



# WELLFLEET CONSERVATION TRUST

June 2020 • [www.wellfleetconservationtrust.org](http://www.wellfleetconservationtrust.org)

## FINDING SOLACE IN NATURE



Redwing Blackbird

In these locked-up times we miss large gatherings, concerts, dining out, and social visits. Many of us have lost jobs and contact with loved ones. It's easy to assume that all our social interactions must be through Zoom, our meditations guided by YouTube, and our thinking trapped in endless narratives of the end-of-times. However, the natural world remains to explore and enjoy. We can still watch the unceasing but ever-changing waves

at the beach, walk through forests, listen to birds, check out the bees in the new bee house, and watch adorable rabbits eating our recently planted vegetables. With fewer cars and trucks travelling long distances the air is cleaner and living things are flourishing.

In his book, *Confessions*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau says, "I can only meditate when I am walking. When I stop, I cease to think; my mind works only with my legs." Rousseau's walking was in the woods, not on a treadmill or in a shopping mall. His journeys remind us that our life cannot be separated from the natural world. Walking in nature can be a social activity as well (six feet apart, of course). Informal connection can be deeper and more attuned to the needs we all feel in these times. We may still feel lost, but we have a chance to find both others and ourselves when we remember our role in nature.

The Trust asked supporters, trustees, and other lovers of nature what particular consolation from nature they are finding during these Covid times. Here are some of the responses.

"Looking out at the always changing marsh and the birds that visit it has been wonderful. We've also enjoyed walks and bike rides to Lieutenant's Island."

– Julie Bartsch

Continued to Page 2

## FINDING SOLACE IN NATURE, CONTINUED



**Cardinal**

"The opportunity for long walks in the Wellfleet woods has been a vital relief from home-isolation. My wife and I have explored (with masks at the ready) the many trails across WCT and National Seashore lands. We are so grateful for these results of decades of conservation of our distinctive environment." – Michael Fisher, WCT Trustee

"Right up there in the high pine trees, the birds have cheered me. And seeing the red cardinal arrive in my back yard." – Clifford Milo

"Watching the male gold finch turn from winter bland to spring mating session - gorgeous." – Marcia Seeler, WCT Trustee

"I am so fortunate to live on the edge of the Pilgrim Springs Conservation area, where I walk every day. Besides my daily first hand observation of the creatures and changing season in the nearby woods and Fox Island Marsh, this spring I enjoyed viewing virtual scenery from family members showing cherry blossoms in Washington, bluebonnets in Texas, blue skies in L.A. and May snow on flowers in Ohio." – Mary Rogers, WCT Trustee

"From the surprise of jellyfish at Pleasant Point to the normalcy of the changing of the tides, to the riot of tulips and azaleas in my yard, Nature has replaced the joy in my heart lost by social distancing." – Susan Broadbent

"During these times staying indoors, I've felt fortunate to have lived and helped maintain some of the properties in Wellfleet. I was watching the season transition into a sunny green oasis just on the LeHac House property, but when I got to drive into town, I was so overwhelmed to see how beautiful it looks when supporting new life!"

– Celia Davalos, AmeriCorps worker



**Goldfinch**

"The birds at our feeder where there is peaceful sharing and comradery in the world." – John Bailey

"I have been taking long walks almost every day and am so grateful to be living in Wellfleet in this moment. Especially in March, when reality seemed to be changing every day and each day brought new unknowns and new restrictions, being surrounded by natural beauty was so grounding. The chance to be outside in wide open spaces, to breathe deeply, to smell the ocean, to feel the warmth of the spring sun . . . those of us who love this special place are so lucky to have the solace and comfort it brings."

– Sue Anthony, WCT Trustee

# WELCOME TO CAPE COD OPEN SPACE

*The following is an adaption of an editorial from Mark Robinson, our advisor at the Compact that was published in the Cape Cod Times newspaper on May 17, 2020.*

It's been waiting for you, just sitting there quietly minding its own business of filtering water, growing trees and plants and sheltering wildlife. Waiting for a time in your life when you needed it most. When you could not visit friends and family at their homes. When your only choices were to remain inside 24/7, take a break and stroll around the neighborhood, or head out into the woods or beaches, some of you for the first time, solo or with others.

