



Site Lines

Summer 2023  Open Space Makes All the Difference



Young Ospreys Land Hot Property at Weeden Farm

Photo by Deb Stallwood

“If you build it, they will come,” rang out through the corn field... except instead of Kevin Costner and a baseball field in Iowa, it was Eagle Scout Charlie Lucia and an osprey nest pole at Weeden Farm in Matunuck in the fall of 2021.

When spring arrived in 2022 and the rapidly rebounding population of ospreys returned from the south looking for viable nesting spots, SKLT staff kept a close eye on the new pole until sure enough, a young male osprey, believed to be only two or three years old, quite liked the new real estate and along with his much more fastidious mate, successfully nested and raised one fledgling. A year later in 2023, the pair are back and redecorating. As of early June, it appears they’ve begun incubating eggs.

Ospreys, also called fish hawks, are large birds-of-prey found almost everywhere in the world. They like to build nests on tall, exposed trees or posts away from lurking predators and close enough to water for an efficient commute to work as professional fishermen. Osprey pairs are generally monogamous and often mate for life. The male selects a nesting site in a tree, on a cliff, or on a man-made structure. The pair collects sticks and other materials together, but the female generally arranges the nest. Pairs will then often use the same nest in following years.

Ospreys declined dramatically from 1950 to 1970 due to chemical pollutants such as the pesticide DDT, which caused breeding failures from eggshell thinning. When DDT was banned in 1972, ospreys bounced back significantly, although some states still list them as a species of special concern. Today their populations continue to increase at a moderate pace.



The Audubon Society of RI manages the state’s osprey nest monitoring program. Volunteers monitor nests every two weeks from April through July (including the nest at Weeden Farm) and record osprey presence/absence, behavior, and number of young. If you would like to get involved or learn more, visit riosprey.info.

MILESTONES

I hope everyone has put the 40th Annual Members' Meeting, Sunday, June 25th 3:00 PM on their calendar. It is always such a treat to welcome everyone. Members in attendance will be asked to confirm four new board members: Barbara Margolis, Susan Merrick, Delite Primus, and Jon Savage. Special thanks to Susan Seyfarth Lovejoy and Annie Richardson who will be reaching the end of their board terms. Following the business portion of the meeting, David Gregg, of the RI Natural History Survey, rinhs.org, will present on migrating insects (some of our favorite seasonal visitors).

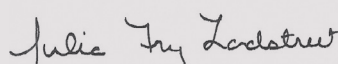
Social media is the best way to remain current with SKLT's incredible scope of activities, programs, properties, and projects. Matt Eldridge takes the lead on our communications. Thomas Meyer captures footage out in the field and creates some super reels. If you remain Facebook/Instagram averse, make sure Matt has your email address in order to receive the bi-weekly updates.

Staff has made the time this spring to focus on a number of internal projects. Kevin Nelson has thrown his talents into taking the land protection file and database organization to a new level. Marie Kondo's organization skills seem pale by comparison!

Our bank can support sustaining memberships through ACH bank transfers instead of putting the payments on your credit card. I switched my form of payment and was stunned by how much of my gift had been going to cover the credit card and processing fees. If you're interested, contact Matt, it truly makes a difference.

And blessedly, there have been lots of other great projects. Visit the Grist Mill, Biscuit City, Weeden Farm or any of the trails and admire the results of the Tuesday Volunteer Workdays. We've had presentation opportunities at Matunuck Elementary School, WBLQ, and Rhode Island Library Association. We installed a new book, *Hi Koo*, to enjoy on the Thewlis Trail. The Scott Evans Memorial Pond at Biscuit City is still filled with trout for those 14 and younger to catch. Join us on an upcoming hike and we look forward to seeing you at the 2023 Great Outdoors Celebration and Auction in August.

In gratitude,



Julia Fry Landstreet
Executive Director



SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST

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Address

17 Matunuck Beach Road
South Kingstown, RI 02879
401-789-0962

Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
and by appointment

Website: sklt.org

Email: info@sklt.org

The mission of the South Kingstown Land Trust is to protect and steward natural resources, open spaces, and cultural landscapes for the benefit of the community, now and forever.



