



1983
CELEBRATING
35 YEARS OF
CONSERVATION
2018

SPRING 2018

Celebrating 35 Years of Conservation and Education

By Doug Warren

The beauty of nature is almost everywhere you look in the town of Harpswell: the majestic, ever-changing ocean; the rugged, rocky coastline; the forested hillsides; the spectacular sunsets. But if you look closely at this natural bounty, here and there you might also detect the hand of man.

For the past 35 years, Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT) has been working to preserve the unique beauty of our coastal community and to ensure access for visitors and residents who live and work along the shore. That effort has made a major difference in the town and helped make Harpswell the place we love today.

As of the beginning of this

year, HHLT has conserved 1,621 acres of land. Of this conservation land, 517 acres are in preserves, which are owned by the land trust and always open to the public. The rest are protected by conservation easements, which restrict future development on privately owned property. Some of these easement properties allow public access.

HHLT also maintains about seven miles of hiking trails and provides access to beaches, tidal pools and important clam-



CURT CHIPMAN PHOTO

digging flats. The familiar HHLT roadside preserve signs extend an invitation to explore nature to passersby both young and old.

Of course, conserved lands benefit not only human visitors, but also the various forms of wildlife that reside there. Migratory birds, shellfish and other animals depend upon Harpswell's forests, fields and wetlands. Healthy fisheries and verdant landscapes are vital to the town's economy and its marine culture.

One of the land trust's core missions has always been to connect people with the great outdoors, and clearly that effort is having an impact. During its 35 years of existence, HHLT has grown to include around 800 member families and more than 150 volunteers, while offering more than 60 educational programs annually. The land trust is fully accredited and has built its own headquarters, on

donated land, that includes a popular community meeting room.

That growth has been acknowledged and applauded.

"I have seen many changes to my beloved Harpswell in my lifetime," said Selectman David I. Chipman. "The land trust has done everything I would have, if I had the singular power, to protect our heritage, preserve open space, defend diversity of wildlife and teach our children to understand and respect their environment."

Consider, for a moment, how different Harpswell might be if HHLT had not come into existence in 1983. For example, just after the turn of the century, two signature open spaces in Harpswell – Skolfield Farm on the Brunswick town line and Johnson Field on Bailey Island – were threatened with imminent development. Construction of

Celebrate with us!

- **Read and learn.** We are featuring some of the people who have made HHLT a success and the interesting human and natural history of our preserves in our email newsletter and on our website.
- **Attend a program.** This year we are offering an event or educational program at a different preserve or trail each month. This is on top of our busy schedule of programs for all ages, including seasonal celebrations and a community nature journaling initiative. Check the back of this newsletter for summer events.
- **Join us.** A donation of any size makes you a member, and you get a car decal, event postcards, newsletters, a discount for Nature Day Camp and the satisfaction of making a difference in the town you love. Please join using the enclosed envelope or online.
- **Come to our special anniversary Annual Meeting** on Sat., July 14 at the Elijah Kellogg Church. There will be free activities to choose from all morning and into the early afternoon. Our featured speaker will be Richard Blanco, President Obama's 2013 Inaugural Poet!

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Our Mission:

To preserve and protect Harpswell's natural resources, cultural heritage, and access to the outdoors through targeted conservation, responsible stewardship and education.

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The Future of Harpswell Heritage Land Trust

By Alicia Pulsifer Heyburn

ALICIA HEYBURN PHOTO

Last summer, as a Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT) outing, I set off from Lookout Point with a few other paddlers to kayak in Middle Bay. I felt fortunate to have a convenient launch site owned and maintained by the town and oodles of tempting destinations, including HHLT's Crow Island and the new Helen and Walter Norton Preserve on Birch Island. With HHLT, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Island Trail Association and others all working together in Middle Bay, we are privileged to have so many protected places and recreational opportunities just on the western edge of town!

