



gosa *instant!* news

Groton Open Space Association *Instant!* News, Summer 2013, Volume 2, No. 2



Photo by Sue Sutherland

It's official!

The Groton Open Space Association (GOSA) is thrilled to report that we are now the proud owners of Groton's newest parcel of designated open space! At 10 a.m. on June 11th, GOSA closed on the \$395,000 purchase (plus additional survey, appraisal, and other costs) of the 91-acre Candlewood Ridge property located in the Groton/Mystic area near the border with Le-dyard. The site is now preserved in perpetuity for watershed and wildlife habitat protection as well as passive recreation for the public. The transaction was completed thanks to hundreds of generous donations from local residents and foundations as well as a \$256,750 grant which GOSA received through the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (CT DEEP) Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition program .

Why are we so excited about this? Because Candlewood Ridge is an outstanding property from a biological and ecological point of view. It contains a diversity of rare habitats and species: deep peat

sphagnum-covered wetlands, poor fens, open tussock sedge marshes, and at least 24 rare bird, amphibian, reptile, fish and plant species.

The parcel contains a complex array of interconnected wetlands and streams that are the headwaters of Haley Brook and flow into the Mystic River and Fishers Island Sound. These waters provide nursery habitats for many species of turtles and fish: spotted turtles, banded sunfish, American eel, chain and redbfin pickerel, common and golden shiner, creek chub-sucker and pumpkin seed.

The avian biodiversity of the property is also notable, containing 168 identified species at this time, 18 of which have been flagged by the CT DEEP as having conservation concerns and in need of special protection. Shorebirds such as the great egret, great blue heron, glossy ibis, and osprey are also found here.

With its healthy upland forests, vernal pools and location adjacent to hundreds of acres of undevel-



Tussock sedge

oped forests, farmlands and wetlands , this parcel provides an important piece of a protected green belt which extends north from Groton’s coastline bordering Fishers Island Sound into Ledyard.

Geologically, the property is also intriguing, containing ancient ridges from the Avalonian period and myriad vestiges of the last glacial period: depressions and bowls scoured in the granite ridge, large erratics, including a split rock and another which balances on top of the eastern Avalonian ridge overlooking wetlands, vernal pools, and brooks.

But recent activities have degraded a 10-acre section of the parcel where clearing and dumping occurred. This area is now the focus of restoration work. GOSA volunteers and UConn Eco-Husky members helped start this effort this spring by holding a cleanup party. It is envisioned that this will provide an area for car access and a series of easy terrain nature trails,



Left to right: Morgan Paternostro, Tabitha Jacobs, Kelsey Reeves, Joe Mangiavico. Photo by Syma Ebbin

which will accommodate baby carriages and wheel chairs. This area will remain closed to visitors until the restoration work is completed. GOSA has applied for several grants (Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program and Long Island Sound Study Futures Fund) to help revitalize this area and improve the habitat for the New England cottontail and other primary succession and shrub land species.

We are also hoping to create a series of trails aimed at children such as the Sponge Bog Trail which will explore some of the parcel’s wetland habitats. Other trails provide more topographical challenges and lead to a series of ridgeline cliffs, intersecting with other established trails in the area.

We hope you will visit Groton’s newest parcel of open space which is open and available for passive recreational uses right now! Information about trail access and parking will be posted on the website www.gosaonline.org. On-site parking and SEAT bus service are available at the Gold Star Highway entrance. On street parking is available at the Larchmont Terrace entrance, providing access to a moderately difficult trail. A third entrance on Lambtown Road will be closed during a habitat restoration project. ■

For additional information contact: President, Joan Smith, dsmith0705@sbcglobal.net



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GOSA News will support the mission and purpose of the Groton Open Space Association by publishing electronic newsletters that will inform the public of past, present and future GOSA activities and threats to the health of open space. **GOSA News** will also serve as a link to the GOSA website <http://gosaonline.org/> for additional information and as a link to other key sites. Our mission is to inform and inspire the public to become actively involved. We welcome letters to the editor. Letters should be sent with the writer’s name, address and daytime phone number via e-mail to: gosamail@gmail.com.

GOSA Mission and Purpose

To work to promote conservation, environmental preservation, open space and recreational areas in South-eastern Connecticut.

To educate the public about the value of open space, conservation and environmental preservation.

To enlist public support and funding to promote, acquire or maintain open space for public use, alone or in cooperation with local, state or federal agencies, or with other nonprofit organizations. GOSA is a nonprofit tax exempt organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3).

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Membership

To join, send a check to GOSA and include your name, address and e-mail. Annual dues are \$10 per year.

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