

Harpswell's Kids Want to Learn Outdoors, Land Trust Helps Make this Happen

Harpswell Community School students Anya Bachor, Henry Armstrong and Lucy Nelson guessed that 35 percent of Harpswell Community School students like to learn outdoors in the winter and 45 percent like to learn outdoors in the spring and fall.

It came as a surprise to these three students that 86 percent of fourth and fifth grades like to learn outdoors in the winter and 97 percent like to learn outdoors in the spring and fall. When children in grades K-3 were asked if they like to learn outdoors, 98 percent of students said yes or sometimes.

The three students worked with Harpswell Heritage Land Trust's Outreach Coordinator, Julia McLeod, to create and analyze an online survey to gauge students' connection to the outdoors.

Many teachers, too, are interested in implementing outdoor, hands-on learning. But there are some barriers. Fourth and fifth grade teachers cited obstacles such as too many children per adult to keep students on task, lack of content expertise and curriculum requirements that take up many of the hours in the school day.



MARY ANN NAHF PHOTO

Harpswell Heritage Land Trust has decided to dedicate resources to help connect students' learning to the outdoors and to Harpswell.

Outreach Coordinator Julia McLeod is working with teachers and students at Harpswell Community School thanks to funding from Holbrook Community Foundation, Alfred M. Senter Fund, Leonard C. and

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Harpswell Heritage Land Trust's Julia McLeod explores nature with Harpswell Community School students.

Restoring the Tides in Harpswell

By Alicia Heyburn

The favorite place I ever lived was a tiny studio apartment tucked above a garage in Scarborough. It wasn't the Murphy bed or the three-in-one sink, stove, fridge that made it spectacular; it was the view. My one-room dwelling had a million dollar vista over the saltmarsh near Higgins Beach. Every day the landscape changed depending upon sunlight, season and saltwater. Many people find salt marshes attractive with their undulating grasses and shifting colors, but are unaware of all that is happening behind the scenes. It's far more than just a pretty picture.

Salt marshes form the basis of a highly productive food web. An acre of saltmarsh can produce as much plant biomass as an acre of intensely farmed cropland. Many commercial species, such as winter flounder, clams and striped bass make use of salt marshes during their life cycles. A marsh protects water quality by filtering nutrients and pollutants washed down from roads and yards; and they absorb storm waters in their sponge-like rich peaty soil, protecting inland areas from flooding and reducing the effects of erosion. This is increasingly significant as our sea levels rise.

Continued on page 6

OUR MISSION
To preserve and protect Harpswell's natural open spaces, islands, shoreline and cultural heritage for current and future generations through education, conservation and landowner assistance.



President's Message

Hello! For those of you who don't know me, I'm Charlie Johnson and I'm currently serving as Harpswell Heritage Land Trust's president. As the weather turns warmer, I want to tell you about some of my favorite places to get outdoors in Harpswell.

Living on Orr's Island, I love to take a side trip to Houghton Graves Park when I'm going to the library or the post office. It's small, but it offers a refreshing change of pace. You can walk the trail in ten minutes and experience the peacefulness and fresh air, as well as a satisfying view of Beal's Cove.

When I feel like trekking farther from home, I like to visit Curtis Farm Preserve. Check out the article on page three to hear an update about this preserve. The property is interesting to visit for the variety of habitats and a dramatic view of Mt. Washington on clear days.

HHLT's preserves are open to everyone, and there's lots of variety to choose from. You can hike in the woods, explore mudflats or tidepools, relax on a gravel beach or have a picnic looking out over a working harbor.

If you're interested in learning about nature, the Land Trust offers educational programs on our preserves throughout the year. You can keep up to date on programs by becoming a member of the Land Trust or signing up for our email newsletter.

For more information about places to get outdoors in Harpswell, visit www.hhlmaine.org or visit our office at 153 Harpswell Neck Road. Don't hesitate to contact our staff, Reed and Julia, for more information about hiking, membership, volunteering or anything else on your mind.

See you on the trails this summer!

Best,
Charlie Johnson



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PHOTO COURTESY OF H2OUTFITTERS

New Paddle and Learn Series

Learn about Harpswell and enjoy getting out on the water with H2Outfitters and Harpswell Heritage Land Trust!

DETAILS:

Half-day kayak trips:
9 a.m.-12 p.m.
\$75 per person, \$60 for Harpswell Heritage Land Trust members.

Full-day trips: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Bring a lunch.
\$125 per person, \$105 for Harpswell Heritage Land Trust members.

All equipment provided. No experience necessary. Discounts for bringing your own kayak and for children.

