

AVALONIA TRAILS

PO Box 49
Old Mystic, CT 06372
(860-887-6786)
www.avalonialandconservancy.org



DEDICATED TO PRESERVING LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

FALL 2005

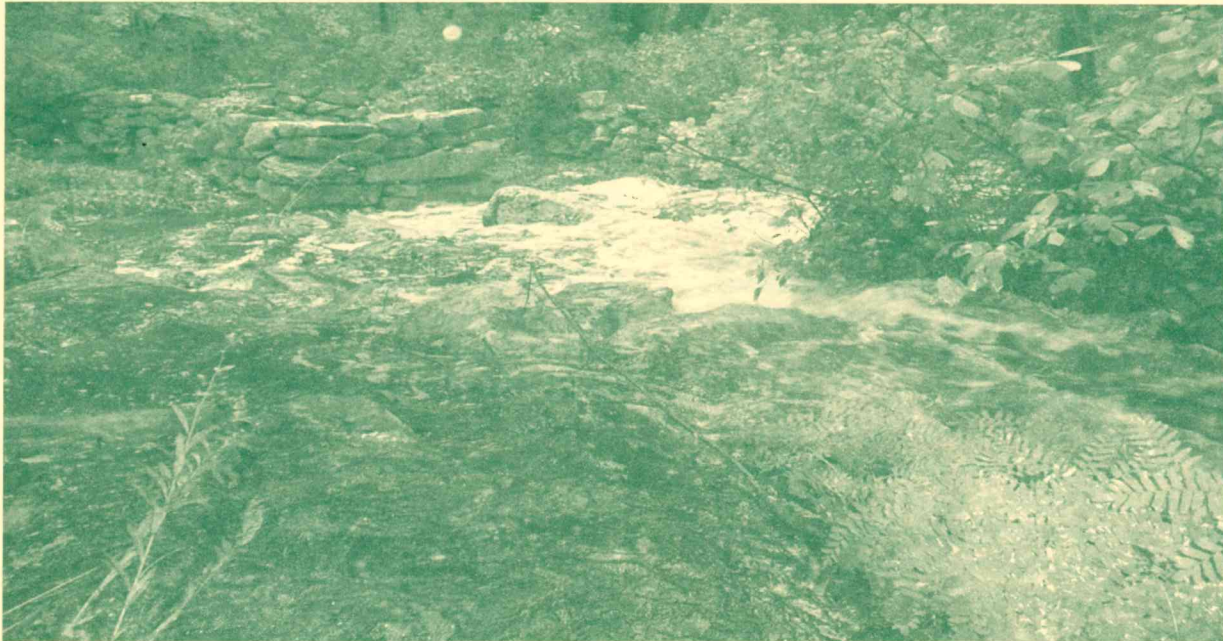


Photo by Joellen Anderson

AVERY COLONIAL SHEEPWASH

Sheepwash is basically a place where sheep are washed. It includes a pen with a small opening shute leading to deep slow-moving water where sheep are driven into 1-3 days before spring shearing. Often the sheep were bathed there by strong men that actually added vats of boiling water to the pools, in order that with the warmer water and the occasional use of soap, the sheep would become even cleaner.

The Avery Sheepwash is just such a place. If you haven't seen this, it is quite a gem. Most sheepwashes did not have the benefit of stone walls that have maintained their shape and design over the years. Note the wall of the sheep enclosure in the background with the sheep bathtub (!) just before it.

The Avery Sheepwash is a small part of the much larger Avery Preserve on Avery Hill Road in Ledyard. It is located on the southwest side at the beginning of the Avalonia Land Conservancy property.

☺ JANUARY POTLUCK ☺

Saturday, January 28, 2006, snowdate February 4, 2006 at 6:00 in Preston Plains School, corner of Route 164 & Route 2, Preston, CT.

Tom Worthley of Coverts Project will discuss *Maximizing your woodlands for wildlife and profit*. Everyone please come for a great night of entertainment and bring something to share. Put it on your calendar. More information is to follow.

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RETIRING CHARTER MEMBERS

With regret, both Anna Coit and Lois Teft Van Deusen have left as active Directors of the ALC Board. They will both remain as Honorary Directors. They both began as Directors for the then fledgling Mashantucket Land Trust as Directors back in 1968. Their many years of involvement will be missed.

THANK YOU!

