We couldn’t be more thrilled to announce a new property we helped preserve recently near our Highland Farm Preserve. In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW), York Land Trust facilitated a deal with the family of the late Mary McIntire Davis to protect a 90-acre forested parcel on Kingsbury Lane that will now become part of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.

An 8th generation York resident and avid conservationist, McIntire Davis received the Maine Critical Areas Award in 1988 for fighting against development of this very property that had been in her family for hundreds of years.

Permanently protecting the property would have been exactly what Mary McIntire Davis would have wanted, says Mal Davis, one of her three sons. “She’d be absolutely ecstatic about this,” says Davis. “We try to carry on in her memory.”

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

In spring, a time when people are excited to spend more time outdoors, York Land Trust increases the number of stewardship projects it takes on with the help of volunteers. Land stewardship is essential for protecting and enhancing habitats, building and maintaining recreational trails and educating the community about our cherished properties.

YLT has been fortunate to have tremendous volunteer support over the years including help from some top-notch Eagle Scout candidates that have taken on special projects like the creation of new hiking trails.

This spring, local Boy Scout Sebastian Benedetto will lead an effort to tackle invasive plants on YLT’s Smelt Brook Preserve (see full article on page 3). The need for volunteers to help with this and other projects, such as constructing trails and monitoring wildlife and habitats, is greater than ever.

Volunteer work days are planned throughout the spring, summer and fall. Please consider joining us. For a schedule of volunteer work days, contact Joe Anderson YLT’s Stewardship Director at 207-363-7400, ext. 3.

Hope to see you out on the land soon.

A Year of Anniversaries

Conserving land takes great foresight and lots of hard work. But when projects come together, that hard work more-than pays off. This spring, we celebrate the anniversary of two long-lasting conservation efforts that have worked hard to protect land across Maine for our communities and future generations to enjoy, forever.

Thirty years ago, a group of forward thinking individuals formed the Land for Maine’s Future Program (LMF), which has since protected 600,000 acres of land across more than 150 sites in Maine, including York Land Trust’s Highland Farm and Josiah Norton Preserves. LMF’s three decades of hard work has protected habitats and resources that drive Maine’s economy and sustain the natural beauty that makes this state so special. The program has conserved 40 farms and 24 commercial waterfronts, and has protected dozens of properties that tourists and Mainers flock to each year to hike, hunt, birdwatch and ski.

Despite recent political challenges, LMF will continue in its mission to protect land for future generations as it embarks on its next chapter of land conservation. Join us in celebrating the 30th anniversary of these outstanding efforts. For more information, visit www.landformainesfuture.org.

Closer to home, we also celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C) this year. Since 2002, MtA2C has worked toward an ambitious goal of conserving 19,000 acres of the most important forests, fields, wetlands and marshes across southernmost York County, in an effort to create an unfragmented corridor from the top of Mt. Agamenticus to the rocky shores of Kittery. Today, there are over 13,700 acres of conserved open space in the MtA2C focus area thanks, in part to this highly successful collaborative that has protected over 3,800 acres in 72 projects since its inception. As a founding partner of MtA2C, York Land Trust has worked with nine other partner organizations to achieve this progress.

Here’s to many more decades of fruitful land conservation!
Invasive plants may become tiresome to tackle year after year, but 14-year-old York resident Sebastian Benedetto knows that digging in and nipping them in the bud is the only way to slow their growth and protect native species. That’s why he reached out to York Land Trust to design an invasive plant species eradication plan as part of his Eagle Scout project this spring.

“I always knew how to identify Japanese knotweed and always see it everywhere, and don’t like it at all,” says Benedetto, an avid birder who spends time birding on YLT’s Smelt Brook Preserve.

Japanese knotweed is one of many invasive ornamental plants spreading in areas across York through a variety of competitive tricks that help them grow faster and stronger than native species. For example, some invasives leaf-out early in the spring, shading out natives, others produce copious amounts of fruit, spreading seeds more densely than other species. Whatever their trick may be, invasives easily spread their tendrils and can take over entire landscapes if left unchecked.

