

Boothbay Region  
Land Trust



**BARN AT AUTUMN VIEW OFFERS HISTORIC LANDMARK AT NEW PRESERVE**

*by Christine Selman, Communications & Outreach Manager*

**Mainers are often noted for their self-sufficiency, tenacity and resilience. In a place where, even** in 2024, residents might count more than a week without power in winter, it takes a certain fortitude to call this region home. These characteristics of resourcefulness and perseverance have taken root in communities like ours over generations as a response to the realities of life in a remote and rugged landscape.

Boothbay Region Land Trust's newest nature preserve, Autumn View, offers a unique window into the ways early Mainers responded to the challenges of everyday life. The preserve encompasses land that was farmed for over two hundred years. Farming in Maine has always presented formidable obstacles, from thin soil to a short growing season and geographic isolation, all of which were certainly challenges that early farmers on Autumn View encountered.

Today the most obvious relic of Autumn View's farming past is a captivating 1800s married-frame timber barn. Observers of this barn are immediately struck

by its impressive stature, as well as its noteworthy craftsmanship. Yet one of the most fascinating realities of this building is that despite its remarkable construction, it was never intended to be anything extraordinary; on the contrary, the barn was built to address the ordinary struggles of life on the farm and the pragmatic needs of the farmers.

The Giles barn was probably built by John Leishman, Jr. who inherited the land at Autumn View from his father in the early 1800s. Leishman grew up on this land in the original homestead (a noteworthy 1775 cape built by his father, John Leishman, Sr., and one of the region's oldest buildings until it unfortunately fell into disrepair and was torn down around the turn of the 21st century). Having been raised on that land would no doubt have given Leishman a deep familiarity with its features and challenges, all of which seem to have influenced the construction of the barn.

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**Photo Credit: Robert Crink &  
Peter Southwick**

## FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Nicholas J. Ullo



**Over the past six years, Oak Point Farm has become** the established hub for Boothbay Region Land Trust's (BRLT's) public outreach, educational programming, and special events. During this time, we've watched as our headquarters has grown in popularity. We've seen our programming and events expand, attracting more visitors to the preserve. This growth has made it increasingly clear that the current parking set up does not adequately meet the many needs of Oak Point Farm.

Nestled along the stunning coastline, Oak Point Farm offers breathtaking views and diverse habitats. The preserve is a cherished spot for nature lovers, while the visitor center is a launching point for many outdoor enthusiasts exploring the region. Organized groups, including schools, appreciate the facilities and the varied opportunities for educational programming there. The preserve has also provided an excellent location for hosting a wide variety of events. However, the challenges of high visitation often lead to congestion and parking difficulties that detract from the overall experience.

We've all seen that, during peak times, the limited parking capacity frequently results in overcrowding, making it difficult for guests to find suitable spaces and forcing people to park off-road. Other challenges have occurred when groups like schools visit and struggle with bus access. This not only frustrates visitors but can have a destructive ecological impact. At this time, BRLT is developing plans to expand the parking facilities to improve access for nature enthusiasts, hikers, schools and families eager to explore the scenic trails, natural playground and waterfront areas. A well-planned parking solution that limits impact to habitats while optimizing already developed areas will enhance the visitor experience while preserving the natural landscape we all cherish.

Beyond the need for parking improvements, upgrading our stewardship and maintenance garage is crucial for the long-term sustainability of BRLT. As a vital community resource, effective management and maintenance are necessary for protecting the diverse ecosystems on our properties. Improved stewardship facilities would enhance our ability to carry out important work, such as trail maintenance, habitat restoration, water sampling and educational programming. Also, coupling the garage project with parking enhancements will allow for more strategic decision making, such as installing some much-needed vehicle charging stations that can tie in with the garage's electrical system.

By investing in both parking and stewardship facilities, we feel confident that Oak Point Farm will remain a welcoming and well-maintained destination for future generations. These improvements would not only enhance the visitor experience, but also support the conservation efforts of BRLT. We look forward to coming together as a community to address these needs and look forward to sharing more about these concepts as they develop.

