



Site Lines

Fall 2026  Open Space Makes All the Difference



Preserving Land - and History - in South County

At SKLT, we're passionate about protecting land for wildlife habitat, open space, and the preservation of Rhode Island's rich agricultural and cultural history. With that in mind, we are always watchful for unique features on the lands we protect. Sometimes those features reveal themselves fortuitously, just before being lost to history. One such landmark is a historic spring tucked away on protected land.

Described as an important water source for Native Americans and Colonists, the site is still frequented by diverse wildlife. It's persistent flow provides a rare source of open water on the coldest winter days, when the vast majority of the landscape is frozen solid.

I first became aware of the spring years ago while working for the Narragansett Bay Coyote Study. We had tracked a coyote – captured and collared at SKLT's Weeden Farm – to the site, expecting to find the pack was drawn there by a food resource or a shelter site. What we found instead was water: a small, persistent flow running clear and unfrozen in the middle of a hard freeze, tracks from diverse wildlife species pressed into the mud around its edges.



Springs like this are easy to overlook. They rarely appear on maps, they occupy a footprint measured in feet rather than acres, and they can be erased by a single afternoon of grading or filling. However, their ecological value is out of all proportion to their size. **In a landscape where surface water may lock up for weeks at a time, a spring that runs year-round becomes a lifeline for wildlife.**



We have been able to locate one written record dated 1889, by local historian J.R. Cole where he described it simply as “an old ancient thoroughfare.”

We are intentionally not sharing the location of this spring (and please don't share on socials if you are lucky enough to know). Small, sensitive sites like this one are vulnerable to heavy foot traffic, and the surrounding habitat would not withstand it. The spring has been documented in our stewardship records, its condition will be noted during our annual monitoring visits, and it will be watched over in perpetuity – which is, in the end, what we do.



– Kyle R Hess, Director of Conservation Stewardship & Land Protection

Kyle joined SKLT in May 2026 and has jumped in with both feet, exploring SKLT's properties, learning their histories, and working alongside landowners and stewards to help them to steward the open places we protect.
kyle.hess@sklt.org | Ph: 401.789.0962 ext. 6

Milestones

The corn is brown in the field, it's dark when I awake in the morning, and the osprey have left their pole. Fall must be around the corner.

It has been a dynamic and active summer. The ribbon cutting at **Yawgoo Trail** has led to a summer of happy hikers. Follow-up on monitoring reports has identified a number of inadvertent but significant encroachments Kyle and Martha are working to resolve. Thomas, David and the volunteers have kept vegetation at bay. And Tasha scheduled a full roster of great programs for the fall.

The **Annual Meeting** gave members the opportunity to vote for and welcome five new board members: Pete Blanpied, Tom Breen, Paul Clappin, Ben Potter, and Susan Rochford. Their skills and insights will be wonderful additions to SKLT's fabric.

The Great Outdoors Celebration and Auction was a delight. The rain changed its course at the last second and spared us all. Thank you, Bob Ward, for being an exceptional auctioneer. Thanks to the many who contributed as sponsors, ticket buyers, item donators, auction bidders and merry makers.

Together the event raised 25% over the budgeted amount! This includes generous support to purchase an equipment trailer for the Tuesday Volunteer crew – SKLT's trails and farms will thank you for years to come.

SKLT is sad to say good-bye to **Tasha Sussman Moss**, Development & Outreach Coordinator. She is off to Indonesia to pursue graduate studies leaving a trail of cunning illustrations, new trail signs, and well-wishing friends in conservation.

Round two of the Reaccreditation process will begin in October. As I mentioned before, the process is rigorous and tedious, but we emerge a stronger organization with every round of effort.

Make time to enjoy fall in South County.

Local produce, warm waters, excellent hiking and more await you. Curley and I startled a fawn today when we took a saunter to enjoy the pollinator fields at Weeden – I look forward to hearing what you see on an SKLT property.

Open space makes all the difference....



Julia Fry Landstreet
Executive Director



South Kingstown Land Trust

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Kyle R. Hess
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Tasha Sussman Moss
Development & Outreach Coordinator

Martha Day
Stewardship Compliance Coordinator

David LaRocque
Land Operations Coordinator

Address

17 Matunuck Beach Road
South Kingstown, RI 02879

401-789-0962

Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
10:00 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.

