



# The Heron

Fall 2006

The Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc. • [www.mattlandtrust.org](http://www.mattlandtrust.org) • E-mail: [info@mattlandtrust.org](mailto:info@mattlandtrust.org)

## Getting to Know Mike Labossiere and the MLT Bird Club

By Diane Perry and Dennis Perry

Let's meet Mike, as in Mike Labossiere, the president and leader of the newly formed Mattapoisett Land Trust Bird Club. The club was inspired by a conversation between Mike and one of the participants of an impromptu bird walk last winter in Nasketucket Bay State Reservation. At the end of the walk, Mike mentioned, "Wouldn't it be nice if we had a local bird club?" This set up a fast-moving chain of events, and the club had its first meeting on April 27, 2006. Under Mike's inspiring leadership, the MLT Bird Club has been spreading its wings ever since.

Mike grew up in Acushnet, in a family of late sleepers. At around the age of 8, he got up early one morning and decided to head into the woods behind Pope Park. He spent 2 to 3 hours watching the birds. At one point he sat down, and a common yellow throat warbler landed just 6 inches away. They spent, as Mike recalls, "a very long time just looking at each other." So began a lifelong fascination with birdwatching.

As a Boy Scout, Mike was the first member of the troop to earn a bird-study merit badge. The troop leader suggested that he contact Milton Vaughn, president of the Paskamansett Bird Club in Dartmouth. Vaughn lived in Rochester at the time, and invited Mike to his home. The two went for a walk in the woods behind Vaughn's house, then sat for a while near his bird feeders. All during this visit, Mike was asked to identify the birds. It was sort of an unofficial test, and Mike passed.

Mike began keeping journals on birding when he was about ten years old. The first entry is about an osprey tower in Wareham, which he had read about in the local newspaper. Since then, Mike continues to record his observations using a variety of methods – just one of the topics he discusses at club meetings. One method of "journaling" includes writing the date of sighting in the

margins of his field guide. One of Mike's favorite books is a used field guide that he purchased on-line for just a few dollars. It turned out to be priceless, as it was full of notations made throughout the lifetime of the former owner.

Mike is birding all the time. He's always looking and listening, even when distractions such as building a house cut into his birding time. Nowadays he identifies most birds by their songs. He decided a long time ago to develop this skill by listening to bird identification tapes, because he figured that his eyesight was going to go before his hearing. To preserve his hearing, Mike wears ear protection while operating the machinery of his landscaping business.

Mike earned a certificate for a home study course in ornithology from Cornell University, and is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Photography. He has led walks and talks on birding for the Marion Natural History Museum, Sippican School, the Paskamansett Bird Club and the MLT. Most recently, he led a bird/whale watch in late July for the MLT. Twenty people were treated to an awe-inspiring trip to Stellwagen Bank. Mike Sylvia,

(Mike Labossiere)



*Greater Shearwater*

– Continued on Page 2

## Mike Labossiere – continued

(Mike Labossiere)

a well-known bird expert, joined the group. Thanks to Mike L. and Mike S., the novice birdwatchers were able to spot at least five new species to add to their personal life lists.

Probably the most satisfying personal birding experience for Mike was when he was able to grant the wish of a fellow birder with a terminal illness. The woman had once mentioned that she really wanted to see a bluebird. Mike made a date with her and her husband, and took them to a likely location in Rochester. The bluebirds cooperated!

Mike's goals for the MLT Bird Club include: (1) visiting all the local hot spots for birding, as well as areas outside of Mattapoisett; (2) teaching various techniques for photographing birds and nature; (3) teaching various techniques for successful birding (such as how to walk quietly and how to get the most from your binoculars). As a side benefit you may learn, as Mike has, that after connecting with nature in this way, you will find your "batteries recharged."

The MLT Bird Club meetings are held the fourth Thursday of every month in the cafeteria of the Center School at 6:30 PM, except during November, December and February when school is not in session. Alternate locations and dates for these months will be announced in *The Wanderer*. Annual membership is \$10 (\$5 for MLT members).

