



watermark

PUBLISHED BY LAUDHOLM TRUST IN SUPPORT OF WELLS NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

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Nik's Notebook

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e pluribus, laudholm

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

— Margaret Mead



We've always felt that here at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm. This is a protected place saved, invigorated, and advanced by thoughtful, committed citizens, born not of tragedy but of opportunity. For four decades, the can-do, all-hands-on-deck spirit has thrived here, creating a unique and treasured spot on the coast of Maine.

You can see it in the pages of this newsletter. Whether it's staff and volunteers pulling together to root out, or at least identify, invasive species on land and in the sea, or dozens of students, parents, and educators making a mosaic to grace our gallery, from many efforts there arises one Laudholm. It is a collaboration that has passed the test of time, thanks to folks—like you—who have continued to stay involved and engaged.

This joint effort, the Wells Reserve at Laudholm, will officially turn 40 next year. Middle age, I've found, is a time of unavoidable but essential reflection, self-questioning, planning, and possibility. So let it be with your Laudholm next year as well. In our Spring 2024 *Watermark*, and even before then, you'll be hearing from us, but we'd love to hear from you too. Tell us: What makes this special place world-changing for YOU?

Nik Charov
President, Laudholm Trust
Chairman, Wells Reserve Management Authority

dozens contribute to heron art

BY SCOTT RICHARDSON

Eric Gold assembled a hundred fragments of art, each 3½ inches wide, a little more than 5 inches tall, and embedded with a story, to make “Heron,” the collaborative painting now on display in the reserve’s Eugene Frederick Artway (the hallway to the auditorium).

The avian portrait was the product of “Dwellers of the Wells Reserve,” a summer program organized by education director Suzanne Kahn and hosted by Gold.

To prepare for Dwellers, Gold superimposed an enlarged great blue heron photo over a marsh background image, then decimated them, across and down, making 100 rectangles. On June 27, he carried those cards, a passel of paintbrushes, and curated acrylics heavy in grays, blues, and greens to the auditorium. There, through five hour-long sessions, he guided small groups to their shared goal. Each person painted a small part—the wader taking wing, the sky, the far bank of marsh grass, the world beneath the water’s surface—applying acrylics while chatting about the majestic birds, the places they live, and how to protect them.

Gold has done this kind of collective work before, often with human subjects, as he explores elevating consciousness in communities through shared creation of art. There is hope Dwellers of the Wells Reserve will be repeated in 2024 with a new animal. This year’s program was supported by a grant from Save Our Shores Maine.



A PLEASED ERIC GOLD AT THE CLOSE OF DWELLERS OF THE WELLS RESERVE.

KIDS AND THEIR LEADERS IN THE FEATHERED FRIENDS DAY CAMP APPLY THEIR PERSONAL TOUCHES TO HERON.



going on the offensive against invasives



**“IT’S BEEN
DEPRESSING TO
WATCH THE INVASIVES
TAKING OVER—
I’M GLAD FOR THE
OPPORTUNITY TO HELP
TURN THE TIDE.”
—NANCY KEDERSHA**

BY SCOTT RICHARDSON AND CHLOE MARCH

Walk any trail at the reserve and you will find them. Sometimes they’ll find you. They dominate certain areas and perennially test others. Once, they were invited. Now, they are unwelcome. But it seems they’re here to stay. You may have guessed: They are **the Big Three** non-native invasive plants at the reserve: bittersweet, barberry, and honeysuckle.

Bittersweet, the persistent vine with pretty yellow-husked red berries that climbs trees, gradually strangling its host and adding so much weight that branches break and entire trees fall.

Barberry, the thorny shrub with crimson drupes that is so unpalatable to browsing deer that it is ignored in favor of nonprickly

plants, which get consumed and eventually find themselves overridden by the invaders.

Honeysuckle, the gangly shrub with sweet-scented flowers that opens its leaves early in spring, stealing sunlight from late-comer neighbors, throwing shade that eventually prevents natives from thriving.

Once these plants colonize an area, eradicating them can become infeasible; containment may be the only realistic option.

DRAWING THE LINE

This summer and fall, the reserve reinvigorated efforts to fight back against the Big Three. Under direction from Vanessa Beaulieu, natural resource specialist, and guided by

Chloe March, conservation intern, 16 volunteers dedicated themselves to the cause. The strategy: Select specific locations with high ecological value or greater chance of success.

