



A Sense of Place

FALL 2021

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MILESTONES:

Last month I took a sisters trip to Sedona, Arizona, where the red rocks and mystical vortexes draw people from all over the world who are seeking a connection, healing, or inspiration. This being my first trip in quite some time, I was one of those seekers, longing for enrichment, inspiration, and replenishment. Though my day-to-day at WLT often centers around connecting people with the land, my experiences on this trip helped me work on that practice for myself.

One woman named June who is Chiricahua Apache made an indelible mark with her humble yet powerful practices of gratitude. Our group of three was fortunate to be invited to take part in June's family tradition ceremony, complete with songs, stories, and teachings of kindness.

A student of the Earth, June begins each day with a solitary walk on the land, asking "what is the Earth trying to teach me?" She asks permission before harvesting from the land and leaves a gratitude offering to the Earth, thanking her ancestors for today's abundance and honoring the cycle, receiving from the past generation and giving back to the next.

She asked us to be mindful that when we walk in nature, we walk in the very footsteps of thousands of people who have come before us, both literally and metaphorically. Likewise, thousands will come after us, walking in our footsteps, seeking the same gifts of connection, healing, or inspiration. I was moved by this concept of a steady stream of people throughout the ages, receiving and giving back, accepting and gifting, taking and replenishing.

At the Land Trust, countless volunteers help steward the 1,700 acres in our care, and when we ask what motivates them to serve in this way, nearly everyone responds similarly: that their gifts of time and toil bring them fulfillment and a connection to something larger than themselves. We are grateful for all those who care for the land and appreciate the role each person plays in making things better for generations to come.



Jennifer Fusco,
Executive Director

INTRODUCING LAUREN BARBER

Lauren is a nature enthusiast and lover of both land and sea. She feels most at peace when outdoors and believes that everyone can benefit from being in nature. She joins the team as our Conservation Programs Manager with a wealth of experience coupled with an eagerness to continue to learn. Lauren brings 10 years of outdoor education and stewardship experience from Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey, Cape May Whale Watch & Research Center, Catalina Island Marine Institute, and the New England Science & Sailing.

Lauren grew up in Cape May County, New Jersey, moved to Catalina Island, California, and made her way back to the East Coast, where she now resides in Westerly, Rhode Island. She describes this town as a gem and believes that the Westerly Land Trust plays a vital role in making Westerly such a special location. She is actively involved in the Westerly community, teaching yoga at BarreCoast and serving as a Westerly representative on the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council. Lauren can be found exploring the outdoors, walking trails with her family, and paddling her stand up paddleboard.



INTRODUCING MARC DOHERTY

Marc, a Massachusetts native, returned to the East Coast after spending nearly a decade romping under the big skies in the American West to become the Westerly Land Trust's Land Stewardship/Community Engagement Coordinator as a 2021-22 TerraCorps service member. TerraCorps is a faction of AmeriCorps that connects young professionals with environmentally focused organizations. Immediately prior to moving to Westerly, Marc worked for the Bureau of

Land Management in Kremmling, Colorado, where he monitored the health of the sagebrush steppe ecosystem. He holds a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from the University of Colorado and brings diverse experience and strong stewardship skills but is humbly eager to learn Westerly's land practices and connect with this community. Marc describes himself as a budding botanist and a soul surfer (and a coffee connoisseur). He attributes his affinity for scientific inquisition to Steve "The Crocodile Hunter" Irwin. If you meet Marc out on the land, you'll soon realize that his larger-than-life personality is clearly one destined for the great outdoors. The Westerly Land Trust thanks the Felicia Fund, ServeRI, and TerraCorps for supporting Marc's position.



HEIRLOOM RHUBARB FINDS HOME IN COMMUNITY GARDEN

When Suzan and Grant Hutchins prepared to move from their home in Westerly to a condo in Stonington in the middle of winter, Suzan knew she couldn't leave her family heirloom rhubarb plant behind but was concerned about finding a place where she could dig deep enough into the frozen ground to transplant it. She and a friend had shared a plot at the Westerly Land Trust Community Garden the previous summer, and so, during the coldest part of the year, Suzan dug up a root of her rhubarb and replanted it in the garden on Main Street. She had high hopes this hardy plant would survive the chilly move. After all, it had already traveled from Wisconsin to Nebraska to Rhode Island, beginning its journey with Suzan's ancestors in 1877.