“In with the New...!” The Samuel E. Perry Grist Mill Sluiceway Project

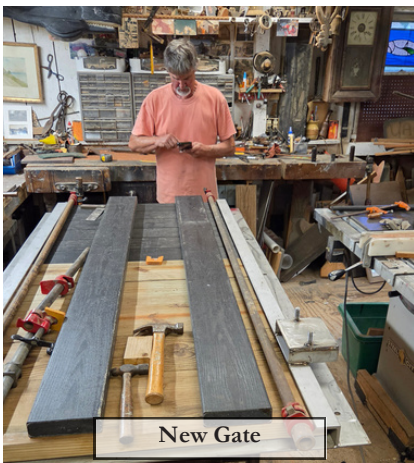
There has been plenty happening behind the scenes at the Samuel E. Perry Grist Mill. Following the mill restoration and sluiceway reconstruction in 2022, the mill was back in operation, but a new problem quickly became apparent. During a grinding, lead miller Rob Lyons and Grist Mill steward Kevin McCloskey regularly had to stop and let the Sluice’s water level recover. Despite repairing several leaks, they still couldn’t maintain enough water to keep the mill running.

In a cursed game of whack-a-mole, Rob, Kevin, and their team of volunteers began investigating and soon found a leak that had been exacerbated by the dam ammeldments, as well as a sluice gate that wasn’t sealing properly.

“This summer we built a temporary dam in front of the gate assembly so we could remove it and work on it,” says Rob. “To our surprise, we found that the 18-inch cement pipe inserted into the pre-existing 26-inch metal pipe during the reconstruction did not extend far enough.”



Old Sluice Gate Behind Temporary Dam



New Gate

To make matters worse, the older metal pipe had also deteriorated, allowing water to leak around it. Volunteers replaced the rusted metal by inserting a new concrete section of pipe and sealed around it with cement block and mortar. Now, the sluice gate itself is being rebuilt, beginning with a stainless-steel frame and a new sealing gasket.

The completed assembly is expected to be reinstalled this fall, with hopes of getting the millstones turning again soon after.

For a 300-year-old mill, keeping the stones turning takes more than opening a gate. It takes problem-solving, skilled work, and plenty of volunteer hands. If all goes according to plan, it means we’ll soon be back to milling Rhode Island Whitecap Flint Corn and enjoying the delicious jonnycakes it makes possible, just as generations before us did.

Interested in grindings? email info@sklt.org

In Memoriam: George C. Whaley



It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to a dear friend, George C Whaley.

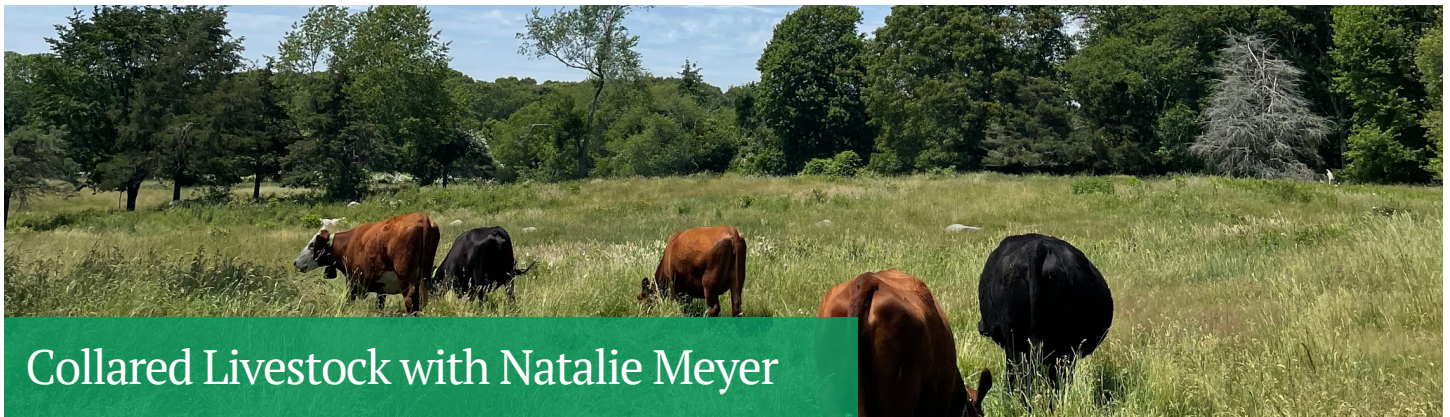
George passed away this past June, and with his passing, “a century of South County farming tradition has come to a close; he was among the last of the full-time-farming, flint corn-growing, daily jonnycake-eating Swamp Yankees.” George was raised on the same farm his family had worked since the 1830s and, like any “good swamper,” could trace his roots in South County all the way back to 1660.