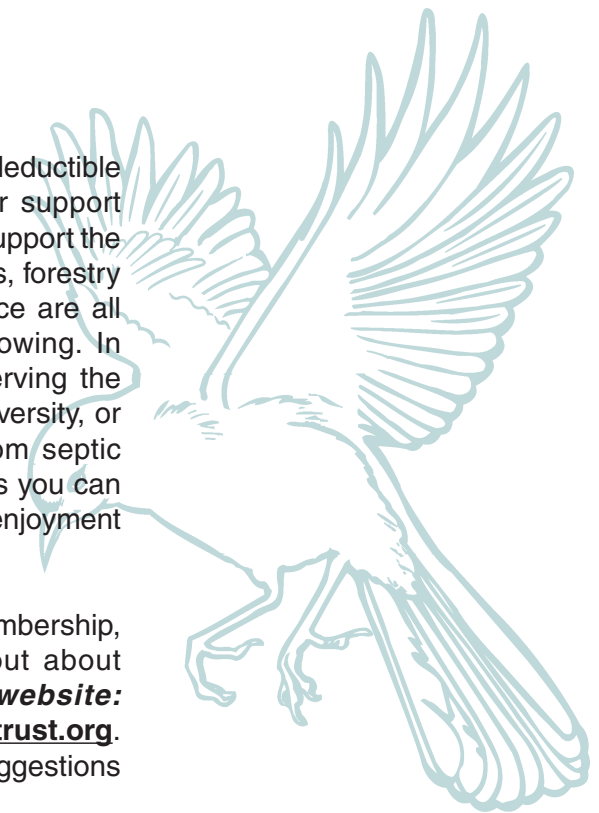


*Eastern Screech Owl*

## 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 new website: [mattlandtrust.org](http://mattlandtrust.org)**, or email us at **[info@mattlandtrust.org](mailto:info@mattlandtrust.org)**. We would like to hear from you and welcome any suggestions or comments!



## Who We Are: Diane Perry

This season's Member Spotlight column features Diane Perry, board member of the MLT and director of the MLT's Education Committee:

**MLT:** *Where did you grow up?*

**DP:** I grew up in Plymouth, MA. Dad ran his own upholstering business, and Mom was a full-time homemaker. I was one of six children, but most of the time the house and yard were buzzing with the sounds and activities of the neighborhood children, too. I have fond memories of building forts in the woods behind our house, going for long walks in the nearby farms and on the town beach, and taking many trips to Myles Standish State Forest to pick blueberries and enjoy picnics.

**MLT:** *What is your educational background?*

**DP:** I have a BFA in Art Education, K-12, from Southeastern Massachusetts University (now UMass Dartmouth), an Associate degree as a Medical Assistant from Fisher College, and a Masters degree from Lesley University in Creative Arts in Learning. I am continually attending workshops, seminars and conferences to stay current in my career as the Art Teacher for the two Mattapoisett elementary schools.

**MLT:** *What attracted you to Mattapoisett?*

**DP:** My husband, Dennis, and I were married a couple of years before we decided to buy a place of our own. We spent almost a year looking at houses and land in close to a dozen area towns. Mattapoisett was the final choice for three reasons. One, the elementary schools were separated into two age groups, with an excellent reputation for both. Two, it is an oceanfront community. Three, a large piece of property in a quiet, wooded area was available. Almost 31 years have gone by since we signed on the dotted line, and we continue to feel that we made the right decision.

**MLT:** *What are your hobbies or past-times?*

**DP:** I love to get my hands in the mud! This goes not only for gardening, but also for working with pottery clay. Walking in the woods, photography, painting, drawing, sewing and reading are other long-time interests. I started birdwatching last winter, and I love that, too!

**MLT:** *Tell us a little about your family.*

**DP:** Dennis and I recently celebrated our 34th wedding anniversary. We have two children, Sean and Laura. They both graduated from UMass Dartmouth. Sean works in Cambridge, and Laura works in Boston. We have several pets, including a horse, a dog, three cats and a rabbit. Den grew up in a large

family in Plymouth, also. Many of our family members still live in the area, so it is just a short trip to visit them, and to have them visit us.

**MLT:** *Why have you chosen to get involved with the MLT, and to be a board member?*

**DP:** I decided to become a board member because I wanted to have a chance to be part of a group that really makes a difference

in helping to preserve some of those things that attracted my husband and me to Mattapoisett so long ago. I was asked to join by another MLT Director, Paul Osenkowski, better known as Ozzie. He explained some of the recent initiatives of the MLT, and they seemed to be going in a very positive direction. One of these initiatives hit very close to home, literally. The MLT, along with the Fairhaven Land Trust, helped fund the state purchase of the former Nunes property. This resulted in the creation of Nasketucket Bay Reservation, a 210-acre, oceanfront property that abuts our backyard. It's simply wonderful!

