



Photo by Kerry Hardy

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Little Garden Island

Little Garden Island, located in the middle of the White Islands, a couple of miles west of Vinalhaven, comprises roughly five acres of granite ledges, spruce trees, and great views. Not much changes there from one year to the next—but in 2019, change came in a big way.

First, and for reasons best known only to themselves, some great blue herons decided to establish a nesting colony there. This is not an everyday event; heronries tend to be long-term communities once established. The State of Maine only counted two in all of Penobscot Bay in its 1987 management plan, so to have a new one established is a big deal. The herons, perhaps two dozen in number, were not deterred by the active osprey nests already there; in fact, some of the biologists at Maine’s Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIF&W) are of the opinion that the herons and ospreys benefit from each other’s presence as a defense against bald eagles stealing their nestlings.

Simultaneously, and with no awareness of the developing heronry, discussions had begun between the island’s owner, James Gaston, and Maine Coast Heritage Trust about the possibility of MCHT acquiring the island for conservation purposes via a bargain sale. Bald Island, Big Garden, Big White, and Little White Islands are already protected through ownership by or conservation easements granted over the years to the Nature Conservancy, MCHT, and VLT.

With this unfolding dialogue as a background, VLT decided to visit the island in May of 2019—and found, to our surprise, a LOT of great blue

herons raising a fuss about being visited. We quickly backed away, and passed the word to MCHT that the island’s conservation values might be increasing.

The combination of a bargain sale offer and the emerging heronry made the island an attractive acquisition, and by year’s end MCHT had closed on the property. (A bargain sale occurs when

stewardship, MCHT knew the island would be in good hands. This transaction was completed in late March. We will now begin developing a management plan for the island, with particularly close attention being paid to whether the herons return, perhaps in even greater numbers, in the spring of 2020. If they do, then we will be limiting access to the island for the full extent of their nesting season, and even urging people in boats to stay an appropriate distance away at all times.

As the bald eagle population has increased in recent years, the populations of their preferred prey species (cormorants, loons, herons, and bitterns) have come under increasing pressure, making it all the more important to protect the places where those species nest. If great blue herons can succeed in establishing and protecting a breeding colony here, it will be an important new component in the local ecosystem...and a great reason for bringing Little Garden Island under conservation stewardship. As with all of our properties, VLT will make an annual payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) to the town of Vinalhaven—making this a win-win proposition for all of us.

Linnell Mather, VLT’s Executive Director reports: “MCHT has been a strong and supportive partner of VLT’s from our very beginnings as a land trust. We are incredibly grateful for all they do for us, from helpful guidance on land protection and stewardship to generous donations such as this one. Thank you, MCHT!”

– Kerry Hardy
Stewardship Coordinator

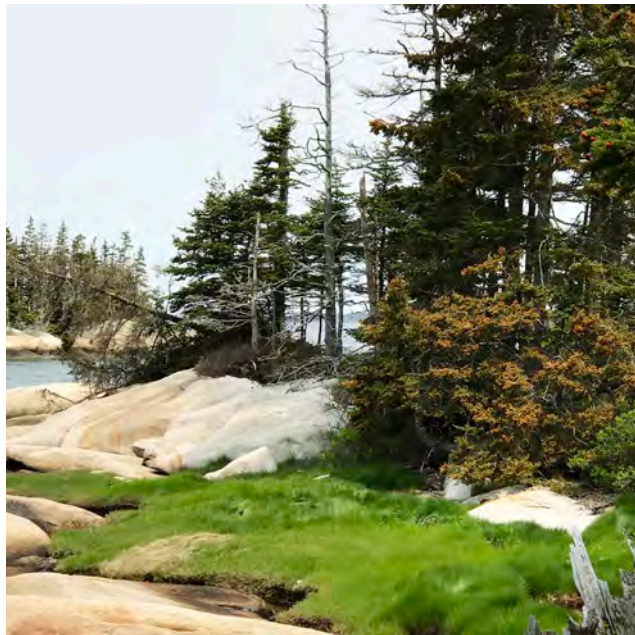


Photo: Linnell Mather

a property is offered for sale to a conservation organization at less than appraised value. The seller may be eligible for a charitable tax deduction for the difference between selling price and appraised value.) Discussions between MCHT and VLT had continued over the winter, and at the January meeting of VLT’s Board of Directors, the board voted to accept MCHT’s offer to transfer the island to VLT’s ownership.

