



The Heron

Fall 2005

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



Photos by Danny Chieppa

Feeding time

An osprey returns with a fish, above, for hungry fledglings at their summer nest near the Field property on Mattapoisett Neck. The fledglings later stretch their wings, right.



MLT makes its mark at Harbor Days

By Martin Hudis

The Mattapoisett Land Trust often is referred to as the best-kept secret in town. Yet it has been active as a nonprofit organization since 1971, has had a booth at the Lions Club Harbor Days event for many years, has organized many nature walks and has published a newsletter twice a year. Despite all this, the MLT lacks widespread visibility. But the cat has finally been let out of the bag and the MLT couldn't be more pleased.

Early in 2005 the MLT decided to take a more proactive course and attempt to increase its visibility. The Lions Club annual Harbor Days fund-raiser is a one-week event centered on Shipyard Park at the Mattapoisett wharf. The event is attended by more than 10,000 people and is the largest local event available for a campaign. Conversations with the Lions Club led to a plan that could support both goals (Lions Club fund-raiser and growing visibility for the MLT) without detracting from all the outstanding work and goals of the Lions. By last spring the Harbor Days venue was selected by the MLT to increase its visibility.

The MLT owns the Munro property just west of the town wharf. The one-acre waterfront parcel was donated in 1976 by Ruth Munro. Her late husband was from a family long associated with Mattapoisett and its whaling history. In 1998, due to the generosity and hard work of the local community, a seawall was constructed the entire 450-foot length of the property to prevent severe erosion. This seawall resulted from a MLT \$100,000 fund-raising program. With an unobstructed view of the harbor and in the center of the village, the Munro parcel has become a prime land trust holding. The Munro property was selected

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Sunset on the marsh: What could be more fun?

More than 50 people, ranging in age from several months to several decades and from as far away as Arizona, came Aug. 8 for the land trust's exciting sunset walk to the marshes surrounding Eel Pond. It began with a short introduction of what we were about to do and see, including two diamond-back turtles that the leaders "borrowed." Of course, the turtles were returned to their homes later that evening.

Led by two well-known Rochester residents, Drs. John Teal and Susan Peterson, we walked from Shipyard Park to Eel Pond, stopping several times to learn about many of the plants and animals that make this area home, including a rather undaunted baby gopher. We saw one of our own mascots, the great blue heron, three beautiful white egrets, an osprey, and a non-plussed night heron that didn't move a feather as we noisily passed within 10 feet of its roosting place in a tree by the railway bridge. Many participants brought binoculars and pails in order to get up close and personal with the creatures that inhabit the marsh.

Children and adults alike then rushed back to Drs. Teal and Peterson to help identify their finds: cone head grasshoppers; green, blue, and fiddler crabs; invasive species, and a myriad of small fish. As promised in the publicity for the walk, everyone was able to explore and enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of the marsh at the dimming of the day and return in the magical twilight to Shipyard Park for refreshments.

Dr. Teal is a biologist and professor emeritus at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. He is a wetlands specialist, a member of the Rochester Conservation Commission and the author of several books, including "Life and Death of a Salt Marsh."



A turtle captivates children and provides an opportunity for a little education.

An anthropologist, Dr. Peterson is a founding and long-standing board member of the Rochester Land Trust and is its clerk. In addition, she has been a member of the board of the Wildlands Trust since 1986.

Together, Susan and John tend their sheep and farm their Rochester property — the Teal Farm — which they placed in conservation with the Wildlands Trust and open to the public once a year. Look for this opportunity to hike their beautiful property in the winter: snow-covered fields, newly born lambs, interesting trails and two of the most informative and gracious guides and hosts you'll ever meet.



Children explore the inlet from the Mattapoisett harbor that feeds the Eel Pond marsh. Walkers gather around, right, as someone makes a discovery on the marsh.

