



# Avalonia Trails

P.O. Box 49  
Old Mystic, CT 06372

*...preserving natural habitats in southeastern Connecticut by acquiring and protecting lands and by communicating the value of these irreplaceable resources*

FALL 2013

## Avalonia Elects Board and Officers for Fiscal Year 2013-2014

*by Janice Parker*

Avalonia elected a new Board of Directors at its Annual Meeting held May 15 at the Lisbon Community Center Barn. The meeting was well-attended and participants included Lisbon first selectman Tom Sparkman who made a brief welcoming address to the members present.

Duncan Schweitzer completed his second term as President and was succeeded by **Michele Fitzpatrick**. Michele served 20 years as a U.S. Coast Guard officer with specialties in Ocean Engineering and Physics. She is currently a part-time contractor at the Coast Guard Research and Development Center in New London and occasionally teaches Physics at the Coast Guard Academy. She is also a Ph.D. candidate in Geophysics at UCONN. Michele is an Avalonia life member and a member of the Groton Town Committee. She previously served on the Board as Groton Town Director and Vice President. **Maureen Dewire**, who has served as Secretary since September of 2011, will continue in that capacity and in addition assume the responsibilities of Vice-President. Maureen holds a Master's degree in Environmental Studies and works as the Education Coordinator for the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Having grown up in Stonington and as a frequent visitor to many of Avalonia's properties, she is delighted to now be a part of their land conservation efforts.



*Incoming President Michele Fitzpatrick and retiring President Duncan Schweitzer.*

**Buck Lawton** was elected Treasurer. Buck is a retired private school headmaster with many years of experience on Boards of Trustees and has served as treasurer for other non-profit organizations. Each of these officers will serve a one-year term.

**Gerry Stefon** was elected to a further two-year term on the Board as Chair of the Acquisition Committee **Bob Chapin** and **Mike Goodwin** will complete the second years of their terms as Chairs of the Finance and Stewardship Committees, respectively. **Margaret Gibson** was elected Chair of the Personnel Committee. The remainder of the Board of Directors will comprise **Scott Dawley** (representing Griswold), **Dick Conant** (Groton), **Mac Turner** (North Stonington), **Binti Ackley** (Stonington) and three Directors-at-Large, **Gregg Matis**, **Dennis Main** and **Anne Nalwalk**. Bob Chapin and Mike Goodwin will serve as Town Directors for Preston and Ledyard, respectively, in addition to fulfilling their Standing Committee responsibilities.

This election brings a number of new members to the Board of Directors and a wealth of new and invaluable expertise. Dick Conant's academic background is in biology, marine science, environmental science and environmental regulations. He recently retired from 33 years with the Federal government working as a marine biologist, aquatic biologist, wetland biologist and environmental compliance manager most recently at the US navy Submarine Base. In serving on the Board, his goal is to gain experience with all aspects of land conservancy management. Dennis Main grew up in Ledyard and received his BA/MBA from UCONN; retired from a career with State of CT Auditors and State Data Center as Fiscal/Admin Manager, he lives in Bozrah on Mainagery Farm. He is currently contracting several forestry management projects with USDA, has served on Bozrah Board of Finance and is currently Chair of the Bozrah Board of Assessment Appeals. He is a CT Licensed Real Estate Broker. Gregg Matis is a stay-at-home father of two, who spends lots of time outdoors (often on Avalonia properties) hiking, fishing, kayaking, or just looking for frogs and critters in the rivers with his kids. He hopes to help Avalonia increase its appeal and interest among families with children. Binti Ackley is new to the Board, but is well known to Avalonia members as a tireless and enthusiastic volunteer and environmental steward as well as past Chair of the Stonington Town Committee.

With this addition of new energy, enthusiasm and expertise to the experience of continuing Board members, we look forward to a highly successful year.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICER

President.....Michele Fitzpatrick  
V-P/Secretary.....Maureen Dewire  
Treasurer.....Buck Lawton

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Acquisition.....Gerry Stefon  
Stewardship.....Mike Goodwin  
Finance.....Bob Chapin  
Development&PR.....Vacant  
Personnel.....Margaret Gibson

### TOWN DIRECTORS

Griswold.....Scott Dawley  
Groton.....Richard Conant  
Ledyard.....Michael Goodwin  
Preston.....Bob Chapin  
North Stonington.....Mac Turner  
Stonington.....Binti Ackley  
Sprague, Voluntown.....Vacant

### DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Dennis Main  
Gregg Matis  
Anne Nalwalk

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....Janice Parker

### HONORARY DIRECTORS

Carole Clark  
Anna Coit  
Lois Tefft Van Deusen  
Hugo Wilms

Phone: (860) 884-3500

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[www.avalonialandconservancy.org](http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org)

## President's Note

Greetings everyone and welcome to a new Avalonia fiscal year. I hope you are enjoying the summer. As the new president, I'd like to thank last year's Board of Directors for their service. I would particularly like to thank Rowlie Stebbins for his many years of service as Treasurer, and Duncan Schweitzer for his numerous valuable contributions to the organization, most notably his recent term as President and his leadership role in the acquisition of Bell Cedar Swamp. You can see a number of new names on the Board roster on this page and some biographical information about them is included in the article on the Annual Meeting (page 1). I would like to welcome the new and returning members of the Board; I look forward to serving with all of you, as well as the Town Committee Chairs and members.

Avalonia had a busy and productive year, which you can read about in our Annual Report (contact us for a copy). Two highlights I would like to mention are the creation of a Strategic Conservation Plan and the completion of the acquisition of Bell Cedar Swamp, which in many ways exemplifies what we mean by "strategic conservation." The Plan outlines Avalonia's overall policy on what lands we want to conserve and why. It also provides guidance for property evaluation and acquisition, stewardship to further our conservation goals, and public outreach and education about our land conservation strategy.

We have another busy year ahead of us. We are in the process of raising funds to acquire the remaining 75% of the Babcock Ridge property, a 74 acre tract that connects the Erisman Woodlands and Henne Memorial Tract of the Shunock River Preserve in North Stonington. A primary focus for the Board this year will be development and membership. It takes a significant amount of time and money to run the organization and provide the services and programs necessary to fulfill our mission. We would like to expand our membership as well as give current members additional opportunities to serve the organization according to their time and skills. Please join us at our "friend-raising" event on September 29 at the La Grua Center in Stonington (see page 3 for details).

Finally, I would like to thank all the members and donors who give generously of their time and money to support the organization and our goals.

*Michele Fitzpatrick*

## The Benefits of Walking and our 2013 Cross-Groton Hike From Bluff Point to Beebe Cove via Avalonia's Towns End Trail

*by Joellen Anderson*

Our ever-popular one-way cross-town hike had over 25 participants for our third annual co-sponsored event in support of National and Connecticut's Trails Day (June 1). We all know that there are many benefits to walking, but, with refreshments provided at two stops along our hike, it would be interesting to know if we all burned off those extra calories. Both Avalonia and Groton Open Space Association (GOSA) members provided hike guides, "sweeps" and property acquisition history as we linked CT state park, Town of Groton and private land trust public open space trails. Thanks to Groton's Park & Recreation Department, who provided transportation, we did not have to walk another 6 miles back to our cars.

Do take the time to explore the public walking trails in your own towns and remember all those health benefits of walking because you will be increasing your cardiovascular and pulmonary fitness, reducing your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, cholesterol, joint and muscular pain or stiffness and diabetes, building stronger bones, improving your balance, increasing your muscle strength and endurance and reducing body fat as you take each step.

See you on our trails!

*Joellen Anderson is Chair of the Groton Town Committee*

# The Land Conservation Process: From Acquisition to Stewardship

:: a FREE Avalonia educational event ::

an invitation to attend

## Topics to include:

- Strategic conservation planning
- Types of land acquisition
- Acquisition project selection
- Sources of acquisition funding
- Benefits to land owners
- Stewardship of acquired properties

## Co-presentors:

Michele Fitzpatrick - President, Avalonia  
Maureen Dewire - Vice President, Avalonia

**DATE:** Sunday, September 29th

**TIME:** 5:00 p.m. sharp followed by light appetizers,  
wine, soft drinks and more great conversation!

**PLACE:** La Grua Center, 32 Water Street, Stonington, CT

Due to limited seating, kindly RSVP by September 20th:  
860.884.3500 or [avalonialc@yahoo.com](mailto:avalonialc@yahoo.com)



[www.avalonialandconservancy.org](http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org)



Left to right: Natalie Schafer, Heather Smith and Michele Fitzpatrick.  
Photo by Joellen Anderson

## Girl Scouts Receive Silver Badges for Stewardship Efforts

by Joellen Anderson

Michele Fitzpatrick, Avalonia's new President (and former Girl Scout), awards Avalonia family memberships and other gifts to Natalie Schafer and Heather Smith, in appreciation of their 50 hours each of volunteer effort to achieve their Girl Scout Silver Badge awards.

Natalie and Heather are members of Girl Scout Troop 63210 and their troop leader is Mary Schafer. Natalie and Heather cleared and blazed trails, learned to identify both native and invasive vegetation, established a letterbox trail to encourage the public to explore the preserve and installed two bridges to protect wet areas along the trail. Before installing the bridges, the scouts prepared and presented the required information to the Town of Groton Inland Wetland Agency and received permission to install the bridges as a non-regulated use per agency regulations. Both

girls were 8th grade Cutler Middle School students and this is Avalonia's first Girl Scout project. In addition, the scouts cleared and blazed the main trail on Town's End and served refreshments there to over 25 participants of our third 6 mile cross town hike event held in support of both National and CT Trails day, a co-sponsored hiking event by Avalonia, Groton Open Space Organization and the Town of Groton (see page 2).

Thank you, Natalie and Heather for all your ideas, presentations and hard work in support of Avalonia's community outreach mission.

## Raising the Purple Martins

by Beth Sullivan

In the fall of 2012, we received funding from Audubon Connecticut Important Bird Area small matching grants program to erect housing for Purple Martins. These birds are considered threatened in Connecticut and depend on humans for their homes and have some specific requirements for becoming successfully established. The Knox Preserve, situated near the coast, with acres of fields and a small pond meets these requirements and Martins had been observed flying and feeding there over past summers.

With the grant we purchased a complete 12-unit Super Gourd housing system. On April 27, we set up it up and by the very next day, Purple Martins were checking out the new real estate. Over the next weeks we watched as new arrivals chose their gourds and began bringing nest material to enhance the pine needle bedding we had provided. When we watched the birds bring in green cherry leaves, we knew egg-laying would follow shortly.

We made weekly observations. Martins are not disturbed by our presence and actually benefit from our careful intervention. We lowered the entire system to do nest checks, count eggs, and also remove nests of invasive House Sparrows.

On June 16 we had our first eggs and by June 28 we discovered the first hatch of a clutch of 5! Over the next days 11 more hatched in 4 nests. Our next phase of Martin-sitting began. Most birds and nests harbor mites. They are barely visible and will parasitize the nestlings, weakening and sometimes killing them. The best way to help prevent this is to change the nest material within each gourd. We removed each baby to a



*Banding the martins with help from DEEP.*

*Photo by Beth Sullivan*

clean box, removed the infested bedding and replaced with clean pine needles. The young were replaced, settled in and by the time all nests were cleaned and system raised again, the Martin parents circled around and returned to their young.

On July 12 when the young were about 14 days old, a team from CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) came to the Knox Preserve and our babies were banded: First with a numbered, Federal ID band and then with two color bands, Orange/Green to identify their place of birth. The nestlings



*Chicks await return to their nest.*

*Photo by Rick Newton*

were weighed and assessed and I am happy to report ours were fat and healthy! By the end of July these little ones will have fledged. Their bands will allow scientists to track their movement as they disperse, migrate and ultimately return here as young adults next year.

The entire experience has been very exciting and educational. The DEEP team suggests we set up a second gourd system next year because they were very happy with our success with our first! There is a great deal to be learned at the Purple Martin Conservation Association website or bring your binoculars and observe at the Knox Preserve.

*Beth Sullivan is Chair of the Stonington Town Committee and also writes regularly for our blog: [avaloniaetrails.blogspot.com](http://avaloniaetrails.blogspot.com). Follow the blog for regular updates on the martins and other topics of environmental interest.*



*The Purple Martin Super-Gourd "condominium"*

*Photo by Rick Newton*

**(Not) Wanted! Giant Hogweed**

*by Anne Roberts-Pierson*

Never a dull moment with these pesky invasive plants! Once again, we are being asked by UCONN and the CT Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) to be on the lookout for one of these noxious weeds. Fortunately, this one is quite easy to spot as it can grow up to 15 feet in height. It has been confirmed in 25 towns in all eight counties of CT. It was first identified in CT in 2001.

Giant hogweed is the culprit. I remembered seeing a plant that resembled this one in Ledyard a few years ago, so I took another look recently and fortunately it was look-alike Purple Angelica, a non-invasive plant. I was very relieved to figure this out with the assistance of the very informative website listed below.

