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On the cover: Female bald eagle returns to her eaglets in the family’s treetop nest, located on an Orleans Conservation Trust property. Photo by Kenneth Mayo Johnson. Inset: New staff member Tom Keras.

“Water is the driving force of all nature.”
– Leonardo da Vinci

Dear OCT members and supporters,

Here in Orleans, we understand the force of water—when it cascades from the sky in an autumn storm, or surges onto marshlands in a king tide, or carves away at tree roots clinging to a sandy bluff. We also understand that water, salt and fresh, is the driving force of our local blue economy. As citizens of this watery realm, we have a big stake in keeping our waters healthy, for fish and shellfish, swimming and boating, clean water from our taps. And because development pressure is relentless, we need to think and work creatively toward solutions.

One such creative approach is OCT’s recent land protection effort on Eli Rogers Road, near the Brewster line (page 4). This property abuts the nearly 500-acre watershed that provides drinking water to all of Orleans, so protecting it was a no-brainer. But the land comes with several buildings, one of which we aim to preserve for attainable year-round housing. This project, combining the protection of drinking water and open space with undevelopment and housing, is a first for the Trust.

On our cover, the dramatic image of a bald eagle mother landing on her nest makes me proud that OCT protected the land and trees where this eagle pair nested. As Drusy Henson notes (on page 11), these iconic birds need big swaths of canopied shoreline to nest. They also depend on water that can support their

favorite fish prey.

People in Orleans are becoming keenly aware that what we do with our land affects the fate of our waters. At the October Town

Meeting, we debated how best to handle harmful algae blooms in our ponds. At OCT’s annual meeting in August, members heard about the restoration of a new piece of our Henson’s Cove preserve, which will benefit water quality in Pleasant Bay (more on page 5).

Are we humans also a driving force in nature? Of course, and not always in a good way. But we’re smart enough to learn that what benefits nature is ultimately what’s best for our own species, too. The success of OCT’s work is visible all around us, and in the growing list of donors named at the end of this issue. I’m so grateful to every one of you, who make our success possible. I’m thankful as well for our remarkable staff—Stephen O’Grady, Abby Hipp, Lily Gooding, and incoming Land Stewardship Director Tom Keras—and for our trustees, who keep us on mission and responsive to the greater Orleans community. A shoutout to retiring trustees Steve Koehler, whose work as treasurer was foundational to OCT, and Diana Landau, who renovated our communications efforts and edits this newsletter.

Fall and winter are some of the best times to enjoy a quiet walk on one of our many trails around town. As you walk, you might dream up more ways you can be a force for good in our natural world!

Sincerely,

Kevin F. Galligan
Kevin F. Galligan
President



Watch OCT’s new video!

We’re delighted to share the Trust’s first “identity video,” created by videographer Chris Szwedo with narration by former trustee Diana Landau and premiered at our Annual Meeting. Just point your camera phone at the code, or enjoy it on your desktop at our website.



Restoration Keynotes Annual Meeting

OCT members turned out in force on a gorgeous late summer afternoon for the Trust's Annual Meeting this August 12. The Orleans Yacht Club was looking its best after recent renovations. Once folks took their seats, they were treated to the first showing of a new two-minute video about the Trust and its work. (You can use the QR code on page 2 if you missed it!)

A short business meeting included election of new trustees Drusy Henson and Deirdre White (see page 15) and farewells to outgoing trustees Steve Koehler and Diana Landau. Koehler then presented his swan-song Treasurer's Report, noting that the recent fiscal year was among our strongest ever, with a sizable uptick in membership. Executive Director Steve O'Grady recapped an exceptionally active year, highlighting the recently completed restoration work at Henson's Cove Conservation Area, OCT's new collaboration with the Orleans schools (see below), and the beginnings of our multiyear community education initiative "At Home with Nature," which gives landowners the tools and knowledge they need to make their properties more nature-friendly. (See page 7.) He spoke to the current efforts underway in Orleans to protect pollinators and ecosystems by reducing the use of pesticides: an effort endorsed by the Trust and by voters at Town Meeting on October 16. O'Grady also introduced an exciting new land-saving opportunity—a property at 37 Eli Rogers Road, next door to the Orleans watershed (page 4).