Who We Are: Paul Osenkowski (Ozzie)

If you've seen someone wearing a large pair of ear protectors cruising our properties on a robust riding mower, you've probably seen Ozzie, our vice president and chairman of our Preservation/Stewardship Committee. We thought you might be interested in learning what motivates him to spend all those hours keeping the properties looking great.

MLT: Where did you grow up? What is your educational background?

PO: I was born and raised in Taunton. I graduated from Clark University in Worcester with a degree in biology and went to dental school at Case Western University in Cleveland.

MLT: What attracted you to Mattapoisett?

PO: My grandparents built a summer cottage at Harbor Beach in 1952 and we spent all our weekends there each season. After I graduated from dental school I spent two years in the Army. When I finished my tour of duty, my wife and I moved into the summer cottage at Harbor Beach for a short time with our two children. We all enjoyed it so much that in 1981 we purchased a home at Brandt Beach and used it as a summer residence. I opened my practice in Greenville, RI, where we reside now, but we spent most of our time in Mattapoisett. My kids have always considered Brandt Beach as their home.

MLT: What are your hobbies or pastimes?

PO: My wife Susan and I spend a lot of time kayaking, hiking and traveling. We like activities that take us outdoors. I'm an

individual who likes to keep busy, and I enjoy landscaping and community service.

MLT: Tell us a little about your family.

PO: Our son is a student at UMass Boston and my daughter, who is a physical therapist, is married and lives in Lincoln, RI. She's pregnant and will make us grandparents this fall.



Ozzie Osenkowski, keeping busy in his kayak.

MLT: Why have you chosen to get involved with the MLT and to serve on its Board of Directors?

PO: When the MLT was unveiling the renewed Salty at Dunseith Gardens, I spoke with Al Schubert and Ruth Bates about what I could do to help because that corner in Mattapoisett was a special part of my childhood. I had always been fascinated with the park and the little pond with its whaling vessel giving chase to Moby

Dick. This was a perfect opportunity to use my love of landscaping for the benefit of the community that I related to so much.

MLT: How do you see the MLT contributing to Mattapoisett's future?

PO: Working with the MLT allows me to help "Keep Mattapoisett Special." This is where we plan to retire and spend time with our growing family. I feel that the MLT has a vital role in maintaining that unique atmosphere that makes Mattapoisett the place where we love to spend our time. By protecting open space, the MLT protects the environment, helps to protect our water resources and makes Mattapoisett a great place to enjoy the beauty of life.

Shoolman Park dedicated

On June 25 the Mattapoisett Land Trust celebrated the bequest of property donated by Edith and Eliot Shoolman at Brandt Beach.

For many years the Shoolmans were supporters of numerous projects in town. When Edith died, part of her bequest to the MLT was a one-acre parcel. A passive recreation park and bird sanctuary was created. The generosity of the Shoolmans will be honored in perpetuity with the establishment of this garden paradise.

Local Girl Scouts contributed to this event by painting bird houses for this and other MLT parks.



Deborah Bresny and Henry Berman, Mrs. Shoolman's executors, help Ozzie Osenkowski open the park.

MLT offered trolley tours, horseback rides and more

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as a site for an expanded program for the MLT.

For many years, the MLT has supported a 10- by 10-foot tent at Harbor Days, with sales of monogrammed shirts and hats plus displays of a large map of Mattapoisett showing the total inventory of conservation property, including:

- Protected state and federal land,
- Protected municipal land,
- Municipal land with conservation restrictions,
- Land trust property (not MLT),
- Land trust property with conservation restrictions (not MLT),
- MLT property,
- MLT property with conservation restrictions.

The plan for the proactive campaign centered on three fronts: maintaining the tent in Shipyard Park, operating a 45-minute narrated trolley tour highlighting five of the MLT properties, and a collection of children's activities under and adjacent to a 20- by 30-foot tent on the Munro property.

The trolley tour featured the Munro property, Dexter Mill property (aka Tub Mill), Field Farm (which has a conservation restriction), Munn property and Dunseith Garden property (location of Salty seahorse). For those not familiar with the properties, a map showing their locations is on

Kids looked for sea craters as part of a New Bedford Oceanarium project.



