



## Land Trust News December 2013

*Our purpose is to preserve and protect the intrinsic values and public benefits of the natural resources in the Towns of Chebeague and Cumberland - mainland, island and contiguous Casco Bay - and to be responsible stewards in perpetuity for those resources in our trust.*

### Ministerial Island Protected Forever

Ministerial Island, a beautiful 17-acre island designated as a critical wildlife habitat in the middle of Casco Bay, has been permanently protected with a conservation easement under the stewardship of the Chebeague and Cumberland Land Trust. The transfer was signed December 12.



Located between Stave and Bates Islands, and next to historic Eagle Island, Ministerial has been owned by the Rutter family of New Hampshire since 1941. It is part of the Town of Chebeague Island.

In making the donation, Hannah Rutter Martin, of East Derry, N.H., daughter of the original owners thanked CCLT for its efforts in protecting the island beloved by her family for generations. “If we listen carefully,” Hannah wrote, “we can hear Ministerial Island murmuring its thanks to all for keeping it safe.”

A mix of sandy beaches, rocky ledges, shrub land and meadows, the state of Maine has identified Ministerial as an important nesting area for common eider ducks, common black-backed gulls and herring gulls, as well as a vital staging area for migrating or roosting coastal wading birds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has also placed a high value on the island as a habitat for rare or declining species of birds and fish in the Gulf of Maine watershed.

The easement will ensure that the property remains in its present state in perpetuity. Ministerial joins a group of other conserved islands in the area including two other islands protected by CCLT, Stockman and Basket. Due to its sensitive habitat, access to Ministerial Island will be permitted only with special organized group trips with permission in advance from the landowners.

“For generations the Rutter family has protected this small jewel in Casco Bay. Thanks to their fondness for this special place and their vision for the future, Ministerial will be maintained in its current natural state forever,” said Penny Asherman, president of the Chebeague and Cumberland Land Trust. “All of us

who love Casco Bay and want to protect its natural environment thank the Rutter family for this generous gift.”

## Cottontails: Young Chebeaguers Track Signs of Rabbits in the Snow



Chebeague primary school students are trained and active in hunting for signs of the New England cottontail. The range of this once-common rabbit has shrunk and its population has dwindled over the last 50 years, so that today this unique native mammal faces possible extinction.

The most critical threat to the cottontail is a loss of habitat - places where rabbits can find food, rear young, and escape predators. Development on the Mainland has taken much of the land once inhabited by cottontails and other wildlife. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has mapped potential habitats on Chebeague, the outer islands, and Cumberland where cottontail may still exist. School children participated in special training with Bev Johnson and Leila Bisharat to learn how to recognize their tracks, collect rabbit scat and submit it for DNA analysis to scientists. So far there are confirmed sightings and scat from snowshoe hares, but none yet for the Cottontail.

With the onset of winter Chebeague children will be out again on snowshoes with their teachers, parents and neighbors hunting for tracks and scat, in hopes that these special bunnies have survived along the shoreline and woodland habitats of Chebeague.

## Sam Ballard: A Leader in Protecting the Treasures of Casco Bay



Sam Ballard died peacefully at home on Chebeague on December 8th 2013. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude for his leadership in conservation and the legacy he has left us: Casco Bay's premier spot for migratory birds, clammers and nature lovers - Indian Point on Chebeague. Island

Sam's boyhood love of Chebeague coupled with the vision he gained from his experience in scientific innovation made him look at the future from a very broad perspective. Sam as a young man worked with Wernher von Braun, and other rocket

scientists, in Huntsville, Alabama. Long before anyone saw how vital it was to protect the shoreline ecology of Casco Bay, Sam was already galvanizing his fellow members of the Indian Island Company into looking ahead to the future in a way that would ensure the protection, in perpetuity, of the marshlands, dunes, sweeping seascape, clam flats and the bar connecting Great Chebeague to Little Chebeague.

Sam sailed all the waters of Casco Bay and built a remarkable trimaran, “The Last Indian” at the end of his life. He planned it to fly faster than any other across those waters, and launched it last year. When the CCLT honored him, and the Indian Island Company, at our 25th anniversary gathering at the Niblic Boathouse, he said, “This has meant a great deal to me”.

## CCLT Receives Grant from LL Bean and Maine Coast Heritage Trust



LL Bean joined with Maine Coast Heritage Trust to award grants this Fall to CCLT and 5 other land trusts to support their stewardship efforts on protected lands. CCLT's grant of \$2,330 was awarded to purchase Stewardship Tool Kits for volunteer stewards to use as they monitor and help manage the almost 700 acres of land under CCLT's care.

The stewardship kits will include GPS units, compasses, field binders and vegetation management tools essential for on the ground work. The tool kits will ensure the safety of our stewards while also improving our stewardship efforts. CCLT has a dedicated team of over 25 volunteer stewards. If you would like to join a stewardship team for a particular protected property, please let us know! We welcome your participation.

## Experiencing Nature in Our Own Communities



Over the past year, CCLT has had great success encouraging families to experience the wonders of nature on our protected areas.

We welcomed the first signs of Spring at Frog Pond and Salamander Swamp as the amphibians awoke from their long winter freeze to head en masse to breed.

We gathered for the spring arrival of the horseshoe crabs on a stretch of protected beach on the Cumberland Foreside.

We improved our tree identification skills at the Rines Forest.

On Chebeague Island, we learned how new technology can be used to educate visitors about fragile coastal resources and migratory birds at Indian Point and the importance of salt marshes at Rose's Point.

## Evening Winter Solstice Hike

Join us for a full moon hike on Friday, December 20th at 7 pm through the Farwell Forest up Blueberry Hill. Please wear appropriate cold weather gear, snowshoes and remember to bring a head lamp or flash lights. We may sing a few Christmas carols along the way and decorate a tree with treats for the animals! FMI e-mail pennyash@maine.rr.com.

## Shop at Amazon and Help CCLT

On-line retailer Amazon.com announced a new program that allows customers to designate a charitable organization to receive 0.5 percent of the amount of their purchases. CCLT is one of the organizations to qualify for the program, which is called AmazonSmile.

Please consider naming CCLT as your organization of choice for the AmazonSmile program. Your donations to CCLT through the AmazonSmile program will be invaluable as we pursue additional acquisitions and continue our stewardship activities during 2014 and beyond.

## NEW! Update your CCLT Membership Online

You can now update your membership on CCLT's website, [www.ccltmaine.org](http://www.ccltmaine.org).

Help us save money for print materials and postage by joining CCLT's membership email list. We promise not to inundate your mailbox. You will receive invitations to fun events and quarterly news updates about our work.

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