Seth Wilkinson's keynote presentation dovetailed neatly with these themes. President of Wilkinson Ecological Design, Seth defined ecological restoration as "the process of aiding the recovery of an ecosystem that has been damaged, degraded, or destroyed." His company works with home-



Seth Wilkinson presents to a packed house at the Annual Meeting. Below: OCT's annual plant sale features natives.

"Ecological restoration is the process of aiding the recovery of an ecosystem that has been damaged, degraded, or destroyed."

— Seth Wilkinson

owners and land organizations like OCT on a professional scale, but individual homeowners can restore and enhance their own properties so they provide all-important "ecosystem services": welcoming wildlife, improving soils, controlling erosion, and protecting water quality.

Among the most accessible ways you can make a difference is by replacing ornamental plants in home landscapes with natives—plants that have evolved together with local conditions and animals, serve pollinators, and feed insects that in turn are vital food for songbirds. (Fun fact: It



can take 400 or more caterpillars per day to feed one brood of chickadee nestlings!) Seth's slides depicted some popular landscape plants that offer little or no value to wildlife—most hydrangeas, hostas, butterfly bush, and burning bush—along with beautiful native alternatives that are mutually adapted with local fauna and thrive in home landscapes.

If you missed Seth's presentation, which illustrates some recommended native plants, you can find it on the OCT website, along with Steve O'Grady's annual recap.

LANDMARKS continued on page 10

Land For All Reasons

Woodland, Watershed Protection, and a Housing Opportunity on Eli Rogers Road

OCT entered a highly competitive real estate market when we learned in late spring that 5-plus acres at 37 Eli Rogers Road had recently been listed for sale. The Trust acted carefully but expeditiously in partnership with The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts (The Compact), which took out a loan and purchased the property for \$1M on June 30, 2023, giving OCT time to raise the funds for its protection. “It was clear the property wasn’t going to sit for long,” says OCT President Kevin Galligan, “so we did our homework and got it under contract just nine days after it was listed.”

Among several significant conservation attributes, the standout is the land’s designation by Mass. DEP as a Zone II Wellhead Protection Area, signifying its importance for the protection of drinking water quality. Hugging the Brewster line, 37 Eli Rogers lies just south of the 500-acre Orleans Watershed. “Orleans is blessed with much public land, which many use and cherish,” says Alan McClennen, chair of the town’s Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners. “The Trust’s proactive efforts to purchase an additional 4.5 acres of land on Eli Rogers Road will offer further protection.”

In addition to protecting the Cape Cod Sole Source Aquifer, which supplies our drinking water, preventing development at 37 Eli Rogers also helps safeguard Pleasant Bay. The land sits in the Paw Wah Pond and Little Pleasant Bay subwatersheds; effluent from septic systems in this area eventually finds its way to Pleasant Bay and contributes to the worsening nutrient load there.

Woodland for Wildlife

The land includes beautiful woodland and wetland habitat for rare species, as well as



37 Eli Rogers Road, looking north toward the Orleans Watershed.



Preservation of the 4.5 acres on 37 Eli Rogers Road (outlined in red) will provide critical woodlands and watershed protection. Parcel layer and imagery provided by the Town of Orleans.

vernal pool wildlife breeding habitat. It also serves as an important wildlife corridor between preserved land in Brewster (land protected in 2010 by Orleans Town Meeting vote) and the Orleans Watershed. Moreover, Nickerson State Park is just a third of a mile away, and this project affords an opportunity to expand on that wildlife stronghold.

In October, the state recognized the significance of the opportunity and announced a Massachusetts Conservation Partnership Grant of \$175,000 to help pay for the purchase—the maximum award given by the program. OCT has also applied for funding from the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which will be decided on by the Orleans Town Meeting next May.

Undevelopment and Housing

Existing on the property is a four-bedroom home as well as two neglected, aging cottages: a prime opportunity to undevelop land, restoring it to its natural state to enhance habitat value and protect water quality. The four-bedroom home is slated for resale, which will allow OCT to protect 4.5 acres at a reasonable price, while still reducing the number of houses and septic systems on the property. In an effort to assist with the local housing shortage, OCT has engaged several local groups that are involved in providing workforce housing to explore their interest in purchasing the home.

