



Brewster Conservation Trust

www.brewsterconservationtrust.org

Spring 2020

Protecting water by protecting land



photo by Bonnie Newman

Slough Pond

It's a fishing place for small mouth bass, perch and northern pike and a favorite swimming pond for the lucky few who know it. Although it boasts broad granite steps it has no real beach, just a sloping side of the road for a couple of chairs or a blanket. A good swimmer can go across and back, or children on floats can play and those wanting a cool summer dip can be refreshed close to shore.



Slough Pond is in the foreground with Walker Pond behind.

It's one of the five ponds in Brewster considered "high quality" and we want to keep it that way. There are few houses around this pond, but its relatively small size, 31 acres and 20-feet deep, can make it sensitive to excessive nutrients.

BCT uses a grid of attributes to determine whether a parcel is suitable to be a conservation acquisition. High on the list of criteria is protection of natural resources. To support drinking water wells in southeast Brewster, BCT has acquired nearly six acres in eight mostly small parcels on the shore or within the watershed of Slough Pond. The one we are looking at now ranks high on the eligibility scale since it is pond front, wetland and part of the wetland system across Slough Road. This lot is only 1.31 acres that may have once supported a cranberry bog, but it is for sale as a possible house site.

For a buildable lot on a clean freshwater pond, \$125,000 is a dream of a price. As always, every donation to BCT goes directly to land purchase. Your donation will help this dream come true.

— OUR MISSION —

"To preserve open space, natural resources, and the rural character of Brewster, and to promote a conservation ethic."



President's Message

Usually in this space, I like to write about some exciting open space acquisitions or new BCT initiatives. But the last several months have been too exceptional to not talk about how the pandemic has affected us.

Few of us have lived through such a period when fear and uncertainty gripped us. We are instructed to avoid contact and respect social distancing, not knowing where the corona virus may lurk, not knowing who may be affected. During these dark times we look for signs of hope and stories of heroism and goodwill – medical staff who put their lives on the line, staff in stores who ensure we have access to life's necessities, volunteers who make sure those in need are not left behind. We also look for places we can go to find calmness and restore our souls.

I find that I am evermore thankful for the community I live in where these stories and these places are plentiful. I'm reminded of some of the findings in the Brewster Vision Plan workshops. What people treasured in Brewster and what they saw for the future revolved mostly around the town's social and physical character: a diverse and caring community with a rural feel created, in part, by open space. In the past several months I have found myself missing the friendly smiles of a small town, but restored when I walk on the numerous trails in Brewster. There, I am reminded of the larger continuity of life.

All of us at BCT would like to encourage everyone to take advantage of the natural environment Brewster offers, of the trails around ponds and bogs, through tall oaks and pines, to see life returning as Spring turns to Summer. Please practice social distancing and please be thankful for the community we live in.

Hal Minis, *BCT President*

A Walk in the Woods: the Eddy Bay Trail

by Pat Bertschy

A partially restored stone foundation from an 1870s barn marks the entrance to a short but varied forest trail. The first section is a holly grove which in winter is decorated with an abundance of red berries and often layers of white snow. Farther along, the bench in the center of a white-pine grove is a perfect spot for a yoga stretch. I lie there on my back surrounded by towering white pines and a clear blue sky. I say a silent thanks to Greg Scalise and his Eagle Scout Troop for installing this bench. Farther on are remains of an old boundary-marking stone, a variety of oaks and pines and another bench. Storms have left massive oaks on the ground, one with as many as 100 rings.

This is a trail for all seasons. In winter, the forest breaks the strong winds and the sun shines through bare branches. Leaves shade the walk in the heat of the summer. The trail is wide enough to avoid ticks and poison ivy. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the trail is the climax for my 4-year-old granddaughter. A huge boulder, a glacial outcropping, rises out of the ground like a giant whale, or a castle for her to climb and defend. Although a dog owner's paradise, the neighbors respect these woods. I have rarely found dog droppings left behind.

The trail meanders to the Cape Cod Bay overlook - the highest natural bluff in Brewster. On a clear day, the view stretches from Plymouth to the Provincetown Monument. A grove of magnificent wolf oaks recall the open fields once here.