Maine has one of the most active land trust communities in the nation, with more land



trusts per capita than any other state. Collectively, Maine's 75+ conservation organizations have protected a little more than 2.5 million acres, which includes 1,621 acres protected by HHLT. While protecting just over 10

percent of our town is an accomplishment, it is also a responsibility, for HHLT is obliged to protect land it is entrusted in perpetuity. So, how much is enough, and what shall be the focus our next 35 years?

In his 2016 book, *Half-Earth*, the great biologist, E.O. Wilson, creates a call to action to protect half of the planet's surface – land and oceans. Fifty percent! Right now, about 15 percent of the Earth's land and 10 percent of its waters are protected. Why one half? Why not one quarter or one tenth?

Because large plots, whether they already exist like Baxter State Park or can be created by connecting smaller plots, as HHLT does in Harpswell, support more ecosystems and the species inhabiting them. And biodiversity means a healthy

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Celebrating 35 Years of Conservation and Education

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any kind on these landmark properties would have altered the landscape of Harpswell forever.

HHLT stepped up to the plate and launched the Special Places for Harpswell Campaign, which raised \$1.7 million to purchase the properties and create the Skolfield Shores Preserve and the Johnson Field Preserve at Mackerel Cove. Future generations of Harpswell residents and visitors will benefit from the transforming efforts of HHLT volunteers and other community members.

The Special Places campaign also transformed HHLT, which for many years had been run

entirely by volunteers and had just hired Thomas "Spike" Haible as its first executive director. Today, the HHLT has three part-time staff members, Executive Director Reed Coles, Outreach Coordinator Julia McLeod and new Stewardship and Communications Coordinator Andrea Stevens. In 2014, HHLT created its Forever Fund to create an endowment to ensure that the organization will have the resources to care for preserved properties forever.

Pressure from continuing development and the increasingly evident impacts of climate change will continue to challenge Harpswell and its visitors and

residents in the future. HHLT stands ready to meet those challenges, with the support of its dedicated volunteers and supporters. As part of its anniversary celebration, HHLT is seeking to recruit 200 new members.

"During the past 35 years, lots of forward-looking Harpswellians have laid the groundwork for preserving the natural beauty of the town and its heritage," said HHLT Board of Trustees member John Boomer. "Now we need to ensure that the preserves can be protected forever and that our town is prepared for the future, whatever it may hold."

NEWS AND UPDATES

CURT CHIPMAN PHOTO

Land Conservation

The Lands Committee and staff continue to pursue new land conservation opportunities.

Stewardship

The Stewardship Committee and our stewards continue to work hard to maintain and improve our preserves and trails for public use and habitat values, as well as to monitor and enforce our conservation easements.

Otter Brook Trail Opening

We hope you can join us for the grand opening of the trails at the new Otter Brook Preserve on June 2! Here is the schedule:

- 8:30-9:30 a.m. Guided walk on the Otter Brook trails
- 9:30-10 a.m. Reception at the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust office, 153 Harpswell Neck Road
- 10-10:30 a.m. Opening celebration remarks
- 10:45 a.m.-12 p.m. Two more guided walks to choose from

Community Outreach and Education

Harpswell Community School

This school year, students at Harpswell Community School will participate in more than 70 hours of hands-on, place-based, mostly outdoor science learning provided at no cost to the school. This enrichment for our local elementary school is provided by Harpswell Heritage Land Trust and is made possible by funding from the Holbrook Community Foundation.

Annual Meeting

This year, to celebrate our 35th anniversary, we're changing up our Annual Meeting. It will be on Saturday, July 14 and we will offer a variety of short workshops and activities during the morning, lunch options and an inspiring speaker at 1 p.m.: poet Richard Blanco. Check out the full schedule on our website: hhltmaine.org.



RICHARD BLANCO

We welcome Andrea Stevens as our third staff member!

