



1983  
CELEBRATING  
35 YEARS OF  
CONSERVATION  
2018

FALL 2018

## Middle Bay Islands: History, Beauty and a Lesson in Working Together

*This is one in a series of articles about the author's research into Harpswell Heritage Land Trust preserves and trails this year. For more of these articles, visit our website: [www.hhlmaine.org](http://www.hhlmaine.org).*

By Nancy West

What is this treasure? There's a pie riding on it. For the most intriguing idea, I'll bake you a pie. You should know that a cherry pie that I baked for another land trust fetched \$360 at auction



(with a bushel of corn thrown in at the \$250 mark). Email me your ideas.

The 10 cm Mystery Object was found at the Helen and Walter Norton Preserve on Birch Island during a beach clean-up. None of the crew collecting styrofoam and plastic that had washed ashore had a clue about its origins. Even David Hackett, president of the Harpswell Historical Society, was stymied.

The Norton Preserve is one of several Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT) preserves on islands in Middle Bay. The others are the south end of White Island and all of Crow Island. You can reach

them from boat landings at Mere Point, Simpson's Point, and Lookout Point.

All these Preserves offer quiet and beauty to boaters, picnickers, artists, clambers, paddleboarders, ospreys, gulls, and fish. They also offer history. At the Norton Preserve, shell middens indicate Native American use. Later, the Durgin family resided, had a boatyard, and farmed the land. Their farmhouse became the main lodge of Camp Narragansett,



*The Helen and Walter Norton Preserve on Birch Island.*

JWM ST. PIERRE PHOTO

operating from 1919 into the 1930s. Does the history of boatbuilding, farming, or camping cast a light on the mystery object?

White Island also has clamshell middens, though few humans lived there until the 1960's. By owning the uplands,

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## Nature and Wellness

By Monique Coombs, Director of Marine Programs for the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association

It should come as no surprise to anyone that I would convey the importance of being outside and in nature with the life of a fisherman. Although, many people do not have the opportunity to work outside every day, or be on the water so often, we intuit the importance of being outside for our well-being, creativity, and mental health.

Tired, salty, sore, and tanned, a fisherman will come in from a long day on the water, sell his catch, and head home with a sense of both completion and accomplishment. If days go by

and a fisherman cannot fish, he can become impatient and exasperated. I've always thought this may have something to do with a desire to work and a need to pay bills, but I've become more convinced that it is everything to do with fresh air, nature, and wellness, as well as achievement and purpose.

Many visitors to Maine in the summer envy the life of

fishermen only seeing them leave the wharf on a beautiful sunny



*The Coombs family (author on left).*

day and comparing that to their life in a cubicle or office. It's undoubtedly not the hard work they envy, but the ability to be outside and with nature.

Everyone would do better to be outside and experiencing nature more often; whether a walk on a local trail or a game of badminton in the backyard, being outside is known to greatly impact wellness, inspiration, memory, creativity and overcoming creative blocks, brain function, and mental health. Many writers credit walking for

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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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## Middle Bay Islands

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HHLT also protects the intertidal zone of clam flats, eelgrass beds, fish nurseries, and shallow, near-shore fishy areas. With the Preserve's 16 acres of high and dry island, therefore, come 47



NANCY WEST PHOTO

acres of protected mudflats and eel grass beds: that is, foraging territory for birds and marine life, with typically stunning Harpswellian views to the south through Middle Bay.

Crow Island's history includes heroic Joshua Chamberlain, sustainer of Little Round Top in the Battle of Gettysburg, governor of Maine, president of Bowdoin College, and owner of Charlemagne, his warhorse who is reputed to be buried on Crow Island. In 2002, the Preserve was a gift from the Holmes family who had acquired it from Chamberlain's heirs. As the owner, David Holmes, wrote in a letter published in the Harpswell Anchor,

"Crow Island reposed for centuries in the town of Brunswick. A few years ago, a lobsterman left Allen's wharf on Lookout Point in the dead of night, came down to Crow Island, threw a line around a big pine and started towing the island toward Harpswell. Unfortunately, the island ran aground north of White's Island and west of Scrag where it rests today...Perhaps in the future, on a big bull tide, a southwest wind will blow the island back to Brunswick. Meanwhile, I now pay taxes

on the island to Harpswell, which has the responsibility for providing schooling for my blue heron chicks, maintenance [of] Crow Island's highways and fire protection."

