



New Land Protection

VLT is pleased to report that we completed two new land protection projects in 2018. First, in late October, Jean Scudder donated two parcels of land to VLT. Though not large, just over five acres in total, these are the last two undeveloped, unprotected parcels with frontage on the Basin. The smaller parcel shares a boundary with VLT's Kintner Marsh Preserve and contains significant salt marsh, as well as a small "island" of higher ground, covered with spruce of varied ages and health, as well as a well-established stand of poison ivy. A small area of this parcel has been traditionally used by a local lobsterman for off-season storage of the traps he fishes in the Basin; VLT has negotiated an agreement with him that will allow him to continue to do so for as long as the traps are actively fished.

The other parcel is very low and wet, with vegetation that is mostly alder and other wetland indicator species, with some spruce. It has a slightly bolder, wooded shoreline that looks across a small inlet to property donated by Ms. Scudder to Maine Coast Heritage Trust in 2007.

Writes VLT Stewardship Coordinator Kerry Hardy:

"Eagles, ospreys, wading birds, gulls, seals, deer, raccoons, and mink, along with a host of smaller creatures that populate the water's edge, are just some of the animals known to use these properties. Likewise, the relatively large expanse of salt marsh on the northern parcel is a valuable natural resource, and should be protected to the extent we are able. Sadly, we acknowledge that changing sea levels will greatly impact both of these sites, especially the northernmost. Salt marsh erosion, specifically the slumping off of large shelves of soil, is already very noticeable here. At king tides, the salt marsh is often largely

inundated."

With a combined shoreline of about three-eighths of a mile, there is significant trash along the shore of both parcels, the clean-up of which will be on the schedule for this summer. Let us know if you are interested in volunteering to help with this effort! VLT's stewardship staff and committee will be spending more time on this property during 2019, as we add to the existing management plan to determine how best it can serve our community, while also adding to the Whole Place conservation of the Basin that VLT and our partner, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, have been working towards for many years.

We are very grateful to Ms. Scudder for this generous gift. She is responsible for much of the land protection that has already occurred around the Basin. In addition to the property donated to MCHT mentioned above, she also donated the 83-acre Watershed Preserve to VLT in 2003, protecting in perpetuity 64 acres in the watershed of the Vinalhaven Water District.

Secondly, also in 2018, VLT completed its first modified agricultural easement on land owned by Laura Blankertz, protecting approximately 34 acres of land on Calderwood Neck. The protected area has approximately twelve acres of mowed fields and over six hundred feet of frontage on Carver Cove, in addition to a moderately sized wetland that extends into the southwest corner of the property. According to the 2002 map prepared for Vinalhaven Land Trust by College of the Atlantic, most, if not all, of the soil in the area protected by the easement is Peru fine sandy loam 3-8% slope, which is excellent for farming. The easement allows for a wide range of agricultural activities on the property, including the growing of crops for sale or for livestock

feed, grazing of animals, Christmas tree farming, or the production of nuts, berries, or flowers. The easement ensures that the modest farmhouse and barn will maintain their current footprints, and that the fields that sweep down towards the shore and woodland are available for farming, grazing, and small-scale forestry in perpetuity.

The property is the former home of the Clint Calderwood Dairy Farm, which produced and sold milk until 1946, when the farm was sold to seasonal residents. A picture from that period shows the house and barn looking very similar to their appearance today, as well as a carriage house or small barn in an area where the easement will allow for the construction of "agricultural structures" such as a barn, milking or hay storage sheds or cheese-making facilities. More recently, about two acres of the lower fields were used by Sparkplug Farm for growing some mid-season crops as the soil in that area held moisture well, allowing the crops to grow better during the hottest part of the summer. With the growing focus on supporting locally grown food, and the very few areas on Vinalhaven with soils this highly rated, the VLT board felt a conservation easement that would prevent the subdivision and possible development of this former active farm was the right thing to do.

