



# Site Lines

Fall 2024  Open Space Makes All the Difference



## SKLT Creates a Nesting Paradise for Birds at Weeden Farm

Left to Right: Female Eastern Bluebird, Male Eastern Bluebird, House Wren, Tree Swallow

If you've been to Weeden Farm, you know that it's special. The 97 bucolic acres are home to historic farm fields, walking trails, SKLT's "Barn," offices, and tractor shed, and thriving wildlife habitat. This grassland/forest "edge" habitat is suitable for many species, but it is ideal for a variety of bird species, especially eastern bluebirds and tree swallows.

Over the years, nest boxes for bluebirds and tree swallows, (they prefer the same exact size box), as well as one larger box for purple martins, were installed sporadically and rarely monitored. In 2022, as SKLT improved the quality of the walking trails at Weeden Farm, especially in the "Back 40" where semi-forested patches meet grassland, staff decided it was the perfect habitat for a coordinated effort to install and monitor nest boxes. With the help of trusty volunteers, 16 nest boxes were installed and numbered, with special metal caps on their entrances to discourage invasive house sparrows from nesting.

This past summer, the boxes were finally ready to monitor for a full nesting season. Linda Stockdale, volunteer extraordinaire and self-described, "beginning birder," took on the project and monitored the nest boxes weekly from May 10<sup>th</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>, following the National Audubon Society's guidelines for nest box monitoring.

Her field notes included information on day, time, weather, box and nest characteristics, nest inhabitants and near-by birds, blooming plants and insects. She used sound recordings uploaded to the Merlin app to identify birds she could hear but not see. She had hoped to easily count eggs and chicks but found it difficult to see the eggs and chicks hidden in the deep nest cup even with a flashlight taped to a dentist mirror!

The easiest way to identify who was living in the box was by observing the nest characteristics and identifying the adult birds going in and out. Bluebird nests are made of fine grass, tree swallow nests are made of fine grass lined with feathers, and house wren nests are made of small twigs often built on top of an old nest as house wrens nest later than bluebirds and tree swallows.

In the first brood, 10 boxes had tree swallow chicks, two had bluebird chicks, two had house wren nests, and two were empty. In the second brood, two boxes had bluebird chicks and five had house wren nests. Soiled nests were removed after the second brood fledged. Nests were not monitored when the chicks were predicted to fledge.

To have all but two nest boxes successfully house native nesting birds is an extremely successful season and testament to the quality of habitat. Also, to not have one nesting invasive species, especially house sparrows, is remarkable and a great sign of future success.



Eastern Bluebird nest

House Wren nest

Tree Swallow nest

If you visit Weeden Farm, keep an eye out for these little homes on poles, and stay tuned for next season's data!

# MILESTONES

Fall is a season with so many transitions. Summer friends have left, migratory birds are visiting on their way to balmier locales, and SKLT is busier than ever.

After a summer of volunteer workdays, guided hikes, and a fabulous *Great Outdoors Celebration and Auction* (thanks to the many supporters and contributors!) September has found SKLT in Host Mode.

The Society for the Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM) brought a team to visit the Perry Grist Mill, and RI PBS filmed a segment about the Mill for *Treasures Inside the Museum* to be aired this winter. SKLT intern Kelsey Tichenor's fabulous "StoryMap" illustrates the relationship between the Mill and its location.

Late September found the Land Trust Alliance's conference, "Rally," in Providence. As a part of the host committee, SKLT held a farming field trip for LTA's "special friends," and I co-presented a course on Stewardship. This intensive three-day conference gathers over 3,000 visitors from around the country, showcasing Rhode Island, sharing knowledge, tools, training, and new friendships.

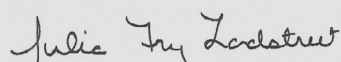
The re-launch of SKLT's EverGreen Legacy Society program has initiated many thoughtful conversations about perpetuity, what it means to SKLT as an organization and what it means to us as individuals and our impact on/for future generations. All I can hear are the voices of mentors past admonishing me to "leave things better than I found them."