Like much of America right now, Cape Cod is seeing a surge in the use of our many nature preserves and hiking trails. Others have commented on proper hiking protocol (six feet, dogs on leash, etc.) or on the occasional abuses (overcrowding, dumping).

But I want to celebrate the simple fact that by this awakening many more Cape Codders are finally acknowledging the immense value provided for physical and mental health by our vast portfolio of protected open spaces. Everything from our 30,000-acre National Seashore to our state parks to our town beaches and conservation areas and even the small diverse areas near you preserved by your local non-profit land trust. These set-aside natural lands add up to more than one-third of the land mass of Cape Cod. They did not magically appear. They are the result of the collective effort of all of us, hard-won victories meant to stave off the complete suburbanization of our Cape.

Between 1984 and 2019, the past 35 years, Cape Cod citizens spent almost \$400 million to preserve more than 10,000 acres. Most of that was paid for through the Land Bank Act and now the Community Preservation Act, the three percent surcharge we pay on our property tax bills, supplemented by state funds. All 15 Cape towns voted for these programs and now we witness the results of our investments.

It sounds like a lot of money and it is. But it pales in comparison to the tens of billions spent on developing real estate on the Cape during that period. Some of us recall the height of the boom in 1986 when the town of Barnstable alone approved more than 900 housing units. Picture three new concrete foundations being poured every day for a year. We almost lost our Cape, which one developer claimed he hoped to make into the "next suburb of Boston."

Towns and land trusts have created many new hiking paths and published maps highlighting how to find these trail systems for your enjoyment. In Wellfleet, there are trails throughout the Cape Cod National Seashore, at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and others brought about by the WCT and the Town of Wellfleet. Go, be safe, respect others and explore your legacy!

*Mark H. Robinson of Cotuit has helped Cape Cod preserve open space since 1984. He is director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc., a network of 30 land trusts and watershed associations.*

## NO ANNUAL MEETING THIS YEAR

For the first time in our 36 years, WCT will not be hosting an Annual Meeting in August. Because of the current concern for social distancing the Town has closed all meetings for large groups. This seems like a minor inconvenience compared with all the suffering going on in our world. But we are sorry to miss the chance to greet you, our members, and are sorry we will not have the opportunity to spend some time together in person. This article presents some of the information that would have been discussed at the annual meeting.

Our stated mission remains "to conserve open space for benefit of current and future generations" of all beings, meaning preservation of natural resources and habitat. WCT remains an all-volunteer land trust, ably assisted by our technical advisor Mark Robinson of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts. We do not anticipate any changes to our Board membership – see the names on the outside cover of the newsletter. We have not had any changes in the land under conservation since we last met. We own 304+ acres of land and hold Conservation Restrictions (CRs) on an additional 82 acres. This land is scattered throughout Wellfleet and is protected in perpetuity. Additionally, we continue to work with the Town of Wellfleet through the Open Space Committee, in designating some of the town-owned land for the care and custody of the Conservation Commission, again, all protected in perpetuity. In partnership with the Town of Wellfleet, we now maintain eight different trail systems that are open for enjoying nature's benefits.

On the financial side, WCT received nearly \$67,000 in donations in 2019, compared to approximately \$80,000 in 2018. Our expenditures were \$26,000 in 2019, compared with \$27,000 in 2018. We had no expenditures for conservation land acquisitions in 2019, although over the course of the year we were in negotiations for several possible projects. Our Land Acquisition Fund balance was \$290,000 at year end. We continue to apply for grants that can help us with acquisitions, and to partner with the town of Wellfleet where possible. As you know, land prices in Wellfleet continue to rise, so moving forward we will need to continue to expand our Land Acquisition Fund.



WCT's mission to preserve and protect land in Wellfleet remains as vital and important as ever. We always seem to have projects in our pipeline, and we continue to work on your behalf to bring these projects to fruition. We are deeply grateful for your continued financial support, as well as for your generous land donations. Stay safe. We look forward to seeing you at our 2021 annual meeting!

# OUR TRAILS ARE OPEN!

WCT's "Annual Guided Walk" has been cancelled, but the Wellfleet Conservation Lands trails are open. The ownership and maintenance of these trails is a partnership between WCT and the Town's Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee. There are some new considerations we advise when you walk along the trails.