The upland portion of 37 Eli Rogers Road is large enough to be carved up into as many as four residential lots; a similarly sized four-lot subdivision right next door illustrates what could happen. “Less is certainly more when it comes to reducing impacts of development in this corner of Orleans, across from the 500-acre watershed,” says Mark Robinson, long-time executive director of The Compact. “Removing houses and septic systems here is a net plus for habitat restoration and aquifer protection.”

OCT is planning modest eco-restoration activities after the cottages are demolished. That effort will be aided by a host of native plants that are already reclaiming formerly disturbed areas. “We’ll need to control some invasive shrubs, mostly autumn olive, and do some regrading and seeding, but we’re encouraged by what we see all around the perimeter of the home site,” says Lily Gooding, OCT’s Land Stewardship Technician. “We look forward to letting nature do the rest!”

OCT’s fundraising goal for the project is approximately \$1.075M; however, the Trust is awaiting the results of the four-bedroom home resale and the CPA application before beginning private fundraising in earnest. General contributions to OCT’s Land Acquisition Fund are encouraged, to allow us to pounce on opportunities like this one!



Two cottages slated for demolition.



Volunteers led by Bob Prescott walk through the restored grassland to plant the last of this year’s hatchlings at new terrapin gardens on the Braddock property.

The Latest from Henson’s Cove

In its first growing season, the recently restored grassland at 4 Braddock’s Way (the newest addition to OCT’s Henson’s Cove Conservation Area) exceeded all expectations. It typically takes 3 to 5 years for a seed mix to really pop, but the wet summer gave this grassland a strong head start. This habitat is scarcer and of much higher ecological value than the woodland it replaced, which was heavily overgrown with non-native invasives.

One of the biggest motivations for restoring this location was to add habitat for threatened diamondback terrapins. Although no terrapins were found nesting on the newly protected acreage just yet, there is good reason for optimism. Just across the cove, on habitat that OCT restored around 2010, Mass Audubon volunteers documented more nests this year than ever before: about 35 nests, compared to last year’s 28. Nests typically contain 10 to 18 eggs, so this site is really starting to produce hatchlings. The steady upward trend in nests and hatchlings is very encouraging, given how dangerously close this population came to blinking out. But more work is needed; since females nest twice a year, that number of nests signifies roughly 20 mature females. Thanks to OCT supporters, they now have more room to roam—and all their eggs won’t be in one basket (of land)!

A Gardener Goes Native

By Marcie Truesdale

More and more gardeners around Orleans are moving towards native plants in their home landscapes. We asked one of them to share her experience.

As October fades into November, the active gardening season on the Cape starts to wind down. Oak leaves are falling in bunches, and the last of the flowers are losing their color. By now, I've planted all my end-of-season "bargain" plants and moved the more tender potted plants into the garage or house. As is recommended these days, for the benefit of insects, pollinators, and soil health, I will do minimal clean-up in the gardens. Leaves will be left to compost and provide shelter for overwintering insects. Seed heads will stay up to provide food and structure for birds; stems left standing can become housing for some types of bees.

I will miss working outside in my garden and woodland, but winter is a great time to observe, reflect, and plan (dream) for next year's landscape. It was during the winter about four years ago that I started my own foray into native and pollinator-friendly gardening. After reading a book called *Nature's Best Hope* by Doug Tallamy, I began a significant shift in my gardening focus.

"For the benefit of insects, pollinators, and soil health, I will do minimal clean-up in the gardens. Leaves will be left to compost and provide shelter for overwintering insects. Seed heads will stay up to provide food and structure for birds; stems left standing can become housing for some types of bees."

When we retired in 2014 to Orleans, I was a relatively novice gardener. The natural landscape was inspiring, but so were all the beautiful plantings and gardens—so at first I bought and planted whatever struck my fancy. Along the way I learned a lot about light, soil, and moisture requirements as well as techniques for planting and transplanting; those iconic blue hydrangeas, ornamental grasses, hostas, and day lilies all flourished in my gardens. By 2019, we had moved to a home in South Orleans with a much more wooded landscape and mature native trees, mostly oak and pitch pine. It had some established gardens but no lawn



Snow accentuates the structure of plants, both native and not, in the winter garden — another good reason to leave them standing. All photos by Marcie Truesdale.

whatsoever, which was fine with us!

