

2023

ANNUAL REPORT



ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST

420 Sunset Road, Deer Isle, Maine 04627

www.islandheritagetrust.org



Edgar M. Tennis Preserve

RESILIENCE



While this report looks back on 2023, this letter is being written in the summer of 2024, with hindsight and knowledge of the devastating winter storms of early 2024. The celebration of Island Heritage Trust's accomplishments and highlights of the previous year must co-exist with the reality of the challenges we face in our world today. While IHT's shoreland does not have vulnerable infrastructure, such as the fishing wharfs critical to the livelihoods of Island fishermen, we did see the significant erosion of shorelines and trails as well as significant debris from high tides and downed trees from damaging winds. Our Stewardship Director, Alex Drenga, said the work to keep trails open and safe was nearly constant all winter and far worse than in previous years. Many intrepid stewardship volunteers aid Alex in caring for these lands, and we owe a debt of gratitude to their efforts.

Resilience is a word that often gets overused in land conservation, but it applies in a much broader context here. The way neighbors and community members show up for each other during challenging times is inspiring and wholly expected if you have come to know this place and its people. In the face of uncertainty, a changing climate, worsening storms, and socioeconomic turmoil, we can foster resilience in all facets of life and return to the land to feel grounded. The natural world exhibits remarkable resilience when supported holistically, such as planting living shorelines with natural vegetation, leaving undeveloped buffers between the coast and human infrastructure when possible, and allowing for migration of flora and fauna through protected open space connectivity.

Island Heritage Trust reflects upon 2023 with immense gratitude for the myriad community members, volunteers, staff, and supporters from near and far who have helped make a positive impact on our work. Land conservation and environmental education remain as essential and relevant as ever, and feedback from those we serve informs our strategic plans and programmatic activities. We will take what we learn each year to continue improving upon the excellent work of those who have walked this path before us. It is an honor to have you alongside us on this remarkable journey.

Catherine T. Washburn

CATHERINE WASHBURN
Board Chair

Julia Zell

JULIA ZELL
Executive Director

ACHIEVEMENTS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023



Benefit Boil at Burnt Cove Boil



Family Fishing Day at Lily Pond Park



Ann Hooke at Pine Hill

1. Along with our Annual Benefit Brunch, hosted generously by Aragosta, we expanded our fundraising events to include a lobster boil by the sea thanks to Burnt Cove Boil, owned and operated by IHT Development Director Jacob McCarty. The **Benefit Boil** was a joyful gathering with live music, casual picnic-style dining, and an opportunity to have fun while supporting IHT's mission. The end-of-summer nostalgia was present as we connected with friends and raised support while the sun set behind the mountains across the sea.

2. Collaborating on educational programming is one of our favorite ways to learn, grow, and strengthen as a service-minded organization. In June, we teamed up with Downeast Trout Unlimited and Blue Hill Rowing to offer our first **Family Fishing Day** at Lily Pond Park. Kids learned to tie flies, hook

worms, cast, reel, build small wooden boats, and identify local fish species. Some even went home with raffle prize fishing rods or lifetime fishing licenses. Coffee from 44 North kept us energized, and ice cream sundaes were served, thanks to Stonington Ice Cream Company.

3. For nearly thirty years, Ann Hooke has been a volunteer, donor, mentor, and friend. From helping to protect Scott's Landing Preserve to leading geology walks at Settlement Quarry Preserve to helping staff track down old files, she has supported IHT with passion, kindness, and generosity. Ann moved to Massachusetts in 2023, shortly after donating **Carrying Place Preserve** - over 30 acres of woodland forest, salt marsh, and tidal flats to be protected by IHT and enjoyed by all starting in 2024. We miss Ann's local presence and celebrate her legacy.

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Wilson Forge

The names listed in this report reflect gifts & pledges from the
2023 fiscal year, which ended October 31, 2023.



Lily Pond Park +

Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you find an error, please let us know, and accept our sincere apologies.

Our Mission Island Heritage Trust (IHT) contributes to the well-being of the island community by conserving its distinctive landscapes and natural resources, maintaining public access to valued trails, shoreline, and islands, and by providing educational programming for all ages.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

EDUCATION

In Environmental Education programs, climate change conversation is embedded in all we do. In 2023, we had challenging and motivating discussions inside and outside the local schools about warming seas, storms and surges, shifting plant and animal ranges, and invasive species related to climate change.

Thanks to supporters like you, Island Heritage Trust field trips help students connect climate change theory with reality in their local community. In the winter, middle school students visited Causeway Beach to see the impacts of storm damage. They discovered changes in the beach profile, resilient success in the 7th grade Beach Grass Restoration Project, and severe undercutting of road on the Causeway. Students measured the height of high tides predicted by models for future years and added potential height for king tides and storm impact.

