



Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay

P.O. Box 10404
Portland, Maine 04104

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Oceanside Conservation Trust of
 Casco Bay
 welcomes your support.

Since 1982, approximately 85 acres
 on Casco Bay Islands have been
 permanently protected.

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 of Casco Bay
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Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay

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ANNUAL SPRING MONITORING VISITS



One of the volunteer crews.

When a land trust organization owns or holds a conservation easement on a piece of property, it accepts the responsibility of diligent and faithful stewardship of that land. Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay stewards nearly 85 acres on islands in Casco Bay through monitoring expeditions by members of the board of directors, the work of volunteers on individual islands, and cooperation with other local land trusts. Each spring OCT conducts formal monitoring visits to each piece of property which has been entrusted to our care.

Loaded with backpacks containing cameras, maps, boundary markers, clippers, previous monitoring reports, tick spray, water, and the essential peanut butter sandwiches, we trek off to Long, Peaks, and Cliff Islands. The more experienced board members are equipped with "wellies" and are mindful of poison ivy.



Roger Berle places an OCT marker.

Monitoring activities include walking the boundary lines and checking that survey markers are clearly visible, posting OCT signs so that visitors will be able to distinguish conservation land from abutting private properties, checking for encroachments or other violations of the specific conditions of each easement, collecting and disposing of trash or litter, and taking photographs for the record book. We look for changes in tree growth and the understory, and also do a bit of birdwatching, noting any changes in the populations. In addition, we are able to enjoy walks in beautiful forests and along the spectacular shorelines of three islands. We are reminded anew of the generosity of island residents who have placed their land in our care.



Mark Green and Tom Bergh consult the maps.



The shore line of Skillings Woods.



Fowler's Beach, Long Island



A DOUBLE LAYER OF PROTECTION

Like many land trusts, Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay both owns property and holds conservation easements on property which is owned by others. For example, OCT owns the Daveis Sanctuary, Skillings Woods and Echo Pond on Peaks Island, and we own College Island which is part of the Town of Long Island. We have easements on Fowler's Beach and Wreck Cove on Long Island, the Bluffs, the ACE Ballfield, Griffin's Cove, and North Point on Cliff Island, and Battery Steele on Peaks Island, all of which are owned by others.

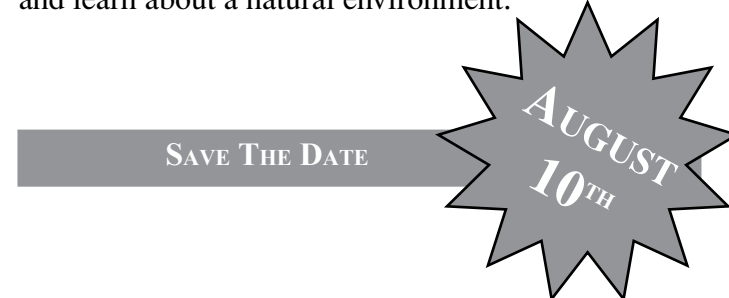
Owned property isn't necessarily as securely protected as land which is protected by a conservation easement. Conservation easements are constructed to be permanent protection for conservation land with the land trust holding the easement having the responsibility for monitoring the property to see that all the restrictions are being respected and pursuing any violations of the easement. Just as important over the long haul, there is language in the easements which guarantees that the responsibility will be passed on to successive conservation entities should the first organization disband or for some reason not perform its duties.

A different circumstance exists when a land trust owns a property in fee, and there is no conservation agreement. One would think a parcel would be in "safe hands" being owned by a land trust. Indeed, it usually is, but nothing legally prevents the sale, even for development, of a property owned by a land trust, and circumstances could exist when that sale would be justified. For example, a land trust might want to "trade up" by selling or trading one property of marginal conservation value in order to accomplish the conservation of a more valuable piece, just as an individual might sell one stock to fund a better investment in another. However, when a judgment has been made that a property has strong conservation value and merits permanent protection, OCT has found that adding a second layer of protection can better accomplish that goal.

The land trust which owns the fee deed can convey a conservation easement on that property to a second land trust. This is known as "double layering". OCT has conveyed a conservation easement on the Skillings Woods on Peaks Island to the Peaks Island Land Preserve. Our intention is to expand that arrangement to include the abutting Daveis Sanctuary and also the

Echo Pond property which Oceanside has just acquired. The same arrangement, but in reverse, occurred when Peaks Island Land Preserve protected Battery Steele (which is owned by PILP) with a conservation easement which is held by Oceanside.

In addition to the permanency of such an arrangement, both the owning entity and the easement holder have more "starch" when responsibility is shared and a watchdog role is played. Board members are working on standardized and simple language for a conservation easement template to be used when both entities are land trusts. We want to carefully define the monitoring vs ownership responsibilities, so we clearly know who does what. In partnership with other land trusts, we can be assured the land is well and permanently cared for. Long after we are gone, these natural areas will be here for birds and other wildlife. We protect places where our children and our grandchildren will always be able to enjoy and learn about a natural environment.



