

Maine Heritage

THE NEWSLETTER OF MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST

SPRING 2007

Vinalhaven's Basin: Achieving Major Milestones

MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST RECENTLY HELPED PROTECT MORE THAN 100 ACRES BORDERING VINALHAVEN'S BASIN, (INCLUDING TWO PROMINENT HEIGHTS OF LAND), CONTRIBUTING TO A "WHOLE PLACE" CONSERVATION EFFORT THAT HAS SPANNED TWO DECADES.

The Basin on Vinalhaven is an unusual landscape feature, a wildlife-rich tidal inlet linked to Penobscot Bay by reversing falls. This unique area stands apart for another reason as well: it is a "whole place" where landowners have drawn together to protect the beautiful embayment their properties encircle. The history of land protection along the Basin shore traces back 20 years and involves many families. Recently, MCHT worked with longtime landowner George "Max" Ross and his wife Ruth Ripnitz to protect their property bordering the Basin, which includes two significant heights of land.

"These two mountains and the adjoining shorefront were key to sustaining the ecological and scenic qualities of place," explains MCHT project manager Betsy Ham. "We're so grateful to Max and Ruth for their willingness to work with us and

contribute to the collective effort to protect the Basin."

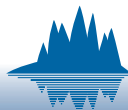
MCHT purchased 44 acres, including all of Steep Mountain (which abuts the Trust's Otter Pond Preserve) and land bordering its Basin (Williams) Preserve. In addition, the



MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST NOW OWNS ALL OF STEEP MOUNTAIN, WHERE VISITORS CAN ENJOY THIS VISTA OF THE BASIN FROM THE SUMMIT.

Trust secured an easement on 59 acres of land encompassing Basin High Mountain, the highest point of land by this inlet—with bare ledges visible from the Basin and surrounding roads and hiking trails. The easement limits future construction to the site of an existing cabin and one modest structure located in the woods.

In total, the Ross projects protect 3,700 feet of Basin shorefrontage, preserving valuable wading bird and waterfowl habitat along with prime roosting and feeding sites for bald eagles. The newly protected land includes a thriving pitch pine community and lies, in part, within the Vinalhaven Water District—helping buffer the Town's water supply. The Steep Mountain parcel, which offers beautiful views from the summit, will be accessible to the public for low-impact, daytime use.



Maine Coast Heritage Trust
A Statewide Land Conservation Organization



President's Column by Jay Espy

Stone Soup

What happens when a landowner invites neighbors to a party and shares with them her vision of place? She doesn't ask anything of them: she simply talks about her heartfelt desire to keep her own property whole and beautiful. She makes good on her word, donating a conservation easement on her land to protect it in perpetuity.

Before long, other neighbors begin thinking how much nicer the whole area would be if they, too, took some action to protect their properties. Now that someone has demonstrated how this can happen, it becomes easier to follow suit. Every neighbor has different needs, and makes differing contributions, but—year by year—more of them take steps to keep this small corner of the world as nice as they found it.

This account may sound like a familiar parable, but it happens to be true. It's a story replicated in many places where Maine Coast Heritage Trust works. Invariably, the story begins with one or more individuals willing to take a risk and lead by example. These people catalyze the land protection process through a generous and far-sighted act. They don't seek recognition nor do they preach about what they have done.

Yet over time, more people come to recognize the goodness of their acts and the promise implicit in replicating them.

