perspectives After School program. Having a high quality place for my children to go and to interact with the natural world has been amazing. As a parent, I cannot thank you enough for supporting these and all school experiences. It is the perfect way to build the future of conservation. - Karen Burns

As a long-committed land conservation guy myself, I feel compelled to send along a gesture of appreciation for your trails and your trail work in the Perry Creek area. When I find myself anchoring and paddling in that unique and exquisite spot, I frequently go ashore and hike that trail system. On the boat, and, thanks to you, off the boat, it's repeatedly a terrific experience, for which I am grateful! -Roger Berle

Meet us at Perry Creek

Join us as we explore all the trails and facets of this, "the cradle of VLT." We have walks that focus on birding, foraging, island forests, geology, and the history of conservation efforts that helped to create this stunning preserve. Check the calendar in our kiosk and online for full details, but mark your calendars now: June 18 (long hike), July 15 (Native American foraging), July 19 (mushrooms), August 31 (the island forest), and September 10 (geology).

Trail Tuesdays: Volunteer Work Parties

Last year, we had Third Thursday work parties, and this year it's Trail Tuesdays. Each month, steward Kerry Hardy will take a group of volunteers out for several hours of trail work at one of VLT's preserves. We'll push back encroaching brush, trim branches, put up signage—whatever needs doing. Experience and tools are welcome, but a willingness to help is most welcome of all. We'll meet at Skoog Park at 9 a.m. and venture out from there. May 24, June 28, July 26, and August 23.



Photo: Amy Palmer

PLANNED GIVING

Looking Toward the Future

Planned gifts demonstrate the value and importance of thinking ahead. By naming VLT as a beneficiary in your will, you can have a lasting impact in protecting the places that we all love as well as in supporting programs in our school and community. Please contact Executive Director Linnell Mather to discuss the many ways you can make a lasting impact at VLT.

TALK ABOUT TICKS

The Vector-borne Disease Laboratory at Maine Medical Center is seeking your input on tick control and disease prevention on Vinalhaven. Please take a few minutes to fill out the Island Tick Control Survey at <http://tinyurl.com/h5tkju5> (or scan the code below) so they can better understand your perspective on ticks on Vinalhaven. Responses are anonymous.



The Walks and Talks Committee Has Outdone Itself Once Again

They have planned a full and fascinating season of free events for the spring, summer, and beyond. Look for weekly bird walks and monthly hikes at Perry Creek Conservation Area, our 2016 feature preserve, which will explore the birds, trees, geology, and foraging opportunities of this island gem. For youngsters (of all ages) we'll have a tide-pooling walk and a morning of building fairy houses. We'll visit North Haven to hike in Sage Woods as well as Hurricane Island to learn about industrial archeology.

Evening talks will focus on the Atlantic scallop, clamming, and coyotes, and we'll host, with the

Island Institute, a series of short films called *A Climate of Change*. And these are just a few of the many events!

A special highlight this summer will be our week-long celebration of noted children's author Margaret Wise Brown, her love of Vinalhaven, and how it influenced her life, work, and that of her illustrators. There will be talks, hands-on workshops in writing and watercolor painting, and a walk to her island home that she named "The Only House."

For a full list of events, details, and updates, see the calendar on our website: vinalhavenlandtrust.org.

Last summer Brian Beal led a popular walk looking at lobsters on Lane's Island. This August look for another talk and walk, this time about clams. Photo by Norbert Leser.



Shopping for VLT —and for you!

JUST SMILE

Did you know you can support VLT when you shop at Amazon.com? Just navigate to smile.amazon.com from your web browser. First-time users will need to select Vinalhaven Land Trust as the charitable organization to receive donations of .5% on your eligible purchases. There is no charge to you, and your existing account, wish lists, and wedding or baby registry are all the same (be sure to log on to smile.amazon.com each time you want to make a purchase). It's an easy way to help VLT every time you shop!

VLT MERCHANDISE

Our VLT goods make wonderful gifts for friends, or for yourself! Come by the office at Skoog Park to see what we have: VLT caps and vests, Tip Toe Mountain tote bags, wildflower calendars, notecards and postcards featuring art by Penelope Lord or photographs by VLT Steward Kerry Hardy, sweet Fairy House books, and geologic maps of the island created by Olcott Gates. These are a great way to remember your time on the island!

"Please accept this donation to VLT. Monet Nowlan (age 9) and Louisa Behner (age 8) sold goods, handmade of course, at a flea market on island that raised these funds. They were very proud of their earnings and wanted to give back to the much loved island. Many thanks."