By then I was learning about native plants and beginning to understand the importance of managing my immediate landscape in ways that would benefit our local ecosystem and the larger environment. I had to find my way with new and different plants along with figuring out my growing conditions. Since there is a lot more shade and woodland here, I started with natives like wild columbine, *Tiarella cordifolia* (foamflower), and Solomon's seal. Returning hummingbirds, I learned, are enticed by the beautiful red-and-yellow, bell-shaped flowers

of wild columbine. I love the arching structure of Solomon's seal, whose fruits attract birds. All three plants generally flower from spring well into summer, and the foliage often stays green into the fall and beyond.

As with learning anything new, there were missteps and setbacks along the way. I bought plants I thought were native, only to find out later that they were an Asian or tropical variety. I know now that there's a difference between cultivars and straight species and that plants native to the Northeast may not be indigenous to Cape Cod. I learned from my mistakes, read articles and books, listened to webinars,

attended programs, and networked with fellow enthusiasts.

I walk my property and wander OCT trails to observe which native plants flourish and under what conditions. In my own woods, I found northern bayberry, Canada mayflower (a wonderful ground cover) spreading like crazy, lots of Virginia creeper, and both high- and lowbush blueberry. In the conservation areas, I see *Clethra alnifolia* (sweet pepperbush) with its fragrant blossoms, huckleberry (now in beautiful fall color), little bluestem grasses, winterberry and inkberry, and even cardinal flower, whose bright red flowers are so attractive to hummingbirds.

I'm also trying to pay more attention to pollinator and wildlife activity. Bugs and insects I once would have thought nothing of eradicating I now know are part of an essential food chain. Plant and insect identification apps on my phone are very helpful, though I always check their response against other resources. As I become more confident in my knowledge, I try to share it when the opportunity arises.

So, as I get ready to settle in for winter, I know I'll be thinking ahead about new plantings and wondering which plants will return and thrive next spring. Maybe this is the winter I'll try my hand at sowing seeds from my own native plants—more learning! I'll be watching what the wildlife is eating and using. And while the

garden rests and rejuvenates for the next growing season, I will find much quiet beauty there. The seed heads and dried flowers of Joe Pye weed, goldenrod, hyssop, and even non-native sedum offer structure for the eye and a place for birds to rest. I enjoy knowing that in a few months, those seed pods on the butterfly weed will develop into the beautiful orange flowers that pollinators love. Gardening with natives and nature in mind has been both challenging and rewarding, and I hope to be in it for the long haul.

Marcie Truesdale retired to Orleans from the Hudson Valley, New York, where she worked as a critical care nurse and educator. She and her husband, Hardie, are staunch supporters and volunteers for OCT; Marcie is also active with Nauset Newcomers and in the Putnam Farm restoration project.



Clockwise from top left: Natives from Marcie Truesdale's garden: wild columbine, spotted wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*, also known as pipsissiwa), Northern crescent butterfly on butterfly weed, flowering Solomon's seal, oak-leaf hydrangea in fall color.

At Home with Nature

A New OCT Initiative

As the Trust looks to expand our reach beyond our own conservation lands, we saw a different kind of opportunity in helping nature "at home." Orleans has thousands of acres in private ownership that can provide a lot of habitat—if we can help residents understand the importance of stewarding home landscapes and give them good information.

