



The Heron

SPRING-SUMMER 2012

ISSUE NO. 26

The Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc. • www.mattlandtrust.org • E-mail: info@mattlandtrust.org

Land Donations...

We're still interested!

Gary P. Johnson, President

You have noticed, no doubt, that we have asked for funds for land purchases repeatedly during the last decade- the Walega-Livingstone Preserve on Brand Island Cove in 2007 and last year's Brownell Preserve being the largest purchases in the period. Some might wonder if the MLT plans only to buy land in the future. Our simple answer is that we hope not. While generous financial donations from members and friends have made the large acquisitions a possibility, these acquisitions were really dependent on grants from governments and foundations. We have no idea if those funding sources will remain available in the future. Accepting donations of land will continue to have an increasingly important role in our acquisition activities.

Saying that we are willing to accept donations of land is not the same as saying we will take any parcel offered to us. When we accept a parcel we are also taking on the stewardship responsibilities for that land and, as an all volunteer organization, we must be judicious in our commitments. For example, we might not want to accept the gift of a parcel of land that had a long history of illegal dumping on the property (tires can be a particular problem). The effort necessary for maintaining the property might not be worth our limited resources. We would suggest that anyone interested in the possibility of donating land to the MLT consider the following list of questions.

Does the parcel abut other previously protected lands?

We are always trying to make our holdings large enough to be of interest for passive recreational activities, such as hiking. If the parcel is next to other protected land, even if it isn't owned by the MLT, the parcel is more desirable to us. The Johnson donation described later is such an example. If the 1.5 acres had been isolated, we probably wouldn't have accepted it but since it added to previously acquired land on Pico Beach Road, we believed that it would be an attractive addition.

Does it have special environmental characteristics? The Commonwealth has made an effort through the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program to identify the areas of the state that are particularly important for maintaining biological diversity. Both the Walega-Livingstone Preserve and the Brownell Preserve contain lands that were identified by the state as important and this designation made their acquisition especially attractive. Even areas that aren't identified on state maps might contain interesting flora and fauna, however. For example, there are areas in town where box turtles, a threatened species, have been spotted that don't appear on the state maps. Those lands might be of interest to us.

Does it offer special opportunities for enjoyment by the public? Does it already have an existing trail network like the Brownell Preserve? Or a picnic area like Dunseith Gardens? We hold land for the public benefit so specific, identifiable benefits are certainly of interest to the Land Trust.

Is the parcel a particularly scenic property? The Munro Waterfront property is small and not of much interest environmentally, but the location with its benches provides the public with a wonderful scenic outlook over our beautiful harbor. Hundreds of people visit it every year to observe the human and natural activity on the bay. Even with their required maintenance, such properties are welcome additions.

We are not alone in believing that land donations provide a benefit to the public. The IRS has for years allowed the donor to claim a charitable donation for the value of the property donated (less the cost). The Commonwealth last year created an even more attractive tax credit of up to \$50,000 for qualified land donations (limited state-wide to \$2 million per year). The characteristics of land that would make the parcel interesting to the Land Trust would likely be sufficient to qualify for the tax credit. But we would gladly discuss the issues with any interested potential donor.

Our acquisition efforts will always be driven by our mission of protecting lands for the benefit of all, but we know that we will never be able to buy all of the land that might help us fulfill that mission. Generous friends can help further our mis-

sion through the donation of the land they cherish. We would welcome the opportunity to talk to interested land owners about the possibilities.

