



BOURNE  
CONSERVATION  
TRUST

A MURDER OF CROWS

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FALL 2024

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# NEW PROPERTY

## The Austin Property Acquisition Project:

### 30-acres of Woodlands and Wellfield Protection in Pocasset

In early August, an agreement was signed by the Bourne Conservation Trust (BCT) to purchase the Austin property in Pocasset, a scenic 30-acre woodland. This land features approximately 400 feet of frontage along County Road, providing direct access to 470 acres of the Town Forest and Bourne Water District land. The property is also located

within a Zone II wellfield protection area and within 500 feet of critical wells, making it an essential environmental asset.

After being listed for sale in mid-July, the Austin property faced the imminent threat of subdivision and development. Acting swiftly, knowing the Town could not do so, BCT secured an agreement to

purchase the land, ensuring the preservation of this valuable natural resource. The closing is scheduled for November 12, 2024, under the terms of the purchase and sale agreement.

The parcel is surrounded on three sides by over 470 acres of protected mature forest, designated under Article 97, and owned by the Town





pending the approval of CPA funding at the Special Town Meeting on October 21, 2024. The BCT is also applying for a state forestry grant to help fund the purchase.

Acquiring the Austin property aligns with the Bourne Local Comprehensive Plan for

of Bourne (Town Forest) and the Bourne Water District (Main Wellfield). The fourth side borders County Road, a designated Town Scenic Road since 1975.

Given the property's proximity to large tracts of town-owned land, BCT has partnered with the Town of Bourne to seek funding through the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to purchase a Conservation Restriction (CR) on the property. The Town will own the Conservation Restriction, overseen by the Bourne Conservation Commission, protecting the use of the land in perpetuity and the BCT will own the land and be responsible for maintenance. This partnership is

Open Space and Recreation, as well as the goals and policies outlined in the Regional Policy Plan of the Cape Cod Commission. Furthermore, preventing the development of this parcel will reduce pressure on town services and contribute to the community's fiscal stability. BCT has applied for \$2.1 million in Town CPA funding. No borrowing is necessary as these funds are available.

BCT has also enlisted the expertise of Mark Robinson and the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts to guide this project through town procedures and identify available grants. According to a recent analysis

by The Compact, this 500-acre assemblage of pine-oak forest in Pocasset would become one of the largest local conservation and wellfield protection areas on Cape Cod.

Much of the property features



rugged ridge-and-hollow topography, and the public already enjoys its trails for hiking and mountain biking. These trails seamlessly connect to an extensive network of marked paths within the Town Forest and Watershed lands.

**We strongly encourage Bourne residents to attend the Special Town Meeting on October 21 at 7 p.m. at the Bourne High School Auditorium and support the preservation of this land by approving this important article.**

Please check the BCT website ([www.BourneConservationTrust.org](http://www.BourneConservationTrust.org)) for updates to this project.



# A MURDER OF CROWS

**Editor's note:** *Because so many recent BCT newsletter stories have focused on our successful acquisition of important properties, this edition features an interview with some important members of the local fauna to learn what they think of our work. There are many who live with us year around and are so common that people take them for granted giving them, at best, little more than passing notice. Among our feathered friends, crows living on the BCT property requested to be our first guests for an interview with our reporter. A group of them recently stopped by for a chat.*

*By Gordon Schimmel*

We should begin this interview by clarifying that "stopping by" is a bit of an understatement, given the crows' arrival. We agreed to meet them next to a large oak tree on a BCT trail and we heard them coming from far away, calling to one another as they flew in our direction. They arrived in the tree above us in a flourish of black feathers, bright-eyed and brassy, obviously eager to meet us. A few of the bolder ones hopped down, branch-by-branch, until we were face to face or, to be more accurate, face to beak.

To break the ice, we began by asking, "Is this group called a 'murder' of crows?" "Murder?" they cried raucously, and this seemed to really upset those still in the branches above. "How prejudicial!"

They declared that they are the best of omnivores, eating fruits, seeds, vegetables as well as insects, snails, spiders, small mammals and fish. However, they acknowledged that sometimes they nibbled on the remains of the recently departed, but only if something else was not easily available. They reminded us that turkey vultures and seagulls do the same, "and so do Bald Eagles - yes, the Bald Eagle! And they are known as 'committees' or 'colonies' or 'convocations.' Plenty of other birds are called 'flocks,'" they

screached. "Why not something better for us? 'Murder,' indeed!"

