

WARREN LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

30th Anniversary!
*30 Years of Saving Warren's Open Spaces
for All to Enjoy*



founded 1987

'Dicimus Pro Aboribus'
*We Stand for the Trees
and
All of Warren's Natural Environment*

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photo description + credit

President's Note

Hello!

I am pleased to welcome you to the new Warren Land Conservation Trust newsletter!

The members of the board and volunteers of the Trust are actively working on a number of projects to acquire and protect open space in Warren for the benefit of the community. We meet monthly (usually the first Tuesday of the month), and the specifics of where and when will be published in the *Warren Times Gazette* and Facebook; all members and the public are invited to attend.

In addition to our Facebook page (fb.me/wlctri), we are designing a new web site (www.warrenlctri.org) that will be up and running early 2018.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the WLCT, feel free to contact me at warrenlctri@gmail.com.

Mike Gerhardt
President WLCT

Who is the Warren Land Conservation Trust? We are your friends and neighbors!

2017/18 Board of Directors:

Mike Gerhardt, President
Davison Bolster, Vice President
Martha Antaya, Secretary
Finn Brudevold, Treasurer

**Erin Ferree • Marcia Goodrum • Jeanne Leffers
Butch Lombardi • Ed McAloon**

Interested in helping out?

The WLCT is looking for volunteers and board members to support the important work we are doing. A membership letter is forthcoming, and we hope you'll take the time to learn more and get in touch!

GET IN TOUCH WITH THE WLCT!



fb.com/wlctri



warrenlctri@gmail.com



website coming soon!



PO Box 565 Warren, RI 02885

Why Support the Land Trust?

There are many reasons to protect and preserve open space. Here's a good one:

Folks who walk along the East Bay Bike Path at the Land Trust property at **Jacob's Point** have probably noticed the new sign providing information on the osprey population and platform. In the 1970s, ospreys were threatened by the widespread use of DDT. Now, every year since being built by volunteers (led by WLCT board member Butch Lombardi) in 2013, the nesting platform has "attracted a pair" and fledged numerous chicks to increase the the local osprey population. No land, no platform, no chicks.



In Spring 2017, another step was taken to improve the environment at Jacob's Point. With the support of the Warren Conservation Commission, an odd looking structure was put up at the southern end of the marsh (near the Bristol line): a twelve station Purple Martin array. The habitat of this significant member of the swallow family is being seriously eroded, and according to the Trust's "Purple Martin consultant" Ray Marr, Jacob's Point represents an ideal location.

The question was: would the birds agree?

Happily, on May 3rd, the first birds occupied their new housing. Volunteers will monitor the array weekly and report to the Purple Martin Conservation Associations.

The WLCT is working on plans for other properties that we own and manage, such as walking trails and viewing platforms, all to the benefit of the people (and creatures) of Warren.

Your ongoing support helps bring project like these to fruition.



Jacob's Point is the largest and most accessible of the Warren properties owned by the Land Trust. Hopefully, more trails on other properties can be developed in the future!

Our First Family Walk: Jacob's Point



SAVE THE DATE!

Join us at our annual meeting, open to the public.
Oysters and other refreshments provided!

When:

Wednesday, Nov 15th
at 7pm

Where:

Hope & Main

On May 3, 2017 the WLCT and RI Families in Nature co-sponsored a Family Walk at Jacob's Point. About 20 people of all ages met at Audubon's Environmental Education Center and did a two mile hike focusing on the Jacob's Point beach. Planned to correspond with low tide, the challenge was to cross the three small streams on the walk route. The kids did great!

We welcome all walkers to use the path off the East Bay Bike Path (just north of the Bristol line and marked with a Land Trust sign) to explore the beauty of this exceptional property.

How Two Oyster Lovers Learned to Love Water Testing: All About the Warren Water Testing Program

(as told by Steve Thompson, Warren Town Councilman)

WHAT, and WHY: The goal of the Warren Water Testing program is to take measurements at various sites along the Warren River for several key indicators of the water quality to help inform policy decisions and conservation work going forward.

HOW'D IT START? Three years ago, Julie Blount and I were discussing ways to begin the reintroduction of wild oysters in the area of the Warren River and it quickly became clear that no concise set of data exists on the water quality and overall health of the water. DEM was doing periodic testing around the Town Beach, but beyond that there was nothing.

THE PROBLEM: After meeting with other concerned citizens in Bristol and at Roger Williams University, we realized this data was essential in making informed decisions on a variety of issues related to the water, including oysters and sea life, pollution, and even sea level rise.