Recent Land Donations of Note

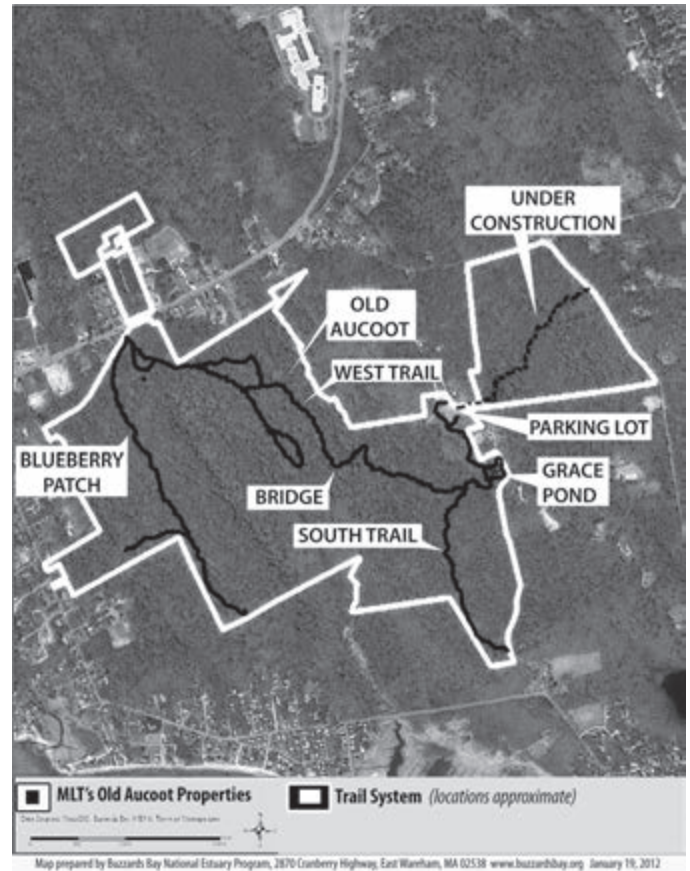
The Mattapoissett Land Trust received the donation of 7 acres of land adjacent to the Mattapoissett Bike Trail at the intersection with Brandt Island Road from Mrs. Jeanette (Murray) Mello. She had inherited it from her parents, Captain John and Mrs. Bridget Murray after whom the parcel will be named. The plan had been to make this part of a family complex when her sons used the land to build their own homes but as often happens with the best ideas, things change. Being a very community oriented person and having concern for the water quality of our area Jeanette felt that the MLT could best preserve the land and further protect the stream which passes through the property. Her father was a fisherman who sailed out of New Bedford and the memory of her parents will continue with this generous gift which the MLT truly appreciates.



Judy and Lynda Johnson moved to Mattapoissett in 1994. The two sisters and best friends had spent most of their lives as teachers in the Fall River public school system in the city they had both been born and raised in. But when it was time for a change they didn't have to look very far to find a place they could call their new home: Mattapoissett. They settled here, on Pico Beach Rd., for several reasons: the solitude, the ocean, the serenity, but most of all, the animals. The woods in their backyard held new surprises each and every day. From the deer, to the raccoons and rabbits, to the countless birds singing their songs and chatting endlessly in the trees, their home and the land around it became a sanctuary. And when they retired not too long ago the two sisters finally were able to live a life they had only dreamed about. In 2007 Judith passed away at the age of 65. In 2009 her sister, Lynda, passed on at the age of 61. They left this world and the people they loved far too soon. But people have a way of figuring out how to carry on; those without a voice--the birds, deer, frogs, raccoons and all the rest of the Southcoast's year-round and seasonal non-human residents--have a less predictable future. That's why they left instructions with their son Alex to portion off the part of the land the wildlife call home and donate it to the Mattapoissett Land Trust. The gift was made in January. While not the largest piece of property--just under two acres--it adds to the generous size of woodland already protected by the MLT. In preserving this little part of the world they loved and held so dear Alex preserved not only a place for nature to continuously unfold in peace but their memory and their deepest wishes.

Trail System of the Mattapoissett Land Trust

Paul Osenkowski, Stewardship Chair



The Mattapoissett Land Trust has been building a trail system to allow for the greater enjoyment of the people of Mattapoissett and their guests. This system has two major components. First is the Walega-Livingston Trail on Mattapoissett Neck and the Hiller Trail system which presently centers at the end of Bowman Road off Aucoot Road. They are open for passive recreation such as hiking and horseback riding but not the use of motorized vehicles which tear-up and destroy the natural trail surfaces.

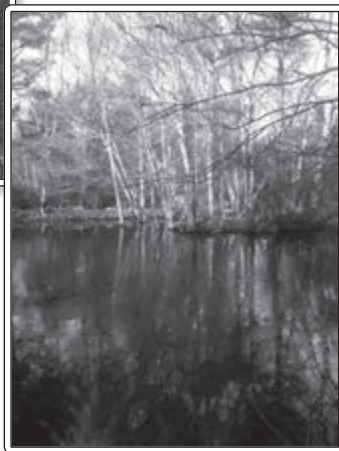
The Walega-Livingston Trail starts at the end of Anchorage Way which may be reached by taking a right off of Mattapoissett Neck Road onto Old Mattapoissett Neck Road and taking the 2nd right onto West Hill Road and then the first left onto Tara Road. Follow Tara Road to the end where it intersects with Anchorage Way and you'll see a yellow Mattapoissett Land Trust sign. You can safely park at end of Anchorage Way and enter the trail at the sign where you'll see white blazes on the trees to the south. Follow the white blazes as the trail takes you on a very easy circuitous trail which heads generally in a southern direction following the marsh of Brandt Island Cove. Appropriate footwear is essential since it can get rather wet. A short distance into the trail you'll find a spur that goes off to the left and overlooks the marsh. At the present time you can't see very far into the marsh due to the height of the phragmites (reeds) but we hope to have a small tower built there in the near future which will allow you to see all the way over to

