

PROTECTING THE SOURCE

Sturup and Shelley donation protects Ducktrap River Headwaters

This spring, Burt Sturup and Kim Shelley of Belmont donated a conservation easement on their beautiful 90-acre property on Tilden Pond, the headwaters to the Ducktrap River. The property is a significant addition to the overall Ducktrap conservation effort and possesses extensive forest, wetlands, 2,500-feet of shorefront, and a section of the river with spawning and rearing habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon. Situated where the pond becomes the river, the land was one of the largest remaining unconserved parcels in the Land Trust's Ducktrap River focus area, which is now over 80% conserved.

Motivating Burt and Kim to see their property permanently conserved was a deep connection to the land built upon deep family roots and a love of the land. Burt's words speak for themselves:

"In the late 1930's my paternal grandparents built a rustic cabin on the north shore of Tilden Pond as a reprieve from their busy life in Worcester, MA. It afforded the comforts of the day: a fireplace for heat, kerosene lights for illumination, and a hand pump and a two-holer backhouse for plumbing. My grandmother was in heaven.

While my grandfather continued to work in MA, my grandmother and her three kids lived at camp for the summer. A naturalist by avocation, she could name every tree, bush, bird, plant or woodland creature that caught her curious glance. And if she didn't spend at least a



couple hours every day trying to catch small-mouth bass, then her day was incomplete. And she passed on that knowledge to her kids, particularly to my father.

As a boy I spent at least part of every summer at camp....my grandmother would take me on adventures exploring the woods, swamps and fields around the pond. She showed me where every bird nested and where every animal had a den or burrow. And without fail she took me fishing every day, dressed in her housecoat and a wide-brimmed hat. At the time, leopard frogs were the bait of choice and I spent the early morning hours catching frogs for the day's fishing. It truly was a young boy's nirvana.

The land has been the constant in our lives whenever other changes have intervened...So, in keeping with our attachment and desire to preserve our land, we contacted Coastal Mountains Land Trust about putting a conservation easement on the majority of the property to protect it from any future development and allow it to exist in its current state in perpetuity. And though we realize that the easement reduces the financial benefit we could have received by developing the piece, it seemed incongruous with our love of the land... the land endures while we all fade away."

All of us at the Land Trust are grateful for Burt and Kim's love of their land, and for their foresight in conserving their land in perpetuity.



