



# *the* **drift**



## **Rooted in Community**

Fall 2022 | Vol.5, No. 2 | The Community Issue

# MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY

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THE MISSION OF MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY IS TO PROTECT AND RESTORE VITAL LANDS AND WATERS ON A SCALE THAT MATTERS.

WE ENVISION A WORLD WHERE OUR LANDS AND WATERS ARE HEALTHY AND PROTECTED AND WHERE NATURE OCCUPIES A PLACE OF CENTRAL IMPORTANCE IN EVERY PERSON'S LIFE.

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Cover Photo: Sarah McLean  
Cozy in the Pond Cabin at Hidden Valley Nature Center

# IN SERVICE OF COMMUNITY

By Pete Nichols, Executive Director  
& Buck O'Herin, Board President

“THE ENVIRONMENT IS WHERE WE ALL MEET; WHERE WE ALL HAVE A MUTUAL INTEREST; IT IS THE ONE THING ALL OF US SHARE.”  
—LADY BIRD JOHNSON

At the core of the conservation movement is our relationship with the natural world—local, regional, and global. It is prudent for us to remember that nature needs us considerably less than we need nature. We need it for food, shelter, clean water, air, emotional well-being and all aspects of our survival. How we choose to interact with the natural world in our daily lives influences our wonder and quality of life.

Considering our profound interdependence and the problems we face, it is critical that a group of people—a community—works together to envision and assemble a reciprocal relationship with the natural world that, at once, sustains both our human community and the larger world in which we are nested. As Lady Bird Johnson once said, “The environment is where we all meet; where we all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share.”

We are incredibly fortunate here on the midcoast of Maine to have a community that is “knee-deep” in the natural world; whether as hunter or angler, clammer, lobsterwoman, or forester, hiker or bird watcher, we have many intimate connections with the natural world as part of our daily lives.

Our work here at Midcoast Conservancy is, in very basic terms, in service of community, both natural and human. As you will read in the pages that follow, this tenet is reflected in every aspect of our work. We cannot protect and steward the wild places, restore our rivers, and provide recreational, educational, and nature programming here on the midcoast without the support and participation of the entire midcoast community.

As you enjoy this edition of our Drift magazine and learn more about the breadth of our work, ponder how you might get involved—as a member, volunteer, land donor, or advocate—and become part of this growing movement we call Midcoast Conservancy. Protecting and restoring vital lands and waters on a scale that matters!



Campers from Hidden Valley Camp in Montville engaged in trail stewardship on the Cozy in the Pond Cabin at Hidden Valley Nature Center

# NEW FACES AT MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY



**ANNA BLANK**  
Administrative Manager

Anna is our new Administrative Manager. In her role, Anna supports Midcoast Conservancy by designing and maintaining efficient office systems and policies, managing office files and records, hiring and on-boarding new employees, and maintaining accurate accounts. Before joining Midcoast Conservancy full time, Blank served as a Development Intern this spring. Anna comes to us with a background in agriculture and environmental policy. After five years of farming, and recently completing a BS in Environmental Policy, she sees joining Midcoast Conservancy as the start of an exciting new chapter.



**JOE CHAPMAN**  
Trails & Facilities Manager

Joe is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of Hidden Valley Nature Center. He manages the firewood production, trail improvement projects and hut maintenance, and works closely with the community and volunteers to ensure that visitors will have a quality and fulfilling experience through nature. Joe grew up in Lincoln County and currently lives in Edgecomb with his wife and son. His love for nature and exploring led him to a BA in Adventure Education at Plymouth State University. He enjoys the solitude and simplicity of being in nature; some of his favorite pastimes include canoeing, backpacking, foraging and reading sci-fi novels.



**ERIKA PRESLEY**  
Senior Land Protection Manager

As Senior Land Protection Specialist, Erika works with landowners, the Lands Committee, and the Board to identify, prioritize, and develop conservation easements and acquisition projects, helping conserve key landscapes in the Midcoast Region. Erika and her family spent the last 15 years living in southern California before moving to Maine, where she has family. She most recently worked as a Naturalist and a Resource Conservationist in southern California where she has experience managing protected lands, restoring native habitats and educating and engaging local communities.



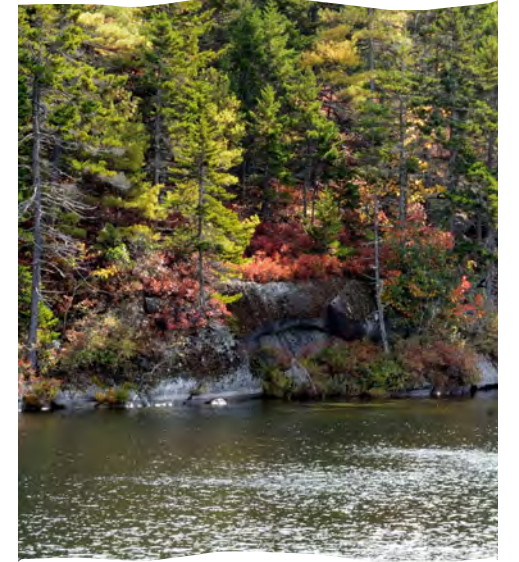
**MORGANNE PRICE**  
Medomak River Watershed Manager

Morganne grew up in Waldoboro exploring the woods in her backyard. She moved to the Pacific Northwest for a brief time to work for the Forest Service and also as a fisheries observer in Alaska, collecting data on commercial fishing vessels. Morganne joins Midcoast Conservancy as our Medomak River Watershed Manager; in that role, she will help coordinate water and land conservation work in the Medomak watershed and beyond. She is thrilled to be back in the Midcoast and is looking forward to using her community ties combined with her experiences from away to benefit her hometown watershed.

# 30X30 LAND & WATER CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

By Chris Schorn

IT'S BEEN NEARLY A YEAR SINCE WE LAUNCHED OUR 30X30 LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION INITIATIVE AND PLEDGED TO CONSERVE 30,000 ACRES ON THE MIDCOAST BY 2030. SINCE THAT TIME WE HAVE CONTRACTED WITH RHUMB LINE MAPS TO CONDUCT A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF OUR SERVICE AREA AND GAIN INSIGHTS INTO THE LANDSCAPE FOR CONSERVATION. OUR ANALYSIS IS STILL WRAPPING UP, SO WHAT WE HAVE TO SHARE AT THIS POINT ARE LARGELY ANECDOTAL OBSERVATIONS.

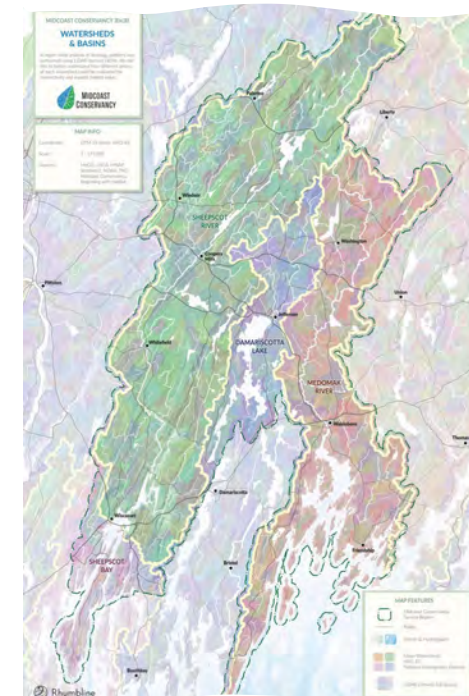


## OBSERVATION #1

There are 106,931 acres of “core interior” habitat—area at least 1000 feet from human development and roads—within our service area landscape.

**HOW WE ARE INTERPRETING THIS:** This area is twice the size of Acadia National Park. This figure speaks to the great extent of “wilderness” that still remains in the Midcoast.

**WHERE WE GO NEXT:** This core habitat is fragmented into blocks spread out across our landscape.



## OBSERVATION #2

There are over 2,565 miles of rivers, streams, creeks, and minor drainages within our service area landscape. If laid out to create a single stream, it would stretch from Wiscasset to Flagstaff, Arizona!