Through their generosity, Jean Scudder and Laura Blankertz have helped conserve the nature of Vinalhaven. These were two very different projects: one helping to complete the protection of a Whole Place focus area, the other making sure that good farmland is not lost to development and will remain available for agricultural activities. Thank you, Jean and Laura!

—Linnell Mather

President's Message

One of the magical aspects of the coming of spring is the gradually lengthening days, coupled with increased warmth from the sun. These two benchmarks are also the trigger for many birds to start their migration north. They show up alone or in pairs before they reveal themselves in larger flocks. American woodcocks start to appear in March, when hope is needed to get through the end of a long Vinalhaven winter. In rapid succession, the red-winged blackbird's song is heard, robins start digging for worms, and wrens begin gathering nesting material.

Being on the coastal flyways, we welcome birds that cross large swaths of open water. After their journey, they look for safe places to rest up and nourish themselves. Vinalhaven is one of those safe havens, and the collection of islands affords many opportunities for birds. Conserved lands (islands, meadows, forests, and canopy) all provide important resting grounds for birds. The protection of habitats, such as wetlands, forests, and fields becomes increasingly important due to climate issues, new construction, and human intervention.

This is one more instance where protected lands add value to our communities, our lives, and our well-being. These lands offer great habitat, food, and protection. When you walk at Fox Rocks or Granite Island, you can hear the melody of birdsong, which has been absent for the winter months, announcing their return to their nesting locations and our collective return to spring. As we approach summer, let us all open our ears and eyes a bit wider to the variety of avian friends Vinalhaven has to offer.

– David Hyde, President

Discovering Birding

In March of 1975, my wife and I brought friends to Vinalhaven to camp out in our “new” house on Atlantic Avenue for a weekend. The two-holer outhouse, a spring on the North Haven Road, and my grandfather's old pot-bellied stove provided the barest of necessities.

Though I had grown up in the country, my life in birding started that weekend on Thrumcap Island in the Basin to which I had led our small group on a walk, two of them genuine birders. There I watched them

freeze in the sudden intensely urgent, hushed excitement that grips birders at a life-list moment, for on adjacent, worn-out spruce trees were two woodpeckers, a three-toed and a black-backed. Marianne's reverentially whispered, “Frank, one's got yellow on its head!” said it all.

That afternoon, I learned how rare both were and what a remarkable birder's paradise Vinalhaven was. Still is. That summer, I bought the spotting scope I still bring to the

land trust's Thursday morning bird walks. I was hooked, joined not long thereafter by my brother, Bill, and 45 years hence we're both still at it, marveling at the stunning beauty of these creatures, the endless places to which they lead us, and the fine company of great people who have shared so much knowledge, many right here on Vinalhaven where it all began for me. I am grateful.

– Pete Jaques



A black-bellied plover posing at Whitmore Pond Sanctuary. Photo by Rick Morgan.

VLT Merchandise

Show your support for the nature of Vinalhaven by purchasing one of the many items available from our office at Skoog Park or at the Flea Market this summer. We have caps and hats, fleece vests, tote bags with an Elaine Crossman print, notecards with artwork by Penelope Lord, notecards with Vinalhaven images by Kerry Hardy, and 11” x 17” maps of Vinalhaven's natural resources created by College of the Atlantic. What a great way to remember your time on the island!

Check our website and visit us on Facebook for events and information!
www.vinalhavenlandtrust.org

ISLAND EXPLORERS

VLT's popular day camp is back for its sixth summer! Island Explorers is offering three sessions of daily hands-on learning adventures for students entering grades K–2. These sessions will be packed with nature exploration, farms and gardens, Vinalhaven history and having fun with friends, old and new! Camp will be held Tuesday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., on the following weeks:

July 16–18 · July 23–25 · July 30–August 1

Cost is \$50 per session for Vinalhaven School students, and \$90 for others. For more information or to register for Island Explorers, visit VLT's website or contact Sarah at vltilslandexplorers@gmail.com.