Knowing VLT’s proven track record of strong

President's Message

Microplastic pollution is considered an emerging issue of international and domestic concern. An estimated eight to ten million tons of plastic make their way into the oceans each year. They have been found in all the world's oceans, in freshwater environments, tap water, bottled water, beer, honey, salt, and even in our air.

Abby Barrows is a recognized expert in microplastics and their impact on our waters and habitat. She lives in Stonington where she runs Long Cove Sea Farm. She has been farming oysters and working to improve the water quality and promote sustainable seafood since 2012. At VLT's annual meeting this summer, Abby will discuss the findings from her Global Microplastic Initiative along with the complex problem of plastic pollution in animals and negative human and environmental health effects. She will also look at some of the solutions required to address it—how we need to use data and legislative tools to put our awareness into real and effective change.

Pollution by microplastics is a complex problem that is affecting all of our lives, our habitat, and our water systems. It is an issue that we need to understand and address for our individual health as well as the land and waters that surround us.

Please join us at our annual meeting this year on Friday, August 14th at 4 pm under the tent at Skoog Park. Abby Barrows will help us learn what we can do to address the impact of microplastics.

—David Hyde, President

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Please let us know if you have interest in trail maintenance, office help, editing and proof-reading, helping at the annual meeting, or monitoring conservation properties. Social distancing and all other CDC guidelines will, of course, be observed by all participants. Email us your interests and skills, and we'll be in touch when an opportunity arises: info@vinalhavenlandtrust.org.

In Memoriam

Eleanor L. Campbell passed away peacefully on November 21, 2019 at the age of 91, in hospice care after suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Eleanor loved spending summers with family on Vinalhaven, where she grew up racing sailboats, an activity which she continued late into her life. Through philanthropy, she supported a wide variety of causes, particularly those focused on music, education, and the environment. In 1993, she gave a 21-acre parcel at Polly Cove to Maine Coast Heritage Trust, which was then transferred to VLT. In 2001 she conveyed the abutting eleven acres surrounding the Bathing Pool directly to VLT. These two properties make up the Eleanor L. Campbell Preserve, which offers a beautiful short walk to a cobble beach, and is a favorite spot for Vinalhaven visitors and residents alike. Additionally, Eleanor, along with her brother George Lewis, granted conservation easements to VLT on their land between Pery Creek and Hopkins Point Road, helping to protect that "Whole Place."

Horace (Hoddy) A. Hildreth, Jr. died December 12, 2019 at his home in Falmouth, Maine. Hoddy's passion for conservation and environmental protection was apparent when he was State Senator (1966-1968). He was a champion of some of Maine's first environmental laws, including establishing what was then called the Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC). LURC's purpose was to provide some protection for Maine's vast territory of unorganized townships. Hoddy knew that Maine would be subject to tremendous development pressure over the coming decades, and that Maine's undeveloped north woods were of irreplaceable environmental value. Hoddy was an advocate for many Maine-based environmental, research, and sustainable development non-profits including Vinalhaven Land Trust. Since 1968, he and his wife Alison (Wooly) enjoyed their summers on Vinalhaven.



Island Explorers learn about the ocean ecosystem at Lane's Island. Photo by Sarah Barrett.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION NEWS

Emily Cohn, middle school science teacher at Vinalhaven School, was named Environmental Educator of the year by the Maine Environmental Education Association (MEEA). Emily graduated from Antioch University with a Masters in Education, and a concentration in Science and Environmental Education. Before teaching here on Vinalhaven, she was an environmental educator for many years working along the coast in Rhode Island and Maine. She was also an AmeriCorps volunteer in Chicago after going to college there. Emily brings her love of her students and the environment together to make a successful and happy classroom. Thank you, Emily!

Nature in the Time of COVID-19

We encourage you to get outside for some fresh air! There are many beautiful places on Vinalhaven to do this. Please follow these guidelines until we are clear of this pandemic.

- Do not use preserves if you are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, or if you have recently been exposed to COVID-19.
- Wash your hands before visiting preserves.
- Be aware that certain points on preserves—picnic tables, benches, kiosks—are points of contact for hikers. Wash your hands when you return from your hike.
- Stay at least six feet away from other people (and their dogs) who do not live in your household. If necessary, step aside when passing other people on the trail. And remember that groups of 10 or more are prohibited.
- Maintain distance between other cars in park-

ing areas when possible, or go to another preserve if there is no parking available.

