

watermark

Published by Laudholm Trust in support of
Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve



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Tolerant Young Hawk Prowls Laudholm Campus

Over the past few years, immature red-tailed hawks have made themselves more comfortable on this repurposed property than they ever could have when Laudholm Farm was raising broilers for market. This spring and summer have been no exception. Visitors have often remarked about a big, bulky bird on the barn, or the farmhouse, or the water tower, or the garden fence, or the circular stone sculpture out in the field. Odds are good they were all seeing the same young predator. It posed for weeks, a solo-raptor photo op.

While the campus has hosted tolerant red-tails for several years, it's not the same bird coming back year after year. Rather, it seems to be a series of youngsters developing skills and their sense of safe boundaries while feasting on the rodents that sometimes become abundant around these old buildings.

How do we know it's new birds? An immature red-tail reveals its youth through plumage. The namesake rectrices don't grow out until after its first birthday, so pale-brown, lightly banded tail feathers signal "hatching year" or "second year" individuals (sidebar). As summer lengthens, some rust-orange tail feathers may replace the dull ones. For most red-tails, it will be the third year before the effect is complete. Once a red-tail reaches maturity, age is not obvious.

To see more red-tailed hawk photographs taken around the Laudholm campus, visit our blog.

The North American Bird Banding Manual explains the standard age labels used by banders.

"Hatching Year" references the calendar year during which a baby bird left its egg.

"Second Year" is an individual known to have hatched during the preceding calendar year; the bird has its first birthday during its second calendar year of life.

"Third Year" continues the pattern; a bird hatched in 2017 and banded in 2019 is recorded as a third-year individual.

For some species and plumages, it is not possible to ascertain age precisely. Additional codes include AHY, ASY, and ATY (or "after" the hatch, second, or third year).

watermark

A newsletter for members of
Laudholm Trust and supporters of
the Wells National Estuarine
Research Reserve

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flotsam

Reserve's First Maine Master Naturalist

Linda Littlefield Grenfell, environmental educator, has completed a rigorous training course to become a Maine Master Naturalist.

This highly selective program requires 100 hours of in-depth training, more than 200 hours of practice, and a commitment to enrich nature education in Maine. It's another feather in Linda's cap, to go with her Registered Maine Kayak Guide and Certified Interpretive Guide credentials.

Deaf Students on the Estuary

Teachers from the Baxter School for the Deaf brought their students to the reserve in May for two tailored programs as part of the "Watershed Stewardship in Action: Deaf Students on the Estuary" project (*Watermark*, fall 2017). K-5 students participated in a Wild Friends in Wild Places program, while grades 6-12 joined Microscopic Marvels. Suzanne Kahn and Caryn Beiter have been the Wells leaders for this program, which involves two other New England reserves, Boston University, and The Learning Center, and is funded by the NERRS Science Collaborative.

Wells Fire Chief Mourned

The reserve mourns the loss of Wells Fire Chief Wayne Vetre, who recognized the value of real-time storm surge and water level data, acquired by the reserve's monitoring stations, during coastal flooding events. He was also instrumental in the past year's design process for upgrades to the barn (page 8).

Quiet Time for Ecology Center Exhibits

After 15 years on display, exhibits in the Maine Coastal Ecology Center have finally reached the end of their useful life. This summer, the doors closed on Mya the talking clam, the Wentzscope, water quality sliding panels, and the salt marsh diorama. Planning for the future use of this space has begun.

Survey Says...

As NOAA prepares to approve the Wells Reserve's 2019-2024 management plan, Laudholm Trust is readying its plan for supporting the reserve's objectives over the next 5 years. In June, to gauge public opinion about priorities and approaches, the Board of Trustees launched a strategic planning survey.

Nearly 450 people responded with about half being members of Laudholm Trust. Almost all had visited the reserve (a quarter of them more than 8 times per year), mostly for walking/hiking or to attend the crafts festival.

Three preselected activities were ranked "most important" to respondents: land stewardship, educating children, and protecting water. And a majority said Laudholm Trust should be more active in lobbying for relevant legislation.

