



Little Compton Landscapes

Newsletter of The Sakonnet Preservation Association

Summer 2014

Little Compton resident John Gwynne, gardener extraordinaire and international landscape architect, will be the featured speaker at the Sakonnet Preservation Association (SPA) Annual Meeting on Tuesday, July 8th. John's early fascination with birds grew into a passion for understanding the conservation of wildlife and native plants. His mission has been to inspire people to protect nature and wildlife. By leading field walks, creating unique field guides, developing naturalistic zoo environments, and working internationally to protect ecosystems from deforestation and development, John has worked to make conservation meaningful and accessible to all.

After a childhood in Providence and Little Compton, John was hired to head design at Roger Williams Park and Zoo in Providence. He moved on to the Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) flagship Bronx Zoo in New York and has worked at multiple WCS international sites. His innovations in an exhibit promoting conservation of the Congo Gorilla Forest at the Bronx Zoo is one well-known example of his work.

He is the project director for *Birds of Brazil* field guides, an accessible series intended to get Brazilians



outdoors and into nature. John has been part of a WCS team that succeeded in persuading leaders of Gabon in Central Africa to create thirteen new national parks. Gabon now benefits from the production of a detailed, ecologically-based "blueprint" for sustainable tourism use of its rainforest parks and turtle beaches.

Fortunately for us, John has returned to live in Little Compton. Those of us engaged in the protection and stewardship of our local landscape are the beneficiaries of his extraordinary experience and

scientific knowledge. He helps us explore the variety of approaches we might take to balance human impacts with the health of our soil, water and wildlife. As we ponder how to protect birds, control invasive plant species, conserve vulnerable natural resources, and take inventory of the native landscape, John is in the thick of it with us. His infectious enthusiasm, skills and energy are evident on the property he shares with Mikel Folcarelli, Sakonnet Garden, and in the ideas he offers about meadow habitat restoration.

Please join us to hear how this native son has returned to share his perspective with our special community that planted seeds of inspiration for his life work.



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President's Letter

Without thinking much about it, most of us grasp what is meant by the expression "a sense of place." Examples appear in the goals of Little Compton's Comprehensive Community Plan, in our town's support of land conservation, and in the tenacity with which families hold on to properties here through multiple generations. It is imbedded in the historic writings of diarist Sarah Soule Wilbour, the paintings of Molly Luce, and currently in Sidney Tynan's letters to the *Sakonnet Times*. Smell. Sound. Taste. Experiences with friends, family, and other community members. Encounters with wildlife. Night skies spangled with stars. Recollections of our seasonal landscape might include thriving communities of birds, bees, butterflies and fireflies, spring peepers and shad bush in full flower, fragrant wild roses in June, then goldenrod and milkweed pods releasing their seeds to the August wind. Pastured animals, fields of crops, long vistas to the water and wooded roadsides blooming with wild Turk's-cap Lilies and cardinal-flower are familiar on our landscape. These collectively assemble in our memory and imagination to create a sense of our place as a healthy and restorative environment that supports all life.

SPA works with landowners to conserve and steward their land to maintain these elements that contribute to our "sense of place."

We are engaged in protecting the habitats, natural resources, scenic vistas and rural characteristics that bind us meaningfully to Little Compton and sustain us here.

Collaboration among private landowners, farmers and conservation organizations is essential to protecting these elements of our community. SPA, working with others, is committed to raising awareness about what individual landowners can do to help create, maintain or restore resources on their property. These resources include clean water, rich soil, locally grown food when possible, an abundance of wildflowers and other flowering plants and trees, and the protection of forest, coastal shrub, wetlands and scenic open space. We are all in this together. We need your help and support protecting the natural resources and rural character of Little Compton that define our "sense of place." – Abigail Brooks

Bringing Conservation-minded Stewardship Home – What Can I Do to Help?

How can we maintain our own properties meaningfully? Conservation-minded stewardship by private landowners is urgently needed to supplement the work of government agencies and conservation organizations. Landscape scale projects can be enhanced by what we do on our individual properties which cumulatively represent the largest land holdings in the country.