**HOW WE ARE INTERPRETING THIS:** Many of these minor drainages have gone unmapped on prior topographical maps, and our ability to predict their location has only become possible with recent advances in laser-sensing satellite telemetry and publicly-accessible digital elevation models. The density and length of these “capillaries” speaks to just how deeply our entire landscape is linked to water.

**WHERE WE GO NEXT:** Our next step is to understand which of these streams are most important for preserving aquatic resilience. Some initial modeling we have done indicates that there may be 7,000 acres that contribute to the drainages of likely coldwater refugia, which are vital for freshwater fish health.

## OBSERVATION #3

Across all the towns in our service area, there are approximately 1,200 parcels that play a critical role in fostering local habitat connectivity.

**HOW WE ARE INTERPRETING THIS:** By assessing landscape features such as ravines and ridgetops and analyzing their interplay with human development and habitat core interior blocks, we can make a best guess model as to where and how wildlife might be most likely to move across the landscape. The paths most frequently used by wildlife wend their way through woods and waters, but also through our backyards and across our roads. This isn't news to anyone, but the importance of some of these paths in connecting habitat blocks is.

**WHERE WE GO NEXT:** We need to understand which of these parcels are most important, and how Midcoast Conservancy can best work with landowners to protect these paths into perpetuity.

Top Photo: Peters Pond Preserve in Waldoboro  
Map: Watersheds & Basins  
For additional 30x30 maps visit [midcoastconservancy.org/30x30](http://midcoastconservancy.org/30x30)



stormwater runoff carrying harmful pollutants such as phosphorus into the lake. Upon achieving the recommended erosion-control improvements under the program, property owners receive a handsome sign designating them as a LakeSmart award recipient.

Water quality monitoring is an important part of Midcoast Conservancy's mission. Supported by DLWC and with help from volunteers, water samples are collected bi-weekly from May through October, at the deepest site in each basin and near Damariscotta Mills. The outbreak of cyanobacteria, discovered during water quality monitoring this summer, has been of particular concern to the community. High water temperature and excess nutrient (primarily phosphorus) concentrations in the lake are ideal conditions for algae and cyanobacteria growth.

You, the members of our community, are the most important stewards of Damariscotta Lake and its watershed. Please communicate your thoughts to any member of the DLWC; we are always looking for anyone willing to volunteer time and ideas; consider volunteering to serve in one or more of the important programs supported by the DLWC. By harnessing the power of our community voice, we can continue to sustain the quality of Damariscotta Lake.

 Damariscotta Lake Watch - Midcoast Conservancy  
 [www.midcoastconservancy.org/damariscotta](http://www.midcoastconservancy.org/damariscotta)

ON AUGUST 23 MORE THAN 150 PEOPLE GATHERED IN JEWELL LODGE AT WAVUS CAMP FOR THE FIRST STATE OF THE LAKE EVENT. MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY STAFF REPORTED ON THE HEALTH OF DAMARISCOTTA LAKE AND ACTIONS BEING TAKEN TO MAINTAIN WATER QUALITY. ENTHUSIASM AMONG ATTENDEES RESULTED IN NEW CONSERVANCY MEMBERSHIPS, DONATIONS AND NEW FRIENDSHIPS CULTIVATED.

The overwhelming response to the event demonstrates the strong bond between our community and this watershed. Your Damariscotta Lake Watershed Council (DLWC) serves as a catalyst to maintain and strengthen that connection. Our commitment to preserving the health of the lake, led by DLWC, and supported by teams of volunteers from the community, is demonstrated in important services provided by Midcoast Conservancy. Significant activities supported by the Council include Courtesy Boat

Inspection, Invasive Plant Patrol, Youth Conservation Corps projects, the LakeSmart award program and Water Quality Monitoring.

Courtesy Boat Inspectors educate the public and examine boats and trailers at the Bunker Hill Road and Vannah Road boat launches for evidence of invasive plants that could harm the lake. In a related effort, Invasive Plant Patrol volunteers survey the shoreline looking for invasive plants. The Council encourages lakefront property owners to consider a Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) project that is currently partially funded by a grant from section 319 of the Clean Water Act. The YCC designs and provides labor at no cost to the landowner to implement erosion control practices and can be a first step in obtaining a LakeSmart award. LakeSmart is an outreach program of Maine Lakes, a science-based action, education, and advocacy organization. Under the guidance of Maine Lakes, Midcoast Conservancy engages owners to make improvements that reduce



MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY HAD A MAGICAL SUMMER IN THE MEDOMAK REGION! FIRST AND FOREMOST, WE ARE SO EXCITED TO WELCOME MORGANNE PRICE AS OUR NEW FULL-TIME MEDOMAK RIVER WATERSHED MANAGER.

Morganne grew up and currently resides along the Goose River, and she will be primarily working out of our Waldoboro office on Friendship Street. One of the first things Morganne did as a new employee was to request that office staff and visitors park in one of Waldoboro's municipal parking lots to keep street parking open for local downtown businesses. This small but important gesture demonstrated Morganne's natural ability to advocate for our towns, our rivers, and our natural lands. We are so excited to work with Morganne over the coming years as she helps our community meet the growing environmental threats.

In addition to welcoming Morganne, we also hosted several community

events, including a Rewilding Workshop and Native Plant Sale at the Waldoboro Village River Park, a Happy Hour at Odd Alewives, and our fabulous Medomak Mixer overlooking Muscongus Harbor as part of the Toast the Midcoast series.

Of course, we did more than just party...Charlie Wetherell and the Medomak Valley Trail Crew were busy all summer clearing trails, building bridges, and otherwise sprucing up our many public preserves. Bennett Collins, Tim Trumbauer, and Ali Stevenson worked with the Maine Island Trail Association (MITA) to lead a volunteer lobster trap cleanup at Oar Island (read more on page 22).

On the water quality side, Brooke Pacy, Bennett Collins, Kristin Rupert, and John Foote ably served as volunteer captains for our water quality monitoring program in partnership with the Maine Coastal Observing Alliance (MCOA); and Tim and Morganne have been monitoring bacteria pollution

and investigating potential sources in Bremen's Broad Cove, an important mudflat for the local clammers.

While we are proud of what we accomplished this summer, we are even more excited for what we can do next year with an expanding staff, an energized community, and majestic lands and waters worth protecting.



 Medomak Valley - Midcoast Conservancy  
 [www.midcoastconservancy.org/medomak-valley](http://www.midcoastconservancy.org/medomak-valley)



**THE SUN AND EARLY AUTUMN COLORS GREETED OVER 40 PARTICIPANTS AND SUPPORTERS OF MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY AT THE ANNUAL 'GOOSEPECKER TREKKER' SPONSORED BY THE SHEEPSCOT HEADWATERS COUNCIL OF MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY.**

This year, there were two hikes offered for participants: a three mile loop for the more adventurous, and a shorter 2 mile hike through the Whitten Hill Preserve in Montville. It was a glorious day for a hike and all returned with strong appetites for the amazing potluck lunch with grilled chicken and beer provided by Midcoast Conservancy.

After the lunch, Executive Director Pete Nichols and Board President, Buck O'Herin delivered brief remarks about the importance of the Sheepscot Headwaters in preserving biodiversity and habitat connectivity in the midcoast region and how the recently completed

30x30 Conservation Strategy identified many areas in the headwaters that are critical to this vision.

Many of these identified are key to connecting the protected lands in along the Sheepscot River with Frye Mountain Wildlife Management Area and if implemented would create nearly a 10,000 acre protected area that would benefit the endangered Atlantic Salmon spawning areas and provide recreation access for members of the community with a connection to the Hills to Sea Trail that was spearheaded by local residents.

Friends of Haystack Mountain member Lorna Crichton provided information about the group's work raising money to save Haystack Mountain from development. Once the property has been purchased, Midcoast Conservancy will assume responsibility for its ongoing management.

The Goosepecker Trekker is an annual event on the first Saturday of October each year. Mark your calendars and keep

an eye on the Midcoast conservancy website for information and registration!

Read more about the Friends of Haystack Mountain on page 19.