New opportunities reveal themselves all the time, a great way to stay informed about programs and projects is SKLT's e-newsletter, Instagram, Facebook, and website. The board-led "Welcome Days" tours are a great introduction to the breadth of SKLT, and I invite you to reach out to me or others on the staff or board with any questions or concerns.

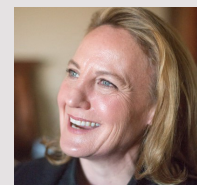
Enjoy the beauty of Fall in Rhode Island.

Open space makes all the difference.

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](http://sklt.org)

**Email:** [info@sklt.org](mailto:info@sklt.org)

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**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.**





## Remembering Charles Merriman Lewis ~ Emeritus Director & Treasurer

Charlie (center) at the SKLT Annual Meeting in 2021 with fellow Directors Emeriti Linda Green (left) and Mike Sherry (right).

Charles Merriman Lewis, better known as Charlie, was born in Providence and was a graduate of Yale University where he earned a ROTC commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

Following two years of service in the Navy, he spent essentially his entire career with the private investment counsel firm of Scudder, Stevens and Clark in New York City, providing portfolio management services to private and institutional clients.

He and his wife, Cornelia, became local residents upon his retirement in 1996 and his undying love for South Kingstown, its people and beautiful open spaces, quickly became legendary throughout the community.

Charlie was a longtime supporter of the land trust and joined the board as Treasurer in the late '90's and served in that capacity until 2011 when he asked to be of continued service with reduced responsibilities as Assistant Treasurer. His distinguished board service earned him the position of Emeritus Director, which he held faithfully until he passed away this year.

Charlie, a consummate gentleman, was a shining example of selfless, dedicated community service. He will be fondly remembered by all who had the good fortune to know him.

## Prepare For Re-Launch: The EverGreen Legacy Society

This summer marked the official re-launch of SKLT's **EverGreen Legacy Society**, a special sub-set of land trust supporters who have chosen to make a lasting gift through their will, retirement account, or other provision.

EverGreen members commit a permanent voice to their conservation values and ensure that the landscapes we all enjoy today will endure for generations to come.

To re-convene and thank this vital group of members, SKLT hosted a beautiful appreciation party overlooking Worden Pond this summer, and re-established the annual tradition of appreciation and fellowship.

Learn more about EverGreen and your legacy gift options at [sklt.org/supportsklt/evergreen\\_legacy\\_society](https://sklt.org/supportsklt/evergreen_legacy_society)







## URI Coastal Fellow Kelsey Creates StoryMap of Mill Pond with Research Data

I'm so glad I got to spend the summer working with SKLT!

While the land trust had pre-existing knowledge about the Samuel E. Perry Grist Mill off Moonstone Beach Road, we didn't know too much about the pond that powers it, Mill Pond.

The information we wanted to learn the most was pond depth, muck depth, resident plant species, and the overall health of the pond and the surrounding watershed.

The deepest part of Mill Pond was just under seven feet deep. What surprised me the most was that the deepest recorded muck depth I recorded was 8.5 feet deep - that's a lot of muck!

There are a wide variety of plants around Mill Pond, but one plant dominated in the pond itself: *Elodea nuttallii*, also known as free-flowered waterweed. As the season progressed, there was so much waterweed in the pond that it looked like an underwater kelp forest!

As a side note, the pond is also home to the biggest snapping turtle I've ever seen! I've decided to name the turtle "Perry," after the first person who owned the Grist Mill.

Water quality studies of the pond and the watershed gave us an idea of how the muck layer and waterweed population got so large. Nitrogen and phosphorus inputs into the pond were consistently high all season, which fuel excessive plant growth and eventually add to the muck layer.



Kelsey on the pond with a painted turtle research assistant.

I used the GPS points and field data that I collected to create maps of the pond and watershed in the mapping program ArcGIS. These maps, along with water quality graphs and lots of pictures were all compiled together in a "StoryMap" that I created with the help of the many experts affiliated with SKLT.