Five sites were chosen. The **Saw-whet Owl Trail** and the western part of the **Laird Norton Trail** are mostly dominated by native plants but needed barberry and bittersweet removed from their edges. Along a section of the **Farley Trail**, a stand of native ferns was suffering a patch of invaders destined for removal. And in the **Yankee Woodlot**, the young American chestnut grove had to be rescued from uncontrolled bittersweet.

Removing invasive plants is hard work, both physically and mentally. Pull one bright-orange bittersweet vine and

field work



Under the watchful eye of a red-tailed hawk, Brian Greenwood, facilities director, mows an open field in midautumn to keep the habitat from being overrun by invasive species. The hawk has learned that mowing often exposes prey like mice and voles.

For more on the importance of mowing, see the fall 2019 *Watermark*. For more on red-tailed hawks, see the summer 2019 issue. Both are available at wellsreserve.org/watermark.

another three pop up. Work a barberry patch and enter a cage of needles. Honeysuckle wants nothing more than to trip up attackers and poke them in the eye.

Week after week, teams spent hours wrangling the big three and taking dozens of loads to the burn pile. **Slowly but surely**, they revealed ferns, freed hawthorns, and exposed greenery with a much longer history in these woods.

Those sites will require regular attention to prevent invasives from regaining the upper hand. To join the crew, contact Vanessa or Lynne (page 2).

Chloe March was a Maine Coast Heritage Trust Richard G. Rockefeller



ABOVE: RICHARD MCKINNON HOLDS A COUPLE OF HEFTY HONEYSUCKLE ROOTS. OPPOSITE: NANCY KEDERSHA REMOVES INVASIVES FROM A PATCH OF FERNS.

Conservation Intern working in the reserve's stewardship program this summer.

THE PULLING TEAMS

In June and July, these eight volunteers tallied 84 hours battling invasive species:

Nancy Kedersha
Richard McKinnon
Joe Rickert
Laurie March
Jamie Lombardi
Rolfe Petschek
Allan Amioka
Helen Burdette

New pullers joined some continuing summer volunteers this fall:

Ginger Bevan
Diane Carfora
Bina Salvador
Joe Rickert
Nancy Kedersha
Richard McKinnon
Larry Guihan
Nancy Welch

tracking marine invaders in maine

BY SCOTT RICHARDSON



Invasive species are organisms introduced to a new location by human activity, and that can harm the environment, economy, or public health.

On a sunny morning in early August, experts on various forms of sea life, their students, and support staff arrive at Wells Harbor on a mission.

They carry aquarium nets, kitchen spatulas, and plastic trays, bottles, and bags down to the dock and, once in position, go prostrate and reach their arms over the edge. For the next 60 minutes, they scoop seawater, scrape surfaces, and inspect specimens. At the closing call, they gather up tools and samples and zip off to their next destination.

such survey since 2018 and just the second to include Wells Harbor.

The reserve hosted the group for three days as they visited Georgetown, Rockland, South Freeport, and Wells..

The Rapid Assessment Survey:

- monitors marine species
- tracks trends in distribution
- detects new marine invaders, and
- documents regional patterns of established invaders.

Speed and expertise are the survey's hallmarks. Participants examine as many underwater surfaces as they can in an hour, recording both native and invasive marine species. Many organisms are identified in the moment, but many more won't be ID'd until team members study samples in a lab. It may be up to a year before the results are published.

RAPID ASSESSMENT

Wells was just one stop on the seventh Rapid Assessment Survey.

The event, coordinated by the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management since 2000, was the first

ENTITIES PARTICIPATING IN THE 2023 RAPID ASSESSMENT SURVEY

- Duke University
- Framingham State College
- Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology
- MIT Sea Grant
- Maine Department of Marine Resources
- Massachusetts Maritime Academy
- Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management
- North & South Rivers Association and MassBays
- Princeton University
- Royal British Columbia Museum
- Southern Maine Community College
- Suffolk University
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- University of California at Santa Barbara
- University of New Hampshire
- University of Rhode Island
- Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Wheaton College
- Williams College



MIMIC FILLS THE GAPS

In the early aughts, rapid assessment team members realized that obtaining data between their intense-but-infrequent surveys would be beneficial. Because new invaders can arrive any time, an expanded early detection network could create awareness and allow quicker response by resource managers.

