



# Brewster Conservation Trust

[www.brewsterconservationtrust.org](http://www.brewsterconservationtrust.org)

May 2011



## HUCKLEBERRY HILL FUND DRIVE CONTINUES

Our effort to buy a major chunk of the eastern side of Huckleberry Hill, Brewster's highest landform, is making progress. Since our last newsletter, we have secured two grants and raised almost \$20,000 from our members and the Charles H. Thomsen Land Fund for Cape Cod has agreed to a \$1,000 grant. We have captured the imagination of the public with our crusade to save the 134-foot high hill! The *Cape Cod Times* produced a CapeCast video of the project (link on our website [www.brewsterconservationtrust.org](http://www.brewsterconservationtrust.org)) and *The Cape Codder* newspaper prepared a breezy article about it last month. If you have not contributed to our effort, now is the time to help get us "over the hump" and enable us to work on other ambitious projects. We need \$70,000 more to finish the job, and every dollar helps. All donations are tax-deductible.



Mayflower: signs of spring

## SALAMANDERS AND WOOD FROGS IN SOUTHEAST BREWSTER

The Trust has secured Jim Harrington's agreement to sell us his woodlot adjoining the Read Kingsbury Town Conservation Area in SE Brewster for \$16,000. In late April, BCT volunteers, led by Jim Van Baalen, documented the existence of a vernal pool in the half-acre pond on the 3-acre woodland parcel.

A vernal pool is a critical wildlife habitat where rare amphibians such as spotted salamanders and wood frogs lay their eggs. This pool was loaded with spotted salamander larva. A discarded tire on the property, 50 feet from the pool, looked like trash to be



removed until the volunteers found Mama Salamander living underneath it. The tire will be removed later.

Help save the wood frogs, salamanders, and this small but crucial niche for Brewster's wildlife.

Harrington vernal pool video at [www.brewsterconservationtrust.org](http://www.brewsterconservationtrust.org)

Left: spotted salamander egg mass



### WAYS TO DONATE

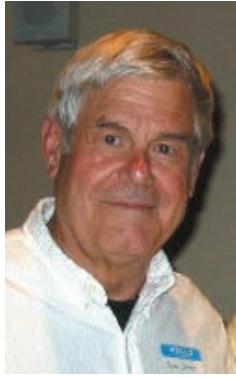
- 1) Make out a check to "BCT" at P.O. Box 268, Brewster, MA 02631 (envelope enclosed).
- 2) Donate at our secure website: [www.brewsterconservationtrust.org](http://www.brewsterconservationtrust.org)
- 3) Call our Treasurer Peter Soule at 508-255-4728 to arrange for donation of securities.

ALL donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

BCT is a 501c3 non-profit organization.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Some of our members ask me how the Trust goes about deciding which lands we should make an effort to preserve. It sometimes looks like we are randomly stomping about the landscape, picking up parcels here and there without any particular plan. During times like these, we have been very active in land acquisition (while prices are relatively low). In fact, there is a method to our madness. We do have guidelines and an approach.



First, we adhere to the belief that not all open space is equal. We analyze each parcel for its conservation value for water protection, wildlife habitat, linkage to other open spaces and scenic views. We have a strategic plan that ranks all undeveloped parcels against one another using these criteria. The most critical open space properties, having multiple values, are noted. As a subset

of this ranking, we have also researched all vacant pondshore parcels in town and have ranked them for importance as part of our Priority Ponds Program.

We believe that the best open space acquisitions are those where Priority meets Opportunity. The most desirable parcels may never become available. We may actively solicit the owner of a crucial parcel, or it may be listed for sale, and we act. The two parcels that we are actively fundraising for right now (see front page) are strategic parcels that we went after and secured an agreement. We did so making a leap of faith that our members and donors will stand by us and contribute the needed funds. We do not have a large treasury or "war chest" to dip into to buy these lands. We must raise money anew each time we target a priority property. So far we have been rewarded with your support. It keeps us going. I hope you will give generously to these pending purchases so we can complete their protection and move onto others while the time is ripe.

Peter Johnson

## CULVERT RECLAIMS WETLANDS

### Sit by the Curve and watch the tide roll in: improving tidal flow to Paines Creek

Have you wondered about the construction at Betty's Curve in West Brewster? It's all part of a plan to restore the salt marsh and improve access for the herring to ponds above Paines Creek.