At this point we thought suggesting a "cacophony" of crows might be best but we knew that would do little to improve our discussion. To find something more acceptable, we suggested a "congress" of crows but that term was roundly rejected as something that sounded too political.

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***...they are the best of omnivores, eating fruits, seeds, vegetables as well as insects, snails, spiders, small mammals and fish.***

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Meanwhile, they were quick to point out that this daily cleanup is good for the residents of Bourne. "Think of what your roads would look like without crows. The BCT has Trail Meisters, so think of us as Road Meisters!"

We all had a good laugh that ended with a collective sigh, and then one of them suggested, "Simply refer to us as a 'flock.'" "Flock it is," we declared and to continue the new air of détente, we noted that many of us really do appreciate the work of crows. For example, one of our members recalls that when walking her dog, crows alerted her to the presence of coyotes, enabling her to get her pet safely back on a leash.

Of course they were very pleased with this news. They were also quick to point out that they mate for life, mourn their dead and use tools to access food, the only non-primates to do so. They went on to say scientists estimate that crows are as smart as a seven-year old child. However, they emphatically declared that, unlike most children at that age, this does not include belief in the Tooth Fairy.

"Maybe all of this is just silly anthropomorphic speculation", one of them added, "words, by the



way, that are really hard for us to say without teeth and lips!"

We were eager to change the subject and get back to the reason for our interview. We asked if they might share an opinion about the work the Trust has done to increase habitat in the town. This time noise of their response was welcome to our ears, as every crow sang our praises. Actually, they screamed the BCT's praises. In a subsequent moment of relative quiet, we learned how much they and all of the local fauna, the turtles,

bees, raccoons and even rock doves (a.k.a. pigeons), appreciate the work we have done to preserve our woodlands and open spaces.

"Even the raccoons," one of them shouted. "They think they are so cute but those layabouts snooze in the woods all day, getting their rest before making nighttime raids on trash barrels. Where would you be without our help with the cleanup?" The comment drew approving chuckles from the Greek Chorus in the

branches above.

Before we could ask any more questions, the treetop lookouts sounded an alarm. Something was amiss down the trail and in one giant airborne explosion they were up and away. For a moment the silence was deafening, but with new appreciation, we recognized the distant commotion as that of friends, working with the BCT to preserve a bit of wildness in our town. Thanks, in part, to our flocks of crows!



chipmunks, squirrels, butterflies,

# OUT ON THE TRAILS

## Trail Meisters—Hard at Work

Many thanks to all Trail Meisters, our loyal group of volunteers that create and maintain the BCT trails. It's been a busy year for many of them, as they have:

- ◆ Built a new long cross trail in the Cataumet Greenway, as a way to avoid roots and steep slopes on the old trail.
- ◆ Planted new flowering trees on the Red Brook Harbor Triangle and in front of the Baxendale Woods, and Christmas trees on the Dimmick tree farm.
- ◆ Cut down "toe kickers," those small stumps we tend to trip on along the trails.

- ◆ Helped with clean-ups at Spring Hill Farm.

This fall, there will be a renewed focus on improving the trails and parking at Bourne Sisters.

There are 37 Trail Meisters and space for a few more. It's a great opportunity to get out in nature, get some exercise, use those favorite woody tools, make friends and help a great cause. And you can do as little or as much as you want. Interested? Contact the BCT at 508-563-2884 or [bct.trails@gmail.com](mailto:bct.trails@gmail.com)

Finally, special thanks this year to Dick Murphy (captain), Ben Allen, Lang Allen, Rick Bagdonas, Chuck Bushey, Peter Fisher, George Gillis,



John Holden, Joe Hurley, Bob Johnson, Mike Lipchak, Greg Packard, Paul Palo, Paul Rossi, Brian Sauro, Matt Stone, Rob Whitaker and Carl Wirsen. Also, thanks go to Chris & Sue Anagnos for new handrails and treads on the Bourne Sisters Bridge.



*At left, left to right, Jen Dimmick, Gary Tabor, Dick Murphy, John Holden, Neil McPhee, Tod Dimmick, Jeannie Watson, Pete Fisher, Grace Rowe.*



- ◆ Widened and cleared trails of fallen trees and deadwood for easier walking.
- ◆ Improved signage and cut down dangerous trees.
- ◆ Opened new vistas along the stream in the Baxendale Woods, on the right as you walk in.