These three Preserves are worth visiting in their own right. For me, though, they also exemplify remarkable cooperation among conservation

groups in Casco Bay. Just as bird watchers often keep life lists of birds they've seen, my husband and I keep a list of islands we've been to. Islands require boats, and the best are those that someone else owns and operates. (Remember that saying, "the two happiest days of your life are the day you buy a boat and the day you sell it"?) So we volunteered

to pick up trash with the Maine Island Trail Association (MITA) and were able to bag three islands in one day—Birch, Little Birch, and White.

Our task was to clean up marine debris. Our rewards were camaraderie, a sense of purpose, clean beaches, and lunch at the Norton Preserve. This was one example of HHLT and MITA working together. Another is that Crow Island and the Norton Preserve are camping spots on the Maine Island Trail. In addition to HHLT and MITA, Maine Coast Heritage Trust and The Nature Conservancy protect islands in Middle Bay, creating a network of conservation and recreation opportunities.

Whether you have a dinghy, a stand up paddleboard, a kayak, or a cabin cruiser, you can find peace and quiet on HHLT's three Middle Bay island Preserves. You can take a pie with you, but you'll have to submit the most interesting entry by Halloween. I'll post results in the article I write for HHLT's November email newsletter. This could be your 15 minutes of fame. Contact me at NancyWWest@gmail.com.

## Nature Notes from Maine: River Otters, Moose, Skunks & More

A collection of stories and images to celebrate the natural world around us just released by Harpswell Heritage Land Trust.

"This book is full of great stories about Maine's wild animals. The stories are highly entertaining and brought back memories of some of my own wildlife encounters. These are the wild critters that make life in Maine very special." — George Smith, Outdoor News Editor for the Bangor Daily News

The book is for sale for \$25

at Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, 153 Harpswell Neck Road. You can also buy a copy and have it shipped to you.

With 190 pages, 40 interesting and informative stories, 60 stunning photos and 10 etchings, this book makes a great gift for anyone who loves Maine wildlife. It was written by Harpswell's own Ed Robinson.

All proceeds from the sale of the book will benefit the work of Harpswell Heritage Land Trust to preserve special places in Harpswell and educate and engage our community.



# NEWS AND UPDATES

CURT CHIPMAN PHOTO

## Land Conservation

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

This summer, Harpswell Heritage Land Trust conserved 15 acres of wildlife habitat on Harpswell Neck thanks to the generosity of Helen Norton. This project added to an existing 100 acres of conserved land. The purpose of the conservation easement is to preserve natural habitat for the plant and animal communities found on the land and the scenic beauty of the conserved lands from the waters of Middle Bay and Harpswell Sound, as well as from Harpswell Neck Road.

## Stewardship

The Stewardship Committee, staff 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.

We are in the process of constructing a parking lot and trails at the Little Ponds Preserve in Cundy's Harbor and expect to open a new trail in the spring.

We had a busy spring and summer stewardship season. We were fortunate to partner with several volunteer groups to help improve our trails. In June, a team of Navy volunteers worked at Curtis Farm Preserve to install bog bridges, build a new section of trail leading to Curtis Cove, and clean up trash. In July, a Presbyterian mission group from Pennsylvania (see photo below) spent a morning at the Skolfield Shores Preserve building steps and removing piles of old lumber. The Elijah Kellogg Church hosted this group for an entire week as they volunteered with various organizations in Harpswell. In August, incoming Bowdoin freshmen helped spread gravel along sections of the Wilson's

Cove Trail. In September, a group of Lowe's employees built steps and removed invasive plants at Pott's Point Preserve. We hope to continue to work with community groups to help us keep up with our ongoing stewardship responsibilities.

