

The official newsletter of Avalonia Land Conservancy

FALL
2025

AVALONIA *trails*

THE
STEWARDSHIP
EDITION



PHOTO BY GAIL KAHOVER

FROM TECHNOLOGY TO INGENUITY: THE MANY FACES OF AVALONIA'S STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

When thinking about the role stewardship plays in a land trust, it is easy to button-hole the tasks to clearing land of invasive plant species, or putting up new trail-head signs. There are many faces of stewardship in Avalonia, from protecting nesting birds, surveying plants and animals, constructing bridges, using computer software to help manage preserves, and, yes...pulling up Japanese barberry and nailing in new signs. Here are some examples from stewardship activities over the last year.

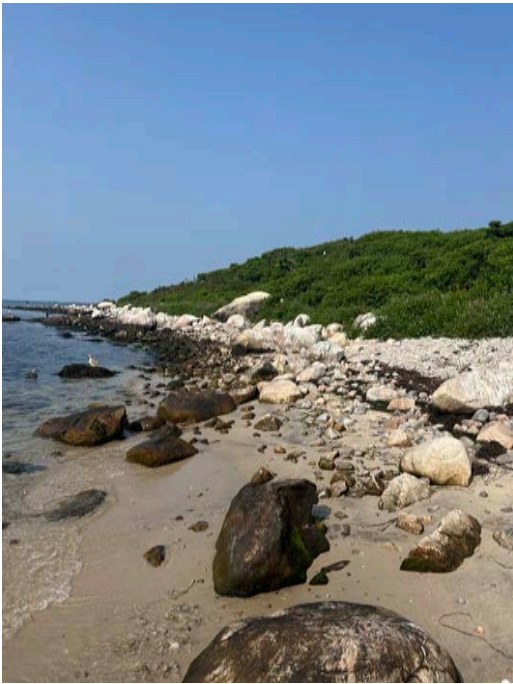
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Embracing technologies like Landscape, ArcGIS, drones, and citizen science apps like iNaturalist, laced together with boots-on-the-ground activity, has proven incredibly effective in strengthening our stewardship capacity. Whether this work is related to our Land Trust Alliance accreditation or the result of some other ecological or recreational need, the portfolio of partnerships that we have cultivated over the years, together with emerging tools and technologies, allow stewardship staff and volunteers to plan for the care and management of our preserves in perpetuity.

Speaking to Eversource volunteers at Glemboski-Ous Preserve, and the South Dumpling shoreline



INGENUITY AND BRAWN HELP BUILD A BRIDGE AT GLEMBOSKI-OUS PRESERVE

BY GAIL KAHOVER

Observing the construction and installation of the 1,980-pound aluminum bridge at Glemboski-Ous this past summer was like watching a real-life engineering-mathematical-trigonometry-physics problem being solved in real time.

And from someone with a journalism degree and zero knowledge of engineering, watching the process was fascinating.

On the first full day of bridge construction, 13 volunteers worked to lay the foundation of the bridge. They came from all walks of life, some were engineers, another a tree expert. They worked in teams, putting together beams and girders using large bolts and screws. Crew leaders checked for proper tension, others put pieces of lumber under the bridge's base. The wood would help the bridge "slide" from one side of Trading Cove Brook East Branch to the other.

A month later, 15 volunteers reconvened to implement a plan to move the now built structure across the deep

ravine. A front-loader was brought in to push the 40-foot bridge forward on the afore-mentioned planks. And on the other side, a network of ropes and pulleys were attached to trees and to the winch of an ATV to pull the bridge.

After a bit of back and forth, and crews on both sides of the ravine either pushing or pulling, or replacing planks, the bridge was nudged to its final resting place.

The bridge now provides easy access to the 159 acres of woodlands and 3.5 miles of trails at Glemboski-Ous for recreational use and for emergency responders.

It was amazing to see what volunteers could do with a bit of brawn and a whole lot of ingenuity.



REMOTE MONITORING IS THE KEY TO FUTURE PLANNING

BY BOB CHAPIN, PRESTON TOWN COMMITTEE CHAIR

In addition to the boots-on-the-ground methods used by land stewards everywhere, advances in technology can give us some extremely useful data, which we use to make stewardship decisions.

We have been using remote monitoring methods to collect data that are completely new for us. For example, trail cameras let us count the number of visitors to a preserve (a lot), or count how many dogs were on leashes (very, very few), or get an idea of how many people used a bridge (a lot). These bridge data made it easy to justify replacing a rickety and slippery bridge with a more sturdy structure.

I've been using a passive acoustic monitoring device to record bird calls (www.birdweather.com), and in conjunction with the Cornell Bird Lab's identification engine and some local ornithology experts, I've been trying to get a sense of which species are singing a lot and which ones are likely transient migrants. When we heard birds that are of an endangered ground-nesting species, we decided to briefly close Preston Nature Preserve this past summer to protect the nests.

The next technology we want to exploit is aerial monitoring via drone, which will help us monitor boundaries on properties which are difficult to access on foot, or to monitor those closed fields for ground nesting birds. I am now certified as a non-hobbyist "Part 107" drone pilot, so Avalonia will now have someone who can legally fly over the preserves.