## New to Town or the Trails?

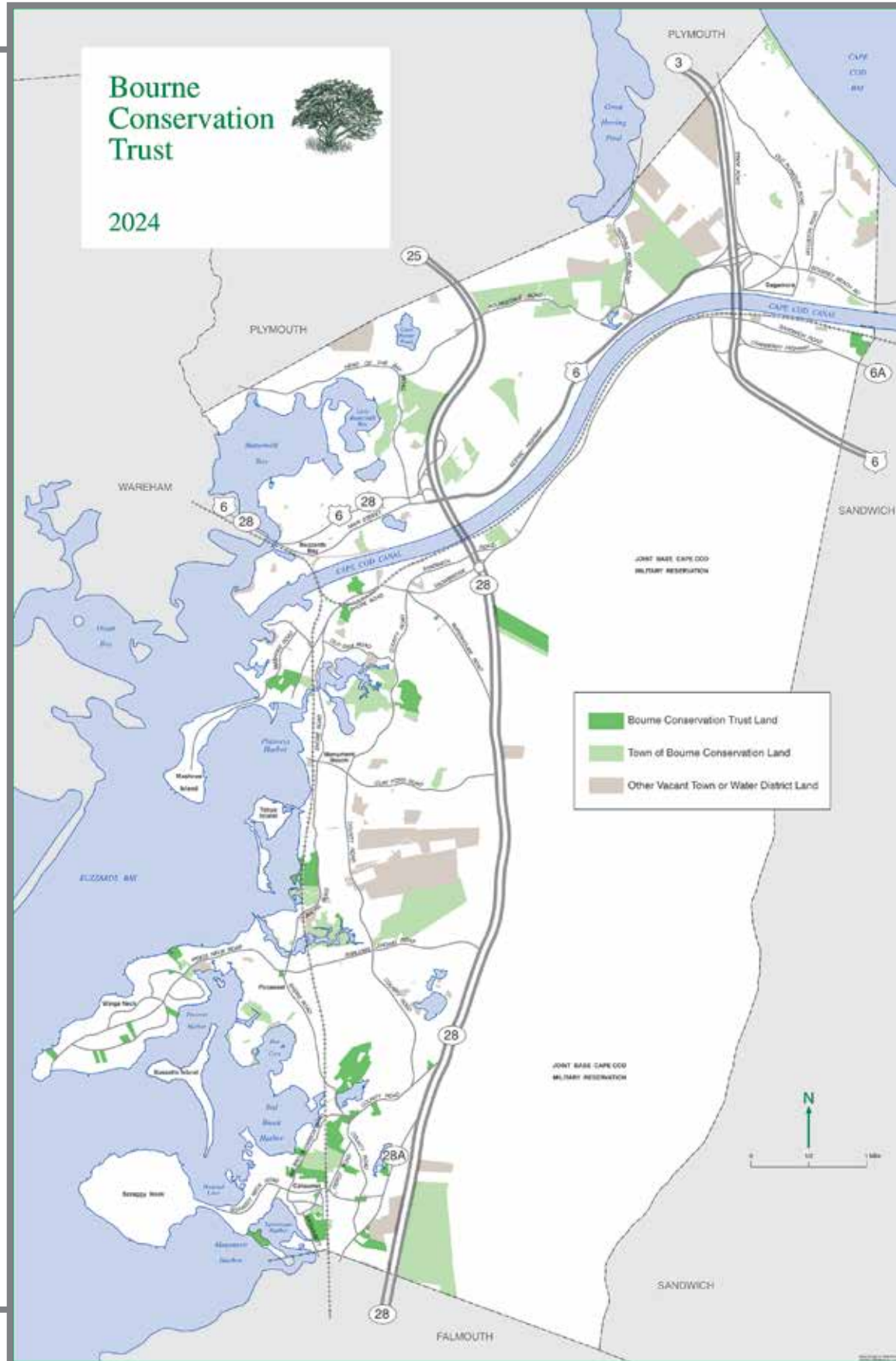
BCT trail maps are available online at [www.bourneconservationtrust.org](http://www.bourneconservationtrust.org). Copies are available at Ballentine's Boat Shop, Parker's Boat Yard, Kingman Marine, Bourne Public Library and Bourne Town Hall. And remember, each trail is unique and fun to walk.