## Community Outreach and Education

The Programs Committee and staff continue to offer a wide variety of stimulating and engaging programming for all ages. See the back of this newsletter for upcoming events.

## Nature Day Camp

It was another successful summer of Nature Day Camp, with five weeks and 81 campers! Some happy camp parents said:

"Awesome! Every day was so well organized from drop off to pick up! My son came home every day saying it was his favorite day!"

"Such early exposure to all these beautiful places in Harpswell will tie their memories to Harpswell when they are adults, who will no doubt support HHLT."

"Every location was beautiful and so diverse! My child loved

exploring each different location, and three of the four were new to us. The camp teachers took advantage of all there was to offer in each place, highlighting animals and features that made the environment unique. Each location offered the group a variety of options for exploring, creating, and playing"

## New Trustees

This summer we welcomed two new members to the Board of Trustees.

### Lew Hinman

Lew Hinman moved to South Harpswell in 2017 when he and his wife retired. They were drawn to the area

by the amazing natural beauty of the region and overall quality of life. Lew brings to the board his experience in land use planning, having spent 16 years on the Planning & Zoning Commission in Connecticut, chairing it for eight years, as well as serving on the Capital Appropriations Committee for four years. Lew spent more than 35 years with United Technologies Corporation in business development, strategic planning and business

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ANDREA STEVENS PHOTO

## Four-Season Island Stewardship

By Doug Warren

Only three wooded acres in size and surrounded by Middle Bay mud flats at low tide, Crow Island might not seem like much to the casual observer. But to Rich Knox, the tiny island has always been “the bees’ knees.”

That’s what Rich’s kids called Crow Island when he would take them there for adventures during their wonder years, and the name stuck. “It was a one-minute boat ride from our home near Simpsons Point in Brunswick,” Rich recalled, “but it was still a world away.”

Crow Island remains a special place for Rich, who serves as a four-season, volunteer steward for the property, which became a Harpswell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT) Preserve in 2002. He proudly notes that he checks on the island “winter, spring, summer and fall” by

paddleboard, canoe, snowshoe and on foot. “Winter is great,” he added. “I enjoy walking on ice over mud.”

Volunteer stewards like Rich perform a vital function for HHLT, helping to manage properties preserved in perpetuity by the land trust.

“HHLT depends upon volunteers like Rich to monitor and maintain our preserves and trails,” said Reed Coles, HHLT executive director. “We all benefit from their dedication for conserving nature’s beauty and wildlife.”

A native of St. Paul, Minn., Rich studied economics in college at Lewis and Clark in Portland, Ore., and landed in Maine in 1987. He rented a house in Brunswick’s historic Pennellville



Richard Knox’s daughter, Sophie, now 22, spent her childhood helping keep Crow Island pristine.



Volunteer HHLT steward Rich Knox celebrates winter on Crow Island in Middle Bay.

neighborhood and first walked to Crow Island from Simpson’s Point in 1988. “I didn’t know anything about conservation back then,” he admitted. After earning a master’s in communications, Rich worked for Central Maine Power before joining Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), the state’s largest land trust, 15 years ago. Today, he serves as MCHT’s director of communications – and he knows a lot about conservation.

He utilizes that knowledge in

his care of Crow Island. The preserve, which is part of the Maine Island Trail system, has a small, natural harbor on the south end with a raised, level campsite that can accommodate up to six people with tents. No open fires are allowed, and dogs must be leashed from April 15 to July 31 to protect nesting birds.

Rich says his duties largely involve keeping the island clean of floating debris, maintaining the campsite and picking up after hunters, who sometimes leave shells

behind and occasionally cut live trees to form blinds. There is an osprey nest on the northeast corner of the island and aptly named Crow Island is visited by a wide variety of wildlife, including eagles, egrets and eiders.

