



# BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

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## Property Spotlight: McCulloch Fields at St. Andrews Farm



*By Melissa Horne*

The McCulloch Fields at St. Andrews Farm is a special piece of open space with an interesting history. Located on Middle Highway, across from the St. Andrews School campus, the 28.53 acre property was operated by St. Andrews School as a working farm from the 1890's until the 1960's. In 2000, the McAdams Charitable Foundation, through the generosity of Norman and Dorothy McCulloch, purchased the property from St. Andrews School and donated it to the Town of Barrington. BLCT serves as the steward of the McCulloch Fields.

The primary purpose of this

generous gift was to preserve and maintain the property as open recreational space for the benefit of the public. Although part of the property was set aside for the construction of at least one soccer field, the remainder is subject to specific restrictions intended to preserve the existing landscape of rolling grassland and copses of trees bounded by upland and wetland forests. Consistent with the McCullochs' goals for the property, the Town and BLCT recently undertook a project intended to restore the property to its original condition and encourage greater public use of it for walking, birding and educational purposes.

Utilizing funds donated by the

McCullochs and matched by the Town, the work included new entry ways from Middle Highway and at the entrance to the trails that lead into the fields and improvements to the parking area. Granite blocks were installed as natural seating areas to make the McCulloch Fields more welcoming. In order to restore the fields to the condition that existed when the property was purchased nearly 20 years ago, BLCT, the Town and the Town's landscape architect determined that selective tree removal was necessary to prevent the forest from encroaching into the meadow and that piles of construction debris needed to be removed.

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... continued from page 1 Although this work resulted in a significant change in the appearance of the Fields, it is anticipated that hydroseeding and an effort by BLCT and the neighbors of the Fields to seed part of the area with wildflower seeds will permit the meadow to rebound in the spring.

The McCulloch Fields contain a mix of plant communities ranging from field grasses and wildflowers interspersed with islands of shrubs and trees to a woodland buffer around the periphery. Of particular note are a

rare Whorled milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*) and a "champion" white oak tree with a trunk exceeding 12' in diameter. The Fields provide a habitat for a wide variety of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and insects. Their proximity to the coastal flyway makes it a potentially important stop-over for migratory birds.

BLCT is in the process of preparing a new management plan for the McCulloch Fields that is intended to

maintain the Fields as early successional habitat. This plan will provide a schedule for mowing the fields to help prevent woody plants from encroaching into the meadow while encouraging the growth of native wildflowers and grasses. The plan will also involve the continued



Photo by Robert Puckett

removal and control of invasive, non-native plants.

The McCulloch Fields at St. Andrews Farm provides immeasurable benefits to the community, thanks to the generosity of the McAdams Charitable Foundation and Norman and Dorothy McCulloch. BLCT encourages everyone to visit the Fields to enjoy the open space and all the plants and animals preserved within them.

## 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.

As another year of conservation efforts comes to a close, we urge you to make a generous donation to ensure that BLCT can continue the types of activities featured in this newsletter in the future. The Barrington Land Conservation Trust and all those who depend on its efforts appreciate your support!



photo by Melissa Horne

# BLCT Provides New Homes for Expanding Purple Martin Population

By Jodi Helman

Photos by Robert Puckett

The Barrington Land Conservation Trust is happy to report that 2018 was a fantastic year for our Purple Martin population. Martins have been migrating to Barrington for centuries. After wintering in the Amazon jungle, these graceful birds head north to many parts of Rhode Island to mate and nest. Living in colonies, they usually return in early April and stay through Labor Day.

This fall, Purple Martin specialist, Ray Marr, oversaw the installation of new gourd towers purchased by BLCT. The distinctive white gourds, which are dotted throughout town at locations including the 17-acre PIC-WIL Nature Preserve, adjacent to RISD Beach at the Rhode Island Country Club, and along the banks of the Barrington River, make the perfect home for the Purple Martins. Historically, the Wampanoag first used the dried gourds to attract the

purple martins to their fields. As natural insect eaters, the Martins would keep the pests away from the crops. Today, residents of town who live near the gourds receive the same benefits of "insect maintenance" as



the Wampanoag did.