## Important Trail Reminders

With the number of people and pets out on our trails it is more important than ever to:

- ◆ Make sure your dog is under control at all times.
- ◆ If walking the trail around Lawrence Island, leash your dog until you reach the bridge, and then from the bridge back to your car.
- ◆ Keep your dog off private property.
- ◆ Pick up the poop from the trails, from around cranberry bogs, and especially from the shores (dog feces is a huge pollutant of our harbors); be sure to take it with you for proper disposal. Please do not bag it and leave it.
- ◆ Park appropriately and do not back onto private property to turn around.

Please be considerate of other walkers and respectful of BCT properties and private properties abutting our lands.



# SPRING HILL FARM

Our successful visit with the crows prompted us to arrange an interview with Daisy, Gracie, Ruff and Tuff, the resident goats at Spring Hill Farm. Lately, G.O.A.T. (Greatest Of All Time) has come into frequent use and our foursome was not at all shy in claiming to be the G.O.A.T residents at the farm.

We began by asking, "What do you like best about living at Spring Hill?" "The food!" they shouted in unison. Daisy was quick to let us know that they have staff who stop by each day to make sure they are well stocked with all the food and water any G.O.A.T. goat requires. Ruff and Tuff had much to offer about the visitors and the treats they bring, especially those recommended on the new sign. Gracie, the self-appointed "neat-nick" of the group, added that the staff also does tidy-ups of the house and pen. "We love our staff and they absolutely love us," she noted without a trace of humility.

We also wanted to know what they thought of the BCT's recent creation of an office and community meeting space. They had nothing but compliments and Ruff was quick to suggest that they be permitted to move into the office, to better oversee the details of BCT management. We thanked him for his idea and said we would give it some thought.

Over by the barn we had an opportunity to speak with George and Luke, the two resident horses. It was immediately clear that they were not at all enthusiastic about Ruff's idea,



preferring the Trust's open pastures to the confines of an office. They were most grateful for the outdoor events that occur on the farm from time to time: the annual Easter egg hunt, special programs like the one featuring raptors, as well as participating in the occasional yoga class.

"You participate in yoga?" "Oh, yes," Luke said. "We watch them ever so closely and we drink in their karma."

"It's so relaxing," George added. "A blessed contrast to what goes on over there in the goat pen!" He noted that they also appreciate the volunteers who maintain the flower gardens

and grow squash to give away, as well the volunteers who do the annual cleanup of the barn and grounds.

"Pay no attention to what the goats tell you," Luke declared. "They think they are so clever and amusing! Actually, it would be boring here without all of these great activities. We would be stuck with them and those crazy squirrels. Pardon the pun, but we are the only stable influence around here!" With that, they erupted in horselaughs and trotted off to the other end of the field.

We hope this brief glimpse into how our animal friends enjoy life at the farm demonstrates the value of your contributions to the BCT to maintain Spring Hill Farm for all to enjoy. We join Ruff, Tuff, Gracie, Daisy, Luke and George in saying "thank you".



## The Volunteers

Besides those who care for our goats and sometimes the horses, we want to thank each and every one of you who volunteered your time at the farm this past year: raking, mowing and brush trimming in the fall, tending gardens and planting in the spring and summer, and cleaning the barn and farm house. We cannot imagine where we would be without your help.



# "MATCH" MONEY MATTERS

The BCT is ever grateful for any size donation to its core mission: preserving open space in Bourne for all to enjoy. But when that donation is "matched", or doubled, there is an extra bounce in our steps as donations arrive. And that is now true for this year and next, thanks to the BCT Endowment Matching Gift Fund.

As announced in our recent Donor Book, we have a loyal (and anonymous) donor who has established this fund to enhance our Endowment Fund, a fund that ensures our ability over time to add to and maintain BCT properties, and helps secure our long-term financial future. It works like this:

- ◆ For every dollar that the BCT receives from individuals and families, from May to December 31, 2024, the donor will match it 100% up to a maximum of \$250,000. If with your help we raise \$250,000 by year-end and receive the full match, the program will start all over again.
- ◆ Money donated in 2025 will also be matched 100% up to a maximum of \$250,000.

The two-year total: \$1,000,000. The importance to the BCT: We can't put a number on that. Please contribute to the BCT, in any amount you can, to help us take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity.

