

The Haskell Property, a conservation gift to all

By Charlie Todd



Photo by Sharon Quinn Fitzgerald

This Sulphur Cinquefoil is one species spotted in the recently conserved Haskell property in Greenbush, an important grassland habitat gifted to OLT by Anita Haskell.

OLT is humbled by the gifts of 234 acres in Greenbush and a \$150,000 endowment for its stewardship from Anita Peavey Haskell. The expanse of fields and woodlands is the largest land donation to OLT in our 39-year history.

Anita Haskell grew up there in a 1820 farmhouse without utilities. She graduated with honors from Old Town High School, worked her way through college, and then earned a Master's degree at the University of Maine. Anita taught for more than 30 years in Old Town schools; served on the Milford Select and School Boards; represented District 13 in the Maine House of Representatives for three terms; and championed development of Bangor's Ronald MacDonald House (1983) as well as the Raish Peavey-Haskell Children's Cancer and Treatment Center in Brewer (2012). In 2021, She was

(Continued on pg. 4)

Orono HS begins Watershed Academy at CBCA

By Jeff Owen



Photos by Watershed Academy staff

Orono High School ninth-graders participate in the new Watershed Academy program on September 22 at the Caribou Bog Conservation Area in Orono. The Academy is a partnership between RSU26, Orono Land Trust, and the Penobscot Nation.

Orono High School made big moves this year to bring a new program to its ninth graders - the Watershed Academy. Philosophically the program is place-based at the Penobscot River watershed, and the students are learning about the watershed through outdoor, interdisciplinary, culturally-informed experiences.

Angie Reed, of the Penobscot Nation's water resources program, knew about what Orono High was trying to create, and wrote funds to support the effort into an America the Beautiful grant proposal she was working on (that ultimately was funded). Among other things, Angie's grant

(Continued on pg. 3)

Haskell: A habitat for grassland birds

by Dave Thompson

Anita Haskell called me in early January 2024 and said she had "about 200" acres that included several acres of fields in Greenbush that she was willing to donate it to the Orono Land Trust. She wanted that "In fifty years for it to look the same as it does today."

I immediately went to look at the land, especially because it was an opportunity to conserve grassland habitat, which is in short supply in Maine. The initial reaction was that this was something the OLT needed to consider. Charlie Todd, a fellow OLT Board member and retired Wildlife Biologist, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries

(Continued on pg. 5)



Kate Wilcox, a member of Maine Entomological Society, sent these pictures of Society members visiting the Caribou Bog Outdoor Center on September 6, to check out the insect environment at the wetlands. Chase Gagne, with the **Maine State Museum**, arranged the trip, which included **University of Maine Orono** teachers and students.



Photo by Bob Bass

TUCARD rides again!

TUCARD, the "Terrifically (and Unnecessarily) Complicated Adventure Race and Duathlon" returned! **Marsh Island Trail Runners (MITR)** held a TUCARD race held on September 13th.

This TUCARD is a fund raiser for OLT promoting public access. The TUCARD is a funky race with a beginning, an end, and several waypoints in between. Runners can navigate the course any way they want to! The Marsh Island Trail Runners group meets every Monday at 5:30 for trail running in the CBCA, and they hold two race events per year.



Photo by Bob Bass

Volunteers shine at the Outdoor Center

In mid-August, a combined team of **Penobscot Valley Ski Club** and OLT volunteers stained the CBOC deck. Working like a well-oiled machine, they completed the job in approximately five hours. The deck is now protected and preserved for another couple years!

**Visitors to Caribou Bog: Drive slow!
Watch out for wildlife on the gravel roads and
the Depot yard. Thanks!**

Watershed Academy (Continued from pg. 1)

award supported some new OLT projects and provided the necessary funds for Orono High to rent the Caribou Bog Outdoor Center for student access, and to support part of a teacher's time to coordinate the process of connecting students with OLT volunteers and projects. (So, a huge Thank You to Angie!!)

Several weeks ago a dedicated group of OLT volunteers set up five "stations" that the 9th graders rotated through. The volunteer at each station described the project, why it's important, and maybe even a bit about how they became interested in doing this sort of volunteer work. A couple weeks later, the students self-selected a project to spend more time with, learn more about, and possibly actually help with - and they took to the challenges full on. With Dan Baumert two new culverts were installed to replace rotten bridges near the beginning of Dorian Road. With Linda Swackhamer, Gudrun Keszocze, and Sharon Quinn Fitzgerald, students helped create a beautiful winter bed for a large variety of native pollinator plants. With Gail White some students walked the Interpretive Trail, observing and thinking about where informative signage might be useful. With Bucky Owen the students learned about the

efforts to restore the American Chestnut and helped harvest some nuts, mud pack some trees showing signs of Blight infection, and put other trees to winter bed. And with Charlie Todd and Harry Cunningham, students put a huge dent into the invasive plants surrounding Taylor Pond. Jenn Dann and Dave Erker had also helped the previous days of station rotations.

