

ORLEANS
CONSERVATION TRUST



Annual Meeting Goes Virtual

page 3

A Marshside Treasure

page 4

■ ON THE COVER:

Welcome back, AmeriCorps!

page 3



Taking to the Trails

Page 5



Join us from your home for Virtual Talks! **Walks & Talks**, pages 6–7

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OCT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

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On the cover: An OCT guided walk along Nauset Estuary in East Orleans. Photo by Diana Landau. Inset photo: AmeriCorps volunteer Kaitlyn Henderson. Photos below and on back cover © Hardie Truesdale.

Invest in What You Love

In these uncertain times, it may be reassuring to know that your year-end gift to OCT helps ensure that land in Orleans is protected forever. As your mailbox gets crowded in early December, please keep an eye out for our year-end appeal letter. Thank you!



from the president

Dear OCT members and supporters,

*"Look after the natural world—
it's the most precious thing we have,
and we are a part of it."*

Sir David Attenborough in the new documentary "A Life on Our Planet"

David Attenborough spent many years exploring and documenting the living world. During a recent interview on *60 Minutes*, he says, "it was the best time of my life." His latest documentary surveys his remarkable career as well as the scale of humankind's impact on the planet over his long lifetime. Reflecting on the pandemic, he reminds us that people need the natural world for our health and well-being because we are a part of it.

As the Covid-19 pandemic extends into fall and winter, I want to remind all of you that enjoying nature is the best antidote we have for now. At the Orleans Conservation Trust, we "look after the natural world" in our backyard: preserving land, managing trails, restoring native vegetation, and connecting habitat on natural lands, large and small. The investments we make to preserve and protect these lands are providing returns in ways no financial report could ever capture: in the health of the precious waters surrounding us, the safety of wildlife we enjoy, and the well-being of our community.

This issue reports on some of the investments we're making to enhance our properties and their value to members and residents: such as purchasing trail cameras that document how wildlife and people use our trails, and a heavy-duty brush mower to aid in the eternal battle with invasive species. Members Lea and Tom Barrett invested in OCT by donating

a much-needed pick-up truck—a gift that especially delighted me, as staff can attest. The AmeriCorps Cape Cod program is once again

investing resources in helping to manage OCT lands, after a Covid-related hiatus.

Our stewardship inspires others to invest in OCT—like Max Klein, who talks about his experience of discovering our trails in this issue (page 5). Like the neighbors of 109 Portanimicut Road, who are leading the way in helping us acquire two beautiful parcels there, adding more connections to already preserved lands in South Orleans (page 4). And like our devoted volunteers, who invest their valuable time and energy to help with land and trail maintenance.

Needless to say, the most important investment comes from you, the members and donors who sustain OCT. Your contributions fuel all of our work—including our stepped-up land management program. I was delighted to see so many of you at our first-ever virtual Annual Meeting (page 3), and as always, we recognize you in this fall newsletter. Thanks also to our extraordinary and hard-working staff: Executive Director Steve O'Grady, Land Stewardship Coordinator Alex Bates, and Administrative Assistant Pam Schultz, and to each trustee, as we continue to invest in our natural world together.

Sincerely,



Kevin F. Galligan
President



OCT Annual Meeting Goes Virtual

As usual, the Annual Meeting of Orleans Conservation Trust convened on a Monday in late August, the 31st. As usual, it was anchored by a welcome by President Kevin Galligan, a year-in-review by Executive Director Steve O'Grady, and a financial report from Treasurer Steve Koehler. As usual, votes were tallied and trustees elected or re-elected to new terms.

But that's about the extent of the "usual." In this Covid-19 year, for the first time ever, the meeting was held in the form of a "webinar" and members attended via Zoom from their living rooms or offices. OCT staff put in extra time assembling a lively and informative slideshow, narrated by the presenters, with time for a Q&A at the end of a brisk 48 minutes.

"We were heartened to see how many members logged on

(60-plus) to the meeting," says O'Grady. "We had well over the quorum needed, and we got some good comments afterward about the format."

Highlighted were the latest land acquisitions completed or in progress, the Trust's heightened focus on restoring and managing the lands we steward, the jump in numbers of people using our trails since the spring (see page 5), and OCT's support of partners working to protect land on the Arey's River (the Town's Peck Property) and on Sipson Island.