Andrea writes: On a recent afternoon when spring was in the air, I suggested to my family that we take a walk in Harpswell. It didn't take much to convince them that Stover's Point Preserve might be a good destination – the beach and tidal pools for my shell-rock-driftwood collector and critter curious daughter, and the expansive views and promise of waterfowl to satisfy my husband's interest in photography. This was just a few days after I learned that I would be joining the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT) team as a Stewardship and Communications Coordinator, so I was eager to explore the area.

We found the Preserve entrance sign topped with a row of carefully balanced cairns. We watched male red-breasted mergansers dancing on the water for their mates, a snowy egret foraging in a tide pool, and searched for "lucky" stones among the many shells and snails. On our way home, my daughter caught sight of a bald eagle feasting in a roadside field along Harpswell Neck Road.



ANDREA STEVENS

Moments like these are the reason I chose to learn and work in conservation and ecology. I spent a few years studying environmental management and plant ecology in graduate school, followed by jobs in stewardship and outreach for conservation organizations on Nantucket, the Pinelands of New Jersey, suburban Philadelphia and most recently with the Cathance River Education Alliance in Topsham. My interests have always been drawn to the coastal landscape and the importance of community-based conservation.

As I transition into this new position with HHLT, I look forward to meeting and learning from all of you and finding ways I can best contribute to the continued success of local conservation and land stewardship in Harpswell.



"Even though I've lived on the Harpswell islands all my life, it wasn't until I got involved with the HHLT that I discovered the beautiful set of preserves that they maintain here. These trails represent everything that I love about life in Maine – rocky beaches, towering pine forests, tide pools teeming with sea stars and hermit crabs, sunny meadows and so much more – and taking the time to explore them has allowed me to rediscover my love for the islands we call home."
– Emma Levy



"Thanks to Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, my children not only have access to Harpswell's exceptional outdoor spaces, but they are also able to observe first-hand endangered Atlantic salmon eggs hatching, assist researchers track the intercontinental flights of great blue herons, and enjoy fireside hot chocolate with friends. Harpswell Heritage Land Trust and its educational programs greatly enrich our community and its children." – Amanda Shearin



"Supporting local land trusts like HHLT is an important way to help preserve nature, nurture the Earth and provide opportunities to keep exploring. Getting outside on beautiful trails like those on HHLT's Curtis Farm Preserve are always good for my physical, mental and spiritual health!"
– Craig Snapp



"I think the work the Land Trust is doing is invaluable. Acquiring valuable properties and turning them into places of refuge, not only for the animals and birds, trees and shrubs, but for the residents and visitors to our area, enriches us all. The Nature Camp has provided my grandchildren with opportunities to explore the environment and to learn how fragile it is. HHLT is helping us all to recognize the need to maintain a balance between commercial growth and protecting our resources. I am such a strong believer in protecting our environment and in educating people about taking care of the treasures we have, so I feel huge gratitude for all HHLT is doing to that end."
– Kathy Goodrich



"I like the school visits and science we learn from Ms. Julia."
– Morgandy, third grader at Harpswell Community School

