



# WELLFLEET CONSERVATION TRUST

Fall 2023 • [www.wellfleetconservationtrust.org](http://www.wellfleetconservationtrust.org)

## THANK YOU, GARY!

Gary Joseph, a founding member of the Wellfleet Conservation Trust, has retired from the Board of Trustees. Gary has been there from the very beginning and holds the record for service from 1984 to 2023. WCT recognized his 39 years as a member of the Board as he stepped down at this year's Annual Meeting held August 16th.

Not only was Gary a founding member WCT, he was also a founding board member of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts in 1986. The Compact started out providing regional support to the six land trusts of the Cape, but has now expanded to supporting 32 local land trusts and watershed associations.



Gary Joseph and Denny O'Connell

When the Herring River Restoration project got underway, Gary became a founding member of the Friends of the Herring River. He also served on the Herring River Restoration Committee for several years.

Gary was a member of the Wellfleet Conservation Commission from 1983 to 1987. He has been on other Ad Hoc Town of Wellfleet committees.

Gary spoke about his time on the Board of Trustees and gave tribute to his mentor, the late Robert Hankey, another founding member and past president of the Trust.

Gary candidly admits that he had just become “meeting’d out” when he made his decision to step down from the WCT Board of Trustees. We understand. We congratulate him and wish him well. Thank you, Gary, for your time with us.

# FIFTEENTH ANNUAL GUIDED WALK EXPLORES WOODLANDS, MARSH, HISTORIC DISTRICT



**Denny O'Connell at Robert's Rock**

Having taken precautions for an impact from Tropical Storm Lee, WCT delayed this year's Annual Guided Walk by one day. The walk got underway on a warm, but not hot, sunny day on Sunday, September 17th.

The 2023 walk started in the middle of the Fox Island Marsh and Pilgrim Spring Woodlands Conservation Area. Denny O'Connell, President of WCT, opened the walk at the Robert Hankey Memorial Stone

by welcoming the 35 participants. Robert Hankey was a founding member of WCT and was directly involved in the creation of this conservation area.

Bill Iacuesa, WCT Vice President and organizer of the walk, explained that the walk would go through three distinct areas, woodlands (mostly along narrow paths), along the edge of a marsh, and finally through an historical area of South Wellfleet.

This year the speakers concentrated on the history of the area. The first stop was at the bench dedicated to the Ira Ziering family. Denny described how instrumental Ira was in helping to acquire a few of the key parcels of the area. He also pointed the trust's newest acquisition, the nearby Bouchard property.

Mary Rogers hypothesized on the name of a particular area of the walk, Pilgrim Spring Woodlands. She suggested it could have been the possible location of the natural spring that gave Pilgrim Spring Woodlands its name and described the Cape Cod Pilgrim Mineral Spring Company that produced bottled tonic water prior to World War I.

At the edge of Fox Island Marsh, Mark Robinson, Executive Director of the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, spoke about how the WCT led the partnership that resulted in the Town, Commonwealth, and private donors raising \$4.5 million to acquire 68 acres of upland for conservation. Mark was involved in the negotiations and fundraising including liaising with the Commonwealth. This assemblage is the largest private conservation area north of the Orleans rotary and is an important habitat for the endangered diamondback terrapin.

Further along the marsh and into the woods, Denny told the story of the burial that took place a number of years ago. It was the burial of a cast iron bathtub that was acquired with the land and had become a mosquito hatchery. At Whalebone Point, Mark Robinson described the vista that came into view, including Indian Neck, Blackfish Creek, Lieutenant's Island, the bridge to the island, and Old Wharf Point.

The final speaker, Dwight Estey, a member of the Board of Directors of the Wellfleet Historical Society and Museum, used two locations to describe the relationship between the growth of the town during the 19th century driven by the mackerel fishery and today's Paine Hollow Historic District.

As always, these walks are a group effort involving a number of our trustees and volunteers. Come walk with us next September for an enjoyable and informative experience. We are thinking of the area to highlight in 2024. Of the 15 walks so far, none has been a repeat.

