



WARREN LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

WE THINK THE WORLD OF WARREN

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Meet Paul Miller, WLCT Executive Director

Hello everyone!

I was very excited this past summer to be offered the Executive Director position with Warren Land Conservation Trust. It is sort of a homecoming for me as I spent my childhood in Warren before moving away to finish high

school in Warwick. So much has changed in Warren since then, yet so much remains the same. I am eagerly looking forward to the ‘broken bridge’ being fixed, a place dear to me as I used to fish there all the time.

As a kid in Warren, I spent a lot of time exploring out-of-doors, especially in the areas along the Kickemuit and Palmer Rivers, and the woods behind Hugh Cole School and near the upper reservoir. These nature forays instilled in me a love for biodiversity, so I pursued ecology for a Bachelor’s Degree at a small environmental school in Maine, Unity College.

After graduating, I spent several years as an itinerant field biologist, traveling around the country as a seasonal field assistant on research projects largely based on birds. One of these seasonal positions turned into a full-time professional Biologist position with the Florida Park Service.

I spent 13 years living and working at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve monitoring and conducting habitat management for one of our rarest birds, the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow. The Preserve is an amazingly beautiful place that I encourage you to visit if you find yourself in that part of Florida.

Since leaving Florida I have done more field work with birds (birds remain my passion), and began to volunteer with a local land trust. I soon became employed with that land trust, and have been doing land trust work since.

Before the WLCT hired me, it has been an all-volunteer effort, which it remains largely out of necessity. However, as a professional staff person I will endeavor to alleviate some of the workload from the volunteers, primarily the Board of Trustees. As I get my sea legs with WLCT I look forward to working on our stewardship responsibilities and the other duties required to manage a nonprofit land trust.

I look forward to meeting you, the members of WLCT, and encourage everyone to donate what you can to help the Trust out, whether that be a monetary donation or a donation of your time. And keep your eye open for programs! We will be planning activities year-round, including a monthly bird walk at Haile Farm Preserve.



Paul birding in Islay, Scotland

RISD climate change research

RISD Landscape Architecture faculty Ann Kearsley and Department Head Johanna Barthmaier-Payne have begun a long-term monitoring project, **The Carbon Footpath at WLCT's Haile Farm Preserve**. The RISD team will collect environmental

and atmospheric data using "sensor posts" to highlight different aspects of the natural carbon cycle and the land use history of the Preserve's ecologically diverse landscape. The sensor post locations exemplify critical ecological transitions experiencing negative human impacts and climate change, clearings in the woodland, and where the salt marsh meets the old field. The research will use the data to provide a sensory experience through environmental communication design that explicitly connects a visitor's physical surroundings and a particular landscape's natural or cultural system. If you spot a sensor post along the trail, please do not disturb it!



Volunteer Spotlight: Corey Watanabe

Corey Watanabe is a Landscape Architecture graduate student at RISD. This summer, as a part of a research project, he performed monitoring at several WLCT preserves. These sites included meadows, salt marshes and woodland, each with complex ecological relationships. Corey noted the various species and plant communities, the presence of invasive species, and any erosion or flooding, as well as human activities.

Corey shared, "One of my favorite experiences from this summer was my visit to Sowams Meadows Preserve. Although I was waist-deep in a tick infested meadow, I looked above once and I saw at least six massive ospreys soaring above the meadow's edge. It was clear this meadow was of major ecological importance to them."

A big part of landscape architects' work is close observation and study of the natural systems. Native and non-native species function together as a system. Understanding this is vital to designers' work, and couples with restoration and integration of vital ecological systems into our communities.

Thank you, Corey, for your tremendous work this summer. Thanks also to WLCT Board member and RISD professor Johanna Barthmaier-Payne for incorporating the WLCT's stewardship efforts into the landscape architecture program.

Sowams Meadow Preserve update

Work has begun on the 4-year restoration of the salt marsh and meadows at Sowams Meadows Preserve on Market Street.

The restoration effort is a partnership between the Warren Land Conservation Trust, the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the USDA (NRCS), and Save the Bay. An initial mowing of the existing fields is complete and now we are working on removing invasive trees and vines from the borders of the fields. The work is being done by crews from Staton's Landscaping in Warren under contract with NRCS. We will also be working in the marsh to improve conditions there and starting a multi-year effort to transform the old hay fields into diverse native pollinator habitats.

