

# THE ISLAND TRAIL

NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE ISLAND TRAIL ASSOCIATION | WINTER 2023



MITA STAFF

Monitor skipper Wes McGlew (left) steers a MITA work boat while his father Shawn, also a monitor skipper, scans the horizon.

## The Monitor Skipper Program: A Family Affair

By Maria Jenness, Regional Stewardship Manager

**M**ONITOR SKIPPERS HAVE BEEN AT THE CORE of MITA's stewardship efforts since the early days of the Maine Island Trail. Fulfilling MITA's mission would simply not be possible without these dedicated stewards who make weekly checks on the islands, drive boats filled with volunteers for work days and cleanups, and help perform maintenance on our fleet. Several skippers have been on MITA's roster for as long as the monitor skipper program has been in action (over two decades now), but each year new volunteers join this skilled and dedicated crew. One exciting development in recent years has been the

evolution of several children of monitor skippers from tagalongs to bona-fide monitor skippers themselves. Each pair's story is unique, but they share a common and unique experience in stewarding the Trail as parent and child.

### FATHER-SON SKIPPER TEAM

Shawn McGlew contacted MITA in 2012, responding to a "boaters wanted" ad in the newsletter that called for new volunteers for the monitor skipper program. Shawn and his wife Kerri

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Thank you to Stu and Juli Haddon for serving as volunteer editors for *The Island Trail*.

The Maine Island Trail is a 375-mile long waterway extending from the New Hampshire border to the Canadian Maritimes. Along the route, public and private islands are available to members or the public for overnight stopovers where one can picnic or camp in a wilderness setting.

The Maine Island Trail Association (MITA) is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to advance a model of thoughtful use and volunteer stewardship of Maine's wild islands, creating an inspiring recreational water trail that is cared for by the people who use it.

#### MAINE ISLAND TRAIL ASSOCIATION

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#### A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



MITA STAFF

## THE MITA BOAT SHOP: A HOME AND HAVEN FOR OUR WORKING FLEET

By Doug Welch, Executive Director

**FOR 35 YEARS**, the Maine Island Trail Association has pursued the same mission established by our grassroots founders in 1988. The core of that mission is to make Maine's iconic islands accessible to visitors through management and stewardship efforts in partnership with island owners. This past summer, MITA took a significant step in increasing its ability to fulfill that mission with the purchase of a small facility in Freeport, since dubbed the **MITA Boat Shop**. This basic but capable space will serve as a maintenance and off-season storage facility for our fleet of eight work boats that are almost exclusively maintained by our staff and volunteers. This past year alone, these boats carried over 1,000 volunteers who combined for a single-season record of 7,700 service hours on the Trail!

During MITA's early years, we relied on generous members up and down the coast with enough yard space to store individual boats for the offseason. Maintenance was not easy to coordinate, and repairs were made on a piecemeal basis wherever each boat happened to be. Eventually we turned to leasing space so that we could at least store the boats together and establish a more solid maintenance program. The benefit of this was immediately obvious as we were able to commission and decommission them all together each season. But with commercial leases for garage-style space becoming fewer and farther between over the last few years, our landlord realized the value they could get out of larger-scale tenants. Without an option to renew our lease, MITA's fleet was back to not having a place to call home.

After several fruitless months of searching throughout the state for leased space, our broker presented to us a building in Freeport that was for sale and appeared to meet our needs. After a tremendous amount of analysis and due-diligence, the Board of Trustees approved the purchase for \$431,400 and we closed on June 16. Sitting on an acre of land just off Route 1, the 2,400 square-foot metal building is situated for easy access by MITA staff and volunteers. While it will always be a practical, no-frills space, the MITA program staff are working hard to make this a fully operational small-boat storage and maintenance facility with a workshop that can facilitate other stewardship needs as well. Being so core to the MITA mission, it is likely this will be the only building we will ever own—so we're going to be asking a lot of it!

Like MITA, the building itself is over 30 years old. At this point we don't know the full cost to refurbish the building, but we have begun fundraising for this exciting effort and are very grateful to a handful of very generous donors who have gotten the ball rolling. We hope you will join this effort to ensure that MITA's mission of island stewardship by volunteers has a home and thus a longstanding future. Thank you.