Suzan's great-grandparents were born in Philadelphia into immigrant families from Westphalia, Germany. In 1858 both families moved to southwestern Wisconsin where numerous other German families had settled. Her great-grandparents were married there in 1875 and had a baby shortly after. In post-Civil War United States, with a focus on westward expansion, the government gave land grants to railroad companies, who in turn sold portions of this land to pioneers to help finance railroad construction. The young couple bought land in Nebraska from the Burlington Railroad in 1876. The following spring, they packed their belongings and seeds from their crops (including rhubarb), so they could sow a farm when they reached their new home. They boarded a train and traveled to the end of the railroad line, but their farm was still further west. The couple, their baby daughter and their rhubarb continued the remainder of the trip by wagon, the image of true pioneers.

This Nebraska farm, complete with an orchard, gardens, lilacs, and of course a lush crop of rhubarb, stayed in the family until 2003. Upon the sale of the property, Suzan felt compelled to dig up some of the rhubarb that had come from Wisconsin so long ago and bring it to her new home in Rhode Island.



When asked how the rhubarb survived yet another transport to the Community Garden, Suzan exclaimed, "It never looked so good!" With large leaves and sturdy stocks, it took over the garden plot, even edging out her tomato plants. In addition to sharing the crop with her friends, Suzan enjoys making desserts out of the rhubarb, remembering with each bite its long history and deep connection to her ancestors who embarked upon uncharted territory for the benefit of future generations.

The rhubarb is moving once more this fall to Suzan's family's garden in Stonington, where it

will continue its tradition of passing joy through the generations. The Westerly Land Trust is honored to have housed this heirloom plant even if just for a short season along its longevous journey.

ROGER SCHONNING AWARD

The Westerly Land Trust is humbled and honored to receive The Roger Schonning Award for 2021 from Ocean State Charities Trust. A letter that accompanied the award noted "The Trustees felt strongly that the Westerly Land Trust reflects the goals of Roger Schonning that all generations should enjoy the many public spaces the state of Rhode Island has, while at the same time learning lessons on how to protect our environment." We are grateful to the Ocean State Charities Trust for this award and for everyone in the Westerly Land Trust community who contributes positively to our mission.



CONNECTING MIND, BODY AND NATURE

The Westerly Land Trust partnered with locally owned and operated BarreCoast to offer monthly yoga classes on Winnapaug Farm Preserve from May through October. At each class, approximately 30 yogis gathered on the grass with blankets and mats to connect minds, bodies, and nature, truly experiencing the present moment by breathing in fresh air, feeling the sun and breeze on their skin, listening to the surrounding sounds, and drawing inspiration from nature. For example, the class could see a tree in front of them, and not only use it as a focal point, but also emulate it by standing tall, rooting down through their solid trunk and reaching their arms towards the sun. After one class, a participant remarked to the instructor, "this is the first time I've ever done tree pose while looking at a tree!"

Research has shown that there are numerous mental and physical benefits of exercising outdoors. Whatever form of exercise you prefer, whether it be hiking, running, walking or yoga, we are happy to have you do it on Westerly Land Trust land where you can take time to appreciate your surroundings and the value of conserved open space. We are grateful to BarreCoast for this partnership and for inviting 10 WLT members to participate gratis in each class.



BEE HOTELS

Have you spied a bee hotel on a Westerly Land Trust property? These are small structures that look like bird houses but are filled with several stacked tubes. Dr. Rachael Bonoan and her team from Providence College have installed these bee hotels on Avondale Farm Preserve, Barlow Nature Preserve, Haggerty Family Preserve, and Moorhouse Farm Preserve to provide additional habitat and study types of solitary bees that don't dwell in hive communities. Species like mason bees and leaf cutter bees live in tiny cavities, such as holes in trees often made by other animals. The tubes of the bee hotel replicate this type of natural habitat, providing more living areas for these vital species, especially as more and more open space is lost to development.

Unlike honey bees that live in hives, a female mason bee will lay a single egg in a narrow tunnel, supply the egg with a food ball, and then cap that section. She will then repeat the process 5-6 times per tunnel. The eggs will develop, and the larvae will feast on the food ball until the bee is mature enough to exit the tube. While honey bees garner much (rightly deserved) praise for their role in sustaining human food sources, mason bees are also great pollinators, specifically for orchards, and can be utilized commercially.

In addition to the Westerly Land Trust properties, Dr. Bonoan and her team are studying bees on Providence College's campus. The goal is to count and catalogue the various species and define differences between urban settings and coastal rural ones. To date, they have identified five species of bumble bees on campus and three on WLT properties.