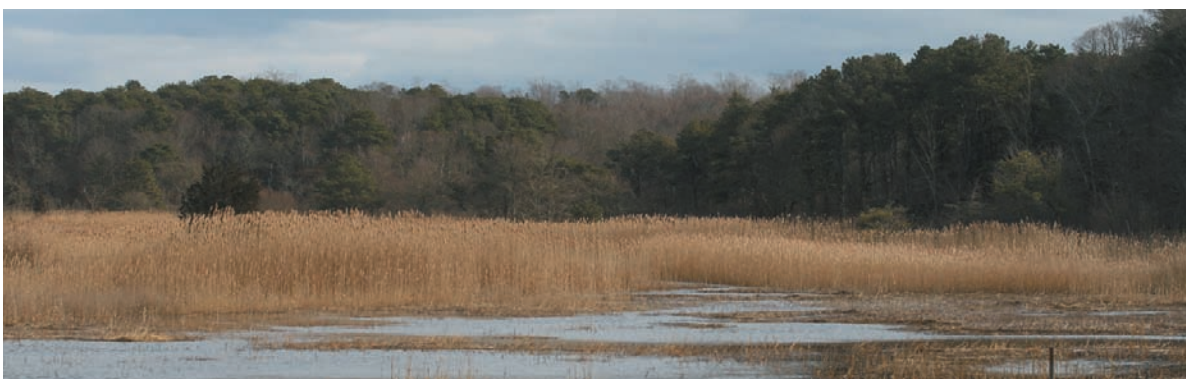
Salt marsh is one of the most biologically productive ecosystems: a nursery for fish; a refuge for birds, reptiles and other animals; a sponge to cleanse water and control flooding. Salt marshes require large amounts of tidal flow to remain healthy, but the marsh south of Route 6A was starved for salt water because undersized culverts under 6A blocked the natural tidal flow from Paines Creek and hampered passage for herring and other migratory fish.

In 2005, the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History and the Town Alewife Committee, chaired by Dana Condit, recommended that the culvert be widened in order to restore salt marsh and assure herring access.

Due to strong support at the local, state and federal levels, this restoration project has moved quickly in the last 5 years, from feasibility studies to completion of construction activities in the fall of 2010.

The 3-foot-wide culvert has been replaced by an 18-foot-wide box culvert and gaps were opened in the Museum's Lee Baldwin Trail to increase tidal flow across the southern marsh.

An event held at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on April 25, recognized many federal and state agencies and local environmental groups for their support of this project which required the expertise of biologists, engineers and contractors. The business community was thanked for their patience during the construction. Chris Miller, Head of the Brewster Department of Natural Resources, was honored with NOAA's Excellence in Restoration award.



Sue Carr

Sue Carr

# THE GRAND OLD MAN OF CONSERVATION IN BREWSTER: JOHN HAY 1915-2011

John Hay, poet, author, naturalist and conservationist, died February 26, 2011 at the age of 95; but his legacy in Brewster will live on.



John and Kristi Hay moved to Brewster following World War II, building a modest home in the Brewster woods with a distant view of Cape Cod Bay.

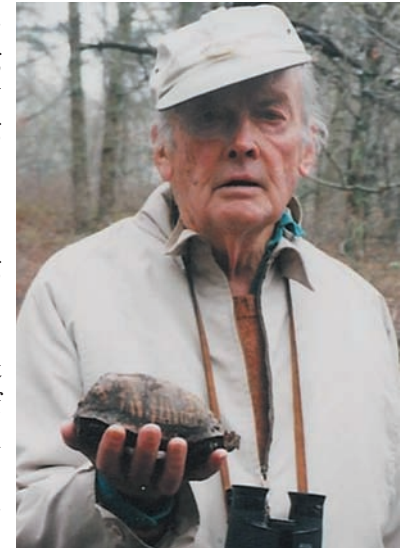
As a member of the brand new Conservation Commission, he went before Town Meeting to convince the townspeople to buy beaches and marshes. It seemed an absurd idea at the time, but was a purchase that proved fiscally and ecologically prescient.

With other parents of young children, he co-founded the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History. Believing in land more than buildings, he cobbled together some 60 acres of land around the Stoney Brook Valley for its nature preserve.

He donated the family estate in New Hampshire to the nation. He supported conservation efforts in Massachu-

setts, New Hampshire and Maine. He and Kristi donated a Conservation Restriction to the BCT on over 50 acres in Brewster, and the Trust named them Conservationists of the Year in 1999.

His writings on the natural world, beginning with *The Run*, the story of the Brewster herring run, won national prizes and recognition. His insights into the place of humankind among the creatures of the world and the deep human need to connect to the rhythms of nature have moved readers for decades. His poetic and insightful writing has inspired a rising generation of natural history writers.



He was a man who lived his beliefs and Brewster is fortunate to have had him as a citizen.

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## BLUEBIRDS IN BREWSTER



The Eastern Bluebird is fighting for its survival. The open woodland needed for nesting sites is limited as fields grow to trees or houses. Their nesting spots in natural cavities are challenged by more aggressive invasive species such as English sparrows and starlings.