This chart shows where we stand as of October 1, 2024.

Follow our progress on the BCT website: [www.BourneConservationTrust.org](http://www.BourneConservationTrust.org).

*Note: Contributions from businesses and charitable organizations do not qualify for the match but will help us to cover our daily operating expenses, also so important to our everyday success, and always so appreciated.*



## EVENTS: In Partnership with...

### **The Dimmick Family**

The Dimmicks love Christmas trees and have a tree lot right in their back yard in Cataumet. Most years, when trees are ready for some decorating in December, they sponsor a Christmas tree sale. They then donate all proceeds from the sale to the BCT. Our big thanks go out to the Dimmick family for their loyalty and ongoing support.

### **The Cataumet Civic Associates and Cataumet Methodist Church**

What better family affair than an Easter Egg Hunt, not to mention a visit with the Easter bunny, on a farm with goats and horses! There is a candy hunt, a golden egg or two, and photo ops to be sure. It's organized by the Cataumet Civic Associates, along with help from the BCT and the Cataumet Methodist Church, a true community effort that we love to be part of.

### **Gardeners All Across Town**

The BCT, along with many of you, continue to plant and encourage wildflower meadows to attract pollinators all across town. Pollinators fertilize plants that will provide seeds and fruits for bees and butterflies, moths, birds and more. These creatures are so essential to the ecosystems that we all rely on for sustenance. And they provide us all with such natural beauty. Let's keep it going.

# WAYS OF GIVING

Here are some of the ways you can support the BCT's ongoing goal of building up its daily operating and Endowment funds. And please remember the BCT Endowment Matching Gift Fund. Donations through the end of this year, and hopefully throughout 2025, will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to a maximum of \$250,000 each year...with the potential of \$1,000,000, which is so important to our long-term success.

- ◆ Send a check or cash; mail it to Box 203, Cataumet, MA 02534.
- ◆ Sign up for automatic withdrawal; contact your bank or financial institution to automatically send a monthly donation to the BCT from a checking or savings account.
- ◆ Name the BCT in your will or as beneficiary of a life insurance policy.
- ◆ Give appreciated securities.
- ◆ Make a qualified charitable distribution. (See IRS guidelines: [www.IRS.gov/retirement](http://www.IRS.gov/retirement))
- ◆ Give the gift of real estate or sell it to the BCT for less than its fair market value. The difference is considered a charitable donation.
- ◆ Host a fundraising event.

## Volunteers Wanted

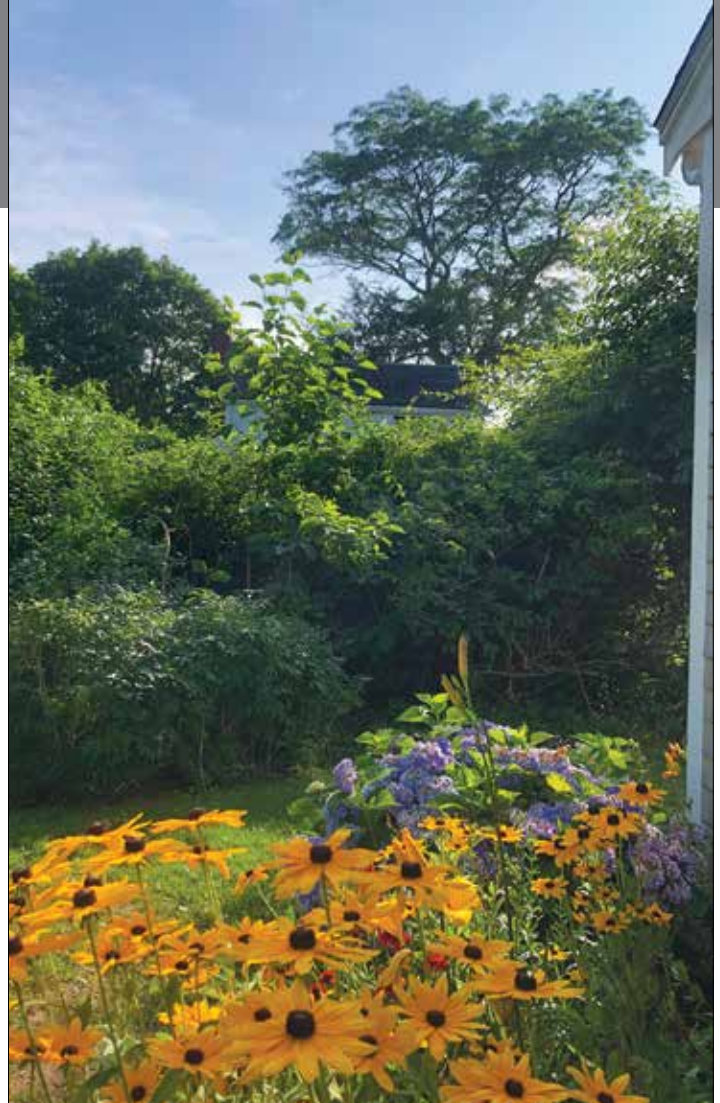
The Trust is always looking for more help. You may volunteer at Spring Hill Farm, at the goat house, or join the Trail Meisters out on the trails. There are also needs for help at the office. Please pitch in any way you can. If you are interested in volunteering, contact the BCT at 508-563-2884 or [bct.trails@gmail.com](mailto:bct.trails@gmail.com).