Dr. Bonoan is a nutritional ecologist who studies how nutrition shifts seasonally and, more broadly, through climate change. To follow this project online, please visit www.providencepollinators.com. The Westerly Land Trust is grateful for Dr. Bonoan's efforts to study and protect this essential class of insects.



Bee Hotel at Avondale Farm Preserve, Photo Credit: Kathy Follow.

COEXISTENCE AS A MINDSET



Dr. Zoe Hanley

In May, the Westerly Land Trust welcomed Dr. Zoe Hanley, the Northwest Coexistence Representative for Defenders of Wildlife, who presented her work on non-lethal means of wildlife control. She spoke about the decade she's spent educating landowners, stakeholders, and policy makers about alternate ways to coexist with natural predators like grizzly bears and grey wolves in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Dr. Hanley said, "Coexistence can't only be about finding ways for us to continue our status quo while creating barriers between ourselves and wildlife. We also need to think about how coexistence is not only the tools, but the mindset."

The Westerly Land Trust thanks Dr. Zoe Hanley for spending the morning educating our community and opening our minds to new ideas about living in harmony with our environment.

To find out about future informational discussions and lectures like Dr. Hanley's, please join our email list at westerlylandtrust.org

TRAILS APP

Get all WLT trail maps with GPS tracking and interactive maps, a calendar of WLT events, property photos, passport program, live updates of weather and recently spotted wildlife, and more all at your fingertips! Visit your app store and search "Westerly Land Trust" or go to WesterlyLandTrust.app.

PASSPORT PROGRAM:

There are 3 QR codes on 8 of our hiking trails. Scan them all and win an exclusive WLT T-Shirt!





Fisher Wearing Collar at Grills Preserve



Coyote at Grills Preserve

CANDID CAMERA: FISHERS AND OTHER MAMMALS

Many people visit Westerly Land Trust properties seeking seclusion and solitude, but thanks to the Rhode Island Fisher Study, we can see we aren't so alone after all. Led by University of Rhode Island PhD student Laken Ganoë, this study aims to collect data on fishers in their natural habitat to help inform land management decisions in the species' best interest. Ganoë and her team from Dr. Brian Gerber's Quantitative Ecology Lab employ motion detecting trail cameras at 240 locations across Rhode Island, including eight sites on Westerly Land Trust properties, to capture images of fishers. Inevitably, other species are caught on film, too, identified, and catalogued, but the primary goal is to understand fishers' habits and population sizes. Over the course of this three-year study which began in 2020, the dedicated three-person team will analyze over one million photos. Additionally, a select number of fishers are outfitted with tracking collars that record GPS data, so the team can interpret the animals' activity patterns. For example, this data can show where fishers are crossing busy roads or offer insight to seasonal changes in activity levels, which can help protect the species. The collars connect with a piece of

degradable leather that will fall off after approximately one year. The first fisher to be collared as a part of this study was a juvenile female at Grills Preserve.

An efficient predator well suited for its forest environment, the fisher population declined dramatically in the 1800s and early 1900s due to deforestation and unregulated harvesting. Thanks to recent forest restoration and scientific studies like this one, the species has begun to rebound over the past few decades. Reintroduction efforts in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New York, Virginia, and Wisconsin yielded population growth, and while no such effort has taken place in Rhode Island, our fisher population is naturally rebounding. Genetic studies indicate that fishers found in Rhode Island are descendants of a hardy New Hampshire population.

Fishers may carry a negative connotation for some people, but Ganoë claims them as her favorite animal, noting that she's always had a soft spot for the weasel family. While she understands that not everyone feels this same admiration, she hopes that her research will help the public understand that fishers do play a critical role in the ecosystem and food chain.