Attendees were struck by a set of slides that contrasted an aerial view of Orleans in 1938, with only sparse clusters of buildings outside the town center, with a 2014 image of the same area, densely overlaid by homes. "That really tells the story of why our work together is important," said Galligan.



Our recently acquired and much-needed truck and trailer at OCT headquarters. Below: A slide from the Annual Meeting presentation.

For more details of the Annual Meeting, including election results, we invite you to view a PDF of the slideshow or a recording of the whole event. Go to <https://orleansconservation-trust.org/event/oct-virtual-annual-meeting>. We hope to see you again in August of 2021!

Around Headquarters

Galligan announced at the meeting that Stephen O'Grady, who has served as Director of OCT since 2018, was given the title of Executive Director effective July 1, "in recognition of his incredible growth in leadership of the Trust. He's done an awesome job keeping us moving forward through this challenging time."

In other news, Land Stewardship Coordinator Alex Bates completed his first year with OCT this summer. He is now a full-time staff member, spear-

heading our land management work on the ground.

Among Covid-19's collateral damage, the AmeriCorps Cape Cod program was forced to shut down for the summer—its young volunteers live in group homes, which wasn't safe. But recently we got the welcome news that these invaluable young people would again be deployed to work in conservation around the Cape.

Meet Kaitlyn Henderson (see cover photo) of Rock Hill, South Carolina, who in October began a joint assignment with OCT and the Barnstable Land Trust. Kaitlyn will work with Alex on land management projects. "Working with an organization committed to land management and conservation is an incredible opportunity," she says. "I am eager to learn as much as my brain can handle!"



Window on the Bay

Closing in on Success at 109 Portanimicut

We're pleased to report strong response for our campaign to acquire a beautiful property near the end of Portanimicut Road—an important addition to OCT's growing "Portanimicut Greenbelt" in South Orleans.

This rare treasure borders a saltmarsh called Deacon Rogers Meadow and a tidal creek flowing into Pleasant Bay, with glorious views over the water to Hog Island, Sampson Island, and the barrier beach beyond. Because neighbors have taken care to keep the area as natural as possible, visiting here is like a trip back in time.

Although the assessed value of the two lots (1.84 acres) exceeds \$1.5 million, OCT negotiated a purchase price of \$760,000. Thanks to more than 85 generous donors, we've raised \$650,000 and need



As protected open space, the property will benefit wildlife and human visitors, serve as a buffer to the saltmarsh and Pleasant Bay's water quality, and preserve a rare scenic viewshed. Photo © Hardie Truesdale. Below: Rachia Heyelman

just \$145,000 to wrap up the purchase and begin restoration. We actually completed phase one on October 1. Closing for the second lot is set for January 2022, when a state tax credit (awarded for the property's high conservation value) will be available to the seller.

"Undeveloping" and Restoring the Land

Two old cottages and a garage currently occupy the lots. Once fundraising is complete, OCT will remove those buildings—the seller agreed to bear the cost of demolition—and largely restore the land to a natural state.

Under a management plan OCT has developed, much of the land will be allowed to grow up annually as a meadow, mowed once or twice a year. We'll create space for a couple cars to park and install a small kiosk. An area next to the marsh will be kept mowed so visitors can enjoy the superb views and a picnic. An early order of business will be removing invasive vines to save a couple large old cedars. (Volunteers: we'll send out a call for help!)

The Heyelman Factor

One person who's always had a vision for this part of South Orleans is Rachia Heyelman, whose family has owned large tracts in the neighborhood for generations. Rachia is among OCT's greatest friends: she not only created the opportunity to acquire Number 109 from seller Dale Horan, but also she has helped coordinate the effort and made a substantial contribution to the purchase.



Moreover, this land is very near 20-plus acres that Rachia will leave

to OCT in her estate. This has encouraged the Trust to envision a future walking route virtually all the way from Heritage Drive (our newly conserved land at 66 Portanimicut) to Paw Wah Pond on the bay.

