

Fall 2020

ORENDA
Wildlife Land Trust
orendalandtrust.org

The Chronicle *of*
Woodlands *and* Wildlife
A Newsletter of Orenda Wildlife Land Trust



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Wild Imaginings: Cooperative Conservation Partnerships

By Jeff Thibodeau,
Executive Director

***“Cooperation for mutual benefit, a survival strategy very common in natural systems, is one that humanity needs to emulate.”
Eugene Odum***

Cooperation.
Interdependence.
Communication.
Diversity.
Connection.

These elements characterize the essence of strong partnerships and the basis of ecology. Derived from the Greek word “oikos”, meaning “family” or “home”, ecology is the study of relationships between individuals, communities, and their physical environments. These relationships form ecosystems.

As the world's population increases and technology advances, the space between us grows smaller and our multifaceted connection to each other within our global “oikos” becomes clearer. The importance of sustaining and strengthening our relationships is critical for our environmental and social well-being, especially during challenging times.

Racial and gender equality, economic stability, family values, and social connections are ecological issues as much

as they are social, because the entire planet and its inhabitants are directly impacted by them. What happens in the socioeconomic sphere directly affects our ecosystem. Similarly, land and wildlife conservation - Orenda's main thrust - is as much social as it is ecological because we, as well as our plant and animal friends, are social creatures. We live in and through community. With every acre and animal we protect, we are directly helping to sustain the intricate, interconnected systems that make up our world.

***“Everything is connected to everything else,”
Barry Commoner***

All systems thrive on cooperation, which fosters stronger, more resilient connections that can better withstand threats. The strength of each part in the system is essential, but individuality also has a precarious fragility that cooperation can fortify and transcend.

***“In nature, nothing exists alone”
Rachel Carson***

Orenda is strong in our individual commitment and effort, but we are stronger in partnership with others. Since our founding almost 35 years ago, we have protected hundreds of acres of land along with the wildlife that



depend on it, but none of our goals were reached in isolation. Our success relies on cooperative conservation partnerships involving our committed members, generous donors, willing landowners, and conservation allies such as town, state and federal governments, grant agencies, and other land trusts. This rich diversity of partners and funding sources is integral to Orenda's strength and success.

This issue celebrates the importance of cooperation in our efforts to protect this world and its wonderful web of life – our home.



Cub's Den

Conversations About Conservation With Our Youth

By Zoe Simmons



*Drawing by
Bella Thibodeau*

This month we pose our question to Zoe Simmons, 6th grader.

Question: "What Does it Mean to be a Good Partner and Why is it So Important in Reaching a Goal?"

Being a good partner means that you work well with others. When you are working with someone else you should be prepared to make compromises. Good partners treat others equally, are considerate, and make sure

everyone feels like their opinions matter. If you do not do that, your partner may not respect you as much.

While trying to reach your goal you must always have a plan, make sure the entire team is on board and that everyone feels their ideas have been considered.

Each group in the partnership should be treated fairly and equally. It is also important to try

and be a good, clear communicator and make sure everyone understands the plan.

Lastly, remember, "haste makes waste", it is best to take all the time you need and to do every step.

When you reach your goal, you should make sure to thank everyone on your team for their hard work.

Towns, Trusts and Teamwork

By Chris Miller

Town land is public, but not all of it is treated the same. It is classified by who holds custody - normally Select Board, Water, Conservation, Recreation, Schools, or Golf - and it may be held for various reasons that can intersect. For example, Brewster has spent decades buying land to protect our water supply wells and their surrounding "Zone 2" buffers. The result is some of the best drinking water in the country and large tracts of public open space, two goals that also work well together when seeking grants.

The state requires the area directly surrounding public drinking water wells (Zone 1) to be controlled by the Water Commissioners, and have specific deed restrictions. Sometimes these lands are

within areas held by the Conservation Commission, and often they are managed for public passive recreation, usually with a fenced area separating the well building. Sometimes a landowner is unknown, or abandons their claim to seemingly worthless or undevelopable property. The Town can "take" these after an extensive tax title search.