MITA STAFF

Boats being positioned for winter storage inside the MITA Boat Shop.

**In addition to your regular support of MITA's operations, gifts to support this project can be made by indicating "MITA Boat Shop" on your gift.**

were boaters and had been members since the early days of MITA, spending their honeymoon among the islands of the Deer Isle archipelago. To Shawn, the monitor skipper program seemed like a gateway to spending time in a place he loved.

Shawn's eldest son, Wes, was eight. One of four siblings, Wes consistently joined monitor runs and cleanups from the beginning. He says at first he just watched, then started learning how to handle the lines and anchors. Wes appreciated that "it's the sort of learning experience you don't get in school."

When he turned 18 this year, Wes was excited to officially become an apprentice skipper—although, truth be told, he had been apprenticing for much of his life already. For years, Wes had been helping to plan the routes and run the boat for monitor runs with his dad, and even attended all of the preseason skipper meetings. We were pleased to honor Shawn and Wes with MITA's Spirit of Stewardship volunteer award in 2022, and to finally present Wes with his official MITA monitor skipper hat.

### GROWING UP WITH MITA

Saphrona Stetson is the same age as MITA, having been born in 1988 when the organization was founded. When she was old enough, she joined her father, Richard, on his monitor skipper runs and attended the annual meetings on Hog and Warren islands. These meetings were some of her most memorable childhood experiences.

"I don't know what the adults did all day," Saphrona recalled, "but us kids were just let loose on the island."

MITA was a constant presence throughout Saphrona's youth—something that she doesn't take for granted.

"I realize how lucky I was to have that experience as a kid, that time on the water. It's not a given, even for people who grow up on the coast."

Raised in Camden, Saphrona noted "First as a student then as a teacher

I encountered kids who never got to experience the coast from the water. There were programs to make it accessible, but you had to know the opportunities were there and seek them out."

Experiences on the water during her youth highly influenced Saphrona's life path. She started working on schooners at age fifteen and attended Maine Maritime Academy, obtaining her captain's license after her junior year. Becoming a MITA skipper felt like a natural thing to do, and in 2018 Saphrona became the first "next generation" skipper to join the ranks.

### LIVING THE MITA MISSION

Adam Wales also got involved as a volunteer after being a member in MITA's early days. He and his wife were sea kayak guides together in the '90s, and decided to skip college graduation to paddle the nascent Maine Island Trail. In 2016, Adam joined the skipper program after a sailing trip along the coast that inspired him to get more involved with MITA. Adam remarked that "it just felt natural that if we get to enjoy these places, we should help take care of them—that's what MITA's messaging is all about."

When he started skippering, Adam would bring along his daughter, Evie. He invited her in part so he wouldn't be going out on the water alone, but also because of her interest in being on the Trail herself. Monitor runs gave them the opportunity to bond over an activity they both love.

"It's a great way to spend time doing something you love individually. Doing it together adds a level of satisfaction, to have her interested in something that is so dear to me."

Evie noted that, through her time on the water, she had realized the magnificence of this incredible asset that was right in her back yard.

"It's wonderful to be able to spend a night on an island, to have that experience, and I wanted to help take care of it."

This love of place and desire to give



A young Saphrona Stetson, with father Richard in the stern, doing what she was always destined to do: skipper a boat.

back prompted Evie to become a monitor skipper apprentice this year, continuing the recent and exciting trend of multi-generational skipper pairs.

### SHARED EXPERIENCES

The greatest joy in my work at MITA is not the spectacular places that I get to visit with regularity, but the wonderful, dedicated volunteers with whom I interface. These individuals make the MITA stewardship community what it is. Many monitor skippers are retirees, so it is exciting to see young skippers eager to join the ranks, ready to carry MITA's mission into the future. To the parent skippers, though, it's not at all surprising.

"It's only natural that skippers with kids would bring them along," Adam commented, "and to have at least planted the seed of stewardship feels really good."

It's also clear how much these shared experiences on the Trail mean to the skipper teams.