We will delve more deeply into the survey, and summarize the draft strategic plan, in the fall issue of *Watermark*.

The paper in this newsletter:

- Contains FSC certified 100% post-consumer fiber
- Is certified EcoLogo, Processed Chlorine Free, and FSC Recycled
- Is manufactured using biogas energy

nik'snotebook: Pushing Boundaries

Summer means vibrant, pulsing life here in Southern Maine. Everywhere I look this time of year, I see this place and its work, its staff and visitors, venturing further, branching out, growing and changing. Perched as it is on the edge of land and sea, the Wells Reserve is all about boundaries.

Estuaries are where freshwater meets sea, of course. Where they daily mix you'll find one of the most diverse and dynamic environments on earth. But that's not the only flexing border here.

National Historic Register sites like ours are where history bumps up against the constantly emerging future. As we probe beyond the familiar borders of our colonial history, we're discovering indigenous stories and local presences that may stretch back to the glacial walls that once lined this coast. At the same time, we're watching the ocean creep farther up the beach, and our tide gauge, each year. It's resetting the line between land and wet and promising an interesting future (to say the least).

The watermark rises as this *Watermark* arrives. On the cover is a young red-tailed hawk who has made the main campus his home, overlapping his hunting zone with our barns and walkways. He seems to feel more familiar each month; soon, he may get a name. My 11-year-old son, another fledgling, recently paddled a kayak by himself for the first time on the Little River and came back a changed man. He's perched on the edge of adulthood, ready to spring his wings and fly.

In this summer newsletter, you can read about how the Wells Reserve's research is taking us deeper underwater, farther upland, even into the skies. Our new Webhannet Marsh Trail cuts a new path through a forgotten place and reconnects harbor visitors with the salt marsh. Campers and teachers in training explore their own potential and the frontiers of knowledge. Boundaries, boundaries, everywhere, if one but stops to think. How will you push yours this summer?



Nik Charov
President, Laudholm Trust



wellsreserve at laudholm

A PLACE TO DISCOVER

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Program Manager, National Estuarine Research Reserve System
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

What's happening now at the Wells Reserve at Laudholm?

facebook.com/wellsreserve

instagram.com/wellsreserve

Email: wellsreserve.org/signup

The Wrack: wellsreserve.org/blog



The Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve is one of 29 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.

administration / partnership

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of protected areas established for long-term research, education, and stewardship. This partnership program between NOAA and the coastal states protects more than one million acres of estuarine land and water, which provides essential habitat for wildlife; offers educational opportunities for students, teachers, and the public; and serves as living laboratories for scientists.

The 29 Sites in the NERR System

ACE Basin, South Carolina
 Apalachicola, Florida
 Chesapeake Bay, Maryland
 Chesapeake Bay, Virginia
 Delaware, Delaware
 Elkhorn Slough, California
 Guana Tolomato Matanzas, Florida
 Grand Bay, Mississippi
 Great Bay, New Hampshire
 He'eia, Hawai'i
 Hudson River, New York
 Jacques Cousteau, New Jersey
 Jobos Bay, Puerto Rico
 Kachemak Bay, Alaska
 Lake Superior, Wisconsin
 Mission—Aransas, Texas
 Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island
 North Carolina, North Carolina
 North Inlet/Winyah Bay, South Carolina
 Old Woman Creek, Ohio
 Padilla Bay, Washington
 Rookery Bay, Florida
 San Francisco Bay, California
 Sapelo Island, Georgia
 South Slough, Oregon
 Tijuana River, California
 Waquoit Bay, Massachusetts
 Weeks Bay, Alabama
 Wells, Maine

Graduate Fellowship Program Launches Across Reserve System

New Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowships offer students a chance to work with a selected National Estuarine Research Reserve for 2 years beginning in summer 2020. A single fellowship is available at each of the 29 reserve sites. Applications are being accepted now.

Each fellow will address a key question to help scientists and communities understand coastal challenges relating to

future policy and management issues.

NOAA anticipates students will receive an annual stipend of \$41,000 for research and travel, while each reserve will receive an equipment and supply budget of about \$7,000 annually.