Most town land is held "for general municipal purposes", which is controlled by the Select Board, and often includes land that is "perceived" as protected, but is not. In Brewster this includes playing fields, beaches, Wing Island, Drummer Boy Park, and the land around Commerce Park. At some point, the use of these properties could change. When evaluating a land purchase, the town uses a ranking system based on many

factors, and the best deals accomplish multiple purposes or add to existing adjacent protected land. For example, when we purchased the 800-acre Punkhorn Parklands, it was for water supply protection, but also to preserve the uniquely rural nature of west Brewster. This resulted in some of the best hiking trails on the cape and protection of large ponds at the head of our Stony Brook herring run.

Most deals take over a year to complete since State grants are only available annually, and we have to wait for appraisals, Community Preservation Act funding, and Town Meeting approval. Conservation partnerships with land trusts like Orenda are valuable since they can move quickly to negotiate a purchase or provide a needed down payment for a future deal.

Stewardship:

Protecting Diamondback Terrapins

*By Ian Ives, Sanctuary Director
for Mass Audubon's Long
Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary*

Threatened Female Diamondback Terrapins (*Malachlemys terrapin*), have been nesting on Orenda's Margaret Wyman Sanctuary Property in West Barnstable for years.

Turtle nesting sites are commonly known as turtle gardens. Unfortunately, female terrapins at this garden encounter serious obstacles to successful reproduction. I have been partnering with Orenda to try and alleviate some of these obstacles and help the turtles thrive.

Last summer, my son and I volunteered to conduct preliminary surveys documenting the extent of the nesting activity, and identify predator threats and habitat needs at the site. During this year's nesting season from June – July, a total of 37 active turtle nests were identified. Each of which succumbed to predation. With the use of 5 game cameras, we documented raccoons, skunks and coyotes at the site, all of which are expert nest raiders and likely to have gorged on all the eggs. Female turtles rely on the sun to incubate their eggs, and therefore choose sunny spots to bury them.

Orenda's turtle garden is located in a small clearing which is gradually succeeding to shady forest. With this reduced open sunny habitat, the terrapins are forced to nest in increasingly dense congregations. As a result, when a predator discovers one nest, he is likely to find and eat them all! This "buffet" dilemma is another obstacle these specialized reptiles need to contend with in order for their young to survive.

With this year's preliminary findings, Orenda has the knowledge to further survey the population and apply some tested management practices to act on behalf of this threatened species. Further survey work could include documenting the number of nests laid in 2021 along with weather and tide levels during nesting, clutch size, and egg size.



Management practices could include nest protection utilizing "caged" enclosures to reduce predation by mammals. To address the buffet dilemma, brush clearing can be done to open up the habitat and reduce the concentration of nests at the site. This work requires permission from state and local environmental permitting authorities.

With continued effort and knowledge, we hope to foster continued success of this resilient reptile.

*Female Diamondback
Terrapin at Margaret
Wyman Sanctuary,
Summer 2020*

Photo Credit: Ian Ives

President's Perspective: Your Generosity is Key

By Daniel Morast, President

As President of the Orenda Wildlife Land Trust, I sincerely note that the most important immediate conservation relationship for Orenda today is the vital link between those reading this newsletter and the donor reply envelope embedded herein. Orenda, and the land and wildlife we protect, need You!

Our newly-installed Executive Director, Jeff Thibodeau is concluding his first adventurous and productive year with Orenda. In preparing this fall/winter newsletter, Jeff has eloquently placed another star on his list of accomplishments.

The extensive textual examples of environmental interdependence and the collaborative need to protect biological diversity (that is so important to all living things) are highlighted in every paragraph.

In part, this newsletter documents our organizational victories and wildlife land acquisition and protection efforts. Many thanks to our all-volunteer Board of Directors, Orenda's Officers, and our dedicated conservation consultants and administrative specialists. For the most part, however, the articles and accolades expressed here are all linked to you, and to everyone who has or will be



making a contribution to help fund Orenda.

To that end, I sincerely thank all who donate to help preserve wild land, clean air, unpolluted water and the animals we are striving to protect. Thank you for your generosity!