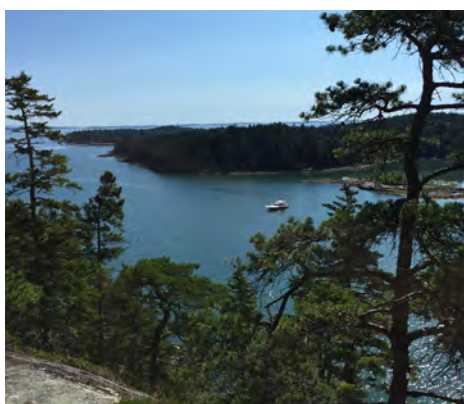
- Dogs are welcome on most preserves (no dogs allowed at Starboard Rock or Whitmore Pond), but remember to bring a bag and clean up after your dog.
- Not all hikers are comfortable with dogs; please keep your dog on a leash or under voice command.
- Have a plan B (and C). If your first destination has a full parking lot, go to the next spot on your list!
- Explore the woods in your own backyard.
- Don't forget to perform frequent tick checks on yourself, your family, and your pets. For more information on ticks and tick strategies, visit the resource page on our website: <https://vinalhavenlandtrust.org/resources>.



The pitch pine woodland at Watershed Preserve sits atop a beautiful granite dome. This woodland is unique for its age (130 years). Photo by Sherry Rega.



Above: Start looking for lady slippers in late May. Huber is the best place to find them, but they can also be found on Starboard Rock and Fish Hook Preserve. Photo by Kerry Hardy. Below left: Starboard Rock offers long views of the islands, and Acadia Mountains to the northeast over the waters of Penobscot Bay. Photo by Sherry Rega. Below right: There are many trails at Tip Toe Mountain. Climb “Little Tip Toe” for views of Crockett’s Cove, and “Big Tip Toe” where a bench awaits you with the Camden hills in sight. The shore trail brings hikers to a beach for further exploration. Photo by Norbert Leser.



OPEN AND FREE!

VLT Preserves:

Round Pond Trail
Fish Hook Preserve
Eleanor Campbell Preserve
Starboard Rock Sanctuary
Marcuse Wetlands Preserve
Perry Creek Conservation Area
Whitmore Pond Sanctuary
Tip Toe Mountain Preserve

The Basin Preserve (jointly owned and managed by VLT and MCHT):

Granite Island and Story Trails
Platform Trail
Watershed Trail
Williams Trail

MCHT Preserves:

Huber Preserve
Carrying Place Bridge Preserve

Town Parks:

Armbrust Hill Town Park
Boy Scout Point Town Park
Sunset Rock Town Park
Geary’s Beach/State Beach
Narrows Town Park and Booth’s Quarry
Lawson’s Quarry
Isle Au Haut Mountain Town Park
Middle Mountain Town Park
Tip Toe Mountain Town Park

The Nature Conservancy:

Lane’s Island Preserve

2019 Donors

IN HONOR OF

Katherine Perkins's birthday
David Bogart
Jim & Merry Boone's 50th wedding anniversary
Karen Gates, VMD
Sheldon Gordon
Becky & Joel Gratwick's wedding anniversary
Ed and Terry Hoyt
Susie Lawrence
Cam Lewis
Linnell Mather
John McLeod
Elizabeth Swain's years of service to VLT
Mark & Mary Lou Tolette
Joe Marcus & Pam Wetherbee

IN MEMORY OF

Betsy Bates
Vincent S.R. Brandt
Philip Ward Brown
Eleanor L. Campbell
Gillian Creelman
Mary Drury
Robert Evers
Jack French
Tony French
Horace Hildreth Jr.
Lucas Kaempfer
Cathy Quimby
Helen Sparrow Sisk
Lydia Sparrow

Anonymous (16 gifts)

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The Bathing Pool. Photo by Sheri Romer-Day.

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 Joseph Lieber
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 Taina Litwak
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 Kyu Yamamoto
 Christine & Leonard Yannielli
 Albert Yetter
 Dick & Holly Young
 Judith Zinsser
 Claire Zoellick
 The late Catherine Quimby & Stephen Zoloth
 Joshua Stein & Laura Zucker

We make every effort to ensure the accuracy of this list. If we have inadvertently omitted or misspelled your name, please accept our deepest apologies.

Thank you!