As Shawn noted, "It's an amazing experience to be able to be out there with your son, watching him grow. To spend that time together—I wouldn't trade it for the world."

**Learn more about the monitor skipper program at [mita.org/volunteer](https://mita.org/volunteer).**



MITA STAFF

A baseball-sized moon snail in the shallow waters of Nettle Island in Penobscot Bay.

# One Ocean. Indivisible.

By Brian Marcaurelle, Program Director

**Q: How do you divide the ocean?**

**A: With a sea saw!**

This silly children's joke is all about the word play in the punchline, but the setup is also clever. The ocean, after all, is a system of interconnected currents, tides, biological communities, and human uses—all of which are continuously moving. The thought of carving up something so dynamic and unconfined seems absurd, so the answer can only be something zany.

As with the sea itself, it is also not practical to divide the job of caring for the ocean among just a small group of

stakeholders. That responsibility belongs to all of us. This shared sense of duty over stewarding our coastal waters is precisely what inspired four Maine organizations—the Maine Marine Trades Association, the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association, Friends of Casco Bay, and MITA—to team up and launch an online educational campaign this past summer. The campaign was affectionately named #LoveMaineWaters.

At its core, #LoveMaineWaters serves as an invitation to those who use Maine's coastal environments both recreationally and professionally, through boating or otherwise, to participate actively

in improving the health and safety of Maine's marine environment. The centerpiece of the campaign is a series of straightforward guidelines for boating and marine environment interaction that touch on safety, low-impact recreation, and on-water etiquette. The guidelines are grouped into four overarching principles: keeping our waters clean, safe, resilient, and equitable. The messaging is broadly applicable, making it relevant to both commercial and recreational boaters and all boats, whether powered by engine, sail, or paddle.

For the many folks who are new to boating since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the guidelines are meant to be a starting point for developing safer, greener, and more responsible habits on the water. For boaters with more experience, the guidelines can serve as simple reminders

of common courtesies and best practices. The hashtag #LoveMaineWaters provides an avenue for sharing personal stewardship stories, which can help build community and illustrate the collective impact of many independent actions.

The Gulf of Maine may seem resilient, but it is surprisingly vulnerable. As complex threats from climate change, invasive species, plastic pollution, and escalating human uses continue to grow, #LoveMaineWaters provides a roadmap for lessening our environmental footprint as well as our impact on our human and non-human neighbors.

The team behind #LoveMaineWaters is asking everyone to do their part to help care for the sea. There's only one ocean, and its well-being is at stake. That's no laughing matter.

**Learn more about Love Maine Waters and how you can help spread the word at [lovemainewaters.org](https://lovemainewaters.org).**

## USEFUL TIPS FOR DEMONSTRATING THAT YOU #LOVEMAINEWATERS

### Love Clean Waters

- Use **nontoxic cleaners** and pump-outs for your boat. Avoid fuel spills.
- Always clean up **pet waste** around marine environments.
- Carry out and dispose of** your own waste (including toilet paper) when there are no facilities.
- Skip balloons** at celebrations. Remember, what goes up must come down, and oftentimes that will be in the ocean.

### Love Shared Waters

- Respect others.** Be neighborly to other boaters.
- Give way to **working vessels** and leave fishing gear alone.
- Watch your wake** and noise levels, and go slow and steady in harbors.
- Give **wildlife** plenty of space.

### Love Resilient Waters

- Support **working waterfronts** and buy local products.
- Respect **private property**. Follow usage rules and guidelines.
- Help prevent the spread of **invasive species**. Research your local threats.
- Inspire others to **#LoveMaineWaters**.

### Love Safe Waters

- Be prepared.** File a float plan and carry a radio and phone.
- Wear a **PFD**.
- Know how to navigate with a **GPS, a chart, and a compass**.
- Maintain **your vessel** and its safety gear.
- Watch out** for swimmers, wildlife, and other boats.
- Don't drink excessively. **Stay sober.**



# SEEKING BOAT DONATIONS

## to Support Island Stewardship

The Maine Island Trail Association accepts donations of boats to support stewardship of Maine's wild coastal islands. Working with professional brokers, we will convert your donated boat into funding that supports MITA's mission! We accept select seaworthy boats of all types—power, sail, or paddle.

