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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 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.



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NEWSLETTER

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Vinalhaven Land Trust

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The Fullness of Place

Here's a question to think about: Who, or what, "owns" this piece of stone?



The woman whose backyard it was buried in? The ditch-digger who took it out of the ground? The historical society he gave it to? The departed soul whose grave it was placed in? Descendants of the culture he came from? The land that has held it these five thousand years? Or does it, perhaps, own itself? This question of "ownership" seems to matter to most people, and nowhere more so than when it comes to land.

But what, exactly, is land—and does any one person truly "own" it? If you work for a land trust, it behooves you to consider these questions. Most of us would define land so as to include the flora and fauna that we carefully inventory in our preserves, but we might overlook some of its many other attributes.

Land is where Earth and Space meet, and where everything happens. Land is the mill where rock, water, wind, and fire—in the form of sunlight—are cracked and ground into their tiniest pieces, which we call small-e earth. As the pieces of these four elements get smaller and smaller, their creative and collaborative potential gets ever greater. Land is the vessel that holds these precious particles; the cruci-

ble in which they're mixed—and from which a magical fifth element arises, which we call life. Once the tender sprouts of life emerge from the earth and begin to climb, crawl, swim or fly about, the play has begun...and thus land is also a nursery and a theater.

However, just as all living things spring from the earth, they must some day return to it. The seeds they spread, the tracks they leave, the deeds they do, and ultimately the crumbled remains of their bodies—land is the archive of it all, however boldly or faintly written.

The information retained by land is staggering—geologic, chemical, physical, genetic, biologic, ecologic, historic, cultural, and on and on. We as humans try to understand and share the many stories that land has to tell: the glacier that left those scratches. The Indians who camped here when they came to cut sweetgrass; you can still see the clamshells they left behind. That cellar hole that belonged to the first white settler in this town. Once we begin to connect land with events, experiences, and stories, then one more bit of magic occurs: land is transformed into place, and so we give it names like Indian Ladder or Carrying Place.

All of this should matter to a land trust, because part of "conservation" should be conserving the land's history. In the previous century, this approach was called "natural history," and it embraced diverse disciplines such as geology, biology, forestry, archaeology, ethnology—in short, the whole suite of ways that land could support life, including human life.

Looking into the history of land opens the door on many delightful new mysteries. For example, there are upwards of seventy shell middens on Vinalhaven, varying widely in their antiquity. Their locations are known, but every year the ocean erases a little bit more

of the stories they hold. In 2018, we will be doing our part to assist University of Maine researchers led by Dr. Alice Kelley, as they scramble to learn what they can before all of the cultural context buried in these middens is washed away forever.

Occasionally, some sharp-eyed hiker will even spot a stone relic left behind by Vinalhaven's earliest residents, such as the beautiful arrowhead (shown at left) found this winter on the southwest side of the island. It's quite safe to say that if you had a collection of Vinalhaven's best artifacts, some of which are still being found, it would be the envy of most museums in the northeast. Who knows what may come out of the ground next, and what it will tell us about these first islanders?

The next evolutionary step for land trusts will be to partner with others—academics and consultants, historical societies, and local knowledge holders—in order to develop a deeper understanding of the lands we steward. Last summer, Walt Day showed us one of the more puzzling trees on Vinalhaven; an English oak growing in a field up near the Thorofare. Who planted it, and when? Is it a modern introduction, or perhaps the descendant of one planted in Vinalhaven's earliest days?

As we unlock mysteries like this one, the next job will be to keep those stories alive, by sharing them with the community. Towards this end, VLT devotes a lot of time and energy through our Walks and Talks lecture series, and by the programs we provide for schoolchildren. People will only preserve land that they love; they will only love land that they feel deep connections to.

-Kerry Hardy, Stewardship Coordinator



Photo: Kerry Hardy
 Cover photo by Kirk Gentelen.

