



BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

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BLCT Pays Tribute to a Founder and a Friend

By Melissa Horne

The Barrington Land Conservation Trust is remembering two pillars of Barrington's conservation community who recently passed away. Mary Stearns Chaffee and Norman "Sandy" McCulloch, Jr. each made significant and lasting contributions to BLCT that will benefit Barrington in perpetuity.



A native of Barrington who loved Narragansett Bay and its tributaries, Mary Stearns Chaffee was one of the founders of BLCT back in 1979. As president of the Barrington Garden Club, Mary and other club members, along with Frank Goulet at URI, undertook a study to investigate disruption the installation of a new sewer system would cause to the Town's wetlands. Disturbed by their findings, Mary joined with several other concerned citizens to incorporate BLCT in order to protect Barrington's open spaces and natural resources. Mary served as BLCT's initial president and was named an Honorary Board Member in 2003 in recognition of her efforts to forever protect

Barrington's open spaces. She passed away in September at the age of 96.

Sandy McCulloch, who passed away in July at age 94, so valued open space that he and his wife, Dotty, purchased the 28.53 acre property now known as the McCulloch Fields at St. Andrews Farm from St. Andrews School and donated it to the Town of Barrington. Although a small portion of the property is used as playing fields, the majority of the property 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 McCulloch's wishes, the public is encouraged to use the McCulloch Fields for walking,



birding and educational purposes. BLCT oversees the management of the McCulloch Fields through an agreement with the Town of Barrington. The McCullochs also donated two conservation easements on Adams Point to BLCT. These three gifts encompass more than 30 acres of property which

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from the prev. page... will be forever maintained as conservation land.

Mary Stearns Chaffee and Sandy McCulloch made invaluable contributions to the ability of BLCT to carry out a wide variety of initiatives intended to help conserve Barrington's open space and natural resources. We appreciate their efforts and extend our condolences to their families.



St. Andrew's Farm. Photo by Mary Grover



St. Andrew's Farm pollinator meadow. Photo by Mary Grover

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 and fill out the form (and check out our older newsletters while you're there). We will never give your info to to anyone else, so don't worry about email spam.

Name That Plant!

This plant looks like it's blowing in the wind but it's actually underwater! It gets its name from a fish and from a plant. Can you guess what it is? Answer on page 6.



BLCT Hosts After Thanksgiving Day Walk at Johannis Wildlife Preserve

The Barrington Land Conservation Trust opened up the Johannis Farm Wildlife Preserve for our annual After Thanksgiving Day walk. This is a special property, and normally closed to the public, so it was a great opportunity to see the preserve, learn about the history and wildlife, and hike off some of that Thanksgiving turkey! We had great turnout, with over 125 people, using staggered timed registrations and facemask guidelines to keep everyone safe. Check back here or like the BLCT on Facebook to get notifications for future hikes!



Coming this Season: Irruptions!

By Catherine Boisseau

This season is witnessing an irruption of seldom-seen winter finches: evening grosbeaks, pine siskins, purple finches, red crossbills, and common redpolls. An irruption is a movement of a species from its usual habitat to an area where it is not usually found. Many of this year's irruptive finches are traveling from Canada's boreal forest, where pine and birch crops have been poor. As a result, birds are looking for sources of food beyond their usual habitats. Irruptions often follow population increases that occur when food supplies are plentiful. When those food supplies return to normal levels, there are more birds to feed on fewer resources, and so they must travel out of their range to find sustenance.



Evening grosbeak.

Photo: Catherine Boisseau

One of the most beautiful of these finches is the evening grosbeak. The male of this species is bright yellow splashed with black and white; the female is a more subtle combination of greenish-yellows and gray. This chunky bird has a large head and a massive bill to crack open seeds. A recent

boom in the evening grosbeak population can be traced to outbreaks of the spruce budworm, a native insect that feeds on the needles of spruce and fir trees; it forms a major part of the grosbeak's diet. Every 30 to 60 years an outbreak of budworm occurs, followed by a subsequent population increase in grosbeaks. Evening grosbeaks are attracted to maple and ash trees and will eat sunflower seeds at feeders.

Common redpolls are tiny, streaky finches with a bright red cap that gives them their name. They feed on birch "catkins," so look for them in birch groves, weedy fields and at feeders, where they like nyger and sunflower seeds.



Common Redpolls

Photo: Catherine Boisseau

Another visitor is the red crossbill. As its name suggests, the lower and upper mandibles of the bird's bill do not meet but cross over each other – a shape similar to when you cross your fingers. This adaptation enables them to pry open pinecones for seeds. Keep an eye out for them in pine and other coniferous stands.

The purple finch and the pine siskin are small birds that at first might be mistaken for house finches or song sparrows. The



Red Crossbill

Photo: Cornell All About Birds

male purple finch is recognizable by the bright rose-colored "stain" over his head, breast and back; the female is streaky brown. Pine siskins are brown and streaky, but with yellow tinges to the tail, wing edges and chest. Siskins feed on buds and seeds of birches, pines, and hemlocks and often associate with goldfinches.