Rich Knox is happy to have a role in keeping Crow Island (aka “the bees’ knees”) a tiny, green gem in Middle Bay. “For me, it’s a passion,” he said. “I love the place and the role of volunteer steward is a pleasure and an honor.”

## Nature and Wellness

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their inspiration. Henry David Thoreau wrote, “Me thinks that the moment my legs begin to

move, my thoughts begin to flow.” In *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy*, Orson Scott Card has suggested that it’s “worth the time to take an hour’s walk before writing. You may write a bit less for the time spent, but you may

find that you write better.”

The time away from electronics and the opportunity to reflect that happens when spending quality time in nature is also important to wellness and

mental health. Being outside with others and experiencing shared joy can combat loneliness and improve happiness, preventing depression and reducing anxiety. When you exercise, endorphins are released in the brain, which have a positive impact on your mood. Exercise also produces hormones that can improve sleep, help release muscle tension, and reduce inflammation.

The more time spent outdoors, whether walking or hiking or a quick jog, helps develop a sense of purpose, which improves confidence and self-esteem, which can, of course, impact other parts of your life including work and social life.

One of the best parts of being a part of fishing family is also giving kids the opportunity to

experience life on the water. When my kids have gone fishing with their dad, it seems they come back with more patience, a sense of purpose and appreciation, a better understanding of time, and they sleep a little better. There are no electronics on the water, just fresh air, open water, and lots of time.

To round out my imperfect comparison, we can all live a little more like a fisherman without having to quit our jobs and fish for a living. By going for a walk and spending just a bit more time with nature, we can achieve a greater sense of well-being, increase creativity, and improve our overall mental and physical health.



CURT CHAPMAN PHOTO

Research shows again and again that spending time in nature is good for our health and well-being.

# Summer Fun and Learning



**Summer Solstice Celebration**



**Educational Programs**



**Annual Meeting with Poet Richard Blanco**



**Nature Day Camp**



# Trail Design and Building: Creating Journeys in Nature for Visitors

By Andrea Stevens

Perhaps you have enjoyed a hike at our Long Reach Preserve, zig-zagging up and down slopes through the oak-pine forests and crossing the sponge-like peat of the shrub bog in the valley. Or maybe you have followed the timber bridges through the wetland forest at Curtis Farm, eventually reaching the stunning scenery of Curtis Cove.



PRISCILLA SEIMER PHOTO

Harpowell Heritage Land Trust (HHLT) maintains nearly eight miles of hiking trails on seven preserves and two trail easements. Our low impact trails offer public access to shores, forests, freshwater wetlands, meadows, and other natural features while respecting the conservation values of these protected lands.

We are very fortunate to have a dedicated team of volunteer stewards who monitor and manage our preserves and trails. Several of these stewards have years of experience in designing, building, and maintaining trails in Harpswell and beyond.

HHLT trails are carefully placed and constructed to ensure the best possible experience for visitors while respecting and working with what the land has to offer.

A trail is “not just a way to get from point A to point B, but it is a journey...it needs to be interesting so visitors will want to return” says Tom Carr, a volunteer steward for HHLT and local trail expert.

Tom points out that trails should be created so that people will want to follow them, rather than finding their own routes, which are often referred to as “social” trails.

Tom has been hiking “forever,” often sharing his love of the outdoors with his two dogs. In addition to his volunteer work for the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, Tom has designed and built trails for organizations in Northern New Jersey, the Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Maine Island Trail Association.

Tom has a keen sense of direction and an eye for siting trails that complement the terrain or the lay of the land,

highlight diverse natural features, and offer positive and memorable experiences for visitors.

But how does a great trail differ from just a good trail? What is involved with planning and building a trail? What are the “best practices” for trails that make them resilient and sustainable through the coastal storms, high winds, and long winters in Harpswell?