For 50 years, George maintained a thriving herd of dairy and later beef cattle while cultivating crops. Even toward the end of his life, you could find him baling straw, sowing seed, and caring for the land he loved.

As his family so eloquently wrote, “George built his life on the back of a tractor. He was resourceful and talented. His wit was a quiet thing, lying in wait like a hunter and striking suddenly, leaving you paralyzed with hilarity.”

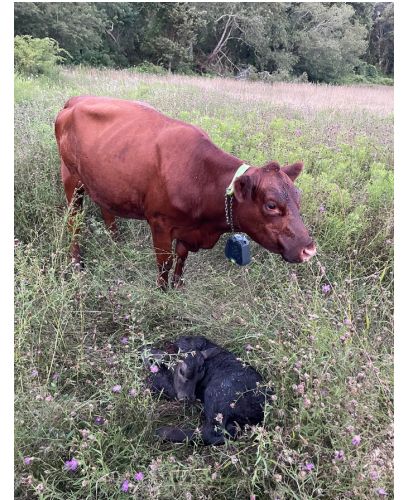
With his passing, we lose a true piece of South County history. Rest in peace, George.

Adapted from a passage written by George’s family in his memory.



Collared Livestock with Natalie Meyer

Moonstone Land & Cattle and Matunuck Farm are working on a three-year project to test **NoFence** virtual fencing technology to optimize rotational grazing. This research is supported by a SARE Northeast Farmer Grant. This technology replaces physical interior fences with GPS-enabled livestock collars that use audible cues and mild electric pulses to keep animals contained within custom virtual boundaries. **Traditional rotational grazing around here is tough because our coastal pastures are small and our grazing season is so short.** Additionally, when you work a full-time job and run a farm “on the side,” doing what is right for the land and your business can sometimes get bogged down by the many demands of the farm and life. Rotational grazing can be one of those things. **Moving temporary fences is time-consuming, so we are using GPS collars to set up flexible micro-paddocks right from a smartphone app.** An additional component of this is working with Thomas Meyer, SKLT’s Director of Land Management, who is helping us map out and track invasive species. **We want to see if targeted grazing can knock back invasive species, improve soil health, and keep small New England livestock farms viable.**



Our herd is wearing collars now, and we are learning a lot. The system takes a minute to figure out, and the virtual line has a bit of a buffer, but it has already been a major time saver. We no longer have to drag physical fences around, and it takes away some of the mental load of figuring out when we will find the time to move them. **The cows are learning quickly, and the real-time tracking is especially helpful during calving season, when I’m checking on the calves every day. We’re excited to see what the data tells us about whether virtual fencing can make rotational grazing more practical, improve soil health, and help small farms like ours remain viable.**



Article written by Natalie Meyer, Ph.D.

Senior Research Analyst | Southwick Associates

Owner | Moonstone Land and Cattle LLC

To find out more about the research study, please scan the QR Code or visit:
https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/fne26-158/

What in the Blazes? Don’t Forget Your Blaze Orange

With hunting season underway, remember to wear **blaze orange** when you’re out hiking, walking, or exploring SKLT trails. A hat plus a shirt, vest, or jacket, visible from all sides, is your safest bet.

(And no, camouflage orange doesn’t count!)

Pro Tip: Protect your dog, too

A blaze orange bandana or vest can help keep your four-legged hiking buddy visible. And as always, remember to follow SKLT’s leash rules.