The entire walk to the Bay takes just about a half an hour, but it can take twice that if you want to stop and soak it all in. There is something for everyone.

The entrance to the Eddy Bay Trail is on the north side of Lower Road between the Cemetery and the Captain Cobb House, home of the Brewster Historical Society.



Do you have a favorite trail or place of beauty?

Tell us about it at:

bct@brewsterconservation.org

BCT Celebrates its 200th Property

In 1983 eleven foresighted citizens realized that rapid population growth was covering over the open land that defined Brewster. Encouraged by outright donations of cash and land, they founded the Brewster Conservation Trust that has now, after 37 years, protected its 200th property.

STONY BROOK VALLEY

The 200th property is a mere 1.18 acres off Paines Creek Road, but it consolidates nearly 120 acres of conservation land along the Stony Brook Valley. This area, one of Brewster's most prized sites, contains not only the herring run but habitat for great numbers of birds, deer, muskrats, and many more.



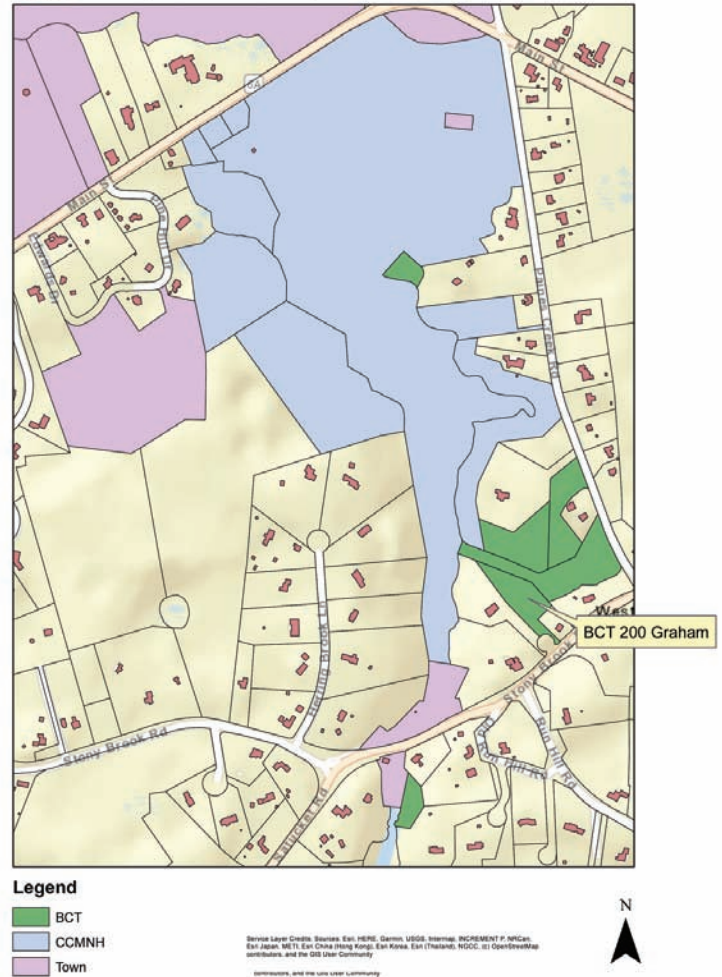
The marshes on the Paines Creek side of Route 6A, which depend on clean water from Stony Brook, are an important breeding ground for fish and shellfish. The brook is buffered by property of the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, the Town and BCT.

EAST TO WEST, NORTH TO SOUTH

From Bladen Park nearly on the Dennis line in the west to the Baker's Pond trails that straddle the Brewster-Orleans border in the east; from the Nickerson donation next to Ellis Landing on Cape Cod Bay in the north to Mill Pond, soon to have a walking trail, almost on the Harwich border in the south, the nearly 563 acres of BCT owned properties and 540 acres under conservation restrictions on Town and private land help define the town. In size there may be a 0.08 acre tiny park in a neighborhood (a kettle hole, pond shore or pine/oak forest) or an expansive wooded 53 acres in West Brewster and 32 acres in East Brewster.