Tom explains that when deciding where to put a trail, he doesn’t necessarily use existing trails (deer trails, old logging roads, social trails, etc.). The easiest route is not always the best route. He is cautious of putting trails on steep slopes, which will contribute to erosion. He stays on high ground when possible, looks for interesting landforms, and respects natural barriers (e.g., wetlands) that

may require bridging. How water will eventually flow near or across trails is important to keep in mind. He tries to follow contours (lines of equal elevation) and designs and builds trails that will be easy to maintain in the years to come.

Who will use the trail is also a consideration. All HHLT trails are open to hikers and most (aside from trails at Skolfield Shores Preserve) allow dogs. Some trails are built wider than others to accommodate snowshoers and cross-country skiers.

Once the trail has been designed and flagged on the land, the building process begins. HHLT often schedules a series of volunteer work days to get this done, engaging our own volunteers as well as groups of

college students and community organizations that are eager to work outdoors. Mattocks, fire rakes, leaf and stone rakes, pruners and chain saws are all part of the suite of tools that are used to clear the trail to the appropriate width and height and to make it walkable and enjoyable, offering a journey that will be remembered.

We encourage you to get outdoors this fall to explore our natural and cultural heritage along Harpswell’s well-crafted trails.



Tom Carr working on one of HHLT’s trails.

ANDREA STEVENS PHOTO

## News and Updates

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acquisition; including two international assignments. Lew says, “It was clear early on that the Land Trust is doing tremendous work in the Harpswell community, and I look forward to helping further the HHLT goals and objectives.”

### Tim McCreight

Tim McCreight is a designer, teacher, author, and metalsmith. He received a B.A. from The College of Wooster and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Bowling Green State University. He taught full-time for 25 years, first in Massachusetts and then at



the Maine College of Art, which brought him to Maine in 1988.

Tim has taught hundreds of workshops throughout the US and in Canada, Japan, Mexico, and the UK. He has written two dozen books, produced a half dozen videos, and created Apps for mobile devices. He has served on several boards including the Society of North American Goldsmiths, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, and his local fire department. He runs a publishing company called Brynmorgen Press.

Tim’s childhood in a small town in upstate New York taught him the importance of time in the woods — for fun and renewal, even as a kid. He is a lifelong supporter of innovative programs that make our important natural resources available for future generations and welcomes the opportunity to support the mission of the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust.

**Volunteers make our conservation and education work possible.**

**We couldn't do it without you. Thank you!**

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## Upcoming Events and Programs

Events are free and do not require advance registration unless otherwise indicated. For details: [www.hhlmaine.org](http://www.hhlmaine.org).

### How Are Fishing Communities Adapting to Climate Change & Can Farmed Kelp Reduce Ocean Acidification Impacts on Aquaculture?

Tues., Oct. 23, 6-7:30 p.m.  
at Harpswell Heritage Land Trust • Join us for an informative evening with the Island Institute.

### Animal Tales

Sat., Oct. 27, 10-11 a.m.  
at Curtis Farm Preserve  
• For thousands of years, people have told stories about why animals act or look the way they do. Join us for a fun family walk at Curtis Farm and hear animal tales from around the world!

### Winter Solstice Lantern Walk

Fri., Dec. 21, 5-6 p.m. • Details TBA.



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## Harpowell Day: A Celebration of Traditional Handcrafts and Subsistence Skills

On Saturday, Oct. 13 from 12-4 p.m. join Harpswell Historical Society and Harpswell Heritage Land Trust for a celebration of traditional handcrafts and subsistence skills. This event happens rain or shine at the Harpswell Historical Society Museum, Centennial Hall, the Meetinghouse, the schoolhouse and outdoors.

For all ages, there will be much to see, do and learn during this free event

celebrating Harpswell's history.

You can observe demonstrations of skills and handcrafts, deepen your understanding of Harpswell's rich history, enjoy live music and storytelling, eat

delicious food, experience a 19th century one-room schoolhouse and more!



CURT CHIPMAN PHOTO