Amanda Lindberg, Stonington Director and Treasurer, and Joellen Anderson, Groton Director, have both retired from the ALC Board after 35 years (combined), but continue active involvement in stewardship. They will be missed.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Since the last newsletter, Avalonia has received over 41 acres in 5 separate gifts (described elsewhere in this newsletter) bringing our protected total acreage to 2166.7 acres.

We have also accepted a few other new parcels, but the deeds are not yet recorded. (You will hear about them the next time.) We continue to evaluate new offers. At all times we submit the parcel to our extensive check list and also consider the stewardship needs of each parcel. Your support and generosity of land donors make this possible. You are all helping to save some open space and green areas for now and the future.

Thank you for your continued enthusiasm and support. We will be asking for your help in our annual appeal which you will receive shortly.

ALC PROPERTY UPDATES

Dodge Paddock and **Beal Preserve** will be getting a wonderful and informative new sign. It will also have a dedication panel for the historical site of State's Pottery.

Paffard Woods has a problem with vandalism. Apparently our beautiful solid oak map box cannot be repaired this time. A cable was installed to stop vehicles from entering the woods from the parking lot.

PINE SWAMP WILDLIFE CORRIDOR (PSWC)

Spring flora was magnificent this year due to heavy spring rains. Pink swamp azalea and mountain laurel were spectacular. The very special native Giant Rhododendrons were also very lovely blooming on the Fourth of July.

CT Botanical Society came out on 7/16/05 (10 members or so), a very hot day, and botanized (sic) for the entire day. After a hike around the Swamp off Hillside Drive in the a.m., they also wanted to see other parts. After lunch, we set out from 113 Whalehead to see the ponds and boulder moraines. They were delighted with the entire place and their findings are forthcoming to us in a report very soon.

Partnering with the Ledyard Library's new Hike, Bike, & Paddle program on 9/24/05, ALC Ledyard directors and Ledyard ALC volunteer, Mike Goodwin led a hike in PSWC. We had a good turnout, from young children to very mature and experienced walkers, including a young yellow lab in-training to become a seeing eye dog. Great weather! Good time had by all (except those few who got tangled up with ground-nesting bees!)

Eagle Scout projects in PSWC continue and will include trail clearing and marking, and small bridge construction.

A bushwhacked new loop trail connects the **Dow Centennial** with the ponds and boulder terrain of the PSWC. Thank you to ALC volunteers.

Anne Pierson & Ellen Fossum

SANDYPOINT

On Sunday, September 18, ALC Stonington Director Bruce Anderson ferried an enthusiastic team to Sandy Point for the annual beach cleanup. This year the ALC was supported by four members of the Stonington High

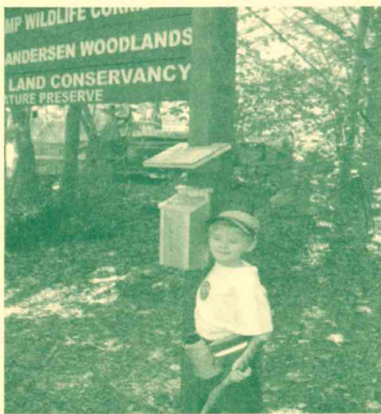
School Environmental Club. The group included Julie Taylor, Stephanie Bond, Aliyah Shultz, and Patrick Corte, all students at the High School. Together with their advisor, Elisa Whitman, the group collected four large bags of refuse material left by summer visitors to the island. This season's cleanup also uncovered the remains of numerous 'open-fires,' which are illegal on the island. This included numerous empty cans and broken bottles in the fire pits. Unfortunately there are some people who still are not reading the signs, and are continuing to make walking on the beach hazardous for the rest of us. Our thanks go out to the High School Environmental Club for their efforts and good will and support.

Bruce Anderson

Volunteer your areas of expertise. Remember we are all volunteers. ALC needs you! Be an ALC steward of an Avalonia property near you.

Charitable remainder trust Talk to your financial adviser. You may be surprised at what you can accomplish.

LEAVE A LEGACY® A statewide public awareness program designed to promote charitable giving through wills and estates.



BOXES

New trail map boxes are now in place at all 4 PSWC trailheads (see photo with little Joey Bacon).

Saturday, June 25 a fundraising bus trip to three very impressive Garden Conservancy sites was enjoyed by all. Proceeds of \$349 go to Pine Swamp Wildlife Corridor. A great big thank you to Sylvia Correia for your work in organizing this trip. Look for another trip to be offered—details in spring newsletter.