## BRLT'S SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMING EXPANDS

by Christine Selman, *Communications & Outreach Manager*

### Boothbay Region Land Trust's environmental education has reached a new milestone this fall.

While the Land Trust has worked with regional schools to provide educational programming for decades, this year is the first in which each of the three public elementary schools on the peninsula will have a regular schedule of on-site programming in the outdoors offered by BRLT.

Southport Central School provided the pilot study for year-round outdoor programming, and this partnership is now in its tenth year. Dubbed "Forest Friday," the weekly program offers seasonally-informed outdoor lessons utilizing the natural spaces of the school yard for students in Kindergarten and first-grade. In coordination with the classroom teacher, BRLT works to tie lessons to curriculum and learning objectives, while also providing opportunities for free play in nature.

The Edgecomb program began a few years later and is now in its sixth year. At Edgecomb, BRLT works with the first-grade class outdoors throughout the year, providing lessons on natural habitats, the seasons, wildlife, and much more. This fall, the Land Trust has begun a new year-round program for Boothbay Region Elementary School's preschool class. Again, the pre-K students will be spending time outside throughout the year learning in the natural settings of the school yard.



*Above: Boothbay Region Elementary students sit in a sharing circle*

*Top Left: South Central student works on a sound map*

*Bottom Left: Edgecomb Eddy students collect samples during a forest study*



"It is very fortunate that all of our regional elementary schools have great natural spaces that enable us to explore a wide variety of nature-based lessons right in the school yards," notes environmental educator, Tracey Hall. "By meeting students at their schools, children not only learn to appreciate the nature around them every day, but they also continue to observe and learn even after the lesson ends." Visiting schools directly also makes these experiential learning opportunities more feasible for teachers by eliminating the time and cost constraints of field trips. The connection children make with Tracey and the Land Trust often persists in future years as they participate in subsequent field trips, or visit land trust properties with their families. Making a strong connection with students at an early age encourages a life-long appreciation for nature and the environment.

BRLT offers free educational programming to schools across the Boothbay Region. To learn more about the Land Trust's school-based educational opportunities, visit our website at [bbrlt.org](http://bbrlt.org) and click on the link for education.



## Autumn View Barn (Continued from page 1)

The design and construction of the barn was likely an organic process that developed over time in response to specific needs on the farm, rather than as a set design. There are indications that the barn was built in two distinct stages during the early 1800s. Preservation specialist Arron Sturgis of Preservation Timber Framing has noted two different sets of carpentry marks visible on the timbers. It may have been enlarged around 1819 when records indicate an increase in property tax value of the barn—suggesting that Leishman may have adjusted the barn to meet changing needs over time. This particular barn appears to have been used both for livestock and hay. One interesting aspect of the barn is its immense size. Its tall stature resembles a style of barn referred to as “Old Majestics” that did not really emerge in Maine until the end of the 1800s. In this way, the Giles barn, built much earlier in the century, was ahead of its time in its design; yet when considering the landscape of Autumn View, it appears likely the stature was a deliberate choice.



*The upper loft of the Giles barn may have been used for drying marsh hay*

Historian Aimée Keithan of the Boothbay Region Historical Society explains that salt marsh hay would need space and ventilation to dry out. Leishman might have decided that an additional elevated loft in the barn was the most effective strategy to dry the hay and catch the breezes, while the lower level was used for livestock. In this way, Keithan sees the Giles barn as “an example of vernacular architecture that demonstrates everyday problem solving.” Not many pragmatic structures of this nature still stand today, which makes this barn special. These structures have a unique ability to demonstrate how early Mainers found creative ways to overcome challenges.

Today Leishman is recognized as the master builder responsible for some of the region’s oldest landmarks, including the Auld-McCobb House in Boothbay Harbor; yet Leishman isn’t likely to have identified himself as a builder. At the time, there were very few professional architects in Maine, and Leishman never recorded professional income from building. His sole source of taxable income came from farming (livestock and tillage), but like many subsistence farmers, he probably bartered skills such as building in return for goods or services. In the case of the Giles barn, it is doubtful Leishman would have outsourced its construction as he was clearly capable of doing the job himself. Thus, while we cannot confirm Leishman was the builder through historic records, the evidence suggests he was.