Volunteers supervised children as they each painted a picture on a large mural

the MLT web site (www.mattlandtrust.org). Tours were narrated by MLT members Brad Hathaway, Ruth Bates, Richard Bates and Ian Broome plus our own selectman, Jordan Collyer. The narrated text including the homework to run down all the history was written by Brad Hathaway and Ruth Bates.

Horseback riding lessons were provided by Julie Craig using the gentle and very patient horse Copper. Elizabeth Richardson and Eleanor Smith both did a great job in organizing the event. The riding lessons were fully booked and twice the number of riding lessons could have been booked if there had been a second horse. The event was a big success and loved by all the kids who had an opportunity to ride the horse.

The center of the children's activities was the large tent on the Munro property. Under the tent were four tables, each with a different craft. The crafts were selected and designed by Diane Perry and Ruth Bates. The number of objects the kids made is a small statement of their popularity. The tent continually had over 20 children working on crafts. Diane and Ruth did a great job designing crafts that were exiting, challenging and fun.

Kids made a wind sock from a paper tube and long, narrow strips of rip stock material. The paper tubes were decorated by the children using paints and crayons. They also made small picture frames using prefabricated wooden frames they decorated with small sea shells, paint and sparkles. The rip stock material was donated by Ron and Sylvia of Eastern Sail and was used for all the banners as well as the crafts.

Birch wood necklaces were made from a thin birch disk that was hand-decorated and attached to a small leather necklace. All the kids did a great job creating unique necklaces. The fourth craft was hand-painted salt dough decorations of seahorses and blue herons. The seahorse is Salty, the Mattapoisett mascot, and the blue heron is from the MLT logo.

Outside the tent, over 50 children painted a mural. The ocean,



A trolley provided guided tours of several MLT properties around Mattapoisett



The land trust's big tent was buzzing with activities throughout Harbor Days

beach and sky background was painted by Ruth and Diane and the children each painted a single element on it. The mural was displayed on the community bulletin board for a week after the event.

Located on the Munro property but west of the tent next to the ocean was the New Bedford W.O.W. (Windows Without Walls) Oceanarium interactive van, manned by program manager Dale Dearnley and six interns. The interactive display was set up under a 10- by 10-foot tent and had a microscope for detailed viewing of crabs and other small sea creatures. Dale and the interns conducted search and find tours with kids to find over 20 different sea creatures.

Finally there was an Old Rochester Regional Junior and Senior High School display of environmental projects conducted during the school year. The displays were organized by Kathy Marx and Lynn Connor, both from ORR.

The foundation of the campaign continues to be the 10- by 10-foot information tent. A great job was done by both Ozzie and Susan Osenkowski who staffed the tent on Saturday, plus Allan and Mary Schubert who staffed it on Sunday.

A measure of the

success of the campaign can be seen from some numbers:

- Around 180 people rode the trolley.
- 34 of the 180 people on the trolley signed up for MLT support activities.
- 146 kids took a three- to four-minute horseback-riding lesson.
- 540 crafts were fabricated by kids during the two-day event.
- 64 hats and 105 shirts were sold.
- Over 35 volunteers helped with the activities during the two days.

The numbers do not give a complete picture. The feeling of success comes from all the positive comments that spontaneously surfaced during the two days. The MLT believes its mission — acquire and preserve natural resources and wildlife areas for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations, educate the public about the wise use of natural resources and work with other organizations having similar purposes — is more widely known and appreciated in Mattapoisett.

To appreciation

We want to thank Monika Schuler of the Spring Meadow Farm, 109 Marion Road (Route 6), for her offer to donate 1% of the proceeds from her farm stand this summer to the MLT. Monika has a long history of supporting charitable and environmental causes, and we are glad to have her support for the work we do in Mattapoisett.

Is community preservation right for Mattapoisett?

