



BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

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Osprey - The Comeback Kids!

By Cindy Moura

Ospreys are a favorite summertime visitor along the waterways of Barrington, but did you know that populations were nearly decimated from the 1950's to the 1970's mostly because of the widespread use of a persistent insecticide known as DDT. It is estimated that nearly 90% of the breeding pairs disappeared from the shore ways from New York to Boston. Although Rhode Island had historically supported a substantial population of ospreys, by 1967 the population bottomed out at just two nests. Ospreys were placed on the USFWS Endangered Species List in 1976, four years after DDT was finally banned. The 1962 landmark book *Silent Spring*,



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authored by Rachel Carson, clearly expressed how important it is to maintain a vigilance on the use of chemicals and their fate in the environment. The story of the osprey demonstrated the undeniable truth of this warning cry.

Fast forward to today, and the osprey has become the symbol of how nature can recover from environmental atrocities. The recovery of the osprey population began soon after DDT was banned almost entirely in the United

States. In Rhode Island, the Audubon Society now monitors osprey nests with the help of volunteers. There are now about 150 active nests throughout the state, and the number is growing. Today, ospreys are no longer listed as endangered, but they remain federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Ospreys that nest in Rhode Island are migratory, spending their winters in Central and South America. Each spring Barrington eagerly awaits the return of bonded pairs of ospreys to their nesting sites spread across town. Many of the nesting sites are located on BLCT properties. Another key to osprey recovery has been the installation of artificial



Photo by Betsy Staples

nest sites (platforms) that allow ospreys to build their massive nests out of the reach of ground predators. Installing and maintaining these raised platforms is just one of the many maintenance tasks that we rely on your generous donations to support.

Ospreys are a conservation success story. However, many other birds are now in peril. A 2019 study, published in the *Journal of Science*, showed staggering declines in bird populations. Nearly 30% of the bird

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... from the previous page population, more than one out of four birds, has been lost in the last 50 years. Loss of habitat and pesticide use, particularly a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids play the most substantial role in population declines. Lands such as those protected by BLCT and other private land trusts across Rhode Island play a vital role, but each of us can focus on creating habitat by adding native plants and employing ecological gardening practices right in our own backyards. As a first step, be sure to learn more about and join the Pollinator Pathway by visiting BLCT.org.



Name That Plant

Answer on page 4



Barrington River, Barrington. Sara Horvet

BLCT Volunteer Leads Scout Hike

On March 26, BLCT volunteer, Sara Horvet, led a local Cub Scout Troop on a "Sea and Tree Safari" nature walk along the Barrington Beach and identified shells, algae, beach grasses and shore birds and then walked through the trails in Veterans Memorial Park and found vernal pools, lichens, hickory trees, and some other fauna and flora! Cub Scout leader Jack Siegel said that, "Our Troop is currently earning our Nature Merit Badge. It is

essentially identifying and collecting different ecological samples. We will be using New England Nature Guidebooks (Audobon and Kaufman) as reference. While these texts are adequate, it was great to have Sara along to point out all the things we would have missed and add real depth with her knowledge of the shoreline ecology."



May is the Best Month for Looking

By Catherine Boisseau



The month of May is probably the most eagerly anticipated month in the calendar for birdwatchers. If you have feeders, flowers, or flowering trees and shrubs, this is the month you

will see the return of backyard birds like Baltimore orioles and ruby-throated hummingbirds, and maybe even some migrating warblers. The common American goldfinch, which spends the winter in a drab light brown plumage, lights up yards with its new feathers of black and bright yellow.

For the most part, May is when we say goodbye to winter visitors like dark-eyed junco and white-throated sparrows,

spring has to offer, so be sure to go outside and look for them at a refuge, bike path, or pond near you. Look twice at areas you might not think to look at, like overgrown weedy patches



and tangles of vines and undergrowth. The scraggiest of scrubby patches of weeds can be the very places these birds are underappreciated --- they are valuable as both cover and food source, and it behooves us to leave patches of them in gardens, fields, along roadsides, and in clearings. Birds do not share humans' penchant for tidy and organized natural space!



whose plaintive song "O Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody" is replaced by the "bouncing ball" call of field sparrows and the buzzing, sewing machine-like trill of the chipping sparrow.