Will Hersey, a member of Brewster Boy Scout Troop 77, found bluebirds to be the perfect subject for his Eagle Scout project. His family had had bluebirds nesting in their field for several years, so Will knew they could produce up to three broods a season with three eggs to a brood. He knew that they eat insects and berries and that cold, rainy weather can threaten chicks' survival. He knew that nest boxes, installed in open, grassy areas and monitored for health and safety can significantly increase their chance for survival.

Will and his troop installed 12 Eastern Bluebird nest boxes on town owned and Brewster Conservation Trust land during the spring of 2010. Look for them on Smith Pond, Quivett Marsh Vista, Drummer Boy Park, Paines Creek Road near 6A, and the Community Garden.

Although challenged by bugs and sparrow bullies, the nest boxes produced three bluebirds, eight chickadees and 15 tree swallows. They began nesting in April again this spring. Let's wish them luck in 2011.



Will Hersey

To learn about bluebirds in Brewster and around the country, look over Cornell University's Nest Watch program. Google:

nestwatch / Username: brewsterbb / Password: nestwatch

## WIN-WIN WITH A CR

It is not unusual to have (what initially seemed) a good idea go awry in the application, but rarely have I experienced a good idea turning out to be a far better. Such has been my husband's and my experience in placing a conservation restriction (CR) on the land adjacent to our home.



BCT advisor Mike Lach (center) and BCT Trustee Peter Herrmann (right) counsel a Brewster family on the tax benefits of conservation restrictions.

No one had to sell us on the value of land conservation, but since we're not wealthy, we never felt that gifting our land to conservation was feasible. It was during a summer morning walk with a friend who is a Trustee of BCT when I first heard about the special tax benefits of placing a conservation restriction on land. Within a week, the Brewster Conservation Trust and The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts co-hosted a workshop where we learned the details of conservation restrictions. At the end of the meeting we scheduled an appointment with Michael Lach to explore our options. From that point on, Michael more or less 'held our hands' and walked us through the entire process.

The short version is that we entered into a legal agreement with BCT. A professional appraisal of the land was necessary; the legal document, or CR, was written by Michael Lach after he coached us through decisions designating permissible uses of our land (e.g. recreation) as well as restrictions (e.g. no building will take place on the land); the CR is a binding contract; we retain ownership of the land, thus the privacy the CR insures enhances the value of our home should we ever decide to sell it.

We never thought the town and Federal Government would let us 'have our cake and eat it, too,' but that is the case. The Town of Brewster's tax assessment is significantly lower, and the reduction in our federal taxes is nothing short of amazing. Doing the 'right thing' and having it 'work out right' is a very satisfying combination.

Try it . . . you'll like it.

by Judy Galligan



"IF WE DECIDE NOT TO HAVE A GARDEN NEXT YEAR WE PLAN TO GIVE THE PLOT TO THE BREWSTER CONSERVATION TRUST."

Thank you to Gordon Brooks

Learn more about  
conservation restrictions

at

[www.brewsterconservationtrust.org](http://www.brewsterconservationtrust.org)  
(click on landowner options)

## TRUSTEE NEWS

### Steve Erickson joins as BCT Trustee

BCT has over 700 acres of managed property, and new Trustee Steve Erickson knows something about every one of them. As co-chair of the Land Management Committee, Steve is in charge of record-keeping, making sure all properties are regularly inspected by volunteer managers and any problems are addressed. For him this is the perfect way to give back to the Town and yet enjoy his love of the outdoors.

Although new to the Board of Trustees, Steve Erickson has been a part-time East Brewster resident for 19 years. He and his family had been vacationing in Brewster since the mid-70s and decided this was the perfect place to enjoy retirement. Growing up in San Francisco, he spent summers in beautiful northern California. That love of nature has carried over to his time in Brewster where he enjoys hiking the many trails on the Cape, kayaking on the waterways, and enjoying the Captains Golf Course.

Steve became interested in doing something for the Town of Brewster that fit in with his interest in preserving its beauty. The Land Management Committee of BCT provided the perfect solution.

In his former life, Steve was an investigator for the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, traveling throughout the world, investigating criminal, counterespionage and counterterrorism matters for the Air Force. After AF retirement, he worked for a security and investigative company in the Washington, D.C. area.



Steve has a degree in Criminology from the University of California at Berkeley and an MBA from the University of Oklahoma. He and Judy, his wife of over 50 years, have three grown children and four grandchildren.

## Contributions to BCT

### Memorials and bequests

What could be a more appropriate way to honor the memory of a loved one than to give a donation to the Brewster Conservation Trust "in lieu of flowers"? It's a gift that will help protect lands of special beauty or environmental value in Brewster. The BCT welcomes memorials and records them in our newsletter. The address to be used for that purpose is P.O. Box 268, Brewster, MA 02631.