This StoryMap is now available to the public! Visit the SKLT website at [sklt.org/research-surveys](http://sklt.org/research-surveys) to get the whole story.

By Kelsey Tichenor, URI Coastal Fellow Intern at SKLT 2024



"Perry" the snapping turtle posing in front of the Perry Grist Mill on Moonstone Beach Road.





## Invader of the Year: Japanese Knotweed

It's everywhere.

Growing through cracks in cement, between floorboards, and out from the gaps in a stone wall. You can see it everywhere in Rhode Island, along the roadside, in every town. And as far as scientists know, so far there is no insect, pest, or disease that can keep it in check.

Japanese knotweed invasions are sudden and aggressive. They can usually be found in areas that are heavily influenced by human activity, such as roadways, trails, and construction sites. These areas provide it with the large amounts of light that it needs to thrive, and disturbance of the topsoil allows its complex root system to form. Once established, the plant may grow 10 feet in one growing season, making them very easy to spot.

Japanese knotweed is so invasive because the aggressive growth of new stands block out sunlight for native plants below, and since the weed must grow very quickly to do this, it consumes large amounts of minerals and nutrients from the soil. This limits the resources available to nearby species, and severely limits biodiversity.

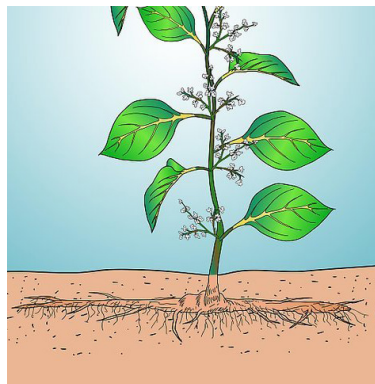
The earliest recording of Japanese knotweed arriving in North America was in the 1800s. Like many of the invasive plants in North America, it was originally used for ornamental and privacy purposes in domesticated gardens.

The stalks of have been compared to those of bamboo, though the plant is actually in the buckwheat family. The stems tend to take on an orange color once mature. Each individual stalk flowers at the end of the summer growing season, producing clumps of small, white flowers. After fruit is produced, the stalks are killed off by the first frost of the fall season, however they quickly return from rhizomes below them come spring.

SKLT actively manages stands of Japanese knotweed on several different properties. This is done mainly through the constant cutting of stalks and the application of herbicides to regrowth from rhizomes. Removal advice varies from source to source and is constantly evolving as new methods are studied. You can learn more about the latest best practice for removal at [invasivespeciesinfo.gov](https://invasivespeciesinfo.gov)

Invasive plant removal is one of, if not the most important volunteer task at SKLT and almost every Tuesday Volunteer Workday includes volunteers mechanically removing knotweed stands and mitigating regrowth.

Removal is most successful when small stems are found early on, so keep an eye out for invaders near you!



Reference: [nps.gov/articles/000/japanese-knotweed-acadia.htm](https://nps.gov/articles/000/japanese-knotweed-acadia.htm)



## Tree Sale to Benefit SKLT at Greenwood Growers



**Friday, October 18th - Sunday, October 20th**  
(10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.)

Fall is the best time to plant trees! Beautify your yard and support open space by buying trees at Greenwood Growers in benefit of SKLT!

Make sure you mention SKLT and 100% of all proceeds from your sale of the \$10, 18-24" 1-gallon Green Giant Arborvitae trees will go to help preserve and protect open space. Half the sales of the \$20 3-gallon trees will also go straight to SKLT's important work.

Check or cash, credit card not accepted.

## Upcoming Guided Hikes

### Guided Hike at the DuVal Trail System

Friday, November 1st (9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)

Orient yourself with SKLT's most extensive trail system, DuVal! We'll be venturing to the western side of DuVal for a hike out to Bulls Head Pond and back. You'll be on the lookout for birds, mushrooms, and more while discussing interesting plants and features of the landscape.



