The OSPREY OBSERVER

NEWSLETTER 127

AUTUMN 2026

Boothbay Region Land Trust



DAMARISCOVE ISLAND WATCHTOWER SEES IMPROVEMENTS

by Scott Peterson, *Stewardship Manager*

The watchtower on Damariscove, which rests on the elevated southeast side of the island, is one of the most notable landmarks by land or by sea. The original tower was installed as part of Life Saving Station #8 in 1897 to aid the Coast Guard in looking for vessels in distress. Today, the watchtower remains a popular attraction for visitors and a landmark for fisherman and other boaters. From the elevated premonitory, hikers can look out to Matinicus, Monhegan, and the Camden Hills.

The thirty foot structure, which was rebuilt in the 1990s after the original tower fell into disrepair, is again in need of upkeep and repairs. Thanks to dedicated community members and seasonal staff, as well as the support of partners, and generous grant funding from the Elizabeth Ann Leach Charitable Trust, a series of improvements is underway with the ultimate goal of allowing supervised access to the tower on a scheduled basis.

After thirty years of weathering, the replica tower's cedar shingle roofing was in rough shape and replacing it was BRLT's top priority. Any building project on an island demands remarkable preparation to sequence a successful outcome. BRLT is fortunate to have partnerships and friends without whom this effort could not have been accomplished. Mark Stover of Red Hook Charters graciously donated his time and vessel to ferry lumber, shingles, and building materials to the island. Maine Island Trail Association recruited twelve volunteers from Bath Savings to manually carry supplies 1.2 miles from Damariscove Harbor to the tower. This required an incredible amount of effort and multiple runs back and forth between the harbor and tower. Substitute caretaker (and former BRLT staffer) Brad Weigel spent a day pounding nails on the roof. Sammie Huss, BRLT summer intern, made numerous trips carrying the heavy staging planks to and from the tower. Southport legend Gerry Gamage installed the copper ridge cap as the final layer of

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Cover: Chubb Whitten & Brad Weigel removing old shingles

BUILDING A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR OUR REGION

by Nicholas J. Ullo, *Executive Director*



At Boothbay Region Land Trust, we think a lot about the future. Every acre we conserve, every trail we maintain, and every habitat we protect is part of a commitment that extends far beyond our own lifetimes. Conservation is, at its core, an investment in a healthy and resilient future. That is why I am especially proud of the steps we have taken to make our own operations more sustainable.

Earlier this year, we installed a 50-panel solar array on the roof of the barn at Autumn View Preserve. Together with the smaller solar array at Oak Point Farm, these panels now produce 100% of the electricity used by Boothbay Region Land Trust.

This is an exciting accomplishment—but it means more to us than just an investment in renewable energy. It is an expression of the same values that guide our conservation work. When we protect land, build trails and offer environmental education, we are thinking significantly into the future. We recognize that the choices we make today shape the landscapes, waters, and communities of the Boothbay region for generations to come. By producing our electricity from the sun, we are applying that same long-term thinking to the way we operate as an organization.

The solar arrays also remind us that sustainability is not a single project or achievement. It is an ongoing practice of asking how we can reduce our impact, use resources responsibly, and make thoughtful choices that strengthen the health of our community and environment. From the fields, forests, and waters of our preserves to the energy that powers our buildings and equipment, we are working toward the same goal: leaving something healthy, vibrant, and enduring for those who come after us.

Together, we are building a more sustainable Boothbay region, one acre, one mile, and one sunlit panel at a time.



HOMES FOR HAWKS: NEW NESTING SITES ON BRLT PRESERVES

by Stan Wakefield

Boothbay Region Land Trust has recently installed structures to support nest sites for Ospreys and American Kestrels on two land trust preserves.



Above: Osprey platform installation at Oak Point Farm.
Below: Kestrel atop nest box at Zak (courtesy: Alan Phipps)

At Oak Point Farm, an Osprey nest platform was installed this past spring in hopes that it will provide a stable nest site for Ospreys to use for years to come. Ospreys represent a significant conservation success story in Maine. After their numbers declined dramatically in the 1950s-60s due to the widespread use of the pesticide DDT, they have been rebounding since the mid-1970s through today.

