



# Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust 2022 Annual Report

May 2023

**"WORKING TO CONSERVE  
SCITUATE'S NATURAL &  
COMMUNITY RESOURCES"**

The Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust exist to help the community and its citizens sustain their environment and quality of life while meeting their economic needs.

We are a non-regulatory, town organization dedicated to:

- Identifying and conserving Scituate's important natural resources;
- Improving the knowledge base from which land use and natural resource decisions are made;
- Building local capacity to protect and manage natural resources as our town grows;
- Conserving our town's unique community character;
- Continuing the Town's legacy as the steward of the state's primary drinking water supply—the Scituate Reservoir.

For More Information  
Contact: Scituate

Conservation Commission  
and Scituate Land Trust  
P.O. Box 328  
North Scituate, RI 02857  
(401) 647-2822  
[www.scituateriltcc.org](http://www.scituateriltcc.org)

You can also follow us on  
Facebook for events and  
Information

## **Trails and Reforestation Grant Kickoff Event**

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, the Scituate Land Trust hosted a kickoff event to celebrate the start of trail improvements and reforestation at Esek Hopkins Park. The event was attended by Senator Jack Reed; Terrence Gray, Director of the RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM); Bob Cooper, Executive Secretary of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities; Pooh Vongkhamdy, NRCS State Conservationist; Michael Marcello, Scituate Town Council; Barbara Rich Treasurer of the RI Land Trust Council and members of the Scituate Land Trust and Conservation Commission. The federal appropriation, in combination with a grant from RIDEM and Town funding, will be used to develop universally accessible trails and parking improvements, as well as adding new plantings and plant identification markers, a composting restroom, a kiosk, benches, and educational signs at the park.

Senator Reed has been a proponent of the project over the last couple years and was instrumental in securing the federal appropriation. During the event, he addressed the importance of these improvements to the community, "And this trail, when it's developed, is going to be a great source of inspiration. These spaces benefit the whole community and they compliment everything you've done here. This trail, when it's completed, will be ADA compliant, so it will be accessible to all Rhode Islanders, and we don't have enough of those trails in the State."

In addition to the federal appropriation, grants received from RIDEM will fund trail improvements at Esek Hopkins, Westconnaug Meadows, Lawton Farm, and Hope Associates properties near Doctor's Lane. Director Gray congratulated the Land Trust and discussed the beneficial impact of such grants to local communities. Other speakers at the event included the aforementioned Bob Cooper, Pooh Vongkhamdy, Michael Marcello, and Barbara Rich. The event concluded with a Land Trust Days hike through the trails at the park.

The Land Trust and Conservation Commission have worked closely with local residents to modify the conceptual design in order to include input from neighbors. It is anticipated the design of these improvements will be completed during the summer of 2023 with construction estimated to begin in the fall of 2023.

Bringing this vision to fruition would not be possible without the help of so many. Whether it be a senator securing federal funding or a neighbor picking up a shovel, each and every contribution is equally important as part of a team. The Land Trust and Conservation Commission would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have contributed and hope to see you as the project moves forward in 2023!



**Land Trust Chair Rob Bower  
speaks at the Esek Hopkins Kickoff**



**Senator Jack Reed addresses the  
audience at Esek Hopkins**



**Senator Jack Reed, Pooh  
Vongkhamdy, Bob Cooper, Terrence  
Gray, Rob Bower at the Esek Hopkins  
Kickoff Event**



**Group photo of Land Trust and  
Conservation Members with guests  
at the Esek Hopkins Kickoff Event**

## Alice M. Howland 2022 Conservation Award



**Mary Manning- Morse (center), the 2022 Alice M. Howland Award winner, receives a pen (crafted of flame box elder) from Tom Angell (CC chair) and Rob Bower (LT Chair)**

The Scituate Conservation Commission (SCC) and the Scituate Land Trust (SLT) are pleased to announce the 2022 recipient of the Alice M. Howland Conservation Award. Mary Manning-Morse received the award at the SCC and SLT Annual Meeting outdoors at Esek Hopkins Park on July 12. Ruth Strach, last year's Howland Award recipient, introduced Mary at the award ceremony.