Molly's Cove in Mattapoisett Harbor. Listen for the cries of the numerous Osprey which nest in the marsh and keep an eye out for Red Shoulder, Red Tail and Marsh Hawks which are also numerous in this special habitat. The trail proceeds southward and ends on a small peninsula at the northern end of Brandt Island Cove. Here you can view some of the most spectacular scenery that I've seen in the whole USA; however, if it's a moon high tide you may have to wear your water wings since the peninsula may be flooded. Looking back toward the north where you came from provides a view of the spectacular filter system that Mother Nature has provided. The water in this area of Buzzards Bay is among the cleanest on the South Shore according to an article produced by the Coalition for Buzzards Bay.

The Hiller Trail is best accessed by entering from the end of Bowman road which is the first right off Aucoot Road. You'll find a small clearing in the meadow on the right with a yellow Mattapoisett Land Trust sign marking the parking area. Follow the trail through the meadow in a southerly direction, by-



passing a couple of divergent trails and proceed to Grace Pond which is marked with a stone column. On the southern side of the pond you'll see that the trail continues into the forest.



You'll come to a tree with signs indicating the South and West Trails. If you proceed to the left it will take you south to Angelica Road. Just follow the white blazes which are very prominent. When you get to the end you can either come straight back along the same trail or follow Old Slough Road back to the pond. If you take the right you'll follow the West Trail to a foot bridge over a small stream. This leads to the core of the old trail system that makes up the Hiller Trail System. Pause for a moment on the bridge and look at the old fallen tree that was once used to traverse the stream. Frogs are abundant in this area in the summer and spring. This is one of the "wetter" parts of the trail system so be sure to have the proper footwear. The trail leads further to the west



and comes to a spot where you can either go to the left or right. If you choose the left it will put you on the faster track to Route 6 or you can go to the right and take the longer trip to the Hiller Trail Monument at Route 6.

Once you approach Route 6 you'll see a grassy road to your left. This is an old "paper road" which you can follow to the south and end at an old stone wall marking the end of the trail. At the beginning of this trail you'll pass a grove of overgrown blueberry bushes that the MLT hopes to someday revitalize and actually produce a significant blueberry crop. There is a vernal pool off to the left as you approach the end of the trail so listen for the frogs in the early spring. About half way to the end of the trail there is a small footpath spur on the west side which leads to Prospect Street and ends at a small stream. You'll find that there is equestrian traffic on some of the trails so watch your step as you commune with nature.

We continue to look for opportunities to expand our trail network in order to offer opportunities for members and the public to experience the wonders of our natural world. In this work we especially appreciate the cooperation of the Scouts of Troop 53 in Mattapoisett who have contributed to the layout and construction of many of the new trails and structures.

More to see on MLT website

Go to www.mattlandtrust.org for additional information and an up to date events calendar (ABOUT/CALENDAR).

Use the Stewardship Log (PROPERTIES/STEWARDSHIP LOG) to keep us informed of what you see on the properties and trails. You can note problems such as misuse or blocked trails or entry ways, or interesting things you observe.

On the PROPERTIES page you will find more and more information about the individual parcels and preserves available for your "passive" recreational use. Under the PROPERTIES menu there are two maps available. One is a printable map to take with you. The other is an interactive 3-D Google map giving you the ability to "fly" over the town and see outlines of your MLT properties (be patient as we add new acquisitions). CONNECT with us to see PDF's of past newsletters, join the MLT, make a donation or link to us on Facebook. SHOP securely and purchase from the catalog of T-shirts, caps, tote bags and more.

In addition, when space does not permit use of the entire text of submissions to the Heron, we will place full text on the blog (BLOG & LINKS). For example, we had to summarize a wonderful, touching letter Alex Johnson sent us about the property left to us by his mother and aunt.