 Sheepscot River - Midcoast Conservancy  
 [www.midcoastconservancy.org/sheepscot-headwaters](http://www.midcoastconservancy.org/sheepscot-headwaters)



**FOR OVER 11,000 CONSECUTIVE YEARS, SINCE THE RETREAT OF THE LAURENTIDE ICE SHEET, THE SHEEPSCOT HAS BEEN A WONDERFUL PLACE TO ENJOY A MAINE SUMMER. (WELL, WE THINK.) THIS YEAR WAS NO EXCEPTION!**

Trail and stewardship projects have continued apace! Staff and volunteers got together this summer to fix bridging at Stetser and Bass Falls, and to manage invasive species at Trout Brook Preserve as part of our novel Sheepscot Knotweed Project. Read more about the Knotweed Project on page 24 and reach out to us if you'd like to be involved next time!

In other news, this summer Midcoast Conservancy applied for funding for three fish passage projects in the Sheepscot watershed that intend to restore access to significant high-quality habitat for Atlantic salmon, alewives, and other sea-run fish species. These exciting projects include fishway

installation and dam repair at Branch Pond in China; the replacement of a severely-perched and undersized culvert, and stream channel restoration at Ben Brook in Alna; and a feasibility study investigating options for removal of the remnant dam at Maxcy's Mills in Windsor. These three projects will build on the Sheepscot Valley community's many years of successful fish passage projects on the Sheepscot River, and will provide both ecological and community benefits.



Also in Sheepscot water-world, we've partnered with US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Marine Resources, and the Atlantic Salmon Federation to pilot habitat assessments on the Sheepscot River this summer and fall. The goal is to classify the habitat quality of each section of river, providing us with an understanding of habitat conditions and factors impacting watershed processes. This will allow us to develop a strategic approach that restores the Sheepscot watershed in a holistic manner.

We are always welcoming new folks to get involved—reach out for more information!



Top Photo: Electrofishing allows the Department of Marine Resources to monitor the Atlantic salmon population in the Sheepscot River! Midcoast Conservancy assists with this fieldwork. The fish are shocked and temporarily immobilized, allowing us to catch them so we can measure and weigh them before safely returning them to the river.

Bottom Photo: Fieldwork for the Rapid Geomorphic Assessment (RGA) assesses the Sheepscot River for areas of high quality habitat for protection and lesser quality habitat in need of restoration.

 Sheepscot River - Midcoast Conservancy  
 [www.midcoastconservancy.org/sheepscot-valley](http://www.midcoastconservancy.org/sheepscot-valley)



AS THE SUN SETS A BIT EARLIER, THE WEATHER GETS A LITTLE COLDER, AND THE DAYS A LITTLE MORE RELAXED, I FIND MYSELF THINKING BACK TO OUR SUMMER AT HIDDEN VALLEY NATURE CENTER.

We held a stellar Live Edge music festival with great bands, watched friends and family run the Race Through the Woods, rode mountain bikes, and paddled under a full moon. We learned new skills like how to build timber frames and how homeowners can encourage birds and other wildlife on their property. We welcomed many new visitors, as well as ones that have used the trails for decades.

As the leaves are changing we look forward to new ways to enjoy Hidden Valley. Running becomes skiing, paddles become hikes, the stoves get warmer, and hopefully we get a few bluebird days to ski and fire up the pizza ovens at the Barn. Our biggest accomplishment was the Roland S. Barth Welcome

Center, which both broke ground and was dedicated this year! We can't wait to welcome everyone to this new space, for everything from fitting skis to finding that next trail.

The most rewarding part of volunteering at HVNC is watching how our educational programs impact anyone—young or old—and how they celebrate our natural world. Many of you this year have learned how to meditate by forest walking or how to do yoga on a stand-up paddleboard. Kids from our local schools have learned about everything from moss to mycelium in our educational offerings. These programs help us all operate with a little more care and a little more wonder in our natural spaces. Here's to many more years of exploration and learning in the woods!



Top Photo: The Out in the Midoast Queer Outing Club explores the bog.  
Middle Photo: Live Edge Musical Festival  
Bottom Photo: Group at a Timber Frame Course.

Hidden Valley Nature Center  
 [www.midcoastconservancy.org/hvnc](http://www.midcoastconservancy.org/hvnc)



# WHEN MORE IS MORE: A SHORT HISTORY OF MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY

By Ali Stevenson

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY, A COMMUNITY THAT COULD DO MORE BY COMING TOGETHER, IS AT THE HEART OF MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY'S INCEPTION. SPARKED BY CONVERSATION BETWEEN STEVE PATTON, THEN THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SHEEPSCOT VALLEY CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (SVCA), AND JODY JONES, ED OF THE DAMARISCOTTA LAKE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION (DLWA), THE IDEA OF MERGING LOCAL CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS TOOK ROOT. JODY AND STEVE INVITED FIVE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO THE TABLE TO DISCUSS THE LOGISTICS, BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF JOINING FORCES TO EXPAND THE CAPACITY TO CARE FOR THE MIDCOAST AREA.

Of the original seven organizations, four put the question to their memberships (Hidden Valley Nature Center's bylaws did not require a membership vote) and three were greenlit to join HVNC in the merger: DLWA, SVCA and Sheepscoot Wellspring Land Alliance (SWLA). After careful work with a skilled facilitator to think

through the implications, and anticipate as many potential pitfalls as possible, Midcoast Conservancy was launched in January, 2016.

Despite the long, thoughtful weeks and months that preceded the merger, it was not a simple transition. Precisely because each of the organizations had a strong sense of local community and of a shared mission, the process of blending with three other similarly devoted, place-based groups was not uncomplicated. The same passion that drove the creation of each of the organizations, whether an environmental crisis or desire to protect a precious lake or the love of a rich and historic river or the desire to protect and share a thousand acres of roadless forest, made each collective protective of the places that inspired their mission.

Like any community with shared values, though, Midcoast Conservancy members put their shoulders to the wheel, growing together and richer for the conversations, challenges and vision that emerged over the early years. In 2018, after watching the scale of impact that the merger had provided for the Sheepscoot River and Damariscotta Lake watersheds, the Medomak Valley Land

Trust took its own leap of faith and joined the Midcoast Conservancy family, bringing with it a deeply committed and engaged group of trail stewards, working waterfront protectors and a remarkable record of conserving large and important lands.

Being part of a community requires listening, trust, commitment and shared beliefs. At Midcoast Conservancy, we are blessed with a vibrant community of volunteers, members and supporters who believe in the magic that can happen when we pull together, and in the same direction.





**Tracy and Bambi wanted to demonstrate a new model of land protection—one that engaged people, was fun for them and others in the community, and could be economically sustainable.**

### THE VISION

Community spirit is baked into the DNA of Hidden Valley Nature Center. From its very inception, born of the shared conservation passion of Bambi Jones and Tracy Moskovitz, the vision was to connect and protect as much land as possible for the betterment of wildlife and human communities.

After buying an abandoned farm in Whitefield, the two dug into rural Maine life: Bambi created an early Community Supported Agriculture system in 1990, and Tracy deepened his interest in and active management of their forestland. In 2007 Tracy and Bambi placed 500 acres of their property (together with six abutting neighbors' land consisting of another 500 acres) under conservation easement with Maine Farmland Trust.

Bambi and Tracy were avid hikers and cross-country skiers. Much of their and neighboring land was crisscrossed with old logging trails which they cleared and maintained. When they discovered Little Dyer Pond, the beauty and remoteness captured their interest. They wrote letters to every landowner on the pond, expressing their interest in purchasing the land around it. Between 1993 and 2012, they assembled nearly 1000 acres of undisturbed land including the entire western shore of Little Dyer Pond. Tracy and Bambi wanted to demonstrate a new model of land protection—one that engaged people, was fun for them and others in the community, and could be economically sustainable. They believed that a combination of modest membership by community members, fees charged for valuable educational and recreational services, and income from value added marketing of forest products could sustain the organization. Hidden Valley Nature Center began in 2007, and was incorporated in 2009, after early successes and an enthusiastic reception from the community. HVNC

continued to grow in its level of programming and its value to the community. It won awards and accolades from organizations like Downeast Magazine (Best Remote Winter Retreat) and 2014 Maine and Northeast Regional Tree Farmer of Year for exemplary forestry practices and educational outreach. HVNC demonstrates the value of working forests and the role they can have in land and water protection.

