



Twelve Miles Out

A Newsletter of North Haven Conservation Partners

Fall 2020



Photo courtesy: North Haven Historical Society

Burnt Island — A Special Place

Located at the entrance of the Little Thoroughfare on the eastern shore of North Haven Island sits Burnt Island. This 74-acre island was given to the Town of North Haven in 1993 by the Minot family. In the spring of 2000, the residents of North Haven voted to grant North Haven Conservation Partners a conservation easement on the island. This easement ensures that Burnt Island is permanently protected as “an undeveloped natural and scenic resource for traditional low-impact outdoor recreation, nature observation and study by the general public, and preservation of the health of the wooded coastal shoreline ecosystem.” Burnt Island is now managed cooperatively by the Town of North Haven’s Mullin’s Head Park Commission and NHCP.

Burnt Island can be accessed by boat, as NHCP and the Town maintain a dock

during the summer months. Thanks to the generosity of the Cobb family, Burnt Island may also be accessed from a parking lot and access trail located on Cooper’s Lane just off Indian Point Road. Access from land is across a tidal bar during a roughly four-hour window, two hours before and after low tide. Please use caution, know the local tide chart, and do not attempt to cross if the bar is submerged.

Two trails on Burnt Island offer visitors the most remote hikes available on NHCP properties, arguably on all of North Haven. The Middle Trail takes hikers through mature forests, old pastures, and past stone walls. The Shore Trail circumnavigates the perimeter of

the Island bringing hikers to a number of secluded beaches and offers spectacular views of the Northerlies, Deer Isle, Mullin’s Head, and numerous other local islands. Several nearby islands are also conserved, including Calderwood Island, Babbidge

Island (Please note that Acadia National Park holds conservation easements on this property but not public access easements.), and Little Thoroughfare Island.

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human activity. An important part of that history that is often forgotten is its place as part of the Wabanki homeland for over 12,000 years. Though there is little specific information about Native American use of

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NHCP 2020 President's Letter



Dear Members and Friends:

In looking back at a summer where all of us had to find new ways to navigate all aspects of life on North Haven, the Board has a truly elevated sense of gratitude for the ways that you found to interact with North Haven Conservation Partners. We know, from the countless words of thanks we received

about the condition of our properties, that more of you than ever are getting out on our land. The attendance at our Zoom annual meeting rivaled the robust numbers that routinely show up for the party we usually throw in August. Many of you took the time to offer words of encouragement and unsolicited support. We will remember the summer of 2020 as a year of rewarding connections with you and a deepened commitment on our part to the fundamentals of our mission as North Haven's land trust.

We believe that the foundation for what you and we experienced this year is our enhanced investment in stewardship. We made sure that our properties were in great condition; put picnic tables in beautiful settings; erected signage to guide visitors on well-maintained trails; and published property descriptions and maps that are available on our website and at various outlets around the island.

We promise to build on this example in every season of years to come. Repairs will be made this winter to the upland portion of Tar Tank beach where severe storms last winter damaged foot access from the parking area. We will also continue to test buckthorn eradication techniques on the North Shore Preserve, and report back to you about what we learn. Part of our buckthorn strategy is planting native tree species in hopes of crowding out the invasive, a process we intend to accelerate this fall and spring.

Please stay in touch. We invite you to follow our updates, activities and volunteer opportunities on Facebook @northhavenconservation and Instagram @nhconservationpartners, or on our website (new and improved this fall!) at northhavenconservation.org. Thank you all for a great year.

As ever,

Badge



Mill Stream Trail

Photo by: Jean G. Lamont

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Welcoming a New Executive Director

John R Stevens



John grew up in the town of Island Pond, a small rural community in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. He graduated from Unity College with a BS in Environmental Science/Natural Resource Management. Following college, John worked as a Park Ranger, Naturalist, Environmental Educator, and research biologist for various organizations including the US Forest Service, State of Vermont, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Vermont Institute of Natural Science, and Stone Environmental Schools of New England. For the past 20 years, prior to moving to North Haven, John served as the Director of Conservation Services at the NorthWoods Stewardship Center. His job included managing wildlife habitat improvement, riparian buffer restoration, trail maintenance and construction, invasive exotic plant control, and forestry projects throughout New England. He has been in love with the islands of Penobscot Bay since a kayak trip to Warrens Island in 1989. When John is not working he enjoys recreational activities including hunting and fishing, sailing, kayaking, hiking, and skiing. In the spring, he enjoys working in his sugar bush and making maple syrup. He has two sons ages 18 and 21, both college students. In addition to his work with NHCP, John is currently working on North Haven as a caretaker with his wife Becca Cabot.



