How do we look today?

Last summer a small group of youngsters peered through binoculars at the birds in the orchard of Salome Sellers’ old farm, now the Deer Isle-Stonington Historical Society. Under the enthusiastic coaching of Lee Fay, they learned how to focus, clean, and even choose binoculars. Binoculars have come a long way since the ‘80s when IHT purchased a half-dozen binoculars thanks to gifts from individual donors.

Now the Norcross Wildlife Foundation has underwritten the purchase of nine pairs of binoculars and one spotting scope. New optical coatings of today’s glasses gather more light and distort less, affording gorgeous views of our feathered friends. These new binoculars are waterproof and armored so they can stand up to enthusiastic young birders. Our school groups are already using them and other groups may apply to IHT to borrow binoculars for an outing.

Expect to see the new field glasses in use during May when IHT co-sponsors the birders weekend and in June for Lupine Festival on the Causeway Beach. Come July, you may spot an even larger group of youngsters behind Heritage House in IHT’s young naturalist programs led by our new Outreach Assistant, Michele Dur. Michele will be helping with our Walks and Talks and programs at the Island Community Center’s Kamp Kooky. You will probably see the new IHT spotting scope in use at the Causeway monitoring the eagles’ nest on the protected shore of Carney Island. Stop by and take a look!
Barred Island conservation easement

For a time the land just north of Stinson Point in Sunset was known as the Charles Sellers farm. Then it became the estate of Frederick Law Olmsted, landscape architect who gave us New York’s Central Park.

Over the years since they came to Deer Isle in 1962, Ken and Marnie Crowell managed to acquire several parcels of this land stretching from Barred Island to the site where Olmsted and his wife Mary built the “Bar Harbor-style shingle cottage” house known as Felsted.

After Ken retired from teaching ecology at St. Lawrence University, the Crowells made their home here year round. Ardent supporters of land conservation, the Crowells have now given IHT a conservation easement on 28 acres of land immediately adjacent to the Barred Island Preserve, which shares with the preserve a boundary over half a mile in length.

Cleaning up after blowdowns on the part of the easement that fronts the road into Felsted and Crowell’s home, Marnie and Ken used attractive species of Maine’s native plants at what they call The Yosemite Boulder Garden because the mini-half dome granite outcrop reminds them of the years Olmsted spent as Mariposa mine manager at what became Yosemite National Park.

The back-land acres had been cut over in the heydays of island lumbering. The successional regrowth has since been charted by Dr. Crowell’s research on bird and small mammal populations. “Areas where bark beetles felled trees thirty years ago are now the most vigorous in regrowth,” says Ken. “We see here that Nature manages to keep things in balance if left alone. Conservation easements protect that possibility.”

Crowells and their neighbors Bill and June Lenoci had earlier donated an easement on the stretch of shore where otters live. The Barred Island area is used in fall hawk migration and is always the site of significant numbers of warblers returning across the Bay in May migration. Although not open to the public, this new easement area almost doubles the effective habitat size of Barred Island Preserve. The only open wildlife drinking water source on the point is in this conserved area. Salamander vernal breeding pools and bog habitats have also been preserved. The west side of the trail from the Barred Island parking lot all the way to Barred Island will now remain undeveloped and natural thanks to this gift which complements the earlier generosity of Carolyn Olmsted and George Pavloff.

Lace up your boots!

Do you enjoy taking care of preserves? Are you interested in assisting the head steward at a preserve by refilling brochure boxes, checking trails, and providing other assistance as necessary? If you prefer short one-time projects, would you serve as a trail steward to help with specific projects? We also need a head steward for Reach Beach at Gray’s Cove to check the beach regularly.

IHT needs easement stewards! Each of IHT’s 25 easements is unique in its conservation purpose. A steward is needed to visit the easement and build a good relationship with the landowner. The job requires about eight hours a year. Easement stewards have the privilege of visiting some of the most beautiful properties on the island. To volunteer, call Mac Herrling at 348-2455 or Ann Hooke at 348-6933.
Looking Back

The Rockefeller family and the Cabot family to this day conserve Butter Island and Shingle Island through trust and easements, resulting from their land trust idea. The story goes that Peggy Rockefeller was discussing the pressures facing the lands of Penobscot Bay, where she and her friend Tom Cabot both owned summer homes. Both agreed that even their prosperous families could not simply buy all the properties worthy of being conserved. And even if they could afford to, they had the wisdom to know that the proper way to proceed would be to provide for local control and oversight of the resources.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust was one of the results of their foresighted efforts and was one of the first land trusts in the nation. Since then, the trust movement has blossomed. Twenty years ago this spring, the papers were signed creating our own Island Heritage Trust.