Photos, above right: An Island Explorer making a discovery while tide-pooling. Photo by Sarah Barrett. Below right: The song sparrow's arrival in Vinalhaven makes it sound like spring. Photo by Karen Oakes. Below left: Hikers cross a bridge at Marcuse Wetlands Preserve. Photo by Norbert Leser.



A Summer of Walks & Talks

The Walks and Talks Committee has once again filled the calendar with an array of wonderful programs and events for spring, summer, and beyond. We will host hikes to learn about butterflies, wildflowers, ferns, and shorebirds, all guided by experts in their fields, as well as some volunteer-led excursions. For the young or young at heart we will have tide-pooling, wildflower pressing, and fairy house building. And for dog lovers, our annual "Woof and Walk" will take place on Middle Mountain Town Park this year. We will be learning to identify trees by their "bark."

Off-island excursions to Hurricane Island and North Haven are always popular. Eve-

ning talks will include topics such as aquaculture, lobsters, seaweed, native plants, and photography. And this is just some of what the summer has in store!

For a full list of events, details, and updates, see the calendar on our website: vinalhavenlandtrust.org. As always, upcoming walks will be advertised in The Wind, on Facebook, and on posters around town.

You may also request to be on our Walks and Talks email list. Starting in June, bi-weekly reminders of upcoming events will be sent out, continuing through September. To be added to the list, please send your email address to sherry.rega@vinalhavenlandtrust.org.

TRAIL TUESDAYS

VOLUNTEER WITH VLT

Mark your calendar! June 18th, July 23rd, and August 13th are dates when you'll have a chance to help with trail maintenance this summer. VLT steward Kerry Hardy will lead these monthly expeditions during which you will spend 2-3 hours pushing back encroaching brush, trimming branches, installing signage, and accomplishing whatever else needs to get done. Tools are a great addition to these outings, but a willingness to help is best of all! Volunteer parties meet at Skoog Park at 9 a.m. to venture out to a VLT preserve.

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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

Songbirds are singing and ducklings are taking their first waddling steps to the shore. Yes, spring is here and it's time to affirm your support for the work of VLT by renewing your membership, and adding a little extra if you can. If you're not a member right now, we'd love to sign you up!

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!

"Planned Gifts" offer alternative ways for you to contribute to VLT's long-term strength and sustainability. They incorporate a variety of gift techniques and asset choices so that you can make a gift that best suits you. A number of arrangements allow you to make a gift commitment now but defer the transfer of the funds to VLT until a future date. Planned gift donors often are eligible to receive important tax benefits. If you are a member, be on the lookout for a brochure to be mailed out soon with all the possible options. Contact Linnell Mather for more information at linnell.mather@vinalhavenlandtrust.org, or call (207) 863-2543.

Bird Walks

Years ago, a request was made for organized summer bird walks on Vinalhaven. VLT and MCHT teamed up to offer "Wednesday morning bird walks" during July and August. The hope for these walks was simple—get interested residents and visitors out to a few of Vinalhaven's seemingly infinite number of beautiful places, have them take a closer look at some of the island's avian residents and visitors, and then maybe the participants would return on their own and make their own observations. The days and starting times of the bird walks may have morphed over time, but the goals have stayed true, and with so many birds to see, it's little surprise the walks remain popular.

It is incredible how much bird activity is observed each week. From scoping out shorebirds and seabirds at State Beach, to watching wood ducks and eagles at Folly Pond, and to the two-hour "walks" at Lane's where the group never gets past the field—the group puts itself in locations/positions to succeed and success is the only option.

Though there are many great memories, some of my favorites involve the Nelson's sparrows at State Beach. Formerly known as "Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow" and before that "sharp-tailed sparrow," these funky tweeters aren't necessarily rare on the island. They are confirmed nesters in the Basin and undoubtedly breed in other salt marshes around the island. What they are, though, is "easily overlooked" and might even be considered "rare to see," largely due to the combination of their stealth behavior, habits, and habitat preferences.