Completing the purchase of Number 109 is a key piece of that vision. *Can you help us finish the task?* For inspiration, please pay a visit there while the fine autumn weather holds—look for our sign on the south side of Portanimicut Road. For more details and to make a donation, visit orleansconservationtrust.org/growing-our-lands. Or contact Executive Director Steve O'Grady at (508) 255-0183, stephen.ogrady@orleansconservationtrust.org.



Taking to the Trails

New Member Max Klein Walks His Talk

by Elizabeth Walker

Since the novel coronavirus upended our normal patterns of activity, it seems that more and more people have masked up and headed outdoors to avoid exposure and regain some composure in the midst of pandemic-induced anxiety. Outdoor dining and socializing on Zoom cannot invigorate the body or renew the spirit like a brisk walk in the woods.

Users of the Cape Cod Rail Trail, recorded by the MassTrails Bicycle/Pedestrian Counts pilot program at its Brewster station, numbered nearly 200,000 in 2019. In line with national trends, this data shows an uptick in activity for 2020. Over Labor Day weekend, 7,671 users were recorded.

Orleans Conservation Trust trails have definitely seen increased use by Cape residents and visitors. Guided walks fill quickly, sometimes needing to split into two groups to responsibly distance. OCT's wildlife cameras are catching more glimpses of "shod feet" on the trails, indicating more human traffic. "Our busiest trail, at Twinings Pond, saw 2,662 visits from June through September," says OCT's Steve O'Grady. "Though it's the first year for which we have data, we believe this is way up from 2019."



Max Klein enjoying Orleans' open space.

Life, Interrupted

Max Klein and his family can be counted among those more frequent users of OCT trails. As a city dweller, 34-year-old Max gets a chuckle out of the "Thickly Settled" signs that dot Orleans roads. An unanticipated months-long stay at his parents' house gave him a greater appreciation of the Cape's wondrous opportunities for outdoor exploration and a way to act on his passion for environmental protection. Once he discovered the wealth of OCT trails and natural lands the Trust has preserved and stewarded over the past half-century, he became a member—with a very generous investment in OCT's work.

Unlike their mother, who as a girl attended Cape sailing camps, Max and his siblings had never spent extended time in Orleans. "My parents would bring us for a week or two every

summer," he explains. About 20 years ago they built a house in Orleans. In 2019, Max's career took him from the West Coast to a job with Amazon in New York. This March, he decided to shelter in place on the Cape. "I packed a bag, brought my road bike, and ended up staying through September."

Besides doing home-office and Internet upgrades around the house, Max took advantage of the chance to deepen his relationship with Cape Cod. "I rode all over, from Brewster to Provincetown." He got into new hobbies: birdwatching and smoking meats. He set up a bird feeder, and he and his brother learned to slow-cook meals in the backyard. Both activities "became integral to our family's Cape Cod rhythm."

Investing in the Outdoors

The Kleins also began to explore OCT trails. "There's a trail off Tonset Road near our house," Max said. "Then we looked up others on the OCT website. It was very clear about the trail locations, how long they were, and what you could expect to see. My family and I tried to walk a new trail as often as possible."

Max soon found that he wanted to give back. "Protecting the environment is very important to me, but it can be hard to make a dent because it's a macro kind of cause," he explains. "I realized that making a gift to the Trust would be a real contribution to the cause and a way to say thanks for the time I spent here. My contribution to OCT benefits my family, my friends—and me. Now that I live closer, I'll be able to spend more time here in the future."

Max also found it enlightening to learn how a land trust works. "My family and I want to participate more fully now that we know more about the organization," he noted. "The land trust model makes the land into a codified public good, open to anyone. I was impressed to find this very professional organization thinking long-term about providing public opportunities for exploring protected land. I really stand behind the ethos of the land trust."

Elizabeth Walker is a freelance writer and active OCT member, even though she lives in Chatham.

Your Guides to Our Trails

Looking for a complete list of OCT and Town lands where you can get out and explore? Find trail descriptions and printable maps on our website at orleansconservationtrust.org/category/trails. Or pick up a copy of the popular *Orleans Walking Trails* guide at our new "mini-kiosk" outside the OCT office at 203 South Orleans Road.



Winter/Spring 2021 Speakers

Join us **online** for the latest in our series of entertaining and informative talks by **local and regional experts**. Admission **free**.