## AMERICORPS MEMBER EMILY GILOT ARRIVES

In October, AmeriCorps member Emily Gilot arrived in Wellfleet as an Individual Placement (IP) to help WCT one day a week. Emily will spend two days per week with the Provincetown Conservation Commission and then round out her week with group projects at other locations across Cape Cod. While serving with WCT, she will be assisting with trail maintenance and mapping. She will also assist in organizing and updating documentation for all the properties the Trust owns and monitors.



Emily Gilot

Emily had never been on the Outer Cape prior to this fall and was a little surprised at the ruralness of the area. She said, "One of the major benefits I am finding to living in the Wellfleet house is the limited light pollution, which is a testament to the community, the proximity to the National Seashore, and the more rural nature of the area. I also love that I can see the sun rise and set over the water in the same day, going from one side of town to the other."

So far Emily has viewed several WCT properties, including Box Turtle Woods and Herring River Overlook. She loved the combination of woods and marsh on many of these properties and is excited to explore them more over the coming months.

In town, Emily has spends the most time at the town pier and beach looking for different animals and beachcombing. "Watching the seals feed in the harbor has been awesome, and, while sad at times, I have been really enjoying looking for Mola Mola (Sunfish)."

Winter on the Cape does not daunt Emily. "Growing up along the Connecticut shoreline, I am no stranger to a New England winter. My family has always gone on beach walks in the wintertime, so I expect to do the same here. The ocean keeps us in Connecticut and the Cape a little warmer than the rest of the region and I am looking forward to having the area to myself for a few months. As a degreed weather nerd, I am interested to see how we fare with Nor'easters this winter and am excited to track the systems then watch the waves at the local beaches when they do come through."

In high school Emily got to study maritime history and learn about marine science through biology, fisheries management, aquaculture, safe boating, and physical oceanography. In college she chose meteorology as her major. Her advanced classes included synoptic meteorology (the study of large-scale features) and tropical meteorology (the study of hurricanes and other phenomena like El Nino). She loved other classes she could connect to weather such as Intro to Emergency Management and the Role of Hazard Mitigation in Community Planning.

Emily joins us on a special year for AmeriCorps Cape Cod, celebrating their 25th anniversary. That lines up a little with Emily's accomplishment of obtaining her 25-Ton Master Captain's license this past spring. We look forward to working with Captain Emily this year!

*For the full e-interview with Emily, check under the News tab on our website:  
[www.wellfleetconservationtrust.org](http://www.wellfleetconservationtrust.org)*

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.

# ANNUAL MEETING WITH THREE (OR IS IT FOUR?)

## FEATURE PRESENTATIONS

In addition to the official business of the WCT Annual Meeting, held on August 16th at the Chequessett Club, members and guests in attendance heard the results of Town's Open Space Committee's recent survey, a tribute to Gary Joseph, and our Keynote Speaker Mark Robinson, Executive Director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts.



**Mark Robinson speaks at Annual Meeting**

President Denny O'Connell thanked Gary Joseph for the impressive span of time he has given as a Trustee. Denny presented Gary with a plaque in honor of his service, which began in 1984 when he was one of the founding members. (See additional story on page 1)

Margaret (Peggy) Sagan, from the Town of Wellfleet Open Space Committee, gave the next presentation, highlighting the results of the Open Space survey that many in the audience had completed earlier this year. She

reported on the overwhelming awareness that protection of our water depends upon the preservation of land as open space.

Finally, Mark Robinson gave a history of the evolution and creation of the Cape Cod National Seashore. His information-packed talk, "Saving the Cape: A History & A Future of Land Conservation on Cape Cod," offered insights and details that the listeners remembered and some that they had not previously considered.

The refreshment table of Trustee-made hors d'oeuvres and desserts arguably represents a fourth popular feature of the Trust's Annual Meeting. People lingered here before and after the meeting. Please join us in August of 2024 to help us celebrate our 40th Anniversary.