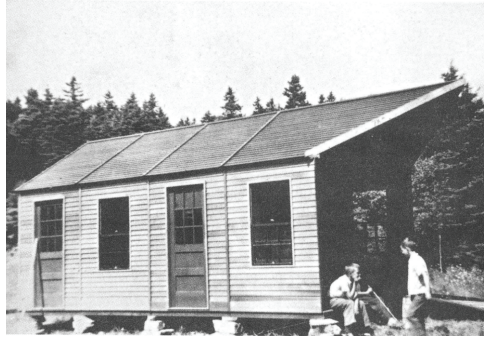
Cabot Fields

Burnt Island (continued from page one)

Burnt Island, their presence is evident in the remains of small shell middens and the presence of stone arrowheads.

Evidence of its more recent past settlement by farmers and fishermen can be seen in the old stone walls, apple trees, and the stone-lined well and foundation located on Burnt Island. The Island was first settled by the Cooper family as early as 1809. In 1850 the Island was purchased by the Leadbetter family and in 1870 Lewis Leadbetter built a farm on the southwest shore of Burnt Island where he remained until 1885. Their children went to the Little Thoroughfare School, their attendance controlled by tide and ice. Although it was never built, in 1879 the State of Maine approved a petition to construct a bridge from North Haven to Burnt Island across the tidal bar. The Leadbetter's continued to have the island farmed and kept sheep there for several years. Eventually, Leo Gillis bought the island where he lived more as a fisherman than a farmer. In 1907, he had the Leadbetter home dismantled and moved to the village of North Haven where it was reconstructed in a different design, being the house now located on Main Street, across from Mill Street. Story has it that

the sale of Burnt Island to the wealthy yachtsman Philip Wren included the buildings as well, but when he returned the summer after the sale, the house was gone.



Burnt Island Cabin, then and now.

In 1938 an E.F. Hodgson portable kit cabin was erected on Burnt Island. The 1938 Hodgson Catalogue described their houses as “built in completed sections in the

factory - sides, roofs, and floors. Windows are fitted in place and doors are hung. The sections are shipped so completely fabricated that the smallest houses can be erected, with the use of our special key bolts, in a few hours' time.” This home served as a summer house and retreat for many years, but over time it fell into disrepair. After much discussion by the North Haven Select Board the decision was made to remove the building. The Town of North Haven put the job of removing the cabin out to bid but there were no takers. Then in the fall of 2020, Adam Rahbee was given permission to dismantle the building. He is planning to reconstruct it temporarily on his property in Belmont, Massachusetts, with the ultimate hope of eventually moving it to some other location.

Burnt Island, and all NHCP properties are local resources open for everyone to use and enjoy.

(Much of the historical information for this article was provided thanks to Lydia Brown, Executive Director of the North Haven Historical Society).

John Stevens, *Executive Director, North Haven Conservation Partners, 2020*



Pulpit Harbor
Photo by: William Trevaskis

Grassland Birds and NHCP

In its effort to be better stewards of the lands we own, NHCP is committed to developing management plans for each of its properties. The first step of any plan is to determine the management goals for each property, and then develop the best management practices to achieve those goals. Properties may have multiple goals based on a variety of factors, including habitat types, easement language, and the feasibility of implementing specific management practices.

The following article discusses both the why and how of managing open fields for better grassland bird habitat. NHCP is exploring managing some of its open fields for grassland bird habitat, but is still weighing the needs and benefits of other critical habitats (such as pollinator habitat,) and management challenges such as the invasive plant species Glossy Buckthorn. We hope to model good stewardship while encouraging other landowners to do the same.



Recent research published by the journal *Science* shows that there is a net population loss of almost 3 billion birds across all species in the US and Canada since 1970. Grassland birds, such as bobolinks, sparrow species, and meadowlarks have suffered some of the steepest declines of all U.S. birds (www.stateofthebirds.org) and are in need of our help. With approximately 47 million acres protected by land trusts (according to Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Land Trust Initiative), they are in a unique position to be a significant part of this critical conservation effort.

Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) are an iconic summer sight in the fields of Maine. They are truly long-distance migrants, coming to breed in Maine fields all the way from their winter homes in South America. Unfortunately, these amazing birds have been on the State of the Birds Watchlist of birds of highest conservation concern since 2014.