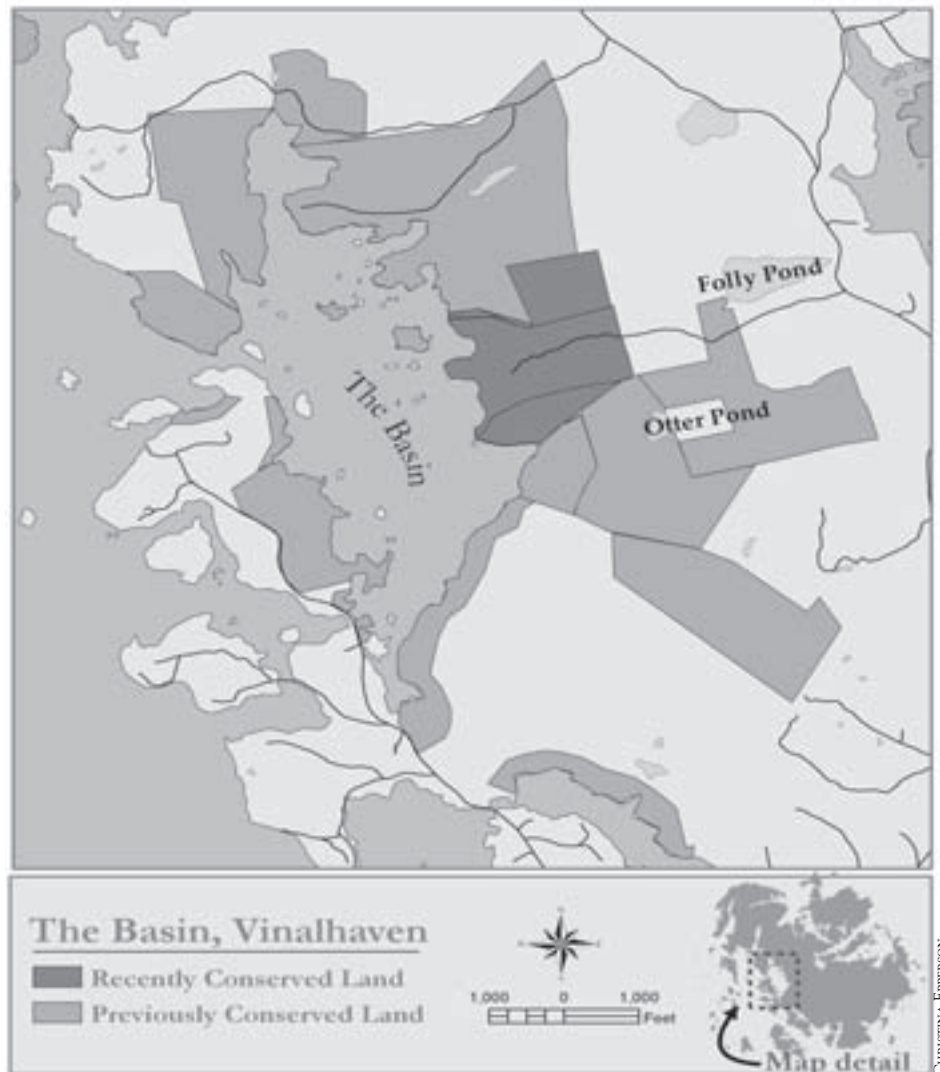
Our cover story in this issue, and our previous cover story (on the Bagaduce River Narrows whole place), are vivid examples of this vision-come-true. In each of these

settings, a landowner stepped forward to act—trusting that others would join them. With patience and time, this leap of faith was rewarded.

What I find amazing, and humbling, in these tales of whole place protection is how one quiet and thoughtful expression of possibility—one invitation to imagine a different

future—comes to inspire a remarkable collaborative effort. Each family starts to see that taking action to protect the entire area is the very best way to meet their own needs.

Land conservation projects, especially complex regional ones, are indeed a “soup”—with many cooks, countless ingredients and a recipe that can never be replicated twice. But each new whole place effort reaffirms the age-old wisdom of the Stone Soup fable: how well communities can nourish themselves when they join together, with each member contributing what he or she can.



LIKE THE PROVERBIAL STONE SOUP TALE, LANDOWNERS AROUND THE BASIN ON VINALHAVEN HAVE CONTRIBUTED WHAT THEY CAN TO A WHOLE PLACE EFFORT THAT NOW ENRICHES THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY. THESE PROTECTED PROPERTIES, WHICH INCLUDE LAND TRUST PRESERVES AND PRIVATE LAND WITH PERMANENT CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS, PROTECT THE BASIN'S HIGH ECOLOGICAL AND SCENIC VALUES. IN ADDITION, SOME OF THE LANDS AFFORD PUBLIC ACCESS.

CHRISTINA EPPERSON

MCHT Conserves Two Key Islands near Mount Desert Island



BRIAN REILLY

THE GENEROUS GIFT OF FOLLY ISLAND TO MCHT ENSURES THE PERMANENT PROTECTION OF THIS WILD AND SCENIC 7-ACRE PROPERTY IN BARTLETT NARROWS.