These "sea hawks" are unique among raptors in that their diet consists of live fish, and they are most seen around bodies of water including lakes, rivers, salt marshes, and coastal areas. They often use large dead trees as nest sites, but will also readily use purpose-built nest platforms like the one constructed by BRLT. Male and female Ospreys work together to feed and raise their young. It is our hope that young Ospreys will have noticed the new nesting platform this year, and that by next season, we will see active nesting on the platform.

The American Kestrel nest box was also installed this spring at Zak Preserve as part of a collaborative conservation initiative called the Maine Kestrel Project with partners Mid-Coast Audubon, Maine Natural History Observatory, and Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. This project emerged in response to the long-term population decline of the American Kestrel in Maine and beyond. The initiative attempts to provide nesting sites in suitable habitat throughout the midcoast region. BRLT was approached to collaborate on a nest box installation at Zak because that preserve presents the right habitat for this species.

The American Kestrel, commonly referred to as a sparrow hawk, has seen well-documented decline from habitat loss, pesticide exposure, increased predation, and competition for nest sites. Kestrels rely on natural tree cavities or ones excavated by woodpeckers for their nest sites. However, they will also readily use nest boxes built to specification like the box at Zak Preserve. American Kestrels are the smallest species of falcon found in the U.S. They are skilled hunters and are often seen perched on power lines or hovering over fields searching for prey such as field mice or voles. Like Ospreys, male and female Kestrels work together to feed and raise their young. Early in the spring a pair of Kestrels was seen in the vicinity of the new nest box. While this pair did not use the nest box this year, it is our hope that activity will develop in subsequent seasons. Mid-Coast Audubon will continue to monitor the site for future nest activity.



ART FOR ACRES: STONE SYMPOSIUM & ART AUCTION RETURNS TO OAK POINT FARM

by **V. Skye Wood**, *Development Director*

It is time to mark those calendars and purge the drab décor, for the much anticipated *Art for Acres: Stone Symposium & Art Auction* returns in 2027! Hosted by Boothbay Region Land Trust every four years in partnership with the Maine Stone Workers Guild, this very special event series celebrates the intersection of art, nature, tradition, and community. And like BRLT nature preserves, trails, and programs, *Art for Acres* offers opportunity for everyone to participate—ensuring that art, too, is accessible to all.



Seeking Aperture *by Joseph DiMauro was sculpted live during the 2022 Stone Symposium. This magnificent sculpture was generously purchased and donated to Boothbay Region Land Trust. It sits alongside the shore at Oak Point Farm for all to enjoy.*

It begins July 14 with the Maine Stone Symposium at BRLT's headquarters preserve, Oak Point Farm. Daily (10am-4pm) through July 25, visitors can enjoy an insider's view to the process of working with Maine's most abundant natural resource. Onlookers can interact with the sculptors, and witness the tremendous creativity, skill, and endurance required of these artisan stone workers as they transform enormous slabs of stone into beautiful, enduring works of art. Participating sculptors include John Catizone, Joseph DiMauro, Sam Finkelstein, Isabel Kelley, Andreas von Huene, and Dan Ucci, with support from Dick Alden.

A free, public Artist Reception & Art Preview will follow on July 27. Guests may view all works of art contributed towards the Art for Acres Auction, meet participating artists, and place early bids. The talent, vibrancy, and generosity of Maine's artist community will be on full display throughout Oak Point Farm's nature center and grounds with an extensive collection of paintings, textiles, jewelry, photography, mixed media, and additional sculpture.

The two weeks of art appreciation, learning, and hands-on activities will conclude with a grand finale on July 30, as BRLT hosts its largest fundraiser, the *Art for Acres Auction*. Tickets are required for this silent and live auction gala, and include cocktails, dinner, and lively bidding—all in support of BRLT's public lands, trails, and educational programs.

Ticket details and important information will be shared regularly leading up to the events. To ensure you receive the most up-to-date news, visit bbrlt.org and scroll down to the 'Join our Mailing List' form to sign up for our digital communications. Don't miss this captivating opportunity to experience art, nature, tradition, and community in a whole new way!