The Great Outdoors Celebration & Auction 2023

It's early evening, Sunday, August 6th, you're looking out over 100 acres of stonewall-lined fields and forest at Weeden Farm, the ocean breeze rolling over the fields of corn is providing the perfect temperature as the sun begins to set behind the trees... you must be at the Great Outdoors Celebration.

The beloved annual event once again welcomes you for an evening of festive music, a delicious array of hors d'oeuvres, complimentary wine, beer, and cocktails, a silent auction, and the main attraction, an entertaining live auction featuring unique high quality items and fun experiences for all.

This event raises critical funds that allow South Kingstown Land Trust to continue to protect and preserve thousands of acres of open space. Your support directly maintains and improves groundwater aquifers, wildlife habitat, climate resilience, and quality of life for the whole community.

The Great Outdoors Celebration is just that, a chance to stop and celebrate the idyllic open spaces that our community is blessed to have, but it's also a celebration of that very community, of the people who make our mission possible, of the people who appreciate the land trust's success... of you!

So thank you for supporting open space, thank you for caring about the natural world, and most of all, thank you for bidding! Stay tuned for invitations by mail. Sponsorships are available at sklt.org.





New Trail at Tefft Park Shines Light on Hidden History

Left: Tefft Historical Park Trail

Bottom Right: One of several historical foundations on the property.

Headstone: "Simon Niles, Sergt. Co. A. 11th U.S. C. Art'y (H'y), Died Nov. 22-1865 of disease contracted in U.S. service during the Great Rebellion. Aged 17 years."

Tucked along the wooded east boundary of SKLT's Tefft Park, South Kingstown Historical Cemetery No. 81 might easily be overlooked but for a solitary marble headstone rising above the uninscribed fieldstones of the other 19 burials. It marks the grave of Simon Niles, who enlisted with the 11th U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery in August 1863, where he rose to the rank of sergeant. He was honorably discharged in October 1865 and returned home to Kingston, only to die a month later at 17 of disease contracted during his service. There is no painting or photograph to honor this young man, only a government-issued headstone bearing witness to one family's history of struggle and personal sacrifice against overwhelming odds to achieve the American dream.

The story begins with Simon's great-grandfather, Mingo Niles, who was enslaved. His name first appears in the 1777 Rhode Island Military Census of men able to bear arms, together with that of his enslaver Silas Niles. By the 1790 Federal Census, Mingo was listed as a freeman of color and farmer, living with his wife Dinah and their two sons. Mingo may have earned his freedom through service in the Revolutionary War; the Rhode Island Slave Enlistment Act 1778 stipulated that enslaved persons who served would be granted their freedom. However, no record of his enlistment has yet been found.