### Guided Hike at Browning Woods Trail

Friday, December 6th (9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)

Join a fun three-mile hike that travels through thriving wildlife habitat, historic stone walls, and foundations that make up the remains of the Browning Woods Farm homestead. You'll be sure to hear birdsong, find some wildlife tracks, and learn more about the landscape of this 257-acre property.



### Members' Open House

Wednesday, November 6th (5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.)  
Free, registration encouraged

Come one, come all! New, longstanding, and prospective members are invited to learn about what we do to protect and take care of thousands of acres of local forests, fields, farms, and trails.



### Volunteers' Open House

Wednesday, November 20th (5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.)  
Free, registration encouraged

Learn more about the variety of opportunities to volunteer and make a difference in stewarding open space. You'll find which opportunity is best for you, removing invasive plants, picking up litter, working events, or stamping envelopes.



# 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 maintain their membership through a monthly, automatically recurring gift.

- I want to become a sustaining member at the monthly amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Please contact me to set up ACH/bank payments.

Or 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.

## Attention Hikers! Don't Forget Your Orange! It's Not (Just) for Style

SKLT provides limited hunting opportunities on select properties as a land management practice. For safety purposes, all hikers must wear orange safety clothing during hunting season.

Authorized SKLT hunters are responsible and the trails remain safe year-round for all visitors to enjoy. By wearing orange during hunting season, hikers ensure they are safe and visible to both authorized hunters, and any possible unauthorized hunters.

**Please wear 200 square inches, such as a hat OR vest, of solid fluorescent (blaze) orange above your waist and visible in all directions, the second Saturday in September until the last day of February.**

SKLT mostly mirrors the same dates as RI DEM's requirements. However, unlike DEM, 500 square inches (hat AND vest) is not required in December, and orange is not required the third Saturday in April through the end of May on SKLT trails.

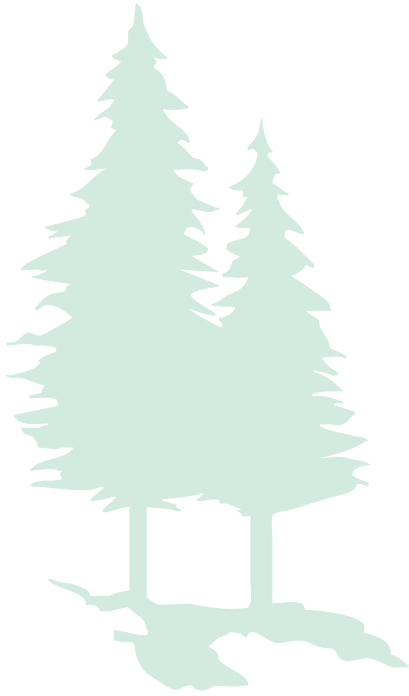






SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST  
17 MATUNUCK BEACH ROAD  
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RI 02879

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Wakefield, RI  
Permit No. 132



## Join Us at an Upcoming Program or Event

Please register for all programs and events in advance at [sklt.org/events\\_calendar](https://sklt.org/events_calendar)

October 4	9 - 11 a.m.	Guided Hike, <i>Crawley Preserve Trail</i>
October 16	4:30 - 5:30 p.m.	SKLT Welcome Days, <i>The Barn</i>
October 18-20	10 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Tree Sale to Benefit SKLT, <i>Greenwood Growers</i>
November 1	9 - 11 a.m.	Guided Hike, <i>DuVal Trail System</i>
November 6	5 - 7 p.m.	Members' Open House, <i>The Barn</i>
November 13	4:30 - 5:30 p.m.	SKLT Welcome Days, <i>The Barn</i>
November 20	5 - 7 p.m.	Volunteers' Open House, <i>The Barn</i>
December 6	9 - 11 a.m.	Guided Hike, <i>Browning Woods Trail</i>

**REMINDER: PLEASE WEAR BLAZE ORANGE WHEN HIKING**

FOLLOW US ON:



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Land Trust



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Not on the SKLT email list?  
Contact us at [info@sklt.org](mailto:info@sklt.org)