SCHEDULE:

Tuesday, June 24
Coming to Bailey Island from the French Riviera in the 1960s: A young girl's perspective
Half-day • Orr's Island

Saturday, June 28
Fishing and Lobstering in Harpswell
Half-day • Orr's Island

Saturday, July 5
Reading and Writing About Nature
Half-day • Orr's Island

Monday, July 7
Harpswell's Rocks
Full-day • Harpswell Neck

Thursday, July 10
Exploring the Maine Island Trail in Your Backyard
Full-day • Harpswell Neck

Monday, July 14
Migratory Fish and Marshes: Stories of Connection
Half-day • Harpswell Neck

Sunday, July 20
Yoga for Paddlers
Half-day • Orr's Island

Wednesday, August 27
Migratory Fish and Marshes: Stories of Connection
Half-day • Bethel Point

Thursday, August 28
Fishing and Lobstering in Harpswell
Half-day • Orr's Island

Sunday, Sept. 7
Natural and Human History of Whaleboat Island
Half-day • Harpswell Neck

For more information, visit <http://hhlmaine.org/events-programs/paddle-learn>

PRESERVE NOTES

CRAIG SNAPP PHOTO

Curtis Farm Preserve Update

Curtis Farm Preserve is known by some as the former site of the boy scouts' bean hole suppers. Others drive right by the property without knowing it's there.

This is likely to change as Harpswell Heritage Land Trust installs signs and builds trails to encourage people to use this interesting property.

Curtis Farm Preserve is the largest undeveloped block of land in South Harpswell. It includes many different types of habitat and has shorefront on Basin and Curtis Coves. There are two access points: a parking lot across the street from 1557 Harpswell Neck Road (Route 123) and a soon to be constructed parking lot on Basin Point Road, around half a mile from its intersection with Ash Point Road.

A group of local people have formed the Friends of Curtis Farm to help HHLT plan and build a trail system and make recommendations for other uses of the Preserve. The trails will hopefully go in during the next year. Volunteers are welcome. If you're interested in getting involved, let us know.

Widgeon Cove Trail Update

The Widgeon Cove Trail is a lovely $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile walk with a gorgeous view looking down on the marsh and mud flats of Widgeon Cove. This trail is nearing completion, with a grand opening scheduled for June 7 at 10 a.m.

The trail is made possible by the generosity of Walter and Helen Norton, who decided to protect the agricultural and natural values of the property with a conservation easement. Part of the property is home to Two Coves Farm. Another portion of the property is the site for HHLT's Widgeon Cove Trail.

Volunteers built the trail from scratch. An extra special thank you is due to Don Miskill and Ron Davis for the many hours they put in to get the trail ready.

The parking lot for the trail is located directly across the street from Paulus Fine Furniture, 708 Harpswell Neck Road (Route 123).

We hope you check it out this summer!



ED ROBINSON PHOTO

Top photo: Curtis Farm Preserve.

Bottom photo: Ron Davis and Don Miskill at Widgeon Cove Trail.

Summer Events and Programs

For more information about any of these events, visit www.hhlmaine.org.

June 7, 10 a.m.

Widgeon Cove Trail Grand Opening
Widgeon Cove Trail, across from 708 Harpswell Neck Road

June 7-8

Harpswell Hiking Challenge
Hike eight trails in two days!

June 15, 1 p.m.

Harpswell Family Outing Club: Father's Day Hike at the Cliff Trail
Harpswell Town Office back parking lot, 263 Mountain Road

June 27, 4-5:30 p.m.

Restoring the Tides in Harpswell
Meet at Harpswell Community School, 308 Harpswell Islands Road

July 8, 6 p.m.

Sunset Cruise
Leave from the Dolphin Marina
See back page for more information

July 16, 5:30 p.m.

Maine Coast Oral History Initiative by the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association
Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, 153 Harpswell Neck Road

July 20, 12:30 p.m.

Harpswell Family Outing Club: Tide Pool Exploration
Pott's Point Preserve, meet at the southern end of Harpswell Neck Road

August 8, 7 p.m.

HHLT's Annual Meeting: Panel discussion on "Our Changing Ocean"
Cundy's Harbor Community Hall
See back page for more information

August 11-15, 8:30-12:30 a.m.

Nature Day Camp
See back page for more information

August 17, 1 p.m.

Harpswell Family Outing Club: Swimming
Johnson Field Preserve, Abner Point Road, Bailey Island

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF CASCO BAY ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP



Enlarging the culvert under Long Reach Lane restores important tidal flow.

Save the Goslings

By Maine Coast Heritage Trust staff

There's an amazing opportunity for you to help save The Goslings—two small islands right here in Harpswell that are among our best known and best loved places to enjoy all the Maine coast has to offer. Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) needs to raise \$925,000 by September 1st to permanently protect and care for The Goslings.