CONSERVATION EASEMENT MONITORING

We're Looking for More Boots on the Ground

VLT holds conservation easements (CE) on forty-one properties on Vinalhaven and a few smaller surrounding islands. That CE is our pledge that the conservation values of that land will be protected in perpetuity. To ensure this we make periodic visits to the property. In fact, we are required by law to monitor each property once a year to verify that the terms of the CE are being observed, and to complete a written report form for our records. And when I say "we," I am referring to a team of dedicated volunteer monitors who take to the woods, fields, and waterways each fall to do this important work on behalf of VLT. We are hoping to recruit a few new monitors to spread out the work load.

Monitoring a property is generally a commitment of a few or several hours each year. You walk the property, keeping in mind permitted and prohibited activities as outlined in the CE, and report your findings on a simple two-page form. We keep copies of the report and send one to the landowner.

Most of our monitors are long-timers who look forward to monitoring "their" properties each year! And we hope that will be the same for you.

So what does it take to be a monitor? A desire to be outdoors and the ability to hike around on all kinds of terrain is a must. You'll need to commit to making a site visit to the property once each year, and then completing your report by the end of the year. If you can read simple maps and match them to land features out in the field, all the better. Some basic compass skills are a big plus. We will make sure you are ready before you head out to the woods. We have a training session for new monitors, and the first

year you'll partner with an experienced monitor to walk the property, verify the boundaries, familiarize yourself with the field notebook, and make sure you understand the terms of the CE. Mostly we are looking for people who are careful observers and who can document their findings in words and photos.

And what else will you be looking for? You may notice natural changes in the land—blowdowns, erosion, or invasive species. You'll want to note signs of human use like foot traffic, hunting activity, or signs of campfires. If the



Photo: Kerry Hardy

property offers public access, are the trails in good shape? It's always fun to note any wildlife or ecological features you observe. And if there is anything that needs follow-up—finding a boundary pin, posting new signage, or any questions for our steward—we'll want to know that, too.

If you'd like to learn more about monitoring opportunities, please call us at 207-863-2543.

Colleen Conlan
Programs Coordinator

Annual Meeting 2016

A FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

We'll be pitching the tents and setting up chairs for our annual meeting on Friday, July 29th. This year we're focusing on what's going on right here in our own community. Come learn about VLT's environmental education program...straight from the island students and teachers who are participating in it. We hope you will join us and catch up with board members, staff, and friends old and new.

A Message from the Executive Director

Tomorrow.

It's a word we conservationists use a lot. Sometimes, it's our response to when that report will be ready. "I'll have it for you tomorrow—promise!"

But it's also part of the way we think, as so much of our work has to stand the test of time. We want to be sure the land we protect will be there for the birds, the salamanders, and the lady slippers for generations to come. It's important to us that our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have places where they can connect with nature, whether it's building fairy houses, climbing trees, or playing engineer in a babbling brook. It should concern us all that sufficient wetlands remain to ensure Vinalhaven's fresh water supply as well as places for herons, ducks, and all the other creatures that depend on these habitats. We want to know that there will be

places where hunters can still take a deer in season. We want there to be wide views as well as dense woods. The list goes on and on.

When VLT is asked to protect a property, whether through a conservation easement or fee ownership, we always need to think about the future: will we have sufficient financial resources to manage that land in perpetuity? Though we don't have a crystal ball, we do our best to envision all the challenges, as well as the opportunities, that could develop. Forests will need managing, meadows need mowing, and invasive species need to be monitored and sometimes controlled.

The next generation is also part of our tomorrow: they are a big part of why we do what we do. We're always looking for ways to connect students with nature, whether through field trips to one of our preserves, an overnight trip to Hurricane Island Center for Science and Leadership to learn about sustainability and leave no trace camping, or a trip to Sparkplug Farm to learn firsthand about food production. Through Perspectives After School, which reaches students

in grades PreK-5 with after school programming, the younger students at Vinalhaven School get a chance to experience the many different mosses on the Granite Island Preserve, learn how to look for some of the first signs of spring, or touch a bee and taste fresh honey.

And what would tomorrow be without our community? VLT strives to engage our community with the natural world through outreach and programming for all ages and abilities. We offer dozens of walks and talks each year, from big-picture discussions about climate change to two events focusing on the lowly—but delicious—clam, and we have those programs in the height of summer and in the dead of winter. We have trails for those who want a brisk five-mile hike as well as for those who want a short stroll on level ground.

And what about tomorrow? The future calls us to continue our work in connecting all who love the island with its important natural resources and significant habitats. Stewarding the lands we protect to ensure the public benefits remain intact will always be a priority. Engaging with our community to explore ways we can be a valued partner is critical for ensuring continued public, political, and financial support for our work.

One of our goals is to keep Vinalhaven Land Trust vital in the next age of conservation. Today is the day to start.