By Gary P. Johnson

The approval last spring of a 2% surcharge on real estate tax bills in both Marion and Fairhaven has some people in Mattapoisett asking: Why would anyone want even higher property taxes? If we acknowledge that our neighbors are rational, and not masochistic, then we ought to consider whether the Community Preservation Act (CPA) might not offer benefits to Mattapoisett as well.

The intention of the Community Preservation Act is to encourage communities to raise money to do three things: 1) acquire and protect open space, 2) preserve and protect historic buildings and 3) create and maintain affordable housing. The law does this by allowing communities to impose a surcharge on real property tax bills of up to 3% and then providing state matching funds for up to 100% of the taxes collected. To date the commonwealth has matched 100% of the funds raised through the program; the matching percentage should remain high for the next few years, at least.)

The law requires that each participating community establish a community preservation committee to make recommendations to Town Meeting as to how the money in the community preservation fund should be spent. The law further requires that 10% of the funds raised each year be allocated, though not necessarily spent that year, to each of the three areas: open space, historic resources and community housing. The remaining 70% can be allocated among these three, or some of it can be allocated to recreational facilities.

However, the money cannot be used to replace other town funds; for example, for the operating expenses of a park. Again, the decision of how to spend the funds rests with the citizens at Town Meeting – and if the citizens aren't happy with the program, they vote to withdraw after five years.

With the understanding that it would be difficult for most communities to impose higher taxes on themselves, the

Legislature included provisions that permit a community to ease the burden for some taxpayers. Each community can exempt the first \$100,000 of assessed valuation of residential property from the surcharge. The town also can offer an exemption from the tax to families who meet the requirements for low-income housing, or to seniors who qualify for moderate-income housing.

Although the exemptions would reduce the size of the fund, they would help those who are least able to afford a tax surcharge. The average assessed value of a house in Mattapoisett is now \$403,000 – that "average" homeowner would pay an additional \$57 in taxes if the \$100,000 exemption were included with a 2% surcharge.

While the financial sacrifice per household would be relatively small, establishing the committee and making recommendations about the fund would require a great deal of effort from some of the residents. Is it worth the effort? Again, using the 2% surcharge rate with the \$100,000 exemption as an example, the fund would raise over \$200,000 per year, before counting the state's matching funds.

Are there any areas where we could use \$400,000? Probably. If we already had CPA in place we could have used some of the funds for the library restoration and expansion. Looking forward, we have a historic Town Hall that will require restoration and upgrading. We would like to protect the quality of our drinking water through the acquisition of more land for a buffer around the wells in the Mattapoisett River Valley. And we obviously need to work on meeting our 10% affordable housing goal.

As we look to the future it seems obvious that the town will face expenditures that would meet the criteria of the act. Those costs could be mitigated by getting the matching state funds.

This article is just a cursory overview of the CPA; it might have raised more questions than it has answered. You can get more information about the act from the Community Preservation Coalition, www.communitypreservation.org, or by contacting us at info@mattlandtrust.org. If you would like to help get CPA on the ballot in Mattapoisett, we suggest that you contact us by email or speak to one of the directors.

Citizens of Marion, Fairhaven, Acushnet and Wareham have decided that the goals of the CPA are consistent with how they want to live in their communities. It seems to us that those goals might fit Mattapoisett also. Perhaps the time has come for the citizens to consider the option.

(Data provided by the Community Preservation Corporation) – Gary P. Johnson, president



Town Hall: Where will we get the money?
Photo: G.P. Johnson

Kids Corner

Vernal pools update

In our spring newsletter we discussed what vernal pools are and why they are important. On Arbor Day, April 29, the MLT sponsored a trip for two sixth-grade classes from Old Hammondtown School to our Munn Preserve on Brandt Island Cove to document two vernal pools for state certification. Each student had the certification form to complete; we provided the required photos through our web site. Fortunately, the weather was perfect, the pools were teeming with life and the only casualties were

a few wet feet. We hope more students will be able to find and document more pools in town next April.