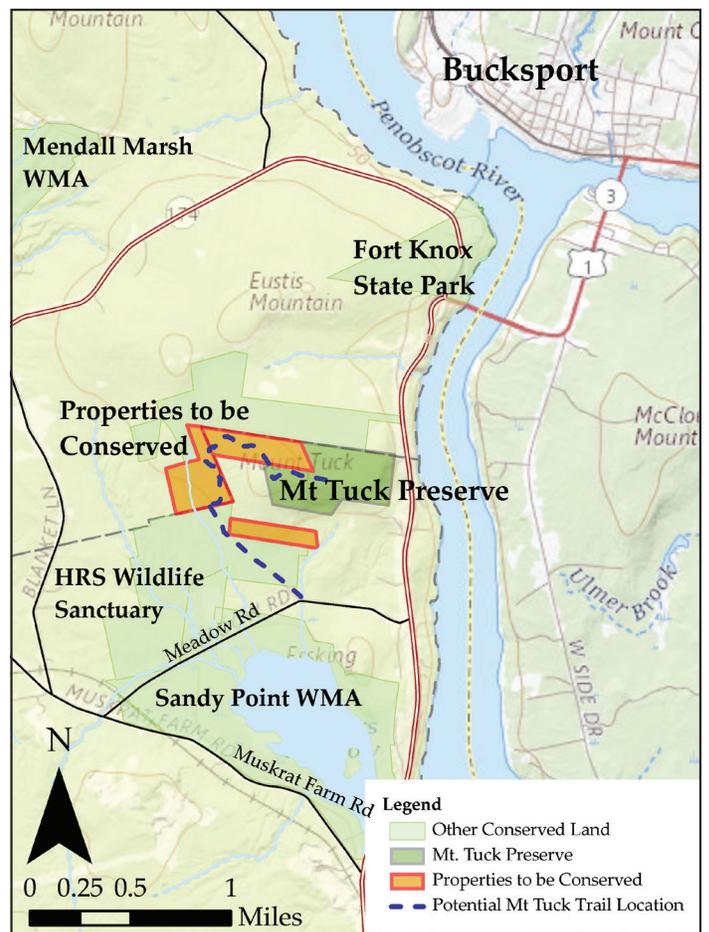
CONSERVING THE HEAD OF THE BAY

Mt Tuck Conservation Moves Ahead

PHOTO CREDIT: JACOB GERRITSEN

In 2019, Coastal Mountains Land Trust launched a campaign to conserve Mt Tuck and build a permanent hiking trail to its summit. This scenic coastal mountain, which straddles the boundary of Stockton Springs and Prospect, overlooks the Penobscot Narrows Bridge, the Penobscot River and Penobscot Bay. With generous support from our members, the local community, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund and the Maine Community Foundation’s Pollinator Fund, we have already conserved the 99-acre summit. Further, we have entered into two purchase and sale agreements with abutting landowners to acquire three additional parcels, totaling 117 acres. Conserving these properties is critical to protect the mountain’s forest and woodland habitats, tie together existing conserved land, and allow us to begin planning a trail. A preliminary route to the summit and then towards a viewpoint off the ridge has been marked. About two miles long, the trail will gradually ascend through woods and along open fields to the young forest on the top of the mountain. A clearing provides sweeping views of the head of Penobscot Bay. We hope to begin building the trail in late 2021.

Our fundraising to make all of this possible continues. To date, we have raised over \$220,000 and have \$85,000 left to raise to make this project a reality. We welcome your interest and support. Watch for invitations to join our staff for hikes in the project area soon! Please consider making a contribution to this campaign. If you have questions, reach out to our Executive Director, Ian Stewart.



OPENING DOORS FOR OUTDOOR LEARNING

Land Trust gets started with outdoor classrooms

Seldom before has providing kids with chances to get outside and explore nature been so important as during the COVID-19 pandemic. This past fall and winter, Coastal Mountains Land Trust was excited to support local students and educators interested in greater access to outdoor learning and classrooms.

In August, as local schools were trying to figure out how to reopen their doors, the Land Trust put out a general call to area schools and educators to see who might want help from the Land Trust with expanding opportunities for outdoor learning. In general terms, we offered to provide open access to the Land Trust’s preserves and trails, to identify natural spaces within walking distance of schools, to assist with procuring outdoor classroom supplies or infrastructure, and to provide opportunities for independent nature study.

The Land Trust moved forward on three separate outdoor education initiatives. In Camden, our staff worked with the Camden-Rockport Elementary School to begin the development of a simple outdoor classroom. Several hardware stores donated buckets as seats/storage containers and stewardship volunteers cleared and prepared an outdoor classroom area. In Searsport, the Land Trust began a constructive discussion about the conservation and long-term use of a parcel near the school as an outdoor classroom. Volunteers worked to clear trails in preparation for its future use by local schools.

Lastly, at the Beech Hill Preserve in Rockport, the Land Trust made a small and underutilized outbuilding on our newly acquired Beech Hill expansion parcel available to an experimental four-

month outdoor learning program called *To Know A Mountain in Maine*. Led by two teachers, Jackie Grannis-Phoenix and Teresa Taylor, a small group of students spent weekday afternoons exploring every nook and cranny of the preserve, no matter the weather. The unheated building was made available for truly inclement days, but for the most part, all learning was done outside. “While COVID-19 was the catalyst for bringing this to fruition right now,” said Grannis-Phoenix, “it is not what is driving us to create an outdoor educational program. A nature-based program is what we see as the ideal, what we would wish for all children at any time.”

We couldn’t agree more. In our current Strategic Plan for 2020–2025, the Land Trust has prioritized conserving lands near schools, as well as partnering with educators to expand the connection between schools and natural spaces. We look forward to having many more stories like these to tell in the coming years.



TRAILS IN THE TIME OF COVID

On a sunny winter Saturday parking lots were full and hiking boots spread out along trails throughout the Midcoast. Over 50 cars were parked at the Ragged and Bald Mountains trailheads; nearly a hundred were at Maiden's Cliff and Camden Hills State Park. Even with highs only in the 30s and a slight breeze, it seemed like the whole community was out for a walk. Throughout the entire country, 2020 was an absolute record year for people hitting the trails. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, many sought access to the outdoors for the first time and long-time trail users ventured out more often. Trails were a place for recreation, for exercise, and for meeting friends.

Locally, we estimate that usage of our trails nearly doubled in 2020 compared to the previous year. This trend was broadly consistent at all of our 30+ preserves. Our quietest preserves, like Long Cove, were suddenly getting more than a dozen people a day, while our most popular preserves such as Bald Mountain and Beech Hill went from being popular on weekends to staying busy all the time. Across the country, the trend was the same. A study by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy found that nationwide usage of their trails increased 60%. In Connecticut, trail use reportedly increased nearly 200%.