Looking to stay safe *and* stylish? Grab an SKLT blaze orange cap before your next adventure.



Hunting Season Dates:
Sept. 15, 2026, - Jan. 31, 2027.

See RIDEM Fish and Wildlife
website for more information.

EverGreen Legacy Voices: Deanna & Don Cullen



Deanna, with an easy laugh, and Don, always with a joke, are the sort of people a whole evening could go by without looking at a watch. Sitting down with them in their home in Matunuck, we took a moment to appreciate the beauty around us: the light salt breeze, the quiet solace you only get down by the water, and the buzz of native pollinators enjoying the garden as much as we were. Even in their home, they have opened the doors and welcomed the outdoors in.

Perhaps it is no surprise that they have made their home here. For both of them, a connection to the outdoors began long before South Kingstown became home.

For Deanna, that connection to Rhode Island goes back to childhood. ***"I spent a lot of my summers in Rhode Island on my dad's boat,"*** she says. ***"We'd come down Friday night after he got out of work and stay until Sunday night."*** There days were spent fishing, trips to Block Island, seaweed and sand everywhere, and evenings at the local clam shacks. I would use every excuse I could come up with to stay as long as possible.

"I just loved being here."

I remember being on the boat, looking at the shoreline dotted with houses and think to myself, ***'who gets to live here?'*** Now I can say ***"I do!"*** When they first built their home in South Kingstown, they thought of it as a summer place. But Rhode Island had other plans. Their sons attended nearby universities and fell in love with the area, too. Eventually, when Deanna and Don asked whether either son might want their house in Connecticut, the answer was a resounding no.

They weren't leaving Rhode Island. Neither were Deanna or Don.

"It's so many things in one postage-sized area," Deanna says. ***"The people, the landscape, the salt ponds, the fields, the trails. There is always something to do, somewhere to explore."*** That love of place eventually led them to the South Kingstown Land Trust. Driving down Route 1 and Matunuck Beach Road on the way to their home, they often wondered about the undeveloped land around them.

"Why is all this land undeveloped?" Deanna remembers wondering. ***"And what's going on in the barn over there? It looks like it's a party..."***

Once they discovered SKLT, they joined hikes and lectures, volunteered, visited the Grist Mill, and got to know the people behind the organization. Deanna became involved with the Development Committee and played an integral part in this year's

Great Outdoors Celebration. ***"It's not just an organization,"*** she says. ***"These are real people behind it that have a true love of the land."***

For Deanna, that connection to the land is about more than scenery ***"It means being able to breathe."***

She remembers driving back to South Kingstown after a week in Connecticut. As they passed the stone walls and open fields, she could feel herself relax. ***"I felt like I was holding my breath all week,"*** she says. ***"And then once we'd hit those stone walls and fields, I could breathe again. I was home."***

That feeling is part of why the Cullens chose to include SKLT in their estate plans. They saw in the Land Trust the things they value most: conservation, education, agriculture, recreation, and community.

"It was really a no-brainer for us," Don says.

They hope their gift will help keep these places here for generations to come.

As Don puts it, ***"You can't just take it for granted. It has to be actively pursued."***

And for anyone looking to begin that connection for themselves, Deanna has some simple and effective advice:

"First step is just get outside. Come to a lecture. Come to a hike. Walk the fields. Breathe."

– Tasha Sussman Moss, Development & Outreach Coordinator

Coming this Fall! Estate Planning 101 with Neil Anthes



Did you know that more than 60% of American adults do not have a will?

While estate planning isn't always easy to think about, having a will is an important way to make your wishes known and protect the people, assets, and places you care about most.

Financial Advisor **Neil Anthes** of **Raymond James in Westerly** will join SKLT this fall for a conversation covering all things wills and estate planning.

Keep an eye out for more information and registration details!

Guided Hikes

Guided Hike at DuVal Trail

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

The largest of SKLT's trail systems, DuVal winds through rolling hill-and-kettle terrain shaped by a terminal moraine left behind as glaciers retreated at the end of the last Ice Age. A bit more challenging than our other properties, DuVal offers more than seven miles of trails and plenty of opportunities for adventure and exploration.