- Observe social distancing of 6 feet or more. Move to the side of the trail, if necessary, to let others pass.
- Please wear a mask or face covering wherever social distancing is not possible.
- Consider a walk at a different location if it looks like there is a large number of people already on the trail.

The usual precautions still apply.

- Avoid poison ivy.
- Check for ticks even if you have used a spray.
- Please keep your dog on a leash and away from other dogs and walkers.

Here is the list of conservation trails for you to enjoy.

**Bayberry Hill:** 0.9 miles - through the beautiful pine/oak woods, leading to a great overlook of the Old Spring Creek Marsh, see photo at left;



**Bayberry Hill**

**Box Turtle Lane:** 0.4 miles - overlooking a part of the Loagy Bay marsh, leading to Harding Meadow;

**Clover Trail:** 0.6 miles - through the woods on part of an old cart path leading to the back side of the National Seashore with its many trails;

**Drummer Cove:** 1.1 miles - with stunning views of the Drummer Cove;

**Pilgrim Springs/Fox Island Marsh:** 1.75 miles - through pine/oak woods and along the Fox Island salt marsh; and

**Walker Trail:** 0.6 miles - along a freshwater wetland area and wildlife habitat.

You can find more information about these trails on our website in the Trails section. Also, there are hard copies of the trails maps in packets distributed at the Library, Town Hall and the Chamber of Commerce.

Please go for a walk and explore the trails and keep yourself and others safe out there.



With great anticipation, Earth Day's 50th anniversary came this past April 22, but the world was focused on the Corona virus pandemic. Celebrations were planned all over the country and world. As we approached the day, large gatherings were not the place to be. In Wellfleet, WCT had planned a free bluegrass concert at Preservation Hall, supported by our friends in the business community. We planned to supplement the music with an engaging trivia contest about Earth day and related facts. For example: *Which of the following Acts was **not** passed in the U.S. in the same year as the original Earth Day - 1970? A. - The Clean Air Act or B. - The Clean Water Act or C. - The Endangered Species Act or D. - The Marine Mammals Protection Act? (Read to the end).* We were also scheduled to join with several other climate-concerned groups in town to do a town-wide trash pick-up. Alas, the day came, and we were not allowed to undertake the task on what turned out to be a very brisk and windy day. On an informal basis, several townspeople did venture out to collect trash.

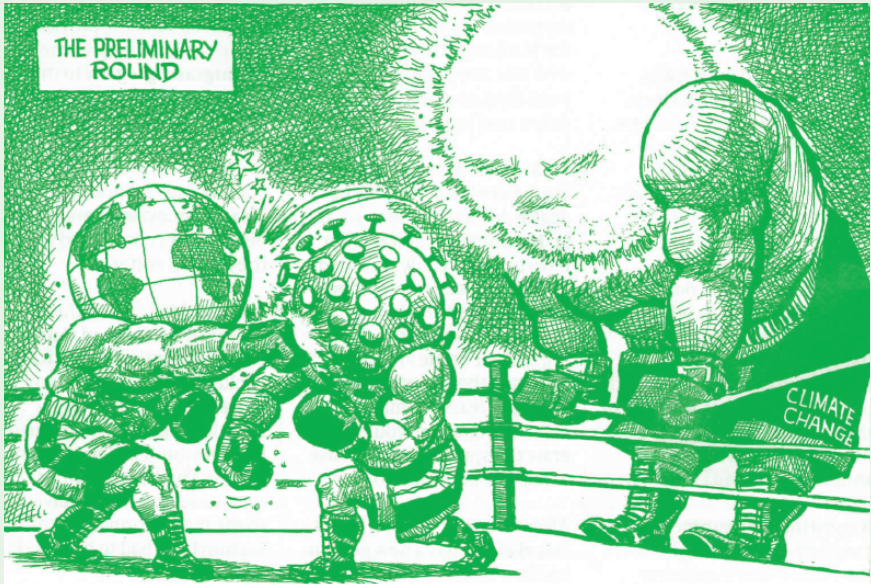
When Earth Day was created in 1970, the country and world had many challenging environmental crises: rivers were burning, smog was rampant, acid rain was coming to our ponds, and oil spills were occurring with frequency. In 1970, and with strong bipartisan support, our national leaders recognized that something needed to be done. Democrat Senator Gaylord Nelson (WI) and Republican Congressman Pete McCloskey (CA) teamed up to create a national recognition of the original Earth Day. These leaders designated April 22 as a day for marking progress and reinvigorating the desire for a better planet. In the decades since 1970, the Earth Day movement has grown with the support of the United Nations and other countries. It is now the largest single day of international recognition of the importance of earth stewardship and it is always on April 22nd.

