



# BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

• ESTABLISHED 1979 •

PRESERVE. ADVOCATE. EDUCATE. ENGAGE.

## Barrington Honors Charlotte Sornborger for Years of Service



Photo by Jeff Hall

By Melissa Horne

The Barrington Land Conservation Trust recently said “au revoir” to an invaluable member of Barrington’s conservation community. Charlotte Sornborger, who has been involved with the Barrington Land Conservation Trust (“BLCT”) since it was founded in 1978, moved to Connecticut in December to be closer to family. Members of BLCT and the local conservation community gathered together in early December to honor Charlotte and wish her well in her new home. Some of the highlights of Charlotte’s conservation work shared at that gathering included the following:

Charlotte was elected president of BLCT in 1986 and served in that capacity for an amazing 17 years. Charlotte’s leadership as president made BLCT what it is today by spearheading the conservation of numerous properties and permanently influencing the quantity and quality of open spaces throughout Barrington.

During Charlotte’s presidency, BLCT protected more than 100 acres of land through 40 separate acquisition transactions, including the Pic-Will Nature Preserve, an 18 acre parcel obtained through negotiations with the land owners and the Nature Conservancy. Charlotte also orchestrated BLCT’s acquisition of the 28-acre Johannis Farm Wildlife Preserve, which was purchased with Open Space Bond funds and a \$60,000 fundraising campaign.

Charlotte also focused on other initiatives, including:

- Developing a Wetlands Alert system to be used by the Conservation Commission & Town Council to inform land-use decision-making;
- Convincing the Town to implement buffer-strip protections in all real estate developments adjacent to Town estuaries and fresh water wetlands;
- Advocating for BLCT’s environmental goals at hundreds of town council, planning board and zoning board meetings and devoting scores of hours to the development of Barrington’s comprehensive open space plans; and
- Establishing, with the Audubon Society of RI, educational programs for Barrington’s elementary school students.
- Finally, and not insignificantly, Charlotte helped ensure BLCT’s financial stability by substantially increasing the number and amount of donations made by members and friends each year.

Charlotte’s involvement with conservation didn’t end when she stepped down as president of BLCT in 2003. She remained active on the BLCT board and committees, hosting countless walks on BLCT

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from the prev. page... properties. She held several leadership positions with the Audubon Society of RI, including president. She also served as an osprey monitor for RIDEM and the Audubon Society.

One of Charlotte's greatest contributions to conservation in Barrington was her leadership of the Nockum Hill Terrapin Population Study. For 25 years, Charlotte led the protection and study of the only substantial nesting site for the endangered diamond-back terrapin in Rhode Island. She and the volunteer crew she recruited and trained worked in the field at Nockum Hill on a daily basis from June through September to protect the nesting terrapin and collect data. Over the years, the Terrapin Project has documented an annual increase in the number of terrapin nesting at Nockum Hill, demonstrating the value of grass roots conservation efforts. Thanks to Charlotte's mentorship, these efforts will continue even though Charlotte has moved away from Barrington.

It may be that Charlotte's success as a mentor and role model is her most valuable contribution to conservation. Charlotte's energy, extensive knowledge and gentle but persuasive personality allowed her to convince people of all ages to become involved in conservation. It is a special tribute that many of the young people Charlotte has mentored are pursuing careers in conservation.

Never one to have idle hands, word comes from Connecticut that Charlotte has already joined an environmental stewardship committee in her new community. Barrington's loss will undoubtedly be Bloomfield, CT's gain!

## Guess The Leaf!

The BLCT properties contain the most beautiful trees that Rhode Island and New England have to offer. In this month's challenge, guess which tree you can find this leaf hanging from. The answer is on page 5. *Hint: It's the RI state tree!*



Photo by Jen Johnson



Photo by Joanna Detz

## Save The Trees!

Do you love receiving our newsletter, but worry about how much paper it takes to produce this wonderful publication every three months? Then send us your email address and we will send the newsletter straight to your inbox! Just go to **[bit.ly/blct-newsletters](https://bit.ly/blct-newsletters)** and fill out the form (and check out our older emails while you're there). We will never give your info to to anyone else, so don't worry about email spam.