Working with YLT’s stewardship director Joe Anderson, Benedetto hopes to lead an eradication project on Smelt Brook Preserve this June pulling out Glossy buckthorn and American bittersweet—two rampant invasives in the area. The project still requires approval from the Boy Scout Council to move forward, but Anderson and Benedetto have begun hashing out preliminary plans in preparation.

As an important nesting and feeding site for many birds, Smelt Brook Preserve provides rich grounds for an eradication project, according to Anderson. Invasive plants threaten the livelihood of birds and other animals by depleting nutrient-rich food sources and fundamentally changing the structure of the landscape.

While completely eradicating all invasive species from the property would be unrealistic, Anderson says manually removing distinct patches will slow their growth and ability to spread. “If left alone, invasives will monopolize. That’s what they do,” Anderson says. “We’re giving the natives a bit of help.”

As part of his project, Benedetto plans to design an hour-long educational presentation open to the public about how to identify and mitigate invasive species, and then will help lead volunteers in the eradication efforts.

“I love learning,” Benedetto says. “I’m really excited to do this and see how good my leadership skills are with the educational piece and public speaking.”
YLT worked with the Davis family to acquire the rights to purchase this land, and helped USFW raise the $880,000 to complete the deal. Sources of funding included a grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and contributions from Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Kennebunk Savings Bank, USFW, and private individuals. USFW now owns and will oversee management of the land, which falls within the York River watershed.

Wetlands on the property drain into the York River estuary, one of the least disturbed marsh ecosystems within the Gulf of Maine, according to the Maine Natural Areas Program. Rare plants and animals, including the Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, find their home in this region.

“The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has an outstanding history of managing land for the benefit of wildlife,” says YLT’s executive director Doreen MacGillis. “Because of the sensitive habitats within this area, they will be the ideal owners of the property.”

The new acquisition is the first within the York River Division of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, a division established in 2007 by USFW to protect the unusually rich habitat and biodiversity along the York River. The new addition also builds on the mission of the Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C), an effort York Land Trust is working toward with nine other partner organizations to create a corridor of unfragmented land from the top of Mt. Agamenticus to the coast of Kittery.

Ward Feurt, manager of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge and MtA2C partner is excited to see the refuge expand in this important way, and to be working so closely with YLT.

“York Land Trust has been a wonderful partner for years and years,” says Feurt. “We are happy to have them as a close neighbor now.”

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows are one of several rare birds that will benefit from the protection of a newly acquired, 90-acre parcel on Kingsbury Lane. Credit: MDIFW
Wish List for YLT’s New Home:

- Vacuum Cleaner
- Dishwasher
- Fireplace Screen
- Water Hog Door Mat
- Kitchen Step Stool
- Fire Extinguishers
- Standing Fan
(New or gently used only, please.)

Invite your friends to connect online: yorklandtrust.org
facebook.com/YLT.York.ME

Upcoming Spring Events

Tour New Trail Network Across Three Properties
Date: May 6, 1 - 3pm
Location: Hilton-Winn Farm, 189 Ogunquit Rd., Cape Neddick

Through an exciting partnership with Great Works Regional Land Trust and Hilton-Winn Farm, we have connected a network of more than three miles of trails over several properties. Join us for an opening reception of the trail network with light snacks, then hit the trails for a guided tour.

Wetland Wildlife Exploration
Date: June 17, 10am - 12pm
Location: 1 Long Neck Marsh Road, York ME

Join YLT and Center for Wildlife for a morning of animal exploration! We’ll meet live animal ambassadors from the region, including a turtle and bird of prey, and learn how these creatures live together in pond and wetland environments. Those interested will then have the opportunity to travel down the road to explore an active turtle nesting site. Visit our website to register and learn more. We hope to see you there!

Save the Date!
Open House & Country Supper at YLT’s New Home
Date: September 17, 2017
Location: 1 Long Neck Marsh Road, York ME

Mark your calendars! We welcome you to join us at our new home for a full day of activities on Sunday, September 17th. From 10am - 2pm, we’ll host family-friendly activities including live animal demonstrations with the Center for Wildlife, apple cider pressing, nature crafts, hikes, and more. This event is free and open to the public.

In the evening, we’ll host a Country Supper fundraiser from 5-8 pm featuring delicious locally-sourced, home-style food and music. Stay tuned for more details.