Being in the field, using measurement tools to collect data, and discovering change firsthand help students understand complicated issues and become inspired to contribute to change.

To widen students' opportunities to connect with the earth, a Stewardship Class was launched for middle school students at Deer Isle - Stonington Elementary School, where they take part in projects to improve the land around the school. These students regularly get outside and actively care for the evolving natural spaces around them. Projects include helping to work on the school Nature Trail, weed or plant around buildings, remove invasive species from campus, and prepare the greenhouse for the growing season.

The students take pride in their tasks, often mentioning how others will benefit from the work they have accomplished.



Causeway Beach



Kids in Nature with Martha Bell



Shore Acres

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

STEWARDSHIP

As the Deer Isle-Stonington community faces threats to local ecology, your support has allowed IHT to develop a haven at Lily Pond Park to propagate native, climate-resilient woody plant species sourced from Deer Isle. These plants will add diversity to each layer of the forest and replace invasive plants or species negatively impacted by invasive insects. Supported by volunteers and the Maine Forest Service Project Canopy Grant, Lily Pond Park will be a leading example of relational forestry care.

Along with new projects, IHT has taken on new land stewardship as recipients of another Island and Preserve!

Not to be mistaken for Sheep Island, located to the west of LDI, the Sheep Island that was transferred to IHT in 2023 is located off Sunshine and is the only island held by IHT that allows public access in that area. Sheep Island was originally protected by a small group of Maine Island Trail Association supporters, and we are honored to be entrusted with the island's care moving forward.

Long-time volunteer, geologist, and friend Ann Hooke also donated 30 acres of coastal woodland off Sunshine Road to IHT, which she and her late husband, Roger Hooke, acquired in 1980. With parking lot creation underway, we hope to welcome the public to Carrying Place Preserve in 2024.



Field Trip to Lily Pond Park



Sheep Island



Roadside Cleanup

“IT IS VERY EXCITING WHEN LAND AND SHORES WILL BE CONSERVED FOR PUBLIC USE, LAND THAT HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE MOUNTAINVILLE HISTORY OF USE BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND RECENT ISLANDERS.” – ANN HOOKE

IT TAKES A VILLAGE:

2,500 +
VOLUNTEER
HOURS

\$75k +
VALUE OF
IN-KIND TIME

30 +
STEWARDSHIP
VOLUNTEERS



IHT PRESERVES

PRESERVES OPEN FOR USE:

1. Bowcat Overlook
2. Causeway Beach
3. Church Land
4. Crystal Cove
5. Lily Pond Park
6. Lisa Tolman Wotton Nature Preserve
7. Pine Hill
8. Reach Beach at Gray's Cove
9. Scott's Landing
10. Settlement Quarry
11. Shore Acres

CO-MANAGED PRESERVES:

12. Barred Island
The Nature Conservancy
13. Crockett Cove Woods
The Nature Conservancy
14. Holt Mill Pond
Town of Stonington
15. Edgar M. Tennis Preserve
Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands

OFF-SHORE ISLANDS:

16. Bradbury Island
17. Carney Island
18. Whig Island
19. Polypod Island
20. Mark Island
21. Wreck Island
22. Round Island
23. Millet Island



4

PRESERVES CO-MANAGED BY IHT

21

MILES OF PROTECTED SHOREFRONT

21

OFF-SHORE ISLANDS CONSERVED BY IHT

25

PRESERVES OWNED BY IHT

38

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

1,450

ACRES OF PROTECTED LAND

2023 FINANCIALS

In 2023, we began fundraising for new and exciting land conservation projects. Our total revenue in FY 2023 was \$840,772, including a very generous contribution of \$255,200 for these projects received late in our fiscal year, in addition to \$45,000 of special project revenue in 2022. Our operating revenue, not including these donations, was \$585,572.

Our operating expenses were \$486,516, which was \$16,000 or 3% over the last fiscal year. Of this, 63% was dedicated to educational programming and stewardship activities directly supporting our mission.