Guided Hike at Browning Trail

Friday, November 13th (9:00 – 11:00 a.m.)

Take a trip back in time on this 3.5 mile hike that travels by the historical stone walls and foundations of Browning Woods Farm. You'll be sure to find lots of wildlife tracks, changing leaves, and mushrooms galore as the forest welcomes winter back. Plus check out the new informational homestead sign!



Guided Hike at Biscuit City Preserve & Potter Wood

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

Discover the unique history and natural beauty of Biscuit City and Potter Wood on this guided hike. Learn about the area's history as a mill site and water source, explore historic features including the mill foundation and collapsed spring house, and discover the diverse plants, wildlife, and habitats that make this special "pocket" nature reserve so unique.



All Hikes are Free. Registration is required. Inclement weather cancels. All ages welcome. Please no dogs.

Potluck & Lectures



Written in Stone: Rhode Island's Stone Wall History with Jim Turek

Tuesday, October 6 (6:00 - 8:00 p.m.)

Stone walls are a familiar part of Rhode Island's landscape. As farmers cleared their fields, they stacked stones along property lines, creating the dry-laid walls that still shape the region today. In this potluck and lecture, Jim Turek will explore the history of these stone walls and their significance to South County and Rhode Island history. With more than 40 years of experience in ecology, field assessment, engineering principles, and innovative restoration practices, Jim will share his expertise on this fascinating part of our local landscape.



The Secret Life of Barn Owls with Joseph Zbyrowski

Tuesday, October 20 (6:00 - 8:00 p.m.)

Join us and raptor specialist Joe Zbyrowski for a potluck and talk about barn owls and efforts to bring them back to the landscape. With more than 30 years of experience working with raptors and owls, Joe will share his knowledge of these remarkable birds, from their distinctive physical features and behaviors to their nesting habits. He'll also share the story of a local restoration program creating opportunities for barn owls to nest and successfully raise young. **Whooo's coming?!**



Bobcat Ecology in RI with Chris Hickling

Tuesday, November 9 (6:00 - 8:00 p.m.)

Bobcats are important predators in eastern forests, and their numbers appear to be increasing locally according to recent camera trap data. The Rhode Island Bobcat Project uses GPS collars, camera traps, and citizen science to better understand how bobcats use highly fragmented, densely populated landscapes. This talk will focus on project methods and objectives and will present research completed to date.

...And More to Come!

Sign up for all potlucks, hikes, and other events at our website www.sklt.org/events

Protect the Open Spaces that make South Kingstown Home

Your support for open space preservation strengthens our organization and invigorates our work.

Join or renew your membership, make a general donation, or become an EverGreen member. SKLT is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, so your donation is fully tax-deductible. TIN: 05-0516985. *Thank you!*

Membership - I want to: ☐ Join ☐ Renew

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Estate Plan

☐

Trust

☐

Other

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Please contact me about making a legacy gift

OTHER SUPPORT

☐

I'm a landowner interested in preserving my land

☐

My employer will match my gift.
I've enclosed a matching gift form

☐

I would like to donate stocks to SKLT. See our guide at sklt.org/supportsklt/

Name:

Address: City: State: Zip:

Phone: Email:

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



FALL 2026, sklt.org



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Join Us at an Upcoming Program or Event

Please register for all programs and events in advance at sklt.org/events_calendar

Oct 6	6 - 8 p.m.	Potluck & Lecture: RI's Stone Wall History with Jim Turek, <i>The Barn</i>
Oct 9	9 - 11 a.m.	Guided Hike, <i>DuVal Trail</i>
Oct 14	5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	SKLT Connect, <i>The Barn</i>
Oct 20	6 - 8 p.m.	Potluck & Lecture: Barn Owls with Joseph Zbyrowski, <i>The Barn</i>
Nov 9	6 - 8 p.m.	Potluck & Lecture: Bobcat Ecology in RI with Chris Hickling, <i>The Barn</i>
Nov 13	9 - 11 a.m.	Guided Hike, <i>Browning Woods</i>
Dec 11	9 - 11 a.m.	Guided Hike, <i>Biscuit City Preserve & Potter Wood</i>

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