THE FIX: We met with Bob Aldrich, the coordinator of Save Bristol Harbor (a citizen-led group in Bristol that has been water testing for years as part of the Watershed Watch Program run by University of Rhode Island). Through the generous support of the Blount Shellfish Restoration Fund and the willingness of the WLCT, the program was created. Last year we tested at five sites, four in Warren and one in Barrington. This year we are testing at five sites in Warren, and I am also pleased to say the Town of Warren has become involved in backing the program (a very important step in its future viability).

WHAT'S NEXT: The goal is to gather yearly data so we can start to get a sense of what is happening in our waterways. Today we have one full year of data, so it is difficult to draw any conclusions about "what's normal" and associated issues. The data we are collecting will be accessible to scientists and policy makers. We have the added benefit of picking up testing where our colleagues in Bristol stop at the town line; our Jacob's Point site continues the testing, and so we'll have a fuller picture of what is happening closer to Warren but also further out as the river meets the Bay.

Learn more about this program at the WLCT annual meeting on November 15th!



Love oysters? Read more about shellfish, New England, and the changing nature of our relationship with our estuaries, rivers, and oceans.

Between Land and Sea: The Atlantic Coast and the Transformation of New England by Christopher L. Pastore

"With a writer's flair and a scholar's insight, Pastore has transformed the muck of the tidal zone into a splendid meditation on the historical transformation of the New England coast. This is a book for beach-combers and sailors, and for everyone drawn to the shore."

(W. Jeffrey Bolster, Bancroft Prize-winning author of *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail*)

-- recommended by WLCT volunteer Kate Dickson



What Are We Conserving? Part I of a Series

By Ed McAloon, Warren Land Trust Board Member

When we view our protected properties, we can see that they consist of **wetlands, forests, fields, and water bodies**. We see that there are trees and vegetation, as well as birds and animals. However, it takes a much deeper knowledge of the land and its features to allow for its proper long term conservation and stewardship. With this in mind, the **WLCT** is in the process of having Baseline Document Reports (BDR) created for our protected properties by a trained conservation biologist.

These reports are a collection of maps, photographs, and written descriptions of a property, its natural resources, and the conservation values that are being protected.

The first report has been completed for a protected property off Cutler and Child streets, consisting of approximately 5.66 acres. This was done under contract to Carol Lynn Trocki, a conservation biologist from Little Compton RI. Ms Trocki made a site visit to the property on December 9, 2016 to observe and photograph the existing conditions.

The entire report, which includes comprehensive photos, will be available for viewing on the **WLCT** website (which is currently under construction). The Land Trust board looks forward to learning more about our other properties and utilizing this information as we develop stewardship plans.

LIFE, Inc.

By Ginger Brown

Every Wednesday morning, a small group of people supported by Living In Full-filling Environments, Inc. (LIFE Inc.), meets at the Audubon Society of Rhode Island's Environmental Education Center to study nature. LIFE Inc. is a local non-profit agency that provides support to adults with disabilities.

From this classroom filled with snakes and turtles, nature books, bones, bird nests, and other biofacts, the group heads out for a morning's adventure exploring nature. During spring and summer months, as they have for several years, these citizen scientists volunteer for ASRI's osprey program, monitoring two nests every other week, recording data and entering their observations into ASRI's statewide osprey database. On alternate weeks during spring months their attention is directed towards the **WLCT's** new purple martin nesting array, where they check twelve nest gourds in a Warren salt marsh and record their observations.



In addition to these volunteer activities, the group has studied and investigated numerous natural history topics including plants and pollinators, trees, weather, pond life, invasive species, animal behavior, marine life, birds and bird nests, mammals, fish, insects, edible and medicinal plants, conservation, wildlife management, and scientific illustration! They have participated in Canada goose and songbird banding with professional biologists; followed coyote and rabbit tracks in a snowy field; recorded birds observed on the East Bay Bike Path; become proficient with field guides, binoculars, and spotting scopes, weather measuring equipment, and the scientific method. And along the way they have honed their curiosity and keen observation skills to further their knowledge of the natural world.

The group is always looking for opportunities to participate in conservation projects that benefit our local wildlife and enable us to get outside to experience nature.

Learn More: www.lifeincri.org/ Instructor for Nature Explorations Program



Cutler Street Property

Conservation Area

0 200 400 800 Feet
Datalayers: 2014 Rhode Island Statewide High Resolution Orthoimages, USGS (from RIGIS).
CLT 4/2017

BDR Highlights:

The topography of this property is nearly level, with elevations of between 1-2 meters above sea level. The property contains a single soil type known as Walpole sandy loam. Walpole soils are hydric soils associated with wetlands, and are thus protected from disturbance under state and federal law.

