



ORONO LAND TRUST

AN INVESTMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Serving Orono and surrounding communities
www.aronolandtrust.org

Vol. 143, Winter 2026

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Orono Land Trust celebrates 40 years in 2026

This year, OLT will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of its founding. Events and activities for the greater Orono community will be announced. We will be announcing guided walks and promoting the many trails that OLT has created over the past decades. We are planning events based around our Caribou Bog Outdoor Center (CBOC), and highlighting other trails and lands along the Penobscot River, and in surrounding towns. A history of the OLT can be accessed on our website at <https://aronolandtrust.org/about-us/history/>. You can read about the list of achievements and milestones of this organization, founded before there was an internet! Volunteers and the Board members can be proud of building a robust trail network for year-round recreation, as well as conserving wetlands and

Save the date! The OLT Annual Membership Meeting is on Friday, May 15, at the Keith Anderson Community House, 19 Bennoch Rd., Orono. The public is welcome.

(Continued on pg. 5)

Trails and dogs: New guidelines

by The OLT Board

OLT welcomes all very good dogs, and in light of several episodes of visitor interactions with dogs at CBCA, OLT has new guidelines for Caribou Bog Conservation Area (CBCA) trails.

Rules now in effect state that **dogs are allowed on CBCA lands only if on a leash at all times.** (This is a change from the previous guidance that dogs must be under voice command.) Signs have been posted at 5 entrances to the CBCA system.



Safety of visitors, pets, and wildlife is paramount. Dogs are to be steered away from sensitive areas on the property as posted. Dogs are not allowed to jump on or disturb other users of the property. Dogs are not allowed to chase or disturb wildlife. Dogs (and people) are not allowed in areas that are posted or closed at certain times of the year for habitat protection. Posted closures on certain trails help balance recreation and habitat during nesting season.

Owners MUST remove and properly dispose of all poop produced by their dog. OLT's policy on restraint of dogs must be consistent with the Dog Leash Law of the Town of Orono.

CBCA hosts The Great Caribou Ski Races

The first of the season Great Caribou Bog ski races was held on February 7th at the Caribou Bog Conservation Area (CBCA).

It was a classic race with distance options of 10, 20, or 30 Kilometers; races continued Saturday, Feb. 14. A Costume Race is scheduled for Feb. 28th. Skiers of all ages and abilities are encouraged to participate.

Results of the Freestyle Ski Race are available at <http://www.webscorer.com/race?raceid=421492>

and for the BKL Race at <http://www.webscorer.com/race?raceid=421493>.

These annual races are a great showcase for use of the CBCA trail system that OLT and Penobscot Valley Ski Club (PVSC) maintains. It provides good publicity for OLT (Continued on pg. 2)



Photo by Gail White

Racers approach the finish line at the Great Caribou Bog Ski Race on Saturday, February 7, 2026.

Thank you! to the Marsh Island Trail Runners

Brian Olsen and the Marsh Island Trail Runners (MITR) wrote a year-end letter to OLT President Ben Hale and the OLT Board to announce a donation of \$2,324.52. This check represents race proceeds for 2025.

Brian explains that, "As a club we use all of the OLT trails, but the CBCA trails in particular have really helped us grow into a trail community with over 200 runner-members who care about the land there, feel connected to it, and count it as one of the things that make living here special. Here are some quick numbers on what OLT helped make possible this year:

- Weekly Monday social runs with generally around 20 attendees (as high as 37 this year and never fewer than 6—when it was raining and 40 degrees!)
- 51 registered racers for TUCARD ("The Terrifically and Unnecessarily Complicated Adventure Race and Duathlon").
- 31 registered racers for the Frost Fixed-Time.
- Many more participants in all of our annual events. Plus, continued growth in our participant base, who are spreading info about trail conservation and running opportunities in Penobscot County (328 online members through the app Strava, 138 members on our quasi-weekly email list-serve, 3944 unique visitors and over 10,000 page views on MITR's website).

