

Sakonnet Preservation

newsletter of the Sakonnet Preservation Association

A family story of conservation

The Taggart family's first exposure to Little Compton took place in 1984 when Rush Taggart's mother, Dee, was dating Jim Osborn. Jim generously invited Dee's offspring to visit, too. Jim and Dee married, as did Rush and Dorothy Bedford. Jim, an avid outdoorsman and birder, quickly introduced Dorothy to the pleasures of birding in Little Compton. Recognizing that the Osborn children would inherit the entirety of their father's property and that Little Compton had won her family's heart, Dee began looking for a piece of land on which to build a home "just in case." When the Crandon farm on West Main Road was subdivided in the early 1990's, Dee purchased one of the lots and, after Jim passed, had a house constructed that could hold all her grandchildren.

When a threat to develop the 4.4-acre meadow and wetland parcel behind her house arose, Dee jumped to purchase this second lot. Twelve years later the family chose to put the meadow into conservation with **Sakonnet Preservation** to ensure it would remain open permanently. Avid birder

Dorothy is diligently trying to lure bobolinks, a rapidly declining grassland-nesting bird, into establishing a colony there.

Recently Rush purchased his sister's interest in a lot to the south of the family house that abuts their previously conserved meadow. Its frontage on West Main Road offers an uninterrupted view across the two parcels to the woodland beyond. At the close of 2022, we were thrilled to accept another easement from him on this lot that increases the acreage of protected open space on the family property to nearly 6½ acres. This acreage backs up to Wilbur Woods to the east and additional conserved land held by the Agricultural Conservancy Trust to the northeast. It enlarges protection of habitat corridors, the scale of surface water protection, and preserves a scenic view of stone walls surrounding meadows along West Main Road—one of the defining and vulnerable characteristics of our town. As a take-away from this experience, Rush and Dorothy have learned from and shared with others the conservation options that can open when working with a locally-based conservation group willing to consider properties of all sizes. We are honored to serve as the steward of this family's multi-generational, conservation-minded generosity for the benefit of Little Compton.



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sakonnetpreservation.org



sound finances

ethical conduct

responsible governance

lasting stewardship

From the President

What a relief to be returning to some semblance of normalcy!

For us it means we can return to providing conservation-related programming for the students in our local school. Plans have been made with the support of the Wilbur & McMahon administrators and teachers, the financial assistance of the Acebes Family Charitable Fund and volunteer community members working with our staff to offer their expertise and passion to these programs.

Our revitalized Simmons Mill Pond Preserve activities with the fifth and sixth graders exposed them to the animal and plant life in its ponds and woodland that depend upon the Preserve's valuable resources. Seventh graders visited the Marvell Preserve adjacent to the Town Beach to learn about its natural resources with a plan to work on a mapping



project for the property in the Fall. This project in particular aligns with standards related to the school's International Baccalaureate curriculum expectations for community service. And we are honoring a graduating eighth grader, selected for an exceptional interest in natural history, with the Lawre Richmond Goodnow Young Naturalist Award.

For the first time, we will be supplementing our staff with a summer stewardship intern who will have just completed a master's

degree in environmental science at the University of Rhode Island. It is our hope that this will be the start of an affiliation with environmental education programs that are developing the next generation of conservation scientists and leaders.

We are committed to ensuring that students here have hands-on experiences connecting them to Little Compton's natural resources worth preserving in the hope that they too, in whatever future lifestyle they choose, will be contributors to the preservation and protection of our planet's vulnerable assets.



Abigail Brooks

Yard spraying for mosquitos and ticks?

The signs are going up around town and mailers are announcing lawn spraying services for mosquitoes and ticks. We are concerned about the consequences of chemical spraying that cannot possibly be targeted for specific bugs. Blanket sprays kill and contaminate the beneficial as well as the challenging. These can harm humans, pets and wildlife, get washed into the ground from which we draw drinking water and into ponds, streams and ultimately the ocean upon which we rely for food and recreation.

There are several non-toxic alternatives for protecting ourselves with bug sprays and we can also protect ourselves by dressing in long-sleeved, light-colored clothing and pants, by bathing following outdoor exposure, and by using attractant traps.



Please also consider the alternatives to lawn and landscaping spraying that are likely to be far more effective and are certainly less harmful to us and the environment. A list of products compatible with organic landscape management from the website [Beyond Pesticides](#) presents good alternatives.

Come to our Annual Meeting in July!

We are pleased to announce that the featured presenter at **Sakonnet Preservation's** July 19th Annual Meeting will be Heather Holm (right), a nationally-recognized expert on bees and wasps.

