



P.O. Box 49
Old Mystic, CT 06372

Avalonia Trails

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING
LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

FALL 2007

SPRAGUE JOINS AVALONIA

by Anne Nalwalk



Map of New London county, showing existing membership of Avalonia, plus Sprague.

At the Annual Meeting on May 16, 2007, the Avalonia Land Conservancy voted to add Sprague to the southeastern Connecticut towns in which Avalonia is active and has Board representation. This was requested by at least 10 residents of Sprague who petitioned Avalonia and through numerous discussions with Gerald Stefon, who had been representing a client in a project involving Avalonia. Sprague is directly north of Norwich and is separated from Griswold to the east by Lisbon. Sprague's two-year old Conservation Commission has already been active in the creation of River Park, a five-acre park along the Quinebaug River, and the planning for the much larger Mukluk property, also along the river.

The new Directors from Sprague are Donald Boushee, Christine Jablonski and Gerald Stefon. Don, who teaches history in New London, has lived in Sprague for twenty years. He is Chairman of the Conservation Commission, having been involved in its creation two years ago. He has also served on Sprague's Planning and Zoning Commission for many years.

Since moving to Sprague from Boston two years ago, Christine Jablonski has made several significant contributions to the town. She was Chairman of the Library Board during the refurbishing and reorganizing of the library. Her thirteen years of experience in the financial services industry (ten years of it in San Francisco) made her a welcome member of Sprague's Board of Finance. Living in Hanover in northern Sprague, Christine and her husband restored the Angus Park House and manage it as a bed and breakfast. Angus Park was a prominent owner of the Norwich woolen mill that bore his name. Christine's interest in conservation is fueled by seeing severe suburban sprawl claim acres of prime farming and fox-hunting areas near her parents' home in Virginia.

Gerry Stefon is a long-time resident of Sprague, where he founded his premiere surveying company, Boundaries, LLC. He recently sold it and now performs extensive title searches as Deedlines, LLC. He is still much in demand, working for clients in Washington, CT as well as locally. His expertise is a welcome addition to Avalonia's Board. Gerry has also been active in Sprague's conservation activities.

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Vice-President.....Harry Tobiassen
Treasurer.....Rowland Stebbins III
Secretary.....Anne Roberts-Pierson

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Stewardship.....Bruce Anderson
Finance.....Rowland Stebbins III
Development.....Ellen Fossum
Membership.....Vicky Connor

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Sprague

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Christine Jablonski

Gerald Stefon

Stonington

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Kate Robinson

Rowland Stebbins III

Directors at Large

Anna Coit

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Honorary Directors-

Carole Clark

Lois Tefft Van Deusen

Hugo Wilms

Avalonia Phone: (860) 887-6786

www.avalonialandconservancy.org

Directors needed

We have vacancies for directors in Griswold, Groton, Voluntown, Preston and North Stonington. If you admire the work that Avalonia does and would like to contribute more actively in this or in any other capacity, please contact us.

President's Corner

Hello, friends and members! We have survived a very hot and humid August and can now get back to the management and enjoyment of our land trust holdings. In spite of the weather, Avalonia's Board of Directors has continued to hold summer meetings due to several projects that required action and consideration. These are most exciting, but are not yet ready for publication. We hope to have all kinds of great news in the next newsletter.

What a joy to have Margaret Gibson's poem, written especially for Avalonia, in the newsletter! (See page 5.) Margaret has published several volumes of her poetry and teaches classes and workshops all over the country. Thank you, Margaret, for such a treasure!

As always, please enjoy our/your preserves and tell us what you see.

Thank you all for your generous and steadfast support.

Anne Nalwalk



A note from the editor

Thank you to everyone who has contributed articles to this issue of "Avalonia Trails". Your comments on the finished product are always welcome. If you would like to contribute an article, notice or photo to our next issue, please e-mail it to me by **December 1st, 2007** at janiceparker@netscape.net. For preference, send text documents as attachments, so they can be pasted directly into the newsletter without re-typing. Thank you.