Although Marr spends a good deal of his free time taking care of the Martins at PIC-WIL, he is also responsible for the other towers around town. Hung in clusters from

tall poles, the gourds can be lowered for inspection and cleaning via a pulley system. Once they have established a nest in the gourd, the birds fly in and out, feeding their hatchlings and then lifting off for more food. Once they find a home they like, the Martins will return year after year, often bringing their offspring with them. This year, Marr was fortunate to witness a flock of 150 Martins of varying ages as they came in to roost in late July. This flock was one of the largest ever recorded in town.

In 2018, 52 gourd units were in place. These gourds provided homes to 49 pairs of Martins, of which 43 pairs fledged 160 chicks. Marr believes that, overall, this was a great season for the entire region. He is optimistic that 2019 will be a banner season due to the large number of chicks produced this year. BLCT certainly hopes those chicks will come back to Barrington to take up residence in the new towers and gourds installed this fall.





# Fall Paddling with BLCT!

*by Ian Donahue*

*Photos by Mary Grover and Richard Staples*

BLCT hosted two paddling events on Hundred Acre Cove this fall. The first was a twilight event during which the paddlers could watch the sunset while checking out the osprey nests. The second event was held in the morning; it focused on being completely surrounded by the wonderful fall foliage. We had lots of people show up for both events, the weather was great and everyone had a good time. Please stay in touch with BLCT for announcements of 2019 events!





# Eagle Scouts Work to Improve Barrington

BLCT has a strong relationship with the Boy Scouts of America, and has benefited from the volunteer work of Eagle Scout candidates as they complete projects within the community as part of the Eagle Scout process. Here are some of the notable scouts from the last year:

In November of 2017, **Patrick Fitzhugh** and his team of volunteers worked over two days at St. Andrews Farm clearing existing trails that had become overgrown and near impassible. They also created a new trail to complement the existing trails and removed many

another member of his troop to construct a new bridge in the same location sometime this fall or next spring, potentially making it possible to extend the trail to an additional trailhead on the bike path.

The most recent project was completed by **Aidan Grant** in July 2018. It involved creating a path across town property from Tall Pines Dr. to Christine

trail.

Future Eagle Scout projects that we hope to participate in include the trail in



*Patrick Fitzhugh's group at St. Andrews Farm*



*Matthew McGee's bridge*

articles that had been dumped on the site including a couch, washing machine, tires and other items. His efforts have opened up considerable walking opportunities for the public.

**Matthew McGee's** project in June 2018 involved demolishing and removing a decaying and dangerous bridge on one of the trails on our Andreozzi Woods property. This paves the way for

Dr. that will ultimately connect to a refurbished trail (also an Eagle Scout project) along the drainage channel in the backside of our Heritage Woods property. These two connecting trails could be the beginning of a north-south trail along town-owned property through Hampden Meadows.

None of these projects could have been

completed without **Barrington Department of Public Works'** support and assistance with hauling away debris from the bridge deconstruction and materials dumped in the woods, supplying wood chips for a trail and cutting up a downed tree blocking a

Heritage Woods, the previously mentioned bridge rebuild, elevated wooden walkways at Johannis Farm, and construction of trailhead kiosks at Sowams Woods and Osamequin Nature Trails.

BLCT extends thanks to all of these Scouts for their help improving the open spaces of Barrington and to **Victor Lerish** for his time, enthusiasm and guidance with all of these projects.



*Aidan Grant's group at Hampden Meadows*

## Oh No! We May Have Missed You!

We realized after the publication of the Summer newsletter that, due to a glitch in our donor database, the list of donors included in that newsletter was missing donors who had donated to BLCT between July and October 2018. If you are one of those valued donors whose name was left off the list, please accept our sincere apologies. BLCT depends on and appreciates each and every one of our donors; please give us another chance to recognize you next year!





The Barrington Land Conservation Trust partnered with the Barrington Public Library to host a Black Friday guided tour through **Johannis Farm Wildlife Preserve**. This is a special property which is normally closed to the public, so it was a great opportunity to see the farm, learn about its history and wildlife, and hike off some of that Thanksgiving turkey! About 70 people came out, a great turnout for a winter walk. Check our website at [blct.org](http://blct.org) or like the BLCT on Facebook to get notifications for future hikes!

*Johannis Farm Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Joshua Lamb*