Please contact the MITA office at (207) 761-8225 or email Jordi St. John at [jordi@mita.org](mailto:jordi@mita.org) to learn more about MITA's boat donation program.



By Nick Parson, Communications Manager

# THE BEST LIGHT

**Shutterbugs 4 Charity** aims to "inspire  
a better world through the lens."

Lately, their lenses have been focused  
on the Maine Island Trail.

The sun sets on another day spent paddling on the Maine Island Trail. Shutterbugs 4 Charity photographer A.G. Evans hit it just right on Shivers Island.

Last winter, I received an email from a coworker letting me know that we had been contacted by a Maine-based organization called Shutterbugs 4 Charity who wished to become a MITA sponsor. They were described to me as a group of photographers and photography enthusiasts whose aim it was to raise funds for charitable initiatives and nonprofits by providing a range of photographic services entirely free of charge. In addition to a sponsorship commitment, they were also interested in providing their services to MITA. To say the email piqued my interest would drastically undersell my reaction.

I navigated to their website (shutterbugs4charity.org), and my jaw hit my desk. As a photographer myself, I was captivated by the quality of work that I was seeing and began dreaming of how MITA might be able to use this incredible and totally unexpected resource.

“Something as special as the Maine Island Trail deserves to be shared in its best light so that others can be compelled to get out there themselves and enjoy all that makes it special,” says photographer

and Shutterbugs 4 Charity founder Mark Jones.

“Being a group of adventuresome photogs, several of us spend much time on the water kayaking parts of the Trail so this is a perfect marriage for us.”

As is often the case, it was someone within MITA’s membership ranks who was able to make the magic happen.

“One of our board members and very adventurous photographers, Tyler Kimbar, who was already a MITA member, suggested a partnership with MITA and it was an easy decision to pursue a relationship.”

The impact that Shutterbugs 4 Charity had on MITA was immediate. As soon as we agreed to work with each other, we received digital files of dozens of impactful images from the Trail, which we have used for graphic design work, social media content, and even to announce our new logo on the front page of our Summer 2022 issue of *The Island Trail*. The first photo used under the partnership belonged to Shutterbugs 4 Charity / MITA unifier Tyler Kimbar—a photo of Seguin Island Light



Goat Island, by Shutterbugs 4 Charity photographer and MITA member Tyler Kimbar

Station taken under the stars that was posted to our Instagram (@meislandtrail) on March 31. While I had big ambitions for how I would be able to capture the Maine Island Trail with my own work come summer, Shutterbugs 4 Charity gave us the ability to begin our brand shift towards a higher visual standard while

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A.G. Evans captures the glow from the Milky Way and his tent simultaneously on Steves Island. MITA’s signage and logbook are visible above the tent.

there was still snow on the ground.

In just a short period of time since coming together as partners, Shutterbugs 4 Charity's generosity towards MITA has extended well beyond digital licenses. This past July, MITA hosted three fundraising parties in different coastal locations in a series dubbed Toast to the Coast. After being approached about donating some small items for a raffle drawing, Shutterbugs 4 Charity instead donated three large canvas photo prints (one for each party in the series) that were better suited for a silent auction, and ended up raising hundreds of dollars for MITA.

The mission of Shutterbugs 4 Charity is "inspiring a better world through the lens." Since their founding in 2019, they have supported over 40 different organizations, with many of them receiving direct financial support in addition to photographic services. The concept for the organization evolved from an annual photo calendar and greeting card set that founder Mark Jones had created in support of the Royal Family Kids' Camp. This organization provides a week-long camp experience for children with a history of abuse, neglect, and abandonment.

After seven years of success in this effort, the idea that photography could be used to support charities and nonprofits of many varieties began to catch on, and Shutterbugs 4 Charity was born. A 100% volunteer-run organization, they now have a roster of over 25 photographers who donate their time and talent towards the Shutterbugs 4 Charity mission. Thankfully for MITA, many of those photographers are active in the outdoors and some are even accomplished paddlers who spend much of their free time on the Trail.