Orono Brewing Company donated \$200 in cash to support two MITR races, in addition to donating five cases of beer



Photo by Bob Bass

Summertime on the CBOC deck after a MITR event.

and seltzer. Both of those donations covered costs that would otherwise have come out of race proceeds. (Thanks, Abe, Cassie, Asa, and Ann!). Frank's Bakery also provided the "trophies" for the Frost Fixed Time race (win Frost, get a cookie!)."

Brian attached the contact info for 56 registrants who opted into a free, one-year OLT membership that came with their registration. OLT thanks MITR and supports collaborations like this, which builds awareness and appreciation for our shared outdoors here in the Orono area. MITR folks have a new slate of fun and races for 2026, check them out!

strava.com/clubs/marshisland,
marshislandtrailrunners.org.

Caribou Bog Ski Races

(Continued from pg. 1) and PVSC. Thanks to all participants and volunteers who make these races a lot of fun.

More info at pvskiclub.org.

Dan Baumert, Director,
Great Caribou Ski Races



Photos by Gudrun Keszöcze

OLT Board member Gudrun Keszöcze noted the increased activity at the Caribou Bog Outdoor Center; people visiting and enjoying the trails on these beautiful winter days.

Orono Land Trust Acquires Chatto Woods and Waters



Photos by Adam Toothaker

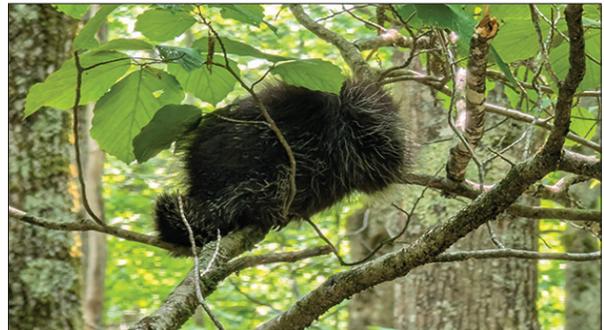
OLT Board member Jerry Longcore at Chatto Woods and Waters near a porcupine den tree.

by Dave Erker and Linda Swackhamer

The Orono Land Trust (OLT) is pleased to announce the purchase and conservation of 26 acres of land in Orono, Maine, along the Penobscot River. The parcel is named Chatto Woods and Waters, in honor of the grandparents of the major donor, Shane Martin, an Orono resident.

Martin stepped forward to donate the majority share of funding towards the acquisition, in honor of his grandparents Marion and Lawrence Chatto. Martin says, "This land has been owned by the Viola, Chatto, and Townsend families over the last century." The Chatto family purchased the land from Guiseppina Viola in 1945. Mr. Thomas Viola, Guiseppina's husband, built the Orono Water system during the time he lived in this area. Martin's mother, Peggy C. Martin, inherited the property from her mother and sold it to Ralph and Ann Townsend in 1998. Peggy Martin was a registered Maine Guide, and founding member of the Orono Land Trust.

As an Accredited Land Trust, OLT assesses land projects through a rigorous process of evaluating soils, forest, wetlands, trails, history and habitat. OLT Board member Ray "Bucky" Owen has said that Chatto Woods and Waters is the "best example of mature hardwood forest in Orono... (and has) unique older growth." The OLT Board evaluation goes on to mention the existence of a complex of significant vernal pools, an important habitat feature. The parcel provides almost 900 feet of shorefront along the Penobscot



Porcupine at Chatto Woods and Waters, Orono, Maine.

River, and contains interesting fern and wildflower colonies.

Shane Martin says, "I hope that this can become a quiet area that people can use to escape from the bustle of the world for years to come. For many years my mom, Peggy C. Martin, was a registered Maine Guide and I think she would be very happy that this land is being preserved."

The Orono Land Trust mission states: "OLT exists to protect, manage, and preserve portions of the natural environment in Orono and surrounding communities, for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. We work to balance conservation and development, extend and maintain trail systems connecting natural areas, encourage appreciation of natural habitats and ensure perpetual access to public lands and waters." OLT can be reached at oronolandtrust.org.

Citizen science that matters: Big Night is coming!

For six seasons, Maine Big Night (a statewide community science project focusing on making roads safer for wildlife through the lens of monitoring amphibian migrations, AKA "big nights") has been recording data on Forest Avenue in Orono.

