



P.O. Box 49
Old Mystic, CT 06372

Avalonia Trails

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING
LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

FALL 2008

FURTHER PROGRESS AT THE YANNATOS

by Janice Parker



Foreground (L-R) Cub Scouts Noah Brown, Brett Doyle, Xaviar Nunes and Tyler DiBrino, with some of the invasive plants they removed, background North Stonington director Janice Parker.

Improvements at the Yannatos Preserve were initiated last spring with the installation of a footbridge to provide access to the hiking trails on the far side of the brook (see Spring 2007 newsletter.) This year enhancements implemented by Stewardship Committee members Mac Turner and Duncan Schweitzer included installation of a mulched path from Clarks Falls Road to the bridge and installation of an entrance feature comprising North Stonington Historical Society's mill artifacts (see page 3 for photos).

Also participating were parents Julie Lanier (Tyler's mom) and Carlos Nunes (Xaviar's Dad). Invasive plants found on the Preserve included Oriental bittersweet, Norway maple, multiflora rose, Japanese barberry and winged euonymus, which were particularly plentiful on the part of the Preserve closest to the road. These were removed in quantity and with great enthusiasm by the participating Cub Scouts, who had to be persuaded it was time to stop working and go for pizza. Thanks guys!

In June a group of Cub Scouts from Den 2 of Pack 71, under the leadership of Den Leader Vilma Gregoropoulos, held a workshop to identify and remove invasive plants from the preserve. The Cub Scouts involved were Noah Brown, Brett Doyle, Xaviar Nunes and Tyler Di-

Further improvements planned for the Yannatos include re-planting with native species and interpretative signage describing the history of the site and of the mill that used to operate there. Plan to visit sometime now that the hiking trails are more readily accessible.

(additional photos on page 3)

Kudos for Sprague, Avalonia's Newest Partner !

by Anne Roberts-Pierson

A single-issue referendum vote in Sprague recently yielded a decisive vote of 424 to 278 to accept a \$500,000 grant from the State of CT that includes an agreement to keep the 278-acre Mukluk property preserved as open space. The former skeet club property abutting the Shetucket River, an irreplaceable tract, is now protected. The Shetucket River between Scotland Dam and downtown Baltic traverses some of the wildest, most beautiful land in Eastern Connecticut. It has been a long road to arrive at this crucial decision but advocates within the Town worked long and hard and their efforts paid off. Way to go Sprague !

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A note from the editor

Thank you to everyone who has contributed articles to this issue of "Avalonia Trails". If you would like to contribute an article, notice or photo to our next issue, please e-mail it to me at janiceparker@netscape.net by **November 20, 2008**. If you have a comment or "Letter to the Editor" we can accommodate those, too.

Thank you.

Birders Have Something To Sing About : The Gibson/McKain Songbird Preserve

by Anne-Roberts-Pierson

In July, Margaret Gibson and David McKain transferred 10 acres of lovely woodland in Preston to Avalonia Land Conservancy.

This very generous gift of land, to be known as the **Gibson/McKain Songbird Preserve**, is located in such a way as to extend the greenway and wildlife corridor that is already ongoing in this area, a concept that land preservationists are always delighted to be able to successfully accomplish. This parcel abuts Avalonia's Main Brook Preserve in Preston which abuts Jean & Hobart Mitchell Preserve also in Preston and North Stonington which abuts the Eleanor & Flood Reed Memorial Woodlands in North Stonington! This connected and protected open space comprises nearly 244 acres! As one can see, every little bit adds up to a larger whole which is so vitally important when one is trying to create rich wildlife habitats where biodiversity can flourish.



Celebrating 40 years

by Ellen Fossum

To mark ALC's successful first 40 years, a Summer Solstice Garden Party Fundraiser was held June 22. Eighty folks enjoyed great gardens, food, wine, and music and helped to raise \$2,000 for the Bedrock Fund for Future Land Acquisition.

Thanks go to Kristen Fossum for designing the flyers and printing the tickets. Thanks also go to the Ledyard High School Wind Quintet for providing music. And a very special thanks go to our generous hosts, Paul Coutu and Bill Turner, at Kentford Farm in Stonington for providing the stunning venue.

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped set up, made baked goods, and served as bartenders. Ellen Fossum organized the event and was very relieved it did not rain.

Thank you to all who attended to make it a success.

More Pictures from the Yannatos

Preserve.

(continued from Page 1)



Mac Turner installs the path from Clarks Falls Road to the footbridge over the brook.



Gears from the old mill installed as an entrance feature to the Yannatos Preserve.

Goldsmith Bequest

Avalonia acknowledges with gratitude the generous bequest of \$5,000 from **Ruth M. Goldsmith**, a member for 14 years. Although Ruth retired to Florida, she retained fond memories of North Stonington and also left a bequest to its Historical Society.

In Memoriam

We note with regret the deaths of **Joyce Steffenson**, a 28-year member and generous supporter of Avalonia and its mission, and, together with her husband Palmer, an exceptional steward of the Preston Preserve; and **Shirley Avery**, wife of Deane Avery, Avalonia Director for 13 years, 1985-1998.