Kinell Mather



Photo: Kerry Hardy

Lot for Sale

When VLT acquires land, we must also be sure we have the resources to steward it in perpetuity. When VLT purchased the land that is now the Granite Island Preserve, the board purposely set off a small parcel to be sold to raise funds for just that purpose. VLT is selling 2.33 acres of nicely elevated land with southern views of Dyer's Harbor. With a septic test for a three-bedroom home, there is plenty of room for a residence and outbuilding. Included in the property is a small parcel with 98 feet of frontage on Dyer's Harbor, assuring water access. Your privacy is ensured by the conserved land to the north and west.

For more information, contact Kris Davidson, Broker, Davidson Realty at 863-2200 or Info@Davidson-Realty.com.

Photo below: Courtney Davidson Realty

Reflections On Our 30 Years

No Child Left Inside: Getting Students Out on the Land

Reflections On Our 30 Years

“When I first joined VLT 30 years ago, I was moved mostly by my parents’ enthusiasm for conserving the island’s most special places. It was just a vision back then, born from the opportunity to protect land in two of those most special places, Perry Creek (which I hardly knew) and Seal Bay (which I knew well), and the technical support of Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Looking back, I’m not sure anyone would have guessed just how much hard work we had signed up for, just how many people would join in the effort with such passion, and just how successful we would be. I marvel that all the islands—and much of the “mainland”—of our cherished Seal Bay are conserved now. The eagles are back in Seal Bay, more ospreys nest there than ever, the seal population continues to thrive, and terns seem on the brink of nesting again on an exposed rock. Meanwhile, the bay attracts clambers, lobstermen, cruisers, and kayakers. Along the way, the land trust has revealed to my family and me even more island treasures. I cherish, too, the friendships that have sprung from sharing trails and meeting rooms with visitors, seasonal residents, and islanders alike.

-Jonathan Labaree



Top left: K-1-2 students learn about lichens on an outing to Eleanor L. Campbell Preserve (Polly Cove). Photo: Colleen Conlan. **Top right:** Seventh graders go to Hurricane Island each spring to make observations and learn about sustainable living and leave-no-trace principles. Photo: Emily Cohn. **Center:** The annual 8th grade ritual: camping at Baxter State Park and the chance to summit Katahdin. Photo: Emily Cohn. **Bottom left:** High school students took part in Counting Corvids, a week-long residency focused on the crow in nature, art, and literature. Photo: Helana Brigman. **Bottom right:** High school students have been collecting data on the invasive species green crab. Here, they prepare an experiment to investigate the “gifting behavior” of crows. They set up gifting stations around town and found that—no surprise—crows will indeed eat green crab. Further experiments will follow. Photo: Emma Baker.



It is rewarding to see how VLT has become such a presence on the island. A few years ago I drove a bunch of visitors from Deer Isle around and they were very impressed with how much land has been preserved. The last few years it seems as though a new trail has been opened up every summer. I loved the walk around the Basin.

-Harry and Tita Gratwick

I don’t think I ever really joined VLT; I just was part of it from the beginning (like many others), and wish to remain so. The current board and staff, their predecessors, and so many in our community have done such a great job in making it grow and thrive. I am most grateful.

-Lea Iselin

[The members of VLT’s very first boards] taught me a great deal about character, common sense, and wisdom. They also gave those qualities to VLT itself. Its accomplishments and its place in the community are results that speak for themselves. So my motives were not so much passion for conservation as joy in the process of working with those for whom it was a passion. Happy and proud to have had some part in what they have done.

”

- Jim Terry

I spend many hours a year walking the trails and enjoying the nature and views of VLT land. There are many things that go into a healthy, sustainable community and its green lungs are an essential part of that. In that respect I am thankful for what VLT has done and continues to do.

-Hooper Brooks

Island Explorers - Summer Fun

This marks our fourth year offering Island Explorers, VLT’s popular day camp. We focus on exploring nature, learning about habitats, and having FUN! Children get hands-on outdoor learning experiences and play games to reinforce concepts they’re learning. Each session meets 9 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Check the calendar on our website for further details and updates.

- July 12-14, 5-7 year-olds – Forests, Ponds, and Ocean
- July 19-21, 5-8 year-olds – Farms and Gardens
- July 26-28, 8-10 year-olds – Island Adventurers

Membership Renewal

Spring is here and it’s time to affirm your support for the work of VLT by renewing your membership in your land trust, and adding a little extra if you can. (If you are not already a member, we’d love to count you as one!) Your renewal helps maintain seventeen miles of trails open to walkers and hikers of all abilities. It sponsors informative walks and talks that we offer year-round. It supports the programs that encourage our students to learn more about the place we call home as well as the world beyond it. And your membership helps protect the woodlands, wetlands, and salt marshes that help ensure the nature of Vinalhaven.

You can renew using the response card we recently mailed out, the form on the back of this newsletter, or by going to our website: vinalhavenlandtrust.org. Please join us today!

We can't tell you enough how much we enjoy the island's public spaces and trails. It is great to hear about the school programs, as well. Keep up the good work!

Janine and John Putman

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