



Avalonia Trails

P.O. Box 49
Old Mystic, CT 06372

DEDICATED TO PRESERVING
LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

FALL 2006



Which Avalonia property is this? Answer on page 2.

North Stonington Natterings ***by Duncan Schweitzer and Mac Turner***

As surprising as it may seem, there was not a thunderous rush of volunteers following our appeal at the annual dinner. We are still looking for people to act as local stewards of properties in North Stonington. Ideally a steward would live next to the property or close by to make periodic checks an easy matter. We envy Stonington where Dave Motherway and Stephanie Bentz have cared for the Knox and Dodge properties respectively for many years. Also, the Conservancy has purchased or received several tools that need care and maintenance; a volunteer to look

after the tool inventory would be helpful. So, if you would like to help, please call us (Duncan 535-0783 or Mac 535-1541).

We tried to get to each property last year to learn about them and note whether signs were needed, whether there was any encroachment or dumping, and if trail maintenance was needed. We started with the Waldo Preserve, which is 3.8 acres north of the library and behind the home of Luther Dickonson. The easement access needs cleaning if this piece next to the Shunock River is to offer educational opportunities as intended.

The Yannatos Preserve in Clarks Falls is a lovely tract along the Wyassup and Greens Falls Rivers. Access could be improved with the construction of a bridge over the Wyassup Brook west of its confluence with the Greens Falls River.

The Eleanor and Flood Reed Memorial Woodland and the adjoining Jean and Hobart Mitchell Preserve is certainly a special place. We added some trail marking on the Mitchell side and while doing so Duncan got a call from his daughter in Jerusalem letting him know that he was a grandfather. Indeed a special place. Maintenance of the trail markings will be needed. We added a sign for parking along Northwest Corner Road.

The Anguilla Brook Preserve and associated properties are used by hikers. We repaired the sign and picked up some trash near the road. We also added boundary signs to some portions west of Anguilla Road including the new acquisition, the Coope property.

The Shunock Brook Preserve, which includes the Stillman tract south of Babcock and the Milltown meadows north of Route 184 need a little more signage marking boundaries. The Shunock River is a very attractive river and access to it will be precious in the future.

We did not do detailed inspections of the Tefftweald at Bircheturn or the Deer Run Sanctuary but will do so this fall. Please join us.



OFFICERS

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

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

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

DIRECTORS

Griswold	Stonington
Scott Dawley	Kate Robinson
Groton	David Scott
Brae Rafferty	Rowland Stebbins III
Ledyard	Directors at Large
Ellen Fossum	Anna Coit
Anne Roberts-Pierson	Stuart Cole
Harry Tobiassen	Rusty Morrison
North Stonington	Honorary Directors
Anne Nalwalk	Carole Clark
Duncan Schweitzer	Lois Tefft Van Deusen
John "Mac" Turner	Hugo Wilms
Preston	
Mary Ann Melgey	
Margaret Gibson	
David Anderson	

Avalonia Phone: (860) 887-6786
www.avalonalandconservancy.org

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

After this hot summer, it's difficult to imagine walks in the woods, but we've had a wonderful taste of those clear fall days to come and so can look forward to the brisk weather ahead. We have scheduled some good walks for you and expect to get busy with stewardship projects as well. We hope to see you in the woods.

An update on the youths who painted the rocks and trees in Paffard Woods is in order. Three of the youths completed a total of 106 hours of community service while they cleared 1335 feet (both sides) of the wall of Paffard Woods along North Main Street in Stonington. It was hot, hard work involving serious poison ivy avoidance (not always successful). Notice the results as you drive by; the weeds are persistent, but we hope to keep the area clean. I supervised most of the work with great help from Stonington Director Rusty Morrison, and volunteers Binti Ackley, Elizabeth Tobin Brown, Laurie Gorham, Sibby Lynch, Dorothy Papp and Kate Rugen, and North Stonington Director Mac Turner did yeoman service by removing at least twelve trailer loads of brush and delivering it to the Stonington landfill. He also did a final trim with Avalonia's DR Trimmer, a most-appreciated gift from Anna Coit.

As always, we thank you for your continued generosity and support and hope to see many of you as we return from summer vacations and get back to work.

We hope you find relief and respite in your local nature preserves.

Anne Nalwalk

A note from the Editor:

This is the first issue of "Avalonia Trails" that I have compiled. I welcome your comments and your contributions. Please submit articles, photos and notices for our Winter 2006-07 issue by December 1st 2006 to janiceparker@netscape.net, or by mail to the address on the front page. Thank you.

Janice Parker



Answer: The front page photo was taken at the Marcia Woolworth Porter Preserve.



***Avalonia Land
Conservancy
sponsors a visit to
The Cloisters
December 9th, 2006***

Avalonia Land Conservancy is sponsoring a motor-coach tour to The Cloisters, the Metropolitan Museum's branch in northern Manhattan for medieval art.