Margaret Davidson served in many leadership roles at the National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). She was the founding director of the Coastal Services Center, acting director of the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, and acting assistant administrator for the National Ocean Service. She focused her professional work on environmentally sustainable coastal

development practices, the reduction of risk associated with extreme events, and climate adaptation. NOAA is building upon her boundary-stretching legacy by training future coastal leaders through this fellowship program.

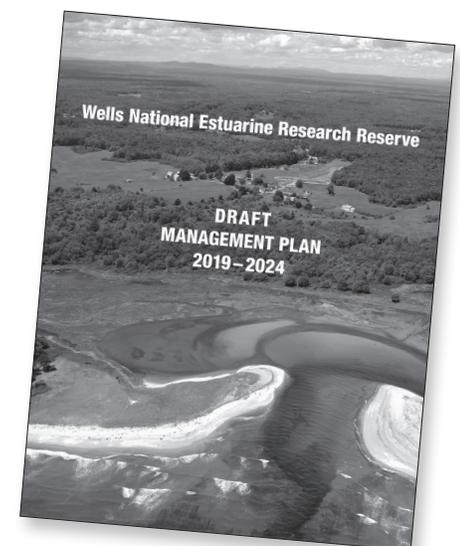
Updates to Key Reserve Documents

The Wells Reserve's primary guidance document has been revised and is nearing final approval by NOAA. This fifth edition of the reserve's management plan lays out a strategic plan for the next 5 years. It describes the administrative structure, core programs, resource protection and manipulation outlook, public access and visitor use expectations, considerations for land acquisition, and needs for facility development.

Laudholm Trust will use the management plan as a primary reference during its own strategic planning process this year.

The reserve concurrently updated its "Rules for Public Use" document to address new activities that have arisen since the last version was issued. For example, vaping, e-cigarette use, and unapproved drone flights are now not allowed at the reserve.

Review documents are available for download at wellsreserve.org.



Webhannet Marsh Trail at Wells Harbor Park is Open to All

The Wells Reserve and Town of Wells dedicated the Webhannet Marsh Trail, the reserve's first ADA-compliant trail, on April 19 at Harbor Park. Two paths and one overlook comprise the quarter-mile trail system, which crosses a parcel owned by the town and incorporated into the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve through a conservation easement.

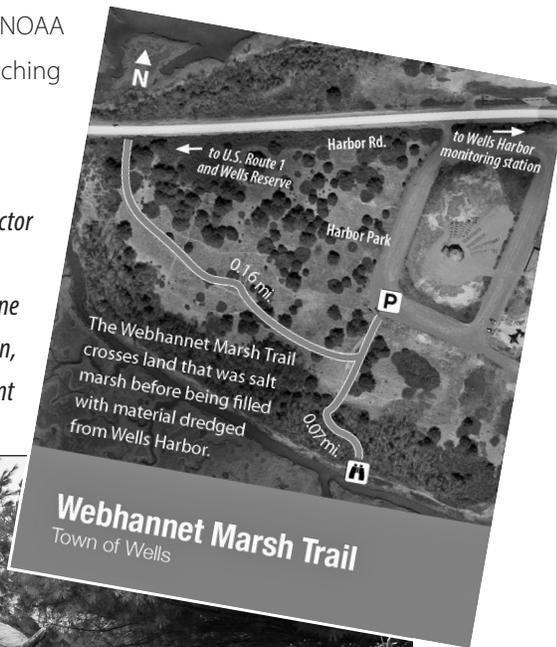
"The Webhannet Marsh Trail allows people with disabilities to approach the edge of a salt marsh and experience its unique sights, sounds, and smells," said Paul Dest, executive director of the Wells Reserve.

The surrounding landscape includes grass, shrub, and wooded areas and a broad estuary. Interpretive signs explain salt marsh ecology and historical changes at the site.

The new trail is the first completed section of a long-sought pedestrian way between Wells Harbor and U.S. Route 1. The first Wells Reserve trail beyond the "Laudholm" property was designed by Wright-Pierce Engineering of Portland and constructed by Green Shadow Landscaping of Rollinsford, New Hampshire.