We have begun to integrate this "At Home with Nature" initiative into many of OCT's activities. Part of the job is to model eco-friendly land care on our own lands—as in the new OCT Office Demonstration Garden: see details

on page 8 and at orleansconservationtrust.org/at-home-with-nature/

As Marcie Truesdale's story shows, finding your way to landscaping with nature isn't a quick journey. (Is anything in gardening?) OCT is committed to providing resources on an ongoing basis to enable residents to use environmentally sound practices on their properties—in this newsletter and other outreach, in our programs and walks (see page 9), and by collaborating with other organizations, such as Pollinator Pathway Cape Cod, which provides a curated list of natives well adapted to our region at <https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/towns/cape-cod>

OCT's Demonstration Garden

For years, a Cape Cod lawn and thick patch of rugosa rose greeted visitors to OCT's headquarters on Route 28. When the Trust set out to start educating residents about managing their home landscapes in a way that creates habitat and invites wildlife (now branded as the "At Home with Nature" initiative), we realized we had a prime opportunity to lead by example. Unlike many of OCT's large preserves, the office property is relatable for the average Orleans homeowner: less than an acre of woods and manicured landscaping. This would be the site of OCT's Demonstration Garden, showcasing the benefits of native plants and an eco-friendly landscape.

OCT staff worked with Tyler Gaudreau of Environmental Landscape Solutions on a landscape design that considered sight lines around the parking lot, sunlight, planting method (e.g., seed mix, plugs, or larger plants), and much more. "We want our property to serve as a persuasive example for residents to transform their landscapes, but you don't need to rely on outside expertise," says OCT Executive Director Steve O'Grady. "Sample plans for native gardens are freely available online. As long as you're planting natives, I don't think you can go wrong."

To ready the area for planting, we removed sections

of turf, aided by a sodcutter and the strong backs of volunteers. We mowed down, spot-treated, then carefully removed the rugosa rose—an aggressive non-native that has naturalized on the Cape. On June 9, OCT volunteers gathered to plant 665 plugs and gallon-size plants—the latter reserved for the center island so that would fill in fastest. Plugs went in another section, and the last area got only a seed mix of native wildflowers and grasses. The three planting methods in different zones represent various options for people, depending on their budget and aesthetic preferences. The design includes more than 30 species of grasses and flowering perennials. This diversity encourages a diversity of insects, and it also means different bloom times—good for the pollinators and good for human admirers, too!

Says Alex Bates, who oversaw the garden installation, "The goal here is less human intervention and a more natural system. Ecologically speaking, almost anything beats a lawn, and I'm happy to skip the summer mowing!"

For more details on the garden installation, future projects at the OCT office property, and advice for homeowners (rule one: start small!), visit <https://orleansconservationtrust.org/at-home-with-nature/>



OCT's Demonstration Garden in bloom. Below: Easy natives to grow include (left to right) yarrow, Joe Pye weed, and Echinacea.



More Stewards for OCT Lands


On an October morning, nearly 20 volunteers showed up at OCT's headquarters for training to become Volunteer Land Stewards. Each was assigned an OCT property and signed up to regularly monitor that land, walk the boundaries, document maintenance needs, and help keep trails clear, signs visible, and educational info current. Volunteers use online maps to self-locate in the field and fill out an online form. Once sent, that gives OCT staff real time information to help prioritize stewardship needs.

Properties monitored by volunteers are among those the Trust has deemed most essential to maintain, based on their ecological value, size,

public accessibility, and visibility. OCT property boundaries are marked more clearly than ever, thanks to a years-long effort by AmeriCorps Cape Cod members who have served with OCT—literally laying the groundwork for the work of stewards. Current ACC member Jen Clifford will continue that effort this year.

Interested in becoming a Steward? Please reach out to tom@orleansconservationtrust.org. And if you can't make a regular commitment but want to get involved, be sure to join our email list (visit orleansconservationtrust.org). We'll send you monthly bulletins about volunteer workdays all over town.

Winter/Spring 2024 Speakers

Join us for the latest in our series of **entertaining and informative** talks by **local and regional experts**. Admission is **free**. Check OCT's website for location and more details.  denotes programs linked with OCT's "At Home with Nature" initiative (see more on page 7).

The Good, the Bad, and the Bugly

Larry Dapsis

Our backyards and gardens are jungles of diverse insect ecosystems. The Cape has a wide range of players that are responsible for pollination and recycling plant matter, as well as recent invasive species (and more on the way). Learn about the fascinating complex of natural enemies that helps maintain balance, from the resident entomologist of Cape Cod Cooperative Extension.