## COASTSWEEP 2023

About forty-five people arrived at Mayo Beach on Monday, October 9th, a holiday, to participate in COASTSWEEP 2023. Volunteers received tally sheets and departed to a dozen other Wellfleet beach sites on the Harbor and Cape Cod Bay to pick up debris – trash, plastic-based rope and fishing lines, metal scraps, preservative-treated wood construction materials and other items. Categorizing and tallying the objects helps reveal sources of marine debris and potential solutions.

Not all of the debris could be picked up and carried back in bags to the Mayo Beach starting point. Tarps buried in sand were discovered at one location. The truck-load collected from Wellfleet's beaches weighed about 700 pounds. This trash won't be spoiling our beaches, endangering wildlife or posing hazards to humans. Plastic-based items were a special target as they are consumed by finfish, shellfish and birds.

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## COASTSWEEP 2023, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4



**COASTSWEEP Sign-in table**

COASTSWEEP is organized by the Ocean Conservancy. Volunteers all over the world collect marine debris. The Wellfleet SWEEP was sponsored by the Wellfleet Conservation Trust, the Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary of Mass Audubon, Friends of the Herring River, and Town of Wellfleet groups including the Recycling Committee, the Open Space Committee, the Conservation Commission, the Shellfish Advisory Board, and the Shellfish Department.

Thank you to all who participated in the 2023 COASTSWEEP beach clean-up. We plan to do it again next fall and will welcome your help in “walking the beach, with a purpose” for an hour or two.

## BEST YEAR YET FOR HODC DIAMONDBACK TERRAPIN

Every fall we await Dr. Barbara Brennessel’s report on the terrapin nesting results from WCT’s Head of Duck Creek (HODC) property, a former building and refuse site which WCT acquired and reclaimed in 2012. This has been a banner year for the diamondback hatchlings. One hundred-thirty-one hatchlings were identified and released back into the wild.

The first nest was found the day after early vegetation management of trumpet vine and switch grass at HODC. Although the vegetation started to grow back in a few spots, the area remained a perfect turtle garden from June to September.



There was a total of 43 nests this year at the HODC area. Thirteen protected nests were established. Nineteen nests were found depredated. Eleven nests were successful without intervention.

The siting of the turtle garden west of Rte. 6 has been helpful in preventing road mortality of terrapins. There was only one road mortality in the area this year. Most of the adult females found nesting spots before they encountered the Mobil station and Route 6.

Dr. Brennessel, Biology Professor Emerita from Wheaton College, was assisted by Haverford College intern Jessica Korgen and local volunteer Holly Kuhn in monitoring the 2023 turtle nests. The full report of terrapin production at Head of Duck Creek follows, showing the grand total of 960 hatchlings at this WCT site.

### HEAD OF DUCK CREEK TERRAPIN PRODUCTION 2012-2023

Year	Protected Nests	Natural Nests	Hatchlings Released	Other Observations
2012	2		11	
2013	5	5	36	5 natural nests depredated
2014	3	8	47	6 natural nests depredated
2015	2	1	20	many infertile protected eggs
2016	1	5	32	4 natural nests depredated
2017	8	2	96	
2018	5	?	46	
2019	10	11	197	1 natural nest depredated
2020	11	7	163	5 natural nests depredated
2021	5	2	81	6 nests depredated
2022	7	4	100	22 nests depredated
2023	13	11	131	19 nests depredated
			<b>960 TOTAL</b>	



## SPOTLIGHT ON... BITTERSWEET

Yes, it's very pretty, especially in the fall, but don't be deceived. Asiatic or Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) is a killer. All parts of the plant are poisonous. Besides being toxic to people and pets, it strangles small trees, bushes and even large trees by wrapping itself around their branches and trunks. If it appears on your property, prepare for a change in attitude. If you have been at one with nature in the wild, you are likely to engage in endless combat with this relentless invader.

