



Avalonia Trails

P.O. Box 49
Old Mystic, CT 06372

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING
LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

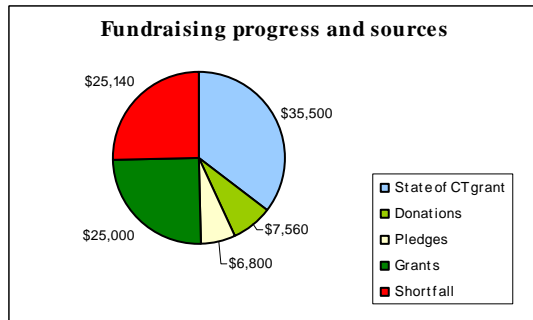
SPRING 2011

Fundraising for Bell Cedar Swamp Underway

In our last issue of "Avalonia Trails" we reported that Avalonia had been successful in obtaining a grant towards the purchase of the Bell Cedar Swamp in North Stonington through the State of Connecticut's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. This was a huge achievement, since competition for these grants is fierce. However, the grant will cover only 50% of the estimated purchase price of the land, so efforts are now underway to raise the remaining 50% of the purchase price plus necessary funds to cover ancillary expenses (legal fees, title searches, survey). As shown graphically in the chart, thus far we have raised \$25,000 from a total of four successful grant applications. Donations by private individuals have contributed an additional \$7,560, while \$6,800 has been pledged., leaving us with a remaining shortfall of \$25,140. We hope to close this gap with additional



Rhododendron maximum in white cedar swamp.



grants, some of which have already been prepared and submitted and trust that our membership will also be generous.

You may ask why we are investing this effort, when there is so much green open space in our part of Connecticut? It is certainly true that much land in southeastern Connecticut is currently undeveloped, but we should recognize that comparatively little of it is actively protected. The mandated "open space" requirements of local planning and zoning authorities are often met by setting aside lots within developments and subdivisions without regard to their ecological, habitat or community value. And while Avalonia has been fortunate to receive many lovely tracts of land as a consequence of the generosity of donors, if we wish to preserve

significant forest blocks and meaningful wildlife corridors, we must sometimes make strategic purchases such as this. In Bell Cedar Swamp, we have the opportunity to preserve a fragile and beautiful ecosystem of unique habitat value, protecting an established White Atlantic Cedar forest, which is home to rare flora and amphibian spawning areas. On a very practical note, the North Stonington Aquifer (within which Bell Cedar Swamp is located) is source water for the Green and Pawcatuck Rivers and feeds water supply areas of Pawcatuck and Westerly so

preservation of Bell Cedar Swamp is critically important to the preservation of our local water quality.

If you would like to contribute to our fundraising efforts by making a donation, you can send a check to Avalonia at P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic CT 06372, or by credit card at our website :

www.avalonialandconservancy.org/BELLCEDAR.html

If you would like to help out in a more practical capacity as a volunteer, we want to hear from you too: call 860 884 3500 or email avalonialc@yahoo.com.

If you would like to hear more about Bell Cedar Swamp, plan to attend our Annual Meeting which will feature a presentation by Duncan Schweitzer. See page 3 for details.



A magnificent example of Atlantic White Cedar in Bell Cedar Swamp.

Inside this issue

President's Message	2
Ice is Nice (for Seal) in Poquetanuck Cove	2
Annual Meeting	3
Alien Invaders	3
Annual Appeal Thank You	4
Educational programs	5
Spring sights on White Cedar Swamp/ Deans Mill Preserves	5
They're coming back...	5
Upcoming events	6

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President's Message

Spring is here! Hope all reading this made it through this challenging and snowy winter to appreciate this hopeful and rejuvenative season that is now upon us.

Avalonia has been very busy over the winter despite the snow, and acquisition projects and new prospects for preservation are ongoing. Stewardship of all Avalonia properties is nonstop all the time. Partnerships with US Fish & Wildlife, CT Dept. of Environmental Protection, and The Nature Conservancy on several fronts in several towns are still moving forward.

There are some very exciting educational opportunities upcoming that you should know about and I urge you to check page 5 of this newsletter for details.

Thank you to all who made our recent year-end Annual Appeal a success and who allow Avalonia to carry out its important mission through their generosity of financial assistance and volunteer time. Do consider adding your own specific talents to our volunteer pool anytime as we can never have enough volunteers and we need of a wide variety of specific skills.

The outdoors beckons, so go forth to one of our many preserves in your town and be refreshed! Just remember that we are a member-driven organization, so while you are enjoying these perpetually preserved woodlands, meadows, or wetlands, do encourage fellow outdoorsmen whom you might run into to become members. I hope we cross paths soon!

