

# BOURNE CONSERVATION TRUST

## EYES ON OWLS

(See page 4)



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# A NOTE FROM STEVE BALLENTINE

*Bourne is a town of many distinct villages—each with its own unique character. One thing that connects nearly all of them is the work of the Bourne Conservation Trust. Over the years, we have preserved land in Sagamore, Gray Gables, Monument Beach, Pocasset, and Cataumet—over 350 acres in total.*

*When I became President of the BCT in 1980, I could not have imagined how much we would accomplish together. We have protected dozens of properties from development and made many of them accessible for public enjoyment—with scenic views, open fields, wooded trails, waterfront, and two access points to the Cape Cod Canal. We've created and cared for miles of well-maintained walking trails, allowing people to connect with the land we've worked so hard to protect.*



*We also established a permanent home at Spring Hill Farm in Cataumet, thanks to the generosity of Joan Mayhew who donated this property, which was her long time home. And we're proud to own and maintain the historic Cataumet train depot, which remains an active hub for community events under the stewardship of the Cataumet Civic Associates.*

*We also launched a campaign to enrich our Endowment Fund to help secure the BCT's future, and recently added over 1.5 million to the fund, ensuring that the work we've begun will continue for generations to come.*

*This year marked another important step forward—we hired our first paid employee, Administrative Assistant Shannon Heino, who brings talent and dedication to our daily work. None of this could have happened without you—our community. Your trust, your time, and your continued generosity have made all the difference. Time and again, when I asked for your support, you answered. Together, we've preserved not just land, but the character and identity of our villages.*

*After 45 years of involvement, Sally and I feel it is time to step back from leading the day-to-day work of the Trust. We will remain available to help as needed, but the moment has come for a new generation of leadership and fresh energy.*

*I am pleased to share that the Board of Trustees has elected Jack Dawley as the next President of the Bourne Conservation Trust, and he has accepted the role. I have every confidence in Jack's leadership, and I hope you will offer him the same strong support you have given me over the decades.*

*With deep appreciation and thanks to you all,*

Stephen Ballentine,  
President 1980-2025



*Incoming BCT President Jack Dawley, with Steve Ballantine.*

## **A Special Thank You to Grace Rowe**

We extend our deepest thanks to Grace Rowe, who retired this year as Treasurer of the Bourne Conservation Trust.

Grace joined the BCT Board of Trustees and became Treasurer in 2004. In addition to managing the financial responsibilities with care and precision, Grace took on far more than the typical duties of a Treasurer.

She played a key role in organizing and overseeing countless successful fundraising efforts—including the

memorable auctions at Parker's Boat Yard (remember those?) and the ever-creative "No Dinner Dinner" (did you get an invitation?). She also helped produce our newsletters, championed the Baxendale Woods campaign with tireless energy, and was a driving force behind the annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinners—many of which she generously hosted herself.

Most recently, Grace oversaw much of the transformation of Spring Hill Farm into our BCT office and headquarters, and she is largely responsible for the welcoming and thoughtfully-designed interior space. The comfort and functionality of our

new workspace are due to her vision and effort.

These are just a few highlights among the countless contributions Grace has made over the years. Her dedication, creativity, and generosity have had a lasting impact on the Trust, and we are immensely grateful.

Thank you Grace.



*Matt Stone and Grace Rowe*

## **New Treasurer—Matt Stone**

We are pleased to announce that Trustee Matt Stone has been elected to succeed Grace as Treasurer. A trustee since 2020, Matt has been deeply involved in the day-to-day work of the BCT and, as a Certified Public Accountant, brings professional expertise that makes him well-suited for the role. We look forward to his leadership in this new capacity.

# EYES ON OWLS: WHAT A HOOT!

By Gordon Schimmel

In early May, the Bourne Conservation Trust treated visitors to "Eyes on Owls," a unique live animal presentation for anyone who wants to know more about these magnificent birds of prey. Mark and Marcia Wilson have been educating and entertaining school, library and community groups during the past 32 years. They have delivered more than 250 programs, reaching a total audience of over half a million children and adults, a massive legacy and testimony to their commitment to avian education.

They began their program by emphasizing that these birds are not pets and noted that they have special permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as five New England states to use them in educational programs. Their animals are permanently disabled due to unfortunate collisions with vehicles or because they were imprinted on humans when young and cannot survive in the wild.