Early trustees included such beloved figures as Mary Nyburg, Rowan Wakefield and Richard Buxton. Don Reiman, Robert Quinn, Dud Hendrick, Judy Hill, Lloyd Capen, Cherie Mason, Jean Welch and Stephanie Levy were among early stalwarts.

The long list of board members and dedicated IHT supporters will be recognized this summer at our 20th anniversary celebration and annual meeting. We welcome back those who have found that another stage of life allows them to recommit to conserving a healthy environment for our island. We are always looking for new people to give of their time and passion, and we are gratified that so many have loyally stayed with us over the years.

Looking Forward
Trust to Have New Headquarters...

With the lease on our current office expiring in this coming December, the trustees last fall appointed a committee to explore our future office and storage needs. This Space Committee was chaired by Brian Clough, with Don Reiman, Linda Campbell, Executive Director Mac Herrling, Morgan Eaton and Babette Cameron as members. Vice-President Lee Fay was liaison, as President Ken Crowell did not participate in committee work or decisions and recused himself from board votes.

Ken and Marnie Reed Crowell had purchased the property adjacent to the Deer Isle-Stonington Historical Society from Judy Hill when health problems forced Judy to put it on the market. After a summer of consulting with the historical society and assessing public response, the Crowells offered to donate the house which they have called Heritage House to IHT.

The Committee spent five months investigating all our options, which included renewing our lease, renting elsewhere, purchasing a building, and even renovating the former Ranga Kennel site. They visited Blue Hill Conservation Trust, which had recently moved to its new office in the historic old Carleton House at the foot of Blue Hill. Their Executive Director Jim Dow stated “Since we steward conservation properties in perpetuity, the public expects that the land trust have some permanent presence, a headquarters, in the community.”

Because Heritage House offers an economical solution to issues of parking, private consultation space, room for outreach activity, and storage, the IHT Space Committee subsequently recommended to the Board of Trustees that the Trust accept the donation of Heritage House as our new headquarters, and the Board voted to accept the donation at the March Board meeting. Our attorney, Ellen Best, has reviewed the procedures and recommendation. Any member may review the report and records of the committee in the office. While details of the actual transfer are being worked out, the public is invited to visit Heritage House during the Annual Meeting on July 18 with an official Open House in the fall.

— Lee Fay
We remember

Red tulips bloom

In New Hampshire, surrounded by family, just after her 78th birthday, on April 18, 2006 Judy Hill lost her courageous battle with her health problems. She earned her Ph.D in social psychology and spent many years working for the state of Alaska before returning to Maine to work as Mental Health Coordinator for the state.

It was due to Judy’s initiative that the Deer Isle-Stonington Historical Society was able to receive a portion of the Old Sellers Farm orchard, enabling them to expand their headquarters. Judy was a loyal trustee of both the historical society and IHT and looked forward to increasing cooperation between these two Island organizations. IHT will use Heritage House as its new headquarters. Memorial contributions in her name are being made to both IHT and the Historical Society.

Sharp to the end, Judy had red tulips sent to the IHT office and to a few friends on the island in her last weeks. We will be planting red tulips in her honor in front of Heritage House this fall, a project dear to her good heart. Judy donated 37 acres to IHT in 2000 for the Shore Acres preserve.

We lost another loyal friend and supporter with the passing of Bruce McWilliams on January 29. After assignments with the US State Department, Bruce had a long prominent career in the imported automobile industry before retiring to Deer Isle. The McWilliams family, which runs the very successful Harbor Farm, generously opened their lovely home and gardens for a summer fundraiser to support the Trust. IHT gratefully acknowledges the memorial contributions in Bruce’s honor.