## Autumn View Barn (Continued)

Following the Leishmans' stewardship of the farm, the Giles family owned and operated a dairy farm on the site throughout the twentieth century. The Giles farm had an excellent reputation for its milk, owing no doubt to the care the Giles family took in raising their animals. Each cow was individually named and the Giles family kept meticulous records of each cow's heritage. The barn today still features some of the handmade wooden signs engraved with the names of their cows. Bickford and Edna Giles were the final farmers of Autumn View, which ceased operations in the second half of the twentieth century—a time when Maine saw many family-scale farms close.

While the economy of Maine today has changed, the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the Maine people continues, and the Giles barn will be a place for our community to connect with this history for generations to come. The Giles barn was carefully restored by Preservation Timber Framing prior to the land trust's acquisition of the building. While the interior space will

serve the functional needs of the land trust, such as equipment storage, the barn is an incredible historic landmark that BRLT looks forward to sharing with the public. Interpretative signage will be placed alongside the barn to provide historical background for visitors, and the land trust will be offering educational programs at Autumn View to provide more information about the preserve's connection to our community and way of life.

Autumn View Preserve is not yet open for public use. Work on the preserve has been ongoing and will continue through the fall in preparation for the official opening and branch cutting now scheduled for Spring 2025. BRLT will be posting more information on our website and in subsequent newsletters announcing the date of the official opening.

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*We'd like to acknowledge the research of Aimée Keithan of the Boothbay Region Historical Society as well as Barbara Rumsey, whose work provided critical information and context for this article.*

## MEET BRLT'S NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Erika Eurkus is VP of Resource Development at Accion International, a global NGO. She has also worked as a loan officer and program manager for U.S. microfinance programs, and launched 'Brewing the American Dream,' an award-winning corporate partnership program. Erika serves on the board of Bridges Homeward, a nonprofit serving children and families, and she previously served on the board of the Massachusetts Community Banking Council. She has also participated in many advisory committees. Erika is passionate about the outdoors and animal welfare, and volunteers for several groups including Midcoast Humane.



Gray Ferris is a special education teacher at Boothbay Region High School and a member of the Bangor Symphony Orchestra. Before working in education, Gray performed with orchestras in the United States and Mexico as a symphony musician. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Music Education, went on to earn a Masters in Music Performance; an Associate's in Entrepreneurship; and a second Masters of Education specializing in Special Education. A licensed captain, Gray also leads sailing and powerboating courses. In his free time, he enjoys hiking, kayaking and exploring with his wife Roxana and step-daughter Jackie.



Melissa Holmes is an attorney and Certified Financial Planner specializing in estate planning and administration, businesses, non-profit corporations, and real estate. Melissa is a Boothbay Harbor native; after attending local schools, she earned her undergraduate and law degrees at Boston University, and is currently enrolled in the LLM in Taxation program at Georgetown University. Melissa has served on the Land Trust's investment committee for several years and previously served on the board and investment committee of the Boothbay Region YMCA. She lives in Boothbay Harbor with her children, Asher and Keira.



## STEWARDSHIP SPOTLIGHT: AUTUMN MOWING FOR SPRING GROWING

by Scott Peterson, Stewardship Manager



**Autumn is a season to appreciate the vibrant life cycle of meadows. Although spring heralds** refreshing green after a dull winter, the biodiversity displayed in autumn is truly spectacular. BRLT's management practices support the vast diversity of wildlife that rely on meadow habitats late into the fall season.

Active management stewardship strategies for meadows promote a full life cycle among plants, animals, birds, and insects. Mowing meadows late in the fall offers multiple benefits to the ecosystem, both to complete one period of growth and prepare for the next. This is called mowing for successional habitat and it actually encourages an early return to health in these meadow habitats.