Pine siskins

Photo: Catherine Boisseau

Red-breasted nuthatches are not finches but tend to irrupt when finch populations do. Residents of the boreal forest, a few of them are generally found in Rhode Island, usually in western coniferous forests. But this year they have been

plentiful and can be attracted to feeders with sunflower seeds and suet. This spunky little bird is a colorful counterpart to our white-breasted nuthatch, and it's fun to compare their appearance and nasal chatter as they pick their way along tree trunks or dangle from pine boughs gleaning food.



Red-breasted nuthatches Photo: Catherine Boisseau

New Fertilizer Ordinance in Barrington Strives to Reduce Nutrient Pollution in Waterways

Did you know a recently passed town ordinance places limitations on fertilizer use in town? Restrictions include type and concentration of nutrients, times of year for application, cautions to not allow fertilizers to remain on impervious surfaces and controls for application prior to rainstorms or within certain distances from waterways. More information on the actual ordinance is available on our website. These restrictions help reduce nutrient pollution in our waterways, essential to the wellbeing of our local water bodies which in turn are essential to our quality of life, after all Barrington is nearly 50% water!



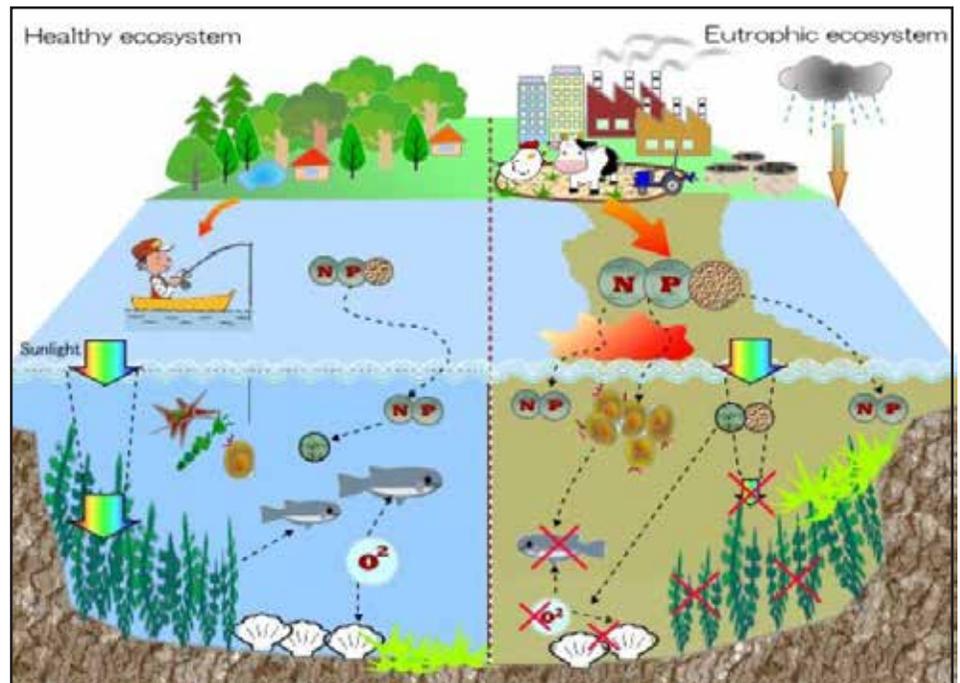
The ordinance was championed by Councilman Steve Boyajian. We talked to the Councilman about the new law, the first of its kind in Rhode Island, and he said getting this implemented had been on his radar for some time. He reflected that growing up on Allin's Cove and spending days wading through marshes and muck made him appreciative of the importance of Barrington's wetlands and waters and cognizant of the damage that had occurred for decades leading up to that point. At that time he could actually watch a factory pipe pumping pollutants into the water. Restrictions on pouring pollutants into the Bay, installation of sewer systems and thoughtful stormwater management projects have improved water quality substantially

since then and the Councilman is delighted that now his own kids get to enjoy paddling and crab catching in much cleaner waters! Despite this, beach closures, shell fishing bans, anoxia, and fish kills, both in Barrington and other parts of upper Narragansett Bay had Steve thinking a lot about something his wife Sarah, who studied marine and freshwater biology would talk about, nutrient pollution in the waterways. How many of you have walked along the shorelines of the Barrington River and noticed slimy green algae creeping along the banks? You can see the algae at low tide covering the beaches and shores where residents used to swim and shellfish. You can smell rotten eggs from the degrading plants and the sandy shore is covered in a squishy muck. The cause of this algae is from nitrogen pollution: one of the more significant long-term threats to the health of many of Rhode Island's estuaries and Bays. Many of the harbors, coves and fresh water lakes and ponds in RI suffer from the effects of too much nitrogen and phosphorus. We all contribute this harmful pollution to our local waterways. Fortunately, we can all do our part to stop it. In clean water fish and shellfish thrive, and people can enjoy the water. But when the water is polluted with nitrogen

(estuaries) or phosphorus (lakes and ponds), it becomes cloudy and murky. Eelgrass can't grow, and fish and shellfish disappear. This process is known as EUTROPHICATION. When water is polluted with excess nutrients, it looks cloudy and murky. Algae begins to grow. Eelgrass beds die, and fish and shellfish slowly disappear. Basically, nutrient pollution is destroying the waterways we all love.

