



ROYAL RIVER
CONSERVATION TRUST

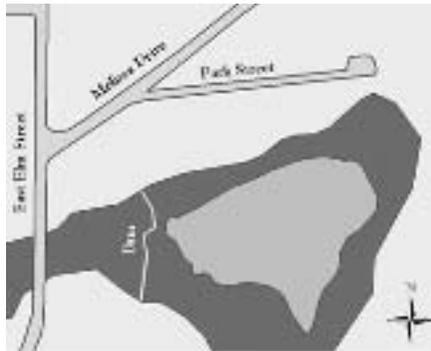
Currents

Conserving land for people, wildlife, clean water, and the future

Yarmouth Grants RRCT an Island Easement

A one acre gem in the center of the Royal River, Gooch Island sits just downstream of the dam visible from East Elm Street in Yarmouth. Any visitor to Royal River Park or pedestrian on the path from Park Street to the Post Office has seen this island across the river. It is decked with a variety of hard- and soft-woods, including several stately oaks, and fringed by rocky shore, one end of which is attached to the dam.

The Royal River Conservation Trust received the generous donation of a conservation easement on the island from Eli and Norris Dale of Portland. The Dales have enjoyed the island since 1978, and wanted to



ensure that the public could enjoy it in perpetuity in its natural state. Following the gift to the trust, the Dales transferred fee ownership to the town of Yarmouth. The town council voted unanimously to accept the gift.

Gooch Island continued on Page 3



Gooch Island

Volunteer Spotlight: Linzee Weld

Linzee Weld has been working tirelessly on a unique project with the potential to combine both the preservation of rural open space and the promotion of local organic farming. A couple of years ago, she began conversations with Dave and Chris Colson, owners of New Leaf Farm, an organic vegetable farm in Durham near Runaround Pond. The Colsons have long been interested in protecting land in their neighborhood for farming, forestry and wildlife habitat.



As a first step towards this vision, the Colsons and their son-in-law, Steve Sinisi, are working to acquire and protect pasture land near their farm where they can expand their livestock operation to raise organic chicken, pork, and beef. Weld, the Colsons, and Sinisi began investigating whether Land for Maine's Future (LMF) funds might be used to buy an easement to protect the farmland. Weld brought her ideas to Henry Nichols at RRCT. He enthusiastically agreed to support her efforts,

Volunteer Spotlight continued on Page 3

Letter from the President



I recently returned from an annual ski trip in Baxter State Park with a small group of Royal River Conservation Trust members. Seventy-seven years after Governor Percival P. Baxter made his legendary gift to the people of Maine, we were reminded of his visionary approach to land conservation and wilderness recreation. As members and supporters of RRCT, each of you help carry forward the governor's spirit and vision for protecting wild places. Your continued confidence in and support for RRCT's mission demonstrates our generation's commitment

to local conservation. RRCT pledges to work hard so that future generations can also discover the awe and inspiration of outdoor exploration.

This spring and summer we invite you to join us for a visit to the increasing number of conservation lands we have protected in our region. Check out our current events page at www.rrct.org for the latest updates, news, and information. Please join us for trips, volunteer activities, and stewardship projects, and learn how to get involved. From paddling to the eastern tip of Littlejohn Island in Casco Bay, to cycling on quiet roads along the river in North Yarmouth, to walking the trails at the Shaker Village in New Gloucester, there is much to explore right here in our watershed. Please come join us!

Your support of Royal River Conservation Trust helps us focus on stewarding our conservation lands and expanding the roster of special places we have protected. As we admire Governor Baxter's vision generations ago, future generations of outdoor enthusiasts will appreciate your foresight in conserving today's exceptional places.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you this summer.

Sam Amstrong Jr.

Opportunities

It is a land trust's job to protect landscapes from unwanted change through easements, purchases and other kinds of transactions that limit or prevent unwise development. Usually there's a close connection between development pressure and the economic conditions that promote it. Here in Maine - including the towns along the Royal River - a comparatively strong economy has promoted development in recent years, and we've experienced losses in public access, open space, and pristine views as a direct result. The Royal River Conservation Trust has worked hard to prevent or minimize some of development's worst effects.