They introduced us to two Screech Owls, followed by a Barred Owl, a Barn Owl and a Great Horned Owl, all of which can be found on Trust properties. Also included was one of the largest members of the owl family,



*These owls are ready for their closeup! Below, the crowd lined the hill behind the barn.*

a native of Europe and Asia. In addition, there was a special appearance of a daytime hunter that, according to Marcia, has a rather possessive crush on Mark. More on this later.

Few of us have had the opportunity to see so many of these creatures close-up, to enjoy the exquisite detail in their plumage and witness their studied, penetrating gaze. As Mark noted, the Eurasian Eagle Owl does not actually look at you, she seems "to look through you!" Further, he says that all of the owls in their care "seem to 'study' us", especially the Great Horned Owl that becomes agitated when they

are getting ready to pack them up for a show. He's pretty sure the bird really just doesn't like to travel!

The presentation also covered some of the misconceptions such as how many degrees an owl can rotate its head, a necessary adaptation because its eyes are fixed in its sockets. Evidently owls can't give anything the "side-eye" without some serious head turning. They discussed the diet they provide (mice, mice and more mice) and the pellets they create. We also got to practice hooting lessons. For example, the very much-misnamed Screech Owl doesn't ever screech; it trills and whinnies. We tried to mimic the baritone call of the Great Horned Owl, an act of territorial supremacy when it begins nesting in early January. And, we were treated to the Barred Owl's call that some think sounds a bit like, "Who cooks for you-all?" an odd, epicurean question from a bird that prefers mice, sushi style, i.e., uncooked.

The surprise guest of the show was the smallest bird, the Kestrel,





## ***I attended both of Marcia and Mark's presentations and bought Mark's excellent book because—full disclosure—I'm an owl junkie.***

a petite member of the falcon family that hunts by day. Many of us have seen them on Trust properties, hovering 30 or so feet in the air over a spot where a snack may be hiding in the grass of a meadow or at the edge of a cranberry bog. For reasons unknown to Mark and Marcia, this bird has bonded with Mark and won't permit Marcia to come near without a fuss. Such are the mysterious ways of our feathered friends.

I attended both of Marcia and Mark's presentations and bought Mark's excellent book because—full disclosure—I'm an owl junkie. Upon finishing graduate school, I was the first executive director of the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst, Massachusetts. Soon after beginning the job I became a foster parent to a young, almost fully-fledged Gray Eastern Screech-Owl that a passerby dropped off on my doorstep. At the time there was no New England Wildlife Center as we now have in Barnstable but I did have some help from the Audubon center in East Hampton.\*

I borrowed their large cage and for the next few weeks I fed it small pieces of meat wrapped in feathers with a bit of thread. I fancied that I taught it to hunt by tugging the concoction across the kitchen floor until it pounced and swallowed the

treat whole, but I am certain it already pretty much knew what to do. I did my best to avoid having it "imprint" on me, not going so far as to dress up in an owl suit, but never

stroking it or encouraging it to sit on my finger.

The sad but inevitable day came when I released it into a nearby pine tree, never to see it again, hoping it would flourish. The owl may or may not have imprinted on me but from my brief caregiver role, count me as one who is forever imprinted by these elegant birds of prey. It was a privilege of a lifetime.

*\*Editor's note: It is no longer legal to raise wild animals without a license but Cape Wildlife Center <https://capewildlifecenter.com/> in Barnstable is well equipped with trained staff to help with emergencies.*

### **AN APOLOGY**

*Try as we might to be perfect when compiling our annual Donor Books, thanking all of you who contributed to the BCT, mistakes sometimes happen. We send our apologies to the families noted below who were generous donors in 2024 but were not recognized in the latest edition:*

Sandra Alisch	Mears Family Fund of
Keith & Laurie Bartlett	Cape Cod Foundation
Donald Coen & Deborah Marvel	John Moriarty
Ralph & Joan Crowley	Larry & Carol Murphy
Alice DeNormandie/Surendra Shah	Thomas & Ellen O'Flaherty
Joseph Duggan & Laura Morrall	Bill & Tracy O'Neill
Rebecca Glen	John & Judy Powers
Clare & Roy Hefferman	Noreen Redmann
Maryann & Mark Hughes	Peter & Lucy Robbins
Illinois Tool Works Foundation	Harriet & Steven Rubin
Jane Jackson	Doreen Shea
Christopher & Donna Kent	Edith Sweeney
Kingman Yacht Center	Rich & Bonnie Thomas
Locke Family	Wally & Kathy Weld
Julie MacNary	Mr. & Mrs. Christopher White
Judy Martin	