Evergreens, herbs, and fruits linked with the medieval celebration of Christmastide deck the museum at this time of year. The medieval practice of decorating churches and halls with fresh greenery had its roots in ancient customs. The arched doorways of the Main Hall are adorned with hundreds of ivy leaves, hazelnuts, rose hip clusters and lady apples. Sprigs of mistletoe decorate the candelabras placed in the Romanesque Hall. A sheaf of wheat bound with ivy will stand in the lavabo in the Cuxa Cloister, and evergreen laurel garlands will festoon the Italian ciborium in the Langon Chapel.

Our motor-coach will leave **Mystic Village Caboose at 7:30am** with a stop at **Town Fair Tire in New London at 7:45am**. There will be a brief comfort stop along the way. After our visit to the Cloisters, on the return trip we will stop in Darian, CT at Bertucci's Brick Oven Pizzeria for dinner (on your own).

The FEE: of \$80 includes transportation, driver gratuity, and admission to The Cloisters and must be paid by **October 15th, 2006**.

Please fill out the registration form below, making checks payable to Sylvia Correia

Mail to: **Sylvia A. Correia,
6 Johnnie Court,
Ledyard, CT 06339**



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____

Pick-up Spot: _____



The Knox Preserve - Great Fall Birding

by ***Bob Dewire***

Fall at the Knox Preserve is a great time to walk the trails and field edges in search of a surprising number of birds in a relatively small (17 acres) preserve. There is a fine mix of habitats from dense thicket and tall trees to large open fields to the shoreline of Quiambaug Cove. The best time to go with birds in mind is October through the middle of November. Each part of the preserve will have a nice selection of birds to look for. We will examine them one by one.

Thickets/woods - A nicely maintained trail system weaves through this area with its large quantities of berry-bearing and seed-producing plants which in turn attract large numbers of birds. Yellow-rumped Warblers are most common, feeding on the plentiful supply of Bayberry and Red Cedar berries. Other berry eaters to be found here include Cedar Waxwings, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and Northern Mockingbird. Not as common, but to be expected will also be Eastern Bluebirds and by late October, Hermit Thrushes. The large amount of seeds from various grasses and wildflowers attract many species of sparrows. Song, Swamp and White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos will be most common, but also present will be Field and White-crowned Sparrows. By November two more sparrows will have arrived from the north - American Tree and Fox. In addition to sparrows Rufous-sided Towhees are quite common. Two wrens - Carolina and House are favorite thicket dwellers. Our two smallest birds after the hummingbird - Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets flit through the trees in bushes as well. Some of our familiar feeders birds also find the Knox Preserve attractive so Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and Northern Cardinals are also easy to find along with House finches and Goldfinches. Rarities?? Yes, there are species to be found. Among the ones we have located are Lincoln's Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat - all skulkers hiding in the thickets and quite difficult to see.

Fields - The large fields will either be planted to corn or lie fallow from year to year. In either case, by October they will have been cut and turned over leaving lots of open ground. If there has been a lot of rain, standing water will be in some areas. These attract ducks and geese, so watch for Mallards, Black Ducks, Pintails and Green-winged Teal as well as Canada Geese and, if you are very lucky, Snow Geese. Shorebirds may also be found, the commonest being

Killdeer. Black-bellied Plovers are also often present and around the edges of standing water there are often Common Snipe. Songbirds using this very open habitat include Savannah Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark. Flocks of American Pipits may spend time here and by November you should scan the fields for small flocks of Horned Larks and Snow Buntings. It should be noted that all these birds are amazingly camouflaged in this habitat and it takes sharp eyes to discover them.

Quiambaug Cove - Scanning the cove edges will usually produce sightings of Great Blue Herons and Great and Snowy Egrets. If the tide is low, Greater Yellowlegs are usually along the muddy edges. Belted Kingfishers often sit on trees along the water's edge. By the end of October, the ducks begin arriving from the north and you can expect to find Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers and Buffleheads among the more common Mallards.

Finally, during this period the Knox Preserve is a great place to watch for hawks. The large expanse of open sky visible from the fields or the cove will give you an opportunity to find several species of raptors. Days when winds are from the north or northwest are best. Commonest species are Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks and up to the end of October, Osprey. Others you can expect here are Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle.

Pick a morning or afternoon and spend an hour or two here. Besides enjoying this pretty preserve, you will return home with a nice list of birds.

Bob Dewire is the owner of NatureScapes, Inc. which conducts programs in schools and offers field trips for adults covering all areas of natural history. His familiarity with the Knox Preserve stems from his operation of a Federal Bird Banding Station at the preserve every fall since 1990.



Trails, Trusts and the Connecticut Forest & Park Association

by Adam R. Moore

It is a fair bet that most land trust members have spent at least a few hours exploring the Connecticut countryside by hiking one of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails. All have seen the distinctive blue oval signs marking where the trails cross state highways, many know the light blue blazes that mark each trail, and some own a well-worn copy of the *Connecticut Walk Book*, but most do not know just how the trails are maintained and what exists for the land trust to learn.