We also welcome bequests which may be made in several ways. For guidance on planning a bequest or gift, contact Mark Robinson of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts at 508-362-2565 or mark@thecompact.net.

#### In Memory of

Baba  
James & Karen Goode  
Russell & Olive Broadbent  
Philip & Barbara Sousa  
Christine Brooks  
Elizabeth Finch  
Ellie & Peter Johnson  
Roger V. O'Day  
Stoughton L. Ellsworth  
Ann T. Ellsworth  
Paul Flagg  
Betty Flagg  
Jane M. Furst  
Michael Furst & Stephen Marx  
Paula F. GoGuen  
J.P. Raymond GoGuen  
Paul & Dorothy Grueninger  
Susana B.G. Lopatka  
John Hay  
Susan Carr  
Elizabeth Finch  
Ellie & Peter Johnson  
Mark Robinson  
Donald Schall  
Judy & Henry Warner

Colleen Heaney  
Bob Heaney  
Joyce T. Jensen  
Jacqueline E. Jensen  
Andy Kamark  
Andy & Lisa Perkins  
Louis Stoia  
Richard Kingston  
Jane Sterling  
Richard Lazarus  
Leonard & Ellen Farwell  
Dorothy A. Lamont  
Lorraine Lamont  
Daniel A. Leone, Jr.  
Dorothy D. Leone  
Susan McNair  
Jack McNair  
Anna May Meier  
Judy & Bill Engster  
Robert C. Mensel  
Jane G. Mensel  
Frances Michaels  
Robert & Ms. Ann Michaels

Frances Nickerson  
Susan & Elliott Carr  
Elizabeth Finch  
Ellie & Peter Johnson  
Our parents  
Don & Laurie Keeran  
Audrey C. & Robert Peterman  
Audrey B. Peterman  
Estter Rich  
Frank & Diane McGoldrick  
Nan Safran  
Donna & Charles Safran  
Peter W. Schilke  
Barbara Risenfeld  
Daniel J. Sullivan  
Alice Sullivan  
Jim Tobin  
Jim & Paula Nicholson  
Virginia Verrochi  
John Verrochi  
Jane Wagoner  
Cal & Karen Mutti

#### In Honor of

Barbara Albret  
Cal & Karen Mutti  
Christopher D. Birdsey  
Barbara Birdsey  
Ona Blanchard  
Nancy Blanchard  
Brewster D.P.W.  
Tim & Mary Gainey  
Our Grandchildren  
Guy & Marie Berube  
Richard & Patricia Logan-Greene  
Bruce Johnson  
Ellie & Peter Johnson  
Martha Johnson  
The Latham Family  
Art & Anita Ristali  
Jack & Amelia Popler  
Dr. Kenneth Popler  
Robert Jefferies Roberts  
William & Patricia Roberts  
Peter Soule & Roger V. O'Day  
Mark Robinson

Brewster **Conservation** Trust

508-362-2565

info@brewsterconservationtrust.org

[www.brewsterconservationtrust.org](http://www.brewsterconservationtrust.org)

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Vicki Plaut  
Elizabeth Taylor  
Robert Williams

*Conservation Advisor*  
Mark Robinson



**Brewster Conservation Trust**

P.O. Box 268, Brewster, MA 02631

**Save the date:  
BCT Annual Meeting  
Thursday, August 11, 2011**

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## IT'S THE NITROGEN, SILLY

Why is Cape Cod talking about sewers? One reason is nitrogen leaking into Cape Cod bays to cause algal blooms. While wastewater from septic systems is the major contributor, it is estimated that 17% of nitrogen comes from fertilizer use, mostly around our homes.

Private citizens can be most effective by restricting the size of lawn area, or by replacing turf with native landscapes that do not require fertilization, or by living with an old-style "Cape Cod lawn" that is green with weeds as well as grass.

For the remaining turf, test to see if fertilizer is needed. A professional soil test can be obtained from the University of Massachusetts soil lab:

[www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/](http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/).

### **If fertilizer is needed, we should:**

- limit fertilizer applications to a maximum of 1 lb N/1,000 sq. ft. of lawn area per year;
- use an organic, slow-release, water-insoluble fertilizer at the recommended dose; do not spread the fertilizer if heavy rain is predicted;
- evenly distribute the fertilizer using a mechanical spreader at the lowest setting, going over the area two or three times;
- sweep up fertilizer that accidentally lands on paved surfaces;
- leave, at minimum, a 50-foot unfertilized buffer to any pond, stream, wetland, or surface water body (perhaps 100 feet if there is a steep slope down to the water body);
- fertilize only in late April/early May and late August/early September when the turf can best use the nutrients.



Thanks to the Pleasant Bay Alliance and Horsley Witten Group. Funding for the fertilizer management plan is from the Cape Cod Water Protection Collaborative's Shared Watersheds, Shared Responsibilities grant program.