Prior to the award presentation, Mary had been asked to share some remarks about the history of Hope Associates and their partnership with the Land Trust. She said that Alice Howland, a resident of Hope, called a meeting on December 5th in 1944 to encourage community activities along the river in Hope. That was the genesis of Hope Associates, which was founded in 1950 as a nonprofit organization to protect, conserve, and maintain the land in Hope along the Pawtuxet River and to provide a venue for community programming. The original grant of land is now known as Hope Pond and includes Salisbury beach and the Howland barn. In 1946 Miss Howland founded the construction of Doctors Field, used by veterans returning from World War II. Hope Associates also owns the parcel containing the beautiful village green acquired in 1997 and created from a run-down lot on Main Street in the village, as well as a parcel across the river called the Green Forest, which is unimproved but under a forest management plan. In the 1990s Hope Associates acquired the Trott-Perry Preserve, north of Doctors Field, named for the two doctors, Raymond H. Trott and Thomas Perry, Jr., who were former owners and conservation supporters. Trails there afford a beautiful, cool walk on a hot day. The Land Trust holds a Conservation Easement on two of these parcels, which forms the basis of the relationship with Hope Associates. An adjacent lot, owned by the Town and thought to have been originally donated by Miss Howland for a library, which was later built at another location, will be the site of a small parking lot to access the Doctors Lane trails. She noted that Hope Associates is a 100 percent volunteer organization supported by grants and donations. She said Hope Associates is grateful for the support of the Scituate community and in particular support of the trail grant around Doctors Lane.

Following Mary's remarks, Ruth began introducing the new Alice M. Howland Conservation Award winner. She described this person as a woman of great talents, like Miss Howland, smart and well educated. And she emphasized that this person has said "yes" to requests for service in many community roles, including serving on the Scituate School Board and spending many hours on the Town Charter initiative.



**Perpetual tree plaque commemorating Alice M. Howland Award recipients.**

The Alice M. Howland Conservation Award recognizes an individual, group or organization rendering outstanding service, either recently or over a period of years, to natural resource conservation in the Town of Scituate. The award is dedicated in the memory of Alice M. Howland, formerly of Hope, one of Scituate's conservation pioneers. A perpetual tree plaque commemorating all recipients of the Alice Howland Award now hangs in the Town Council Chambers. Each year the new recipient's name is engraved on a metal leaf and added to the tree. Previous recipients include Mr. Alvah Vernava (2003), Mr. Alfred Hawkes (2004), Mr. James Doris (2005), Ms. Diana Reisman (2006), Mr. Chris Modisette (2007), Mr. Paul Dolan (2008), Hope Associates (2009), Mr. Hans Bergey (2010), Mr. Bob Budway (2011), Mr. Ted Richard (2012), Mr. John Gorham (2013), Mr. Jon Vernava (2014), Ms. Shannon Donovan (2015), Gentian Garden Club (2016), Mr. Michael Capirchio (2017), Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Colvin (2018), Ms. Cindy Gianfrancesco (2019), Ms. Marie Hawkes (2020), Ms. Ruth Strach (2021), and Ms. Mary Manning-Morse (2022).



## ***Bird Survey Indicates Continued Success at Lawton Farm***

The eleventh annual bird survey at Lawton Farm was conducted in May and June 2022. Survey results showed an increase in species richness with a total of 56 species observed across the three sites. The continuing strong count is a sign that ongoing hayfield management strategies are paying dividends. Jeffrey Cook, a dairy farmer in Foster, RI, has continued his partnership with the Conservation Commission, waiting to mow the fields in August or later to provide prime habitat to grassland nesting birds during the spring and summer nesting season.

As in past years, to identify breeding birds and evaluate habitat preferences of different species, point count surveys were conducted at three locations within Lawton Farm representing shrubland, forest, and field habitats. Highlights of the 2022 survey results are listed below:

(1) *The total number of species observed this year (56) was slightly higher than observed in 2021 (49). This year the most abundant species were Tree Swallow (68), Bobolink (52), Red-winged Blackbird (44), American Goldfinch (32), and Red-eyed Vireo (28).*

(2) *Over the 11 consecutive years, a total of 77 unique species have been recorded at Lawton Farm.*

(3) *Bobolink continue to be observed at Lawton Farm in substantial numbers in Field 1, and, unlike 2021, were not observed in the other fields. However, Lawton Farm continues to provide important habitat for Bobolinks, a species of conservation concern in Rhode Island.*

(4) *Total abundance across all sites in 2022 was 713 individuals, a 35% decrease over that observed in 2021.*

(5) *Eighteen shrubland species were observed during all surveys in 2022, which is similar to the 17 reported in 2021. A total of 20 unique shrubland species have been reported over the past eight survey years (2012-2021).*