Janice Parker

Philadelphia Flower Show Fund-raiser Planned for March

- Arrangements have been made for a motor coach tour to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City on Sunday, March 2nd followed by a visit to the Philadelphia Flower Show on Monday, March 3rd, 2008 to enjoy their theme of “JAZZ IT UP” New Orleans style.
- Accommodations will be at the Double Tree Inn in Plymouth Meeting, PA.
- This trip is being co-sponsored by Avalonia Land Conservancy and NatureScapes.
- Please save the dates.

Other Upcoming Events

International Beach Clean-up. September 15/16 or 22/23. Usually done on Avalonia’s Porter Marsh, Dodge Paddock, Knox Preserve, South Dumpling and Town’s End Preserves. Island clean-up depends upon a volunteer with a boat and volunteer availability, so please consider participating. Other sites are usually coordinated by local stewards. The information collected goes into an international database. Avalonia has participated for over 10 years. For further information and/or to volunteer please call: (860) 887-5878.



Walking WeekendS. Sunday October 14, 2 p.m. Preston Nature Preserve, Krug Road, Preston. In conjunction with The Last Green Valley’s Walking WeekendS and the Preston Historical Society, Mr. Robert Thorson will explain Preston’s stone walls as they appear on the preserve. Mr. Thorson, a professor of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Connecticut is the well-known author of “Stone by Stone”, “ Exploring Stone Walls” and “Stone Wall Secrets”. From Route 164 in Preston, turn onto Krug Road, go 0.5 mile, pass 32 Krug Road and park where indicated. Easy walk. Dogs permitted. Please call (860) 887-5878 for further information.



Monarch Butterflies in Connecticut

by Martha McLaud Tonucci

Information provided by Richard Chyinski & Carol Lemmon, Connecticut Butterfly Association

You may have noticed that last fall there was a huge number of monarch butterflies, the highest number in about 10 years. Two years before, the numbers were dismally low. Data in Connecticut are documented by volunteer researchers who tag monarch butterflies with a small pinky nail-sized “postage stamp” on the underside of the wing. It contains the identification of the tagger, date and place of tagging, a phone number and website to report the insect. Members of the Connecticut Butterfly Association purchased 800 tags last fall. Richard Chyinski of Salem tagged about 500 of the butterflies himself.

The Monarch butterfly, *Danaus plexippus*, is easily recognizable to most people. The deep orange wings are crossed with black veins, and white spots dot the wing margins. The females have darker veins on their wings, and the males have a distinctive black spot on each hind wing. Monarchs have nearly circumglobal distribution. There are two sub-populations in the United States, one west of the Rocky Mountains and the other east of the Rockies; it is thought that there is also a separate Florida sub-population.

Monarchs are especially well known for their lengthy migrations, and the length of time for their migrational journeys far exceeds the lifespan of the adults! Here in Connecticut, migrations are at their peak August through October. The eastern sub-population of adult monarchs, including from Canada, have routes that converge in Texas, and then continue to the mountains of El Rosario, northwest of Mexico City. There are ten known sites in this area, and each site contains about 10,000,000 butterflies where the butterflies roost in high altitude forests of an indigenous fir tree. Several of Chyinski’s Monarchs have been recovered from this area.

Migration back north begins early in spring. They arrive along the Gulf coast in March and April, lay eggs on southern milkweeds and die. The offspring continue the migration north, arriving in Connecticut in June and July. These butterflies repeat the same process, laying eggs on milkweed, then dying. The extremely tiny eggs, mere specks, can be found on milkweed leaves. From the egg, a miniature larva, the caterpillar, becomes an eating machine and grows rapidly. It soon spins itself into a chrysalis (pupa) form, hanging from a sturdy twig until the adult butterfly emerges from the chrysalis. By late summer, migration south begins again.

This generation does not reproduce until it leaves the over-wintering location. It is this generation’s children and great-grandchildren that return to Connecticut in early summer!

Several factors influence population numbers. Normal fluctuations occur within nearly all species of animals, except exponentially growing human populations, depending on food supply and other environmental factors. Herbicides and pesticides are a major threat to any butterfly population. Other major problems, especially on coastal California, are unregulated logging operations and expanding housing developments. In addition, well-meaning but disastrous human presence by ecotourism poses a major threat.