Since surveys began in 2020, Forest Ave. has made the top ten deadliest in the state for amphibian mortality on roads. Additionally, all but two of our native amphibian species have been recorded here, making it one of the most diverse locations in the state for amphibian species. Among these are Northern Leopard Frog, a State Special Concern species, as well as Four-toed Salamander and Blue-spotted Salamander, both relatively uncommon.



To help solve this issue, Maine Big Night is partnering with Maine DOT and Orono Land Trust to test a makeshift wildlife crossing structure to help amphibians and other wildlife cross the road safely. In a typical situation, a specially designed wildlife crossing structure can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. This summer and fall, we will be testing whether we can take advantage of pre-existing culverts by guiding wildlife to them with specially designed fencing. If successful, this would result in a form of wildlife crossing that is magnitudes cheaper than other options.

Orono Land Trust will be assisting with the installation and monitoring of the site. Keep an eye out for the sections of fencing along the road, and do your best to avoid driving on Forest Avenue on rainy spring nights!

...and speaking of Big Night, this one can't wait!



OLT Board member Jenn Dann contributed this photo: "Look what we found, alive, in the middle of the path on the ridge at Piney Knoll Conservation Area today (Feb. 16)! We moved him off path into some leaves near the base of a tree so it wouldn't get trampled."



Photo by Linda Swackhamer

OLT was a participant in a presentation at Bangor Library on January 22. A panel featuring representatives from the Forest Society of Maine and the Bangor and Orono Land Trusts spoke about their conservation efforts and how they benefit the community and the state of Maine.

You can donate your vehicle, boat, or ATV to Orono Land Trust! Follow this link: <https://careasy.org/nonprofit/orono-land-trust>

Orono Land Trust celebrates 40 years in 2026

(Continued from pg. 1) supporting habitat. OLT hosts visitors to ski, hike, bird watch, and learn outdoor skills, plus our lands serve as research areas for collaborations with the University of Maine. Bikers commute on the Veazie Railroad trail. And in 2025, OLT completed purchase of the Caribou Bog Outdoor Center, which serves as a base for programming and joint use with the Penobscot valley Ski Club, Girl Scouts, and others.

The Orono Land Trust was created in 1986 and over the years, dozens of property owners have offered easements and rights-of-way with the Orono Land Trust. Others have donated their property, or, in some instances, the land trust has purchased properties. It is a wonderful way for our communities to protect green space and ensure access to trails for future generations to enjoy. Stay tuned for announcements about our 40th anniversary events. **More details to come at the Annual Membership Meeting on May 15, at the Keith Anderson Community House in Orono. This meeting is open to the public.**

The Watershed Academy at Orono High School

Noah Charney, of Orono's School Board, contributed some great photos of Watershed Academy 9th-grade students at Caribou Bog and on the trails behind Orono High School. The Watershed Academy started last fall to get kids out of the classroom for hands-on learning in the outdoors. OLT is hosting the Academy at the CBOC for programs on trail culverts, pollinator gardens, and invasive plants, and is an active partner in this project.



Nature Clip

by J.R. Longcore

Northern Cardinal Range Expansion—Red Flag of a Changing Climate

Ralph Palmer (1949, *Maine Birds*) reported on the first Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) in Portland in 1852. (Fig. 1). By 1949 he reported the species as “Probably a very rare visitant, most records referring to escaped captives”. Seth Benz (Schoodic Institute) reported that locally, the species was first glimpsed on Mount Desert Island in 1960 and then not reported again until 1970. By 1969 Cardinals were observed on the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (*Audubon Field Notes*, No. 23: 642) and were confirmed as breeding in southern Maine. In the first *Maine Breeding Bird Atlas* (1978–1983) the Northern Cardinal was confirmed as being as far north as Bangor, ME. By 2018 Cardinals had been confirmed as breeding in Presque Isle, Aroostook County, ME. My arrival date records of Cardinals in spring in Orono document that as early as 2003 one or more Northern Cardinals were in my yard and singing by mid-April. A nest (Fig. 2) I found in 2010 in the backyard confirmed nesting by the species in Orono.