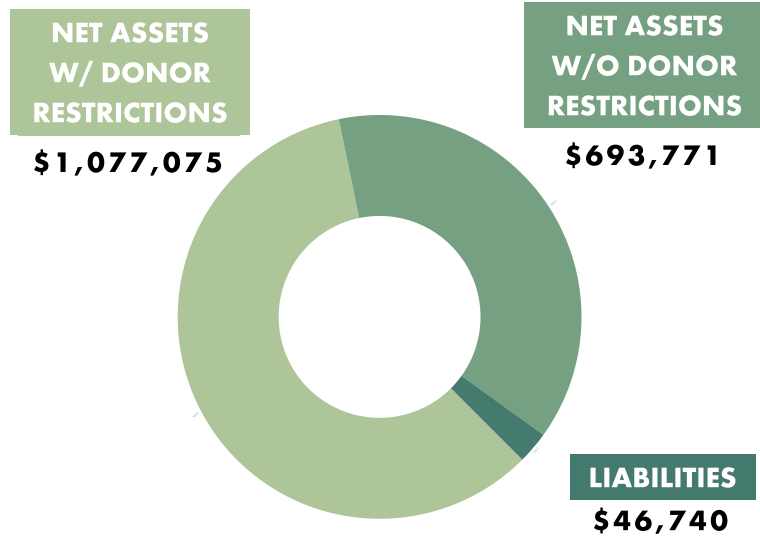
Minus some special project-specific contributions, net assets increased slightly from FY 2023 due in part to market gains and the investment of last year's surplus.

We anticipate several significant projects over the next 3-5 years, including improvements to Heritage House, new land conservation projects, and rehabilitation of the Lily Pond Dam in collaboration with the Town of Deer Isle and Deer Isle Fire Department. Our greatest continuing need is unrestricted annual operating revenue to maintain a strong foundation to do our best work. We are grateful to our members and donors for their support of our mission.

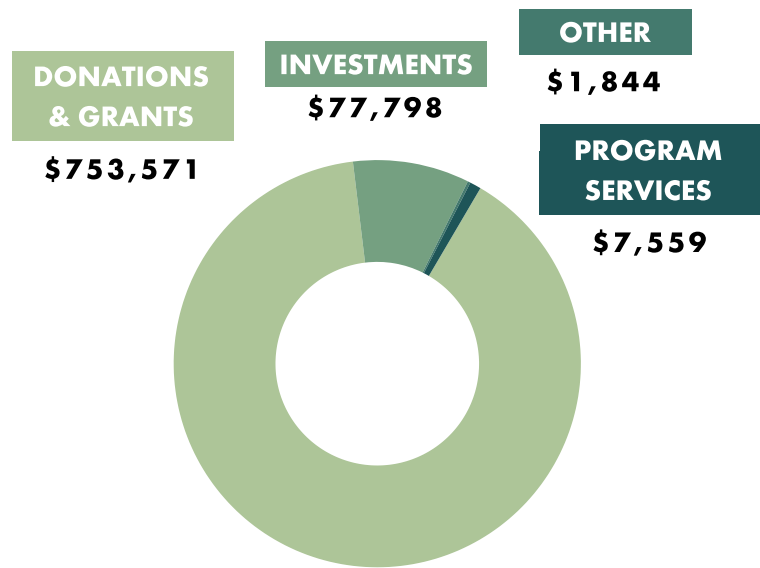


Barred Island +

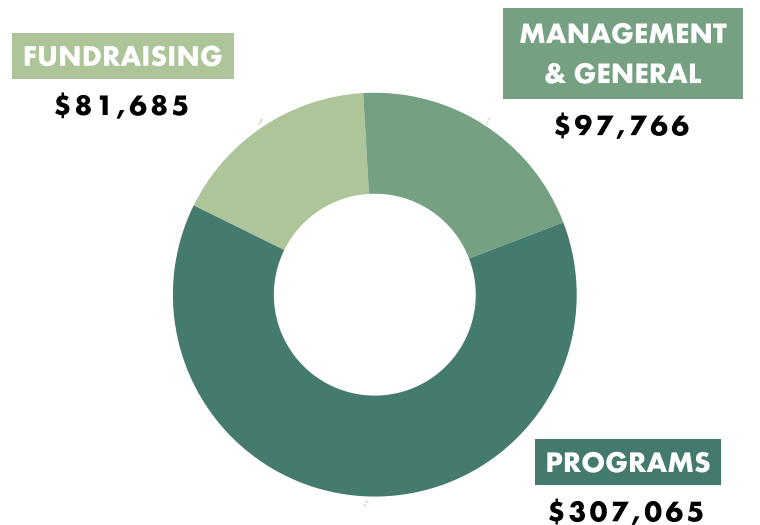
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS: \$1,817,586



TOTAL REVENUE: \$840,772



TOTAL EXPENSES: \$486,516



STAFF

Julia Zell, Executive Director

Martha Bell, Environmental Educator

Alex Drenga, Stewardship Director

Pat Gross, Bookkeeper

Jacob McCarty, Development Director

Terry Real, Summer Stewardship Assistant

Noël Ruth, Outreach Manager

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Platinum
Transparency
2024

Candid.



Scott's Landing +

^ Photographs by Dan Rajter
+ Photographs by Matt Litman



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