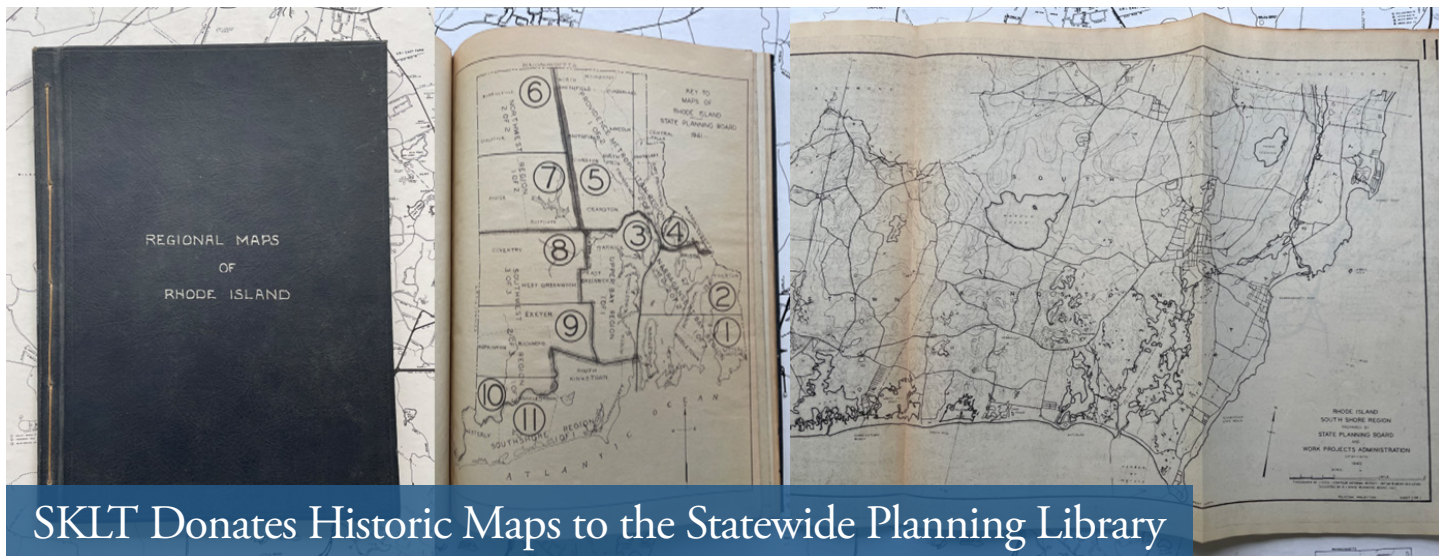
Mingo's son, Simon Quash Niles, furthered the family's fortune when in 1805, he purchased 18 acres adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Tefft parcel. He and his wife Nancy farmed the land and raised their four children in a small house 150 feet from the cemetery. By the 1850 census, Nancy disappeared from the record, suggesting she had died. In 1858, Simon Quash, then around 80, sold the property but maintained his connection when he reserved in the deed "the right to be buried in the Fowler [Niles] lot...where the said Simon has already commenced to bury his family..."

Simon Quash moved in with his son, Edward, and his wife, Mary, Simon Jr.'s parents. The family's ascent continued under Edward, who began as a farmer and later trained for a more lucrative trade as a stone mason. Two of their eight children, Ellen and Abby, attended public schools, possibly the first in the family to learn to read. But in the end, the odds overtook the family. In 1863 Simon Jr., now of age, followed his two older brothers into the Union Army. All three brothers fought, and all three died. Edward and Mary lost their only other son two years later, and in subsequent years three of their four daughters. The youngest, Cornelia, died in 1929 on the 4th of July, ending the family line that began with Mingo on that annual celebration of freedom and independence. Only this gravestone remains, a silent beacon of hope shining in the dark forest.

11 H. Art'y, U.S.C.T.	
Simon Niles	
Co. A, 11 Reg't U.S. Col'd H. Art'y.	
Appears on	
Company Descriptive Book	
of the organization named above.	
DESCRIPTION.	
Age	16 years; height 5 feet 5 1/2 inches.
Complexion	African
Eyes	Blk
hair	Blk
Where born	Kingston R. I.
Occupation	Farmer
ENLISTMENT.	
When	Aug 10, 1863.
Where	Providence
By whom	W. H. Helm; term 3 yrs.
Remarks:	afflicted with dysentery. Promoted to sergeant Jan 1865
James	
Company.	

Simon Niles' military record. Providence, 1863.

By Katherine Long, Kingston Historian & SKLT Board Member



SKLT Donates Historic Maps to the Statewide Planning Library

SKLT is always very appreciative of the generosity of our supporters who donate not only funds that support our preservation efforts but also donate items, some of which can be put to practical use, and some of which are educational or simply interesting. While sorting through a box of donated historical photographs, SKLT staff discovered a hardcover book of maps from 1941 displaying all of Rhode Island in a series of map panels.