In addition to threats to grassland habitat through re-forestation and development, changes in timing and frequency of hay harvesting have further hastened grassland bird species decline. Grassland birds require undisturbed fields for nesting. Haying occurs earlier and more frequently in recent decades, coinciding with the nesting period. In addition, fields not used for hay production are often cut during the nesting timeframe. Thus, the human impact on breeding populations is significant and results in widespread nesting failure across much of Maine's habitat each year.

Recently featured in the Land Trust Association's *Saving Land* magazine article "3 Billion Birds Gone: Land Trusts can help curb declines" (<https://www.lta.org/news/3-billion-birds-gone>), Ag Allies is a statewide program that works with land trusts to increase nesting success of grassland birds. One way to do this is to refurbish grasslands that are currently under-managed. Many grassland acres held by Maine's land trusts have not been actively managed for forage production in recent years. With later, more sporadic mowing, and lack of fertility management, these grasslands have declined in productivity as well as become less attractive for nesting grassland birds.

Therefore, some land trusts are now interested in implementing field refurbishment/improvement practices. This is done through assessment of fields and implementation of best-fit practices to restore quality nesting habitat. Practices often include soils testing and analysis, lime and fertilizer application, and may also include some re-seeding, land smoothing (for particularly rutted fields to allow management), and invasive species management.



Bobolink Summer Calendar

Bobolinks arrive in Maine starting in early May. Nests are built beginning from the end of May through early June, and consist of a well concealed cup of grass placed on the ground in a field. Nestlings, tended by both the male and female, are fed exclusively insects, while adults also consume a variety of weed seeds. Nestlings mature through June and into July and in Maine are generally flighted by July 15-20th. Thus, delaying a field cut until this date allows the birds a good chance to have some nesting success.

Grassland Birds and NHCP (continued)

What Makes Good Grassland Bird Habitat?

- Fields need to be undisturbed during breeding season – mid May to mid July.
- Depending on landscape, a single field should be 8 or more acres for bobolink and Savannah sparrow habitat, likely 15 or more for Meadowlark or the other grassland sparrows.
- Fields should be a mix of grasses and forbs, with little to no woody-stemmed vegetation. Timothy-clover fields are the “standard” old grassland bird mix.
- Fields should be maintained with lime and fertilizer as needed. Timing and type of materials applied are critical. Avoid application during the breeding season.
- Field configurations that are rectangular or circular (i.e. ones

with a large area in the center) are much better than long, skinny fields.

- Any walking or ATV paths should be located around field edges rather than through the center.
- Field vegetation should be fairly dense, with not much bare ground visible.
- Fields should be cut every year to maintain habitat conditions.
- A nearby water source or marsh is a great attraction!

Working together, we can make a difference to these birds so in need of our conservation help.

Laura Suomi-Lecker, Ag Allies grassland bird program manager, Somerset SWCD 207-474-8323 x 4 ; laura.lecker@me.nacdnet.net



The Fox Island Outing Club's fifth year of programs are up and running! Despite adapting to the pandemic, we are excited to creatively provide weekly adventures for students from K-8th grade. From foraging to wilderness survival skills, compass navigation to snowshoeing, activities change with the season and are always an adventure!

This fall has kicked off with leaf observations, plant identification, and phenology for K-5th grade students. Observations will focus on changes for plants and animals during the transition to each season. Students in grades 6th-8th will navigate and orienteer using maps and compasses this fall. We will explore the woods, make new discoveries, and hope to not get too lost! This year, programs will incorporate specific stewardship and land management projects.

FIOC programs emphasize that infinite exploration and learning can occur in our own backyards. We hope that participants will value

and protect the place that they live. More than ever before, it is important to form a deeper connection with our environment in times of global change and warming. We feel fortunate to live in a place with access to natural space, rich local history, and a close knit community.



Photo by: Amilia Campbell

Gilda Alexander is excited to ID a leaf!

Looking forward, we are focusing on the future sustainability of FIOC. Through implementing new curriculum and assessments, applying for grants, and building community connections, our goal is to establish a program that outlasts its current staff.

Please reach out if you have any program or project ideas. We'd love to hear from you and incorporate local knowledge whenever possible!

Thanks,

Amilia Campbell & Maria Keeler
FIOC program leaders

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Thank You Volunteers!