The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails measure some 800 miles and are maintained by the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, or CFPA. Founded in 1895, CFPA is a private, non-profit conservation organization whose mission is to conserve the land, trails and natural resources in Connecticut. In 1929, CFPA established the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System, and CFPA volunteers continue to maintain these trails today.

The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail system comprises a number of individual trails, and in some cases trail systems, each with its own name. With certain exceptions, all of the trails are pedestrian footpaths. Most, like the Metacomet Trail, are long-distance, rugged, backcountry paths that traverse geological features over a number of different land ownerships. Some, like the Cockaponset Trail, are contained entirely within a single ownership. All of the trails are overseen by the CFPA Trails Committee.

Each trail is divided into sections, and each section is maintained by a volunteer Trail Manager appointed by the Trails Committee. To be appointed, a Trail Manager must demonstrate that he has walked the trail, has read the Trail Manager's Handbook, and has attended a CFPA workshop or work party. Trail Managers are required to submit annual reports that state the number of volunteer hours dedicated to the trail, describe the work accomplished, and note the types of problems encountered.

The annual reports are an essential element of the maintenance program. They provide the organization with an opportunity to ensure that the work is being done. The record of hours devoted to trail work is essential, too, as volunteer time has a value and may be used as a match for certain trail grants.

CFPA holds a number of annual workshops at which trail management techniques are taught. These

workshops are open to anyone, and in recent years many members of land trusts have attended to learn skills that may be applied on land trust holdings. Held in a different park or forest each year, the spring workshop offers land trust members a chance to learn tool safety and then participate hands-on in any of a number of trail projects. These projects include bridge-building, erosion control, invasive species identification and removal, blazing, side-hilling, and even the construction of a wheelchair-accessible trail.

CFPA also holds a winter workshop offering classroom demonstrations of trail techniques. In 2006, the winter workshop featured a presentation by Janet Zeller of the USDA Forest Service on universal access trails, and featured a presentation by Eastern Mountain Sports on the use of GPS mapping equipment. The workshop also includes a basic course on trail tools and their safe and proper use. Both workshops are free, although pre-registration is required as they do fill to capacity.

If a land trust wished to develop its own trail maintenance program, there are a couple of CFPA documents that may be useful models. First, the Trail Manager's Handbook offers an excellent description of how a volunteer should go about the task of maintaining trails. The land trust member should note, however, that the sections of the handbook pertaining to interaction with landowners may not be appropriate. The difference between a typical CFPA Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail and a land trust trail is that CFPA does not own the land on which its volunteers maintain trails, whereas the land trust most likely does. Second, CFPA has compiled a number of guides on the subject of proper trail maintenance techniques. Those interested in a guide or a handbook should call CFPA and request a copy.

Finally, CFPA is often asked if it will establish a trail on a land trust property or take on the maintenance of trails on certain land trust properties. The unfortunate answer to most such requests is "no." CFPA must decline these requests because it receives so many of them, and the resources of our volunteers are stretched thin in maintaining the 800-miles of Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails that already exist. There are exceptions, however, and these typically arise when CFPA and a given land trust agree to establish a portion of a Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail, or a spur or loop trail connecting to a Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail, on land trust property.

Adam R. Moore is Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association.



AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY. INC.
P.O. Box 49, Old Mystic, CT 06372

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Upcoming Events

Saturday, September 30, 2006, 10:00 a.m. -- Perry Natural Area. Gentle walk through wooded historic farmland with stone walls, wells, a foundation and small cemetery. From the North Stonington rotary intersection of Routes 2 and 184, go west on Route 184 for 100 feet, turn left on North Anguilla Road. Trail entry and parking are approximately 0.25 mile on the left. For information call 887-5878.

Sunday, October 15, 2006, 2:30 p.m. – Preston Nature Preserve. Gentle walk on this 55-acre preserve featuring meadows, wetlands, ponds, woodland trails and picturesque outcroppings. Located on Krug Road in Preston. This walk is one of the Quinnebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor Walking Weekends walks centered on Columbus Day weekend to feature the natural and historic treasures of the Corridor. Dogs on leashes are welcome. For information call 887-5878.

Saturday, October 28, 2006, 9:00 a.m. -- Eleanor and Flood Reed Memorial Woodlands and Jean and Hobart Mitchell Preserve. A moderately rugged walk on the 213 acres of these adjoining wooded preserves in North Stonington and Preston. Beautiful mature forests divided by Main Brook and featuring deep valleys and remarkable rock outcrops. Park on Northwest Corner Road, North Stonington, 2.5 miles west of Route 201 or 1.5 miles east of Route 164. For information call 887-5878.

Heavy rain cancels all walks.