### THE PRESENT

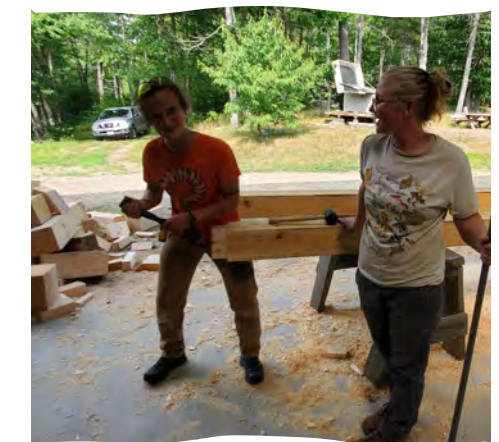
Thanks to the forward-thinking conservation of Bambi and Tracy, the 1,000 acres comprising Hidden Valley Nature Center are as pristine and awe-inspiring as they were three decades ago. No matter which direction you go upon entering the preserve, you are guaranteed adventure and wonder. Essential to HVNC is Midcoast Conservancy's commitment to providing opportunities for all to find their path there.



### EDUCATION COMMUNITIES

HVNC is a community classroom. Any given week, there might be a guided hike. Eager to learn more about lichen, vernal pools, mushrooms or bird identification? Keep your eyes peeled for upcoming programs! We are blessed with an extraordinary cadre of volunteer naturalists and passionate amateurs who generously offer their time and talent to enrich our education programming.

School and community groups from across the greater midcoast area take to the trails on a regular basis. Joyful laughter might alert a hiker to a troop of boy scouts, a busload of fourth graders, or the kids from the Augusta Teen Center bringing their curiosity and creativity to their exploration. HVNC as a classroom is without peer: the kettle hole boardwalk lets you immerse yourself in its carpet of orchids, flycatchers and pitcher plants. Boulder fields dot interior landscapes. Ponds and wetlands support a unique community featuring cardinal flowers, milkweed and harebell, with the occasional beaver or otter.



### FORESTRY COMMUNITIES

As a model of sustainable forestry, HVNC provides a place for community members to learn practical skills like safe chainsaw skills and timber frame construction. Using beams milled from carefully maintained and monitored woodlots at Hidden Valley, course participants discover the beauty and functionality of construction using responsibly-harvested wood. Understanding the balance and benefit of selective logging is a critical message that the work at HVNC helps to share with the community. Using demonstration woodlots, and welcoming groups like the Women Foresters Collaborative or MOFGA's femme, non-binary, trans and women's chainsaw safety class to the preserve, HVNC is a powerful classroom and model of best practices.



**OUR MISSION:**  
We protect and restore vital lands and waters on a scale that matters.

**Total Acres:** 1,000  
**Total Trail Length:** Over 25 miles



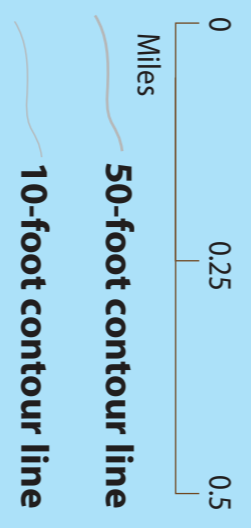
### Map Key

- Trail Type**
- Major Trails
  - Minor Trails
  - Interpretive Trail
- \* Nature Trail Guide available at Gatehouse.

- Trail Difficulty**
- Easy
  - Moderate
  - Difficult

- Along the Trail**
- Roland S. Barth Welcome Center
  - The Barn
  - Picnic Table
  - Cabins
  - Yurt
  - Campsite
- \* Outhouses at all cabins and campsites

The Barn is available for large events and educational programs.



Updated: Oct. 2022

whose deepest passion was his love for and commitment to the natural world. Because he helped found and support the Sheepscot Valley Conservation Association and its successor, Midcoast Conservancy, and led a community effort to permanently protect a large block of land adjacent to Hidden Valley Nature Center it was only natural to honor Roland by naming the Welcome Center after him.

Thanks to the Welcome Center, we will be able to greet visitors as soon as they arrive, offer trail recommendations and answer questions. Our gear rentals of cross-country skis, snowshoes and fat tire bikes will be offered there as well. A new cohort of trained volunteers, known as Welcome Center Stewards, will be on hand to help us staff the center; we welcome anyone interested in that role to reach out and apply!

We already know that Hidden Valley Nature Center is a recognized community treasure. With the opening of the Welcome Center, we hope to reach many more people who have yet to experience its wonders.

As a well-used community resource, HVNC also stands as a model that we imagine bringing to other places in the Midcoast Conservancy service area. Future plans could see other multi-use preserves that welcome hikers, skiers, and campers so that across our beloved Midcoast, all can know the thrill of walking to a birdsong soundtrack, the whisper of snow beneath their skis or the awe of falling asleep under a canopy of stars.

**Check out the updated HVNC map for your next adventure!**

### THE FUTURE

As community use of HVNC increased steadily, we began to imagine ways to make the experience of visitors more enjoyable, more informative, and more welcoming. For several years, we've dreamed of having a place that made it easy for anyone to find the trail, or the gear, or the campsite that would enhance their time there.



Enter the Roland S. Barth Welcome Center, a truly collaborative project from start to eventual finish. The bones of the building were the product of two timber frame classes this past spring. Our Amish neighbors arrived to install the roof, and the siding material was made possible by a donation from Hancock Lumber. Robbins Lumber donated the interior wood. Solar panels from Green Tech Renewables, Sheepscot Sound and Solar, and Electric Sunshine will continue the HVNC tradition of using renewable energy to power community buildings. Volunteers have labored daily to install siding, interior paneling and trim out windows. See the sidebar for a complete list of our amazing business sponsors!

Friends and family of Roland donated much of the money needed to make the Welcome Center a reality. Roland was known to the community as a man

**Essential to HVNC is Midcoast Conservancy's commitment to providing opportunities for all to find their path there.**



### RECREATION COMMUNITIES

Fun is HVNC's middle name! As Tracy and Bambi ordained early in the preserve's creation, time spent there should provide a variety of ways to recreate and have fun. Options for recreation are abundant: trails are groomed all winter for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and fat tire biking; the annual Race Through the Woods reminds the trail running community that they have a jewel in their midst; horseback riders love the wide trails for their treks; and Little Dyer Pond offers a sweet spot for those who want to paddle, ice fish and skate.

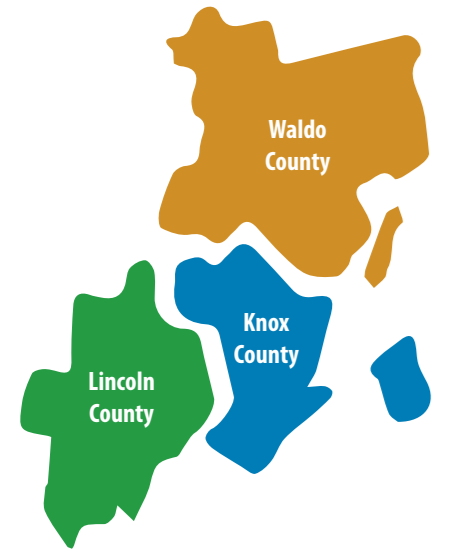
Because we know that access to recreational gear can keep families with young children, or folks new to a sport, from trying out an activity, our gear rental program seeks to take that obstacle away. Our community ski lease packages let kids take home skis, boots and poles for the season rather than have parents buy an annually-outgrown set. A six-week youth ski clinic at HVNC in January and February ensures that skiers' skills grow as steadily as their feet do! Adult ski packages and snowshoes can be rented, and fat tire bikes are available for winter riding, with a fleet of mountain bikes ready for spring-through-fall adventuring.