Two more island gems off Mt. Desert Island are now protected, thanks to the vision and generosity of their landowners. “Island properties like these are in demand in today’s market,” notes David MacDonald, MCHT’s Director of Land Protection, “and we’re grateful that the owners chose to permanently protect these places. Both islands provide a wealth of public benefits that people can now enjoy into the future.”

Folly Island

Lying at the south end of Bartlett Narrows, along a popular boating route, Folly Island is a hilly, 7-acre knoll that affords beautiful views over Blue Hill Bay. Sylvia Erhart and Julia Coleman, whose grandfather acquired the island in 1943, kept the island wild and allowed those travelling the Maine Island Trail to enjoy daytime use of it. In reviewing their estate plans and their goals for the island’s future, the sisters decided to give the

island to Maine Coast Heritage Trust. MCHT will transfer a “forever wild” easement on Folly Island to Acadia National Park as a backup layer of protection, and will continue permitting low-impact, daytime use. (MCHT staff and board were saddened to learn that Julia Coleman passed away in mid-March.)

North Twinnie Island

With the recent acquisition of North Twinnie Island, the Trust completed protection of a three-island archipelago at the gateway to Mount Desert Island (just east of the Thompson Island visitor center). MCHT secured the first island, South Twinnie, in 2001 through a bargain sale (well below the appraised value) and subsequently transferred the property to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. In 2005, a bargain sale offered by former owner Dr. Frank Moya and a National Coastal Wetlands Grant enabled MCHT to purchase 65-acre Thomas Island. Recently, Dr. Moya completed another bargain sale to MCHT of North Twinnie, a wooded, 4-acre island barred to South Twinnie. “South Twinnie is home to a well-established bald eagle nest,” notes MCHT Project Manager Brian Reilly. “Protecting all three islands in this archipelago will help ensure the future success of this nesting site.”

REDUCING ESTATE TAXES THROUGH

A little known tax rule, Internal Revenue Code Section 2031(c), allows heirs who will inherit natural lands to have the estate donate a conservation easement on the property, potentially lowering the estate tax due. “This rule allows conservation easements to help reduce the land’s value, so heirs who face the prospect of high estate taxes can gain real financial benefits,” explains MCHT’s General Counsel, Karin Marchetti Ponte.

The tax rule allows estates to

exclude an additional 40 percent of the value of land subject to a qualified conservation easement (up to a limit of \$500,000) from the gross estate, after lowering the estate by the value of the conservation easement itself. “Reducing the estate tax liability this way,” notes Marchetti Ponte, “helps heirs keep land in the family and maintain its traditional use.”

Maine Coast Heritage Trust just completed its first project involving this provision since the rules first

Field Trip Season Starts Soon: Sign Up Now

Here's your opportunity to visit some of the Trust's most spectacular properties.

For more information or to sign up for trips, please contact Patty Renaud (prenaud@mcht.org, 729-7366).

MUSCONGUS BAY ISLAND TOUR

JUNE 16 Enjoy a boat tour past several conserved islands in this largely unchanged part of midcoast Maine. We'll picnic on MCHT's Friendship Long Island preserve. (Departs from Bremen)

SEABIRDS OF JORDAN'S DELIGHT AND NASH ISLAND

JUNE 23 Join this boat trip to Jordan and Nash Islands where, with Maine Audubon, we'll observe nesting seabirds and grazing sheep and learn of surprising research about their interactions. (Departs from South Addison)

EXPLORE MALAGA ISLAND'S PAST

JUNE 23 Join the USM archaeology school on this Casco Bay island that was once home to a small African-American community (whose members, sadly, were forcibly removed by the State in 1912). (Departs from Phippsburg)



WARREN WHITNEY

MERCHANT ROW ISLAND TOUR

JULY 12 Enjoy a boat tour, with our friends from Island Heritage Trust, past an array of protected islands in the legendary Merchant Row archipelago. (Departs from Stonington)

ALDERMERE FARM TOUR

JULY 16 Bring youngsters along to see the "oreo cookie" cows at MCHT's working farm in Rockport, learn about conservation projects underway there, and take a short walk over open fields to Lily Pond.

PADDLING NORTHEAST CREEK

JULY 19 Explore a little known part of Mount Desert Island, canoeing past marshes, bogs and conserved farmland on one of the eastern seaboard's most pristine estuaries. Canoes provided or bring your own.