Butterflies, including monarchs, will be attracted to most brightly colored flowers like zinnia, cosmos, marigolds, and buddleia. They will lay eggs, however, only on milkweed. The common milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*, is found in fields and along roadsides. Although it can be planted in home gardens, it has deep roots that spread and may become invasive. A species highly recommended is *A. tuberosa*, the bright orange-flowered butterfly milkweed. Do NOT try to dig it from the wild! Seeds can be easily propagated, or plants are readily available at garden centers. Another pink/purple-flowered species is *A. incarnata*. It has a white variety called “Ice Ballet” that is another good garden choice.

For an interesting experience, Rich Chyinski encourages people to help out with the annual Monarch tagging at Meigs Point Nature Center at Hammonasset State Park in Madison. This year’s event is Saturday September 15th, starting at 9 a.m. Rain date is Sunday, September 16th.

For more information, contact the Connecticut Butterfly Association, PO Box 9004, New Haven, CT 06532. Dues are \$15 per year, and field trips to study butterflies are held April through September. More information on tagging is available at www.monarchwatch.org.

Martha Tonucci is Director of the East Haddam Land Trust

DIRT

by Margaret Gibson

Because a raw gash of it becomes poppies and dame's rocket
Because it shields the dead as they undress
Because along the rim of the cattail pond, rain softens it
Because it is a rainbow, embedded
Because it is the *basso continuo* of pussy toes, earthworms, nomads, and wheat
Because the exposed root of the oak tree rumples it,
 and deer and fox and wood thrush write on it with different feet
Because it erases the wheel that ruts it, the plow that seams it open
Because an old woman, removed from her homeland, carries it with her—
 a fistful of earth
in a mason jar whose blue-tinted glass becomes a hologram of sky
 around the dust of her ancestors
Because into rain-softened mud a child has pressed her bare feet and learned
 the weight of her presence
Because more than one woman has bedded her man saying, "I am good soil
 for marriage..."
Because dirt is a greater philosopher than Plato—for whom the distant
 edge of a field along a skyline was
merely the shadow of a more luminous line on which the mind might compose
 strophic measures
Because I cannot step out of my body and must walk the field, each inch,
 as it changes to woodland and ridge,
mountain and the slow erosion of mountains into the plain
Because I must walk the milky way of the prairie at night and feel its surge
 and flow change to gumbo and gully, arroyo,
scour hole, fell field and meadow, flutes and folds—
I praise the dirt: storehouse, grantor of ground and horizon, not the Source,
 but its guardian
Beneath gender and hierarchy, beneath any division of labor,
 it continues, despite our nooks and walls, boundaries and treaties
It is what gives and receives, outlasts us, and *is*.

Margaret read her poem, written for Avalonia, at the Annual Meeting in May.



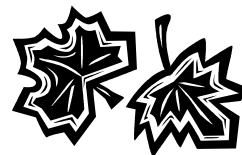
Avalonia receives Pfizer grant

Pfizer Inc has provided Avalonia with a donation of \$675 to support an environmental education program on Poquetanuck Cove in Ledyard/Preston. The scope of the project is to produce an educational brochure that will:

- Encourage adjacent landowners to utilize best management practices on their land to reduce runoff impact to the Cove
- Educate them about a proposed *Phragmites* (invasive plant) project and the importance of universal participation in this project
- Inform area residents about a Streamwalk program starting in July in the tributary streams that will document streamside conditions while educating volunteer participants about the relationship of land use to water quality.

This outreach effort is a small part of a larger project that includes an updated plant inventory of the Cove and a multiyear *Phragmites* control project with follow-up monitoring for effectiveness. (For more details see Jean Pillo's article in the Spring 2007 issue of this newsletter, available on our website: www.avalonialandconservancy.org)

The Board and membership of Avalonia would like to publicly acknowledge and thank Pfizer Inc for their commitment to and support of this important environmental initiative.





AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY, INC.

P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, CT 06372

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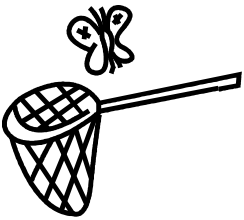
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Upcoming Events

See page 3 for additional details on upcoming events



Monarch tagging at Meigs Point Nature Center at Hammonasset State Park in Madison. This year's event is Saturday September 15th, starting at 9 a.m. Rain date is Sunday, September 16th. See page 4 for a related article on monarch butterflies and contact information.

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