This property has a long history of agricultural use dating back to colonial times. Located within the Palmer River watershed, the property is comprised entirely of wooded wetland. Based on 45 year planning projections, the property would be impacted by a two foot sea level rise.

On the site visit, 29 species of flora (plants) were noted, none of which are rare. Eight of these species are considered to be invasive in the region. Six species of birds and evidence of four species of mammals were observed. It is likely that the property is used by a wider variety of wildlife species at various times during the year and that the property provides an important refuge for the neighborhood.

It was noted that the property provides scenic and aesthetic value as a pocket of undeveloped open space within a heavily developed portion of Warren.

A Land Trust Excursion...

As part of Land Trust Days (a statewide effort to promote land trusts), we held a row to Tom's Island, one of our hard-to-access properties in the Palmer River. Under the capable direction of Don Betts and Rock Singwald, about 15 hardy individuals rowed in two 20 foot long skiffs for about 45 minutes before landing on Tom's Island (which incidentally is disappearing due to sea level rise). The event got rave reviews from the participants.

We hope to (re)schedule an Edible Plant Walk at Jacob's Point in the coming year -- stay tuned!

WLCT will continue to look for opportunities for the community to enjoy our properties; please feel free to send us your suggestions.





Great News! We've Got a Lot of Folks to Thank

The land held by the Warren Land Conservation Trust has recently expanded by approximately 65 acres! This represents an increase of about 67% in our land holdings.

A few months ago, Attorney Ernest Mayo approached the Trust to inquire about a donation of slightly over six acres near the Kickemuit Middle School. After a site visit and noting that the property abuts Town owned open space, the Board voted to accept this generous donation. We are grateful to Mr. Mayo and his siblings for considering us for this donation.

Subsequently, while researching property ownership along the Palmer River for a Trust sponsored meeting with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA), it became apparent that a large parcel of land (off Market Street, behind FedEx), left over from a previous subdivision and covered by a conservation restriction from the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), was owned by the Town of Warren. Together with two other smaller lots and including one small parcel already owned by the by the Trust, the property totaled almost 60 acres of prime marshlands and some uplands. Research showed that the land had been taken by the Town for a failure to pay property taxes many years ago.

Discussions with the Town ensued resulting in the WLCT producing a Conservation Easement for the property (to clarify what can and cannot be done on the land) and a Stewardship Plan (a tentative plan as to where trails for public access might be located). After some needed legal work and the required public hearing, the Warren Town Council voted on October 10th to transfer ownership of the property to the WLCT.

The Trust is grateful to Joe DePasquale, President of the Town Council, and Jan Reitsma, our Town Manager, for their support in bringing this very significant project to a successful conclusion. Research is currently underway to determine if additional "tax sale" properties might be subject to future discussions and possible transfer.



Land Trust Success Story: Bird Condos

by Erin Ferree, former WLCT Board Member

If you've taken a walk along the East Bay Bike Path this spring, you may have noticed a clothesline covered in white balloons in the Jacobs Point salt marsh. That "clothesline" and those "balloons" can best be described as a bird condo, or more specifically, a purple martin array.

Purple martins are large swallows with striking indigo coloring. These birds are native to the eastern half of the United States where they spend the spring and summer breeding season. During the cold winter months they migrate south, not unlike many other Rhode Island residents.

They naturally live in colonies which is why the array has a high concentration of white artificial gourds. The birds eat insects often while caught in flight. Because of this, they prefer nests be located near open spaces, particularly water. For these reasons, Jacobs Point was seen as an ideal location for a purple martin colony.

According to the Audubon Society, purple martin populations are in decline. While the causes are not entirely understood, one thought is that starlings may be out-competing the martins for nesting sites. To help prevent this, you may see volunteers periodically lowering the array to check that occupied gourds are housing martins and not other birds or insects.

On June 1st, martins were spotted investigating the array, and Board Member Butch Lombardi was able to capture some excellent photos of four adults. These sightings show that Jacobs Point is a promising location for a robust future colony. As you visit Jacob's Point next summer, keep your eyes peeled for our newest Warren residents and if you are able to capture any photos, be sure to share them with our Facebook page, [fb.com/WLCTRI](https://www.facebook.com/WLCTRI).



This purple martin array was made possible by a grant from the Warren Conservation Commission and with the help of local purple martin enthusiast, Ray Marr.

For more information on purple martins, or any other birds you see while visiting our conserved open spaces, visit audubon.org.