Dennis Perry



Diane Perry at the entrance to Nasketucket Bay State Reservation

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**MLT:** *How do you see the MLT contributing to Mattapoisett's future (your vision for the land trust)?*

**DP:** Physically and educationally. The physical, of course, includes expanding the protection of land by accepting donations of acreage, as well as by outright purchase when necessary and possible. These properties include plants, animals, water and other related resources that need to be maintained, and made accessible to all. As the property holdings of the MLT increase, so too will the need for more members to maintain them. The education aspect of this response relates to adults as well as children. The Board supports both. I would like to see more residents join the MLT Education Committee, which is geared toward creating educational experiences for children. We must do this in order to ensure the continued growth, maintenance and wise use of our precious resources.



## Kids Corner

### Featured Creatures

The fall is a wonderful time to observe many species of birds migrating through Mattapoisett on the way to their wintering areas. We've described two of these below, so that you can be on the lookout for them in the coming months. And don't forget to take a picture of any unusual or interesting species and submit a Field Log form on the MLT website!

#### **Eastern Screech Owl (*Otus asio*):**

This small, mottled owl (about 10" in length) has both brown and gray color phases, depending on geography. They can live in deciduous woods, wooded lots, suburban areas, and along the coast. This is the perfect time of year to hear the Eastern Screech Owl's tremulous, descending cry that can be at once eerie and beautiful. They are fierce defenders of their nest, and have been known to strike unsuspecting humans on the head as they pass nearby at night. And if discovered during the day, they will often freeze in an upright position, in an effort to blend in with their surroundings.

#### **Greater Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*):**

Greater Shearwater's are slender, 18-20" birds that are dull brown across the back and white on the underside. They prefer the open ocean, spending May to early November in the North Atlantic. This is a good time of year to spot a Greater Shearwater in our area! They are good divers, feeding mainly on small fish and squid and using their partially opened wings and paddling feet to chase their prey.

See photos of the above birds on earlier pages of this newsletter.

## Do You Have Suggestions for Activities We Could Offer Area Kids?

We'd love to hear your ideas on fun, educational outings or events that get kids involved with the land trust and appreciating the outdoors! Call Diane Perry (508.758.9063) if you'd like to suggest an activity that could be sponsored by the MLT.

## Join the Mattapoisett Land Trust!

### Membership Renewal

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Seasonal Address (If Applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Dates (from-to) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Additional donation designated for  
land acquisition \_\_\_\_\_

**Cut along the dotted line and mail in your support!**

**We only exist with your help!**

#### 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"/> Corporate  | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends of Salty | \$5   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other      | _____  |
| (children under 12 years)                 |       |                                     |        |

Please make your check payable to:

**Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.**

P.O. Box 31

Mattapoisett, MA 02739

## Property Updates

### AN UPDATE ON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION

#### ***Vote November 7th!***

Last May 13, at the conclusion of a 4-day-long Town Meeting, the dedicated citizens who had survived the debate voted to accept the provisions of the Community Preservation Act for Mattapoisett at the recommended surcharge rate of one percent. They also accepted the proposals that were made for an exemption of the first \$100,000 of assessed valuation for residential properties and for an exemption for families and seniors that meet specific income criteria. The one change that was accepted as an amendment was changing the two at-large members of the Community Preservation Committee to elected positions from appointed positions. In order for Mattapoisett to begin to obtain funds from the state's Community Preservation Trust Fund the citizens of the Town need only pass the question on the November 7 ballot.

We discussed the CPA more extensively in the spring issue of the Heron – we would only remind you that if it is passed it would provide over \$120,000 per year, before state matching funds, to be used in the areas of land preservation, historical preservation, affordable housing and recreation. Thankfully, the ACT provides enormous flexibility for communities to decide how they wish to spend the funds. While there are minimum requirements as to how the funds must be allocated, there is no requirement that they be spent in any given year. Mattapoisett can raise the money, with state matches, and wait until it finds an appropriate project – a project that is approved by a Town Meeting vote.

The MLT is engaging in this political activity because the Board believes that the Town has land preservation needs, specifically the protection of wells in the Mattapoisett River Valley, that can be met at the lowest cost by obtaining state funds available through the CPA. And the cost to the average homeowner in Mattapoisett will not be onerous, only about \$35 per year. Also, if it doesn't work, the Town can opt out of the program after five years.