Stony Brook Valley Conservation Lands



CAREFUL PLANNING

With strategic planning the Trust has preserved parcels on 20 fresh water ponds and many more acres in drinking water recharge areas, scenic vistas at Windmill Meadows and Quivet Marsh, habitat corridors connecting protected open space of which Stony Brook Valley is the best example, eight vernal pools, and the walking trails featured in the Brewster Trail Maps brochures found around town.

Number 200 is a significant cause for celebration but it is only a symbol of the work accomplished and an inspiration for more to be done for Brewster, "The Conservation Town."

37 years
of appreciation
& preservation



Wet West Brewster

Emerson told us, “Life is by watercourses.”

When BCT was recently able to acquire, by gift and by purchase, some strategic lots along watercourses, we felt blessed.

These 4.5 acres help to fill out some strategic positions for BCT landholdings. The Cobb and Graham (the 200th noted on page 3) parcels, with drainage to Paines Creek, expand the three acres previously owned. We now own all of the old Cobb bog in the hollow and most of the slopes around it. A deep outlet that we affectionately call the Gulch empties the bog into Stony Brook just south of the herring run.

Most of West Brewster drains to two outlets on Cape Cod Bay: Paines Creek and Quivet Creek. Underpass Road is a divide; all the surface water on the west side of

the commercial street (including the MacDonald/Posey donation on page 5) drains through a series of sluggish ditches and streams under Main Street to Cobbs Pond and then south of Lower Road to Freemans Pond and out to the mouth of Paines Creek. So too does Stony Brook south of the mill site and all of the ponds upstream. Smith Pond and Schoolhouse Pond also have outlets that empty into Paines Creek in a dawdling fashion.

This amazing tapestry of narrow streams feed freshwater and life into the salty reaches of our two major western estuaries, sweetening the waters and enhancing our life along busy Main Street. We are fortunate to have landowners who share our vision of a Brewster united by water and love.



SHARE US WITH YOUR FRIENDS! Follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Check out our website to stay connected all year long! **brewsterconservationtrust.org**

2.16 Acres Donated in West Brewster

John Posey (right) has donated 2.16 acres of bog and maple swamp in the Dollar Pond drainage system in memory of Paul MacDonald.

Paul MacDonald grew up in Rockland, MA and spent happy summers on the Cape. In Boston and Providence he worked in fashion and fashion display, but his lifelong passion was antiques. In 1988, he opened The Shop on The Hill which began on Boston's Beacon Hill and completed its peripatetic journey at his historic sea captains barn on Cape Cod in Brewster, which remained open until 2015. Paul passed away in May, 2018.

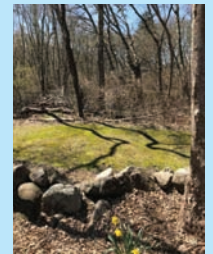
His partner, John Posey, recalls that Paul was an avid collector of clocks and watches of all kinds. Despite the many



clocks Paul was often late, but he was always forgiven due to his easy-going demeanor and sweet and kind personality. In talks with BCT John told us, "We talked about giving the land to the BCT for years and after Paul passed away in May of 2018, I decided to do things we had hoped to do

together – gifting the land was one of those things. The most important thing is to remember his life and to memorialize him for as long as I can."

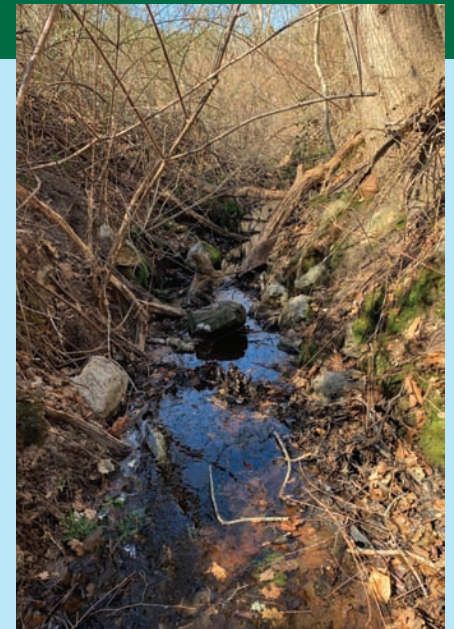
He loved nothing more than to marry beautiful things together in a harmonious setting for the admiration of others and to please himself. In John's words, "He leaves this world a more beautiful place."