Watchtower Improvements

(Continued from page 1)

weather protection. These snapshots cannot do justice to the full scope of effort and support provided by many people over two months to complete this work.

However, we cannot share this project without highlighting the island residents who invested the most time and effort to support the roof project. Chubb Whitten, co-owner of the former Life Saving Station on the island, spent ten days high in the air stripping the old roof and installing the new shingles. His boundless energy and commitment to Damariscove is unparalleled. The land trust is grateful to have such a good neighbor. The island caretakers, Aiko Pandorf and Masa Peterson, were also essential contributors ferrying supplies, hoisting ladders, and removing debris all while maintaining trails and welcoming visitors throughout the summer months.

With this first phase of repairs complete, BRLT looks forward to moving ahead with additional updates next summer. These will include installing windows, replacing the tower door, and providing safety improvements to the stairs and railing. Given the remote location, the full scope of updates required to rehabilitate the watchtower will require continued planning, time, and support. We are incredibly grateful to the community who has supported this important project, and we look forward to providing more updates in the coming year.



Gerry Gamage installs the copper cap to complete the Damariscove watchtower roof

MEET OUR NEW DIRECTORS!





Adam Climo is a Maine native who graduated from Boothbay Region High School and New England College. He works in finance and has served as branch manager at First National Bank in Boothbay Harbor since 2023. Outside of the bank, Adam serves as a volunteer firefighter with the Southport Fire Department, as well as on the Southport Central School Board. He is also a member of the Southport Island Association. Adam and his family reside on Southport Island.

Katy Inman serves as Head of School at the Center for Teaching and Learning in Edgecomb. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from Haverford College in 1999, and her Master of Arts in Teaching from Brown University in 2002. From 2004 to 2019, she was the Middle School Director and a seventh/eigth grade humanities teacher at Touchstone Community School in Grafton, Massachusetts. Katy lives with her family in Boothbay where she enjoys exploring the land trust trails in her free time.

Newly elected board members commit to a three year term, with the opportunity to be re-elected for a second term.

BRLT AND TOWN OF BOOTHBAY EXPLORE DOG PARK

by Christine Selman*, Communications & Outreach Manager*

For several years now there has been strong community interest in seeing a dog park developed in our region. As an organization that provides public access to outdoor spaces, Boothbay Region Land Trust often fields questions and comments regarding spaces for dogs to recreate, run off leash, and interact with other dogs. A designated dog park would serve this need while also alleviating pressure that dogs otherwise cause to more sensitive conservation habitats. With the support of its members and following careful review, BRLT is now in talks with the town of Boothbay to support a town-owned dog park in our region.



Earlier this year the Town of Boothbay approached the land trust to discuss a possible collaboration on a dog park. The greatest challenge was finding a suitable location. The town saw potential in the Cross River Preserve property. Cross River Preserve is centrally located with easy access from Rt 27 in the town of Boothbay. The land was originally owned by the Town of Boothbay and was gifted to the land trust in 2014 for the benefit of its residents.

BRLT acquired the Cross River Property with a stipulation that the land trust would manage a trail as well as build a nature center of no less than 1,500 square feet on site. Prior to BRLT's acquisition of Oak Point Farm, the land trust envisioned Cross River as a location for its headquarters and nature center. However, shortly after receiving Cross River, BRLT learned of an opportunity to acquire Oak Point Farm and ultimately determined that Oak Point with its historic farmhouse and shore frontage would better serve the organization's needs as a permanent headquarters and nature center.

When the Town of Boothbay proposed utilizing a section of the Cross River land adjacent to Rt. 27 for a dog park, the land trust understood the potential to provide an important community resource on this property gifted by the town. In addition, according to the legal language in the conveyance of the Cross River Property from 2014, if Boothbay Region Land Trust does not follow through on plans outlined in that document, including building a 1,500 square foot nature center on site, within 15 years of receiving the property (by 2029), the town reserves a right to repurchase the property for one dollar. In the interest of working with the town and providing a true resource to the community, the land trust has carefully considered the request.