SKLT believes in the principle that anything of value or interest to the public should be in the hands of whoever can best care for the object or property. So, since the maps weren't specific to us or South Kingstown, and because we don't have a library to house the book, we decided that we would not be the best custodians. But, who would be?

The maps were produced by an agency called the "State Planning Board" which no longer exists so the maps couldn't be returned to them. In a bit of serendipity, Kevin Nelson, our Director of Land Protection, came to us from Rhode Island's Division of Statewide Planning. Kevin immediately recognized the State Planning Board as an early predecessor agency that eventually evolved into the current Statewide Planning agency. Most importantly, the Division of Statewide Planning manages a planning library that includes maps, photographs, and documents that date to the 1930's. Kevin contacted his former colleagues to see if they would be interested in adding the maps to the library and was greeted with an enthusiastic, "YES!" With the approval of SKLT's Board of Directors the maps were presented to Statewide Planning and are now safely cataloged and housed.

Miniature Magic Brings New Life to SKLT Sculpture Trail

In the fall of 2014, SKLT board member Sophie Lewis and neighbor Troy West tucked a short trail into a protected property at the corner of Green Hill Beach Road and Matunuck School House Road and populated it with 20+ unique sculptures and artworks. While nature has consumed some of the original pieces, it is a lovely place to experience art, nature, and solitude.

Recently, Girl Scout Keely Grady created a home for a Fairy Village at the Sculpture Trail, marked with explanatory signage and a rustic fence. We encourage visitors to use natural materials from the site and build a fairy house for our magical visitors!

SKLT staff is in the process of identifying a new partner to assist with curating and managing the Sculpture Trail and generating a process to add new pieces to the trail.

If you are interested, please contact info@sklt.org.





40th Annual Members' Meeting Featuring David Gregg

Calling all members! Flock to the Barn on Sunday, June 25th at 3:00 p.m. to celebrate SKLT's progress over the last year and recognize outstanding volunteer contributions.

You'll enjoy a fascinating presentation by David Gregg, Executive Director of the RI Natural History Survey:

"More than Monarchs: Migratory Insects and Coastal Conservation"

Rare and vital habitats are found along the coast of R.I., each with unique animals and plants found only in these small pockets and narrow strips. But coastal habitats also contribute importantly to global populations as insects travel annually across continents to reach scarce resources and beat winter's cold.

Monarch butterflies are only the best-known example, others include dragonflies, and even flies. David Gregg will describe insects that pass back and forth through R.I., how their travels differ from those of classic migrators such as birds or mammals, and what climate change might mean for these tiny travelers.

Active SKLT membership and advance registration is required due to limited space.

Explore Your Local Trails this Summer on a Guided Hike



Guided Hike at Browning Woods Trail Friday, August 4th (9 a.m. - 11 a.m.)

Explore thriving pine barrens and upland forest habitat on a 3-mile hike that travels by the historical stone walls and foundations of Browning Woods Farm.

You'll learn a little bit about the homestead and its former inhabitants, hear raucous birdsong, find some wildlife tracks, and learn more about the landscape of this 165-acre property.



Guided Hike at Crawley Preserve Friday, September 1st (9 a.m. - 11 a.m.)

Savor the last days of the forest in full summer bloom at Crawley Preserve, a beautiful trail shared between SKLT and the Richmond Rural Preservation Land Trust off Glen Rock Road in West Kingston.

You'll explore habitat along Sandy's Brook while on the lookout for migratory birds and other wildlife as well as interesting trees, plants, mushrooms, and more.



Full Moon Hike & Bonfire at Weeden Farm Friday, September 29th (6 p.m. - 8 p.m.)

Enjoy a special twilight guided hike illuminated by the beautiful glow of September's Harvest Moon at Weeden Farm on Matunuck Beach Road.

We'll discuss the history of Weeden Farm, listen for owls and other nocturnal wildlife, and more.

Guests are encouraged to enjoy the campfire, make a s'more, and bring their own snacks to enjoy.

Join Us in Preserving Open Space in South Kingstown

Your support for open space preservation continues to strengthen our organization and invigorate our work. Join or renew your membership, make a general donation, or become an EverGreen member! The South Kingstown Land Trust is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, so your donation is tax-deductible. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

MEMBERSHIP

I want to Join Renew

- Individual..... \$30 Family..... \$50
 Steward..... \$100-\$249
 Guardian..... \$250-\$499
 Conservationist..... \$500-\$999
 Benefactor..... \$1,000-\$2,499

GENERAL DONATION

I'm already a member, but I would like to make an additional donation in the amount of \$_____.



EVERGREEN

I have already planned a legacy gift to SKLT and qualify to be an EverGreen member through

- Estate Plan Trust Other
 Please contact me about making a legacy gift

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please make checks payable to: South Kingstown Land Trust, 17 Matunuck Beach Road, South Kingstown, RI 02879

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP

This program allows our donors to easily establish and maintain their membership through a monthly, automatically recurring gift.

- I want to become a sustaining member at the monthly amount of \$_____

Please charge my credit card:

Credit Card # _____

Exp. _____ Billing Zip Code _____

Name on Card _____

Signature _____

OTHER SUPPORT

- I'm a landowner interested in preserving my land.
 My employer will match my gift. I've enclosed a matching gift form.

The Hale House is "On the Move!"



Hale House programs this summer will feature an historic photography exhibit, "On the Move! Hop On Board the Transportation Revolution of the 19th-into the 20th-Century."

Help us kick off the season at our opening reception on June 21st. In July, join us for a lecture by Brian Wallin, a well-respected RI historian, who will discuss the history and impacts of the Narragansett Pier Railroad. In August, we will host an evening lecture with Scott Molloy, former URI professor and author of *All Aboard, the History of Mass Transportation In Rhode Island*.

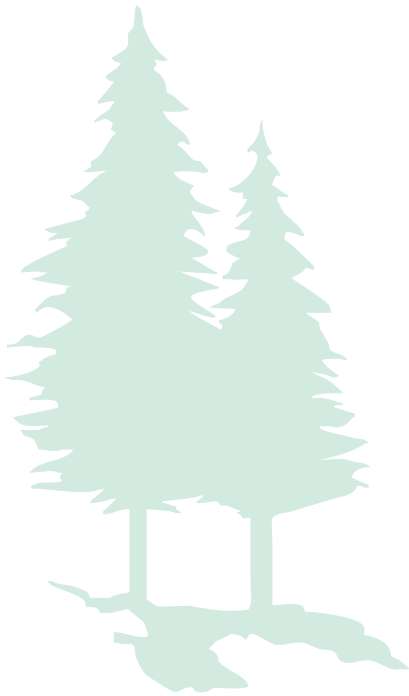
More information on days and times will be available on our Facebook page and website closer to the events.

Hale House will be open this season on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm starting June 21st through Labor Day. Guided tours will be offered by advance reservation at 401-830-4677. There is no charge, but a \$5 per person suggested donation to help offset the costs of providing the tours.



SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST
17 MATUNUCK BEACH ROAD
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RI 02879

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Join Us at an Upcoming Program or Event

Please register for all programs and events in advance at sklt.org/event-tickets

June 17	10 AM	South Kingstown 300 th Anniversary Parade, <i>Main Street</i>
June 25	3 PM	Annual Members' Meeting, <i>The Barn</i>
July 7	9 AM	Guided Hike, <i>Biscuit City & Potter Wood Trails</i>
August 4	9 AM	Guided Hike, <i>Browning Woods Trail</i>
August 6	4 PM	Great Outdoors Celebration & Auction, <i>The Barn</i>
September 1	9 AM	Guided Hike, <i>Crawley Preserve Trail</i>
September 6-9	Varies	Land Trust Alliance Rally, <i>Portland, OR</i>
September 29	6 PM	Full Moon Guided Hike & Bonfire, <i>Weeden Farm</i>
October 6	9 AM	Guided Hike, <i>DuVal Trail System</i>

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Contact us at info@sklt.org