History Written in Land and Water

We call it a gulch, the deeply carved water way that drains Smith Pond and makes its way under tangled bush to Paines Creek. It's not a virgin forest that climbs the hill then tumbles sharply down to the little creek. Its plants are more recent and more foreign than domestic. There is a lot of history here.

Ten thousand years ago the receding glacier dropped stones from small car size to bowling ball and smaller. Much later European settlers cleared the land, probably for pasture, leaving hastily piled walls of glacial stones to keep livestock from falling down the steep banks to the narrow stream. Open fields are an invitation for opportunistic immigrants, hence the abundance of plants named Japanese honeysuckle, Norway maple, Japanese knotweed, English oak, Oriental bittersweet, English ivy. The one sturdy red cedar must have begun life in the abandoned meadow.



Still later cranberries succeeded sheep as the economic driver and Cobb's bog may have utilized the tiny stream. The waterway shows signs of human interference with remnants of a stone armored bank.

Today the hillside is a tangle of vines, briars and fallen trees ending at the rim of a steep sided gully that holds the little creek. It's only for the intrepid explorer and sure of foot, but it offers an appreciation of changes made by time and the persistence of nature.

The People of BCT

"Service is to act on your passion. By serving in land management I am taking a passion for the earth and giving it physical representation."

Nick Banning



LAND STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR

Jon Bruce has his hands full. He is in charge of maintaining all 200+ properties on 1,300 acres and working with a stalwart crew of volunteers. The job requires cutting trails, cleaning debris, establishing boundaries and doing voluminous paper work.

For all this, he is well prepared. He grew up on the Cape, earned a Bachelor of Science degree, served with AmeriCorps in Missouri, Kansas and Arizona before returning to the Cape to work with Wilkinson Ecological Design, and now to his dream job with BCT.

Jon looks forward to making a lasting impact on the Cape Cod environment. He remarks that, "I've lived on Cape my whole life yet there's still so much I haven't seen. It's exciting to be in a position where I can truly learn and explore this place I call home."



VOLUNTEERS *Becoming part of a Community*

Like many who retire to Cape Cod, the Cape was already in their blood. Such is the story that brought **Frank and Ruth Steponaitis** to Brewster. Frank first visited Cape Cod in 1954. He and Ruth came in 1971 with their children to camp at Sweetwater Forest. Returning summer after summer, their love for Cape Cod and Brewster grew deeper and deeper.

Moving to Brewster full time in May 2016 was a well-earned relocation after 41 years in the education field for Frank and 41 years as an OR nurse for Ruth. Their love for the outdoors and desire to become part of their new community led them to volunteer with BCT in 2018. As workday crew, boundary marker, land monitor and office helper, they both have been valuable assets to BCT. Frank and Ruth both stated that they "like every aspect of the work," but mostly just being able to be outdoors. In their free time, they enjoy walking Eddy Bay Trail among other hobbies.

If you would like to join Frank, Ruth and the rest of our BCT Volunteers, contact Dorria Marsh at 508-694-6720.



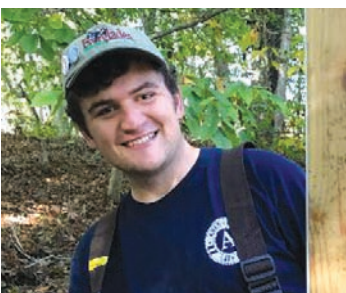
INTERN

Welcome back to our 2019 summer intern, **Mary Doucette**. Mary now has a BA from Eckerd College in environmental studies and sociology. A student of land use change across the United States, next year she plans to spend a year with AmeriCorps before pursuing a PhD to research climate change, environmental inequality and the complex relationships between the environment and society. We at BCT are excited to have Mary's map making skills and work spirit maintaining our trails and properties.