Holm passionately informs with her books and educates live audiences nationwide about the fascinating world of native pollinators and beneficial insects and the native plant communities that support them. She is the author of four books: *Pollinators of Native Plants* (2014), *Bees* (2017), *Wasps* (2021), and *Common Native Bees of the Eastern United States* (2022). Both *Bees* and *Wasps* have won multiple book awards including the American Horticultural Society Book Award (2018 and 2022 respectively).

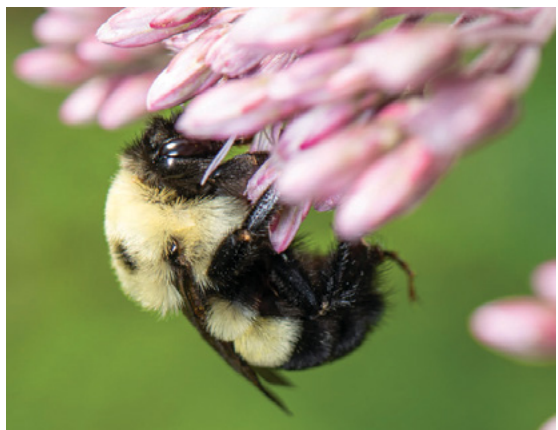


Photo by Heather Holm

Sakonnet Preservation's Annual Meeting will take place at the Little Compton Community Center. Starting at 5.30, attendees are invited to attend a welcoming reception with light refreshments. A brief business meeting at 7 pm will be followed by our featured speaker's presentation. As space is limited, we will be requesting registration in advance. Notice of this free event will go out to our membership and the public at large as we get closer to the date.

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Among the various conservation groups working in Little Compton, **Sakonnet Preservation** is distinguished by its willingness to accept properties for conservation that may not be a priority for other groups. We are open to accepting small parcels which make up a high percentage of the remaining undeveloped land in our community. Such parcels are vital for protecting groundwater, habitat corridors, historic stone walls and scenic vistas that define our landscape.

An accredited 501c3 non-profit organization, **Sakonnet Preservation** relies almost exclusively on donor contributions. Its primary work is twofold: preserving open space and providing conservation education to all ages in the community, the latter with planned activities, volunteer opportunities, and web and print newsletters. Donations supporting our work can be paid by check; online credit card payment through our website sakonnetpreservation.org; with contributions from donor-advised funds; with gifts of appreciated stock; or with Required Minimum Distribution funds from an IRA. Our correct mailing address is PO Box 945, Little Compton, RI 02837. For direct transfer of funds or financial instruments please contact us for instructions.

Gray's Mill Pond, conserved by Sakonnet Preservation
 photo by Warren Jagger



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Managing the Ponderosa

Sakonnet Preservation Association (SPA)

bought The Ponderosa property in 1981 from Manuel and Jennie Camara for \$30,000 after their offer to sell to the Town was rejected by voters at the Financial Town Meeting.

According to historic maps, the pond had been dug by 1972 during the Camara's ownership, and they generously allowed use of the property by townspeople for picnicking, boating and skating.

Sakonnet Preservation

accepted responsibility for The Ponderosa's management with its purchase. Any alteration of wetlands, including management activities on this property, has been under the jurisdiction of the RI Department of Environmental Management since 1971. Increasingly rigorous permitting requirements have led to greater complexity and cost over the 42 years of SPA's ownership.

Multiple efforts to remove vegetation in the pond, including the invasive phragmites that grow well beyond the boundaries of our property, have been undertaken over the years of our ownership. We have used hand-pulling, chemical spraying, and cutting as attempted controls. Silt buildup has resulted in a shallow pond that freezes quickly, making it safe for skaters of all ages when winter weather hits a cold patch. Some years the pond is too shallow for trout stocking when there has been little winter rainfall.

A photo from the *Sakonnet Times* at the time of the acquisition



Board member meetings with knowledgeable townspeople and engineers about both volunteer and/or professional dredging and removal of the dredge spoils from the pond have exposed how extraordinarily costly (\$150,000 and up) and temporary the options are. We've learned that dredging to a depth of at least six feet to maximize the longevity and cost of the effort would slow how quickly the pond's surface freezes to a safe thickness and would create greater risk if a skater were to break through the ice.

While discussing options—most recently with the engineering firm of Horsley Whitten—we learned from Fire Chief Petrin that the Fire Department includes the Ponderosa's outflow stream (a continuation of the Dundery Brook) as a vital source of water in plans for fighting a fire in the area of the Commons. This has become our first priority to secure.

We have submitted draft plans to the Fire Chief and the Department of Environmental Management. We await the scheduling of a meeting to discuss what would be required to support an application for a wetland alteration under the new rules for the various scenarios in our draft.

A frog in the Ponderosa's pond
photo by Peter Goldberg



Early spring at the Ponderosa

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