Delaying mowing until late autumn allows annual grasses to mature and flower so they may repopulate through seeding. It also allows for a greater variety of plants to support other species. Meanwhile, all that flowering invites pollinators to enjoy a lengthy feeding phase. Bees and flies will support themselves throughout the summer as the blooms change while butterflies operate on a shorter life span and migratory hummingbirds visit the Boothbay region only briefly.

Aside from pollinators, insect activity in the meadows during autumn is something we humans experience audibly as crickets and grasshoppers loudly sing for mates. Singing Meadows gets its name from the cacophony of sounds one hears in the meadow and fall is a prime time to enjoy it. As the fall progresses, the din softens, sending a signal that eggs have been laid to remain dormant for the winter. In the spring,

larvae and nymphs will provide high-protein food sources for animals and birds as well as repopulate the ecosystem.

The tall grasses and flowering plants of autumn also assist migratory and ground-nesting birds by providing safety from predators. As birds ready for winter, they feed on insect life while the dense collection of grasses and flowers provides much needed shelter.

While late Autumn mowing benefits many meadow species, rodents are susceptible to mowing even late in the season. Autumn mowing exposes rodents who enjoy the protection of tall vegetation. Coyotes and foxes are known to follow tractors waiting for mice and voles to scurry as grassy warrens are exposed. However, limiting rodent population is often necessary for maintaining ecological balance in meadows.

Some may wonder, why mow at all? In order to maintain our meadow habitats in the region, mowing is necessary. Without mowing, trees would encroach on these lands and out-compete grasses; white pines and oaks are notorious for proliferating at the edges of meadows, generating shadows which prevent grasses from flowering and re-seeding. Over time, this encroachment reinforces itself and gradually the meadows revert to forest.

BRLT is committed to protecting the region's meadows, forests, wetlands and shoreline through responsible application of best practices in land conservation and stewardship.

## IT WAS A CELEBRATION ON THE SEA AT BRLT'S CRUISING FOR CONSERVATION

by V. Skye Wood, Development Director

**Boothbay Region Land Trust's environmental** education has reached a new milestone this fall. On the evening of August 2, Boothbay Region Land Trust took to the seas aboard Cap'n Fish's Cruises' The Pink Lady II for a night of fun and fundraising! BRLT's Cruising for Conservation included a fully catered sunset cruise with music and dancing. Over 100 guests joined us for the evening, to celebrate the stunning unspoiled coastal properties and abundant wildlife made available in our region as a result of BRLT's conservation work, and continued community support.

The entire Cap'n Fish's Cruises crew were incredible hosts, going above and beyond to accommodate all of our event needs, and tending to our guests. Lead sponsor Tindal & Callahan Real Estate, as well as business supporters First National Bank, Knickerbocker Group, patron Marianne Reynolds, J. Edward Knight Insurance, Bath Savings Institution and Mine Oyster all, once again, generously contributed to the success of this Land Trust event. It truly is owed to their tremendous community support that these fundraising events are possible.

Because of these businesses, as well as the ticket buyers and donors, \$40,000 was raised through this event. We are so grateful to everyone who contributed to its success, and we look forward to seeing you next summer for more fun events in celebration our 45th anniversary year!



Above: Cindy Casey, Christine Selman, Bailey Charron & Mackenzie Bearor

Below: Guests enjoyed dancing late into the evening  
Photos by Kelsey Moon



## Summer 2025 Save the Dates

Celebrating 45 Years!

BRLT Birthday Bash



JULY 11, 2025

Family Fun Day



AUGUST 16, 2025

Annual Member Meeting



SEPTEMBER 25, 2025





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The Boothbay Region Land Trust seeks to conserve for the public benefit the natural habitat, scenic beauty and working land of the Boothbay region.



# WINTER SPECIAL EVENTS

## Volunteer Appreciation Party

**When:** December 5, 2024 from 5pm-7pm  
**Invite with more details coming soon!**



## Winter Solstice Lantern Walk

**When:** December 20, 2024 from 4pm-7pm  
**Where:** Oak Point Farm, 60 Samoset Rd. BBH



2024 Annual Conservation Partners:

