



# 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 2016**



## Get Ready, Get Set, GO! Hike and Seek.

*by Beth Sullivan*

Avalonia has the privilege of owning, and thus sharing, acres of protected land and miles of trails. Part of our mission is to educate and help others develop an appreciation for these special preserves. Because we are an all-volunteer organization we cannot always be leading hikes and presenting programs as often as we would like. So...Get Ready to Hike and Seek! We will guide you in a unique way, on journeys of your own choosing.



We developed this program to point out real elements in nature: no virtual creatures here. Showcasing 24 preserves in 5 towns and with the website to guide you, we challenge one and all to explore with the goal of learning a bit more thinking deeper, pondering and perusing, and then, documenting your found clues with photos.

Ideally created for those who have social media and technology at their fingertips it is also great for families. Parents can help children explore the photo clues then encourage them to find the targets along the trail. Sharing can be done by using the **#avaloniahikeandseek** for Instagram and Facebook, or by posting your photos in the photo album for each preserve on Avalonia's Facebook page. Instructions and clues are all in one place on the Hike and Seek web page <http://avalonialandconservancy.org/hike-and-seek> and more information and maps are readily available through links to the main Avalonia website. All mobile friendly.

The program is free to all and registration is optional but will allow us to contact parents or leaders with updates and notify participants of occasional seasonal celebrations for all Seekers!

There is no real beginning, no end, no competition and no stress!

Beautiful hiking weather is finally here. There are targets to be found now. Over time we will add more goals that may be seasonally dependent to keep every trip interesting and new.

We look forward to seeing your submissions and hearing your comments.

Avalonia has worked hard to acquire and protect so much beautiful property here in southeastern CT. Our mission is to help you learn about it and appreciate it so that you and your families will help us carry the effort forward into the next generations.

Have fun!



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2016-2017**

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**www.avalonialandconservancy.org**  
**avalonialc@yahoo.com**  
**860-884-3500**

**President's Update**

I am honored to serve as Avalonia's 9th President, following a rich tradition of leaders dedicated to conservation of habitats in Southeastern CT. Dating back to February 19, 1968, when Lois S. Tefft, Hugo J. Wilms, John H. Hubbard and Hugh L. M. Cole first incorporated Avalonia as the then-named Mashantucket Land Trust, Inc., there has always been an underlying Vision for preservation that has remained the basis of Avalonia's work.

As part of the Avalonia Accreditation process that is currently well underway, the current Board of Directors has formalized a Vision Statement for our organization and it was adopted at the June BOD. It is posted to our website and I am sharing it here with you:

**AVALONIA VISION STATEMENT**

(adopted by the Board of Directors on June 22, 2016)

- ◇ To be the primary regional and leading best-practice land trust in Southeastern CT, protecting and conserving natural resources including threatened and declining habitats;
- ◇ Work collaboratively with other land trusts, preservation groups, political entities, not-for-profits, etc. in the southeastern Connecticut area to conserve key habitats;
- ◇ Create a Strategic Conservation Plan with fully integrated mapping to allow proactive identification of priority acquisition parcels and partnering opportunities;
- ◇ Grow our Town and Standing Committees to become more robust, fully staffed, and functioning Committees to meet stewardship, acquisition, and other organizational requirements;
- ◇ Steward fee properties in accordance with individual management plans and develop public recreational and educational opportunities where appropriate including compliant ADA trails where feasible;
- ◇ Monitor all Conservation Easement properties as required by law and best practices;
- ◇ Maintain and/or return arable lands to productive farming where appropriate, through innovative partnering;
- ◇ Strengthen financial support of conserved lands while controlling costs and maintaining transparency.

As a President dedicated to communication, I plan to offer regular updates on our work toward that Vision as we complete our Accreditation work (an additional information response is due back from the BOD to the Accreditation Commission October 14, 2016.) We will also be planning for our 50<sup>th</sup> celebration events. We continue to partner with fellow Land Trusts and to collaborate with other environmental organizations to further our mission for conservation and are fleshing out details of a Capital Plan to support preservation acquisition activity in our mission area. We will also strive to continually enhance our communication, education and outreach to our members and the greater community we serve.

I also welcome you to follow updates on the Avalonia Webpage at <http://avalonialandconservancy.org/news/> I intend to provide more frequent and timely updates there as time, events and news dictates.

We will soon have good news for you on our latest acquisitions, watch your email inbox for announcements. Closing is scheduled after deadline for getting this newsletter to press. I am pleased to be signing the transaction documents this month!

*Dennis Main*

## Executive Director's Note

The air is getting crisper, the leaves are starting to change, pumpkin spice is all around you, and the ticks are going away (okay, well maybe not that last part...did you know that's a myth?). Autumn is here and for many it's the most wonderful time of the year. It's boots and flannel weather and perfect for hiking. As the days get shorter, we relish being able to catch those last few rays of sun out on a trail or watch the sun set from our kayak. For Avalonia's volunteers, it often means a reprieve from tackling invasive plants and constant mowing.

Fall is also a time for us to take a deep breath, regroup, and work on our plan for next year. Have you been out to one of our preserves and thought "Avalonia really needs to do..." or "I would really like to see..." or "why don't they...?" Because we do. All the time. We are always asking ourselves "what can we do to make the preserves and the organization better?" Sometimes we don't have a clear answer and would love to hear your opinions. During the membership drive we sent out surveys to our membership asking these kinds of questions and we were fortunate to get some great responses, which we are collating and will share with you shortly. But we still like hearing from you even when it's not for a specific survey. You are always welcome to call, write, or email us with suggestions or ideas. Avalonia's ears are always open to you. This is YOUR organization and we want to hear YOU.



## Come Sail Away Aboard the Schooner Argia!



Volunteers hoist sail on last year's cruise. Photo by Heather Milardo.

Once again we welcome members and guests for a 2.5 hour private charter cruise aboard the *Argia*.

We will embark from the *Argia* dock at 15 Holmes Street in Mystic at 10:20 am on **Saturday, October 1st**. Our cruise will tour southeastern Connecticut's waterways, including a view of Avalonia's own South Dumpling Island. Refreshments and snacks will be served.

Tickets are \$45 for adults and \$20 for children and can be purchased by calling our office (860-884-3500) or on our website [www.avalonialandconservancy.org/argia](http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org/argia).

There are only 45 seats available, so please purchase your ticket today!

## Annual Appeal

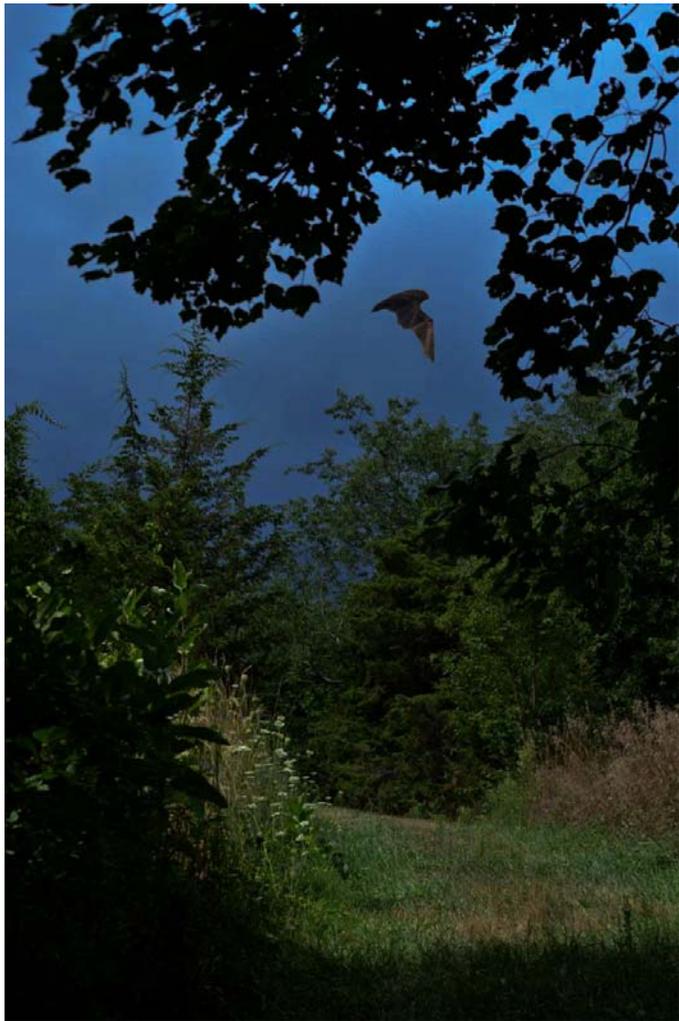
It's the giving season! Avalonia is getting ready to send out our Annual Fall Appeal. It's that piece of mail that you'll find mixed in with a dozen others asking you to please make a donation to support our amazing organization. And you know what? They are all amazing. Non-profits all over the world are working hard to make a difference in the world. But here's what makes us different from most. We are in your backyard. Your neighbors and friends are our volunteers. The place that we are working together to protect is your home. The things that you love and value – community, environment, health, clean water, native plants and animals that make our area special – those are the things that you are helping to safeguard.

We ask you to please take a moment and think of what southeastern Connecticut would look like if not for the support of the individuals who so generously contribute to Avalonia's mission. If that vision worries you as much as it does us, please include a donation to Avalonia in your annual giving plans. And ask your employer if they participate in a matching gift program; with this simple request, you could potentially double your donation!

If you have already made a recent donation, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

## A New Challenge Grant

Last year we asked you to help us reach a goal. We had been approached by a generous benefactor who offered to donate \$10,000 if we could raise a matching amount by the end of the year. You were so successful in meeting that goal that the same benefactor has reached out to us again and offered to double his previous opportunity! If we can raise \$20,000, specifically in response to this new challenge, in the next year and a half, he will once again match your contributions. You were up to the challenge then and we know you will be again.



## Membership

by Heather Milardo

We have received a lot of calls and questions regarding the recent membership mailing and wanted to take a moment and provide some answers en masse.

We apologize for the delay in getting this mailed out to you in late April/early May as we usually do. There were some unexpected mailing issues that were out of our hands that prevented it from going out on time.

We heard from quite a few people that they did not receive their renewal notice. It appears that any member who did not have an active membership was inadvertently excluded from the mailing list.

We sincerely apologize for the confusion and inconvenience. If you did not receive your renewal mailing or were not a member in the past and would like to become one, you can do so by either mailing a check to the office (a membership form is provided on this page) or by credit card through our website. If you decide to do it through the website, you have the option to make it recurring so that it will automatically renew each year. If you have any questions, please call the office at 860-884-3500. Thank you for your understanding.

## Walktober Haunted Hike *by Bruce Fellman*

The Preston Nature Preserve is a 55-acre jewel of meadows, wetlands, and hardwood forest that offers splendid peak-color vistas. On our Walktober hike, it just might also offer a taste of the spooky. On **Saturday, October 22**, from 4 pm to 5:30, Avalonia naturalist and photojournalist Bruce Fellman will lead a family-friendly trek along the Preserve's half-mile of gentle trails that starts with a search for migrating birds and butterflies, including Monarchs, and a scan of plants for caterpillars, galls, and all the preparations for winter that the natural world undergoes in October.

There'll be plenty of time to observe the leaves changing their hues and to talk about the biology of the annual color change. Then, as the darkness grows, we'll enter a spooky forest. *If we survive*, we'll emerge in the fields to hunt for bats and owls.

Come in costume... if you dare.

For more information email us (newsletter@avalonialc.org), or just meet at 4pm at the trailhead on the south side of Krug Road, 0.6 miles west of Jewett City Road (Route 164).



### Welcome!

### New and Renewing Members!

Renew online at [www.avalonialandconservancy.org](http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org) or mail this completed form and check to:

P.O. Box 49  
Old Mystic CT 06372

Name(s).....

Address.....

Town.....State.....Zip.....

Phone(s).....

Email(s).....

#### Chose membership level

<b>Junior (under 18) \$15</b>	<b>Regular \$25</b>	<b>Family \$100</b>
<b>Supporter \$250</b>	<b>Patron \$500</b>	
<b>Life \$1000 (one-time payment)</b>		
<b>Organization \$150</b>		

Details of the benefits associated with each of these levels of support are available at [www.avalonialandconservancy.org/membership/](http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org/membership/)

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

## Summer Hike Series

by Amanda Dostie & Joseph Warren

Every season, Avalonia is dedicated to the conservation and acquisition of numerous local parcels of environmentally important land. Now, with a growing 3,400 acres of land, our mission is to share and educate the public on the importance of land use and conservation. We found the most effective classroom to be the outdoors, so this summer we launched a series of guided hikes!



Amanda introduces young hikers to local flora and fauna.  
Photo by Laura Frommer.

Leading the expeditions were Amanda Dostie, a senior in the Marine Science BS program at UCONN, and Joseph Warren, graduate student in Marine Chemistry. Together, we toured a total of six preserves throughout the summer.

On many hikes, the group had the incredible good fortune to be accompanied by Yale naturalist, Bruce Fellman. The guided hiking series offered an opportunity for participants from all over New England to enjoy and learn about our many diverse preserves. In addition to raising awareness for our curated hiking spots, the mission of the summer was to get as many people outside as possible, while deepening their understanding of the surrounding environment. The interconnection between the public and nature is crucial in land conservation and we want people to care and have fun!

The series brought in an eclectic group of hikers with various professions, scientific knowledge, and ages. Participants included bird watchers (sometimes callers!), curious hikers, children, adults, and even a hiking family who brought along their newborn by back! Due to the diversity of the participants, the guided series functioned as an excellent group learning experience for all, myself included! Every hike was a blast, with interesting sites teeming with life.

On many of our hikes we found flora and fauna such as salamanders, turkeys, frogs, toads, birds, mushrooms, wildflowers, blueberry bushes, butterflies, and many more! We even stumbled upon two homemade tipis by locals enjoying the woods!

Amanda: "The support and feedback of the public has been tremendous! Over the summer series I have been fortunate enough to meet many dear friends and exciting people! Sharing my love for nature and education has been

incredibly rewarding, especially with the younger groups. Seeing all groups and ages become excited over the outdoors has made my summer very special. Speaking for myself and Joseph, we could not have had a better summer and we hope to continue our efforts into the future!"

Joe: "It really was incredible to have such a diverse group come out with us on the hikes. While Amanda and I served as the guides on the expeditions, I like to think that we took something away from each walk as well. From expertise on the local birds, to the identification of plants throughout their various growth cycles, discussion abounded and the group was able to have open discussions. It was rewarding to get to see avid naturalists in their element, and some of the newcomers began to show up more frequently. Moving forward with the program is imperative, as it serves to act as an outreach service not only for Avalonia, but for nature conservancy in general."

## 50th Anniversary coming up!

In 2018 we are going to be celebrating the 50th anniversary of Avalonia's incorporation (as the Mashantucket Land Trust) in 1968.



We are in the process of assembling a group of volunteers who are interested in planning events to commemorate the occasion. If you are interested, or if you have ideas as to what we should do to celebrate, please get in touch: 860-884-3500, or [avalonialc@yahoo.com](mailto:avalonialc@yahoo.com).

As one way of recognizing this milestone we are planning to revise our logo to reflect our mission, our vision, and our goals for our next half-century. Who better to interpret this for us than you, our members? So we plan to hold a competition to select a new logo, and we invite you to submit your proposals. Don't be discouraged if your artistic skills are not equal to your imagination; if you have an inspiring concept, we will work with you to refine it.

Our articles of incorporation require that the logo be round, and include our name and the date of incorporation, 1968. Beyond that, you are free to design as you will. We look forward to seeing your ideas.



## Avalonia Community Outreach Gathering

We are planning another of our popular potluck gatherings of members and friends in March 2017, and we are looking to recruit volunteers to organize it.

If you have enjoyed these in the past, and would like to ensure that they continue, please contact Michele at [mfitz@tvconnect.net](mailto:mfitz@tvconnect.net).

We need kitchen staff and set-up and clean-up crews, as well as planners and organizers. The more the merrier!



AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY. INC.

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

*ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED*

Non-Profit Organization

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Mystic, CT

Permit No. 126

### **Avalonia has a Facebook page:**



- Read our weekly blog “AvaloniaEtrails” for updates between newsletter issues:  
<http://avaloniaetrails.blogspot.com>
- Submit your email address to [newsletter@avalonialc.org](mailto:newsletter@avalonialc.org) to receive our e-newsletter “Avalonia Now!” and notifications of impromptu events.



### **Upcoming Events**

**Saturday, October 1, 10am. Argia Cruise.** Details on page 3.

**Saturday, October 22, 4pm. Walktober ‘Haunted Hike’** at the Preston Nature Preserve. Details on page 4.

**Avalonia phone: (860) 884-3500**  
**Avalonia e-mail: [avalonialc@yahoo.com](mailto:avalonialc@yahoo.com)**  
**[www.avalonialandconservancy.org](http://www.avalonialandconservancy.org)**