Spring Giving

The songbirds' sweet tune is a sign of longer days and warmer temperatures. Yes, spring is here and it's time to show your support for VLT's work by renewing your membership, and adding a little extra if you can. If you're not a member right now, we would love to have you join!

Your membership helps maintain over 17 miles of trails for hikers of all abilities, sponsors year-round walks and talks to keep the community active and informed, and supports educational programming that encourages students to learn about habitats, plants, and the nature of their island home. As a member of VLT you are helping to protect the woodlands, wetlands, and salt marshes that define and ensure the nature of Vinalhaven.

Renew by using the response card we recently mailed out, the form on the back of this newsletter, or the "Donate Now" button on our website: vinalhavenland-trust.org. Thank you for your support!



The many apple trees on Vinalhaven are blooming all over the island. Photo by Sheri Romer-Day.

ISLAND EXPLORERS

VLT's popular day camp hopes to be back this summer! Please email Sarah for more information: vltislandexplorers@gmail.com.

VLT'S COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITY

Like so many of you, I am writing this from my home office. If you'd asked me a week ago, I would have extolled the large table and ample storage; really far more than I need for my simple existence. That was before I relocated two laptops and many of my VLT files, as well as a supply of stationery and a briefcase of loose papers, all of which now seem to be crowding every available surface. But I feel lucky to have a home office with reasonable internet (by Vinalhaven standards), a good office chair, and two cats who are taking a deep, personal interest in all aspects of my work.

I am also feeling blessed to have Vinalhaven's wild beauty within easy access. Whether walking alone, or at a proper social distance with a friend, time spent in nature helps ground and calm me during these anxious days. While my front door is often my trailhead, I am also enjoying watching the slow but steady arrival of spring on VLT's preserves. The lengthening days and thawing soils are paying no heed to this pandemic that has turned so many of our lives topsy-turvy. The buds on the red maples are swelling; the chickadees brazenly hop from branch to branch, singing their spring call. The woodcocks are doing their crazy spring mating flights out on Lanes Island and elsewhere. Skunk cabbages are emerging from the muck, brightening the roadsides with their bright maroon spathes. Though this pandemic may have affected our daily lives, nature offers a changing array of delights to help distract us—even if only for a few minutes—from this upheaval.

VLT is paying close attention to the updates from the town office and the CDC to be sure our messaging and work are in alignment. So far, time outdoors for exercise and fresh air is being encouraged, and we are working hard to be sure our trails are welcoming. VLT steward Kerry Hardy is regularly doing a sweep of all our trails, as we are seeing an uptick in usage as people

look to ways to get outside for exercise and some calming time in nature. Though we had to cancel our annual Basin Cleanup scheduled for mid-April, we have been encouraging individuals and family groups to participate in coastal and roadside cleanups of the trash and bottles that are coming into view as the snow has melted. Early spring is the perfect time to tackle this, before the grasses start growing and the shrubs leaf out.

Just as the earth around us is bursting out of its long, cold season of dormancy, so too will we burst out our doors when it is safe to do so, maybe tentatively at first, like a new shoot, then with greater confidence, as we hug our friends and greet our neighbors once again and joyfully visit treasured places that may have been off limits due to overcrowding.

And when we do, the land will be there to welcome us. Even as I now find solace on the mossy trails, or pausing on the shore to watch the sparkle of sun on water and listening to the almost hypnotic, rhythmic

whoosh of the waves, the woods and shores will be ready to enfold us in the scent of pine and fir, the tang of salt water, and the cry of the osprey as it circles far overhead.

For many of us, the land is our shared connection to Vinalhaven. VLT is continually looking into ways we can share that connection with those of you who are "from away" and respecting the call to "shelter in place" off-island for now. For the most reliable information on visiting or returning to Vinalhaven, please check the town's website at townofvinalhaven.org. If you are on social media, you can find us on Facebook, or on Instagram at [vinalhaven_land_trust](https://www.instagram.com/vinalhaven_land_trust). Stay in touch!

Warmly,

Executive Director



Skunk cabbage is an early harbinger of spring. Photos by Kerry Hardy.

New Trails in 2020

Hikers looking for a change of pace will have a couple of new trail sections to explore on the island this year.