Welcome Aboard

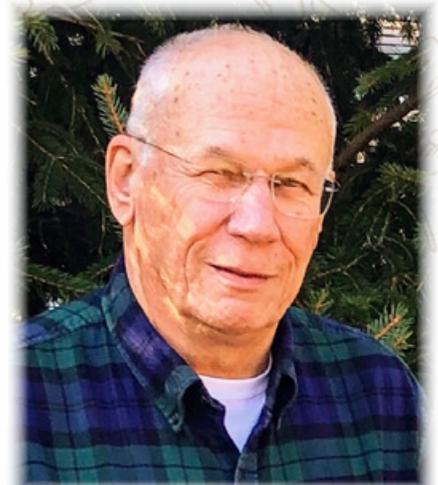
Chris Miller

Chris joined the Orenda Board in 2020. He has served as Director of the Natural Resources, Conservation, and Harbormaster departments in Brewster for the past 13 years and has a background in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology and Chemical Engineering. Chris lives in Brewster with his wife and two kids and grew up in the northeast. He is an avid scuba diver, sailor and outdoorsman and is eager to apply his experience to work protecting our wild lands through Orenda.



Bruce Brockway

Bruce joined the Orenda Board in 2020. He grew up in North Attleboro, Massachusetts and earned his B.S. and M.S. Forestry degrees at the University of Maine in Orono. Bruce was employed in the Maine forest industry as a timberland manager, procurement manager and as a resource consultant. He and his wife Cheryl raised their family in Old Town, Maine, moving to Brewster in 2008. He has always enjoyed the outdoors and is an active stewardship volunteer.



Land Protection: Partnership in Action

By Jeff Thibodeau

Orenda is currently working on several cooperative conservation partnerships.

Princeton, Worcester County

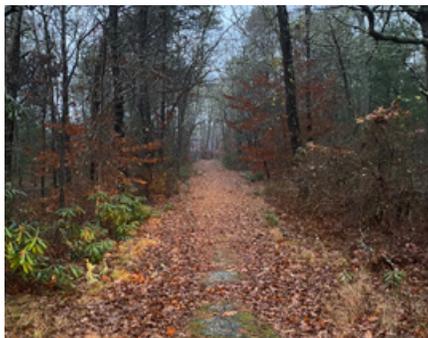


Orenda accepted a donation of 3.5 acres in Princeton from the Khamsi family. Neighbors will serve as land stewards. We may cooperate with a Princeton area land trust on stewardship.

Partners:

- Buyer – Orenda
- Seller – conservation-conscious brothers Ser and Sarir Khamsi
- The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts - technical assistance
- Neighbors – land stewards
- Worcester County land trust may share ownership

Lindsey Counsell Sanctuary



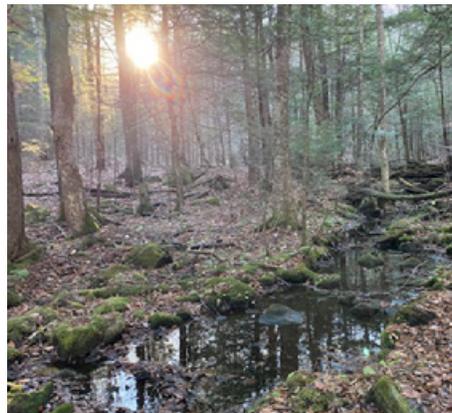
Orenda recently purchased 6.2 acres of forest in the

watershed to Wequaquet Lake in partnership with the Town of Barnstable, which approved \$425,000 in Community Preservation Act funding for a conservation restriction that allows passive public use. Neighbors also donated \$25,000.

Partners:

- Buyer – Orenda
- Seller – Roman Catholic Church
- Town of Barnstable - Approved CPA funding for CR.
- Neighbors – donated \$25,000
- The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts – technical assistance

Middlefield, Hampshire County



Orenda is partnering with a conservation-conscious landowner and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in an effort to protect a 25-acre parcel in Hampshire County. Orenda hopes to reach an agreement with the owner and then team up with the USFWS on funding and stewardship.