Overall, we view this increased access as a very positive thing—a sign that people are realizing the restorative power of spending time outdoors.

During this past year, people more than ever needed places to stretch their legs and enjoy the fresh air. However, some trails across the country, like crowded sections of the Appalachian Trail, experienced negative impacts of too many people—degraded by litter, human waste, trampled vegetation, and erosion. In some instances, managers struggled to



maintain positive user experiences and reduce environmental damage. People, desperate to get outside, were loving trails to death. At home, however, while we did need to make some important adjustments, we found these issues to be minimal at our Preserves. Full parking lots, off-leash dogs, dog waste, and user interactions were a few of the issues we addressed on trails this past year. But these issues are minor and solvable if we all work together.

Our hope is that the interest in trails will continue, even when COVID-19 is behind us. To maintain trails and ensure that everyone continues to have a positive experience, however, we will continue to encourage visitors to keep a few key trail etiquette tips in mind as they get out there this spring. First, **Be Respectful of Each Other**. For example, if you are mountain biker on a shared-use trail, announce yourself as you approach and pass hikers slowly. Second, **Respect Social Distancing**. When necessary, step off the trail to let others pass you, and follow state guidelines for masks. Third, **Follow Use Guidelines** like keeping *dogs on leash* and *leaving no trace* or waste. Our leash guidelines are clear and are meant to protect people and wildlife. Fourth, **Educate Others**. We usually respond more openly to new ideas from people we know and trust rather than strangers, so start by educating your friends and family who may be new to hiking. Talk to them on your hike about why it is

important to be a good trail steward. We believe that good trail culture is just as much the responsibility of its users as it is of any land manager.

We also invite you to consider pitching in with trail stewardship—which means trail monitoring, maintenance and construction! Consider becoming a trail volunteer or making a contribution to the benefit of our growing trails program. We need your help! Happy trails in 2021!

FROM THE DIRECTOR

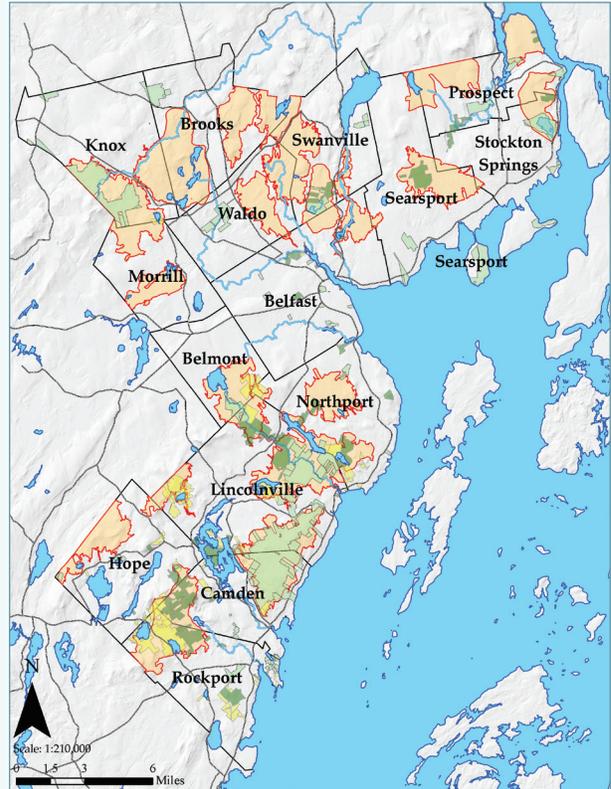
An Ambitious and Urgent Challenge—30 for 30

People ask all the time: How much more land is your organization going to conserve? Beyond the 100+ conservation projects completed, including more than 3,000 acres on Bald & Ragged Mountains, 1,100+ acres in Ducktrap watershed and several hundred more around Hurds Pond, how much is enough?

To begin to answer this question, last year we completed a conservation plan to identify the areas of highest conservation value in the western Penobscot Bay region. By bringing together ten unique map layers that represent a wide variety of conservation values, we identified twenty large areas that, if conserved, would result in conservation of **25% of the land in our service region** over the **next 25 years**. Today, 11% of the area in the fifteen towns we work in is conserved.