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Vinalhaven Land Trust

Message from the Executive Director

Spring has been very slow to arrive on Vin-alhaven this year. According to my journals, the first snow drops poked their noses out of the ground right on schedule in late February, and then were promptly buried in up to a foot of snow – four times. Luckily, unlike me, they weren't fazed by winter's refusal to depart gracefully. I heard the first tentative sounds of the spring peepers in early April. The next morning dawned with temperatures in the mid 20's, heavy frost on the windshield, and thick ice on the birdbath. None of us were happy.

But the sky is not pitch black when I wake in the morning, and there is still daylight when I head home at the end of the day. The sun is higher in the sky, streaming through the windows of the VLT office, warming our toes and our spirits. And though the days are still chilly, a hike in the woods finds skunk cabbage emerging in the marshier areas, buds swelling on shrubs and trees, and a cheerful cacophony of bird songs.

I eagerly anticipate these signs that winter's icy grip is loosening. I'm the one who cheers the first dandelion flower, especially when I find native pollinators buzzing it, eager for a food source. I listen for peepers and hang around outside at dusk, hoping to see a male

continued on opposite sidebar



JOHN MCLEOD

The Mayor of Perry Creek

My first introduction to John McLeod took place a number of years ago on the day I answered the VLT phone and was greeted by someone with a beautiful, rich Scottish brogue, wanting to know how we could help him make boaters aware of all the work VLT had done protecting the lands surrounding Perry Creek. I am pleased to report this outreach has been very successful; after receiving a steady stream of donations each summer, some crediting "the Mayor of Perry Creek" for the use of his mooring and sharing information about our work, I decided it was time to learn more about John and why he does what he does. In John's words:

"VLT board member Richard Byrd and I were talking one day and he commented to me how disappointing it was to see so many visiting boats come into Perry Creek and leave without any indication they were aware of the wonderful gift of preservation which has been bestowed on the adjacent and riparian lands.

This got me thinking and there surfaced the idea of a guest mooring in the Creek, which could be used as a way to distribute information about VLT. The guest could be provided with information that what they were seeing as they moored in the Creek, hiked on the trails, and enjoyed the environmental ambience would be there for generations to enjoy, thanks to the efforts of VLT and the many supporters who recognized the need to preserve this landscape in perpetuity.

I contacted VLT, who willingly put together and delivered several packets of materials to the north end of the island. Visiting boats were approached and made aware of the treasure which had been gifted by the landowners or purchased by the land trust and were encouraged to do just a little to be part of this treasure.

Two stalwart supporters of this venture have been Alan Rae on the powerboat *Evening Star* and Rick Bates on the schooner *Apledore*.

The distribution of printed material has been an important part of this success. The original offering has been augmented and now we even provide a stamped addressed contribution envelope based on the principle I employ in my business of removing the slightest obstacle to making the contribution.

The story of the Creek, the story of VLT, and a current newsletter are much appreciated as reading material and the addition of a trail map of the Perry Creek Conservation Area secures the keeping of the info.

The guest mooring idea has developed as I have found space for a new mooring or purchased an existing mooring. I now have four guest moorings ready to gain new members and supporters of VLT. All this has been done with wonderful support and guidance from the Harbormaster for the Creek, Foy Brown of J.O. Browns Boatyard.

The four guest moorings—Roddy, Lindy, Sally, and Mary Ann—are named for three of my dogs and my wife, respectively. The mooring marked *Cloud Dancer* is reserved for the Mayor!

This year, Sally will be brought up to the standard I have set of a 4000 lb. granite block with 25 feet of Coast Guard chain and powerful top mooring tackle. Roddy, Lindy, and Mary Ann are already so fitted.

It is made abundantly clear to anyone picking up a guest mooring, that there is no requirement of payment for the use of the mooring and that any donation to VLT on their part is totally voluntary and without obligation.

With the welcome cooperation of Linnell Mather and her staff, a small informational kiosk has been set up on the south shore of the Creek, where a boater would land to access Fox Rocks Trail.

I would be remiss if we did not tell that we are not limited in our "sales pitch" to the guest moorings. With but slight encouragement, we will approach any boat who looks like a likely source of support.

Now here is the big secret: We make friends. What greater reward can there be than that? Sometime in another article I will tell you about a supporter in Atlanta and my heart (I do have one)."