AMERICORPS MEMBER, Nick Banning

What is a young man with BAs in International Studies and German Language and Culture doing installing signs, setting up benches and putting up fencing for BCT? His favorite part of his AmeriCorps assignment is learning about the ecology of Brewster's woodlands, ponds and coastlines. He enjoys serving with BCT's land stewardship volunteers. He is clearly a man with many skills and interests. He's not sure where next year will take him, but wherever it is, he hopes to continue public service in new and exciting ways.





Mary M. Mooney

November 30, 1930 – November 10, 2019

Mary was a reader, a traveler, an accomplished needlepoint artist; she was interested in ballet, theatre, politics. Although she grew up and raised her family in Brighton, Natick and Melrose, she moved to Cape Cod 25 years ago where she loved the tranquility of the Bay shore and the scenic views over the Atlantic. She was a long time supporter of the Brewster Conservation Trust. After her death her son Brian wrote to BCT, “She loved Brewster and all you do to preserve its character.... Keep up the good work.”

Our thanks to Brian Mooney, his sister Lisa McDonald, and to Mary for their dedication to helping make Brewster the place they love. With their help, and yours, BCT can continue to “Keep up the good work”.

What will your legacy be? Do you appreciate the Town’s rural character, the trails, the high quality drinking water? Then consider including Brewster Conservation Trust in your estate plan. Gifts of any size will help BCT carry on its mission and ensure those same valued assets for the next generation.



LEAVE A LEGACY

Making a bequest to BCT in your Will can have many advantages – you can reduce the taxable amount of your estate and avoid paying taxes and capital gains. Gifts can be made from your IRA that count toward your minimum distribution and are tax free. BCT can accept gifts of cash or securities. Consult your professional advisor for further information and guidance.

MEMORIALS & BEQUESTS

Contributions to BCT honor the memory of a loved one; give a donation to the Brewster Conservation Trust “in lieu of flowers”. Send donations to: 36 Red Top Road, Brewster, MA 02631. For guidance on planning a bequest or gift, contact Amy Henderson at: amy@brewsterconservationtrust.org

In Honor of

Brewster Conservation Trust

Deborah J. Jones

Tim & Darcy Hackert

Lydia Hackert

Debra Johnson

Nancy Hilary Hays
Sally A. Johnson

Peter Johnson

Joan S. & James E. Van Baalen

Peter & Ellie Johnson

Roger & Jeane Samuelsen

The Maults, Zwobodas, Bauers, Zonis, & Nortons

Joseph & Angela Mault

Our neighbors in Sheep's Landing Assoc.

Gail & Dick Hanson

Carolyn Sprogell

Jonathan H. Sprogell & Kathy Taylor

Beth & Robert Tobias

Calista L. Hillman

Jeff Thibodeau

Barbara L. & Peter A. Schaible

Robert Rush & Elizabeth Braun

Robert Hsiung & Ingrid Gould

The Lord's Creation

Paul Liu & Sallyanne Lund

In Memory of

Stuart Anson

Alan R. & Amyjo A. Bershaw

Phill & Barby Balasa

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A Letter from the Erickson Family

Heaven on Earth



Our Dad/Gramps Steve Erickson was a BCT Board member and faithful supporter of yours for years. He passed away in 2012, and our Mom/Grammy Judy passed in 2016. Although their home has been sold, our family still travels from Virginia and California each summer to gather for beach, baseball and, of course, family hiking time. Thanks to our Dad's great example and teaching, we have enjoyed several of your trails over the years. Seymour Pond, Eddy Sisters, and last summer, the John Wing Trail. We look forward to our 2020 hike and creating more family memories and connecting with the heaven on earth that you are helping to preserve on Cape Cod!

Check BCT Calendar on our website for up-to-date news on upcoming events

- **Brewster Conservation Day cancelled for 2020**

Next year will mark the 10th Anniversary of Brewster Conservation Day. We plan to see you there! Until then, please be safe as we all work together to navigate this challenging time.

- **Save the Date: BCT Annual Meeting, Thursday, August 13**
at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History (VIDEO if necessary)