Imported from Asia in the nineteenth century, bittersweet escaped from gardens and spread rapidly throughout North America on its own and with the help of birds who enjoy its orange berries. It thrives in many environments: woodlands, fields, roadsides, and dunes. If there is nothing to climb, the vine will simply ramble along until it finds something. Its alternating leaves are round or oval, finely toothed with pointy tips. These turn yellow in fall, and the small greenish flowers that appear

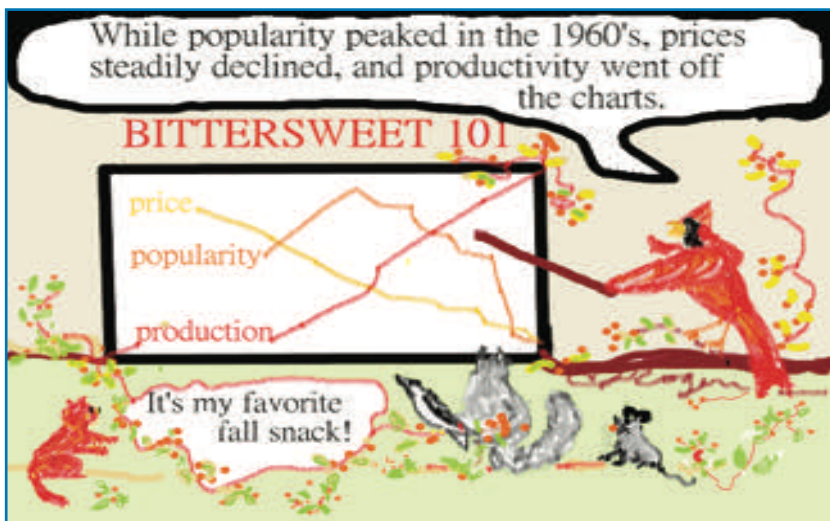


Bittersweet

in spring become the distinctive yellow capsules containing bright orange berries, food for birds and other wildlife.

Does anyone appreciate it? The pliable vines are used in basketmaking. In fall, branches laden with eye-catching berries are sometimes twined into wreaths or other decorations. Just a word of caution here, if left outdoors, the birds will find the berries irresistible and later gift you with the troublesome bittersweet.

If Asiatic bittersweet should appear on your property, try to pull out the vines by hand. The underground network of orange-hued roots makes it very difficult to eradicate, so you will need to get as aggressive as the bittersweet. This is an aptly named plant – so destructive (bitter) and so attractive (sweet).



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER - FALL 2023

As I write this note, the beauty of Fall has happened, again! We are fortunate in New England to have this annual phenomenon. Although Cape Cod may not enjoy all the extent of robust colors, we still get doses of it and know that it is special. I “crossed the bridge” the other day to witness a colorful day of trees. It is an ongoing benefit to living New England which is appreciated as special and is not taken for granted. Who has not gazed over a sunset at Blackfish Creek as the grasses are changing to a beautiful reddish-brown hue? Have you noticed that the sea-pickle as it turns bright red around the edges of many salt marshes, or in the shallow parts further out in the marsh?

I would liken the appreciation of fall colors to appreciation of open space, but without all the splash. When people get on our trails, they are frequently refreshed in their appreciation of what we do. It is not just the trails that garner the appreciation.

Our volunteer trustees “work” for WCT as an avocation, or hobby, and sincerely appreciate your support and encouragement. Your support is welcomed as financial and/or labor, or kind words. We always appreciate when we are notified that something needs to be done, i.e., “the bench seat at xxx trail is loose” or “people are creating a new trail on a steep slope” or “a fallen tree is blocking a trail.”

As we enter the “slow season,” our activities continue. Overall, our primary tasks are to identify and protect open space, thereby ensuring that open space is doing its jobs of protecting habitat and wildlife, protecting clean air and water, and providing the objectives of Chapter 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution which establishes a right to a clean environment including its natural, scenic, historical, and aesthetic qualities for the citizens of the Commonwealth. Chapter 97 also declares that the conservation of natural resources is a public purpose and provides that land or easements subject to Article 97 be protected in perpetuity. In line with these rights, we inspect every property each year.

By the time you read this, good holiday wishes are in order. Please do have good holidays, and thanks for your support.

Sincerely,

Dennis (Denny) O'Connell, President, Board of Trustees

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# WELFLEET CONSERVATION TRUST

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