The theme here is that more actual data about our preserves will allow us to make the best possible management decisions, for both residents and visitors alike.

A BIG MOVE + MAKEOVER POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS



Vehicles lined up for moving day, Peter Gauthier rolling on a fresh coat of paint, and Bill Roberts laying new flooring

This summer, we relocated from our longtime home in Mystic to a much larger office at 756 Colonel Ledyard Highway in Ledyard, CT. The move marks an exciting new chapter, but what makes it truly special is the incredible support of our volunteers.

They arrived early with trucks, vans, and cars to haul boxes and furniture, turning a daunting task into a day filled with teamwork and laughter. It was truly a labor of love.

When a business in Warwick, RI, generously donated much-needed furniture, volunteers once again came to our rescue and delivered.

Admittedly, the entire space needs a makeover — a fresh coat of paint, floors, and an upgrade to the HVAC system. Volunteers have provided design suggestions, pulled up broken floor tiles, removed carpet, painted walls, and installed new flooring, giving at least one of the offices fresh energy and a clean palette. It's still a work in progress, but we are deeply grateful to all who have jumped in to help. To see the full gallery of images, visit Avalonia.org.

PHOTO CONTEST

TO SEE THE FULL GALLERY OF SUBMISSIONS, VISIT AVALONIA.ORG

Congratulations to the winners of Avalonia's photo contest!
Thanks to everyone who captured the beauty in our preserves!

FIRST PLACE WINNERS

SOLAR POWER



FOREST COLORS



PATH WAYS



SOLAR POWER

*Julie Elkins
Moore Woodlands,
Groton/Mystic*

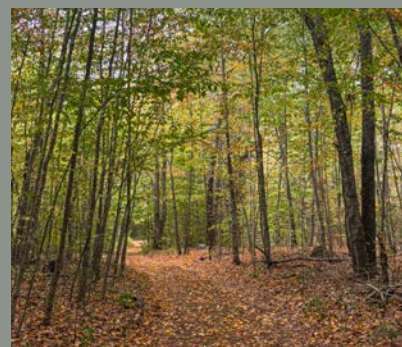
FOREST COLORS

*Carolyn Baker-Reck
Knox Preserve,
Stonington*

PATH WAYS

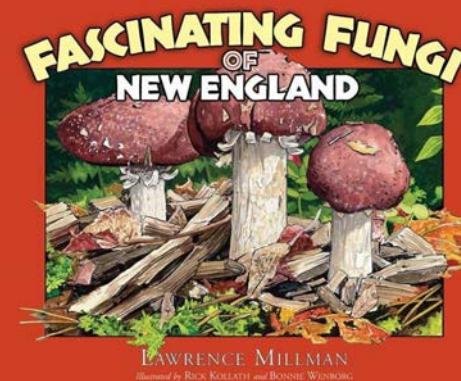
*Rivkah Berkman
Paffard Woods,
Stonington*

HONORABLE MENTIONS



From left to right: **FOREST COLORS** Laura Parsons Knox Preserve, Stonington; **SOLAR POWER** Kathy Fallow, Tefftweald at Bircheturn, North Stonington; **PATH WAYS** Morgan Reynolds, Tri-town Ridgeline Forest Preserve, North Stonington

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RECOMMENDED READING

Fascinating Fungi of New England. A guide by Lawrence Millman.

This is an easy-to-understand guide to more than 150 species of fungi in New England. Wonderful illustrations help you to identify mushrooms in the woods and your backyard.

NEW TRUCK MOVES STEWARDSHIP FORWARD

What has four wheels and can visit almost every Avalonia Preserve in New London County?

No, it's not a moped and two unicycles, it's the new Avalonia stewardship truck!

After 57 years of using privately-owned vehicles to haul brush, deliver trees, fencing, trailers, mowers, shovels and more, Avalonia finally has its own work truck.

We are so grateful to a visionary group of donors who put the gas in the tank for this effort including: The Wimpfheimer Foundation, Eversource, the Hibbard family, the Castellani family, the Olson family, Gouthro family,

Sharon Viadella, the Robe family, the Shaw family, the Sorenson family, and the Main family.

Avalonia donors and volunteers often enable our Land Conservancy to meet stewardship needs that allow us to go the extra mile. In this case, they have revved up our stewardship efforts with an essential tool that will increase our capacity to steward more than 100 preserves.

Make sure to keep an eye out for the new Avalonia truck on local roads and at our preserves.



BY CHRISTOPHER KEPPLE, DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY | PHOTO BY JIM KAHOVER



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OUR CHAMPIONS



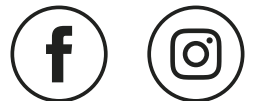
OUR DEFENDERS



Miranda Creative
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THANK YOU FOR BEING A VALUABLE MEMBER OF AVALONIA!

Over 57 years of preserving natural habitats in southeastern Connecticut by acquiring and protecting lands and by communicating the value of these irreplaceable resources.