## Board of Directors

Stephen Ballentine, President  
Grace Rowe, Treasurer  
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Tom Corcoran, Trustee  
Jack Dawley, Trustee  
Philip DeNormandie, Trustee  
Dick Murphy, Trustee  
Matthew Stone, Trustee



Booklet design: Susan Quirk, [s.quirk@comcast.net](mailto:s.quirk@comcast.net)



- ◆ Offer a matching gift to support our efforts to purchase property. People respond generously when they know their contribution will be doubled.

If you have any questions, contact the BCT office at 508-563-2884 or log on to [www.bourneconservationtrust.org](http://www.bourneconservationtrust.org).

*The Bourne Conservation Trust is tax-exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Within IRS guidelines, contributions and gifts may be tax deductible from your taxable income. The trust's tax identification number (TIN) is 04-2767827. Please consult your tax advisor for more information.*

*The BCT is a private nonprofit land trust with a primary objective of acquiring land and leaving it in its natural state to: protect habitats, provide groundwater recharge, preserve rural ambiance and make it available for recreational and educational purposes. The BCT owns and maintains more than 300 acres of open space. Miles of walking trails thread their way through these protected woods and waterfront areas. The BCT is always looking for volunteers and donors to help achieve its mission and both maintain and enhance its properties. Learn more at [www.bourneconservationtrust.org](http://www.bourneconservationtrust.org).*

# Kahlin's Korner

Kahlin's Korner is dedicated to the memory of Kahlin Jespersen, a child full of sunshine and a love of nature, and also to all children for whom we preserve a part of the natural world.



**Location:** Spring Hill Farm

**Instructor:** Hal DeWaltoff, Local Artist

**Date & Time:** To be determined after registration closes

**Registration Closes:** December 1, 2024

All Tools and Materials Will Be Provided!

**Don't miss out on this fun and creative opportunity at Spring Hill Farm!**

To register your child, please email [BCT.trails@gmail.com](mailto:BCT.trails@gmail.com) with:

**Child's Name and Age**

## STAY IN TOUCH

We urge you to visit the website: [www.bourneconservationtrust.org](http://www.bourneconservationtrust.org), to learn more about our history, mission, properties, trails, events and the many ways you can support the BCT. You can also track our progress on the Endowment Matching Gift Fund.

As you navigate through the website, look for pictures contributed by numerous gifted photographers, particularly pictures of local wildlife. Then, as you wander along our trails, enjoying the quiet, peaceful serenity and never-ending wonders of nature, take your own picture of any wildlife or wonder of nature you come

across. You can share it with us at [bct.trails@gmail.com](mailto:bct.trails@gmail.com)

Reminders:

- ◆ Send us your wildlife sightings, your stories or other trail trivia.
- ◆ If you see wildlife in trouble, call the Cape Wildlife Center (508-362-0111) for help.
- ◆ Think about donating a section of fence for Spring Hill Farm.
- ◆ Support the Trail Meisters out on the trails.
- ◆ Pay a visit to our goats; they love visitors.
- ◆ Support the BCT, as a donor or a volunteer (or both)

PO Box 203  
Cataumet, MA  
02534

Non Profit Organization  
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Cataumet, MA 02534

Address Service  
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*Contact Information:*

508-563-2884

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