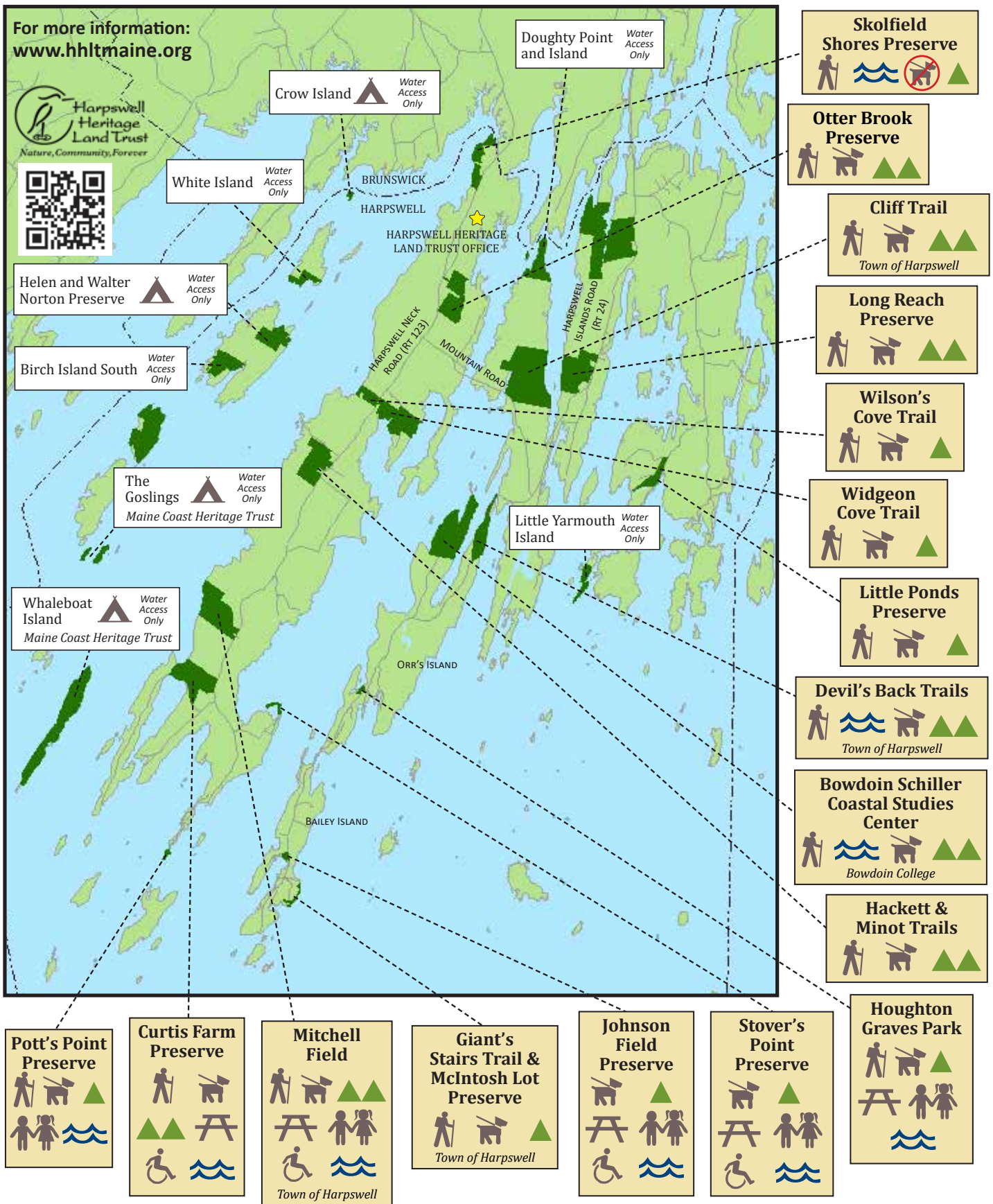


"My life depends upon open spaces, clean air and water, free of chemical pollution. We no longer have DDT to worry about, but there are many other pollutants that could threaten the Casco Bay area where my mate and I raise our young." – Bald eagle



"We were delighted to discover the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust last summer, our first in Harpswell, with its exceptional programs and progressive environmental leadership. What a wonderful introduction to a special place on earth." – Barbara Aiken and Alan Calhoun

EXPLORE HARPSWELL



New Trails at the Otter Brook Preserve

By Tulle Frazer, one of the community stewards for the preserve

The 68-acre Otter Brook Preserve was created in 2016 and trail work began in 2017. The trail system will open to the public on June 2, and a grand opening celebration will introduce the community to a new place to walk. When completed, the total trail distance will be around one and a half miles. The trails are wide enough for walkers, snowshoers and cross country skiers.