The full interview by Ellen Flynn with Blanche Perry Scholarship recipient Jonathan Wilbur also had to be edited down.

Both are on the MLT site in their entirety.

From Horizon to Horizon

with a Mattapoissett Land Trust Scholarship

By Ellen P. Flynn, Chair of Education Committee.

Winner of the 2011 MLT scholarship Jonathan Wilbur, during his college search, wanted to be close by to his hometown, be on the water, and able to have an outdoors environmental hands on experience. Throughout H.S. the courses he enjoyed were Marine Biology and the environmental sciences. He attended a "Weekend Environmental Symposium" at Mass Maritime College. He spent the night on the T.S. Kennedy maritime ship, attended lectures, learned about sharks and got a taste of what college life had to offer.

EF. You have just returned from your first Sea Term voyage on the T.S. Kennedy, which took you to Ecuador, the Panama Canal, Panama City, Cuba, crossing the Equator, and the island of St. Thomas. What were the highlights of your Sea Term voyage?

JW. I saw the entire Milky Way, from horizon to horizon. It was so peaceful and so calm. The stars were like a fog of lights traveling through the air, so unlike the Mattapoissett sky. While traveling to Cuba, I turned 19 years old, having no phone service, and not hearing from my parents was a unique time for me. Crossing the equator, and being so young, was an experience of a lifetime! On the 540-foot long vessel with 600 cadets and 100 crew members, I was always busy, scrubbing the decks, painting, and working below with the engineers. My first semester friends and I became better friends while at sea. When leaving St. Thomas the seas were rough, a wild ocean storm, with forty-foot waves, the kind you might expect off Cape Hatteras, the "Graveyard of the Atlantic". Upper-classmen and supervisors were very supportive. I kept a journal but after 52 days at sea it did seem too isolated for my liking.

EF. Coming through the Panama Canal, what was that experience like?

JW. It was beautiful, seeing the early morning fog at 5:30am was like being in shock, watching the water rising 85 ft. above sea level, to the three sets of locks, on the Gatun Lake, and the Gaillard Cut, the canal was much wider than I thought. I worked from start to

finish to complete the five-hour transit, reaching the Pacific side. It was good luck for me to see the building of the new canal! Panama City is more developed than other areas. World banks line the streets. The architecture is spiraled glass buildings and cranes everywhere. From the docks, boats bring a lot of money for exchange to the banks. It was very different from the streets of Massachusetts.

EF. How has the experience working with the poor changed you?

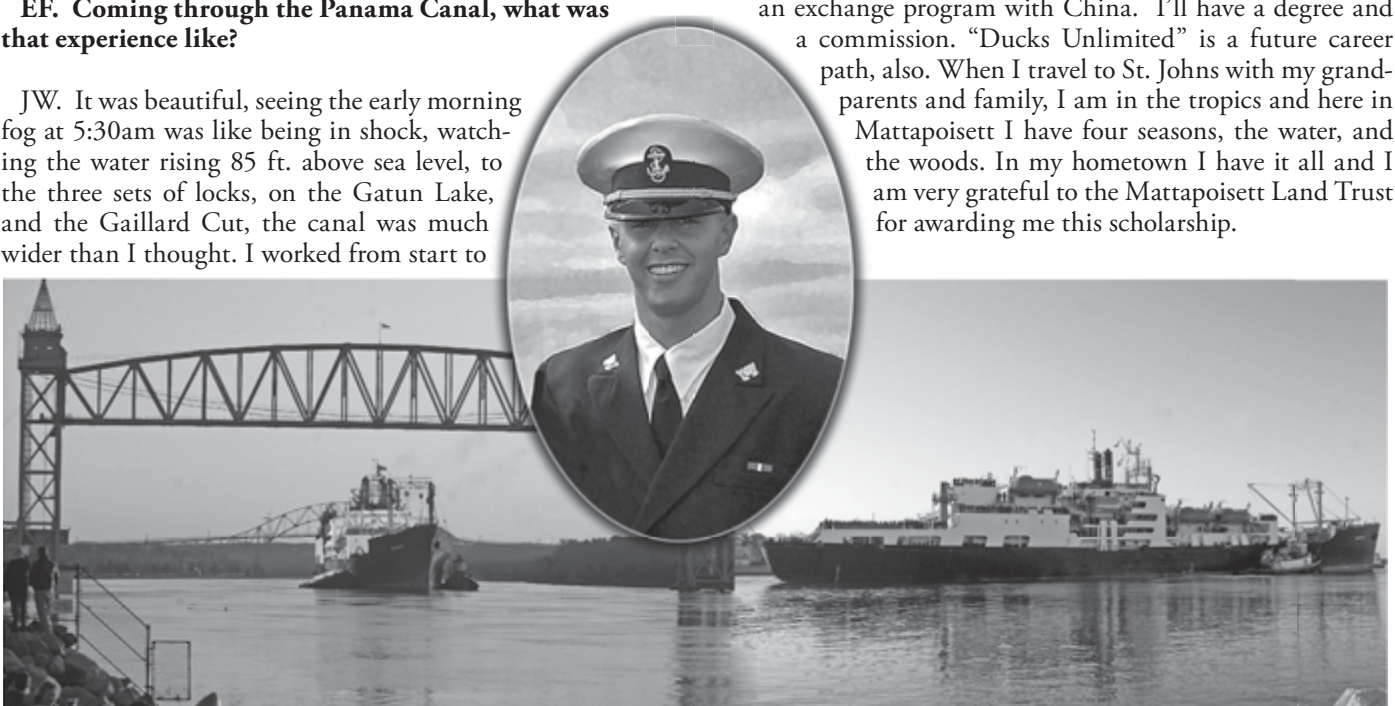
JW. When traveling to Ecuador my classmates and I collected clothing and gave out food and supplies for the hospital. At first, it was scary, collapsed buildings, blacked out areas and warnings from the Embassy about dangers and high crime rate. Streets had abandoned junk cars and plastic trash on the beaches. I realized then how thankful I am for my home life and the love I have for the Academy.