Jane Creager Miller of Radnor, PA died on April 12. This summer a memorial service will be held on Little Deer Isle. Donations to IHT celebrate her life and her love for her second home here.
Creative ways to support your land trust

A note from the President

In July, I will be retiring from the IHT board, having served the maximum consecutive terms allowed in the bylaws. Hence I will be stepping down from the presidency, but first I wish to recognize recent major donations for the future of the Trust. It is a pleasure to announce that IHT is the beneficiary of a $100,000 Gift Annuity. Last summer an unassuming trust member walked into the office and announced that he would like to talk about a charitable gift annuity (CGA) for his spouse. George Seiler was that man.

George Seiler already has a charitable gift annuity set up with The Nature Conservancy, but he and his wife Jean are so impressed with the work of IHT that they decided Jean should have a CGA as well. Delighted and grateful, IHT’s Development and Finance committees reviewed the matter, and then arranged for the Seilers, who are New York state residents, to work with Maine Community Foundation, which will administer the annuity. The Seilers receive an immediate tax deduction on a portion of the principal and Jean will receive an annuity for her lifetime, after which the principal will be managed by Maine Community Foundation as an endowment for the benefit of IHT.

The Sanders family of Montclair, NJ, has long summered here. They have set up a memorial fund expressly for stewardship of the Tennis Preserve. Another donor no longer needed whole life insurance and transferred their policy to IHT, which received the cash value of the policy.

Until Dec. 31, 2007, IRA distributions may be transferred directly to a non-profit organization tax-free. Taking advantage of this provision, one shrewd member last December made a contribution to the annual appeal in this manner and plans to do it again this year.

Judy Hill, former IHT trustee and donor of Shore Acres Preserve, made yet another significant gift to IHT this year. She transferred appreciated stock to IHT’s endowment fund. With the exception of funds restricted for stewardship, IHT has little endowment.

There are many creative ways you can follow the example of these generous individuals to benefit the Trust through bequests and direct giving. If you would like to discuss a possibility, I invite you to give us a call, and by all means consult your financial advisor or attorney who can give you more ideas. Supporting your land trust is an act of community. Believe me, you may find this one of the most satisfying things you have ever done.

— Kenneth L. Crowell, President
For Love of an Island ...  
New IHT web page feature

Marnie Reed Crowell and Ann Flewelling have combined forces and their considerable collective talents to produce what might readily be compared to a delightfully informative print version of IHT’s popular “Walks and Talks.” Their book, Beads and String, is being featured on the IHT website, www.islandheritagetrust.org, in prepublication serialized installments. The work highlights, through prose, verse and photographs, both the natural and cultural history of our beloved island.

Crowell is a biologist whose Quick Keys, Birds of Deer Isle (with Ken Crowell) and Butterflies and Moths of Deer Isle, may be a familiar resource to many residents and visitors alike. She is author of articles for magazines such as Redbook, Audubon and Natural History. Our bay is featured in Great Blue, Odyssey of a Heron (Times Books) and her first book, Greener Pastures (Funk & Wagnalls) was excerpted several times in Readers Digest.

practicing clinical psychologist, photographs the natural world around her with an unerring eye for the lyrical and luminous.

Together, the two have produced not only an amazingly informative work, but one which also contains images of the breathtaking beauty to be found around every bend in Deer Isle’s roads and shoreline. Conversationally written, the work travels chronologically through the calendar, month by month, as the two friends visit the island’s various preserves and sites. Each chapter bears the name of a month that in turn is associated with a particular location. For example, March features the Edgar B. Tennis Preserve, while April is devoted to Settlement Quarry. The late Judy Hill is profiled in the June visit to Shore Acres.

Through Marnie Crowell’s inimitable style in both prose and verse, we accompany the two friends as they explore a particular site or witness a natural phenomenon. Along the way, we are introduced to a host of fascinating people associated with various island endeavors and enterprises. We are offered as well a lucid primer about the island’s geological history, for example, which explains in readily accessible terms the formation of Deer Isle’s celebrated stone. Taken together, the photographs, prose and verse contained in Beads and String offer the reader a rare gift: the joy of exploring Deer Isle in company of two of its most devoted, knowledgeable and generous residents.