The Webhannet Marsh Trail is a partnership project involving the Wells Reserve, the Town of Wells, and NOAA. Funding was provided by NOAA through a grant to the Wells Reserve, with matching funds coming from the town.

Participating in the ribbon cutting were Wells Town Manager Jonathan Carter, Wells Reserve Executive Director Paul Dest, Wells Selectman and Reserve Management Authority Board Member Karl Ekstedt, National Estuarine Research Reserve System Program Manager Erica Seiden, and Laudholm Trust President and Reserve Management Authority Chair Nik Charov.



upcoming programs AT WELLS HARBOR

Tuesday, August 27, 10-11am

Life Under the Dock *Take a close look at marine organisms living on and below the Wells Harbor dock. We will collect samples, set out a plankton net, and pull a trap to see what we discover. Hand lenses and microscopes supplied. Free for all ages. Families are welcome. Meet at the upper dock landing at Wells Harbor.*

Tuesday, September 10, 10-11am

Estuary Discoveries Walk *Enjoy a peaceful, easy meander along an accessible trail with a lovely view of the Webhannet estuary. Learn about salt marshes and the history of this site. Free for all ages. Families are welcome. Meet at the trailhead at Harbor Park, Wells, with sunscreen and insect protection.*



Green Crabs

really grabbed our attention about 5 years ago, and they haven't released their hold since.

It's time for an update.



When green crabs arrived in New England more than 150 years ago, they found an unoccupied ecological niche in Maine's salt marshes. Since then, the population has grown dramatically and its effects on natural systems have been strong and largely negative.

Studies at the Wells Reserve and elsewhere have demonstrated that green crabs prey on softshell clams, damage eelgrass beds, and destabilize estuary creek banks.

Despite their long occupancy, great abundance, and serious impacts, there is a lot left to learn about green crabs. The reserve's latest research has focused on understanding seasonal movements, population structure, sexual maturity, and effects on habitats.

Local Studies

The Webhannet River estuary is small, mostly linear, and has a launch ramp just 5 minutes from the Laudholm campus, making it a convenient site for studying crabs.

In a 2018 pilot study, researchers tagged male and female green crabs with acoustic "pingers" and tracked their movements. They found males moving up the estuary into generally warmer, shallower water while females tended to move down where water was colder. This finding appeared to be reinforced during trapping in 2019.

Researchers also looked for characteristics that would signal sexual maturity, finding females with carapace (shell) widths as small as 39 mm (a little over 1½ inches) carrying eggs. They learned that while female crabs with yellow, orange, or red undersides could be mature, eggs were seen most often on red-vented crabs.

In 2018 and 2019, Wells researchers assessed environmental DNA (eDNA) as a monitoring tool for green crabs. They discovered that because hard-shelled crustaceans don't release easily detectable amounts of eDNA, it can be difficult to trace them with this method. But in the lab, egg-bearing females did release measurable amounts, so eDNA still holds some promise for monitoring.

Regional Study

New England reserves collaborated in summer 2015 to gain a regional perspective

on the effects of crabs on salt marshes.

The four research programs measured the burrowing and grazing activities of *Carcinus maenas* (green crab), *Sesarma reticulatum* (purple marsh crab), and *Uca pugnax* (Atlantic marsh fiddler crab).

Green crabs were abundant in Maine, near absent in New Hampshire, and intermediate in southern New England. Crab effects were generally greater at southern sites, though, possibly because three resident crab species can have more of an impact than just one.

The scientists expressed concern that impacts on northern marshes may increase as additional species expand northward.

The study is currently being prepared for publication.

National Synthesis

In a broad study of crab effects on salt marshes, completed in 2017–2018 and recently published in *Ecology*, scientists from 15 reserves found that while crabs can be damaging at a local scale, they do not appear to be a major threat to salt marshes at a broad scale.

Instead, salt marsh elevation raised greater concern. Low areas in a salt marsh are submerged more often and for longer periods, causing them to become less healthy and more susceptible to damage. The authors concluded that rising sea levels pose a larger threat to the nation's salt marshes than do crabs.