Environmental variables that affect a bird's range and population change are weather and climate, available habitat, geographical barriers, and man, directly or through his activities (Beddall, 1963). Documenting expansion of a species range is easier to achieve than detecting the retraction of the range of a species, especially if the species' population is fragmented into local breeding units associated with pockets of suitable habitat. The primary environmental variable, mean annual temperature, which has risen 1.9 °C since 1895 and affects habitats, may elicit a positive biological response (i.e., expand its range) by a bird species like the Cardinal, or lose habitat to sea level rise that affects the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) that nests in *Spartina* sp. grass of Maine's coastal marshes.



Fig. 1. Northern Cardinal, Male, at Orono feeder, 2026

All Photos by J. R. Longcore



Fig. 2. Northern Cardinal nest, Orono, ME, 2010 (Note: Emerging feather tracts of nestlings).

Climate change at the global scale is considered a severe threat to biodiversity, which is essential for functioning of ecological communities. It is prudent to remember that nature is dynamic, and species must respond to several challenges all at once, including pollution, invasive species, and severe

(Continued from pg. 6) fragmentation of landscapes as man can do. Recently, record snowfalls in 2009, 2010, and 2025 make climate change deniers gleeful, however, those snow events are consistent with effects of global warming. As warming evaporates more water from the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean the greater amount of water vapor in the atmosphere fuels these record snowstorms (Huber and Gullede, 2011). Ignorance can be mitigated with education, unfortunately, stupidity cannot.

Recommended readings:

Beddall, B. C. 1963. Range expansion of the cardinal and other birds in the Northeastern states. *The Wilson Bulletin*, Vol. 75 (2):140-158.

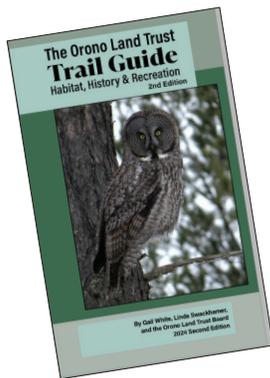
Morrison, M.L. 1986. Bird populations as indicators of environmental change. Pages 429-451, In R.F. Johnston (Ed.), *Current Ornithology*, Vol. 3, Springer US, Boston, 522 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-6784-4-10>.

Huber, D.G., and Gullede, J. 2011. Extreme weather and climate change: understanding the link and managing the risk. Science and Impacts Program. Center for Climate and Energy Solutions: Arlington, VA. <http://www.c2es.org/publications/extreme-weather-and-climate-change>.



Photo by Linda Swackhamer

OLT took a table at the Banff Mountain Film Festival at The Gracie Theater at Husson University on Feb. 4 and 5. Above, OLT Board member Gudrun Keszöcze greets visitors. This annual festival of short outdoor films is a winter wonderland of inspiration, and a great social event.



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.

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- Jerry Longcore, *Bog Boardwalk*
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- Tim White, *Secretary/Tech*

**Orono Land Trust
PO Box 4,
Orono, Maine 04473**

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Calendar

**Next scheduled Board meeting:
Wednesday, March 11, 6:30 pm at Keith Anderson
Community House, 19 Bennoch Rd., Orono**

Please Note: This newsletter is distributed in two versions: A printed hard copy, and a digital emailed format. If you would like to save paper and mail costs, choose email! Please notify linswak@gmail.com.

Orono Land Trust Membership Application / www.oronolandtrust.org

Orono Land Trust, PO Box 4, Orono, Maine 04473

Name: _____ Preferred email: _____

Address: _____ Preferred phone: _____

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| _____ \$10 Student Membership | _____ \$100+ Chickadee Membership | Donation only |
| _____ \$25 Individual Membership | _____ \$250+ Cardinal Membership | _____ |
| _____ \$50 Family Membership | _____ \$500+ Loon Membership | for _____ |
| _____ \$100- \$999 Supporting Membership | _____ \$1000+ Eagle Membership | |
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I'd like to make an additional donation to help protect green space in Orono. \$_____

Please send my newsletter by: email only _____ US Postal Mail _____