To that end, they started laying groundwork for the Marine Invaders Monitoring and Information Collaborative. In 2008, trained MIMIC volunteers started monitoring sites in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine.

MIMIC's goals echo the rapid assessment, but in practice the focus is narrower. Volunteers learn 18 invasive species selected for ease of identification, regular occurrence, and importance to resource managers. Many volunteers go beyond these basics, noting other flora and fauna while at their sites. Over 15 years, MIMIC observers have sampled more than 40 locations and documented 500-plus species.

In Maine, MIMIC is coordinated by the reserve's research associate Jeremy Miller. He oversees 18 MIMIC sites from Kittery to Bristol and supports almost 50 volunteers who have signed on to do monthly surveys between May and October.

MIMIC IN ACTION

On the final MIMIC survey of the year in Wells and Kennebunk, I joined Jeremy, Eileen Willard, Bruce Bjork, and Carol Steingart to watch them in action. At the harbor, they found a single European rock shrimp, a "good chunk of *Botrylloides*," and no *Didemnum* but 3 other target tunicates. They searched several spots then classified each species as abundant, common, few, or rare.

Surveying the usual tidepool in Kennebunk was a quick job. Late in the season, there are generally fewer species and individuals.

New volunteers are welcome to join the MIMIC project. Jeremy will lead the next training at the Wells Reserve in May. Watch our calendar for details.



MIMIC SITES IN MAINE, YEAR STARTED

Kittery Sea Point, 2016
York Harbor, 2008
Wells Harbor, 2008
Kennebunk Beach, 2008
Biddeford Pool, 2008
Spring Point Marina (South Portland), 2017
Segal's Reef (South Portland), 2009
SMCC Dock (South Portland), 2008
Peaks Island Dock, 2014
Peaks Island Tidepool, 2015
Great Diamond Tidepool, 2020
Great Diamond Dock, 2020
Long Island Fowlers Beach, 2016
Long Island Ferry Dock, 2015
Chandlers Wharf Dock (Chebeague), 2018
Waldo Point (Chebeague), 2018
Stone Pier (Chebeague), 2014
Rachel Carson Salt Pond (Bristol), 2022

FAR LEFT: THE WELLS HARBOR DOCK IN THE MIDST OF THE 2023 RAPID ASSESSMENT SURVEY. LEFT: JEREMY MILLER, EILEEN WILLARD, AND CAROL STEINGART SURVEY A KENNEBUNK TIDEPOOL. ABOVE: AN ALGAE SAMPLE COLLECTED FOR LAB INSPECTION. BELOW: RAPID ASSESSMENT SURVEY TEAM MEMBERS IN THE WELLS RESERVE TEACHING LAB.



what do maine science teachers want?

BY SCOTT RICHARDSON

Three out of five educators teaching pre-K to high school in York and Cumberland counties are aware that Maine has a National Estuarine Research Reserve, but only one in five have used the Wells Reserve's educational resources, according to a needs assessment completed for the education program this summer.

I have used lesson plans and activities that I have gotten from past course work with Wells and Laudholm with great success in my classes.

The electronic survey was completed by teachers at both public and private schools. It attracted 213 responses from 100 schools.

The 29 questions asked about educational settings, teaching approaches, field trips, program content, professional development, and interactions with the reserve.

Some results echoed long-standing frustrations—funding constraints and transportation challenges can put field trips out of reach and it can be hard to find time for either field trips or teacher workshops.

On the plus side, teachers said they need and value the kinds of programs and resources the reserve offers, especially experiential activities focused on ecological themes.

Pertinent in this post-pandemic year, teachers did not express much interest in virtual or technology-based offerings.

Since the education program's last needs assessment in 2011, teachers at

I would love to do more field trips but money and transportation is always an issue.

all grade levels have gained a greater interest in climate change resources. They have also intensified calls for education materials in various languages, particularly Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Lingala.

The needs assessment, completed by Waterview Consulting in Harpswell, will be discussed by the reserve's education advisory committee at its December meeting. Next year, the education staff will delve into the findings as they plan future programs, with the benefit of being better informed by local teachers.

Any new education initiatives at the Wells Reserve will need support. To make a donation that will help us reach more teachers and students, please contact Nik Charov at 207-646-4521 ext 144 or nik@laudholm.org.

What is your ideal teacher workshop?

My ideal workshop combines community science connection, interdisciplinary relevance, and hands-on modeling that I can take back to my classroom.