Partners:

- Buyer – Orenda
- Seller – Conservation-conscious landowner

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – acquisition team and potential funding/ownership partner
- Libby Herland, environmental consultant
- The Nature Conservancy - project consultation
- The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts - technical assistance

Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge

Orenda purchased 14-acres within the Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge (MNWR) for \$225,000, protecting additional wildlife habitat and water protection area. To do this, we drew from our small land acquisition fund, took a short-term loan from The Compact and the owner allowed us to finance part of the purchase. We are exploring a funding/ownership partnership with the USFWS as we strengthen our relationship with the Refuge.

Partners:

- Buyer – Orenda
- Seller – Cooperative landowner extended a short-term mortgage on part of the cost
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - potential funding/ownership partner
- The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts - short term loan and technical assistance
- Fields Pond Foundation - awarded small grant
- Cape Cod Five Cents Savings Bank - awarded small grant

Welcome to Cape Cod Open Space

By Mark Robinson, Executive Director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc.

It's been waiting for you, just sitting there quietly minding its own business of filtering water, growing trees and plants and sheltering wildlife. Waiting for a time in your life when you needed it most. When you could not visit friends and family at their homes. When your only choices were to remain inside 24/7, take a break and stroll around the neighborhood, or head out into the woods or beaches, some of you for the first time, solo or with others.

Like much of America right now, Cape Cod is seeing a surge in the use of our many nature preserves and hiking trails. Others have commented on proper hiking protocol (six feet, dogs on leash, etc.) or on the occasional abuses (overcrowding, dumping).

But I want to celebrate the simple fact that by this awakening many more Cape Codders are finally acknowledging the immense value provided for physical and mental health by our vast portfolio of protected open spaces. Everything from our 30,000-acre National Seashore to our state parks to our town beaches and conservation areas and even the small diverse areas near you preserved by your local non-profit land trust.

These set-aside natural lands add up to more than one-third of the land mass of Cape Cod. They did not magically appear. They are the result of the collective effort of all of us, hard-won victories meant to stave off the complete suburbanization of our Cape.

Between 1984 and 2019, the past 35 years, Cape Cod citizens spent almost \$400 million to preserve more than 10,000 acres. Most of that was paid for through the Land Bank Act and now the Community Preservation Act, the three percent surcharge we pay on our property tax bills, supplemented by state funds. All 15 Cape towns voted for these programs and now we witness the results of our investments.

It sounds like a lot of money and it is. But it pales in comparison to the tens of billions spent on developing real estate on the Cape during that period. Some of us recall the height of the boom in 1986 when the town of Barnstable alone approved more than 900 housing units. Picture three new concrete foundations being poured every day for a year. We almost lost our Cape, which one developer claimed he hoped to make into the "next suburb of Boston." The small town of Brewster has itself spent tens of millions of dollars to preserve land. But that wise leverage in keeping the town rural just



may also keep it from having to spend hundreds of millions on the municipal wastewater systems that its neighboring communities are facing now. And Brewster has terrific walking trails. Find out what a Punkhorn is and go walk it!

Towns and land trusts have created many new hiking paths and published maps highlighting how to find these trail systems for your enjoyment. A quick internet search for Cape Cod Pathways will get you started. Go, be safe, respect others and explore your legacy!

Mark H. Robinson of Cotuit has helped Cape Cod preserve open space since 1984. He is Director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc., a network of 30 land trusts and watershed associations. He has been an important advisor to Orenda on all matters, most importantly land acquisition.



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Orenda's Mission

Founded in 1986, Orenda Wildlife Land Trust works to preserve and protect open space for wildlife habitat, fresh air, and water quality, in sanctuaries on Cape Cod and throughout Massachusetts.

All contributions to Orenda Wildlife Land Trust are tax-deductible under federal regulations.

Orenda is grateful for all donations of time, energy, land and money. A gift made during your lifetime allows you enjoy the fruits of your generosity while bequests leave an indelible legacy. For guidance on planning a donation or bequest, contact jeffthibodeau@orendalandtrust.org

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