EF. What kind of advice can you offer younger people like H.S. students or even younger who are looking for a unique college experience?

JW. While in H.S. I enjoyed nature and being outdoors, hunting and learning about the natural world, and the marsh and its habitat. Hunters are some of the best conservationists. Going forward, I will stay connected to Old Rochester Regional H.S. students and teachers and stress the importance of choosing the right fit for college.

EF. When you graduate will you have a degree, a license, and or a commission?

JW. I have selected two majors Marine Safety and Emergency Homelands Management, a curriculum similar to environmental Police. I will do two or three internships to travel to Alaska, or possibly to Shanghai China. The Academy has an exchange program with China. I'll have a degree and a commission. "Ducks Unlimited" is a future career path, also. When I travel to St. Johns with my grandparents and family, I am in the tropics and here in Mattapoissett I have four seasons, the water, and the woods. In my hometown I have it all and I am very grateful to the Mattapoissett Land Trust for awarding me this scholarship.



The MLT Blueberry Patch

Paul Osenkowski, Stewardship Chair



Following the Brownell acquisition, the MLT started to examine the possibility of restoring the old blueberry patch that still exists on the northern part of the trail and dates back many years. As you follow the trail that leads from the Route 6 entrance and proceed approximately one quarter of a mile, you will find that there are numerous rows of overgrown bushes on the west (right) side of the trail. There are many pine, oak and various

other trees that have grown up in the rows of blueberry bushes that appear to be all "lined up". Many invasive plants, like bittersweet, have contributed to the "tangle" of briars that are literally choking the life out of these old treasures. Sharon Spector, who is herself a Brownell, has been kind enough to help us in finding out just what it will take to revive the blueberry bushes and hopefully get them to produce fruit that can be harvested. This will not become a "financial venture" but rather a community project that will allow families to go in and pick blueberries and enjoy the bounty of nature.

Sharon likes to talk about the experiences that she had as a child when the family actually did care for and maintain the bushes so that a plentiful harvest could be realized. A picture of the old metal bucket that she used to collect the harvest accompanies this article. She tells us that there are many different kinds of blueberry varieties, from pie berries to big blues.

It will take a concerted effort on the part of the whole community to produce an actual productive blueberry venture but it is hoped that many people will volunteer to get behind this project and make it work. Sharon and her husband John have been seeking advice from experts that have done this type of project before. First we have to remove the invasive brambles and trees to get light to the bushes and then we have to prune them in such a way as to promote growth and fruit production. We've had our arborist, Dan Shea, look at this project and he enthusiastically hopes to get started on this endeavor early this spring. With the input of other people who are familiar with these types of ventures and those who just want to spend

some quality non-electronic time with their kids, this might prove to be a very valuable experience.