# OUT ON THE TRAILS

In our last newsletter, we announced an agreement to purchase the Austin Woods, a scenic 30-acre woodland located in Pocasset. This property offers direct access to 470 acres of protected Town Forest and Bourne Water District land, and is a valuable and now protected natural resource. The land includes a network of walking and mountain biking trails, the



Trail Meisters just had to clean them up, widen them, and add signage. Walking these trails gives you direct access to the Town Forest and Four Ponds Conservation area and all of their well-established trails. The land straddles Valley Bars Road, just off 541 County Road. The best place to park is in the lot on Valley Bars Road. Trail maps can be found on the BCT website under the Trails tab and at the trailheads. The BCT applied for and received a state for-

estry grant to help with the purchase of this property.

The Trail Meisters, ever-ready, have performed their regular trimming and dead fall cleanup on all the BCT trails, and have:

- ◆ Installed four new benches at Ocean Avenue, the old Cataumet Garden Center, the entrance to the Cataumet Greenway on Red Brook Harbor Road, and Bourne Sisters.
- ◆ John Holden continues to manicure the grass at the entrance areas to the ever-popular Baxendale Woods. Thank you John.
- ◆ Red Brook Pond draws walkers and hikers everyday. A number of fallen trees were removed during the summer months.
- ◆ Cataumet Greenway requires a lot of attention because of its size. Several Trail Meisters walk this area daily so tree or limb issues are cleaned up the day that the problem is reported.
- ◆ Cataumet Garden Center is our hidden gem and has a dedicated Trail Meister, Brian Sauro, who lives close by. He manages the entire system by himself, by mowing, cutting limbs and removing debris. This is a wonderful place to walk the perimeter and enjoy a beautiful sunset over the central crest of the property.



Next up, making plans for the new 7.34 acres off County Road in Pocasset. (See page 11.)

There are about 38 Trail Meisters now, and we are always happy to welcome more. To volunteer, call 508-563-2884 or email [bct.trails@gmail.com](mailto:bct.trails@gmail.com).

Thank you to all our Trail Meisters and especially to Dick Murphy, their fearless leader.





Page 6, far left, Sue Anagnos and Laura Murphy at SHF clean up day. Upper right: Main entrance to our newest trail area, Austin Woods. Lower right Matt Stone installs sign at Austin Woods.

This page: Upper left, Paul Rossi and Lang Allen cut up a large pine tree at Monks Park on a snowy day. Upper right: Brian Sauro, Al Cunningham, Bill Farley, and Rob Whittaker install new signage at the entrance to the BCT office at SHF. Right: New bench at Ocean Avenue.

#### New to Town or the Trails?

Go to [www.bourneconservationtrust.org](http://www.bourneconservationtrust.org) for BCT trail maps. Copies are available at Ballentine's Boat Shop, Parker's Boat Yard, Kingman Marine, Bourne Public Library and Bourne Town Hall.



## MONEY MATTERS

Lucky us. We have a loyal (and anonymous) benefactor who in 2024 established a Matching Gift to raise money for the 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 worked like this:

- ◆ From May 1 to December 31, 2024, the donor matched 100% of your donations, up to a maximum of \$250,000. With your support, that challenge was met.
- ◆ From January 1 to the spring of this year, thanks to you and way before the year-end deadline, the donor again matched 100% of your donations up to \$250,000.

**This increased our endowment by \$1,000,000 in less than two years. And thanks to the overwhelming success of that fundraising effort, another anonymous donor contributed an additional \$500,000 to the BCT Endowment Fund. Wow!**

#### Looking Forward, After Taking a Look Back

With our Endowment Fund in such good shape, we can't help but look forward to BCT's next 50 years, and all the new properties, walking trails and, yes, adventures ahead. But we can't do that without first taking time to reflect on our first 45 years. Thanks to our members, volunteers, and more than generous donors, the BCT now oversees more than 350 acres of land that will NOT be developed. With our many volunteers, much of this land has been cleared, walking trails established, benches and bridges installed, and wildflowers planted. We have a farm with horses and goats and a BCT office, all fixed up. And just think, the Endowment Fund will ensure that the BCT continues to thrive and care for the open spaces that we have preserved for years to come. But the endowment will not cover everything, we still need your donations large and small to support our yearly operating expenses, help purchase available and suitable land, and maintain a healthy endowment.