On behalf of the High School, we'd like to extend our tremendous gratitude to Angie Reed for creating this opportunity, and for the many OLT volunteers who were willing to work with our students. You are all wonderful!!!



All photos by Watershed Academy staff

The Watershed Academy curriculum spans science, English, social studies and aims to promote outdoor-focused learning.



The OLT Caribou Bog Outdoor Center provides facilities for the Watershed Academy.



Photos by Sharon Quinn Fitzgerald

Wildlife recently spotted by OLT Board member Sharon Quinn Fitzgerald includes a beaver at Beaver Pond (imagine that), and these New England asters showing fall color.



Photo by Sharon Quinn Fitzgerald

Anita Haskell's gift to OLT is a significant habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife.

Haskell

(Continued from pg. 1)

recognized by Old Town schools in their "Achievement Hall of Fame."

The Greenbush property was home to several generations of her family. One sector became a Maine Forest Service Nursery in 1956, but Anita bought it back from the State after it closed in 1994.

With this gift, Orono Land Trust now owns property in four towns and holds conservation easements in two others. With your support, there's a tremendous opportunity to bolster conservation, outdoor recreation, and environmental education in the Penobscot Valley.



Laura Lecker of AgAllies (at left), meets with OLT Board members Charlie Todd (center) and Dave Thompson (at right).

AgAllies visits Haskell habitat

Photo and text by Sharon Quinn Fitzgerald

Laura Lecker, director of AgAllies met up with four members of the Orono Land Trust Board in early August to assess the newest Orono Land Trust acquisition, the Haskell Property in Greenbush. AgAllies works with Maine landowners and land trusts to increase the nesting success of grassland birds through on-farm incentive payments, technical assistance, outreach, and education.

OLT Board member Charlie Todd had extended the invitation to the organization. Given the many acres of grassland fields at the core of this unique tract, the Haskell property has great potential for improving the opportunity for nesting success of grassland birds.

On this fine summer day we found numerous flowers, beneficial insects and several birds that fit the profile for the protection project. On a subsequent visit Charlie logged 19 bird species including bobolinks which typically nest in grassland areas. Timely surveys are planned for the future but 57 species already have been recorded to date.



Photo by Charlie Todd

Another view of the Haskell property shows the grassland opportunities for bird life.

Habitat for birds

(Continued from pg. 1)

and Wildlife (IF&W) and I drove to Greenbush to meet with Anita on the land. She gave us the "Grand Tour" in her car, with her black Labrador retriever. Charlie recognized the potential of the parcel and has worked through the acquisition process that included several steps.

A survey conducted by Ray Hintz and Charlie established the corners and boundary lines. They found the parcel contained 234 acres, including the six acres on the east side of the road. The fields amounted to about 60 acres and the recently harvested woodlands amounted to 174 acres.

The parcel is located north of the East Ridge Road and west of the Goulds Ridge Road, with the southeast corner located at the road intersection called Scotts Corner. The parcel slopes gently from the esker on the east over an outwash plain to the west. This outwash plain has a mix of sandy loam soils that underlie the fields. Standing at the south end of the fields you have an uninterrupted view for half a mile. The woodlands lie mostly west of the fields.

The most significant habitat is the large acreage of fields that have been mowed every year and contain various species of grasses depending on the soil and the moisture available. The fields will provide OLT an opportunity to

manage them to provide nesting habitat for various species of grassland birds. Because the forest has undergone a recent cut it is in an early successional stage of species, but with a sparse overstory, although it will attract a variety of birds and animals that use this type of habitat.

Anita's requests for the management of the parcel area were: (1) The land be open to people walking; (2) No motorized vehicles except for the use in the maintenance of the parcel; (3) No hunting or trapping; (4) No development, including gravel pits; and (5) Must be managed as a wildlife preserve. Anita has established an endowment of \$150,000 with the Maine Community Foundation with the earnings to be used to offset the cost of stewardship in managing the parcel. We intend to prepare more articles about this acquisition as appropriate.