The plunge in monarch butterfly numbers has led to an initiative by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Farmers in the Midwest, where the majority of monarchs on this continent are hatched, are being compensated for planting pollen-producing flowers and milkweed in hedgerows to support butterflies and other essential pollinators crucial for agriculture. Likewise, our own properties would be enhanced by such plantings that assist monarchs as they hatch and migrate.

Despite devastation to honeybees by the mysterious colony collapse disorder, private landowners around the country are continuing to take up beekeeping. As it turns out, there are historic records of large scale die-offs of localized honeybee populations worldwide that have recovered with re-introduction by beekeepers. Locally, you can keep bees or at least keep them fed with pollen-producing plantings on your property.

Grass-nesting birds such as Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows and Meadowlarks can also benefit from our help. By

avoiding mowing fields during the nesting and fledging period for their young (starting in mid-May and finishing in late July or early August), these birds are able to reproduce at a rate that improves their chances of maintaining population levels. The Tiverton Land Trust is experimenting at Pardon Gray Preserve with using the rotational grazing of cattle to control invasive plants and

improve the soils and environment for grass-nesters while supporting an income-producing herd for a local farmer. The Bobolink Project, headquartered in Connecticut and Vermont, is engaged in raising funds in Jamestown to compensate farmers in that community for the loss of income from delayed haying that benefits the birds but reduces the chances of a second haying. Could you consider delaying mowing meadows on your land until early August?

Or perhaps cut pathways for access and walking while leaving most of your meadow for late mowing? Fireflies benefit from tall grasses as well.

Large scale projects can be supplemented by what we choose to do on

our own properties. Protecting wetlands that hold and cleanse water, mowing late for ground-nesting birds, raising bees, planting native pollen-producing flowers and flowering trees, leaving milkweed (or planting it), eradicating the invasive swallow-wort plant to help the monarchs, and protecting coastal shrub to provide food for migratory birds — all these are answers to the question: "What can I do to help?"



Grain for grain, sun and rain,
I'll find my way in nature's chain,
tune my body and my brain
to the music of the land.

*Excerpted from lyrics to "Garden Song"
by Dave Mallett*

Fall Tour of Simmons Mill Pond Area with Roger and Gail Greene



On Saturday, September 6, SPA is sponsoring a walk in Simmons Mill Pond Management Area guided by Roger and Gail Greene. The walk will begin at 10 AM and will continue for two to three hours depending on the interest of participants. Attendees may leave the walk at any time. The rain date (if pouring) will be the following day, Sunday, Sept. 7, at the same time. Roger and Gail are knowledgeable about the area's historic sites and its flora and fauna. The Management Area comprises the largest conserved area in Little Compton--over 600 acres of ponds, meadows and high woods. The public is invited to join this free event, a part of RI Land Trust Days. Sturdy walking shoes, long pants, bug repellent, a packed lunch or snack, and a full water bottle are advised. There are no restrooms within the Management Area. Please park in the Colebrook Road/Long Highway lot at the northwest entrance to the Preserve.

August 8 through September 28 marks the period celebrating Land Trust Days. Sponsored by the RI Land Trust Council, it provides an opportunity to visit publicly accessible conserved lands around the state. Information about other sponsored events will be available on the Council's website (rhodeislandlandtrusts.org) in the coming months.

National Land Trust Alliance Rally, September 18 – 20, in Providence

Over 1,500 conservationists from around the country will be gathering in Providence, September 18 - 20, to learn and share during the Land Trust Alliance's annual conference. The Northeast is home to the highest concentration of volunteer land trusts, and for the first time, there will be a series of panels and roundtable discussions dedicated to strategic planning, human resources and fundraising specifically for volunteer groups. SPA board members and Holly Lippert, our part-time administrative assistant and bookkeeper, will be among the workshop presenters at the conference. At the start of the conference, SPA and The Nature Conservancy will be co-sponsoring a field trip to the P.T. Marvell Preserve and Goosewing Beach for conference attendees. To view the entire program, go to the Land Trust Alliance website (lta.org) and log on to Rally information on the home page.



Roadside Litter in Little Compton Exceeds Usual Volume

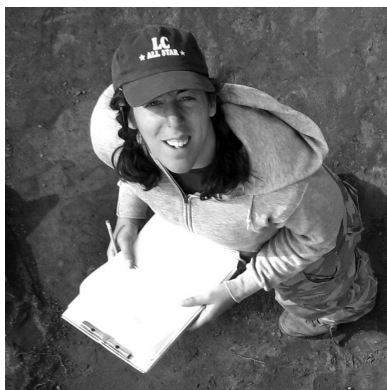
A number of people have reported an unusual amount of litter along our roadways this spring. Please help prevent litter.