Tuesday, January 9, 6:30pm
via Zoom 

Postcards from Plants

C. L. Fornari

What if you could get postcards from Mother Nature, the Green Man, and plants themselves, giving you pithy information about how to be a better garden maker and plant lover? Author and creative gardening expert C. L. Fornari guides us to look at human involvement with gardens and indoor plants from nature's point of view, using the natural world as our "first search engine."



Tuesday, February 27, 6:30pm
Location TBD 

Picking Your Battles with Invasive Plants

Karro Frost

Karro, a plant biologist with the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, will discuss why we should be concerned about invasive species, how to approach getting rid of them, and some of the new invasives showing up on Cape Cod. Learn how to manage invasive plants at home.



Tuesday, March 26, 6:30pm
Location TBD 

Undeveloping Land

Mark Robinson

As part of a new emphasis on climate resilience, OCT and other Cape land trusts are trying to win back some dilapidated or degraded properties for new open spaces. Mark Robinson, executive director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, talks about why undevelopment projects are proliferating, the complexities they entail, and how they're enabling land trusts to strengthen the patchwork of protected lands on the Cape.



Tuesday, April 30, 6:30pm
Orleans Yacht Club

Winter/Spring 2023-24 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. Register and find maps at orleansconservationtrust.org.*

Ice House/Reuben's Pond

1.5-mile walk around two freshwater ponds, focused on migrating waterfowl that stop there.

Meet at 245 Tonset Road

Saturday, December 2
10:00–11:30 am

Kent's Point

Beautiful walk along nearly 1 mile of shoreline with outstanding bay views.

Meet at 39 Keziah's Lane

Tuesday, February 20
2:00–3:30 pm

Orleans Watershed

Experience some of the 500 acres that make up the Orleans Watershed on this 1.5-mile walk, mainly on the service road.

Meet at 35 South Orleans Road

Friday, April 12
2:00–3:30 pm

John Kenrick Woods

A historically rich walk of about 1 mile through a white pine grove; see specimens of the rare American chestnut.

Meet at 35 Namequoit Road

Thursday, May 16
11:00 am–12:30 pm

Woods Cove

Walk about 1 mile through pine-oak woodlands and along Nauset Estuary, learning to identify trees and shrubs by their winter appearance at this lesser-known OCT property.


Meet at 366 Tonset Road

Thursday, January 25
1:30–3:00 pm

Twinings Pond

Walk about 1 mile around Twinings Pond, exploring OCT's eco-restoration efforts, followed by a chance to participate in our work.

Meet at 135 Quanset Road

Wednesday, March 13
9:00–10:30 am 

Learn, then burn!

Our educational walk around Twinings Pond will focus on OCT's eco-restoration efforts on this ecologically significant land. Near the end of the walk, participants will have the opportunity to get involved; weather permitting, we'll have



a pile burn to remove invasive brush and restore native habitat!

LANDMARKS continued from page 3

Update on School Grants

Last year, OCT launched a pilot test of a new program to improve environmental education for Orleans students, including support for three projects at Orleans Elementary School (OES) and six projects at Nauset Regional Middle School (NRMS). All indications to date are that teachers and students are excited and that the OCT-funded activities are going well.

At the Annual Meeting this August, Suzan Parisse and Keren Castro, second-grade teachers at OES, described how their students were using Boland Pond to assess the effects of water quality on plants and animals. Rand Burkert, greenhouse teacher at NRMS, described students working with Wampanoag consultants on the plant life around Boland Pond. Other projects are launching this school year, and OCT is likely to continue the program.

Comings and Goings at the Trust

Earlier in August, the Trust said farewell to summer intern **Ryan Lewis**, who was instrumental in helping to plan OCT's future management of Rachia Heyelman's land on Portanimicut Road, and to our outstanding Land Stewardship Director **Alex Bates**. Alex, who had been with the Trust since 2019, accepted a post as Conservation Agent with the Town of Eastham; we wish him all success in that role and are grateful for his count-



Ryan Lewis, Alex Bates, and Steve O'Grady at a going-away gathering for Alex and Ryan. Left: OCT's incoming Director of Land Stewardship, Tom Keras.

less contributions to improving the health, attractiveness, and accessibility of OCT's properties over the years. "It's hard to overstate the growth of OCT's land management program under Alex's leadership," says O'Grady. "He spearheaded improvements to accessibility at several trailheads, greatly improved the educational signage in our kiosks and on our trails, and oversaw several eco-restoration projects that will deliver benefits for many years."