We hope you will support the adoption of the CPA in Mattapoisett – place a sign on your lawn, discuss it with your friends, but, most importantly, vote “Yes” on November 7. If you'd like to take a more active role in campaigning in support of the issue, call 508-758-7849 or send an e-mail to [matcpa@comcast.net](mailto:matcpa@comcast.net). We can do more to preserve what makes Mattapoisett “special”.

#### ***Brandt Island Cove Update***

You may recall from our spring newsletter that MLT had agreed to purchase for \$1.45 million the 106 acres on the northwest side of Brandt Island Cove, consisting of salt marsh and woodland. The area is among the most environmentally important in Mattapoisett in terms of providing habitat for threatened species and would offer a unique location for the public to experience the natural beauty of Mattapoisett.

You may also recall that the purchase was only possible because we had the opportunity to obtain a grant of \$770,000 through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. While we mentioned that the Coalition for Buzzards Bay helped negotiate the deal to purchase the land, we were remiss in not mentioning that the grant was only part of a larger grant for land protection on the South Coast, and that other organizations were involved in its preparation. In particular, the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences provided all of the bird information, the Buzzards Bay Project provided the necessary

maps, and the Massachusetts Environmental Trust provided \$10,000 in cash. In addition to our project, the grant is also being used to help fund two projects for the Fairhaven-Acushnet Land Preservation Trust.

As of press-time, the final purchase and sale agreement have not been completed. We still hope to complete the transaction before the end of the year, however, and will be contacting all of our members to ask for their financial support before that time. The word “unique” is overused these days, but this property surely is unique and will offer future generations the opportunity to experience the wonders of nature that we've been able to enjoy. Your generosity can help make the purchase a reality.

#### ***Challenge to the Zoning Board of Appeals***

You may have heard in the spring that the MLT filed a legal challenge to the decision of the Zoning Board of Appeals to permit a drive-through window in a new Tedeschi's store on the property adjacent to our Dunseith Gardens (the former A&P, now the Salvation Army Store). We believe that every member should understand why we took this action and should know how he or she can show support for this effort.

At the Appeals Board hearing, MLT president Gary Johnson expressed our concerns about adverse effects on our property that would be caused by a convenience store with a drive-through window, citing a 1998 study from the State of Florida that documented the extra litter created by a drive-through. He explained how the increased litter would impose a severe burden on our all-volunteer organization to keep our highest-profile property, Dunseith Gardens, looking respectable and inviting. While the final ruling of the Zoning Board attempted to deal with the litter on the Tedeschi property, it did nothing to address our concerns about litter that would undoubtedly accumulate near Salty the Seahorse.

The old bylaw, under which the Tedeschi's appeal was filed, permits a special permit if “the proposal's benefits to the Town will outweigh any adverse effects on the Town...” We believe that Tedeschi failed to demonstrate any significant benefits to Mattapoisett and that the Zoning Board largely ignored the adverse effects. In addition, as an organization dedicated to the wise use of natural resources, we believe that the Town should be discouraging, rather than encouraging, fossil fuel usage.

We were not alone in opposing the special permit for the drive-through. Others have opposed it because of the adverse effects it would have in our attempt to create a more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly zone in the business corridor along Route 6 and the fact that the citizens had accepted such a goal in the adoption of the new zoning bylaws in 2005. As abutters to the property, however, the MLT and Candace Heald were the only parties who had the right to appeal. The Board of Directors thought it reasonable to commit only \$1,000 of our operating funds toward this effort, which may cost ultimately as much as \$20,000. While we wish to protect our interests, we believe that our membership would prefer to have most of our funds used for land acquisition, property maintenance and education. We are, however, accepting donations specifically for the zoning appeal from anyone who would like to contribute to that effort. Those interested in helping should write a check payable to the Mattapoisett Land Trust with “Zoning Appeal” on the memo line and send it to MLT, P.O. Box 31, Mattapoisett, MA 02739.

Challenging the Town's Zoning Board of Appeals is not a position we enjoy taking, but we believe it is consistent with our mission of protecting land to enrich the lives of present and future generations of residents and visitors. If you agree, we would welcome your financial and moral support.





## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL HARBOR DAYS!