# THE SLOWEST CREATURES ON BCT LANDS

By Gordon Schimmel

In a dive at sometimes as much as 240 miles per hour, Peregrine Falcons are recognized as the fastest wild creature on the planet. On occasion, they are known to visit the Cape to nest and rear their young under a Canal bridge, close to Bourne Conservation Trust properties. This got us thinking about the alternative, namely what might be the slowest creature on BCT properties. Thus began an investigation to learn more about the slow and steady among us.

The first candidate that came to mind was the earthworm. However, we discovered that our versions of the species comfortably manage as much as 20 to 30 feet per hour, depending on the density of the soil. Next, we checked out the garden snail, commonly found in our woodlands only to discover that they can top out at as much as 15 feet per hour. Not as slow as we thought so maybe it was time to shift our focus to the BCT shoreline. Marine animals like starfish and sea anemones are mind-numbingly slow and we were sure that one of these would be our winner.

"Whoa!" declared our friendly BCT fact-checker. "How about our recent visitor, the Cicada? Not the species of Cicada that arrive each year during the dog days of summer. No, we're talking about the periodical Cicada—those that emerge from the ground every 13 or 17 years, exactly the kind that visited us last spring."

Digging deeper (so to speak) we learned that their scientific name is *Magicicada*.

They are part of 15 of known "Broods" in the United States and they are pretty magical indeed. After hatching from an egg, the nymph falls to earth and digs down a few inches under the nearest tree or bush. Once underground, they molt five times over the course of the next 13 or 17 years, burrowing down not much more than two feet. As they feed on xylem from the roots, they slowly make their way back towards

CONTENDERS	
	<b>Earthworm</b> Wanna be.
	<b>Garden Snail</b> Close, but no cigar.
	<b>Starfish</b> Semifinalist
	<b>Sea Anemone</b> Runner up.
	<b>Cicada Magicada</b> Dark horse.

the surface. I'm no math whiz but I think my 8th grade total distance traveled over/total time formula would reveal that the underground speed of the Cicada nymph (where they spend 99.5% of their lifespan) is unhurried, to say the least.

However, after 13 or 17 years (have we mentioned this already? It bears repeating!) things do pick up when earthen temps hit around 65 degrees Fahrenheit. They emerge from the

ground en masse with oh, so many stories to tell! And then it's back to business with a trip up the nearest vertical object, usually a tree, where they molt one more time and sprout wings. Sad to say, their flight is somewhat less than elegant: not much in style but enough in substance to get them into the nearest tree where the real party begins.

At more than 100 decibels the males' songs are louder than your basic hairdryer. And, when two or three species sing at once, the pulsating atonal churrrrrrr is deafening. Some Tinnitus sufferers maintain that the chorus sooths ringing ears but the jury is still out on this remedy for most of us.

However, it's music to a female Cicada's ears and she clicks a response that, in spite of the din, is somehow audible to the nearest male of her species. She moves in his direction and it's "game on" for a tryst. Not long after, the female deposits eggs by the hundreds in the soft bark of twigs and the stage is set for another life cycle.

Some Cicada species have managed to carry on like this for 200 million years, many hundreds of times longer than homo sapiens have been around, so who are we to complain about the noise?

At last, we think we have our winner. Even if you factor in the speedier travel during the final month-long tree climbing/flying phase, these irrepressible critters have to be the slowest moving things on the planet. Put another way, if you sent a snail, a sea anemone and a periodical Cicada out to pick up a pizza, the first two would be back a very long



*Cicada pic taken at SHF, and Cicada eggs laid on maple leaf.*

time before anyone hears from the Cicada.