Unless you have a nest in your yard, as I did one year, you may notice fewer cardinals at your feeders; they are still around, but they now compete with other birds, including grackles and red-winged blackbirds, finches, and the same titmice and chickadees that were with us through the winter. Though red-winged blackbirds are commonly associated with marshes, Barrington is surrounded by so much marshland and waterfront that these birds will sometimes come to backyard feeders. The "ker-kerr-eee" song of the blackbird is a much-loved and sure sign of spring.

In the marshes, ospreys, egrets and herons return. Some, like the great blue heron, remain all winter, but the great white egret and the snowy egret return around April. Later in spring, green herons, black-crowned night herons and sometimes even the reclusive yellow-crowned night heron return to marshes and ponds.

In the meantime, keep an eye out for colorful warblers, some of which are passing through on their way to breeding grounds further north and others which are breeding here. Their beautiful plumage and songs are one of the best things

Many varieties of warblers also like to feed on caterpillars in the top of the canopy, so if you hear a song you don't recognize, be sure to scan the trees; in particular, warblers are attracted to oaks because of the many species of caterpillar living on oaks which provide birds with the protein they need as they migrate and enter the breeding season.

Good luck and happy birding adventures in this most active of seasons!



Nature Needs You - Please Give Generously!

Have you ever wondered about the gourds at Mussachuck Beach and Pic-Wil Nature Preserve that enable the purple martins to thrive?

Are you curious about how the trails at Sowams Woods are so well marked and accessible throughout Barrington's four seasons?

Is the post Thanksgiving walk at Johannis Farm a part of your family tradition, but you are not sure how it comes together?

The answers to these questions and more are: your support makes ALL of this happen and more!

As the outside world continues to play a role in our lives locally, we hope you will make a gift to BLCT to help us continue to bring the best of nature to our community.

Please take a moment today to make a tax-deductible donation at the most generous level possible. Your donation will help ensure that BLCT will have the funds necessary to continue to protect Barrington's special places and keep its properties open and available for recreational and educational opportunities.

Thank you for supporting BLCT.

You can scan the QR code below to go straight to the BLCT donation page at [PayPal.com](https://www.paypal.com)



Name That Plant Answer



Waquoit Bay, Cape Cod. Sara Horvet

Sea Lettuce (*Ulva lactuca*) grows in shallow, brackish and salty waters. It can be free-floating in the water or attached to rocks, pilings and other hard surfaces. You will often find sea lettuce washed up along the shorelines in Barrington and in most other bays throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Sea Lettuce is very pollution tolerant and can thrive where most other plants cannot. Large amounts of it often indicate high levels of nutrient enrichment which results in eutrophication. Eutrophication is the term to describe the process where excessive amounts of phosphorous and nitrogen enter into a water body and stimulate the growth of plants and algae. When these organisms die, they sink to the bottom, decompose and use up the dissolved oxygen. Without oxygen, shellfish and other marine organisms cannot live in the water and the ecosystem becomes degraded. Unfortunately eutrophication is common in most of our local estuaries and bays. Fertilizer, storm water runoff, erosion, and sewage are the main causes of nutrient enrichment. To learn more about ways to help lower the nutrient pollution entering our local waterways visit the URI Watershed Watch (<https://web.uri.edu/watershedwatch/>) or the UMASSD School of Marine Science Coastal Systems program (<http://www.smast.umassd.edu/Coastal/>)

Back to her Roots: Ann Brouillette

When Ann was young, she observed as her grandfather and father volunteered locally in their communities. Her father's work in the local conservation commission likely planted a seed that led to her commitment to volunteerism and the natural world. Ann's degree from college was in conservation and resource management; while a great interest, her career took her to property management and real estate. As she neared retirement, she enrolled in the URI Master Gardeners program and got involved with the Wild Plant Society. Looking to give back locally in Barrington, Ann joined the Tuesday Trail team with the BLCT. From there her engagement with the BLCT grew and she is now a champion of one of BLCT's most recent community wide projects: the Barrington Pollinator Pathway project.

Ann's commitment to our community and to the work of BLCT is clear when she speaks about her projects. She enjoys the people she works with and encourages all to get involved, as you will learn about our community, be a part of preserving our beautiful spaces, and learn a little about our natural habitat. Below is a more in-depth interview with Ann.

For me, the BLCT means.....

An opportunity to do what I love – spend time in the natural world helping to preserve and manage it with the goal of maintaining not just the land but the native plants and wildlife that live on it.

I decided to volunteer for the BLCT because.....