For photos, plant descriptions, control techniques, and a reporting form, visit: [www.cipwg.uconn.edu/giant\\_hogweed](http://www.cipwg.uconn.edu/giant_hogweed). If you prefer your information in video form, the Greater Vancouver Invasive Plant Council has prepared a YouTube video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=sysmrqw4sEo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sysmrqw4sEo)

To report what you think might be a sighting of this weed, please visit the CIPWG website first and compare your suspect plant with the data, photos, and descriptions provided there. To report the plant, use the online form or contact Donna Ellis at: [donna.ellis@uconn.edu](mailto:donna.ellis@uconn.edu) or call (860) 486-6448.



*Giant Hogweed. Photo provided by CIPWG.*

*Ledyard town committee member Anne Roberts-Pierson is a former president of Avalonia.*

**Executive Director’s Report**

*by Janice Parker*

Now donations from our 2012 Annual Appeal have been totaled, we are happy to report a record return, however, our budgeted expenditures for the fiscal year still exceed our projected income. This in part is because we are now stewarding more land than ever, and in part because the cost of doing business has increased. To learn more about what it takes to conserve land in perpetuity, plan to attend our September 29 event ( details on page 3).

If you would like to contribute in a tangible way to our mission, consider volunteering. We currently have openings on a number of our Standing Committees. We are also specifically seeking candidates for the following positions: webmaster, event planner(s) (both fund-raising and “friend-raising” i.e. social, educational, community outreach and family events), newsletter editor, grant writer(s), fundraiser(s) and volunteer co-ordinator(s). Contact us to learn more (see page 2 for phone and email information).

**Avalonia welcomes new and renewing members!**



Renew online using your credit card:

[www.avalonialandconservancy.org](http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org)

Click “Donors & Members info”

Or mail this completed form and check to:

**P.O.Box49  
Old Mystic CT 06372**

Name(s).....  
 Address.....  
 Town..... State..... Zip.....  
 Phone.....  
 E-mail.....

Choose membership level:	Individual \$25	Family	\$ 45
Pine \$50	Cedar \$100	Maple	\$200
	Life membership	Mighty Oak	\$500
		Organization	\$ 150

I am enclosing \$.....as a contribution in addition to my membership dues.

I am enclosing \$.....as a contribution toward the acquisition of Babcock Ridge.

I want to help:  outdoor work  fundraising/PR  solicit new members

event planning  other work (please specify).....

I would prefer to receive my newsletter by email

*Note: Dues, gifts of land, securities and other contributions are tax-deductible within the limits of the law.*

**Additional Annual Appeal Donors**

We acknowledge with gratitude the following additional donors, whose contributions arrived after our April issue went to press:

- Michele & Charlie Ewers
- Bob Gunnels
- Chester Kitchings Family Foundation
- Thomas & Marguerite Moore Family Trust



AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY, INC.

P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, CT 06372

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Non-Profit Organization

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Mystic, CT

Permit No. 126

**Avalonia now has a Facebook page:**



## Upcoming Events

**Sunday, September 29, 2013 at 5p.m. The Land Acquisition Process: From Acquisition to Stewardship.** Join us at the LaGrue Center, 32 Water Street, Stonington to learn more about what it takes to fulfill our mission of conservation. Details on page 3.

**Sunday, October 20, 2013 from 8-11a.m. Bird banding on the Knox Preserve, with Bob Dewire and Beth Sullivan.** We have been banding on this preserve for over 2 decades and have compiled an impressive list of species. The data are important for developing management plans and tracking population trends in migratory and resident songbirds. Participants can provide hands-on help with the process and it is a great opportunity for photography.

**Sunday, January 19, 2014 at 1p.m. Explore local woodlands in winter.** Hike Avalonia's Moore Woodlands and abutting Town of Groton's Beebe Pond trails in Mystic. Meet at Moore Woodlands Capstan Avenue cul-de-sac entrance. Hike difficulty is medium to difficult depending on weather and trail conditions: some level ground, but also a stream crossing, additional wet areas and boulder fields. Time: 1.5-2 hours. Dress appropriately for weather conditions. Inclement weather or difficult trail conditions cancels. Bring water. Refreshments and conversation at hikes end. One dog on leash will be allowed at the rear of the group. Call 860-445-2563 to register.