State Implements New Dog Policy

by Janice Parker

The CT DEP has implemented new dog leash regulations for wildlife management areas (WMAs). As detailed in an article in the May/June issue of "Connecticut Wildlife" the regulation reads (in part) *"Dogs must be on a leash no longer than seven (7) feet and under the control of their owner or keeper. The person responsible for the dog must hold the leash at all times... all dogs may be prohibited on any area or during any time when so posted by the Department."*

Avalonia's policy with respect to dogs has always been consistent with this new DEP regulation. We prefer that dog owners who use Avalonia properties keep their dogs leashed, and there are certain properties that are sensitive wildlife habitats and where, for that reason, dogs are prohibited. One such property is Sandy Point, a nesting area for the endangered piping plover. Signs indicate those Avalonia properties on which dogs are prohibited.

As the Connecticut Wildlife article goes on to say: *"Wildlife management areas are set aside primarily for the conservation of wildlife populations and their habitat. Public use of these areas is a benefit, but not the main reason for their existence."*

Dogs are perceived by wildlife as predators. Ground nesting birds are heavily distressed by dogs and may abandon or lose their nests if constantly disturbed. They are also susceptible to undue stress and may suffer injuries from unleashed dogs. Many populations of ground nesting birds, which nest at WMAs, are in long-term decline on a regional basis. Dogs also will chase wildlife including their helpless offspring.

Owners often allow their dogs to swim in wetland areas at WMAs, such as streams, ponds, marshes and vernal pools. Waterfowl and waterbirds that use these areas are usually frightened away from their nests. Dogs wading through vernal pools and marshes have a negative impact on these important amphibian breeding sites. Egg masses left behind by wood frogs, spring peepers, and various species of salamanders can be destroyed. In addition, the pathways that dogs and their owners have created to gain access to these wetlands have destroyed important riparian habitat and caused significant erosion."

We hope that Avalonia members and the public will continue to enjoy responsibly the properties that we have preserved, bearing these considerations in mind when they choose to hike with their Best Friend.

Italicized text has been excerpted from the May/June issue of "Connecticut Wildlife" with permission of the author and editor, Kathy Herz. The full article is available on Avalonia's website at www.avalonialandconservancy.org.

Boundaries

by Bruce Anderson

The root question is: What makes someone go on to someone else's property and take liberties, by either using the property for their own use, or misusing the property as a dump, or even vandalizing a property to satisfy their own boredom?

It's a question that the ALC stewards are having to review more, and more often. It is also getting harder and harder to manage these issues as the processes of stewardship become more difficult. Unfortunately there are folks out there who just don't understand boundaries and/or rules. Whether this is a matter of education, or just setting individuals straight, it's a problem, and one that as a property owner ALC is dealing with on a regular basis.

The variety of issues is vast, and can be profiled from dumping leaves and garden debris, to raising a flag pole on a 24/7 basis, to taking down stone walls to make accesses, and even simply riding an ATV where not allowed. Each case has its own particular curiosities, and the reasons why people do what they do is equally curious, especially when all our properties are open to the public, and more often have well marked trails, and guidelines.

I remember when I lived in the UK the "right to roam" and the freedom to wander along footpaths was such a joy, even to the extent of being greeted kindly by neighbors who might have a pathway running right through their back yards. There was never, in my memory, any misuse or vandalism, and the management of the pathways was the responsibility of everyone. Obviously time does mean change, and I remember just before returning to the US in 2001 there were national reviews, and amendments on the horizon that presented changes, specifically in reference to privacy, and what was termed 'encroachment'. It's a good word, and one that we have begun using within our own policy documents, and besides being a football penalty rule. Ironically the meaning is the same, and stepping over the line, no matter where it occurs, is against the rules. Boundaries are set up for a reason, and when they are crossed, there should be, and will be consequences.

I hope as ALC opens up more of its properties to the public, that our neighbors will respect our boundaries, and the public will understand that the properties are for all to use, and not to misuse. Happy summer/fall to all....

Bruce Anderson is Chairman of Avalonia's Stewardship Committee



View of Qiuambaug Cove from the Knox Family Farm Preserve, Ray Pierson in the foreground. To learn more about this Preserve, read our Spring 2008 newsletter online at www.avalonialandconservancy.org. Photograph by Anne-Roberts-Pierson

Some book suggestions

by Joellen Anderson

"The Secrets of Wildflowers" by Jack Sanders is "a delightful feast of little-known facts, folklore and history." The book contains a variety of information such as:

- Natural history, folklore, historic and modern uses of plants, name origins, horticulture, literature, and even a bit of humor.
- 74 chapters covering hundreds of North American wildflowers, both natives and aliens.
- More than 90 color photographs illustrating interesting and popular wildflowers.
- Huge bibliography with comments on each book and tips on how to find out-of-print titles.
- Guide to World Wide Web sites on wildflowers.
- Extensive index.

And on a more serious note:

"Sustaining Life - How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity" with a foreword by Edward O. Wilson. This book can be checked out at the Groton Public Library and "is a comprehensive review of how human medicines, biomedical research, the emergence and spread of infectious diseases, and the production of food all depend on biodiversity." It is edited and written by two physicians from Harvard Medical School with contributions by more than 100 leading scientists from around the world.