ALC TEES

Preshrunk cotton in M,L,XL for \$15; XXL for \$16 available at winter potluck. But just in case you should want one for a holiday gift, you can contact Anne Roberts-Pierson at 464-8101. All proceeds go to Pine Swamp Wildlife Corridor funding.

ADOPT A PROPERTY NEAR YOU

Become an active steward with the Avalonia Land Conservancy. In some instances you may only need to drive by the property on a periodic basis.

Do call us at 860-887-6786 to inquire about current and future stewardship efforts or to report a problem.

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Automatic contribution is for SBC long distance customers. Sign up for Community Connections, which automatically donates 5% of every dollar you spend on long distance. Simply call 800-635-7638 or log on to www.snet.com/community and have your SBC customer number from your monthly bill. Ask for the automatic donation to apply to #3926 – Avalonia's number. Easy and simple. Thank you.

ORIOLES & GRAPE JELLY

Grape jelly feeders for **Baltimore and orchard orioles** are attracting more attention from the wildlife world. **Red-bellied woodpeckers, mockingbirds, brown thrashers, scarlet tanagers, catbirds, and grosbeaks** join the grape jelly enthusiasts. Add a few grapes and orange slices and you gather **bluebirds, waxwings, finches, robins, and towhees** to your feeding station.



Lois Tefft VanDeusen, **Tefftweld** neighbor and steward, was concerned about the orioles as they were eating large quantities of grape jelly. She contacted Anne Hobbs at Cornell Lab of Ornithology with her concerns.

Ms. Hobbs replied, "Orioles eat both nectar and insects...supplying them with a ready supply of "nectar" in the form of grape jelly, you're just satisfying that part of their dietary needs. I'm sure they're still eating plenty of insects to get the other parts of their needs."

Lois offered this suggestion in making a low cost, successful feeder for a winter project. It was extremely successful. This year she made a feeder using a 6" round clear plastic (sturdy) flower pot saucer, red plastic mason jar lid, floral clay, and floral wire. With an ice pick, punch holes every inch around outer bottom edge of saucer, for drainage. Fasten the jar lid with a "tootsie-roll" of floral clay pressed securely around top edge of jar lid. Firmly press the inverted lid onto center of the saucer. (This holds securely through rain, fog, and washing.) Punch three holes with ice pick, equidistant around upper flange of saucer. Twist floral wires through these and unite at top. Attach clip, hook, and/or chain.

Seedless grape jam or jelly mixed with equal parts water is placed into the red plastic inverted lid. Be sure to clean with hot water at least two times a week.

Lois reports that this, "dandy feeder was hung from my feeder line...even though I had not previously been feeding orioles at my present home, voila! Day one -- we had orioles !!! Male and female. They visited the grape jam feeder regularly and emptied it at least once a day. This was thrilling to behold!"

ALC NEWEST PROPERTIES

Main Brook Preserve was donated by Green Falls Associates, LLC which consists of two adjacent parcels of open space totaling 20.3 acres. The northern parcel (12.68 acres) abuts Avalonia's Jean and Hobart Mitchell Preserve in Preston/North Stonington which in turn abuts the Eleanor and Flood Reed Memorial Woodlands. Thus, the contiguous protected area now totals 233.16 acres.

This preserve contains some high forested ground as well as the wetlands surrounding Main Brook. The area is a young forest of mixed hardwoods with some ledge. Access to the preserve is provided on the east side of the cul-de-sac at the end of Main's Way.

ALC also holds conservation easements on the steep slopes at the rear of three lots in the subdivision and the wetlands at the back of another lot.

A work party this spring removed a considerable amount of debris left by previous owners in the southern portion. Peter Gardner provided a bucket loader, driver and helper, and two dumpsters (both were filled!); Avalonia provided additional man and woman power to get the job done—not a trace remains of the shed, tires, old lumber, or other trash.

Lamb's Way Preserve ALC has taken title to the 16.04-acre open space surrounding Lamb's Way Cluster Subdivision on Stonington Road, Stonington. The mostly forested parcel surrounds the development and includes much of the steep slopes bordering the spectacular high ground. This high area provides a large vista to the south toward Fisher's Island Sound. The western portion of the parcel abuts the Wilcox Marsh that extends north from the Quiambaug Fire House.