We're happy to report that **Lily Gooding**, who came to the

Trust as an AmeriCorps Cape Cod service member in 2022, has been hired as the Trust's first Land Stewardship Technician. She'll work under the supervision of our newly hired Land Stewardship Director, **Tom Keras**, who will take up his position in November. A Massachusetts native, Tom has worked in conservation for the Montana State Parks, the Maryland Park Service, and mostly recently in Colorado. Along the way he learned the value of building relationships through education and stewardship of

protected lands, and he's excited to bring his experience back home. "The Cape is special to my family: I have generational links to the Outer Cape and got married on Cooks Brook Beach in Eastham," says Tom. "I'm honored to work at OCT and serve the Orleans community." Off the clock, you may find him surf casting, fly fishing, hiking, or watching Boston sports. O'Grady says, "We're delighted to have Tom join the team and help take our stewardship work to the next level."

Once again OCT will benefit from the service of an AmeriCorps Cape Cod member for nine months, beginning in October.

Jen Clifford hails from Maine and holds a BA in geography from Vassar, where she



Jen Clifford

studied global environmental activism, political ecology, and landscape theory. She has worked with GIS mapping systems with Three Rivers Land Trust in Maine, and she hopes for a career in land stewardship and environmental education. "I'm interested in people's relationships with land and water," she says. "And I'm delighted to be part of ACC Year 25," which kicked off this September when Jen and her cohort were sworn in at Barnstable County Courthouse.

Eagles Have Landed in Orleans

Family Spends the Season on OCT Property

By **Drusy Henson**

Photographs by **Kenneth Mayo Johnson**

Orleans Conservation Trust was founded in the spring of 1970—right around the first official Earth Day. One major theme back then was the near extinction of our national bird and symbol, the majestic bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). In the lower 48 states, the use of pesticides (particularly DDT), habitat loss, and hunting by ranchers hoping to protect their young livestock caused the eagle's population to drop to near zero.

Luckily, we wised up a little. DDT was banned, and federal laws protecting eagles were strengthened. Bald eagle populations began to rebound. In western Massachusetts, the species was introduced to the Quabbin Reservoir area in the 1980s and began to thrive.

Here on the Cape, however, they still seemed an exotic creature you would never see, unless you traveled to Alaska and learned to spot “tennis ball heads” in the trees. Then stories began to spread of eagles nesting up Pochet and on the River. Soon the sightings were verified by experts. In fact, both National Audubon and Mass Wildlife have been working since 1982 to revitalize the Cape's bald eagle population, and in 2020 the Cape's first bald eagle chick in 115 years was documented in Barnstable. Today, bald eagles are spotted all over the peninsula. In Orleans, they are flying around Pilgrim Lake and seen around Pleasant Bay. The pair shown in Ken Johnson's images has become quite famous; many photos have appeared on social media.

OCT is proud to say that this pair is living on our protected land. And land protection is exactly what eagles need to



The eagles arrived in early spring and nested on an osprey pole, leading to serious conflict when the smaller raptors arrived to reclaim their nest site. Other photos show the two eaglets being fed and one parent with a nearly full-grown eaglet. All four were gone from the nest by mid-October.

thrive. They require long stretches of canopied shoreline to nest and hunt. They need high perches like old oak snags to spot their prey, which is mainly fish (salt and fresh, they love both). They need mature trees to build their nests; a typical nest ranges from 4 to 5 feet in diameter and 3 to 4 feet tall. In short, they need protected habitat.


So please join in helping us make a place for eagles. Becoming a member will

help OCT preserve and wisely manage habitat; we also help residents learn how to create homes for wildlife (maybe even eagles!) on their own land. And don't forget to look up: that huge soaring bird might just be a bald eagle.

Drusy Henson's bio can be found on page 15.