Consider volunteering for monthly roadside cleanups sponsored by the Sogkonate Garden Club. www.sogkonate.org



Kate Johnson Employs Latest Technology To Reveal Historic Local Land Use

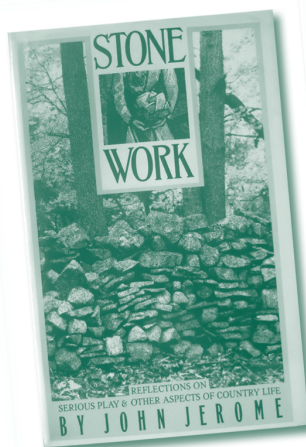
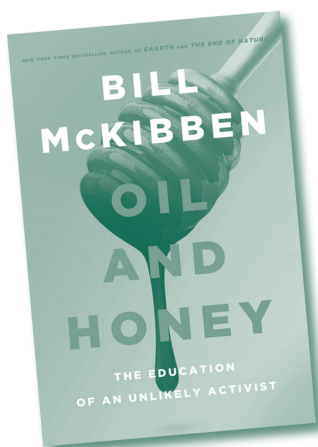
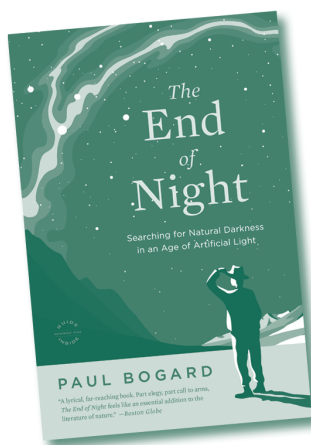
Kate Johnson's April 30 presentation, co-sponsored by Sakonnet Preservation Association and the Tiverton Land Trust, filled the upstairs of the Little Compton Community Center. Kate's research as a geology PhD candidate involves the use of scanning technology mounted on an airplane wing that is capable of exposing old stone walls, remnants of building foundations and old roads through forest cover. The images produced come alive on the screen as nearly three dimensional. Coupled with information gleaned from historic maps and documents, they help broaden our understanding of human activity on the



Kate working at a Viking Age through Early Modern site in northern Iceland.

landscape since early colonial times. This work may help us discover historic elements worthy of protection and reveal the age of stone walls, for example. Tiverton, Westport and Little Compton residents were present to see images she captured of historic land use markers in all three towns. Her presentation will be made available on SPA's website (sakonnetpreservation.org). How intriguing that growing up in Little Compton and being curious about what she saw while wandering in the woods would lead Kate to seek answers by utilizing technology in such a "groundbreaking" way.

BOOKS THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST



The End of Night: Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light by Paul Bogard Little Brown & Co., 2013

Oil and Honey: The Education of an Unlikely Activist by Bill McKibben Times Books, 2013

Stone Work: Reflection on Serious Play and Other Aspects of Country Life by John Jerome University Press of New England, 1996

Reading The Forested Landscape: A Natural History of New England by Tom Wessels The Countryman Press, 1997



Sakonnet Preservation Association

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Yes, I would like to join or renew my membership.

Enclosed is my tax deductible membership contribution.

<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor	\$500
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Bequests *There are many ways to include the Sakonnet Preservation Association in your estate plans:*

- Name the Association as a beneficiary of your retirement plan
- Leave a specific amount, percentage, or the residue of your estate to the Association
- Designate a particular asset to the Association (securities, real estate, artworks, etc.)
- Name the Association in the succession plan of your donor advised fund or family foundation
- Include the Association as a beneficiary of testamentary or living trust
- Name the Association as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy
- Please contact your attorney for specialized legal language to ensure that your bequest intentions will be properly fulfilled

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The Sakonnet
Preservation Association,
a non-profit land trust,
is dedicated to preserving
the rural character
and natural resources
of Little Compton
for the lasting benefit
of the Community.

Our Mission



Sakonnet Preservation Association

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