**Annual Meeting of
Oceanside Conservation
Trust of Casco Bay**

Wednesday, August 10, 2005
2:00 p.m.
Cushing Island

Earle Shettleworth
Keynote Speaker

Details will be announced.



**Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay
Board of Directors
2004-2005**

Christine McDuffie, President	829-3231 Long Island 766-5277
Stephanie Weaver, Vice President	761-4212 Cushing Island
Jane Laughlin, Secretary	799-9285 Great Diamond Island 766-2570
Roger Berle, Treasurer	781-5331 Cliff Island 766-2827
Jo Belknap	721-8505 Cliff Island
Tom Bergh	766-2419 Peaks Island
Bob Bittenbender	892-3818
Erno Bonebakker	874-6664 Chebeague Island 846-5203
Brenda Buchanan	766-4403 Peaks Island
Priscilla Doucette	772-5705 Little Diamond Island
Eliza Cope Nolan	772-5024 Cushing Island
Mark Greene	766-4440 Long Island
Kris Saunders	772-7447 Cliff Island 766-5532
Norman Seagrave	725-8478 Cliff Island 766-5523
Robert F. Skillings	725-4886 Peaks Island
John Whitman	766-2211 Peaks Island

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay is to facilitate the conservation of wild or undeveloped open space, scenic areas, and historic landmarks in the Casco Bay region and to foster low-impact and respectful access to these resources, as well as to enhance the cultural, economic, and civic well-being of residents and visitors. The Trust may acquire, hold, and transfer interests in land, including easements, in order to accomplish this mission and to assure that a diversity of ecosystems will be available to future generations. In addition, the Trust may hold charitable, cultural, and educational activities for the benefit of residents and visitors. (Adopted 10/24/96)

VISION STATEMENT

stewardship and land management, Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay will become a leader in coordinating and facilitating land conservation efforts among individuals, island organizations, and land trusts in Casco Bay.



Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay



Property	Location	Owner	Date Acquired	Approximate Size
Fowler's Beach	Town of Long Island	Long Island Civic Association	5/25/1987	6.38 acres
The Bluffs	Cliff Island, Portland	Robert & Josephine Belknap, Tenants in Common	12/26/1989	18 acres
Daveis Sanctuary	Peaks Island, Portland	OCT	5/14/1994	6.8 acres
College Island	Town of Long Island	OCT	9/7/1994	1 acre
Battery Steele	Peaks Island, Portland	Peaks Island Land Preserve	7/28/1995	14.3 acres
North Point	Cliff Island, Portland	Helen W. Kenefick	12/1997	9 acres
ACE Ballfield	Cliff Island, Portland	Cliff Island Corporation for Athletics & Conservation Education	1/31/2000	15.4 acres
Griffin's Cove	Cliff Island, Portland	Cliff Island Corporation for Athletics & Conservation Education	12/22/2000	.75 acres
Everett & Mildred D. Skillings Woods	Peaks Island, Portland	OCT	2001	2 acres
Wreck Cove	Town of Long Island	Town of Long Island	7/29/2004	11.3 acres
Echo Pond	Peaks Island, Portland	OCT	04/2005	.4 acres

In addition, OCT has a cooperative role in the protection of Cow Island, Stockman's Island, and Rose's Point, Chebeague Island.

For many, this story will be a familiar one. The chapters are rich in tradition and family history. The setting could be any island off the Maine coast, the dialogue taking place in any number of cottages and homes which have been owned by the same family for many generations. The story's conflict arises from the increasing value of island real estate and the accompanying skyrocketing property taxes; the plot thickens with the complexities of property management by multiple heirs scattered well beyond the original family home. The characters ponder their dilemma: Is it possible to preserve the generational connection to the land? Can the "older generation" ensure that the children and grandchildren will have the opportunity to enjoy the unique experience of life and family traditions on a Maine island? One family on Peaks Island in Casco Bay found a way to give this story a happy ending. Because the Skillings family had a great desire to preserve forever a natural island habitat, their generosity will benefit future generations of many families, not just their own.



Robert F. Skillings

The Skillings Woods, located adjacent to the Daveis Sanctuary on Peaks Island, was once a part of the Skillings Farm, a swath of land extending

across the island from the protected inner bay to the open Atlantic Ocean. The Skillings Farm was created in 1842 when Robert Franklin Skillings of Cushing Island married Harriet Newell Trefethen of House Island and settled on land donated to the newlyweds by the bride's parents, Henry and Mary Trefethen. For many years, much of the land was farmed and was also the site of Oak Cottage, a summer boarding house which subsequently became a monastery overlooking the bay. Over the years, portions of the farm were sold as building lots for summer cottages, but on the back shore one large section was purchased by the Daveis family and eventually became the Daveis Sanctuary [please refer to OCT's newsletter of December 2004 for information about this property]. Another large section of the farm remained in the Skillings family who left it in an undisturbed natural state.