Recently, economic conditions have changed. Real estate is no longer "hot;" sales of existing homes are down; developers aren't staking out as many projects as they have been.

In the land protection business, all of this spells opportunity.

Opportunities continued on Page 3



Illustration by Amanda Devine

Gooch Island continued from page 1

"The Dales' gift of Gooch Island is a terrific asset to the Town and an important part of the Town's interest in preserving the history, conserving the natural habitat corridor, protecting the scenic vista, and providing for public access and enjoyment," said Nat Tupper, Yarmouth Town Manager. "The Dales have long been good stewards of the island and generous in allowing public access, but this gift preserves the island beyond our lifetimes and allows its conservation and protection through our partnership with the Royal River Conservation Trust. Yarmouth is twice blessed."

The Dales have given a right of way to the island that will allow for public access, but only when the water level is low enough to allow safe wading. The location of the right of way will be posted in the future so that trespass can be avoided on the land between Park Street and the river.

Due to abundant snow since the easement donation, RRCT staff and trustees have yet to set foot on Gooch



A hearty thank you to the Dales, pictured here on Gooch Island, for their generosity.

Island. We are eagerly awaiting spring and lower water to wade across and explore this gem firsthand.

- Sharon McHold

Watch for upcoming events, presentations, and work days at
http://www.rrct.org/current_events.html

Linzee Weld continued from page 1

in part because they fit into a larger vision RRCT has to protect lands around Runaround Pond.

Linzee describes herself as the "volunteer project manager" for the project. She has spent many hours working with the Department of Agriculture and with the Colson clan to help this project qualify for the special agricultural category for Land for Maine's Future funding. She has enjoyed collaborating with Henry, as he brings experience with land conservation, fundraising, and state government to the project.

Linzee Weld continues to shepherd the project application through the LMF process. As of mid-March the project had met pre-application requirements. She will help RRCT apply for LMF funds to purchase an agricultural easement to permanently protect this important piece of farmland. We at RRCT admire her foresight and are extremely appreciative of all of her efforts and the many volunteer hours she has spent on this exciting project.

- Merrie Woodworth

Opportunities continued from page 2

With the heat down, we can give ourselves the gift of planning ahead; appreciating what we have; imagining how we want our landscapes to look 50 or 100 years from now. In a sluggish economy, we can act to protect places when they're affordable. If we're thoughtful and pro-active, we can protect the places we cherish before they're directly threatened.

If coastal Maine's overheated real estate market continues to slow down - and there's every indication it will - conservation-minded people will have the chance to make some real progress in protecting what's important. Though no one hopes for an economic downturn, least of all a nonprofit organization dependent upon the public's generosity, we can take advantage of a bear market to turn an otherwise bleak situation into an opportunity for land conservation.

- David Platt

A Winter of Owls

If you've been bird watching in Maine for any length of time, you know that each winter brings its own distinctive mix of species. A bird that drains your feeder one winter can be virtually absent the next. While pine siskins, goldfinches, purple finches, and evening grosbeaks have been few and far between this year, for example, common redpolls, pine grosbeaks and bohemian waxwings have been turning up everywhere. As showy as these birds are, the species that's really been turning heads this winter has been the barred owl.



Photo credit to Zoe Theberge

Although barred owls are not uncommon in Maine, these large nocturnal predators are more often heard than seen. Not this winter. From central Maine to southern York County, people have been regularly seeing barred owls during the day - especially at the edges of clearings where there is a good view of bird feeders and their attendant squirrels. Early and persistent snowfall has provided mice and voles with plenty of cover, forcing the owls to hunt out in the open and into the daylight hours. It's also possible that barred owls here in Maine and in neighboring Canada had a productive nesting season last summer, with higher numbers of birds than usual moving into and through the state. Unfortunately, the combination of more birds vying for less available prey has resulted in high mortality, so dead owls have been much in evidence, too. (Remember, as beautiful as those feathers are, it is not legal to keep them.)

With the melting snow, barred owls will fade back into the woods, and their characteristic hooting: "*who cooks for you, who cooks for you all*" will be the best indication that they still live among us.

- Bill Hancock

From the Stewardship Program...