# WHO IS THE MIDCOAST COMMUNITY?

By Air Rhodes

MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY'S 450 SQUARE MILE SERVICE AREA ENCOMPASSES 24 TOWNS IN LINCOLN, KNOX, AND WALDO COUNTIES. IT IS THE WATERSHEDS OF THE MEDOMAK AND SHEEPSHOT RIVERS AND DAMARISCOTTA LAKE. 115,451 PEOPLE MAKE THEIR HOMES HERE. OUR LOCAL NEIGHBORS ARE OUR CORE COMMUNITY. BUT WHO ARE WE MIDCOASTERS?



## WE ARE A RURAL COMMUNITY

Not surprising since Maine is the nation's most rural state. Our whole region is considered rural, with ~44 people/square mile.

## POVERTY HAS RISEN 6%

Despite all this hard work, Maine ranks 9th for the lowest median income, with incomes in our watersheds ranging from \$29-35,000. Poverty here is getting worse, i.e. rising by 6% since 2015 in Lincoln County. For most of us, it is increasingly hard to get by.

## COMMUNITIES OF COLOR ARE GROWING

While Maine, and this region, have a lot of white people, we are not all white. The largest communities of color in our region are Latinx, Asian (especially Filipino), and Native American. Good news: in our region, especially Lincoln County, the percentage of non-white residents is increasing rapidly.

## FOOD INSECURITY IS WIDESPREAD

If you've struggled to put food on the table, you're not alone: Maine ranks third nationally for very low food security: ~25% of Mainers do not have reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food.

## HEALTH CHALLENGES ARE INCREASING

State-wide, we have a much higher percentage of people with disabilities (11%) than the national average (5%). More of us face health challenges, including heart disease and obesity, than state averages. Mental health is a struggle for many of us, with adults experiencing increased anxiety, and more children reporting severe depression around here than in the rest of the state.

## HOME TO ALL WALKS OF WORK

Our community has all walks of work—moms, clammers, nurses, IT techs, chefs, you name it! The biggest groups of workers here are in healthcare and hospitality, and a majority of us have more than one job.

## HOME TO YOUNG & OLD

Maine is also the oldest state: elders represent 22% of all Mainers, and Lincoln County is the oldest county in the state (29%). Many young families (i.e. 25-39 year-olds) are also choosing to make their home here (+17% in Waldo County), some of whom you've probably met at our events!

## FROM HERE & FROM AWAY

Midcoast Conservancy's community is a rich tapestry of all of these factors—and beyond. While 70% of our members are Mainers, we also have members from away who support our work because you see the value of this special region and our work here. Our largest groups of members from away can be found in Massachusetts, and our farthest-flung members are from the UK and California.

## WE CARE ABOUT THE MIDCOAST

BEYOND STATISTICS, OUR COMMUNITY VALUES THE NATURAL WORLD, THE LANDS AND WATERS THAT MAKE UP THIS BEAUTIFUL PLACE. WE WORK HARD AND VALUE OUR FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND NEIGHBORS. WE STAY INFORMED SO WE CAN TAKE ACTION TO CARE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES AND THE SPECIAL PLACES WE LOVE. WE STEP UP TO HELP OUT, AND WE LOVE TO GET TOGETHER TO HAVE FUN, TO LEARN, AND TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

WHOMEVER YOU ARE, WE ARE GLAD YOU ARE HERE. THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF OUR COMMUNITY!

*Note: Most of these statistics are from the US Census and American Community Survey. Midcoast Conservancy-specific statistics are from within our organization's internal database.*



# OUT IN THE MIDCOAST

By Skye Cahoon

WE CRAVE BELONGING. BOOK CLUBS, SPORTS TEAMS, EVEN OUR CAREERS FRAME THE COMMUNITIES WE IDENTIFY WITH AND GIVE US A SENSE OF SELF. REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU PREFER FICTION OR NONFICTION, CHEER ON THE PATS OR THE SEADOGS, OR WORK IN A CUBICLE OR ON A LOBSTER BOAT, THERE IS ONE COMMUNITY WE ALL BELONG TO: NATURE! EVEN IF YOU ENJOY SIPPING YOUR MORNING COFFEE ON YOUR PORCH MORE THAN HIKING OR SKIING, WE ARE ALL INTRINSICALLY CONNECTED TO THE EARTH. WE ALL DRINK WATER, BREATHE AIR, AND EAT FOOD THAT IS BORN FROM SOIL AND SUNSHINE.

Many of us pursue a peaceful moment of reconnection with nature to escape cabin fever, email notifications, and tedious responsibilities. The grim truth is that for the LGBTQ+ community, the outdoors is not always a place of escape. Spending time outside can enhance the very discrimination we seek to leave behind. If we meet the wrong person on the trail, a simple walk in the woods can quickly turn into a life-threatening experience. Without bystanders to invoke the social protections we experience in a bustling downtown, queer people can encounter ugly discrimination just for existing as ourselves in green spaces.

A solution is bringing a trusted friend to support you. That is, if you can find one. Though community is the lifeblood of Maine, it can be difficult for us queer folks to meet peers here. That's why I look forward to the first Saturday of the month, when I spend the morning exploring Hidden Valley Nature Center with the Out in the Midcoast Queer Outing Club.



Out in the Midcoast seeks to protect queer Mainers' right to exist genuinely in nature, and create the community we long for. Wandering past the white oaks, carnivorous plants, and lady slippers, we share stories, skills, and laughter with our peers without fearing for our safety. Being surrounded by LGBTQ+ people from all walks of life cultivates a sense of belonging that I can't find in heteronormative spaces. I am grateful for my straight friends that celebrate my authentic self, but being the only queer person in the crowd can make me feel lonely and different, like a sea eagle that wound up on the wrong continent. At Out in the Midcoast gatherings, we are birds of a feather.

This club is more than just hikers sharing a trail; it represents the beginning of a united queer midcoast network and the joy of being proudly ourselves. Each step taken alongside new friends and mentors is a step towards an empowered and connected queer community that feels at home anywhere we choose to explore, from crowded sidewalks to quiet trails.



**Each step taken alongside new friends and mentors is a step towards an empowered and connected queer community that feels at home anywhere we choose to explore, from crowded sidewalks to quiet trails.**



Photos: haystackmountain.org

# FRIENDS OF HAYSTACK MOUNTAIN

By Tim Trumbauer

*A grassroots effort to protect a special place.*

WHEN HAYSTACK MOUNTAIN, WHICH CONNECTS LIBERTY AND MONTVILLE, MAINE WAS PUT UP FOR SALE, A GROUP OF LOCALS BANDED TOGETHER AS FRIENDS OF HAYSTACK MOUNTAIN (FOHM) TO SAVE IT FROM DEVELOPMENT AND TO GUARANTEE PUBLIC ACCESS FOR PERPETUITY.

**M**idcoast Conservancy is supporting the local conservation efforts of FOHM by serving as a fiscal sponsor and providing communications and administrative support.

“Maine is at risk of losing its unprotected special places in the next five to 10 years unless the people who know and love these places act quickly and with generosity,” said Buck O’Herin, Midcoast Conservancy’s Board President and a Friend of Haystack Mountain. Friends of Haystack Mountain know that the time is of the essence. The group has until December to raise \$500,000 to preserve the mountain.

Haystack Mountain has a long history of connecting people with nature. Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, located on Deer Isle, is named for the mountain. Couples have gotten married and taken wedding pictures on the mountain. Snowmobile and outdoor enthusiasts have enjoyed the mountain trails in all seasons. The Maine Geological Survey (MGS) recently announced Haystack Mountain as a Maine Geologic Fact and Locality.

Mainers are concerned about the loss of natural spaces. Sophie Veilleux, who grew up in Montville said, “I am not opposed to all development in Maine. Easy access to nature is a privilege that everyone should be able to enjoy if they want to. I welcome sustainable development that increases access to affordable housing and brings a needed boost to our economy. I believe that is possible while still protecting our natural scenery, resources and wildlife. Development for the sake of luxury or profit, which disregards the fragility of our ecosystems, our treasured landscapes and the actual needs of Mainers... that should be avoided at all costs.”