The parcel now known as Skillings Woods is a 1.5 acre stand of thick spruce located between the Daveis Sanctuary and Seashore Avenue. It was acquired in 1979 by Robert (Bob) Fraser Skillings and his wife, Sally Africa Skillings. Since age five, Bob has spent time each year in the family cottage overlooking the ocean. Built in 1911 by Bob's father, Everett Skillings, the bungalow is now owned and occupied by Bob's sister and her husband, Thomas and Emily Skillings Palfrey. He recalls with nostalgia the many summer days he and Emily spent playing on the shore, fishing for cunners, swimming, and sailing boats in tidal pools. In the woods they built playhouses and gathered raspberries and blueberries. Bob and Emily's mother, Mildred D. Skillings, shared her children's love of the woods. She began to consolidate several very small lots that had been owned by other Skillings heirs. Without realizing it, she was creating a deterrent to what has become explosive land development on this Maine island.



Installation of Everett and Mildred D. Skillings Woods Marker.



In the 1990s, Bob and Sally consulted the next generation – their children and Emily's children – and together the family decided that the Skillings Woods should be conserved forever in its natural wild state. In 2001 Bob and Sally donated the land to Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay (OCT), which already owned the adjacent Daveis Sanctuary. A conservation easement was granted to Peaks Island Land Preserve (PILP), giving a double layering of protection to the wishes of the Skillings family. Bob and Sally gave the property to OCT with the stipulation that it be considered a memorial to Everett and Mildred D. Skillings. An appropriate plaque has been placed on the property.

Skillings Woods and Daveis Sanctuary are maintained together as a bird sanctuary for the public's enjoyment. In 2004 OCT contracted with BioDiversity

Oceanside Conservation Trust welcomes Priscilla B. Doucette to the Board of Directors. Priscilla will represent Little Diamond Island. She recently retired after teaching English at Portland High School for twenty-nine years. With her husband Dale, she resides in Portland and spends part of each winter in Vieques, Puerto Rico. She is the Chairperson of the Oakhurst Dairy Charitable Giving Program. Priscilla began her involvement in conservation with Citizens Who Care, a group established to prevent the construction of a supertanker facility on Long Island. Since then she has participated in Maine Audubon, Friends of Casco Bay, and Sierra Club in addition to OCT. Currently she does bird counts for SeaNet.



Priscilla B. Doucette

Priscilla's love and knowledge of Casco Bay has grown over her lifetime. She spent summers as a child exploring islands near Portland from her small motor boat. Her parents' cabin cruiser ferried family and friends to such islands as Birch, Jewell, Horse, and Little Whaleboat for picnics and camping trips. Family reunions on Chebogue and the New Meadows River helped her stay close to her island roots.

Childhood summers spent with her grandparents on Little Diamond made the Doucettes' purchase of their cottage on Little Diamond in 1977 particularly meaningful. She is happiest spending time there with her husband, children, and grandchildren. She also enjoys walking, kayaking, reading, birding, seaglassing, and gardening.

Priscilla is co-editing the publication of this newsletter with OCT's secretary, Jane Laughlin. She feels that the spring monitoring trips to Cliff, Peaks, and Long were an exciting and very rewarding experience. "I have a great appreciation for all the work that OCT has done to conserve land in Casco

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Research Institute of Gorham, Maine, to create a bird inventory, a conservation plan, and recommendations for the management of the two properties. The study was financed in part by the Edward Daveis Memorial Trust. The board of directors of OCT has formed a management committee for hands-on field work, such as boundary marking, invasive plant eradication, trail clearing, and planting of bird-friendly shrubs and trees. Members of PILP and other bird-loving volunteers participate in this work.

BIRDING

Now that it's spring, serious bird watchers can be found each morning in Evergreen Cemetery in Portland. Here in mid-May, members of Maine Audubon help new and experienced birders identify the dozens of warblers who land in this famous "warbler trap." These birds are small, quick, agile, and in many cases hard to find. Their sounds and bright colors make them a delight to see and hear. However, Evergreen Cemetery is not the only location where these beautiful birds can be spotted. The islands of Casco Bay are part of an intriguing and complex system that provides protection, nesting habitat, and food for many birds. OCT invites you to expand your birding horizons and look for these tiny creatures in such places as Battery Steele, Skillings Woods, or our new property Echo Pond on Peaks Island. Or on Cliff Island you might try The Bluffs with its long trail which winds through excellent warbler territory.

The yellow-rumped warbler is our most abundant and well-known warbler. It can be seen in most seasons due to its hardiness and varied feeding habits, which include ground feeding, fruit eating, and fly catching. The first warbler to nest in Maine each spring is the yellow warbler. And it's also the first to leave for its wintering areas after raising its young. The black-throated green warbler and the kinglet (which is even smaller than other warblers) can often be spotted. As the leaves become full, warblers will be harder to spot, but by then you may be able to recognize their distinctive sounds.

In addition to warblers this spring and early summer, birders will find cardinals, crows, ravens, white-throated, tree, and song sparrows, nuthatches, gold finches, robins, blue jays, woodpeckers, cedar waxwings, and, of course, Maine's most loved bird, the chickadee. Did you know that it has at least 17 different calls, all with precise meaning?

We are proud that OCT's stewardship with our land enhances our lives and the lives of the birds. In a future issue we will take a look at the ocean birds which abound in Casco Bay.