The Goslings are a favorite spot of Casco Bay boaters, and visitors to the islands can explore their sand bars and shell beaches, and watch for wildlife. There are limited opportunities to protect entire islands in Casco Bay, and few are finer than the Goslings. MCHT's project manager Keith Fletcher notes "the long tradition of access to these islands is part of what makes Casco Bay so popular, and it's what we hope to preserve." Maine Coast Heritage Trust needs your help today to make this possible. To make a gift, or for more information about this project, please go to www.mcht.org/goslings or contact MCHT's development office at 207-729-7366.

Restoring the Tides in Harpswell

Continued from page 1

Salt marshes are one of the rarest habitat types in Maine, consisting of less than 0.01 percent of Maine's total acreage. Harpswell's 444 acres of this important resource makes up barely three percent of the town's total acreage, and we have more shoreline than any other town on Casco Bay.

Salt marshes have been deemed a nuisance by some because they are unbuildable, can block access to desirable land and were seen as breeding ground for menacing mosquitoes. Over the centuries, marshes have been ditched and drained for agricultural purposes and filled and traversed by railroads and roadways, frequently without allowing free flow for the flushing tidal water that makes these natural systems so productive.

Restricting tidal flows is like cinching a belt too tight, and it impacts not only the salt marsh but the entire coastal ecosystem. Tidal restrictions reduce the feeding and nursery area available to marine organisms; constrain the export of nutrients to the sea; lower salinity in the marsh, which can lead to the spread of invasive or fresh water species; and reduce the ability of the marsh to mitigate surging flood waters.

Long Marsh on Great Island is visible from Route 24. It starts at the Gurnet and snakes south toward Trufant-Summerton Ball Field and Harpswell Heritage Land Trust's Long Reach Preserve. As reported in HHLT's Fall 2011 newsletter, this marsh is one of Harpswell's greatest natural resources, and it is getting even better thanks to a project that is restoring the free flow of nutrient-rich tidal waters.

Long Reach Lane crosses the middle of the marsh in Baxter State Park's Authority Austin Cary Lot. Until this winter, there was a skimpy 30-inch concrete culvert under the road that provided the only means for salt

water movement into the upper marsh. Upstream of the road crossing, where the tide could not reach its full height, fresh water plants such as cattail and nonnative common reed (*Phragmites australis*) competed with native smooth cordgrass and salt meadow hay, indicating the lack of salt water flow. Downstream the marsh fans out and supports a healthy mix of plants and aquatic life.

This is the site of Harpswell's newest tidal restoration project! MaineDOT chose the site to offset the negative impacts of the replacement of the Martin's Point Bridge between Falmouth and Portland. The 30-inch culvert was replaced with a 6 by 12 foot concrete box this winter.

MaineDOT has contracted with the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership to monitor the marsh for five years and document changes. Upstream of the new box culvert they expect over time to find more mud flat, less freshwater species and a deeper channel.

This is the newest, but not the only tidal restoration site in town. Bethel Point Road recently got a large new culvert, and although this project was not specifically designed to restore unimpeded tidal flow, it will certainly have a positive impact on the marsh, mudflat and water quality at the head of Hen Cove. Wallace Shore Road, a private road off Cundy's Harbor Road, is another site where landowners are in discussion with the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership about options to replace two undersized culverts, which will improve the salt marsh.

Learn more by joining a public walk at Long Marsh titled, Restoring the Tides in Harpswell. See page 3 for more information.

Land Conservation Benefits Everyone

By Ed Robinson

Harpswell Heritage Land Trust's list of conservation projects is ambitious, and the Lands Committee and Executive Director Reed Coles work hard to bring as many projects as possible to fruition. Recent successes are made possible by strong membership support, grants from foundations and federal and state governments and collaboration with other conservation organizations.

Conserving land for future generations is a benefit to everyone who loves or lives in Harpswell. Natural undeveloped land protects clean water, wildlife habitat and the scenic nature of our town. Many people enjoy the access to trails and to the shore that HHLT ensures will be there forever.

One of the Land Trust's recent conservation successes is the pending purchase of part of Liberty Farm on Harpswell Neck. Liberty Farm lies just inside the Harpswell town line on the west side of Harpswell Neck Road (Route 123). In combination with other nearby conserved land, this area encompasses one of the largest natural areas in town, with beautiful and productive salt marshes, healthy forest and a rich history.

Native Americans crossed this neck of land at high tide with their lightweight canoes. In the mid 1700's, the Skolfield family set up ship building operations on Middle Bay. Today there is still active farming on the rolling fields and commercial shellfish harvesters rely upon the mud flats.