## BLCT Joins Save The Bay for Coastal Cleanup Day

On September 28, 2019, BLCT co-sponsored a beach clean-up with Save the Bay at Mussachuck beach in Barrington as part of the 2019 International Coastal Cleanup. 20 adults as well as 17 teens and children participated, collecting 17 bags and 174 pounds of trash, each item individually itemized into 30 categories. There were 2681 items in total with bottle caps, food wrappers, plastics, straws and stirrers, and cigarette butts leading the list.

Ocean trash is a serious pollution problem that affects the health of

people, wildlife and local economies. The International Coastal Cleanup is the world's largest, annual, volunteer effort tackling this problem for our ocean and waterways.

On average, more than 2,000 volunteers participate annually in the Rhode Island ICC at more than 80 sites, typically removing about 20,000 pounds of trash and debris and documenting what they find. In 2018, more than one million volunteers across the globe took a stand against ocean trash by joining the ICC.

Our data, added to data from clean-ups around Rhode Island, other states, and countries, will be compiled and published in an annual global report on marine debris by the Ocean Conservancy. Policymakers use the ICC data to raise awareness about marine debris and reduce the problem at the source.

This is an annual event. BLCT will announce the date for its 2020 cleanup late this coming summer. For more information you can also go to: <https://www.savebay.org/events/icc/>



Photo by Victor Lerish



Photo by Melissa Horne

## Dozens Turn Out for Black Friday Hike at Johannis

The Barrington Land Conservation Trust partnered with the Barrington Public Library to host the annual Black Friday guided tour through Johannis Farm Wildlife Preserve. This is a special property, and

normally closed to the public, so it was a great opportunity to see the farm, learn about the history and wildlife, and hike off some of that Thanksgiving turkey! About 70 people came out, a great turnout for a winter

walk. The pictures below were taken by Town Councilor Jacob Brier, so big thanks to Councilor Brier for helping out! Check back here or like the BLCT on Facebook to get notifications for future hikes.



Photo by Jacob Brier



Photo by Jacob Brier



## Elizabeth Rush to Speak at The Library

The Barrington Public Library and BLCT will host author Elizabeth Rush on Thursday, March 12 at 6:30 PM for a discussion of her book *Rising: Dispatches from the New American Shore*. From Ms. Rush's website:

*With every passing day, and every record-breaking hurricane, it grows clearer that climate change is neither imagined nor distant—and that rising seas are transforming the coastline of the United States in irrevocable ways. In Rising, Elizabeth Rush guides readers through some of the places where this change has been most dramatic, from the Gulf Coast to Miami, and from New York City to the Bay Area. For many of the plants, animals, and humans in these places, the options are stark: retreat or perish in place.*

*Weaving firsthand testimonials from those facing this choice—a Staten Islander who lost her father during Sandy, the remaining holdouts of a Native American community on a drowning Isle de Jean Charles, a neighborhood in Pensacola settled by escaped slaves hundreds of years ago—with profiles of wildlife biologists, activists, and other members of these vulnerable communities, Rising privileges the voices of those too often kept at the margins.*

*Rising* has been named a Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction, winner of the National Outdoor Book Award, a Chicago Tribune Top Ten Book of 2018, and a Guardian, Publishers Weekly, Lit Hub, and Library Journal Best Book of 2018. It was also selected for the *Reading Across Rhode Island*, Rhode Island's One Book, One State community read program.

Please join us for this event, with a book signing following. Advance registration is required through the Library website.