After review by the Lands Committee and Board of Directors, BRLT brought the question before its members at this year's Annual Meeting. There members voted to officially authorize the Board of Directors to move forward with the project. The vote allows BRLT to "return part of the Cross River Preserve to the Town of Boothbay sufficient, in the judgment of the Board of Directors, for purposes of a dog park on terms and conditions that the Board of Directors deems in the best interests of Boothbay Region Land Trust and in return for a release from the Town of Boothbay of the condition to construct a nature center and/or headquarters on the Preserve."

As part of ongoing conversations now taking place with town leadership, Boothbay Region Land Trust has emphasized a few key limitations. BRLT does not have the capacity to manage a dog park, and such management would fall outside of the land trust's mission. Consequently, the Town of Boothbay will be responsible for the development and management of any dog park. BRLT will continue to hold and maintain a publicly accessible nature preserve on the majority of the Cross River property, including all frontage on the Cross River.

The land trust hopes that by working with the Town of Boothbay to support a dog park, it can serve the needs of the community, while also prioritizing conservation of the sensitive habitats on the Cross River.

REFLECTIONS ON MY SUMMER INTERNSHIP

by Sammie Huss, *BRLT Summer Intern*



When I started my internship at Boothbay Region Land Trust, I knew that I loved the outdoors, especially here in Maine, but I didn't yet know what it looked like to turn this passion into tangible impact in land conservation. Now, thanks to an incredible summer at BRLT, I have the tools and a path forward to do just that.

Some of my proudest accomplishments happened when I was covered in dirt out on a trail. I dedicated a lot of my time over the summer to managing invasive species across our preserves (purple loosestrife and I became very well acquainted). I helped maintain trails, repair bridges, build a kiosk, and learned how to create and preserve structures or trail systems that will serve the community for years. Developing this long-term mindset around access to public lands is a perspective that I am proud to carry forward.

A direct example of how this thinking supports land trust work was revealed in the efforts we made seven miles out to sea on Damariscove Island. I was lucky enough this summer to spend a significant amount of time out on the island with Scott, the caretakers, Aiko and Masa, and many volunteers. I watched as many hands made what seemed impossible turn into light work. Carrying large and heavy staging planks, siding, and various timber or tools across the island for a tower restoration project demonstrated how powerful a dedicated community can be in land conservation work.

My internship also provided wonderful exposure to the communications side of land trust work. Alongside Christine, I ran BRLT's social media, wrote articles, and even shared my own story on BRLT's Storybook Trail. I have always believed in the importance of sharing exactly what and how conservation work is happening. The community has an important role in supporting BRLT's work. Translating the day-to-day work of the land trust into accessible information for the public is vital in nourishing and growing that connection. The commitment and care from the people of the Boothbay region was truly a privilege to witness, and one of my favorite parts of this internship was learning how to best share our work with all of you.

Another window into this community came from helping with Tracey's Trail Tuesdays. Whether chatting with regular hikers or welcoming visitors, I learned so much from both Tracey and the attendees of these walks. My plant identification skills have exponentially increased, and I have gained a new appreciation for the community that can be built through outdoor learning. The friendships and lessons that Trail Tuesday gave me this summer have inspired me to continue working in the Maine land trust community.



I began this internship curious about environmental writing, stewardship, and land conservation. I have left with a clear commitment to and appreciation for the land trust world. This summer opened the door to an entire field I now get to call my career. I'm so excited to be continuing on in Midcoast Maine as the Communications and Operations Coordinator at Kennebec Estuary Land Trust.

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FOLLOW US:

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





NEW TO VIEW AT OAK POINT FARM!

A tidal monitor has been installed on the dock to provide continuous water level monitoring. This data can be used along with other monitors installed locally to inform the community about sea level trends over time for municipal planning, research, and education. This project is in collaboration with the Town of Boothbay, Boothbay Region Climate Action Team, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences, and Hohonu.

A geology exhibit featuring four rock samples collected and mounted from outcrops at Oak Point Farm is now on display in the Nature Center. The collection includes posters that explain the composition and formation of each sample, local geology, as well as the process that geologists use to extract and research outcrops like these. Special thanks to geologist Bonnie Milne-Andrews for creating this informative educational display.

2026 Annual Conservation Partners:

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