Presentations will be made by webinar. Exact dates and times for all programs to be announced on our website and via email to members, with links provided.



Tracking Coastal Habitats Over Time

Owen Nichols

Director of Marine Fisheries Research, Center for Coastal Studies

Owen and his colleagues conduct ecosystem-level assessments of coastal habitats around the Cape. Numerous marine species use these habitats as nurseries, and breeding and feeding grounds. A comprehensive study of Pleasant Bay was completed in 2017, and another is underway in Nauset Marsh. Owen will share results of ongoing research and describe the importance of baseline data and long-term monitoring in preserving and protecting coastal habitats—and the fisheries that depend on them.

January 2021



Fighting Climate Change with Forest Carbon

Paul Catanzaro

Associate Professor at UMass Amherst, State Extension Forester

Climate change can seem like an overwhelming challenge, but there's a glimmer of hope in the forests of our own backyards. Paul will discuss what "forest carbon" encompasses, how it's measured, why it matters, and how a forest's age and composition can affect its capacity to store carbon.

February 2021



Recycle Locally, Think Globally

Kari Parcell

Regional Waste Reduction Coordinator, Barnstable County Cooperative Extension

Recycling markets operate on a global scale, and global events affect local waste reduction efforts. Kari will discuss how such events, including a 2018 recycling market crash in China, have changed the way waste reduction is managed locally. She'll also describe how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted waste reduction and what changes we may see as part of the "new normal." Her talk will equip you to be a better recycler and reduce your environmental impact.

March 2021



The Uncertain Future of Coral Reefs

Benjamin Neal

Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, Colby College

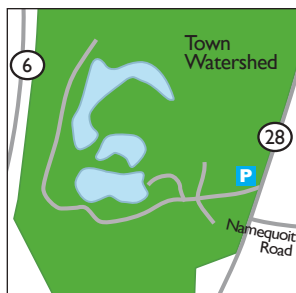
Coral reefs have been called the "rainforests of the sea," alluding to their status as one of the most biodiverse ecosystems on earth. But coral reefs worldwide are imperiled by stressors occurring on a global scale. Ben will discuss these threats and what the future of these shallow-water tropical ecosystems looks like.

April 2021

Winter/Spring 2020-2021 Walks

Get to know the **open spaces** of Orleans on our **popular guided walks**. They're **free, fun**, and appropriate for **all ages**.

Space is restricted; advance registration required. Call OCT or register on our website.



Orleans Watershed

Experience some of the 450 acres within the Watershed on this 1.5-mile walk, mostly on the service road.

Meet at 350 South Orleans Road, Orleans

Friday, December 4
10:00 am – 11:30 am



Hosea's Swamp

Walk about a half mile through the Quanset Wellfield and get an up-close look at a globally rare Atlantic white cedar swamp.

Meet at 70 Quanset Road, South Orleans

Thursday, January 14
10:00 am – 11:30 am

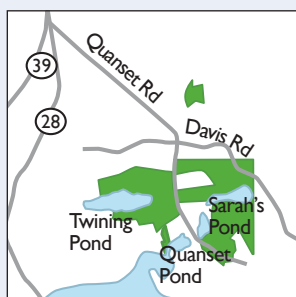


Ice House & Reuben's Pond Conservation Area

1.5-mile walk around two freshwater ponds and through a wildlife stronghold in the Tonset neighborhood.

Meet at 245 Tonset Road, Orleans

Wednesday, February 10
1:00 – 2:30 pm

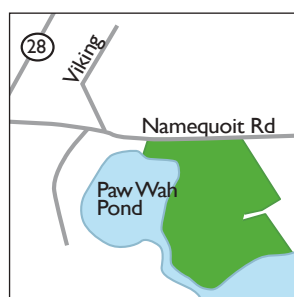


Three Ponds (Meadow Bog, Sarah's Pond, Twinings Pond)

2-hour walk and historical talk through 80-plus acres of OCT-owned conservation land.

Meet at 135 Quanset Road, South Orleans

Saturday, March 6
10:00 am – 12:00 pm



Paw Wah Point

Learn about how Orleans voters prevented development and preserved this sensitive area, while enjoying views over Little Pleasant Bay.