In the past few months, however, we have been hearing a clear call for an even faster pace and larger-scale conservation effort. Leaders from across the country and around the world have set forth an ambitious vision of conserving 30% of all land as one of the key strategies needed to protect biodiversity and mitigate climate change. In Maine, our state's recently released four-year plan for Climate Action includes a commitment to "increase by 2030 the total acreage of conserved lands in the state to 30% through voluntary, focused purchases of land and conservation easements on working forest or farm land." Concurrently, in January, the new federal administration announced an Executive order to tackle the climate crisis, which "commits to the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and oceans by 2030."

Now more than ever, for the resilience of the world's biodiversity and our local communities, we must recognize the need to ramp up the work of conservation. It is time to think and act boldly. Although we, as an organization, have not yet adopted a formal percentage goal, we applaud the urgency of these calls and recognize that we, as one of the 1,300+ non-profit land trusts across the country, will play a crucial role making the gains of local conservation projects add up to realize this larger vision.



Areas of Conservation Interest

We invite you, as a Land Trust member, to help us move forward. Help us protect the most special natural areas in our community. Consider conserving your own land. Support a land project. Get involved. Ask *yourself* the question, how much land do we need to conserve to mitigate climate change, preserve wildlife, safeguard water quality, maintain access to the outdoors, and sustain the extraordinary quality of place that defines our communities?

Ian Stewart



101 Mount Battie Street
Camden, ME 04843
207-236-7091
www.coastalmountains.org

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #11
NEWCASTLE, MAINE



Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)
PHOTO CREDIT: BRIAN WILLSON

SPRING OUTSIDE!

“Sneak Preview” Project Hikes for Members

This Spring, join the Land Trust’s staff for a pair of special member’s sneak preview hikes:

Mt. Tuck Focus Area Exploration—Thursday, May 6th, 2–5pm

Hike the future Mt Tuck Trail and visit several properties that the Land Trust is in the process of acquiring with Stewardship and Land Protection Manager, Jack Shaida.

Round the Mountain Trail Phase II Project Walk—Saturday, May 15th, 9am–noon

Walk the next section of the Round the Mountain Trail to be constructed in 2021 before it is built with Stewardship Program Director, Ryan Gates.

To sign up, please send an email to info@coastalmountains.org. Directions and raindate information to follow. Space is limited, so sign-ups are required.

Top 10 Spring Micro-Adventures for You (& Your Family) To Enjoy (2nd edition)

Recommendations from the Staff of Coastal Mountains Land Trust

- 1 Listen for Spring Warblers: Early May—Ducktrap River Preserve, Lincolnville (Ryan O.)
- 2 Get Fit: Run, Bike or Hike the Round the Mountain Trail or Belfast Rail Trail (Polly)
- 3 Long (50 miles!) Distance Hike: Venture from downtown Belfast to Unity: Belfast Rail Trail to Hills to Sea Trail (for more info: see waldotrails.org/unitytrail.html) (Jack)
- 4 Naturalist’s Paddle: Paddle from Knights Pond through the Pitcher Pond and back: St. Clair Preserve, Northport (Ian)
- 5 Listen for Frog Calls in Vernal Pools: Long Cove Preserve, Searsport (Jack)
- 6 Ocean Paddle to a Stone Beach: Beauchamp Point Preserve, Rockport Harbor (Ryan G.)
- 7 Track Wildlife: Newman Preserve, Northport or Main Stream Preserve, Stockton Springs (Ryan O.)
- 8 Backcountry Adventure Hike: Meadow Brook Preserve Hike from Hawk-Fry to Bessey Track across Hurds Pond (Heather)
- 9 Catch a Fish: Join the local fishing scene at the Sides Preserve, Rockport (Ryan G.)
- 10 North & South: Explore our most northern trail to the Penobscot River: Penobscot Shore Preserve, Prospect and hike our most southern trail up Beech Hill from the lesser known Rockville Street Trail access (Polly)

Serving the communities of

Rockport, Camden, Hope, Lincolnville, Northport, Belfast, Belmont, Morrill, Waldo, Swanville, Brooks, Knox, Searsport, Stockton Springs, and Prospect

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Judy Wallingford
Vice President E. Daniel Johnson
Secretary Darby C. Urey
Treasurer Malcolm White

Roy J. Call, Courtney Collins, Gianne Conard, H. Landis Gabel, Thomas R. Moore, David D. Noble, Lys McLaughlin Pike, Roger Rittmaster, Nicholas C. Ruffin, David Thanhauser, Elisabeth Wolfe

STAFF

Ian Stewart Executive Director
Polly Jones Office Manager & Membership Coordinator
Heather Rogers Land Protection Program Director
Ryan Gates Stewardship Program Director
Jack Shaida Stewardship & Land Protection Manager
Ryan O’Neill Stewardship Assistant



LANDSCAPES