## Easy access to nature is a privilege that everyone should be able to enjoy if they want to.

The dark night skies over Haystack are perfect for stargazing. Those starry nights inspired a James Webb scientist at the Space Telescope Science Institute, Dr. Justin Pierel, to become an astrophysicist. Dr. Pierel was born and raised in Montville Maine. “When I heard Haystack Mountain had gone up for sale, I knew I had to help preserve it because everyone deserves an opportunity to look up into the night sky and be inspired,” he said.

To learn more about the Friends of Haystack Mountain and upcoming events and opportunities to get involved, visit [www.haystackmountainmaine.org](http://www.haystackmountainmaine.org).

# REDEFINING COMMUNITY: ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

By Isobel Curtis

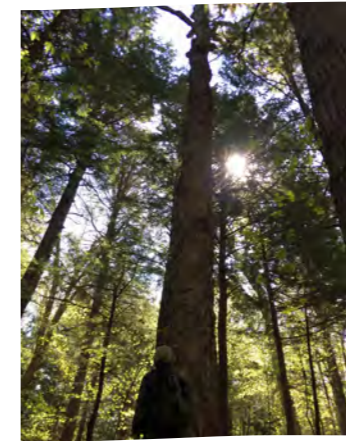
DO YOU KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR’S NAME? NO, NOT CHERYL OR PAUL—I MEAN THE TREE SHADING YOUR DRIVEWAY. DO YOU KNOW ITS NAME?

**Community (def): a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic or interest in common.**

**Ecological Community (def): an assemblage of interdependent organisms of different species interacting in a specified habitat or area.**



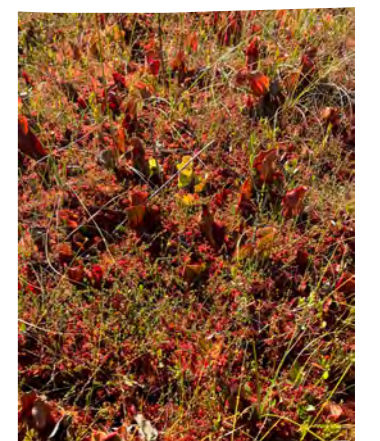
Hi, my name is Spirea! You can call me Meadowsweet or Steeplebush.



Welcome to the forest, come on in, we're happy to have you!



I'm a Crown-Tipped Coral Mushroom, pleasure to meet you!



Check out our bog neighborhood! Home to Pitcher Plants, Sundews, and more.

**I**f we look at historic and current definitions of “community”, all involve a group of people linked by either affinity or location. It’s fascinating that our collective definitions of and associations with “community” seem to hover above the ground, an untethered layer woven solely of people, their actions, and their interests. Geography merely provides one way to define the group—say by town or by state. It is only when we look at the definition of “ecological community” that we see this layer affix itself to the land, tied in place at various nodes of interaction. It is an acknowledgement that place is more than a grouping unit: it is the physical, living matrix with which we interact and are embedded. It is an expansive definition of community, one that calls us to know all those who live in the area, regardless of if they photosynthesize, fly, or drive a Bentley.

These many-faceted neighbors are everywhere and yet somehow so invisible, blending into the great “green tunnel” that forms the backdrop of our lives we simply call “nature”. By learning their names, the green tunnel’s grainy scenery shifts into sharp resolution and we begin to literally see the forest for the trees. As with all things, familiarity gives way to attachment, which seeds connection to and care for our fellow

organisms. By reducing the entire living world to the word “nature”, we de-animate it beyond recognition and compassion.

Learning the names of our neighbors endows us with another vital capacity: the ability to notice. If all conifers look the same, it is impossible to see that only the Hemlock’s graceful boughs are going bare. If we can’t differentiate at the organismal scale, we can’t see change in our local ecological communities. We can’t speak up when something looks off, and we can’t advocate for action. Such is the case with all communities: they function best when members are informed and active participants.

An effective means of connection between Mainers is by talking about experiences of place. The record drought and early blueberry year. An abundance of pogies in the harbor. There is a rootedness in the ecological conditions that mediate our existence. By learning to identify our multi-species neighbors, we move toward this collective culture rooted in ecological awareness and advocacy. We are able to take stock and speak up for what is at stake: the resounding vibrancy and intricacy of the living world.

# A SMALL DROP IN THE LAKE

By Patricia Nease

THROUGH OUR OUTREACH ON SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAILS, PRESS RELEASES, AND STATE OF THE LAKE EVENT, WE HOPE THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF THE CYANOBACTERIA OUTBREAKS THAT OCCURRED THIS YEAR, THE ASSOCIATED HEALTH RISKS, THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTING CAUSES, AND HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO HELP PREVENT THEM.

IF THIS IS NEWS TO YOU OR YOU NEED A REFRESHER, PLEASE VISIT: [MIDCOASTCONSERVANCY.ORG/DAMARISCOTTA-LAKE-WATER-QUALITY-ALERTS](http://MIDCOASTCONSERVANCY.ORG/DAMARISCOTTA-LAKE-WATER-QUALITY-ALERTS)

I'd like to talk about the microscopic life in our lake. You may have heard it said that a drop of pond (or specifically Damariscotta Lake) water can contain an entire community, a microscopic community. We've heard about one of the players in this microscopic community, cyanobacteria, but there are many other kinds of plants, animals, and bacteria, invisible to the naked eye, that call Damariscotta Lake home.

The tiny community of photosynthesizing plants and bacteria (phytoplankton) shifts throughout the year based on a suite of factors such as availability of nutrients and light. One of the biggest factors in determining the phytoplankton community structure is the community structure of grazing zooplankton; you can think of this tiny community as very similar to larger terrestrial grazers (like cows), but things can happen on a much faster scale! Just as deer might prefer to munch on the high-quality forage found in your garden, copepods (a type of zooplankton related to lobsters) can selectively forage on phytoplankton. One important limitation in the foraging ability of any animal is the size of their mouth. Just as

I sometimes struggle to fit a particularly tall sandwich in my mouth, zooplankton can be limited in their ability to eat larger types or colonies of phytoplankton, and they don't usually have the benefit of being able to cut things into smaller pieces.

This is true all the way up the food chain in Damariscotta Lake, from the tiniest phytoplankton to the largest of fish. If the herbivore community is dominated by larger-bodied, and thus larger-mouthed, zooplankton, the phytoplankton community is different than if the grazers are all smaller and can't consume large phytoplankton. Cyanobacteria often form colonies or filaments which makes it challenging for some zooplankton to consume—and some kinds of zooplankton are picky eaters! They really don't like eating certain types of phytoplankton, and cyanobacteria are like brussels sprouts—they're not everyone's preferred food. Daphnia, a type of water flea, don't like to eat cyanobacteria. Cyanobacteria can have lower nutritional value, and toxins make them less "palatable" for zooplankton.

It is important to note that cyanobacteria and other phytoplankton, nutrients,

and even sediment are a natural part of a healthy lake ecosystem; the problem is that human impacts like nutrient pollution from excess erosion, warming waters, failing septic systems, and the destruction of protective buffers have thrown the lake out of balance. Let's do our part to help the lake by reducing erosion, planting native buffers, eliminating lawn fertilizer, and maintaining our septic systems: we and the lake thank you!



# COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP ON OAR ISLAND

By Ali Stevenson

MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY AND MAINE ISLAND TRAIL ASSOCIATION PARTNER WITH VOLUNTEERS TO REMOVE DERELICT LOBSTER TRAPS FROM OAR ISLAND.

The coves along the inland sides of Muscongus Bay islands are perfect collection spots for wayward lobster traps. Their nooks and crannies invite unauthorized lodging for all manner of detritus, including rope, crumbling buoys and hundreds of mangled traps. Removing the traps is an arduous, multi-step process that requires plenty of resources and specific permission from the Maine Marine Patrol because it is otherwise illegal to move lobster gear even when it has washed up on shore.

In late June, volunteers from Midcoast Conservancy and the Maine Island Trail Association (MITA) joined forces to remove nearly 200 traps from Oar Island. Long-time Volunteer Monitor skippers Ben Fuller and Tom Carr, along with MITA Regional Stewardship Manager

Maria Jenness, piloted three skiffs to the congested coves and offloaded a dozen volunteers and Oar Island co-owner Anne Wesson. Armed with serrated knives, work gloves and high spirits, the team spread out to strip the traps of rope, seaweed and anything else caught inside before loading the emptied traps onto the skiffs.