As you enjoy subsequent issues of *The Island Trail* and follow our various exploits on Instagram (@meislandtrail), keep an eye on the photo credits. You will see first hand the wonderful impact that Shutterbugs 4 Charity has had on MITA, and how it has already done so much to bring our members and followers closer to the Trail, even from afar.



MITA STAFF

MITA history and tea on a calm, late-autumn afternoon.

## A Deep Dive into the Archives

By Stu and Juli Haddon, Editors

**In the beginning, there was the *The Island Trail Update* for 1988—89. Six pages long and penned by our founder, Dave Getchell Sr., it was intended as an insert into the Guidebook. Amongst other news, members could read about the 25-mile extension of the Trail to Machias, the remarkable increase in membership to 500, and the new MITA logo, which remained almost unchanged until this year.**

The first edition of *The Island Trail* that appears in the archive is Spring 1990. This already looks a bit like the publication we have come to know and love, although only eight pages long compared with the 20 or so we see today. The content, too, mostly looks familiar—save for the fact that the issue obviously predates digital photography and MITA's adoption of color printing. The front-page article is about three islands in Penobscot Bay (Butler, Pond, and Russ) being added to the Trail, and there is a piece from the newly appointed Trail Director, Cate Cronin, about MITA's goals for the year. These included the need to: "...continue to build a solid and conservative reputation for MITA," and "...gaining the respect of professional mariners, such as commercial fishermen and the coastal marine

industry."

Also of interest in 1990 is the introduction of the "Adopt-An-Island" scheme, with an impressive list of 48 islands seeking adoption; an article about kayak safety; and a short piece on lobstering and the likely dangers it could pose to the unsuspecting coastal paddler. Appended to the latter is a list of nine "dos and don'ts" intended, no doubt, to underscore the goal of "gaining the respect of professional mariners."

Until 1993, MITA was part of the Island Institute, and the archive contains several excerpts from their publication, *Island News*, covering 1991 and 1992, which includes news from MITA. Several of these jumped out at us: the opening of the new MITA office on Union Wharf (complete with picture); the already well-established

partnership between MITA and the Bureau of Public Lands; and the “Coastal Island Use Log,” with a summary of data collected for the 1991 season, extracted from “240 logs submitted by 30 people reporting on 62 islands.”

The 1992 editions of *The Island Trail* were notable for an article by Ken Fink (MITA Member #1), reflecting on safety at sea for kayakers. In it, he provides a detailed analysis of four incidents on the Maine coast in 1991, including one which resulted in a fatality. This seven-pager (!) makes fascinating, if chilling, reading.

The headline in the Spring 1993 edition is: “Maine Island Trail Association Moves into Independence,” referencing the split from the Island Institute. The article which follows provides a sober and low-key approach to what must have been an exciting development.

The center spread is given up to excerpts from a logbook installed by MITA volunteer Dave Lovejoy and mounted

on a wall desk (which he built himself) in the cabin on Crow Island (Casco Bay). It proved to be the source of many comments by visitors, ranging from tales of high-seas adventures to sentimental (sometimes passionate) accounts of evenings spent on the island. It looks like a precursor of the present-day logbooks.

Although much of the content in the archive covers very familiar ground, there are some obvious differences in presentation, compared to the present version. There used to be many more advertisements, for example, often from small businesses. This, of course, was long before MITA had an established business sponsorship program that now boasts over 60 partners.

In 1998, “Letters to the Editor” appeared, flourished during that year, and then became sporadic after that. At some time, they must have died out completely for whatever reason.

Another significant evolution in content,

as far as we could see, is that none of the old issues have any reference to Indigenous people, either in a historical sense or related to their present-day relationship with the Maine coast and the islands. That is something which is changing in a positive direction due to MITA’s participation in First Light, which provides “a bridge between conservation organizations and Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Micmac communities who seek to expand Wabanaki access and relationship to land.” First Light was first covered in the Summer 2021 issue, and we are looking forward to more opportunities to tell this story in the future.