Anne Roberts-Pierson

Ice is Nice (For Seal) in Poquetanuck Cove

by Anne Roberts-Pierson

Overcast, cool, with some snow and ice still lingering, Saturday, March 5, 2011 would not have been a memorable day. A late afternoon call from an Avalonia Ledyard member quickly changed that! Sylvia Correia excitedly told me to come up to her house on Poquetanuck Cove to see the seal that was lounging on an ice floe right off her backyard and in front of the Avalonia sedge beds! She had just gotten home and people were congregating there on Johnnie Court to see this incredible sight.

So off I went to hopefully catch a glimpse of a creature which to my knowledge had never before been seen in the northern reaches of the Cove. My friend, the late Quentin Long, a longtime advocate in the protection of this very fertile but fragile freshwater tidal estuary, had photos from the 1980s of a seal which had also hauled up on an ice floe in the Cove one winter, but in the southern end where the Cove is much deeper even at low tide. We expect to see Bald Eagles and a myriad of over-wintering waterfowl up and down the Cove during the winter months but this was going to be a real treat!

And lo and behold, there *was* a seal off Sylvia's backyard and Avalonia's sedge beds, just lounging on an ice floe seemingly without a care in the world! Sylvia's spotting scope provided all of those assembled with terrific close-up views of this very sleek black and white beauty! We were quite the curious speechless onlookers to be sure and the seal cared not at all. This calm, quiet behavior on the part of this harp seal, allowed a few amateur photographers to give their high-powered lenses a workout and one of their photos is here displayed.

This harp seal appeared healthy, without distress, and it stayed until Sunday morning and then as quickly as it came, was gone. This unusual visit by this marine mammal just emphasizes how special this tidal estuary ecosystem is and can be for people and for wildlife. Easy sightings such as this make people curious about wildlife and where they live which makes education about and appreciation of our natural resources such as Poquetanuck Cove that much easier. And if you have yet to discover Poquetanuck Cove, please consider joining us on the water on June 4: see page 6 for details.



Harp seal relaxing on the ice .

Photo courtesy of Donald Blake.

43rd Annual Meeting
Wednesday, May 18th, 2011 at 7 p.m.
Denison-Pequotsepos Nature Center

There will be a business meeting at which Board members and officers will be elected. If you are unable to attend and wish to vote by proxy, please provide written authorization to your designated proxy. The business meeting will be followed by a program featuring two speakers.

Speakers:

Duncan Schweitzer, Vice-President, Avalonia Land Conservancy
Bell Cedar Swamp: An endangered ecological gem.

Suzanne Hoover Paton, Sr. Biologist, U.S.F.W.S. - Coastal Program
New England Cottontails

Alien Invaders: the Invasive Species Challenge

by Joellen Anderson

“It has been said that unwanted invasive species now cover an area larger than the entire Northeast and that each year, their spread gobbles up an area larger than the state of Delaware. The spread of invasive species is thought to cost Americans about \$138 billion dollars per year in total economic damage, associated control costs and has contributed to the decline of almost half of all imperiled species.” a quote from U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth.

As homeowners, how can each of us meet this challenge of removing invasive species from our own property? Here are a few suggestions:

- Learn how to recognize an invasive species
- Remove the culprit(s) by hand , including all their root system
- To protect our groundwater and our health, do not use chemicals
- Re-plant with native species. Native species are hardier, and provide more appropriate habitats for our native wildlife.

References: Invasive Plants – Guide to Identification and the Impacts and Control of Common North American Species by Sylvan Ramsey Kaufman & Wallace Kaufman
www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/plants.html
www.invasive.org/species/weeds.cfm
www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact

Joellen Anderson is Chair of the Groton Town Committee.

Avalonia welcomes new and renewing members!

You can now renew online

www.avalonialandconservancy.org/DONORS-MEMBERSINFO.html



Or mail this completed form and check to:

P.O.Box49
Old Mystic CT 06372

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Choose membership level: Individual \$25 Family \$45

Pine \$50 Cedar \$100 Maple \$200 Mighty Oak \$500

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I am enclosing \$.....as a contribution in addition to my membership dues.

I want to help: outdoor work fundraising/PR solicit new members

event planning other work (please specify)

Note: Dues, gifts of land, securities and other contributions are tax-deductible within the limits of the law.

Thank you to all the generous contributors to our 2010 Annual Appeal!

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Four donors preferred to remain anonymous

Memorial donations:

From Kathy Weinberger, in memory of her brother Mark, who dedicated his legal career to preserving open spaces.

From Mr. & Mrs. Alan P. Bentz, in memory of Terry Lyden.

Avalonia is Happy to Sponsor these Educational Events and Programs

Birds of Prey. Another in Denison-Pequotsepos Nature Center's series of popular Inside/Outside programs, in which an informative indoor program is paired with an outdoors excursion that provides an opportunity to apply the knowledge learned. Inside: On Wednesday, April 20th, 7:00 p.m., at the Groton Public Library, Kim Hargrave will be speaking about our Connecticut raptors. She will bring a few live raptors such as an owl and a kestrel and will discuss the characteristics of each group of raptors, their habitats, food sources, interesting facts and the various threats these raptors face. Outside: Saturday, May 7th, 9-11:00 a.m. in Ledyard on Avalonia's Pine Swamp Wildlife Corridor preserve. Please go to www.avalonialandconservancy.org for a trail map if you wish to explore the trail system further after the program finishes.