What purpose do they serve? As aerators of the soil of course, but mostly as a handy feast for birds of all sizes from turkeys to titmice as well as tasty treats for raccoons, turtles, even Fido, the family pooch. They are defenseless;

they neither bite nor sting. They survive by satiating their predators and then, by sheer numbers, they ensure survival of their species. And, let's not forget, humans. Down through the millennia, from First Nation peoples, to present-day indigenous folks with family recipes and restaurants in many parts of the

world, Cicadas are crunchy morsels.

So, why not here? We already dine on marine arthropods—lobsters, shrimp and crabs—but why not Cicadas? This could be the next classic Cape Cod treat. Cold brews and Fried Cicada rolls, anyone? Yum, yum!

## EVENTS: In Partnership with...



*Trail Meisters George Gillis and Chuck Bushey digging in tree saplings at the Dimmick Christmas Tree farm.*

### Creative Kids

This summer, Hal DeWaltoff and Grace Rowe sponsored a special two-hour Drawing Lesson for kids ages 7–10 at

Spring Hill Farm. They provided all the tools, materials and guidance the kids needed to hone their artistic skills, plus snacks.

### 1,000 Easter Eggs, and the Hunt Is On

This cherished tradition is like a community reunion organized by the Cataumet Civic Associates, along with help from the BCT and the Cataumet Methodist Church.

Candy eggs are hidden throughout a section of Spring Hill Farm, including "golden" eggs. Families arrive, the Easter Bunny appears, the goats and horses are on alert for some visitors, and the hunt begins. Thanks to all who helped with this favorite family event.

### Yoga and Reiki Day on Spring Hill Farm

The horses and goats loved watching and providing endless commentary. On a picture perfect September day, eighteen folks gathered for some guided meditation and gentle yoga led by Danielle Briggs and Audrey Davis-Stok. There was a small fee for this activity, which included a donation to the BCT.

### Eyes on Owls

See *Eyes on Owls: What a Hoot!*, by Gordon Schimmel, on page 4.

### Events Notice

If you want to be kept posted on BCT events and activities at Spring Hill Farm, send your email address to [bct.trails@gmail.com](mailto:bct.trails@gmail.com). You'll receive advance notice on our programs, with dates, times and details.

### Christmas Trees

For over 20 years, the Dimmick family has been planting a variety of evergreens in the hollow behind "the field" at their home in Cataumet. As the trees mature, they become Christmas trees for many local families. Each holiday season, the Dimmicks sell the trees and donate all proceeds to the Bourne Conservation Trust. No tree is cut until it has been chosen by its purchaser, ensuring the freshest tree possible. For many, the annual Dimmick Christmas Tree Sale has become a cherished holiday tradition. Once again, we thank the Dimmicks for their generosity.

# 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.*

Following our request in the spring donor booklet, Juniper Polloni, age 10, sent us this Great Horned Owl diorama, with the owl made from felt. The owl's prey is a mouse she crocheted. The owl measures 7" in height.

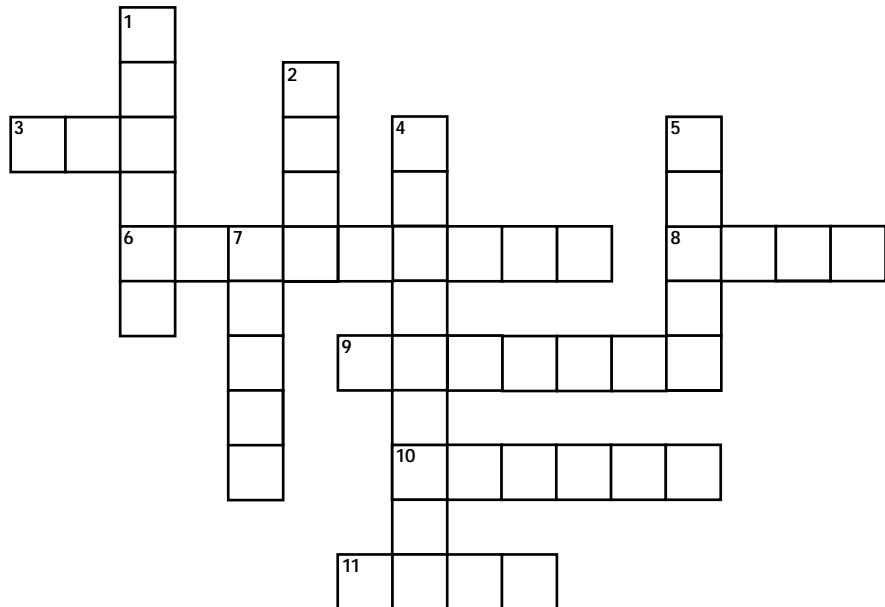
## EYES ON OWLS CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### Across