MARSHALL ISLAND

AUGUST 8 A naturalist will accompany us as we explore the tidal pools, sand beaches, and woodland trails on Maine's largest undeveloped island. This trip is perfect for families. (Departs from Bass Harbor on MDI)

WITHERLE WOODS WALK

August 11 History buffs young and old will be captivated by archaeologist Alaric Faulkner's stroll through this Revolutionary War site in Castine.

FRENCHBORO WALK 'N' ROLL

AUGUST 17 You'll have many options to explore Frenchboro's shoreline and inland trails, finishing the day with lobster rolls at Lunt Harbor. (Departs from Bass Harbor on MDI)

EAGLES IN STRAIGHT BAY

AUGUST 25 Join in a boat tour far downeast on this quiet, pristine bay with Maine's highest concentration of nesting eagles. (Departs from Eastport)

YORK RIVER SHOREBIRDS

SEPTEMBER 9 With the York Land Trust, we'll enjoy a boat tour through the wildlife-rich upper reaches of the York River, past tidal marshlands, rolling fields and forests. (Departs from York)

WHALEBOAT ISLAND HAWK WATCH

SEPTEMBER 22 Participants in this annual trip at peak migration time routinely spot hundreds of hawks over the meadows and spruce woods of Casco Bay's largest undeveloped island. (Departs from Harpswell)

POSTMORTEM EASEMENT DONATIONS

were enacted in the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1998. The estate of Gertrude L. McCue, a Mount Desert summer resident, donated a conservation easement prohibiting future development on 9 acres of scenic fields and blueberry land along Beech Hill Road in Mount Desert. "Our mother wanted these fields to remain open, but due to the challenges of negotiating the details with all interested parties, we unfortunately were unable to finalize the easement during her lifetime," her son

Bill McCue explains. "In settling her estate, we found that donating an easement postmortem made financial sense for us while honoring her wishes for the land. The finite amount of time available to donate the easement and realize its benefits after our mother's death brought a certain clarity to the situation, which had been lacking when there was no deadline."

For more information about this option, please contact MCHT at development@mcht.org.

STEWARDSHIP: Sharing the Coast with Bald Eagles

Maine now has 414 nesting eagle pairs, half of them along coastal waters. This number represents a remarkable recovery of the species, from a low in Maine of 27 nesting pairs in 1967. Federal and state wildlife agencies lent the bald eagle regulatory protection in 1978 by placing it on a list of “endangered and threatened species.”

This summer, the US Fish & Wildlife Service is expected to “delist” the bald eagle, removing its designation as a “threatened species.” “Within the next year or so, the State will likely follow suit,” says Charlie Todd, wildlife biologist with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIF&W). He is quick to add, though, that “regulatory protection has been the eagle’s lifeline over the past few decades, and we’re not walking away from that completely.” Eagles still will receive some protection under



WHILE EAGLES IN MAINE HAVE MADE A STRONG RECOVERY, THEIR FUTURE DEPENDS ON PERMANENT PROTECTION OF THEIR PRIME HABITATS.

BILL HANSSON, FPL ENERGY MAINE - HYDRO

habitat. More than half of the eagles in Maine today benefit from past land protection projects, many of them involving donated easements. “Private landowners always have taken on an extra role protecting eagles,” Todd observes. “It’s amazing the pride and commitment people take in good stewardship of nest sites. Nearly all of Maine’s eagle nests are on private land, so these stalwart practitioners of conservation are really unsung heroes.”

the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The State also plans to monitor populations closely to make sure that eagle numbers continue to rebound.

A cornerstone of the new management strategy is to encourage more landowners to voluntarily conserve areas that eagles frequent, ideally through use of conservation easements that explicitly protect eagle

MDIF&W hopes to offer landowners more incentives to help protect—not just individual nesting sites—but the surrounding area where eagles feed and roost and where young might return to nest. “We will be contacting key landowners as part of a collective effort to ensure that eagles can thrive in Maine over the long term,” says Todd. To learn more, contact Charlie Todd (charlie.todd@maine.gov, 207-941-4468).