# RISING

DISPATCHES *from the*  
NEW AMERICAN SHORE

ELIZABETH RUSH

## BLCT Needs Your Help - Please Give Generously!

The Barrington Land Conservation Trust depends upon the generosity of its members and friends for the funds necessary to steward the 76 properties it has conserved, to protect the animals and plants that live within those properties, and to share the natural wonders associated with this flora and fauna with school children and residents of Barrington.

Please help to ensure that BLCT can continue the types of activities featured in this newsletter in the future by making a donation today. The Barrington Land Conservation Trust and all those who depend on its efforts appreciate your support!

# Western Kingbird Spotted at St. Andrew's Farm

*Article and photos by Catherine Boisseau*

In November, an unusual avian visitor appeared at McCulloch Field at St. Andrew's Farm on Middle Highway: a western kingbird, whose breeding range is in the western half of the US. It winters in Central America and Mexico but occasionally makes rare incursions into the eastern half of the country. Its visit marked the first time the bird has been seen in Rhode Island since 2015, and the first sighting ever of this species in Bristol County.

With its white breast, bright yellow belly, grey head, smudgy black eyeline, and dark tail with white outer feathers, the kingbird drew appreciative birders from around the state to St. Andrew's farm for about two weeks. Visitors watched as the bird flitted about the fields in search of the flying insects that make up its diet: grasshoppers, crickets, bees, moths, butterflies, and wasps.



The Western kingbird is a member of the flycatcher family (tyrannus). It prefers open habitats like fields, pastures and grasslands, where it perches on low scrub, fenceposts, or on a tree at field's edge. From there, it sallies out from its perch to catch insects in mid-air, usually no more than five feet above the ground. The western kingbird is slightly larger than its eastern US counterpart, the eastern kingbird, which frequents semi-open habitats near water, such as Barrington's Brickyard Pond, in summer.

The fields at St. Andrew's provided the right setting for this wayward bird during what was probably its off-course migratory flight south. The unmown grasses provided good habitat for insects and a place for the bird to feed. Fortunately, BLCT has been working with the town of Barrington to develop new management practices at St. Andrews Farm fields. Mowing is delayed until as late in fall as possible, and in a change from past practices, only half the

fields are mown in a patchwork pattern each year, in order to leave areas with grass cover and food sources for wildlife during winter. This approach is increasingly practiced by conservation organizations and gardeners alike as the benefits to wildlife and pollinators become increasingly evident.

The western kingbird is a vigorous defender of its territory, and has been known to attack crows, ravens, and even hawks that venture too near. It often frequents farm fields and has long been considered beneficial to farmers because of its control of insect populations, but it can also be adversely affected by pesticide use.

The kingbird will occasionally eat fruits, which this bird probably resorted to at the end of its stay as the insect population dropped. As the weather grew colder, concerns grew for the bird's survival. Birders returned to see it regularly, until one cold day at the end of November when it was finally gone -- probably having moved south to its wintering grounds. We can only be grateful for its surprise visit, and hope for similar surprises in the coming year.

## Quiz Answer: Red Maple

The Red Maple, (Aceraceae *Acer rubrum*), also known as the Swamp Maple or Soft Maple, was voted as the state tree by school children in the 1890's. In the fall, the leaves turn gold, purple, and scarlet, adding to the beauty of Rhode Island's forests.



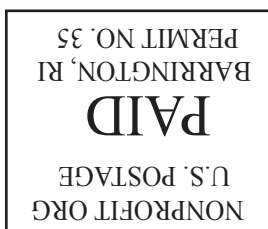




*Photos by Lenny Rumpler*

## Lenny Rumpler Prints Available to Purchase

Throughout January, the Barrington Public Library hosted the works of Lenny Rumpler in the Jennifer English Gallery and elsewhere in the Library. These photographic prints were all taken on BLCT properties. The framed prints are for sale, with all proceeds going to the BLCT, so pick one out today, get a great picture for your home, and help out a good cause! Some of the prints are still hanging at the library, and you can see all the prints and get contact info by going here: [bit.ly/lennyrumpler](http://bit.ly/lennyrumpler)



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