Opposite: Research intern Kayla Rexroth hauls in a modified lobster trap holding dozens of green crabs from the Webhannet River estuary. Insets show reproductive steps: a mated pair, a female bearing eggs, and an immature crab just after molt.

Collaborating Reserves

These reserves participated in the national synthesis, which was spearheaded by Elkhorn Slough and Narragansett Bay. The reserves in italics were involved in the regional study.

Chesapeake Bay, Virginia
 Delaware, Delaware
 Elkhorn Slough, California
 Guana Tolomato Matanzas, Florida
Great Bay, New Hampshire
 Mission—Aransas, Texas
Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island
 North Carolina, North Carolina
 North Inlet/Winyah Bay, South Carolina
 San Francisco Bay, California
 Sapelo Island, Georgia
 South Slough, Oregon
 Tijuana River, California
Waquoit Bay, Massachusetts
 Wells, Maine



Barn Upgrades

The big barn is receiving some special attention this summer. Because the barn sees a lot of use—camps and concerts, storage and tours, festivals and weddings—we wanted to be sure it would be safe.

With guidance from the town code enforcement officer and the State Fire Marshal's office, these upgrades have been completed or are in progress in mid summer:

- emergency exit doors
- ADA-compliant ramp at egress
- fire-protection coating
- emergency lighting
- full complement of extinguishers
- code-compliant signage

These changes are being accomplished while imposing as little as possible on the barn's aesthetic appeal.



Governor Mills's Day of Service Team in the Coastal Resource Library: Dave Harrison, Tom Karb, Debbie McGawley, Madeline Mooney, Bob Joyner, Diana Joyner, Mary Harrison, Les Parker, and David Gagnon. Not pictured: Elizabeth Conrad.

Coastal Resource Library Gets a Facelift

In 2001, the reserve opened a specialty library containing more than 3,500 items covering coastal environments, estuarine issues, and watershed conservation. For nearly two decades, the Dorothy Fish Coastal Resource Library has served staff, volunteers, visitors, and borrowers statewide. It is also proven as an effective meeting space.

After many years of use, the library was due for new carpeting, fresh paint, and other upgrades. Early last winter, the work got done. An indefatigable maintenance crew and library volunteers were joined by staff and volunteers, including a team that came out for the Governor-elect's Day of Service on January 5. Stop by for a look at the refreshed space.

Docent Room Redo

Peter Anthony has become well acquainted with the odd pitches, slopes, and slants of Laudholm's historic buildings as a volunteer woodworker over the past 4 years. So when a plumbing leak buckled the floor of our volunteer resource room (docent room), forcing a fix-up, Peter embraced the opportunity to right the room's off-kilter cabinets and countertops.

Nothing square? No problem. Peter made an involved project look easy. Aided by a generous donation of spalted maple boards from the Smith-Valley family of Kennebunk, Peter crafted a beautiful "kitchen" station.

Paintbrush-wielding volunteer Carolyn Broad colored the room surfer blue and picnic green, making it a bold and bright space for the stream of docents who keep the reserve's education programs in the flow.



Peter Anthony with a load of donated boards that he incorporated into the spruced-up docent room.

Drawing the Line: Reserve Resurveys Property Boundaries

Trail walkers have noticed pink ribbons hanging along some of the reserve's trails since last fall. The markers were tied to selected trees and shrubs for temporary reference during a survey of the reserve's boundaries.

The reserve is resurveying land that adjoins private property along Drakes Island and Island Beach roads, along the boundary with Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, and along Laudholm Farm Road. The work is being done by Middle Branch Engineering, the firm that completed the original surveys. New boundary signs are being installed in strategic locations to clarify owner responsibility.