Thanks again to the leadership of Martin Hudis, the MLT enjoyed a successful Harbor Days, increasing our visibility and furthering our mission of educating children and adults in the wise use of our natural resources and in land preservation.

*All photos on this page by Gary Johnson*



Diane Perry

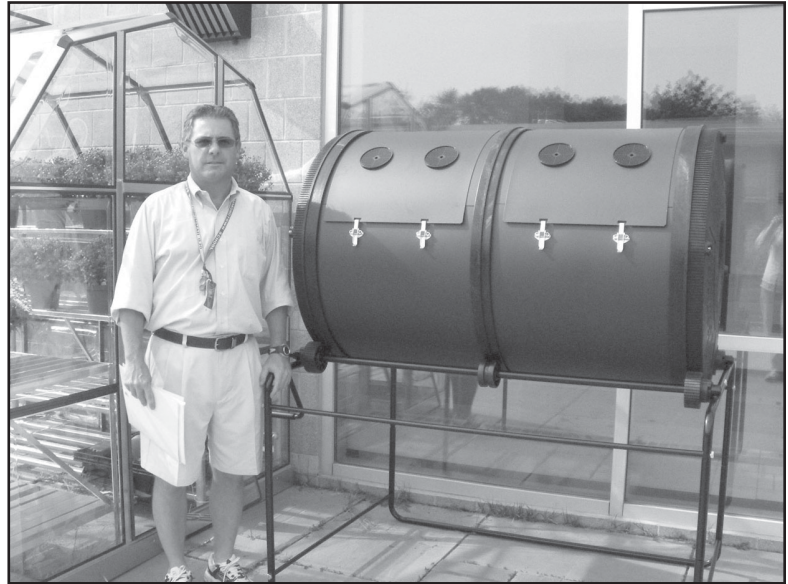
## EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATES

### Composting at Old Hammondtown School

The new science teacher at Old Hammondtown School in Mattapoisett, Mr. Kevin Tavares, recently made a proposal to the Education Committee of the MLT. He explained the need for composting of the plant refuse (weeds, old plants, thinned leaves, etc.) from the newly created organic vegetable garden in the courtyard of OHS.

Mr. Tavares provided great detail regarding the multi-faceted connections between the garden, composting, the science curriculum, the health curriculum, and conservation. He asked the MLT to consider funding the costs related to two different methods of composting. One method involved the construction of three ground level enclosures, made with wooden stakes and chicken wire fencing. In this method, a pitchfork is used to turn and transfer the material through three different stages until it is ready for use in the garden. The other method involves the purchase of a dual-chamber system called the Mantis Compost-Twin. The chambers are mounted on a metal frame, and are rotated daily with an easy-crank handle.

The members of the Education Committee and the MLT Board of Directors voted whole-heartedly to support the financing of both aspects of Mr. Tavares' proposal. As shown in the photo, the Compost-Twin is up and running, quite literally. The ground-level system was still in the planning stages. Students are being involved in all aspects of both types of composition. We look forward to hearing the results of the comparisons they discover. Mr. Tavares welcomes visitors to the garden, and invites anyone with such an interest to call him at OHS, 508-758-6241, or send him an e-mail, ktavares@orr.med.edu, to set up an appointment.



*Kevin Tavares heads the composting project  
at Old Hammondtown School*



*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, Martin Hudis, Luana Josvold, Elizabeth Leidhold, Paul Osenkowski, Blanche Perry, Diane H. Perry, Elizabeth E. Richardson, Eleanor Smith, Eileen Sorrentino and Gary P. Johnson, President

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

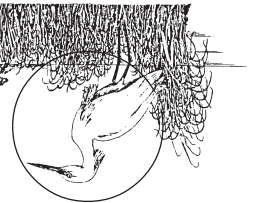
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## Calendar – Spring Activities

**All MLT Events are FREE and Open to the Public!**

### **Saturday, October 21, 10:00 AM – *Dedication of the Hiller Cove Trail Monument***

The MLT would like to commemorate obtaining the Hiller Cove property and dedicate a monument marking a trail that has been laid out throughout the property. The dedication will take place at the Martocci property. Parking will be across the street, at the Friends Meeting House on Route 6. We look forward to seeing you there!

### **Saturday, November 4, 9:00 AM – *Dunseith Gardens Fall Clean-Up***

Join 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 9a, but feel free to join us at 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.

**Raindate: Sunday, November 5**