The area has settled into a finished landscape with the undisturbed, wooded open space providing the required buffer and habitat.

Cranberry Pond has been donated by the eight families that form the Cranberry Pond Association in Gales Ferry. The 5.45 acres on Harvard Terrace includes Cranberry Pond and its western shore. This secluded pond can be viewed from the road and is approximately 900 feet long and 200 feet wide. The dam is near the road and is owned and controlled by the Town of Ledyard. Approximately 2 acres of the land west of the pond are included in the gift. This pond provides excellent habitat for fish, amphibians, and birds.

Salvatore DiFrancesca Preserve was donated to Avalonia by Palma Marie Pirie, his daughter. Approximately 300 feet of the Choate Brook run along the western and northern portions of this .80-acre mixed-stand forested lot. The Choate Brook is a pristine stream flowing north through wooded lands into the Thames River. This portion of Preston along Old Jewett City Road is largely rural with working farms, historic houses, and small clusters of newer homes.

Thomas and Leon Whewell Gift was conveyed to Avalonia a 0.80-acre parcel on Stonington Road (Route 1) in Pawcatuck that has been in their family since 1926. The parcel is just west of the Stop & Shop and contains large trees, some ledge, and a small stream that runs behind the market.

PRESTON NATURE PRESERVE

by MaryAnn Melgey & Margaret Gibson

The Avalonia Land Conservancy (ALC), the Preston Preservation Committee (PPC), and Preston Plains School eighth grade students have begun an interdisciplinary project that focuses on land held in perpetuity as open space in the Town of Preston. In October, we investigated The Preston Nature Preserve just off Krug Road, 54 acres of mixed habitat: open fields with mowed pathways; wetlands, ponds, and wooded hills.

While the Preston Nature Preserve has been featured on the Connecticut Walking Tours in October for some seasons past, it's been one of Preston's best kept secrets. Now at least 20 Preston Plains students have walked it, photographed it, and written about it.

On October 17, a bright, cloud-blown day that followed a week of rainfall, the students from Preston Plains School entered the Preserve with notebooks and pens and with donated disposable cameras to record in words and in photographs what they noticed. They had been instructed in ways of noticing detail: how to pay attention to the moment and look for detail and pattern as they walked. Some of our instruction was heeded; some was overruled by the general excitement and animal spirits of youngsters let loose in the open space to follow the trails with their guides and mentors.

"This place is so beautiful!" exclaimed several students. A quiet boy found a way to photograph a deer skull he found along a path. Others let milkweed loose into the wind and photographed it shining in spun tufts on the dried Queen Anne's lace. They tried their hand at taking panorama shots of the wide fields. One group made it half way through the brimming wetlands, whose new bridges shone in the sun. Several students took photographs of fern and leaves reflected in the puddles that, eventually, stopped us from penetrating the wetlands. "Just think," one student said as we followed a trail around Little Dumpling hill, "out there is Route 165, and the elementary school. And I never knew all this was back here!" Before the visit to the Preston Nature Preserve, the students participated in the first of two nature writing workshops given by poet and Preston ALC Director Margaret Gibson. The tour of the Preston Nature Preserve was led by Preston Director Mary

Ann Melgey. Also assisting were Preston Parks and Recreation committee member Gail Rigney and Preston Plains School teacher Noelle Wolcin.

After the walking tour of the Preston Nature Preserve, the students met once again with Margaret Gibson to write their poems and prose impressions, and they met with Gail Rigney to select photographs from the developed rolls of film, and to mount writings and photographs so that they can be displayed along with other maps and charts that show the wealth of natural resources in the town of Preston.

As a preview of the recorded impressions of Preston Plains students in the Preston Nature Preserve, here are two poems.

The Beauty of Nature

**I looked deep into the glass-covered pond.
A vulture flew overhead.
A feather, soft and fine,
fluttered down and came to rest
near a spire of tall mullein
with a yellow flower on top.
And I became the wind blowing
through the pastures,
swaying the grasses,
safe and sound,
at peace forever.**

—Colin Landry

(untitled)

**The smooth sunlight hits the lily pad
covered pond,
a slight shimmer as it bounces back.
Spinning around in circles, I try to take in
the beauty.
In a calm breeze of wind, I notice the tall
weeds
sway side to side as I continue my travels
along the gently rolling hills of green grazing
grass.**

—Gillian Mary Ferrell.



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