Let me put it this way—Nelson's are totally worth looking for every visit because you know they are there, somewhere in the grasses. Though there are so many variables stacked against seeing this bird, Nelson's still have inspired more "high fives" than any other bird species observed on the walks. Walks where Nelson's have been observed are talked about throughout the season, and often achieve (somewhat) legendary status.

Nelson's sparrows are just one of the many avian species which have created memories and stories on the bird walks. Others include the year of eastern kingbirds at Folly Pond, the searches for the first returning red-necked grebe, and the yellowthroat nestlings, to name just a few.

There is no better way to get to know what the birds are up to around the island than getting out and looking at them. The more you get out, the more you observe, and you just never know what might show up from week to week. Do yourself a favor and join a bird walk or two this year. There are often a few scopes being shared, and when everybody is looking, everyone sees more. Who knows, you might be there for the Nelson's sighting or to see the merlin hunting shorebirds. Consider yourself officially invited. There's always space for you!

Each Thursday at 8 a.m. starting June 20th through September 12th. See you out there!

— Kirk Gentalen



The yellow-bellied sapsucker is one of the many birds that can be seen (and heard!) on a bird walk. Photo by Kirk Gentalen.

Photo below: Kirk leading a Thursday morning bird walk at State Beach. Photo by Sherry Rega.

Birds on the Web!

For more information on what you can see at a bird walk, visit VLT's new bird page at: <https://vinalhavenlandtrust.org/vinalhaven-bird-page>



Nesting Seabirds

If you've ever been boating among the islands off Vinalhaven's east shore, you may have noticed signs like the one pictured at right. All seven of the islands here in the so-called Brimstone archipelago are among the seabird nesting islands that are protected breeding grounds for puffins, terns, eiders, guillemots, cormorants, and other species that maintain nesting colonies on these remote outposts.

Some, like the puffin, guillemot, and petrel, nest in crevices and rocky burrows. Others, like the several species of terns that breed in Maine, just lay their eggs on a sandy or gravelly surface, and trust their camouflaged shells will keep them safe. Black-backed, laughing, and herring gulls also have camo on their eggs, but give them a rude nest of straw as well. And some, like the eider duck, nestle their eggs in a perfect halo of super-insulating downy feathers.

All of these different strategies may be in play on the same island as the spring stretch-

es into summer, which is why state and federal laws have been passed to prohibit people from going ashore on these islands until August 31, after the breeding season is over.

Although we leave it to Maine state and federal agencies to do periodic censuses of each species, VLT has stewardship responsibilities on four of these islands—Otter, Hay, Roberts, and Little Roberts—and monitors them each year in the early fall. Though it may be tempting to visit them during those perfect July and August days, please remember that this is not allowed. For more information about the many species that depend on these islands for safe nesting habitat, check out this website:

https://www.fws.gov/uploadedfiles/region_5/nwrs/north_zone/maine_coastal_islands/guide%20to%20maine%20seabirds_opt.pdf

— Kerry Hardy



Photo above: Common eider ducks are one of the many nesting birds in Vinalhaven. Photo by Kirk Gentalen. Photo at right: The name mourning dove refers to their soft lamenting calls. Photo by Sheri Romer-Day.



Annual Meeting

This year's annual meeting will be on Friday, July 26 at 4:00 p.m. under the tent at Skoog Park. On the panel speaking about "Groundwater on Vinalhaven" will be geologist George Kendrick, hydrogeologist Josh Bowe, and Rick Knowlton, President of Maine Water, which works with the trustees of the Vinalhaven Water District to maintain Vinalhaven's municipal water supply.

There will be light snacks, beverages, and lively conversation with VLT board, staff, members, and community. All are welcome to attend.

TICK CHECK!

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>

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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!

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

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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.

Photo: Kerry Hardy



12 Skoog Park Road
PO Box 268
Vinalhaven, ME 04863

Vinalhaven Land Trust