Continued to Page 7



## EARTH DAY, CONTINUED

A critical element of earth stewardship has been land conservation and it will continue to be. Areas of the environment have become better in many ways: rivers no longer burn, the air is cleaner, and most waters are much cleaner, but more progress is needed and new challenges are being recognized: plastic pollution, greenhouse gas control, rising temperatures and rising sea levels. The reasons for Earth Day continue to focus on climate control. Not to take away from the pandemic crisis, but the following cartoon appeared in *The Economist* of April 25, 2020.



*The trivia answer is D.* Today, can you imagine a bipartisan coalition passing legislation like the Clean Air, the Clean Water, and the Endangered Species Acts, all of which led to the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency? The Marine Mammals Protection Act was passed in 1972. Not to say 1970 was perfect, but now it seems like one of the "good ole days"!!!

Your support of WCT is very much in tune with Earth Day goals. Thank you for protecting our earth!

Check out the "Wellfleet Open Space and Conservation Lands" map on our website to see what your support of WCT has preserved. Click on the map under the "Conservation Land and Trails" tab and then expand the map on your browser.

## CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS: PRESERVING THE LAND WHILE RETAINING OWNERSHIP

In addition to preserving lands through direct ownership, the Wellfleet Conservation Trust also protects land through Conservation Restrictions. Conservation Restrictions (CRs, also known as conservation easements in other states) are permanent legal agreements that protect important natural resources and conservation values, primarily on privately-owned property. Protecting these resources (e.g., water quality, wildlife habitat, and/or scenic value) benefits not only the private landowner, but the public as well. The CR agreement between a landowner and the Wellfleet Conservation Trust allows the landowner to continue to own and use the land but identifies certain use restrictions to help protect the land's conservation value.

CRs are permanent interests in property, recorded at the Registry of Deeds, and held by WCT. The CR is a legally binding agreement that ensures the land is permanently protected through all subsequent changes in property ownership. Because individual landowners have different needs and goals for the conservation of their property, each recorded CR contains unique terms which reflect a balance between protecting the land and its resources and the personal objectives of the landowner granting the CR. While some CRs cover an entire parcel, others protect only a portion of a property.

In Massachusetts, CRs are reviewed and approved by the municipality in which the land is located (via the town Select Board), as well as at the state level by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA).

Additional benefits for a landowner granting a CR include:

- Peace of mind from knowing the land will remain protected forever.
- A possible federal and Massachusetts tax savings: donated CRs may be considered a charitable donation of property.
- A possible reduction in local property taxes; the property's assessed value may be reduced by the CR which restricts the property's development value.

Any landholder interested in discussing the gift of a CR to the Wellfleet Conservation Trust should contact our President, Dennis O'Connell.

*Text adapted from The Trustees of Reservations Conservation Restriction Landowner Handbook – copyright 2016*

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

We appreciate your donation using the enclosed envelope.



## SPOTLIGHT ON... FIREFLIES



Fireflies are probably part of your favorite childhood memories of evenings in early summer. Fireflies, also called lightning bugs, belong to the *Lampyridae* family of insects. There are over 2,000 species of these winged beetles. Fireflies have the chemical luciferin in their abdomens, and they light up when it reacts with oxygen and the enzyme luciferase to create bioluminescence. This light is a

very efficient cold light. Both male and female fireflies emit blinking lights during mating. The female remains in one place and lights up when a male firefly's signal appeals to her. She will then flash her bioluminescent light to let him know where she is.

Fireflies undergo four stages of their life cycle: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. The adult lifespan of a firefly is approximately two months. After mating, the female lays her eggs on or under the ground. About a month later, the larvae emerge and feed on insects, worms, and snails. They hibernate in their larval stage and wake up in spring to eat more before they pupate. After a few weeks in a cocoon, the firefly appears.

Not only does a firefly's light attract a mate, it serves as a warning to would-be predators. Their bitter taste can be poisonous to some vertebrates. Bats will gag and vomit if they swallow a firefly by mistake. Other mammals and birds gag and throw up fireflies, but frogs and toads are not affected. A firefly caught in a spider's web is also suitable prey. These hazards have always existed for fireflies, but now they face more serious threats.