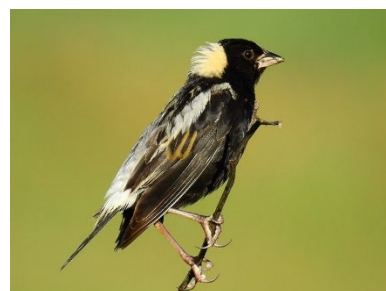
(6) *These findings suggest that Lawton Farm continues to provide important habitat for shrubland species.*

*The survey was conducted for the Scituate Conservation Commission by Dr. Richard McKinney and Clara Cooper-Mullin of the Department of Resource Science at the University of Rhode Island.*

Lawton Farm provides unique habitats to a variety of bird species, and thus contributes to maintaining regional bird diversity within New England. From a conservation point of view this is extremely valuable as this area is helping to maintain and enhance local and regional biodiversity. The property is particularly important to shrubland species and grassland species, since both categories of birds have suffered regional declines due to habitat loss and forest succession in recent years.



Clara Cooper-Mullin at Lawton Farm entrance, with Dr. Richard McKinney



Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*  
Image from intobirds.org



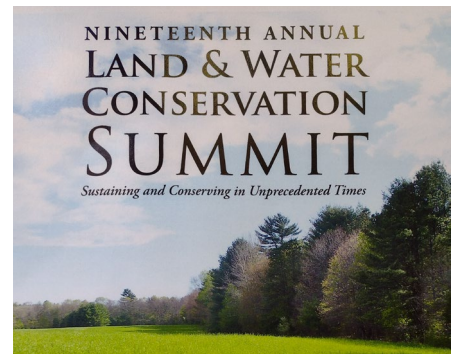
Cindy Gianfrancesco leads a nature walk through Esek Hopkins Park

## ***2022 Annual Meeting Outdoors at Esek Hopkins***

The 19<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Scituate Conservation Commission and Land Trust was held outdoors at Esek Hopkins Park on July 12, 2022. After a brief business meeting, Tom Angell and Rob Bower welcomed guests and thanked the Town Council and staff for their support. Mary Manning-Morse then provided a brief history of Hope Associates, and she was then awarded the Alice M. Howland Conservation Award, which was presented by the 2021 recipient, Ruth Strach. Cindy Gianfrancesco then led a nature walk along the trails of Esek Hopkins Park and talked about the ecology and timber salvage operation which took place in 2021.

## 2022 Land and Water Conservation Summit

Three board members of the Land Trust and Conservation Commission participated in the 2022 Land and Water Conservation Summit, presented by the Rhode Island Land Trust Council. Members attended workshops focused on climate change & resiliency, land stewardship, land conservation projects, and forest protection. Members collaborated with Land Trust and Conservation Commission members from other communities in Rhode Island during the event, learning from each other's experiences.



Molly Allard and students from Scituate Middle School install deer fencing at Esek Hopkins Park

## Tree Planting with Scituate Middle School Students at Esek Hopkins

The Land Trust and Northern RI Conservation District (NRICD) hosted the Scituate Middle School (SMS) environmental club for a day-long field trip at Esek Hopkins in April 2022. Molly Allard from NRICD and Beth Travers from SMS coordinated the installation of tree guards, tree planting, and review of educational signage along the trails.

## 2022 Earth Day Cleanup at Esek Hopkins

In conjunction with the Scituate Sustainability Initiatives Committee, Rotary Club, and Gentian Garden Club, the Land Trust and Conservation Commission participated in an Earth Day cleanup at Esek Hopkins Park. The event included two hours of litter and invasive plant removal followed by a group hike through the park's woodland trails.



## Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust

Town Hall  
P.O. Box 328  
North Scituate, RI 02857  
Phone: 401-647-2822

Join us on our outings in 2023!

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## Mission Statement

To promote and develop natural resources, to protect watershed resources, and to preserve natural aesthetic areas within the town.

### Conservation Commission

Cindy Gianfrancesco, Chair  
Brian Venditelli, Vice-Chair  
Rob Bower  
Gary DeBlois  
William Frederickson  
Kimberly Smith  
Stephen Venditelli

### Land Trust

Rob Bower, Chair  
Cindy Gianfrancesco, Vice-Chair  
Laureen Avery  
Anna Cimini  
Matthew Sayer  
Brian Venditelli  
William Frederickson