*Common Snipe
Capella gallinago
Brandt Island Cove
April 29, 2005
Gary Johnson*

Web site field logs

We have a page on our web site where we would like to document the wide variety of plants and animals on our properties. We invite



Photo: Gary Johnson

*Students from
Old
Hammondtown
School hunt in
a vernal pool.
Front (left to
right):
Meghan Kelly,
Edward Smith,
Brendan
McGowan,
Daniel Tripp.
Rear: Stephen
Kelly.*

you to take your digital camera into the woods or to the shore to see what you can find. We will post photos on our Field Log page. We ask only that you identify the plant or animal with its scientific name and that you tell us where, when and by whom the photo was taken. E-mail your photos to info@mattlandtrust.org. Happy hunting.

Join the Mattapoisett Land Trust!

**Membership Renewal – We only exist with your help!
Cut along the dotted line and mail in your support!**

Name(s) _____
Mailing Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail: _____
Seasonal Address (If Applicable) _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Dates _____

Membership Categories:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$ 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$ 250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$ 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$ 500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting | \$ 75 | <input type="checkbox"/> Founder | \$1000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining | \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends of Salty\$5 (children under 12 years) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | | | |

Please make your check payable to:

Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.
P.O. Box 31, Mattapoisett, MA 02739

We would like to hear from you!

Whether your contributions come in the form of tax-deductible financial gifts or through volunteer services, your support matters! Your **annual membership contributions** support the operating expenses of the MLT. Mowing, inspections, forestry services, trash pick-up, legal and accounting advice are all part of what keeps the organization vital and growing. In addition, whether you are concerned about preserving the scenic beauty of Mattapoisett, maintaining its biodiversity, or fear the degradation of Buzzards Bay waters from septic systems and chemical run-off, there are many ways you can **volunteer your time and services**, allowing for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

To become a member of the MLT, renew your membership, learn more about upcoming events, and find out about volunteer opportunities, **check out our website: mattlandtrust.org**, or email us at info@mattlandtrust.org. We would like to hear from you and welcome any suggestions or comments!



Post Office Box 31 ~ Mattapoisett, MA 02739

Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.

Calendar

Saturday, Oct. 22, 7 am.

Late Fall Migrants and Early Winter Residents Bird Walk

Mike Labossiere has agreed to lead us on another bird-spotting expedition through Nasketucket Bay State Reservation. The varied habitat and the change of seasons make this a great time to find a large variety of birds, both residents and transients. We will meet in the parking lot on Brandt Island Road. We recommend long pants, insect repellent and boots to keep your feet dry. The walk usually lasts about two hours. We will provide a bird list so you can keep track of what we see and hear. **Rain date: Sunday, Oct. 23.**

Saturday, Nov. 12, 9 am.

Dunseith Gardens Fall Clean-up

Join with our local Boy Scout troop in cleaning up the park around Salty the Seahorse as we get the gardens ready for winter. We'll start at 9 but you can join us any time. Leaf rakes, leaf blowers and plastic trash barrels are especially useful in moving leaves and branches to the composting piles at the rear of the property. "Many hands make light work."

Holiday Gifts

As you start thinking about holiday gifts this fall, why not look at the Merchandise page of the MLT web site. We have clothing and accessories for young and old, and you can choose the Heron logo or Salty the Seahorse. You'll not only have a special gift from Mattapoisett, but also you'll be supporting our land preservation efforts to keep Mattapoisett special. Start at www.mattlandtrust.org.



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: Robert Atkinson, Brad Hathaway, Martin Hudis, Luana Josvold, Elizabeth Leidhold, Paul Osenkowski, Blanche Perry, Diane H. Perry, Elizabeth E. Richardson, Eleanor Smith, Allan Schubert, Eileen Z. Sorrentino and Gary P. Johnson, president.

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

Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.

P.O. Box 31 • Mattapoisett, MA 02739

Email: info@mattlandtrust.org