The term "hands-on" was used 45 times in the 152 responses.





ON THE AIR

The reserve's involvement with marine invasive species (see page 6) caught the attention of Maine Public, which dedicated a **Maine Calling** episode to the subject. Jennifer Rooks chatted with our own Jeremy Miller, along with Curtis Bohlen (Casco Bay Estuary Partnership), and Carol Steingart (Coast Encounters) in front of an enthusiastic audience in the Laudholm barn.

PEOPLE

After 13 years in the reserve's Coastal Training Program, **Annie Cox** has moved to the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership as its watershed resilience manager.

Emily Greene, Coastal Training Program assistant and outreach coordinator for the Saco Watershed Collaborative, has redirected her energy toward Earth & Equity, a sustainability and social performance consulting group.

On June 7 in Boston, the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment presented **Paul Dest** with a 2023 Visionary Award. He was cited for outstanding contributions toward protecting natural resources at the Wells Reserve and the broader Gulf of Maine watershed.

In October, education director **Suzanne Kahn** supported whale research as a Grosvenor Teacher Fellowship Alumna on board a Lindblad Expeditions–National Geographic voyage in Southeast Asia and Micronesia. Meanwhile, research scientists **Jason Goldstein** and **Ben Gutzler** flew to western Australia to present at the 12th International Conference and Workshop on Lobster Biology and Management.

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The Wells National
Estuarine Research
Reserve is one of 30
reserve sites throughout



the country. All reserves require local funding to match federal grants from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Wells Reserve is the only reserve that receives its match from a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Each year, Laudholm Trust contributes private funds and in-kind services to support Wells Reserve operations and capital improvements.

this land was saved by volunteers



We held our customary volunteer appreciation event in September this year. What perfect timing! The afternoon was warm and bright, as were the people who attended.

The reserve's unofficial choral society serenaded their faithful friends, who bring so much heart to their work at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm, with custom lyrics sung to a well known tune.

THE "WELLS RESERVE CHORAL SOCIETY" INCLUDES, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, KAREN STATHOPLIS, SUZANNE KAHN, BRUCE BJORK, CARYN BEITER, PAUL DEST, KAT LIBBY, NIK CHAROV, AND LYNNE BENOIT.

SUNG TO THE TUNE OF "THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND" BY WOODY GUTHRIE

This land is YOUR land, this land is OUR land
From Alheim dorm-a, down to Drakes Island
From the upland forests to the Maine Gulf waters
This land was saved by volunteers

As I went walking those ribbons of boardwalk
I saw beside me those preserved marshes
I saw before me vast milkweed meadows
This land was saved by volunteers

Docents and rangers clocked countless hours
When it comes to caring, they have great powers
Their voices sounding, on two-way ra-di-o
Champions of coastal eco-lo-gy

There was a high wall of green invasives
Choking the chestnuts, the tender hawthorns
We asked for help and just guess what happened
Native plants are thriving once again

Visitors come calling, they see the sign and
Inside the booth is a smiling person
They may be looking for the Rachel Car-ar-son
These folks helped by our volunteers

Day in and day out, you set the example
That's why we're caught up on larval samples
In every season check on red maples
Great efforts by kick-ass (!) volunteers

When the sun comes shining, when the grass needs mowing
Walls of endless painting supplies need stowing,
Though the workshop's flooding, you still showed up today
Our wonderful fa-cil-ities volunteers

In the Visitor Center, or on the trails, dear
Whenever we need you, you somehow get here
Soon we'll stop singing, but before we go-o-o
Once more for all our volunteers

All together now:
This land is YOUR land, this land is OUR land
From protected wetlands, down to Drakes Island
From the towering white pines, to the Maine Gulf waters
Thank you to all our volunteers

Thank — you — to — all — our — volunteers!



to our recent donors **thank you**

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Rebecca Kibler

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John Apte
for a canvas print of the
Laudholm campus and Little
River estuary

wells reserve mission

To understand, protect, and restore coastal ecosystems of the Gulf of Maine through integrated research, stewardship, environmental learning, and community partnerships.

laudholm trust mission

To raise financial and community support for the Wells Reserve at Laudholm and Maine's coastal environment.

WANTED

Spectacular Photography
and Extraordinary Art
for our 18-month calendar
July 2024–December 2025
Commemorating 40 years since
Wells Reserve designation
wellsreserve.org/contest