PLAN SHOWING THE
**WELLS NATIONAL
 ESTUARINE SANCTUARY**
 PHASE ONE
 WELLS — MAINE

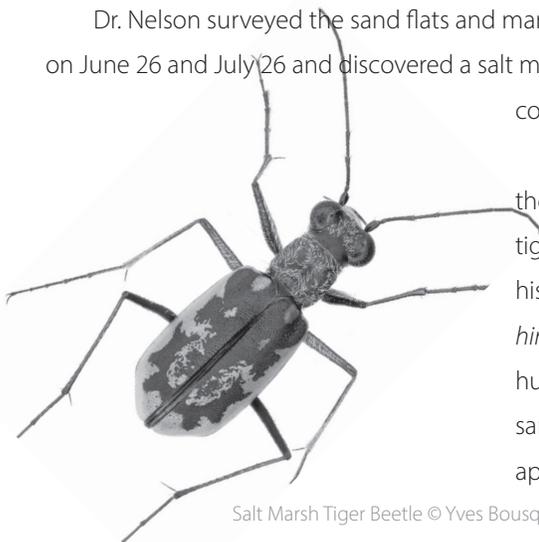
At the Edge of the Sea: Salt Marsh Tiger Beetle

Maine is home to 14 species of tiger beetle, one of which is a salt-marsh specialist. *Cicindela marginata* is a "species of special concern" in Maine and "possibly extirpated" in New Hampshire. It is vulnerable to tidal erosion, sea level rise, development, and coastal oil spills.

In 2010, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife found the salt marsh tiger beetle in Wells and just nine other sites during a survey of the state's salt marshes. Because the species' situation remains precarious, the reserve asked Dr. Robert Nelson ("Beetle Bob") to determine the status of the local population this summer.

Dr. Nelson surveyed the sand flats and marsh surface behind the Little River barrier dunes on June 26 and July 26 and discovered a salt marsh tiger beetle population "large enough to be considered stable and secure."

A casual observer walking along the dune at the river mouth is likely to encounter a different tiger beetle that Beetle Bob found abundant on his visits. The hairy-necked tiger beetle (*Cicindela hirticollis*) is a half-inch-long, speedy, start-and-stop hunter of smaller insects whose larvae burrow into sand. It is threatened in other parts of its range but apparently secure in Maine.



Salt Marsh Tiger Beetle © Yves Bousquet CC BY 3.0



Memorial Gifts

Aristides (Harry) Stathoplos
Barbara Cole Perry
Chief Noda
Deborah Kyne
Joan Junker
Linda Morrilly

Celebratory Gifts

For Becky Richardson on her birthday
For Grace & Bob Vogel on the holiday
For Jeffrey R. Sweet on his birthday
For Joan Boyle in her honor
For Linda Grenfell on her birthday

In-kind Contributions

Kittery Trading Post for a kayak and paddle for the Punkinfiddle raffle
Carolyn Broad for a dishwasher, fantasy marble laminate top, and other items
Rising Tide Brewing Company for cases of Ishmael and Spinnaker beers
Tracy & Tim Kay for household items for the spruced up docent room
Carole Bailey for lumber



Summer interns Sophia Troeh (education) and Megan Gillen (research) prepare to retrieve a salinity sensor situated in the center of a salt marsh panne on the Little River estuary.

New Members

Judy & David Adams
Cynthia Appleby
Chuck Archer
Lorrie Aubuchon
Jack Austin
Carole Bailey
Patricia Barnaby
Greg & Judy Barnhart
Jean Beattie
April Bennett
Virginia Bevan
Martha Bridges
Robert & Sally Bryan
Lisa Burditt
Margo Burnham
Bob & Susan Carchedi
Elizabeth Chadwick
Devin Chamberlain
Linda Miller Cleary
Christian Clough
Peter Cohen
Judith Corello
Don Cosentino
Anne-Marie Craven
Derek Davidson
Alvah Davis
Christopher Davis
Diaz Family
Sue Ellery
David Farrell
Scott, Lisa & Brittany Ferrecchia
Tina Fischer
Patricia & William Fitzgerald
Patrick & Marilyn Fleming
Grace & Larry Fogle
John Foley
Mary Fusconi & John Harris