KEEPING A RESPECTFUL DISTANCE

Bald eagles build their nests in prominent trees near shorelines so they have ready access to the water and tidal flats to feed on fish, seabirds and waterfowl. Year after year, eagles return to their nests—maintaining some for decades. In coastal Maine, eagles often begin nesting in March and the adults share non-stop care of the 1-3 eggs during five weeks of incubation. Be careful of intrusions at this season: eggs exposed for as little as 10 minutes on a cool day can cause nesting failure.

Eggs typically hatch by early May. Privacy at nests remains important through at least mid-summer. If human disturbance forces eaglets to attempt flight prematurely or drives away the adults guarding them, the young birds can face injury or death.

Eagles may leave a perch or nest if approached within 1,500 feet. If you notice one or two adult eagles circling an area, flapping hard (rather than soaring) and vocalizing, move away quietly. Avoid approaching an eagle on the ground, shore, tidal flat,

or ledge: it may be feeding or reluctant to fly because of inexperience or injury. Watch from a safe distance and report suspected problems to MDIF&W (207-941-4468).

Further Information:

- www.briloon.org/research/raptor.htm
- www.baldeaglecam.blogspot.com
- www.fws.gov/nctc/cam/eaglecam.htm
- “Bald Eagles in Coastal Maine,” by Charlie Todd, at www.mita.org/eagles.html.

A Tribute to Priscilla deForest Williams

“Priscilla Williams, an early MCHT Director and recent Council member, was a true pioneer of conservation,” reflects MCHT President Jay Espy. “For more than three decades, she was an avid enthusiast of our work.” Mrs. Williams died in December, leaving behind her husband of 65 years, Douglas Williams. Her conservation values and generosity were evident in the huge role she played protecting the Head Harbor archipelago off Great Wass Island. “Priscilla really loved the wild islands and coastline of downeast Maine, and worked hard for four decades to preserve them,” observes David MacDonald, MCHT’s Director of Land Protection. “She donated easements on her own islands in the 1970s and, as recently as the last couple years, she was still actively acquiring and conserving property and encouraging others to do the same.” In addition to her work in Maine, Mrs. Williams was formerly the N.Y. State “Vice Regent” of Mt. Vernon and Past Chair of the Heckscher Museum on Long Island.

Staff and Board News

Maine Coast Heritage Trust welcomes three new members to its board. **Dawn Kidd**, of Boothbay, served for 14 years as the executive director of the Boothbay Region Land Trust. **Kurt Klebe**, of Falmouth, is a partner with Verrill Dana, LLP in Portland, and serves as a director or officer on numerous boards throughout southern Maine. **Didi Stockly**, of Falmouth, is currently a director of Vinalhaven Land Trust, as well as a past director of Falmouth Land Trust.



NEW TOPSHAM STAFF: PEG ADAMS, CELESTE BLACK, CINDY BROWER AND JOHN TOOZE

New staff members, as well, have joined the Trust over the past year.

Peg Adams, of Freeport, holds a newly created position as Administrative Assistant to MCHT’s General Counsel and to the Director of Stewardship. Peg’s background as a litigation paralegal, legal secretary and graphic artist qualifies her well for this role.

Celeste Black, MCHT’s Topsham receptionist, is a native of Orr’s Island. Having seen many changes along the coast, she is happy to be at MCHT and supporting its mission.

Cindy Brower, of Phippsburg, has worked as a paralegal in Montana and Maine, and has spent time river rafting, scuba diving, hiking, and wilderness camping. She is now Executive Assistant to the President at MCHT.

John Tooze, an assistant on MCHT’s development team, has worked in the library field and has organized many local poetry readings and programs. He moved to Brunswick from Florida in 2006 and likes his new state and new role.

Douglas McMullin, a graduate of Maine’s Unity College, now serves as MCHT’s regional steward in the Merchant Row area, a position created in 2006 to meet the growing stewardship needs there. Douglas knows the Maine coast well, having worked both as a sailing captain and a commercial airline pilot.



DOUGLAS McMULLIN



MAINE COAST HERITAGE TRUST

is dedicated to protecting land that is essential to the character of Maine, its coastline and islands in particular. Since 1970, more than 123,000 acres have been permanently protected, including 265 entire coastal islands. MCHT provides conservation advisory services to landowners, local land trusts and state and community officials free of charge. A membership organization, MCHT welcomes your support and inquiries.

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