Congress Passes Conservation Tax Incentive for Family Farms and Ranches

Press release

May 23, 2008 WASHINGTON, D.C. — The hotly debated Farm Bill, which Congress enacted yesterday with an override of the President's veto, renews a powerful tax incentive which has helped conserve a million or more acres of farms, ranches and natural areas across the US. The incentive had expired January 1st, but is now retroactive to the beginning of the year and will last through 2009.

A broad coalition representing sportsmen, outdoors enthusiasts, farmers, ranchers and national conservation groups, embraced the measure. Rand Wentworth, president of the Land Trust Alliance, said, "This renewed tax incentive for donations of conservation easements is one of the best things Congress could do this year to help landowners choose the conservation option over sprawl. Especially for family farmers and ranchers of modest income, this is a great way to help them keep productive agricultural land from being lost."

Wentworth gave special credit to Senators Max Baucus (D-MT) and Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Representatives Mike Thompson (D-CA) and Dave Camp (R-MI), saying, "They are all true conservation leaders who have worked tirelessly to save a conservation measure that has already had benefits in hundreds of communities across the country." In conserving land, Wentworth added, "We also are protecting clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, local food sources, historic landscapes and scenic beauty."

Senator Baucus, who originated the incentive provision, said, "Simply put—this is an incentive that works: for conservation, for farmers, for ranchers, and for all landowners who want a fair deal for their tremendous generosity in donating conservation easements. Many ranchers and other landowners in Montana and across the US have told me they could not afford to conserve their land without this measure."

The incentive, which applies to a landowner's federal income tax, will:

- Raise the deduction a donor can take for donating a voluntary conservation agreement from 30% of their adjusted gross income in any year to 50%;
- Allow farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their income; and
- Increase the number of years over which a donor can take these deductions from 6 to 16 years.

Landowner donations to conservation organizations known as land trusts have resulted in millions of acres of working lands and natural areas being conserved for the future. According to the Alliance, many conservation groups reported an annual doubling of the number of conservation agreements completed in 2007, in response to the same incentive that had expired in January. Land trusts in America have together saved more than 36 million acres from development, an area the size of New England.

The Alliance also credited the success of the measure to the entrepreneurial spirit of the private sector, which has taken the lead in conserving land in recent years. Said Wentworth, "The fact is that conservation in this country now depends greatly on the generosity of individuals. It is the individual rancher, farmer or forester, working the land in a way that is conservation-oriented, who will largely define our natural heritage in the future."

Questions? E-mail Robert Levite Esq. at boblevite@hotmail.com



Aerial view of Poquetanuck Cove

Photograph by Roger Wolfe

Aerial view of Avalonia's "sedge bed" property in Preston, looking west towards Rte. 2 and the Thames River. A floristic survey of Poquetanuck Cove was completed in July 2008 with six state-listed Natural Diversity Data Base species confirmed. Volunteers will begin the Phragmites monitoring program in August 2008. The first herbicide treatment for Phragmites control is planned for September 2008.

To follow the complete history of this award-winning land stewardship project, read previous issues of this newsletter online at www.avalonialandconservancy.org. Click on "Archived".



AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY, INC.

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Upcoming Events

Saturday, September 6, 2008. 4 to 7 p.m., Connecticut Forests and Parks Annual Meeting at Kellogg Environmental Center and Osborne Homestead Museum, Derby CT. Everyone is cordially invited to join CFPA for cocktails and a light buffet before the meeting. Cost: \$25. Special tour (optional) of Gardens, Museum, and Environmental Center at 3 p.m. Registration and light "Connecticut" foods buffet with "local" wine and beers 4-5.30 p.m., Annual meeting at 5.30 p.m. Guest Presenters - Pres. & CEO of Aquarion Water Company, Chuck Firlotte, and State Forester, CT DEP ,Chris Martin at 6 p.m. Go to rsvp@ctwoodlands.org to RSVP by September 1, 2008, or call (860) 346-2372.

Wednesday, October 1, 2008. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) Symposium 2008 "Cherish Our Natural Heritage: Managing Invasives to Promote Native Diversity". Symposium at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT, open to all interested people. Keynote Speaker: Doug Tallamy. Cost is \$40 (postmarked by September 10), late registration fee \$55 (postmarked by September 24), Students \$25; includes parking and sustainable food. Pesticide Recertification and other Continuing Education Credits available. For full program/registration brochure: www.hort.uconn.edu/cpiwg or call Donna Ellis (860) 486-6448.

Saturday, November 8, 2008. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Work Party at the Reed-Mitchell Preserve in North Stonington. Meet at parking area of Northwest Corner Road. We'll be building a water bar structure to prevent erosion, and doing general trail maintenance. Call 535-0783 with questions.

Thursday, September 25, 2008. Last Green Valleys Walktober kick-off event: "Tastes of the Valley", the Oliver Wight Tavern, Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA. More information on their website: www.thelastgreenvalley.org.