The first is at VLT's Fish Hook Preserve on the Calderwood Neck Road, where a 0.2-mile extension allows hikers to walk almost all the way down to the nearby MCHT Carrying Place Bridge Preserve to connect with that trail. The new trail traverses a dramatic side hill underneath mature evergreens, bringing hikers out to a wooden bench sitting atop an impressive bank of granite ledges and boulders. The bench makes a great place to sit quietly and watch for ducks, eagles, and ospreys, or to just enjoy a scenic look back at Fish Hook and the surrounding waters. There are no especially big hills on the trail, but it's still a good place to hike with a walking stick.

The other new trail offers a quick trip back in time. Hikers can park right at the gravel pull-out across the road from Round Pond, and will find the new trailhead directly adjacent. It follows an old road right-of-way, from when North Haven Road was farther back in the woods, away from the edge of Round Pond. A short 0.1-mile walk brings you

out onto the high ledges overlooking Round Pond, where a rustic bench invites you to sit and enjoy the view. This trail is short and easy enough for hikers of all ages, and one of its many attractions is the contorted red maple tree that arches completely over the path.

Alternatively, you can choose a left turn in the trail that will take you up through mature spruces and massive granite blocks and ledges, ultimately connecting to the existing network of trails already established on this property. This branch of the trail is also only 0.1 miles in length, of which the first 200' are fairly steep—again, a good place for a walking stick.

This new trail at Round Pond was established thanks to the generosity of the Vinalhaven Water District, along with two private landowners, all of whom allowed us to route the trail over their properties. We ask that visitors please help us by staying on the established trails and by taking extra pains to keep the parking area and trails free of litter, as a way of thanking them for extending this privilege to Vinalhaven's hikers. We hope to meet many of you on these new trails in the coming seasons.



Arched maple on the new Round Pond trail. Photo and story by Kerry Hardy.

COMPOSTING NEWS

Tucked in neatly by the solid waste container at the Transfer Station sit two former bait containers, one with a step and flip-top lid. The insulated bins, with 'dos and don'ts' signage, are the collection point for a new municipal composting system: Vinalhaven Community Compost. Funded by a \$20k grant from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Vinalhaven Community Compost is part of a larger effort by the Town's Solid Waste, Composting, and Recycling Ordinance Committee, aka WasteWatchers, whose

mission is to reduce solid waste, increase recycling, and reuse as much discarded material as possible, with the goal of lowering financial and environmental costs incurred at the Transfer Station. Municipal composting will help the Town save money by diverting food scraps from the solid waste stream, thereby reducing the tonnage of waste shipped off the island.

FMI, contact Anna Poe knitwitmaine@gmail.com or Gabe McPhail gmcphail@townofvinalhaven.org, or visit the WasteWatchers page at townofvinalhaven.org.

Planned Giving

What prompts someone to make a planned gift to VLT? Last fall, Margaret (Peggy) Ives directed that part of her retirement plan distribution be directed to VLT.

"The rocks, the woods, the coves! My husband and I spent time on North Haven, but there were too many relatives summering there, so we started spending time on Vinalhaven. We rented at first, and fell in love with the island. It felt like an old granite town, and had so much history. In 1969, we bought land near Starboard Rock and built a house. Though the marriage did not last, my love for the land endured. If the tide was right, I would swim off the rocks every morning, then warm up in the sun with my coffee. I loved the wild nature of Starboard Rock and Mill River and am so grateful for all the work VLT has done in protecting them."

Conserving the traditional character of Vinalhaven that is so important to Peggy is part of VLT's mission. There are many options for making a planned gift to VLT. Through your actions today, a planned gift allows you to build VLT's future strength and well-being. Please contact Executive Director Linnell Mather for more information.

Thank you!

After drafting this piece with enthusiastic input from Peggy, VLT's board and staff were saddened to learn of her passing on April 19, 2020 from complications of COVID-19. Peggy's energy and humor will be sorely missed.

WALKS AND TALKS

We hope to have our schedule of events as planned in July and August, but cannot confirm right now. For updates, keep in touch with us through Facebook, Instagram, our website, email, or phone.

207-863-2543 • vinalhavenlandtrust.org

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Sheri Romer-Day, Office Assistant and
Monitoring Oversight

Help Conserve the Nature of Vinalhaven

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

\$250 \$100 \$50 Other \$ _____

Check enclosed.

Please charge my Visa or Mastercard # _____

Signature _____ exp. _____ CCV _____

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Town/City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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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.

PO Box 268 • Vinalhaven, Maine • 04863 • 207-863-2543 • vinalhavenlandtrust.org



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.

Photo: Banner Moffat



Vinalhaven Land Trust

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