Trail access begins at a new parking lot on Harpswell Neck Road (Rt. 123) at the southern end of the trail system. From the parking lot, follow the trail and

principal at the West Harpswell School, organized a community service project to rebuild the dam after it was destroyed by two hurricanes. Sam Alexander, his brother, and four other eighth graders worked with Warren on the project. They built a sluiceway in the dam with a board you could insert to raise the water an additional foot. Winter fun returned to the pond.

Sam said swimming wasn't popular there due to the mud, but the mud hasn't stopped children who attend HHLT's Nature Day Camp. Campers have enjoyed finding baby toads, dragonflies and aquatic insects.

Trail work on the northern loop went more quickly than on the southern loop, partly thanks to the efforts of the Keith Brown, Chris Potholm and their children. They built the wide

wooden bridges that you'll see on this section of the trail.

Continuing around the loop, you will come to a small meadow and then will turn left and down a gentle hill. Sam can remember his father cutting hay in this area. White pines grew up in these abandoned fields and many blew down in the windstorm of October 2017. To save time and labor, we rerouted the trail around some of the blowdowns.

Upon completing the loop, turn right to recross the small bridge. As you head uphill, the trail to the left continues around the southern loop. This section is still being

cleared and blazed, but volunteers hope to complete it soon. This loop will require more bridges than the drier northern loop.

Along the southern loop, the trail comes to an observation point that looks out over the marsh. The mound under this point was once part of a causeway that extended across the marsh, connecting Hildreth Road with Harpswell Neck Road. A resort called the Hildreth House, adjacent to Ewing Narrows, opened in 1907. It offered boarding by day or week, a large dining hall and ample grounds for baseball and other sports. Sam's great grandfather's twin brother, James Alexander, helped run the Hildreth House. He could travel between the Hildreth House and his family's farm on the Neck by crossing Otter Brook on the causeway. Eventually the causeway broke down and beavers built their dams adjacent to its remains.

The flooding created great cranberry habitat. Sam and his brother would pick 10 quarts each in the fall. But the state

trapped the beavers and blew up their dam. Of course, the beavers tried again. Sam was rooting for the beavers, and for the cranberries.

Otter Brook and its pond and marsh form the eastern boundary of the preserve. The trails are set back from the brook to minimize disturbance to wetland wildlife, but observations points allow you to get a better view of the water. This mix of freshwater habitats isn't common in Harpswell, which is all the more reason to limit the disturbance to animals that rely on it. Keeping your dogs leashed will limit their impact on animals throughout the preserve.

There are many people to thank for these trails. First, of course, are the previous owners of the two parcels that make up this preserve: Sam Alexander, Keith Brown and Chris Potholm. Many individuals, as well as the Town of Harpswell, contributed money to purchase and conserve the two properties. Thanks also to the people who have worked on the trail. Details about the grand opening on June 2 and upcoming work days will be posted on the HHLT website. Enjoy!



CURT CHILMAN PHOTOS

then turn left to head toward the northern loop. Follow yellow blazes as you pass through rolling to level wooded terrain and continue down a hill and across a bridge. Soon you'll reach the northern loop. For this article I will turn right to go counterclockwise. Soon you'll see Otter Brook Pond through the trees to your right. If you proceed quietly you may catch a glimpse of waterfowl or a great blue heron.

The pond is formed by a dam that is just north of the HHLT property boundary. Sam Alexander grew up across the street from Otter Brook. He told me that he and Keith Brown enjoyed skating and ice hockey on the pond as young boys.

In 1957, Warren Norton, the eighth grade teacher and



The Future of Harpswell Heritage Land Trust

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place for people to live, with clean water, fresh air and ample places to play. With 103.51 square miles of water within town borders, we may just reach Dr. Wilson's recommended 50 percent.

In late March, Tim Glidden, Director of Maine Coast Heritage Trust, opened the annual Maine Land Trust Conference by saying to the assembled 400 attendees, "We have much to be proud of, and we have changed with the times."

Like HHLT, the annual land trust conference was also celebrating 35 years, and it was a chance to reflect, while planning Maine's conservation future.