The whump came a full five-count before the snow bridge actually collapsed. That brief delay gave me time to say a little prayer that my GPS unit was stowed in the top of my pack, rather than in a soon-to-be-submerged pocket. It did not offer enough time to shuffle back to the bank, however, and a split-second later found me waist-deep and gasping for breath in frigid brown slush. My next thought was of a more immediate concern: climbing out of this stream through half-frozen ice would be troublesome in snowshoes. Stewardship in winter isn't always a walk in the park.

For that matter, it isn't always much of a walk at all. For better or for worse, the stewardship department of a land trust in winter typically has precious little to do with snowy days in the woods. Planning for field work has trumped most out-of-door opportunities, and with very little exception, my computer and telephone have seen far more use than my boots these past few months. Getting RRCT's files up-to-date, drafting baseline data for easements, contacting landowners, applying for grants, developing management plans and recruiting volunteers have all topped the list of this winter's priorities. Perhaps less exciting than bushwhacking into half-frozen beaver ponds, the groundwork laid indoors is nonetheless pivotal to field season success.



Stewardship Coordinator, Amanda Devine, examines a pair of duck legs left over from a great horned owl meal on the Littlejohn Preserve.

And, soon enough, the Royal River Conservation Trust's fledgling Stewardship Program will sally forth from its office without fear of frostbite. With winter white finally melted, there is plenty of field work that now needs doing, and seeing the desk-bound diligence of winter pay off in on-the-ground dividends is cause to celebrate. If you're interested in celebrating outside with RRCT's Stewardship Program, then be in touch - we're always looking for volunteers!

- Amanda Devine, Stewardship Coordinator

Littlejohn Preserve, Chapter One: War on Weeds

It's tempting to think that the story ends once the deed is registered.

The reality is that acquisition is merely the beginning of a long relationship between a land trust and its preserve lands. Months of fundraising and negotiations notwithstanding, the Littlejohn Island Preserve's story is still unfolding. Acquired by the Royal River Conservation Trust in late 2006, the 25-acre preserve juts out into Casco Bay from the northeastern reach of Littlejohn Island. White pines and red oaks stand tall over an understory of lowbush blueberries, whose summer offerings will no doubt prove welcome to human and non-human visitors alike.

Simply because the land is owned by a conservation organization doesn't ensure its sanctity, however. Vying with pines, oaks and blueberries for sunlight and nutrients are a suite of non-native invasive plant species, whose extent poses a threat to the conservation value of the land.

Where Asiatic bittersweet has taken root, the canopy is at risk, as this species' growth form leads it up trunks and around branches until it strangles the host tree. This leaves bald eagles and great horned owls without a limb to stand on, so to speak.

So, after a long preamble, Chapter One in the Littlejohn Island Preserve's story will chronicle a war on weeds, come springtime green-up. RRCT is planning work days for the spring and summer to remove invasive species where they have just begun to encroach, and to free still-living canopy trees from strangling weeds. It isn't glorious work, but preserve management is nothing if not a labor of love. And you can't beat the view!

RRCT welcomes the elbow grease and good cheer of volunteers, so please check in regularly at our website for dates and details.