The MLT is in the process of improving the trail system that intersects with this trail and also hopes to create an open area further to the south so that families can spend some time enjoying the rest of the forest. Equestrian use of the trails is advocated; however, use

of ATVs is prohibited. If you feel that you can help us move this project forward, We would truly like to hear from you. Please contact the MLT through the web site at matlandtrust.org. This is a worthwhile project that could bring value to the whole town.

Acquisition update

Gary P. Johnson, President

For the last year we have asked our members and friends to help us acquire the 49-acre Brownell Preserve in the Old Aucoot district. You may recall that in order to complete the purchase, we needed to use a loan of \$150,000 from the Bay Lands Revolving Fund of the Buzzards Bay Coalition (BBC). At the time we were unsure where we would find the funds to repay the loan.

Our cooperation with the Coalition paid off in an unexpected way this winter. We have known for years that the land we own would be more certainly protected if the development rights were held by a different entity, either an environmental organization or a governmental entity. (As an example, we ensured that the Walega-Livingstone Preserve would remain preserved by selling a Conservation Restriction (CR) to Mass Wildlife.) This winter the Coalition was able to obtain grant funding to allow it to purchase a CR from us on the entire 307-acre Old Aucoot properties, including the Brownell Preserve, Matocci Preserve, Coyne Forest, Grace Pond, the Sul-

ivan Preserve, the Dunn Preserve and other abutting lands. The purchase price was \$146,000 which will provide us the funds to repay the loan.

While the CR will prevent development in the future, it does permit our current activities. It also allows us to continue to develop our trail network and even allows us to add parking areas, picnic areas, a well for the blueberry patch, and even a small storage building, if we need one. Passive recreational uses will continue as before, but we are now more certain that the land will always be available for those activities.

Our fund-raising will continue, however. Now we are attempting to collect \$16,000 to begin the restoration work on the blueberry orchard. While volunteers can help with the restoration, the size of the trees that have overgrown the orchard requires the use of heavy machines for removal. We, therefore, need some professional help to begin the process. We continue to seek memorial or honorary donations of \$100 for a blueberry bush- we still have hundreds of bushes that have yet to be adopted. Your contribution will speed the production of organic berries from this communal orchard.

Kids' Corner

Our Bat Friends

As part of our annual meeting in May, Dr. Tom French from the Commonwealth's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program will talk about bats that live in Massachusetts and the white nose disease that has affected them recently. As the weather turns warmer this spring you may want to check the evening skies to see if you can spot any of these flying mammals.

The two most common bats in Massachusetts are the Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) and Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*). As you can tell from their names, the Little Brown Bat is the smaller of the two; it's about 4½ to 5½ inches long with a wingspan of 8½ to 10½ inches. The Big Brown Bat, on the other hand, is 5½ to 8 inches long with an 11 to 12 inch wingspan.

All bats are insectivores, meaning that they eat insects, and they do a great job at it. They come out of their daytime resting area as the sun goes down and can eat up to 600 insects per hour, including mosquitoes and other pests. Big Brown and Little Brown Bats feed in somewhat different areas. Big Brown Bats like woods and fields while Little Brown Bats prefer wetlands and water. So both bats have many places to feed in Mattapoisett.

Because bats must feed on insects, they hibernate during the winter. They either migrate to hibernate in caves or hibernate in heated homes. As they begin to hibernate they will slow their breathing to only one breath every 5 minutes. If you're concerned that you have bats in your house you should try to get them out during the summer and fall and then close any openings that they used. If you seal the house after November, you may be sealing the bats in.

If you want to learn more about bats, come to the MLT meeting on May 19. In the meantime, as the weather turns warmer, look to the trees and the water in the evening to see if you can spot the fluttering, wild flight of our insect-eating friends.

(*Myotis lucifugus*)



Vernal pools

Elizabeth Leidhold

A vernal pool is a contained basin depression lacking a permanent above ground outlet. In the Northeast, it fills with water with the rising water table of fall and winter or with the meltwater and runoff of winter and spring snow and rain. Many vernal pools in the Northeast are covered with ice in the winter months making them easy to spot through the trees during this time of the year.

All vernal pools contain water for at least a few months in the spring and early summer but by late summer it is not unusual for the pool to be dry. Because these pools dry up on occasion they do not support breeding populations of fish, which is essential to the reproductive success of many amphibian and invertebrate species. These pools provide a safe environment for those animals that cannot breed effectively anywhere else due to excessive predation.