— Elke Dorr

Pink beach at Tennis Preserve  
Ann Flewelling photo
Back to the future
From Executive Director’s desk

In 1987 the Land Trust Alliance was five years old and there were fewer than 400 land trusts in the nation; now there are over 1600 land trusts with 12 million acres protected. By 1989, IHT president Rowan Wakefield said that the Trust “has now shaken off its birth cocoon and is ready to move forward forcefully to achieve its mission …”

In 2007, we have more land under easement (700 acres) and ownership (almost 500 acres) than ever. We are strongly connected to the community through outreach in the schools, Walks and Talks programs, and collaboration with other non-profits like the Opera House, the Historical Society and the island conservation commissions.

I have been working with an island housing committee to support the creation of affordable housing, an even more urgent need than in 1990.

We will be moving into permanent headquarters in the fall thanks to the foresight and munificence of Ken and Marnie Reed Crowell. With a very successful Annual Appeal, we are making strides to financial sustainability.

Yet our mission remains a humble one – to preserve the “character” of the island and its unique natural treasures so that twenty, fifty years hence, when a child wonders what things were like in 2007, they will see much the same landscape that has thrived underneath the canopy of IHT protection.

We continue to need your hands and your hearts to shepherd this crucial living legacy forward. Our founders laid the groundwork for us. We only need follow their outstanding lead.

— Mac Herrling

Moon over Merchant Row

Photo by Steve Curtis

IHT online

This island is brimming with good things to do on behalf of our environment. IHT now sends out e-mails once a month describing a variety of coming happenings and highlighting issues of interest to anyone who shares an interest in our natural resources. We have a list which goes to IHT members and another list which goes out to the community at large. To sign up for either or both of these, send an e-mail to Mac Herrling at islandheritagetrust@verizon.net. Your e-mail address will not be shared with anyone and you can unsubscribe at any time.

Our web page, www.islandheritagetrust.org, is increasingly taking on some of the functions of a printed paper newsletter. One of the most appropriate of these is timely updates of our calendar. You will want to check for updates on the enclosed calendar as the season progresses. We look forward to seeing you at these events. What can be more satisfying and sustaining than joining with folks who share your values for special ways to enjoy this special place?
Very very antique road show at Heritage House

Historical societies all over Maine will be showing the public their offerings on July 28 and 29. The Salome Sellers House, headquarters of Deer Isle-Stonington Historical Society is no exception, but this year, the doors will be open literally next door as well. The quaint kitchen of Heritage House makes ideal display space for the society’s collection of Maine Indian baskets. The cupboard and drawer facilities of the old kitchen in IHT’s new headquarters are ideal museum cases for such artifacts, an example of future cooperation between the two organizations.

Archeological field school set for June

The public is invited to visit an archeological dig site June 30 from 1-4 p.m. at Scott’s Landing and then hear archeologist Dr. Steve Cox discuss the dig at 7 p.m. at Heritage House, 420 Sunset Rd., Sunset (in front of the Deer Isle-Stonington Historical Society). Cox and other archeologists will be working with ten participants from the island and the region in a archeological field school. The participants will be introduced to methods of field archeology and to Maine pre-history and Maine’s native cultures. Dr. Cox holds a doctorate in archeology with three decades of experience in Maine and has led field schools for both the Maine State Museum and the Abbe Museum. He is currently an Adjunct Curator at the Maine State Museum.

In five days of field work on a 2,000-year-old shell midden, students will learn proper archeological field techniques and how to recognize materials including stone tools, pottery, food remains, and cultural features such as hearths and shelter floors. The fieldwork will be supplemented by evening lectures. At the end of the week, participants will gather to summarize the findings of the excavation and discuss what it has contributed to our understanding of local and regional prehistory.

In addition, prehistoric artifacts from the Island’s shell middens will be on display here. (See Scott’s Landing Field School.) Director of the archeological dig, Dr. Steven Cox will give a public lecture on the prehistory of our area on June 30. Our own trustee Bill Haviland, Cox and the other visiting archeologists conducting the field school have offered to look over collections brought in for identification. Don’t miss this chance to learn more about those old bits of stone, pottery or bone in the shoe box gathering dust in your closet. Owners of artifacts may wish to have their collections photographed for an Island inventory, a chance to contribute to our heritage.