James Gaffney & Priscilla Bryant-Gaffney
Mary & Stephen Giannetti
Annette Gosnell
Paige & Erin Gott
Robert Graves
Weston Gregg
Daniel Grenfell-Lee
Kimberly Hardy
Joyce Toye Hartmann
Miranda Hassett
Colleen Hicks
Mary Beth Huber
Daphne Innes
David Jackson
Paula Janes
Amanda Kilgore
Janet & Peggy Knott and Lisa & Bart Robins
Barbara Kszystyniak
David & Janet Kupferschmid
Janie & Scarlet Labbe
Ben LaBelle
Victor Langelo
Susan C. Law
Sarah & Dennis Levesque
Cheryl Link & Mary Rose
John Mahoney
John Mahoney
Stephen & Diane Mallon
Carol Maloney
Katie McCourt
Kathleen McIntyre
Matthew McKeown
Mac & Michelle McMillan
Roger Miller
Aram Mitchell
Doreen & Clay Mockus
Dorothy S. Moore & Friends

Taylor Morrison
Tim Murphy & Hannah Gensheimer
Donna Murphy
Gary Newell
Candace Nichols
Mary Jane O'Connor-Ropp
Erik Pearson
Amy Pollini
Leland Pollock
Kristine Pynn
Susan Rafferty
Cristie Reich
Cydnie Reiman
Pamela A Romanelli
Patricia Rynkiewicz
Rita Schlegel / The Schlegel Sisters
Michelle Schmidt
Scott & Kelley Simpson
Julie-Anne & Colby Smith
Don, Judith, David & Aaron Stanford
Sarah S. Stanley
Samuel Stoddard
Rob & Marie Tate
Paul & Jackie Terwilliger
Samantha Tipton
Rachel Tolley & Family
Corey Tondreau
Kelley Wagers
Paula Ward
Betsy Winslow
Daniel Wissell
Mary Lou & Ferdinand L. Wyckoff, Jr.

thankyou
for gifts received
November 2018 through June 2019

(DRAFT) FY 2019 Financial Report

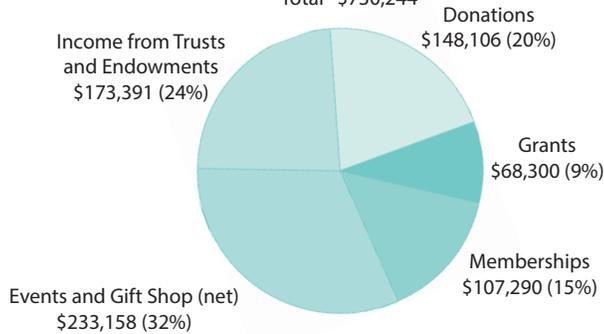
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

This condensed information has been derived from draft financial statements. Upon completion, reviewed financial statements for the Wells Reserve and Laudholm Trust will be available online and in our offices.