Monitor skipper Fuller says, "The most difficult and satisfying job in monitor skippering is running a skiff stacked so high with traps and other gear that you need to stand on the seat to be able to see over it as you run pretty slowly. On this occasion we got to do it a number of times. And I've been looking at the accumulation of fishing gear on the Oar Island shore for thirty some years and finally have the privilege to do something about it." Once offloaded on the mainland, volunteers drove the traps to a facility in Washington, where they will be recycled.

Four hours and many skiff-loads later, 5,800 pounds of trap refuse had been



removed; more remains but the results of the day were clear and satisfying. Midcoast Conservancy's Medomak Valley Council Chair Bennett Collins says, "It's very gratifying to see the outcome when partner organizations come together to share resources, skills, and knowledge to improve our unique environment here in Midcoast Maine!" Wesson, the island's co-owner says, "Thank you so much for organizing the Oar Island clean-ups. What a huge effort that is! The shoreline looks so much better without all those derelict traps in the way. I am grateful to MITA and Midcoast Conservancy. Without their help, those traps would have continued to mar the island as trash, for I could not have removed them without their help. The beauty of the Maine islands in their natural, wild state is something we all treasure and hope to preserve." Such sentiments are why work day partnerships like this one are an important way to steward the special places of coastal Maine.



# MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY FORESTRY: TRULY FOR THE COMMUNITY

By Tim Libby

MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY'S FORESTRY COMMUNITY IS GROWING ALONG WITH THE TREES. OVER THE YEARS WE HAVE WORKED WITH A WIDE ARRAY OF FORESTRY-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS FOR BOTH PROGRAMMING AND SUPPORT. THIS RANGE SPANS FROM FOREST PLANNING TO ACTIVE MANAGEMENT TO EDUCATION AND WE ARE DELIGHTED TO SHARE OUR FORESTRY AS PART OF OUR MISSION TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE HEALTHY LAND AND WATER.

Through our educational programming we have coordinated with a multitude of partners to create the program as it is today and share it with the community. A major start was our award from the United States Forest Service, designating Hidden Valley Nature Center as a Community Forest, which enabled us to acquire it. We have also continued with the tree farm tradition and remain certified members of the American Tree Farm System. Today we hold a number of events there over the course of the year; here are just a few of them and their highlights.



This spring we held a Women Owning Woodlands workshop with the Forest Stewards Guild (FSG) for the first time in several years. Our own two foresters Barrie Brusila and Maren Grandstrom joined Alyssa Gregory, our District Forester from the Maine forest Service (MFS), tish carr, a forester/ arborist and former program director of one of our parent organizations, and several private forest consultants. The program prepared an audience of highly motivated learners to be better stewards of the land.

Our Low Impact Forestry 101 course with the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) covered everything from soil to tree ID to considerations for woodlot access and careful management. Projects that were funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and implemented in our demonstration forest were reviewed and discussed as part of the tour. We were joined by David Roque, recently retired State Soil Scientist and again by Alyssa Gregory from the MFS.

We held a second Forestry for Maine Birds workshop with the Maine Audu-



bon and the FSG. The tour followed along our common forestry tour routes but held an eye toward management for wildlife. A favored takeaway for participants was that leaving woody material in the forest, for the forest, is good: ecology does not want neat and tidy!

We were thrilled to host the summer gathering of the Women Foresters Collaborative. This was a day full of learning, sharing and fun that was attended by 36 foresters from across New England. Presenters included Keyana Pardilla of the Penobscot Nation and Patti Cormier, the Director of the MFS.

# KNOT IN OUR HOUSE: THE SHEEPSCOT KNOTWEED PROJECT

By Kristin Stone & Sheepscot Knotweed Project members

AFTER A CONVERSATION LAST FALL ABOUT A GROWING OBSESSION WITH SPOTTING JAPANESE KNOTWEED IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD, SUKI FLANAGAN AND I TOOK AN IMPROMPTU AND CHILLY TUBE RIDE DOWN THE SHEEPSCOT RIVER FROM HEAD TIDE TO THE DOCK ROAD TO TAKE A MORE CAREFUL LOOK AT ITS SPREAD. WE WERE QUITE BLOWN AWAY. THERE IS A LOT! WE ARE NOT CONSERVATION BIOLOGISTS, BUT BOTH LOVE THE PLACE WE LIVE AND THE PROCESS OF BRINGING OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER... ESPECIALLY FOR THE HEALTH OF THE RIVER AND THE PLANTS, ANIMALS, AND PEOPLE THAT LIVE HERE.

On our trip, we noticed a huge flagged patch of knotweed on the Midcoast Conservancy property at Trout Brook Preserve. We reached out to Midcoast Conservancy and learned that Isobel Curtis is heading their invasive species program and the knotweed management on their riverside property.

In partnership with Isobel and Midcoast Conservancy, we gathered a collection of local experts including Carl Solberg and Dan Townsend to help guide our efforts under the name "The Sheepscot Knotweed Project". Together we conducted a baseline survey of knotweed on the river from Route 17 to Sheepscot Village, mailed riverfront landowners, held a



Japanese knotweed (aka false bamboo) is one of the most aggressive non-native invasive plants. It spreads rapidly and outcompetes all native plant species, establishing dense monoculture stands. It frequents areas with high disturbance such as streambanks, roadways, and construction sites. With stout green stems that can exceed 10 feet in height and broad triangular leaves, knotweed grows a dense canopy that starves all other vegetation of light. Knotweed produces a prodigious system of underground rhizomes and roots that enable its rapid horizontal spread. It also spreads from live root and foliage fragments so be sure to burn, dry, compost in place, or landfill all live cuttings!

Knotweed's roots are thick with minimal fine root material, meaning it has less soil-holding capacity than the diverse native plant community it excludes. When knotweed becomes established along streams, erosion becomes a problem, destabilizing streambanks and increasing silt loads. This is a concern as the Sheepscot River provides excellent habitat for rebounding Atlantic salmon requiring gravel beds to rear and spawn. Knotweed has become established throughout the Sheepscot Watershed and in other freshwater riparian communities across Maine. These infestations not only displace native plant communities, but threaten all of the animals that live in or depend on those communities.



community river float, and offered a knotweed management workshop and hands-on demonstration at Trout Brook Preserve. The one-acre knotweed patch at the Preserve was cut back twice over the summer with the help of many volunteers, followed by a fall herbicide treatment. This represents one step in a multi-year process to restore the native riparian community there.

The Sheepscot Knotweed Project aims to continue researching and demonstrating best management methods, as well as educating and rallying our community to provide volunteer and technical support for landowners struggling with knotweed. This year was just the start of our effort to ignite the community to confront knotweed in an effective, coordinated, and fun way!

# LAND PROTECTION UPDATE

By Chris Schorn

AS THE YEAR WINDS TO A CLOSE, THE STORY OF CONSERVATION KEEPS WRITING NEW CHAPTERS. SINCE LAST FALL, MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY HAS CONSERVED A NUMBER OF KEY PROPERTIES THAT WILL SAFEGUARD OUR LANDSCAPE'S ECOLOGICAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE INTO PERPETUITY.

In late fall of 2021 two properties were donated to Midcoast Conservancy as fee preserves, to be owned and stewarded by us forever. The 45-acre Aranyani Wildlife Preserve, in Newcastle, was donated by Leonard Duffy in memory of his late wife, Nancy Duffy. "Nancy had a strong connection with nature on many levels; she cared for all the plants and animals around our home in Newcastle," Leonard explained. "Everywhere she went, Nancy appreciated the delicate balance and interdependence within all of nature." It was our honor to accept this generous donation of land and continue stewarding it as wild woodland and sanctuary for the biodiversity that Nancy loved.