I joined when I had just retired and the Tuesday Trail Team sounded like a fun way to learn about the land trust and the land trust properties. Over time, I've become involved in the Stewardship Committee and the Pollinator Pathway committee also.

A few of my favorite projects have been....

Four of us started the Pollinator Pathway project during the first covid winter. We spent many virtual hours on the project and it was a great learning experience.

A project many of the land trust volunteers are now working on is figuring out how to best manage the Johannis Farm property for pollinators and other wildlife. We have been awarded a grant from NRCS to do habitat restoration work there.

If someone were to ask you about volunteering for the BLCT, what would you say to them?

By volunteering with the land trust you can meet some great people, learn about wild flora and fauna, and contribute to an important cause – one that will make a difference to the future quality of life and the natural world of Barrington. Besides volunteering on the properties, there are opportunities to help on one of the committees, at events, or with the website or the newsletter.



BLCT Volunteer Ann Brouillette in her pollinator garden, which is part of the Barrington Pollinator Pathway project initiated by BLCT. To learn more about this project, visit blct.org/more-about-us/pollinator-pathways

Favorite BLCT property? Activity?

My favorite is Johannis Farm. It has several acres of fields, woods, and salt marsh which means it has a wonderful diversity of plants and wildlife, including eagles. I have enjoyed walking the property with some of the experts we have asked to advise us on the management of it as we plan how to best use our grant money.

Is the BLCT for young people? Families? People of all ages?

The land trust properties provide places where people can take a walk in the woods or near the water when they need time in the natural world, which is great for people of all ages. They also provide a place where you can volunteer locally and make a difference. In addition, some of the properties have been used for student community service hours, scout projects, and library story walks for children. DEM has done invasive insect monitoring on two of the properties and a Brown professor has brought her field botany class to a few of the properties.

If Ann's story of her commitment to volunteerism, to our natural world in Barrington and to the BLCT inspires you, we hope you will reach out to join one of our many projects and activities here in town.

Levi Robbins Volunteer Work

The properties owned or stewarded by the Barrington Land Conservation Trust are maintained by a group of volunteers called the Tuesday Trails Team. The Team meets once a month and works on one or two of the properties in any given month. BLCT is fortunate to own many properties, but our Trails Team can't always get to each of

them as often as we'd like. So, when Levi Robbins contacted our leader, Victor Lerish, about working on Mussachuck Grove and Mussachuck Beach, we were delighted to have him help. Here, in Levi's words, is a description of his project:



"My name is Levi Robbins and I am 13 years old and in the 7th grade at Barrington Middle School. I am currently studying for my Bar Mitzvah and as a part of this process we are asked to do a Mitzvah project. Mitzvah means "commandment" as doing good deeds is

something we are all obliged to do. I wanted to choose a project that would benefit the community and also something that is close to my heart, which is conservation. For my project, I have been helping to maintain Mussachuck Grove and the beach close to my house with the support of Dr. Victor Lerish and Ann



Brouillette. I have been going every week to cut down invasive species and to clear the pathways. I have also been doing beach cleanups along the beach near our home and sometimes I bring my friends along with me."

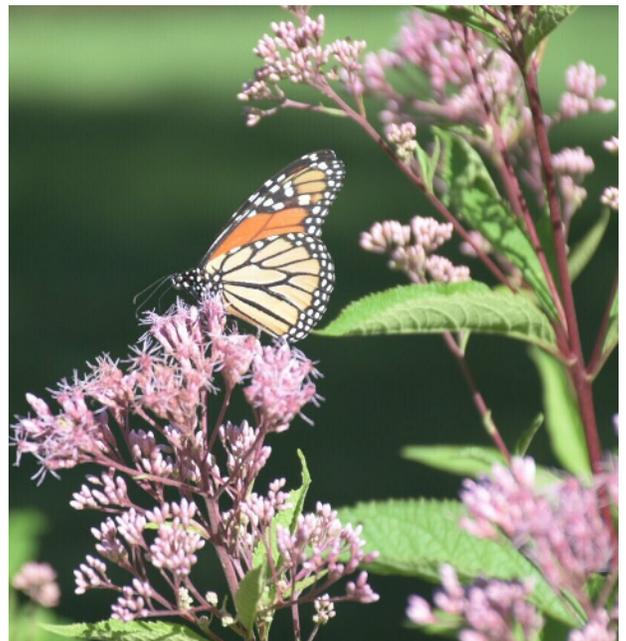
As he describes, Levi has been cutting invasives in the woods including burning bush, multiflora

rose, and bittersweet. He has collected several trash bags of trash from the beach. We are grateful for all his hard work. If you walk in Mussachuck Grove or on the beach, you have Levi to thank for maintaining them.