Mother Nature's Child. A film presentation by the Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association (COEEA) Tuesday, May 10th, 2011, 7:00 p.m. at the Groton Public Library. COEEA is an organization that supports Connecticut's outdoor and environmental educators as they promote responsible environmental stewardship. Avalonia members will be present to share informational materials.

Explore the Salt Marsh at Barn Island

From crabs to cord grasses, a salt marsh is like no other ecosystem.. Learn about the plants, animals and ecology of the salt marsh by getting a little mucky looking for coffee bean snails, fiddler crabs, amphipods, glassworts and much more. Be prepared to get your feet wet! Presented by Kim Hargrave from Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center., Saturday, June 11th, 10-11:30a.m. Adults and families welcome. Park in the Barn Island parking lot on Palmer Neck Road in Stonington and meet at the CT DEP demonstration area on the left just prior to the parking lot. Heavy rain cancels, no rain date.

Spring Sights on White Cedar Swamp/ Dean's Mill Farm Preserve *by M-P Morton*

Come and have a pleasant walk on these two connecting preserves sandwiched by Jerry Browne Road (Stonington) on the south, Interstate 95 on the north, Aquarion Water Company's wire fence and granite cliffs on the east and a neighbor's fence to save her beautiful summer gardens on the west. Start off quietly so you can hear the frogs croaking, spy on the nesting pair of Mallards near the small island in the middle of the cedar swamp (take a side path and sit on an old stone bench!). And further on, as you cross a small brook, you'll see skunk cabbage and maybe a salamander. The lollipop loop takes approximately 1 hour, it is marked. Getting there: pass the Water Company building on the right and motor up the curve toward Old Mystic Village, a small 2-car pull off can be used to park, high step a stone wall and you are on your way!

M-P Morton is a member of the Stonington Town Committee.



American Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliatus*). Photo by Rick Newton

They're coming back...

by Binti Ackley, MP Morton and Anne Nalwalk

To be exact, it's the oystercatchers, piping plovers and, last year's surprise, the least terns that are coming back to Sandy Point. With the help of Fish and Wildlife and Sandy Point stewards, Sandy Point will once again have protected nesting areas for the returning birds. New tactics will likely be employed this summer to ensure a greater survival rate of the hatchlings against the attacks of the black-backed gulls and other predators.

Horseshoe crabs will also be coming back; and thanks to the hard work of the "taggers" more and more information is being discovered about these ancient creatures' migrating habits.



Horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*). Photo by Rick Newton.

Also returning will be an influx of humans who, hopefully, will be more informed about conservation efforts at Sandy Point. To this end, United States Fish and Wildlife and Avalonia will be holding a meeting at the COMO on May 2nd at 7 p.m. to talk about the activities taking place on Sandy Point.

The authors are members of the Sandy Point Committee, which under the Avalonia Board of Directors, oversees management of Sandy Point Nature Preserve.



AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY. INC.

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Avalonia has a Facebook page

We have responded to the suggestions of a number of members and established an Avalonia Land Conservancy Facebook page. If you have a Facebook account, find Avalonia’s page using the “Search” box on your home page, or connect from our website. Become a fan and receive timely updates of Avalonia news and reminders of upcoming events. You can also submit your own comments and photographs. Be sure to rec-



Upcoming events

Birds of Prey : An inside/outside program presented by Kim Hargrave from the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, April 20th at 7 p.m and May 7th at 9a.m. Details on page 5.

United States Fish and Wildlife informational meeting on Sandy Point management at the COMO (28 Cutler Street, Stonington) on May 2nd at 7 p.m.

Mother Natures’s Child : A film presentation at the Groton Public Library Tuesday, May 10 at 7:00 p.m. Details on page5.

43rd Annual Meeting: Wednesday, May 18th at 7 p.m. at the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center. Details on page 3.

Poquetanuck Cove Paddle. Saturday, June 4th, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. An easy flat water paddle at high tide through narrow, 2-mile tidal embayment of the Thames River. Discover a significant coastal habitat and designated state bird sanctuary. Learn about ongoing efforts to control damaging invasive plants. Bring your own canoe/kayak, personal flotation device, beverage and snack. Meet leaders Anne Roberts-Pierson and David Bainbridge at the public access car-top boat launch at end of Royal Oaks Drive (off Arrowhead Drive, Ledyard). Heavy rain cancels. Pre-registration is **REQUIRED**. Questions and to register: contact Anne Roberts-Pierson, (860) 464-8101.

Explore the Salt Marsh at Barn Island. An educational program presented by Kim Hargrave from the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center June 11th, 10-11:30a.m. Details on page 5.