For the full restoration plan, visit our website, WARRENWCLT.ORG

Moonlight cruise

On August 10th, over 100 people enjoyed a fabulous moonlight cruise on Narragansett Bay aboard the Prudence Island Ferry while listening and dancing to the live music provided by Otis Read, Peter Breen, Jim Corwin and Chris Brooks. "It was smooth sailing all the way," commented Land Trust Secretary Martha Antaya who organized the event both this year and last. "And, we were even treated to a harvest moon after days of rain that forced us to postpone the event by a day," she added.

Land Trust members as well as new friends were on board. "This is a great way to provide an activity that few people get to do and to raise some funds as well," noted Land Trust President Rock Singewald. "We're talking about holding even more social events in the future as a way for people to get to know us and the important work that we're doing."

A video of the event is available on YouTube at youtu.be/74DkG6VcsVQ



The WLCT thanks Blount Fine Foods for their very generous corporate support from their charitable giving trust



To volunteer for the Warren Land Trust, Sign up at our website, warrenlct.org/support-us/volunteer/, or email us at warrenlctri@gmail.com.



Go fly a kite!

The WLCT held its 3rd annual Go Fly a Kite event on Saturday, October 8. More than 20 folks showed up, from 4-year-olds to 94-year-olds, all with their own kites. At one point 6 kites were up and flying. The light wind made us feel like Charlie Brown for a bit. Even so, the sky, sand and water were bright, and everyone had a glorious time.

Volunteer Opportunities

We have many great volunteer opportunities this season - there's something for everyone! Some of our most urgent needs are listed here, but there are many other ways to volunteer - please reach out and share your skills by submitting the interest form at warrenlct.org/support-us/volunteer/

- **BOARD MEMBER** - Support and guide WLCT's strategy and initiatives!
- **COMMUNICATIONS** - Help us share WLCT's work and mission through article writing, expanding our social media strategy, adding photography, and more.
- **EVENT PLANNING** - Plan, organize, publicize, and lead events, from nature walks to fundraising events.
- **DEVELOPMENT** - Provide support such as grant writing, networking, donor relations, and more.
- **GROUP EVENTS** - Have a group of friends or co-workers? Contact us to plan a team-building volunteer event!

RI Land Trust Days

The Rhode Island Land Trust Council (RILTC) is the coalition of our state's land trusts - community-based organizations formed to protect scenic open spaces, farms, forests, historic sites, and watersheds that define the character of our communities, keep us healthy, protect wildlife habitat and drinking water supplies, and provide local food and beautiful places for recreation. Many properties are open to the public and are traversed by hundreds of miles of walking trails. Every year, the RILTC coordinates a two-month celebration of these open spaces across Rhode Island called Land Trust Days.

This year, Warren Land Conservation Trust was asked to host the first 'kickoff' event for the Land Trust Days celebration. We decided to showcase Haile Farm Preserve for the event by leading a nature walk through the preserve.

We started the walk by reading a Pokanoket Land Acknowledgement Statement, recognizing that the land we now know as Haile Farm Preserve and the greater area is known as Sowams, the ancestral home of the Pokanoket People. Then Kate Sayles, Executive Director of the RILTC spoke about the council and other Land Trust Days events. Then, after we went around and introduced ourselves, the group of approximately 15 people headed down the trails.

It was a nice day, and the woods were still occupied by birds, though seeing and hearing birds with a group of people can be a challenge. As we walked the trails, we chatted about seeing the berries on the Bayberry plants in the marsh, and the witch hazel shrubs in the forest. We also found a turtle nest in a sandy spot under the power lines between the marsh and the forest; was it one of the rare Diamond-back Terrapin's nests? Maybe!

Inevitably the walk wasn't so much about the observations we had while enjoying the preserve as it was just about being outside, together, in a special place that is protected forever.



Kate Sayles discussing the RILTC and Land Trust Days, and Paul Miller, probably talking about birds.

A 20-minute video of the event is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9CtSae-Mzkk>. Additional imagery from the walk is available at the Sowams Heritage Area website at Sowamsheritagearea.org

Upcoming events

MONTHLY BIRD WALKS

WLCT Executive director Paul Miller will lead monthly bird walks at Haile Farm Preserve, 8:30 AM -10 AM. Please email Paul at warrenlctri@gmail.com to register for the walks. We will use the email list to notify participants of cancellations or other changes.

The bird walks will take place on the following dates: December 16, January 21, February 18, March 18, April 15, May 13

2ND ANNUAL FIRST DAY WALK

January 1 at 11:00 AM, Haile Farm Preserve

WLCT ANNUAL MEETING, January 17 at 7 PM

The Event Room at Cutler Mill, 16 Cutler St, Warren



female Northern Cardinal in the snow (photo by Paul Miller)