Nutrients enter the waters of coastal and freshwater embayments mainly through the watershed from septic tanks, stormwater runoff and fertilizers. In Councilman Boyajian's own words, "fertilizer as a source of nutrient pollution, though not as visually jarring as the factory pipe I saw as a kid, is a place where local government can do some tangible thing to make a difference."

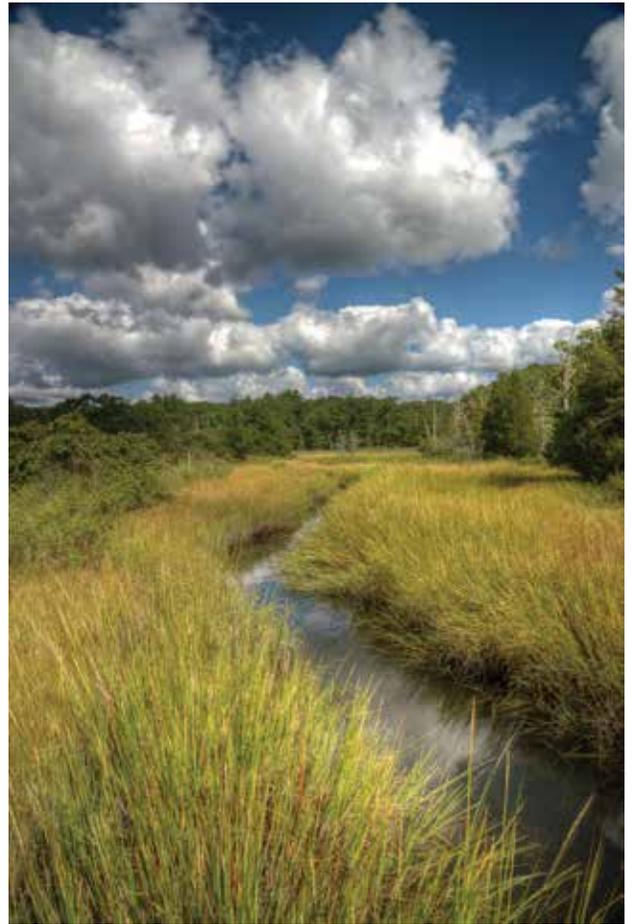
This is a complex topic and one that requires more than the space of this article to tackle. Water quality matters deeply to the Land Trust, after all many of the properties we work so hard to protect border and contain fragile bodies of water. That's why in the coming months we will be doing more to provide education on this important topic and to offer meaningful solutions for ways that every resident can help! Stay tuned.



Stay Tuned for the 2021 BLCT Photo Contest

After featuring the wonderful photos of local artist Lenny Rumpler during the last few months, we're inspired to announce a new photo contest for 2021! We'll have more details in the next newsletter and on Facebook, but you should start taking pictures on the BLCT properties now!

Photo by Lenny Rumpler



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Support BLCT with a Tax-Deductible Year-End Donation

Despite the challenges of this long and difficult year, BLCT has continued to offer its members and friends access to the restorative power of the natural world.

Increased use of our properties, while energizing, brought new repairs and maintenance obligations. The financial support of its members and friends is more important than ever to BLCT's ability to keep its properties open and to provide recreational and educational opportunities.

Please consider making a year-end gift so BLCT can continue to give the gift of nature. Your year-end donation will help ensure that BLCT will have the funds necessary to continue to protect and preserve Barrington's special places. Please support BLCT by taking a moment today to make a tax-deductible donation at the most generous level possible.

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



BLCT Celebrates a Land Donation

Many thanks to Janet Hoder for her recent donation of the Hoder Marsh property. Located on Adams Point at Bourne Lane and Oyster Shell Lane, the 3.5 acre property is a nice complement to the adjacent Marshlands property. As their names suggest, these properties are marshy and not easily accessible by people. They do provide wonderful habitat for birds, amphibians and small mammals. The Hoder family's fondness for this property will be respected as it will remain protected forever in its natural, scenic and undeveloped condition. Thank you, Mrs. Hoder, for this generous gift!





Name That Plant: Eelgrass!

Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is an important aquatic plant native to marine environments along the coastlines of North America and Eurasia. It provides a number of important ecosystem functions, including shelter for young fish and invertebrates, food for waterfowl and sea turtles, and spawning surfaces for species such as the Bay Scallop. Eelgrass beds also improve water quality by filtering polluted runoff, absorbing excess nutrients, storing greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and protecting the shoreline from erosion. Unfortunately there has been significant degradation of eelgrass habitat, primarily from human impacts such as urban development, dredging and pollution. A number of organizations have undertaken seagrass restoration projects in Rhode Island. The University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography and the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program are great resources if you would like to learn more about this important habitat.



Photo by Jennifer Benson

The BLCT wishes to thank the volunteer Board of Directors for their many contributions of time and energy in serving the Barrington community.

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