Gifts and Donations Membership Year 2022–2023







From July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, 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. People who have made donations to OCT, in any amount, for at least five

consecutive membership years, are designated as Red Oak Donors with an acorn symbol after their names. 





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 protect and restore natural lands for people and wildlife, the health of our waters, and the character of our community.









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
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


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Molly Rees Gavin

Welcome New OCT Trustees!

OCT is pleased to welcome three new trustees. Drusy Henson and Deirdre White were elected at the Annual Meeting in August; Gary Bowden was appointed to the board in September.

Drusy Henson has been a part- or full-time resident of Orleans for more than 60 years (her first job was at Fancy's Farm Stand, now Nauset Farms). Her family came to Orleans more than a century ago. Drusy graduated from Wellesley College with a degree in English and Geology and continued her studies in geology at Harvard University. She spent her entire career in the tech industry, holding positions such as Director of Business Analysis at Deltek Inc., Senior Manager of User Experience and Documentation at Iron Mountain Digital, and Senior Principal User Researcher at Oracle Corp. She currently serves as Vice Chair of the Orleans Conservation Commission and as the commission's liaison to the Putnam Farm property. She lives in East Orleans with her wife and two beloved rescue dogs.



Deirdre White grew up among the apple orchards and dairy farms of the Hudson Valley in Dutchess County, N.Y., and vacationed in Wellfleet for many years. While in her teens, she learned firsthand about environmental protection with the near death of the Hudson River and its subsequent (and ongoing) clean-up. Deirdre earned her BA at Smith College and an MBA at the Simmons Graduate School of Management. She worked in banking



and real estate development in New York City from 1981 until 1999, when she left to attend Princeton Theological Seminary, graduating with an MDiv in 2002. She has served on several nonprofit boards including Family Promise North Shore/Boston and the Cape Ann YMCA. She is a trustee of the Snow Library, a Master Gardener, an OCT Trail Steward (with her husband, for the Mill Pond Valley Trail), and a "growing" member of Pollinator Pathway Cape Cod and the Sea Call Farm community. A landscape photographer, Deirdre enjoys wandering on the beach, in the woods, and on the waters of the Cape, which she is delighted to call home.

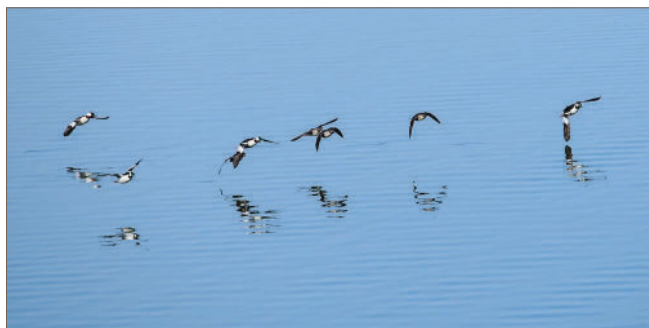
Gary Bowden has been an active OCT volunteer and supporter since he and his husband, Mark Ziomek, made Orleans their permanent home in 2019. Gary retired after a 34-year career with the federal courts in Washington, D.C. His chief passion now centers on environmental work: advocating for restoring native plants, removing invasive species, and educating about the value of protecting our native pollinators. Gary serves on the board of the Nauset Newcomers, including a recent term as president, and as a director and member of the Speakers Bureau at the Master Gardeners Association of Cape Cod. In 2020 he worked with representatives from nine regional nonprofits, including OCT, to form the Pollinator Pathway Cape Cod. He recently joined the Land Management Committee of Sipson Island Trust, which is working to restore the island's natural habitats for the benefit of wildlife and visitors. Gary and Mark have a vegetable garden plot at Sea Call Farm, and their home perennial garden has been on the Orleans Improvement Association and Hydrangea Festival tours.



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Do You Migrate with the Season?

OCT is in the process of updating our donor database and moving to the database management system Little Green Light (LGL). Used by many local land trusts and nonprofits, LGL will streamline our efforts to keep consistent, clear records.

Do you have a seasonal residence? Help us keep our mailing list up to date by telling us which address to use during the months you're in town. To update your contact with this or any other information, scan the QR code or visit <https://orleansconservationtrust.org/update-my-information>

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