The pressure is on to preserve lands before they are irreparably altered by development, yet the methods we use are changing, the dollars we need are

increasing and the partners and stakeholders are expanding.

This is a welcome challenge for HHLT. We are small and nimble. We have strong membership support and a great track record for receiving grants. Our education programs allow our youth to grow up with knowledge of and connection to Harpswell's natural habitats. We are fortunate to have an excellent working relationship with our town officials. HHLT's strategic conservation priorities are a direct reflection of the town's open space plan – a vision that was created with tremendous community and scientific input, including climate change predictions.

By serving only one community, HHLT can easily adapt to evolving local priorities such as access to clam flats, the

need to protect clean water for fishermen, desires for locations for educational and recreational opportunities and the need to anticipate where marshes will migrate as the sea rises. Harpswell Heritage Land Trust exists to ensure a high quality of life for all residents and visitors – we are a community organization – and what we do in our next 35 years will reflect what you ask us to do. Community conservation uses the strengths of the land trust to meet needs expressed by people in the community.

By adopting the four strategic operational goals of the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization that guides the work of all land trusts, HHLT must remain RELEVANT and work at a RATE that matches development pressures and local priorities; we need to

maintain RIGOR as a trusted, high-performing conservation organization and finally we need RESILIENCE to defend our organization and protected lands from threats ranging from economic downturns to invasive species.

As a membership-supported organization, we rely on our members, just as much as you rely on us. There is a reason our name includes the word trust and we look forward to entering our fifth decade together, offering targeted conservation, responsible stewardship, education for all ages and many more kayak trips out on the bay.



CURT CHIPMAN PHOTO

Please help us thank these businesses for supporting Harpswell Heritage Land Trust!

Interested in becoming a business sponsor? Check our website (hhltmaine.org) or contact us at 207-721-1121.

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Upcoming Events and Programs

Events are free unless otherwise indicated.
Some events require advance registration.
For details: www.hhltmaine.org.

Birding Walk at Curtis Farm Preserve

Wed., May 9, 7:30-9 a.m. *
Curtis Farm Preserve

Geology of the Giant's Stairs

Sun., May 27,
2-3:30 p.m. *
Giant's Stairs Trail
and McIntosh Lot.
Shuttle service
from Johnson
Field Preserve
provided.

Otter Brook Trail Opening

Sat., June 2, 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m. *
Harpowell Heritage Land Trust
and the Otter Brook Preserve
* Activities throughout the
morning

Harpowell Hiking Challenge

Sat. & Sun., June 2-3 * Take
the challenge to hike eight
coastal trails in two days!

Make your own Nature Journal



Tues., June 5,
5:30-7:30 p.m.
* Harpswell
Heritage Land
Trust * \$2-5
suggested
donation per
journal

Intro to Birding for Adults

Thurs., June 14, 6:30-8 p.m.
and Sat., June 16, 8-9:30 a.m. *
Harpowell Heritage Land Trust
and Curtis Farm Preserve

Summer Solstice Celebration

Thurs., June
21, 5:30-7:30
p.m. * Johnson
Field Preserve
at Mackerel Cove



Annual Meeting

Sat., July 14, 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
* Elijah Kellogg Church and
other locations * Various
activities offered. See website
for details

Paddle to Little Yarmouth Island

Sun., July 15, 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
* Departing from Bethel Point
Boat ramp

Paddle to Little Snow Island

Wed., July 25, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. *
Departing from Great Island
Boat Yard

Paddle to Yarmouth Island

Wed., Aug. 1, 9:30
a.m.-12:30 p.m. *
Meet at Bethel Point
Boat Ramp

History Walking Tour

Sun., Aug. 12, 3-4:30 p.m. *
The very southern end of
Harpowell Neck Rd

Sunset Cruise

Tues., Aug. 14, 6-8 p.m. *
Leaving from the Dolphin
Marina * \$60 for adults and
\$30 for children