Meet at the parking area at the end of Namequoit Road, South Orleans

Tuesday, April 6
12:30 – 1:30 pm



White's Lane Conservation Area

View restored meadow habitat and learn about the ongoing success story of threatened diamondback terrapin turtles that nest on the property.

Meet at 33 White's Lane, Orleans

Wednesday, May 12
10:00 – 11:30 am

Explore the Three Ponds



Twinings Pond

Back in 1973, when three-year-old OCT was finding its footing and starting to fill a much-needed role in the community, the Trust accepted a donation of nearly 60 acres in South Orleans. The Cochran Gift remains the single largest gift of upland to a land trust anywhere on Cape Cod, launching a legacy of land conservation work in South Orleans that remains strong today.

Register for any walk and find trail maps on our website, orleansconservationtrust.org

Helping Hands on OCT Lands

by Alex Bates

In these challenging times, I'm grateful for the opportunity to carry out OCT's land stewardship initiatives—with help from many volunteers, our summer intern, AmeriCorps Cape Cod, and skillful contractors. All thanks to support from our members!

Our equipment toolkit was beefed up this year by the purchase of a Gravelly brush mower, a major aid in controlling invasive species, maintaining meadow habitat, and keeping trails accessible. To transport the mower and other gear to properties around Orleans, we now have a used Toyota Tacoma pickup truck and trailer (see page 3). We have installed more trail cameras to monitor use of our trails, much of that work handled over the summer by intern Cameron Bonnell.

We were able to bring in expert help on several projects early this fall. At our Hofs Gift along the Cape Cod Rail Trail, Jeff and Nate Norgot of Norgot Inc. installed wooden steps leading to an upland vista of Namskaket Marsh. Since then we've installed benches so that walkers and bikers can rest and enjoy the view. At the Mauch Gift, off Old Duck Hole Road, Keith Johnson of Billingsgate Land Management removed invasive species along the bordering hillside, and we reseeded with a native grass and wildflower mix. Keith also removed shrub honeysuckle and black locust at the Young Flint Gift off Champlain Road, clearing the way to maintain more of this property as open meadow habitat.

In September, an AmeriCorps Cape Cod crew descended on the Mill Pond Valley trailhead to clear fallen trees and



Top: Volunteers and staff working upslope from Twinings Pond. Photo by Steve Gass. Above left: This white-tailed doe and fawn were snapped by our trail camera in the Ice House and Reuben's Ponds Conservation Area. Above right: Alex Bates had to temporarily evict this Eastern screech owl from a kestrel nest box that was due for cleaning. Left: Using the new steps at the Hofs Gift, people passing on the Cape Cod Rail Trail can view the marsh without eroding the coastal bank or trampling the marsh grass.

storm debris, so we can get at the persistent English ivy and Oriental bittersweet. Our new AmeriCorps placement, Kaitlyn Henderson, will lead those service projects while she serves with us through next July.

Volunteer workdays resumed in August with COVID-19 safety protocols.

Volunteers removed hedge privet and other invasives at Twinings Pond Trail, building piles that will be burned this winter. Future workdays will be planned for sites that allow for social distancing; if you'd like to take part, email me at alex@orleansconservationtrust.org.

Gifts and Donations

From July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020, Orleans Conservation Trust received support from its members and the community in the form of unrestricted donations and restricted gifts, which specifically support land acquisition, land management, or educational programs. The Trust also received special gifts made in honor or in memory of someone designated by the giver.

Unrestricted Donations & Restricted Gifts

\$100,000 and above

Anonymous (2)
The Robert F. Payne Family Trust

\$10,000 – \$99,999

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Cape Cod Five Charitable Foundation Trust
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\$5,000 – \$9,999

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Membership Year 2019–2020

Every gift, in whatever amount and for whatever purpose, demonstrates your commitment to conserving land and plays a vital role in helping OCT fulfill its mission—to preserve land and educate the public in order to sustain our natural resources and the character of our community.

Fred, Karl, and Teryn (Bevan) Weintz
Francis and Frances Weller
Lois Witt
Sheryl Wolf

\$500 – \$999

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Peter and Marsha Allgeier

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