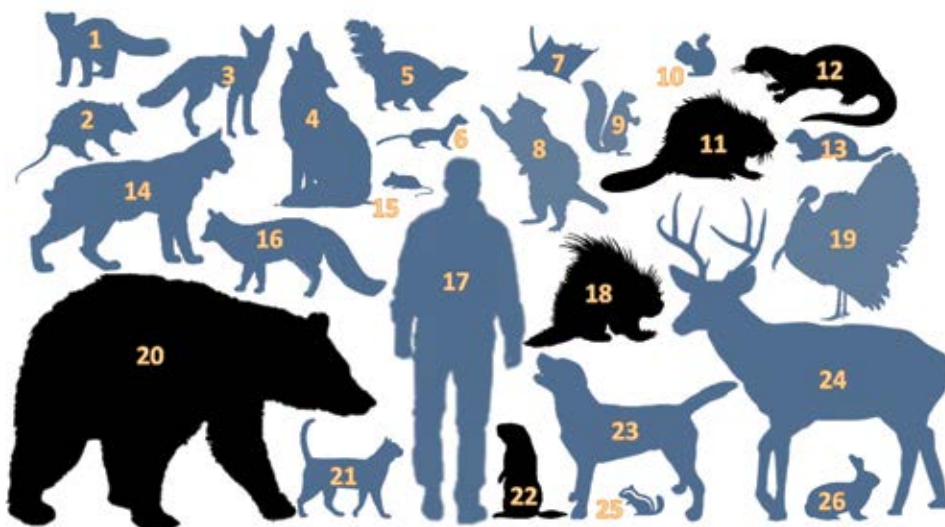
To hikers who might be nervous about encountering a fisher (or another predator) on a Westerly Land Trust trail or even in their own back yard, Ganoë says "you probably won't see one, and if you do, you're lucky!" As nocturnal creatures, fishers spend the majority of daylight hours sleeping in the treetops. She does warn that if one does see a fisher, just let it be, like all wildlife.

The Rhode Island Fisher Study is a collaboration between the Rhode Island DEM Division of Fish and Wildlife and the University of Rhode Island and is funded by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Along with thanking her DEM collaborators, including Jay Osenkowski and Charlie Brown, Laken Ganoë sends her gratitude to the Westerly Land Trust and the other 20 landowners who welcome her scientific studies. In turn, the Westerly land Trust is thankful for her thoughtful and diligent research.



SPECIES DETECTED ACROSS ALL WLT SITES SHADED IN BLUE

(1) fisher, (2) opossum, (3) red fox, (4) coyote, (5) striped skunk, (6) long-tailed weasel, (7) flying squirrel, (8) raccoon, (9) grey squirrel, (10) red squirrel, (11) beaver, (12) otter, (13) mink, (14) bobcat, (15) mouse, (16) grey fox, (17) human, (18) porcupine, (19) turkey, (20) black bear, (21) feral cat, (22) groundhog, (23) dog, (24) white-tailed deer, (25) eastern chipmunk, (26) eastern cottontail





KEEPERS OF THE LAND FEATURED IN MYSTIC FILM FESTIVAL

The Westerly Land Trust is proud to report that Keepers of the Land was chosen for the Mystic Film Festival, a four-day festival that ran from October 21-24 and showcased 90 short and feature-length documentary and narrative films from around the world. Six local venues hosted the films: Mystic Luxury Cinemas, The Velvet Mill, La Grua Center, United Theatre, Mystic Noank Library, and the Mystic Seaport Museum's Thompson Building.

The Westerly Land Trust produced this short film with Frame + Focus Media in 2020 to celebrate the intersection of land conservation and local farming. Congratulations to local filmmakers Hillary Federico and Matt Andrews for creating this beautiful piece that is worthy of acclaim.

To view Keepers of the Land, please visit our website at westerlylandtrust.org or go directly to www.vimeo.com/452671420

MUDSLINGING FUN

In Spring 2020, the Westerly Land Trust partnered with Save the Bay to restore a section of the Winnapaug Pond's salt marsh. Narrow channels were excavated to allow water to naturally return to the salt pond. These runnels must be maintained by hand for at least two growing seasons. In May 2021, a tenacious team of volunteers donned muck boots and trudged out to the marsh equipped with buckets and shovels. We appreciate all of you to all who came to get dirty in the name of science and conservation! If you are interested in helping with future projects like this, please join our email list at www.westerlylandtrust.org.



11TH ANNUAL FARM DINNER REIMAGINED. TAKE 2

Out of an abundance of caution and with respect for all, this summer's Farm Dinner was reimagined once again (we hope). On August 14th an amazing group of local chefs created a farm fresh, four-course meal that was then carefully packaged and delivered by volunteers to over 40 homes in the Westerly area. The Westerly Land Trust would like to extend our gratitude to the 235 guests who reimagined with us, many for a second time. We would also like to thank the farm dinner committee, volunteers, and chefs who made this event magical even though we couldn't all be together. And last, but certainly not least, thank you to the small scale, sustainable farmers who take care to ensure our local food is healthy and plentiful.

WESTERLY LAND TRUST IS APPLYING FOR ACCREDITATION RENEWAL

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The Westerly Land Trust is pleased to announce it is applying for renewal of accreditation.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs. Achieving this national designation is a point of pride for the Westerly Land Trust, a signal that WLT's procedures and practices are top notch.