Learn more about Pollinator Pathways on the next page

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 email the newsletter straight to your inbox! Just go to bit.ly/blct-newsletters and fill out the form (and check out our previous newsletters while you're there). We will never give your info to anyone else, so don't worry about email spam.



Look and Find at Osamequin

By Cindy Pierce. Photos by Julie Andreozzi

Kids of all ages visited the Osamequin Nature Preserve this February to participate in the annual Look and Find Nature Walk, a collaboration between the Barrington Land Conservation Trust and The Barrington Public Library.

Clues were hidden all across the preserve, helping participants fill in an activity sheet with questions about the plant and animal life at Osamequin. The clues helped solve a word scramble, which counted as an entry ticket to a raffle of a hiking backpack full

of goodies, courtesy of the library.

Exploring the preserve also gave kids and families a great chance to spend some time outdoors during February vacation break. The Look and Find ran for the entire week, February 19-27, so families could enjoy the self guided activity on their own timeline. Keep in touch with the BLCT for announcements of other fabulous outdoor adventures at our wonderful properties by following us on Facebook and Instagram.



Help Our Local Pollinator Pathways

Pollinator numbers are declining, with several native bees nearing extinction and monarch butterfly populations decreasing by more than 90% over the last 20 years. The loss of insects in turn negatively affects birds. Cornell School of Ornithology recently released a

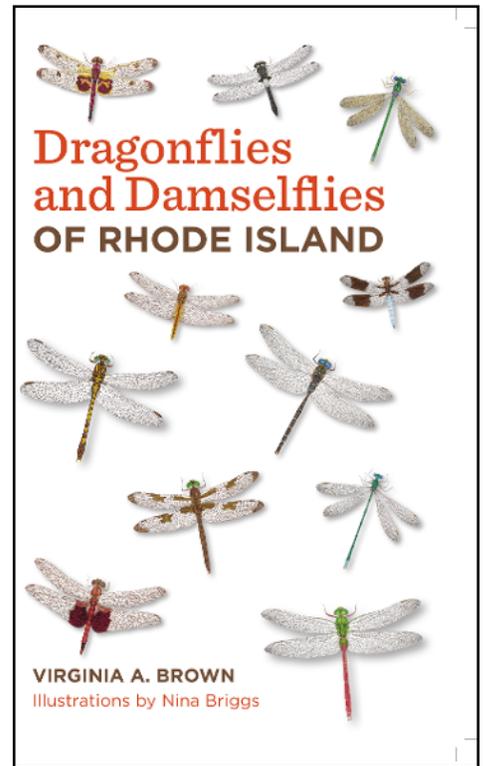
report indicating that since 1970 the North American bird population is down by nearly 3 billion birds, "a staggering loss that suggests that the very fabric of the ecosystem is unraveling". Despite conservation efforts, our



landscape has been chopped up, or fragmented, through suburban-ization. Even with the essential land stewardship efforts by groups like the BLCT, there is simply not enough conservation land to support sustainable populations of wildlife in isolated preserves. But, if local residents begin to manage their own yards organically and with native plantings, we can use them to connect parks and preserves, creating crucial corridors for pollinators and wildlife. That is the idea behind the Barrington Pollinator Pathway. Learn more by visiting our website <https://www.blct.org/more-about-us/pollinator-pathways/>. We hope you will consider joining dozens of your neighbors on the pathway. Eliminate pesticides, add native plants, shrink the lawn and get added to the map by visiting www.pollinator-pathways.org. Already part of the pathway movement? Invite your neighbors to join the effort too.

Join us for the 2022 Annual Meeting!

Let's get back together! After a two-year hiatus, the BLCT Annual Meeting will be held in-person at the Barrington Public Library on June 7 at 6:30 PM in the auditorium. Our guest speaker will be Virginia Brown, author of *Dragonflies and Damselflies of Rhode Island*, an atlas of all the odonate species found in the state during a multi-year inventory of more than 1,100 sites in Rhode Island. She will speak about their identification, distribution and abundance, natural history, behavior, habitat, seasonality, and conservation. After the presentation there will be a question and answer session, followed by a reception in the Collis Gallery. We hope to see you there!



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