And friends they make. Many are now regular donors to VLT; many still make their annual gift in honor of "Cloud Dancer and the Mayor of Perry Creek!"

Thank you, John!

-Linnell Mather, Executive Director

ISLAND EXPLORERS

VLT's popular nature-based day camp will return for three sessions this summer, all of them chock full of the outdoor adventures and explorations that make Maine summers so unforgettable!

Daily, hands-on learning experiences will focus on exploring nature, learning about organisms, habitats, farms and gardens, and having fun with friends, old and new. Camp will be held Tuesday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to noon on the following weeks:

- *Island Ecosystems*: July 17-19, ages 5 to 7.
- *Farms and Gardens*: July 24-26, ages 5 to 7.
- *Island Ecosystems*: July 31-Aug. 2, ages 8 to 10.

For more info, or to register for Island Explorers, visit VLT's website or contact Sarah at vltislandexplorers@gmail.com



TICK PREVENTION STRATEGIES

During and after spending time outdoors, don't forget to perform frequent tick checks on yourself, your children, and your pets, and follow these rules to help avoid ticks altogether:

- Wear long sleeves and long pants, and tuck pant legs into your socks.
- Wear light colored clothing so ticks are easier to spot.
- Wear a hat.
- Walk in the middle of trails, away from tall grass and bushes.
- Treat clothing with permethrin, and skin with DEET before entering the woods. (Always read and follow instructions.)
- Put any clothes that might have live ticks on them in a hot dryer for 10 minutes; this will kill all insects.

Permethrin is an insecticide derived from a chemical found in the chrysanthemum family of plants. It is a spray used on clothes only, and is deactivated and made less effective by the oils on our skin. Once it is sprayed on clothing, it becomes odorless and can last for several weeks with a single application. Once applied, most ticks will curl up and fall off if they make contact, and will eventually die if there is prolonged exposure. Spray clothing the day before a planned hike so that it dries before you head out.

COMPOST NEWS

Did you know that roughly 25% of the average household waste is organic, compostable material? The EPA estimates that more food reaches landfills and incinerators than any other single material in our everyday trash. The VH Waste Watchers committee, as part of its mission to help the town reduce solid waste, is working on a municipal composting site at the transfer station. If we keep organic materials out of the waste stream, the benefits are numerous:

We save money. Less trash means less money spent shipping waste off the is-

land for disposal. We cut down on greenhouse gases. Organic materials in the waste stream generate methane. Plus, finished compost is beneficial to our gardens—let's keep these nutrients on the island!

We hope to be up and running in May, and we are looking for an initial twenty households who would like to participate in composting their food scraps and help maintain the composting system. If you'd like to join the "compost team", please contact Anna Poe at knitwitmaine@gmail.com.

Message From The President

It is the spring of the year. The snows in this part of the country are slowly retreating; the birds are announcing their presence through song and spring colors; daffodils are close to blooming; lobstermen are cleaning and repairing their traps; soon the third truckload of alewives will be delivered to Old Harbor Pond.

The Basin clean-up is also an annual spring ritual. It is a chance to walk the shore line and collect debris that was washed up over the winter months. It is messy, muddy, and mucky.

On April 15th, we had a small army of nineteen people who showed up on a blustery, cool morning. It was an interesting process to witness as the "trash pickers" just seemed to show up in a steady procession. They grabbed a couple of heavy duty trash bags from Linnell and fanned out across the Basin shore.

When I first arrived that morning, it was quite obvious the amount of debris that decorated the Basin shoreline and surrounding roadsides. But soon, when you scanned the shoreline, you could see people carrying blocks of Styrofoam or parts of lobster traps or pieces of cardboard. Some dragged their soon bulging trail bags behind them, others threw the bags over their shoulder.

When we left, it was very gratifying to recognize the absence of that debris and to appreciate all of the people who took two hours out of their Saturday morning to make a difference. Two pick-up truck loads of trash were delivered to the transfer station, and the Basin shoreline was ready for visitors.

David Hyde, Board President