The next month we accepted a generous donation of the 52-acre Goose River Woodland Preserve on the Waldoboro-Friendship border from Luther Black. Said Luther, "This land was given to me for the purpose of conserving it. It's been in my family since 1903, and it is my honor to have Midcoast Conservancy as a caretaker of it for future generations." Well, we'd say the honor is all ours. These quiet wooded acres with frontage on the Goose River contain some of the largest and richest spruce stands we've seen on the Midcoast.

In the spring, we finalized two special conservation easement projects. The Full Moon Property contains 120 acres of untamed, rich and diverse wetlands along the Medomak River in Washington. Landowner Deb Dean said, "It was very important to me that this land stay undeveloped...I am glad to be able to keep habitat intact for the many types of wildlife that live on the land." The Blue Warbler Property, owned by Leslie McNeill, will conserve over 100 acres of undeveloped wildlife habitat and wetlands along Route 1 in Nobleboro. Habitats like these serve a vital purpose in securing wildlife connectivity across busy highways, and we are so grateful for the opportunity to work with landowners like Leslie to protect the scenic and natural landscapes of Maine into the future.

Want to add your story to ours?  
Curious to learn more about options  
for land conservation?  
Reach out to us at 207-389-5150 or  
[info@midcoastconservancy.org](mailto:info@midcoastconservancy.org)  
for more information!



# PART OF THE CREW: A VOLUNTEER-MAINTAINED TRAIL NETWORK

By Isobel Curtis

WHEN CHARLIE WITHERELL CALLS, THE TRAIL CREW ANSWERS.

IT WAS A WEDNESDAY MORNING, THE USUAL MEDOMAK TRAIL WORK DAY, AND A BRIGHT BLUEBIRD DAY WITH THE CRISP EDGE OF FALL. SOME OF THE EXTENSIVE BOG BRIDGING AT PETER'S POND PRESERVE IN WALDOBORO HAD ROTTED OUT AND NEEDED REPLACING. CARS ROLLED INTO THE PARKING LOT UNTIL CHARLIE, ED, TINA, TED, ANDY, PETER, AND JAMES WERE CIRCLED THERE, EXCHANGING JOKES AND JABS WITH THE EASE OF OLD FRIENDS. MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY STAFF WAS REPRESENTED BY ME, TIM LIBBY, AND MORGANNE. 10 TOTAL—PERHAPS A NEW RECORD, AND ONLY HALF AS MANY BRIDGES TO BUILD!

With the crew assembled Charlie set out. Roles were delegated, boards heaved onto shoulders, and tools dispersed. Everyone's mood was bright, glad to catch up and be gathered for some final late-season trail work. Two hours later we'd worked up a sweat, done much creative problem-solving, and were feeling quite accomplished. That's the simple beauty of a day on the trail: it's an old-time recipe of fresh air, camaraderie, a little manual labor, and a whole lot of feel good.

On any given day from May to October, you can find the Medomak Valley, Whitefield, Northern Headwaters, or

Sheepscot Valley crews out on the trails lopping away overgrown vegetation, removing blowdowns, and repairing bridges. The simple math is that every mile of trail requires maintenance and Midcoast Conservancy's preserves boast a whopping 95 miles of trails!

Maintaining a trail network of this magnitude sounds daunting, but the community always shows up when the call goes out. Those 95 miles of trail are maintained almost exclusively by an amazing group of volunteers. Four volunteer trail crews, one for each region, are headed by four volunteer regional trail coordinators: Charlie Witherell, David Elliot, Buck O'Herin, and Gerry Flanagan. Additionally, each trail has a volunteer steward that reports maintenance needs.

It is in those moments of people assembling in parking lots, jovial and ready to pitch in, that I really feel the support of this community. Our deputy director Air Rhodes commented in a recent staff meeting how amazed they were by the level of skill, knowledge, and dedication our volunteers have... and that it is something special, not present at all organizations, not to be taken for granted. Truthfully, so much of what we do succeeds only because the community steps in and shows up in some way to protect the land and water we all love. It has been a tremendous honor and pleasure to enter into this community surrounding land and trail stewardship here in the Midcoast. Thank you.



# WHY OUR MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS MATTER!

By Kate Raymond

OUR MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT OUR MISSION IN SO MANY IMPACTFUL WAYS AND HELP TO STRENGTHEN THE ENDURING CONNECTIONS WE HAVE WITH THE MIDCOAST COMMUNITY!

Individual contributions made up approximately 65% of our funding last year.

Midcoast Conservancy currently has 2100+ active members!

Our 250+ active volunteers make many of our vital programs possible, including Invasive Plant Patrol, Easement Monitoring, Trail Maintenance, Water Quality Monitoring, and so, so much more!

"You inspire us daily through your support of our work, and truly make it possible for us to fulfill our mission!" —Kate

Over the last year, the support of our members and volunteers have allowed us to provide 125+ public programs and events, reaching 3,500+ people.

By supporting us, you've joined a community of individuals and organizations who understand the importance of protecting and restoring the lands and waters of midcoast Maine on a scale that matters!

HERE IS WHAT FOUR OF THEM HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THEIR MIDCOAST CONSERVANCY COMMUNITY:



**Lili and Alex Pugh**, Members & Volunteers

"We support and are active members of Midcoast Conservancy because they work to protect the land and waters we love. We believe the continued growth of the organization better enables it to do its work on a scale that matters."



**Kyle Markmann**, Member & Volunteer

"The Midcoast Conservancy has become such a large part of my life since becoming a member. I have found so many like-minded people that share my passion for the Midcoast and the environment. Since getting involved, I've learned more about everything from forestry to cross country skiing. That is all great—but what has been the most incredible is the community I have found while doing all those things! I have found my home with Midcoast Conservancy."



**Lizzie Stebbins**, Member & Volunteer

"I volunteer at Midcoast Conservancy as an expression of gratitude for Damariscotta Lake and the peace and beauty I experience every time I look out of my window. Midcoast Conservancy is devoted to the health of the Lake and I want to be a part of that. Volunteering provides me with a sense of purpose and community - plus you meet the nicest people!"

## COMMUNITY CLASSROOM

By Andy Bezon

WE LIKE TO CALL HIDDEN VALLEY NATURE CENTER AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM, AND INDEED IT IS FOR ANYONE WHO FORAGES FOR MUSHROOMS ALONG ITS TRAILS AS PART OF A MUSHROOM IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP OR GOES ON A HIKE TO LEARN ABOUT BIRD SONG OR FERNS OR HORSE-POWERED FORESTRY PRACTICES.

But it functions as another kind of classroom as well. For three years, between 2017 and 2020, Midcoast Conservancy sent its AmeriCorps members into classrooms around our service area; two teams brought our outdoor adventure gear to schools so that kids could get outside, excited about recreation and fun ways to exercise, and explore the trails in their local communities. The benefits were clear: a middle schooler getting on a bike for the first time, glee as kids slid down trails on cross-country skis, the revelation of preserves close to home. But from a practical standpoint, two teams of two people could only do so much, get to only so many schools in a year. After the necessary pandemic pause, we made a decision to pivot the program to a more scalable model: outdoor adventure leadership training.

The leadership training program allows us to bring community program leaders—teachers, scout leaders, Boys' and Girls' Club directors and more—to HVNC to learn the ropes with our fat tire bikes, cross-country skis and stand-up paddleboards. Staff teach them how to size bikes and skis to users, how to instruct kids unfamiliar with the gear to gain mastery, and even the basics of map reading and route planning so students and community leaders can be empowered to lead their own adventure at HVNC. Like the adage about giving

someone a fish versus teaching them to fish, our outdoor adventure programs can feed the needs of many more communities through this leadership training approach.

With the imminent opening of the Roland S. Barth Welcome Center, we will be able to do even more. Future plans include a full-time Education Coordinator, based at HVNC, who will oversee a regular roster of visits from schools, provide educational programming, and support groups using the preserve for experiential learning. As a classroom, Hidden Valley Nature Center is boundless and so are our hopes for the ways it will continue to grow in the ways it meets the needs of our Midcoast Conservancy communities!

**As a classroom, Hidden Valley Nature Center is boundless and so are our hopes for the ways it will continue to grow to meet the needs our communities.**



MIDCOAST  
CONSERVANCY

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