- Amanda Devine

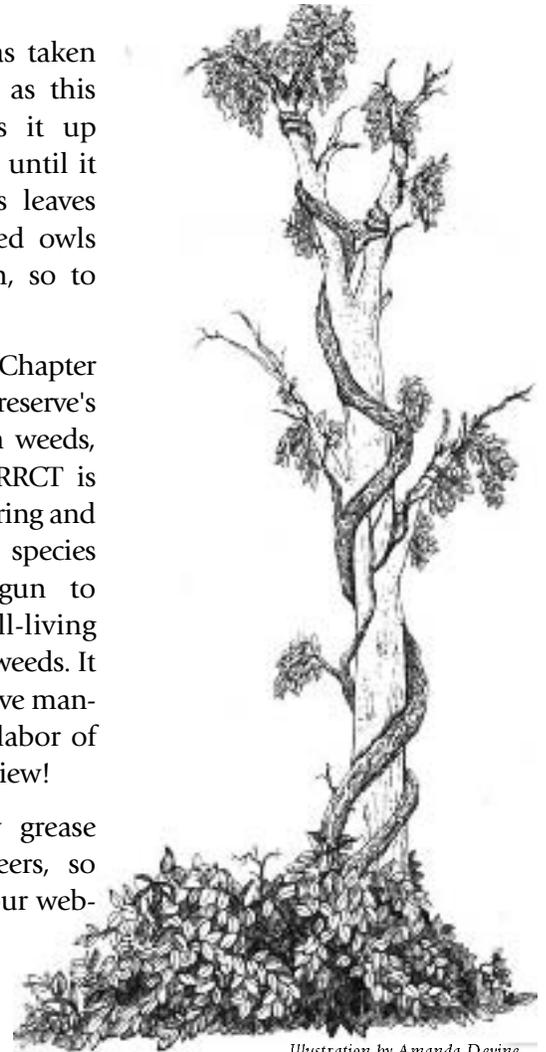


Illustration by Amanda Devine



The RRCT Board on location in New Gloucester.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jane Arbuckle
Tom Armstrong Jr.
Steve Barr
Gro Fletebo
Eugenie Francine
Ed Gervais
Bill Hancock
Dick Leslie
Sharon McHold
David Platt
Gordy Scannell
Merrie Woodworth

STAFF

Henry G. Nichols,
Executive Director
Amanda P. Devine,
Stewardship Coordinator

RRCT welcomes the following new members

Brown Chiropractic	Katherine Harwood
Cascon, Inc.	Paul and Dixie Knoll
Gail and Gordon Clark	Chris Lutes
Hilary Cochran	Justin and Rebecca Nichols
Eliza Dorsey	Ted and Ann Noyes
Laura Dorsey	Dr. and Mrs. Peter Robbins
Alex and Patsy Fava	Ann Thayer
Paul First	Emily Wall
Fluid Imagine Technologies, Inc.	Eric and Tracy Weinrich
Linda and Schuyler Grant	Nick and Louisa Witte
Suzanne and Tom Harden	Yarmouth Lions Club

**We at RRCT extend our sincere
thanks to all of our supporters!**

Current Events

Check out our current events page regularly for updates and additions!
http://www.rrct.org/current_events.html

Intervale Marsh Birds

Saturday, May 10, 6-10 a.m.

Join RRCT Director Bill Hancock and explore New Gloucester's beautiful Intervale marshes for some of the reclusive species characteristic of southern Maine's freshwater wetlands, such as the Virginia rail, sora, American bittern, and marsh wren. You'll see plenty of other birds, too, in this wonderful habitat designated as a state Important Bird Area. Wear waterproof boots, as the morning dew in these lowlands can be heavy. Happening on International Migratory Bird Day and cosponsored by Maine Audubon. No fee; donations to either organization appreciated. Limited to 12 participants.

Royal River Bike Ride

Saturday, June 21, afternoon/evening

Celebrate the longest day with a road ride through the Royal River Watershed! We'll cap off the day with a potluck cookout. Details to follow on our website.

Preserve Work Days

Throughout the summer, we'll be hosting volunteer work days on our preserved lands. Keep checking our website for scheduling and location information!

We're moving!

After five great years in the Sparhawk Mill, RRCT is moving to Main Street on May 1st. If you'd like to help us pack and head upstream, give us a call! Pick-up trucks, boxes, and strong backs are most appreciated.

Membership Card

Thank you for sustaining the Royal River Conservation Trust with a membership gift. Our success is directly attributable to membership support from people living, working and playing in the Royal River region. Please make a gift of \$35, 50, 100, 250, 300 or more today.

Name(s) _____ I wish to make my tax-deductible membership gift of \$ _____ by check credit card

Street Address _____ Card type _____

City/Town/Zip _____ Card # _____
Name as it appears on card _____

E-mail address _____

Phone number _____

I'd also like to help by volunteering. **ROYAL RIVER CONSERVATION TRUST**

Please contact me: **THANK YOU!!!**
Expiration date _____

RRCT will not share your information with anyone. Member benefits include our biannual newsletter and invitations to special events.



Amanda Devine leads Yarmouth residents in a RRCT - and Town - sponsored wildlife tracking workshop on Cousins Island.

Check out RRCT's website at rrct.org

Our website is a place where readers may learn about our activities, find information on how our communities are growing, and become inspired to help us conserve the Royal River region's special places.