This acquisition was made possible by many OLT volunteers especially Charlie Todd, Ray Hintz and Jerry Longcore. It is a short drive north on Route 2 to Greenbush. OLT will upgrade access and parking there next summer. Be sure to take time to visit the property. *(Editor's note: Dave Thompson worked tirelessly on this project.)*

Nature Clip

by J.R. Longcore

Harbinger of Fall: The Droning Chorus of Cicadas

During the “dog days” of summer in August heat the continuous trill of the cicadas fills the stifling air. The sound is loud and distinctive, not readily confused with any other summer sound. In a nostalgic recall from my youth, I remember days spent in the hayfields of Michigan watching the old, red bailer spit out 50-pound bales of well-dried and compacted winter forage for the livestock while hearing that sound.

At that time, we identified the sound as coming from the “harvest bee”, which was a misnomer. Cicadas, ~3,000 species worldwide, are not bees but are in their own Family (*Cicadidae*) within the Order, *Hemiptera* that are known as “true bugs”. Lifestyles vary; most cicada nymphs live in the soil for 2-5 years, but some species in the genus *Magiciada* only emerge after 13 or 17 years underground and are considered “periodical” species. Early scientists referred to periodical species as “magical cicadas”, thus magic became part of its Latin name.



All Photos by J. R. Longcore

Fig. 1. Common Dog-day Cicada (*Neotibicen canicularis*)



Fig. 2. Molted exoskeleton of annual cicada

Maine has four species of annual cicadas, including the Dog-day cicada (*Neotibicen canicularis*) that I photographed in Orono (Fig. 1). When the nymphs (after 5 stages) emerge from the ground, they molt their exoskeleton (Fig. 2) one last time to become an adult. After the males emerge, they commence making their songs simultaneously to attract a female — the unison singing is also thought to confuse predators. The loud song is produced by males rubbing together ridged areas on their exoskeleton abdomen called “tymbals”, which are made of a substance called resilin. Muscles rapidly vibrate these tymbals and males can send out 300-400 sound waves per second! (see references).

After a female mates she crawls along tree branches (Fig. 3) to deposit eggs with her sharp ovipositor. I believe that this female was a periodical species because I obtained the image before 1976 in MD and Brood X (i.e., 10) of a 17-year species emerged there in 1970. The adults both die about one month after emerging. In *Nature Clip* #120 (2019) I explained the importance of cicadas to the life cycle of the Cicada Killer Wasp in Michigan.



Fig. 3. Female *Magiciada* sp. ovipositing in tree branch, Laurel, MD.

References:

- Dr. Biology. “Sounds of Cicadas”. ASU-Ask a Biologist. 23 July 2021. Web, <https://askabiologist.asu.edu/cicada-sound>
- Dr. Biology. “Periodical cicadas of the Eastern United States”. ASU-Ask a Biologist. 23 Jul 2021. Web, <https://askabiologist.asu.edu/periodic-cicadas>

Engineering 101: Duct tape!

From OLT Board member Dan Baumert: All three wooden bridges at Dorian Newman Hill junction now replaced with plastic culverts. All culverts were sourced from the Town of Orono. This **Orono High School 9th grade** crew even got hands experience using the universal construction material, duct tape!

Thank you to local vendors who are selling our
reprinted, revised

OLT Trail Guide/2nd Edition:

In Orono: Ampersand, Rose Bike,
UMaine Bookstore.

In Bangor: Ski Rack, Slippin' Gears, Alpenglow.



PRNEMBA flow trails open

From OLT Board member Tom Cassidy: September 14 saw the grand opening of the new bike trail at Bangor Hill in the Caribou Bog Conservation Area. The **Bangor Hill Flow Trails** held a dedication at the Outdoor Center after a rain delay on the previous week. The **Penobscot Region, New England Mountain Bike Association** (PRNEMBA) folks and Maine Trail Builders worked hard on the trails and bikers should check it out! The work also includes improvements to the climb up Bangor Hill and will hopefully pull recreational use to Bangor Hill as we try to increase conservation on Newman Hill. PRNEMBA has done an incredible job fund raising and managing the project.



Invasive plants at Piney Knoll

From OLT Board member Charlie Todd: A crew of nine (including three from the Maine Conservation Corps) continued invasive plants removals at Piney Knoll in July. A pile of multiflora rose stands higher than volunteer Harry Cunningham. Mike Opitz and Jenn Dann have championed this effort for years.

Business members: Thank you for your support!

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Calendar

Next scheduled Board meetings: Wednesday, November 12, and Wednesday, December 10, 6:30 pm at Keith Anderson Community House, 19 Bennoch Rd., Orono

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I'd like to make an additional donation to help protect green space in Orono. \$_____

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