- 3. Wise Old \_\_\_
- 6. Active at Night
- 8. Where Owls Rest, Lay Eggs and Feed Their Young
- 9. To Nest in One's Place and Move to a Different Place in Winter
- 10. Tiny Owl Chicks
- 11. An Owls Mouth

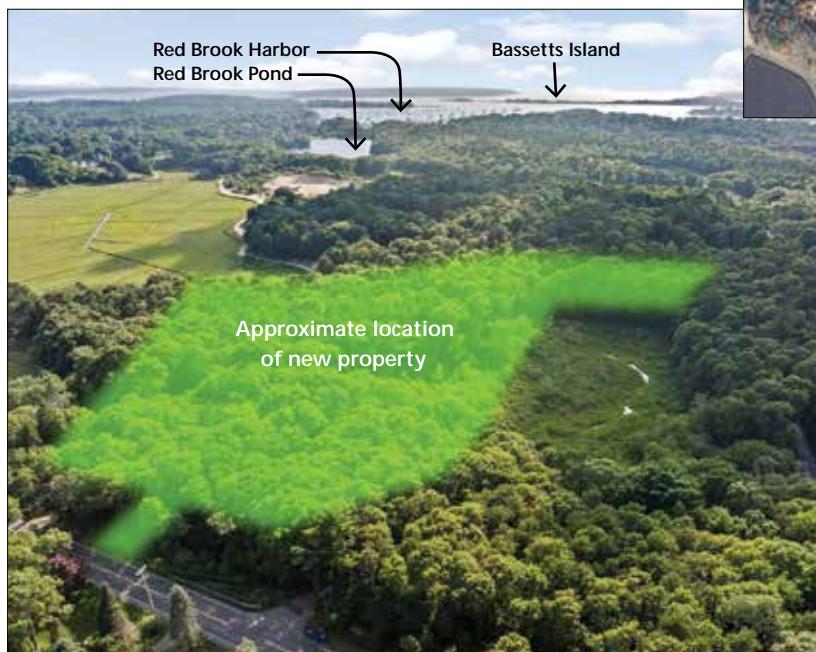
### Down

- 1. Owls Claws that are Sharp
- 2. Sound Owls Make
- 4. Meat Eating Bird or Animal
- 5. Area Where Owls Live or An Appliance in the Kitchen
- 7. Top of Owl's Head or A King's Hat



Answers to Crossword on next page.

# A NEW PROPERTY



At left, drone's eye view of approximate location of new property. Photo for diagram courtesy of Jack Conway Real Estate. Above, potential location of new trails. Below, BCT properties map.



## Wait—BCT is buying another property?

You bet!

The Bourne Conservation Trust has made a deposit and signed an agreement to purchase 7.34 acres of land, on County Road in Pocasset. This beautiful parcel borders undeveloped Barnstable County Hospital land and the cranberry bogs that access Red Brook Pond Conservation Area—an ideal spot for future trails and wildlife habitat.

If all goes according to plan, the purchase will close sometime in 2026. After that, you can bet the Trail Meisters will be out there, loppers and chain saws in hand, clearing new trails for all of us to enjoy. So yes, the rumors are true—BCT is growing again!

**And to make it happen, we need your help to raise \$650,000 for this exciting addition to protected open space in Bourne.**

Crossword Answers: Across: 3. Owl, 6. Nocturnal, 8. Nest, 9. Migrator, 10. Owlets, 11. Beak

Down: 1. Tails, 2. Hoot, 4. Carnivore, 5. Range, 7. Crown

## Board of Directors

Jack Dawley, President  
Matt Stone, Treasurer  
Steve Ballentine, Trustee  
Eugenie Birch, Trustee  
Tom Corcoran, Trustee  
Philip DeNormandie, Trustee  
Dick Murphy, Trustee  
Grace Rowe, Trustee



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 ambience and make it available for recreational and educational purposes. The BCT owns and maintains more than 350 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)

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*Lawrence Island on a serene autumn day.*