The organisms that use a vernal pool exclusively for breeding or maturing are called the "obligate" vernal pool species, so called because they must use a vernal pool for various parts of their life cycle. By collecting evidence of breeding or juvenile obligate vernal pool animals, such as the mole salamanders and the wood frog, or any evidence of fairy shrimp, a pool may be certified for protection as a valuable wildlife habitat.

If you'd like to find out more about these special ecosystems please join the Mattapoisett Land Trust at www.mattlandtrust.org

**See calendar on back cover
for special vernal pool events**

Mattapoisett Land Trust Founders are celebrated at special reception

On January 22nd of this year MLT members and friends gathered at the Kin-sale Inn to thank those who founded our organization back in 1974.

Founders and original members of the Board of Directors attending the event were George Mock, Brad and Priscilla Hathaway, Donald Fleming, Larry and Lorraine Seidl, Violet Jones, Isabella Watts, David and Norma Hewitt, and Frances Pernas.

We had 35 people attending the event, along with past board members of the MLT, including Al Schubert, Bob Atkinson George Mock III and Martin Smith.

President Gary Johnson talked about the goals of the organization, how we currently are achieving these goals, and he announced that a commemorative plaque honoring our Founders will be added to one of our properties in the near future.

Gary Johnson (right) reviews MLT accomplishments (including 712 acres currently under protection and public education) that never would have been possible without the foresight and energy of the founders.



Don Fleming (left) and Brad Hathaway address the group on the history of the MLT and recognize its many successes.



Honor Your Loved Ones

The following individuals or groups have chosen in the last six months to honor their loved ones through donations to the Mattapoisett Land Trust.

In memory of Russ Pearson:

Shirley L. Pearson
Mattapoisett, MA

In memory of Martha Lorraine:

Robert & Beth Kelley
Mattapoisett, MA

In honor of David and Linda Hall:

Anthony & Barbara Zeimet
Andover, MA

In honor of Karen Browning & family:

The Modafferi Family
Charitable Fund
Edmonds, WA

Thank you for your generous contributions which will be used to further our mission of protecting the land and environment of Mattapoisett for generations to come.

THE HERON is published bi-annually by the Mattapoisett Land Trust.

The MLT, formed in 1974, is a non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Its purpose is to preserve open space for the enjoyment of current and future residents of Mattapoisett, as well as to educate the public about the sound use of natural resources, and to work with other organizations having the same goals.

Our membership consists of annual contributors—our primary source of revenue—and a volunteer Board of Directors: Kathy Bohan, Don Cuddy, Sandra Dawson, Ellen Flynn, Sandra Hering, Luana Marie Josvold, Elizabeth Leidhold, Louis Martin, Jenny Mello, Paul Osenkowski, Charles Radville, Donald Short, Steven Wilcox, and Gary P. Johnson, President.

The MLT is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization. All contributions are fully tax deductible.

Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.

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Layout and Design by Charles Radville

A special "THANK YOU" to
for putting Salty's Santa



BROWNELL SYSTEMS
hat on year after year!



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Calendar — 2012 Spring and Summer Activities

All Mattapoisett Land Trust events are free and open to the public

Check www.mattlandtrust.org/calendar for up-to-date information

Wednesday, April 11, 2012	7 pm	Vernal pool talk	Presented by Elizabeth Leidhold in preparation for the certification on April 14	Mattapoisett Library
Thursday, April 12, 2012	6:00 pm - 7:30 pm	Celebrating our Earth	Visit our table for fun activities	Center School Gym
Saturday, April 14, 2012	9 am	Vernal pool certification	Walk to a pond in the Brownell Preserve to certify it as a vernal pool	Start at Friends Meeting House
Saturday, April 28, 2012	10 am	Guided Tour	Walega_Livingstone Preserve	Anchorage Way, Mattapoisett Neck
Saturday, May 19, 2012	1 pm	Annual meeting	10:00 am Dedication of Brownell Preserve 12:00 pm Pot luck lunch 12:45 pm presentation by ORRHS students on field work 1:00 pm annual meeting 1:15 pm Dr. Tom French talk on bats	Friends Meeting House
Saturday, June 09, 2012	10 am	Guided Tour	Check the website in late May for location	TBA
Saturday, July 21, 2012	10 am to 3:30 pm	Harbor Days	Stop by our booth, #81, off the parking lot by the Harbormaster building	Shipyard Park