Will fireflies continue to be around for us to enjoy? They are in decline because of light pollution, pesticides, and habitat destruction. Fireflies depend upon darkness to attract mates. They thrive in moist, chemical-free habitats, places lost to development. Human behavior makes a difference. The Wellfleet fireflies will be giving us their summer light show soon. Be sure to look for them in an enchanted open space near you.



## TRAIL MAINTENANCE AT CLOVER CONSERVATION AREA

During Covid-19 times, WCT has had to postpone our customary activities, but nature has its own schedule. On May 22, a small group, armed with chainsaw, ropes, loppers, gloves, ear and eye protectors, and face masks, set out to take down a fallen tree on the Clover Conservation Area trail.

The tree had been broken in a windstorm. It was still in one piece, but it was twisted and partially cracked through. Most of it was jammed in place between two other trees. There did not appear to be an immediate danger, but it was clear that it could dislodge at some point and fall onto the trail.

In about an hour, we got the tree down, removing the hazard and turning it into safe log liners for the trail.

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



1. Mike Fisher assessing the tree's predicament
2. Stephen Bruce and Denny O'Connell throwing a rope over the fallen tree
3. Denny O'Connell, Chip Bruce, and Gary Joseph using a rope and come-along attempt to dislodge the tree
4. Gary Joseph, Chip Bruce, and Stephen Bruce Adding their weight to the come-along's pull
5. Denny O'Connell applying the chainsaw

*Photos by Susie Quigley*

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER - JUNE 2020

Greetings from Wellfleet Conservation Trust,

I wish you and your loved ones the best at this pandemic time. It is a remarkable time, and incredible that it is truly worldwide. I was very fortunate that my career took me to many different areas of the world, and I am still in touch with the good friends I made. I know from my contact with these friends that the actions, experiences, emotions, and conditions that people are experiencing are similar from Singapore, to Europe, to Iceland, and the US. People all over the world are going for more socially distanced walks and appreciating nature.

I was pleased by the acknowledgments of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, although the virus, of course, greatly muted what I hoped the anniversary would bring. I was disappointed that more recognition was not given to the accomplishments of the past 50 years and I also felt that there was not enough consideration of the huge challenges to come. A consistent theme of Earth Day has been appreciation of the powers of nature and the need to protect our natural world. In addition to changing our usual ways, there is a need to preserve what we have, and even to recover some of the past. This is all about WCT's mission to conserve natural land for current and future generations' benefit and appreciation. I am confident about the importance of our mission and the need to continue it in these times.

We sincerely appreciate your past support of this, your land trust. We ask for your continued participation through land and monetary donations. Our efforts to put more land in conservation are challenging as land prices are still high, transactions are complex, and other opportunities involve some expensive reclamation. With your support, we will continue to do our best.

If you have any questions or comments, please let us know.

Sincere thanks,

Dennis (Denny) O'Connell, President, Board of Trustees  
508-349-2162 or [dennyoc@comcast.net](mailto:dennyoc@comcast.net)



# WELFLEET CONSERVATION TRUST

PO Box 84 • Wellfleet MA 02667

[www.wellfleetconservationtrust.org](http://www.wellfleetconservationtrust.org)

## *Board of Trustees:*

Susan Anthony  
Jane Baron  
Bertram Bruce  
Barbara Cary  
Richard Ciotti  
Michael Fisher  
William Iacuessa  
Gary Joseph  
Jonathan Kelly  
David Koonce  
Dennis O'Connell  
Virginia Page  
Susan Quigley  
Mary Rogers  
Marcia Seeler

## Inside This Issue

Finding Solace in Nature .....	Page 1
Welcome to Cape Cod Open Space .....	Page 3
No Annual Meeting This Year .....	Page 4
Out Trails Are Open! .....	Page 5
Earth Day's 50th Anniversary .....	Page 6
Conservation Restrictions .....	Page 8
Spotlight On... Fireflies .....	Page 9
Trail Maintenance at Clover	
Conservation Area .....	Page 10
President's Letter .....	Page 11

The Wellfleet Conservation Trust is an IRS qualified 501 (c) (3) non-profit land trust.