The new purchase will add to the existing Skolfield Shores Preserve, and will ensure that a historic access point for clambers will be forever open for public use. The original farmhouse will be retained by the owners.



REED COLES PHOTO

The purchase is made possible by successful grant applications to the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant program and the Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program, which were made in partnership with Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust and Maine Coast Heritage Trust as part of the Middle Bay Wetlands Partnership.

The Skolfield family has been in Harpswell for many generations, and living descendants felt a great responsibility to see that these unique lands are protected forever. Eini Lowell, now living in Oregon, wrote that "her grandfather often spoke of wanting to protect Liberty Farm from development."

Harpswell is fortunate to have so many residents and landowners who see value in conserving and making available for public use some of the special places in our beautiful coastal community. I'm sure the pileated woodpeckers, Baltimore orioles, ospreys, deer, raccoons and moles are also happy to have such valuable habitat.

Perhaps you are interested in conserving the special values of your property. Please contact Reed Coles to start the conversation.

Forever open for public access and natural for wildlife habitat: HHLT will purchase almost 14 acres of forest with 1660 feet of shoreline on Harpswell Neck.

Harpswell's Kids Want to Learn Outdoors, Land Trust Helps Make this Happen

Continued from page 1

Mildred E. Ferguson Foundation, Margaret E. Burnham Trust, an additional foundation that wishes to remain anonymous, and generous membership donations.

This June, McLeod will bring Kindergarten students on a field trip to Houghton Graves Park to learn about animal and plant habitat needs. Other field trips and in-school programs are in the works.

McLeod is also leading a new "Explore Harpswell" after school program at Harpswell Community School. The program is filled to capacity with students eager to spend time outdoors after school, and parents eager to help them do that.

"When I was a kid we used to spend lots of time outdoors," one parent noted. "Kids just don't do that anymore."

This isn't due to lack of interest. The top reasons why fourth and fifth grades like to spend time outdoors:

"It's fun," "I spend time with friends," and "There's lots to do."

Students also see the benefits of having natural areas to visit. One hundred percent of fourth and fifth graders said they agree with the statement: "It is important for people to have natural areas to visit." Ninety-eight percent agreed with "Nature is important to me," "Water is important to me," and "I want to take action to protect nature."

Besides its work with Harpswell Community School, HHLT also provides outdoor programming for the Harpswell Coastal Academy, the town's scout troops, and the general public through the Harpswell Family Outing Club and Nature Day Camp (see the article to the right and page 8 for more information).

Research shows that time spent outdoors is good for you. Let's get kids started young!



JULIA MCLEOD PHOTO

Harpswell Family Outing Club

One year after forming, the Harpswell Family Outing Club is going strong. The goal of the group is to build community around enjoying the outdoors. Outings are free and open to all. The group is a collaborative project of the Harpswell Recreation Department, Harpswell Community Nursery School and Harpswell Heritage Land Trust. We hope you'll join us for an outing this summer. Find more information at <http://hhlmaine.org/events-programs/harpswell-family-outing-club/>.



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Join us this summer!

Second Annual Sunset Cruise

July 8, 6-8 p.m.

Leaving from the Dolphin Marina

In 2014, Harpswell Heritage Land Trust's Sunset Cruise will take us around Bailey Island towards the Islands and shoreline of eastern Casco Bay.

Join us on Casco Bay Ferry Lines Aucocisco to take in Harpswell's breathtaking scenery. Enjoy the wild shorelines of Harpswell's Islands. Keep an eye out for seals, dolphins, eagles, shore birds, and more. Enjoy finger foods, wine, beer and soft drinks. Chat with friends, listen to live music, and learn about cultural and natural history. Support the work of the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust.

Tickets are \$50 for adults and \$25 for children 12 and under.

Annual Meeting

August 8, 7 p.m.

Cundy's Harbor Community Hall

You're invited to Harpswell Heritage Land Trust's Annual Meeting. This year we will feature a panel discussion titled, "Our Changing Ocean."

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. This free event features refreshments and door prizes. The panel discussion will follow a short business meeting at 7 p.m.



CHRIS BALES PHOTO



CURT CHIPMAN PHOTO

Nature Day Camp

August 11-15, 8:30-12:30 a.m.

Kids ages 6-11 are invited to explore the amazing natural diversity of Harpswell. Campers discover nature in Harpswell through hands-on exploration and fun! Activities include digging for clams, catching critters in tidepools, playing games, and nature journaling. Camp is at a different Harpswell location each day.

Parent and Grandparent volunteers are welcome. Exploring and learning happens rain or shine.

The fee for one week of camp is \$75/child. Scholarships are available. For more information and to register: <http://hhlmaine.org/events-programs/nature-day-camp/>.