laudholmtrust

Revenues

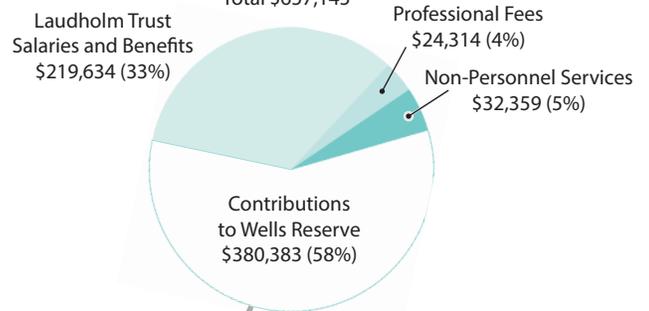
Total* \$730,244



* excludes gains on investments and trusts

Expenses

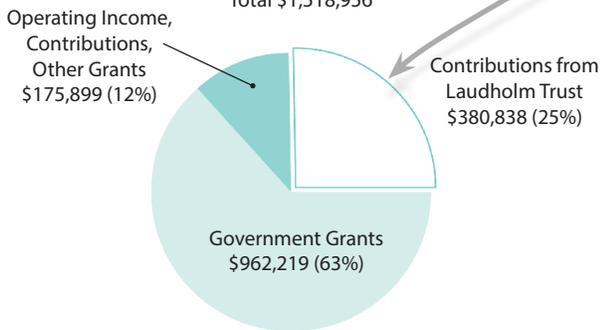
Total \$657,145



wellsreserve

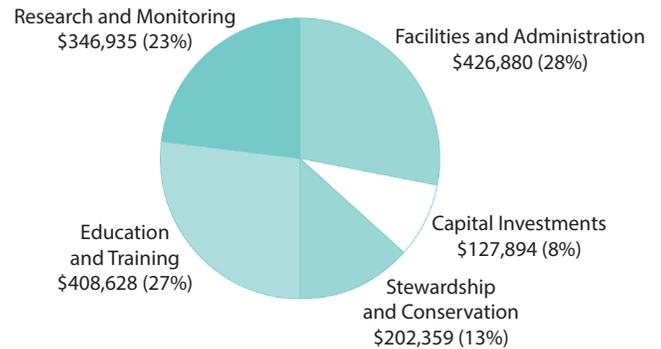
Revenues

Total \$1,518,956



Expenses

Total* \$1,512,691

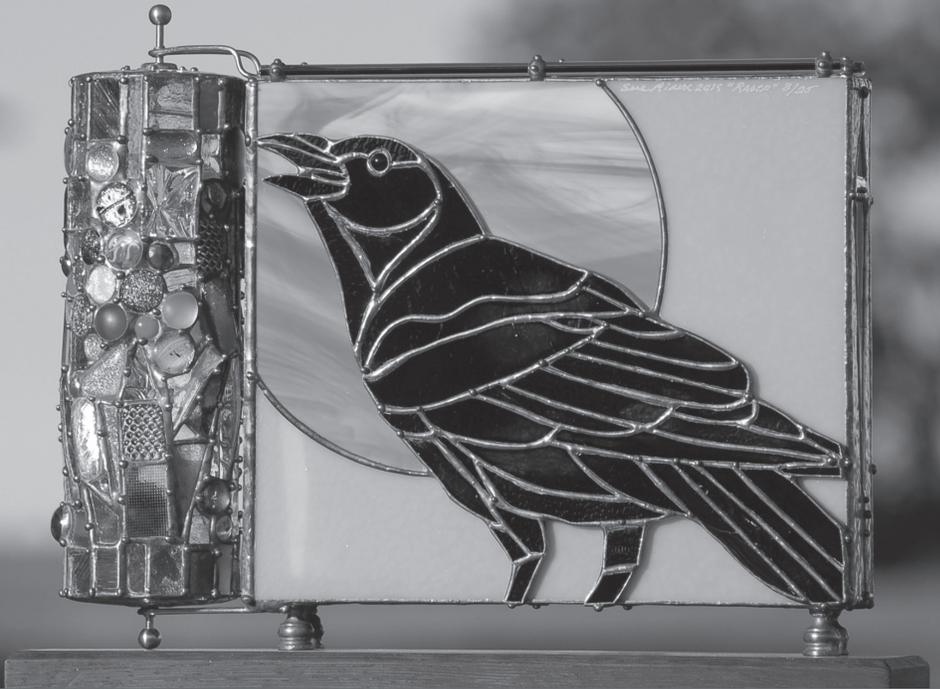


*excludes depreciation

The public-private partnership between Wells Reserve and Laudholm Trust makes this place and its programs possible. Essential local support provided by the nonprofit Trust matches federal and other competitive grants to fund the operations of the Reserve. Neither organization is possible without the other; though we perform different activities, we inseparably work toward one vision.

The Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve works to expand knowledge about coasts and estuaries, engage people in environmental learning, and involve communities in conserving natural resources, all with a goal of protecting and restoring coastal ecosystems around the Gulf of Maine.

wells**reserve** at laudholm



SEPTEMBER 7-8, 2019 10AM-4PM

32ND
ANNUAL laudholm nature
crafts festival

[wells**reserve**.org/crafts](http://wellsreserve.org/crafts)

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Live Music • Ample Parking
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