VOLUNTEER CORNER: KATE AND RICH SMITH

Kate and Rich Smith became full-time Westerly residents in August 2020. They spent most of their professional lives in Walpole, Massachusetts, but traveled frequently to South County for 22 years. When looking for a place to retire, they were drawn to Westerly's local charm.



This outgoing couple met through their medical professions; Kate was a nurse and Rich was a physician specializing in pathology. Rich's 36-year career often took him away from his family and allowed little time for outdoor recreation. Anticipating Rich's retirement, the Smiths began looking for a way to reconnect with each other through a shared experience that would get them outside and deliver a deep impact to their community.

Volunteerism has been a lifelong priority for the Smiths. Both were involved in Walpole's Town Committee. Kate was Board President for the Pond Home, an assisted living facility in Wrentham, and Rich was president of the Physician's Association at Sturdy Memorial Hospital. For 15 years, Kate exercised her sewing talents as the costumer at the Walpole Footlighters Playhouse; Rich helped with set construction.

It was Kate who first learned about the Westerly Land Trust. She was driving past Dr. Lewis Pond and saw a crew working diligently to minimize overgrowth. On her return trip, she observed the difference their work had made. "I wanted to hop out of the car and thank them!" she said.

Upon further research, she discovered that the crew was the Westerly Land Trust's Coffee and Clearing Club (CCC). Inspired, the couple joined in April 2021. Rich even worked through the summer, the typical CCC hiatus, mowing the grass on many WLT properties.

Rich claims that CCC is the secret to staying young. He notes his involvement in this group keeps him active and engaged with nature. Also, the Smiths value the connections they've made with their crewmates. "The people are so interesting and have such diverse backgrounds," Rich said.

The Westerly Land Trust is proud to know Kate and Rich. Thank you for joining our family.

HIKING IN THE FALL: ORANGE REQUIREMENTS

The Westerly Land Trust would like to share a friendly reminder that it is now hunting season, and while hunting is not allowed on all our properties, it is allowed on some. Here are some tips for staying safe this fall:

- All hikers, bikers, horseback riders, etc. are required to wear 200 square inches of solid daylight fluorescent orange above the waist and visible in all directions.
- This requirement runs from the second Saturday in September to the last day of February and the third Saturday in April to the last day in May.
- If you are unsure if a property allows hunting, it is always best to err on the side of caution and wear orange anyway. And don't forget to "orange" your dogs, too!



2021 WESTERLY LAND TRUST CALENDARS

Our community's photographers were at it again this year, snapping great shots all over the Westerly Land Trust's preserves as a part of the 2021 WLT Photo Contest. Twelve of our favorite pictures are being made into a 2022 calendar, available at westerlylandtrust.org in early November. Congratulations to all the winners and thank you to everyone who participated!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Wine in the Woods

Wahaneeta Preserve, Saturday, November 6, 1:30-4:30pm: WLT is partnering with Tapped Apple Winery for a happy hour hike, followed by a wine and cider tasting in the woods. For more information about how to register, visit westerlylandtrust.org/event

Yoga Hike

Sunday, November 14: Connect mind, body, and spirit in the great outdoors. This hike will be interspersed with various nature inspired yoga poses and stretches. Location is TBD. For information and to register, please visit westerlylandtrust.org/event

Beaver Moon Hike, November's Monthly Themed Hike

Crandall Preserve, Friday, November 19, 6pm: This hike is free for members and \$10 per person for non-members. Check westerlylandtrust.org or the Trails App for details.

Westerly Land Trust Wreaths

This holiday season, adorn your door with a wreath handcrafted by WLT staff and volunteers with local pine and holly branches. Proceeds benefit our conservation efforts year-round. Check westerlylandtrust.org and our social media for updates on how to order yours.

Knife Sharpening at Gray Goose Cookery

Through November and December, when you make a donation to the Westerly Land Trust at Gray Goose Cookery, they will sharpen your knives... Just in time for turkey carving!

Ugly Sweater Hike, December's Monthly Themed Hike

Dr. John Champlin Glacier Park, Saturday, December 18, 10am: This hike is free for members and \$10 per person for non-members. Check westerlylandtrust.org or the Trails App for details.

Annual Meeting

The Westerly Land Trust's Annual Meeting will be on Thursday, December 2nd and is open to all members. To practice safe social distancing, the meeting will be conducted on a virtual platform. Information about time and how to log in can be found on our website as the event approaches.

Thursday Hikes

Regular guided hikes run Thursdays from 10am-1pm at various locations. Check westerlylandtrust.org or the Trails App for the complete schedule and to reserve your spot! Please dress appropriately for terrain and weather. RSVP to the hike leader listed for that week.