Finally, no archive trawl would be complete without spotting some of the people who made, and continue to make, MITA what it is. Much featured are youthful-looking versions of Sid Quarrier, Ben Fuller, Ted Scharf and Rit Roberts. There may be more, so apologies to anyone we didn’t see.

# CHART YOUR COURSE

Care for wild islands forever by  
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to learn about how joining MITA’s

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POWERED BY CHIMANI

**MITA thanks the many individuals, families, businesses, and institutions who helped the Maine Island Trail thrive over the last fiscal year that concluded on September 30. We especially recognize the generosity of our Trailblazers, whose annual operating support totaled \$1,000 or more during Fiscal Year 2022.**

### **Trailblazers (\$1,000+)**

Karen Agnew & John Huth  
Jessie & Nick Alberding  
Fannie Allen & George Cogan  
Margaret Angell & Nathaniel Fick  
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MITA's advancement director, Pam Erickson, enjoys her first day of work with a sail aboard the schooner *Bowdoin*.

## How could life get better?

By Pam Erickson, Advancement Director

**One of the more enduring memories from my youth** is of a beat-up old kayak leaning against my neighbor's garage. Living near lakes in Northern Wisconsin, my family had a small motorboat and canoes, but something about the kayak intrigued me.

When I moved East, I landed in New Hampshire, soon crossed the border to Maine, and never looked back. I had found home. With a few dollars saved, gifts from friends and whatever I could gather from between the seats in my pickup, I cobbled together enough to buy *Bluey*, a scratched-up old sea kayak. I had her out every chance I could, and remember my first learning opportunity with the ebb and flow of tides. In Wisconsin, when you left your boat on the shore to go exploring, it was there when you came back! Shortly thereafter, I joined MITA, and each year when renewal time came around, membership was a non-negotiable, automatic must-do.

Fast forwarding, today I'm a member of the Granite Society (20+ years since my first membership). In that span of years, I continued to paddle, with highlights of a harrowing moose encounter in the Forks, the challenge and opportunity

of Cobscook Bay, and a few memorable whale sightings in Nova Scotia. I sought to deepen my knowledge by pursuing Maine Guide and Sea Kayak Guide certifications. I led canoe and kayak trips for co-ed groups, girls, mother/daughter teams and women, and delighted in sharing something I loved deeply. There were storms to be wary of, and the fog changed our plans, sometimes offering an extended stay on an island. We were content nestled in our tents, with hot tea and a deck of cards—and an invitation to get to know ourselves, each other and the world around us a little bit better.

Eventually I upgraded the kayak and continued my exploration of charts, inlets, ledges, and islands. Each day on the water presented something new and inspirational to be grateful for. And, as one tends to do with boats, I kept my eyes open. I must have been nearly impossible to live with for awhile, as each time I drove past a used skiff, I almost went off the road. I wasn't exactly sure what I was in search of until I drove by a well-loved 17' Whaler. "Hmmm, what would she offer in the way of expanding my radius of exploration?" I was destined to find out, and *Helga* joined the family. She offered a more expansive view, and

more opportunities on the Maine Island Trail. The old Mercury motor left a little to be desired, however, and my exuberant declarations of, "But she's an unsinkable legend!" fell on deaf ears. We upgraded to a slightly newer boat which solidified our love of power boating in addition to kayaking. And still, something gnawed.

The Grady White gleamed brilliantly at the marina, the extra storage space now seemed necessary, and she was a "Freedom" model. That resonated. While I was reluctant to get rid of the toilet seat that fit on a five-gallon bucket, having a head that could be pumped seemed like the responsible thing to do. I kept the old fishing net that was duct-taped together, as it still did a great job of gathering the trash discovered while adventuring.

During the pandemic, I began Grateful Mornings Maine as a way to share the splendor with others who didn't have the same access as me. Walking to the dock in the dark with a thin layer of light on the distant horizon, and puttering quietly among the islands to watch the sunrise ... how could life get better? Friends, family and those I had just met would come along, cuddle in a blanket, and embrace the invitation to simply be surrounded by magnificence. Returning to the slip a few hours later, the sun up and shedding layers, we'd trade a gentle smile and a knowing nod for how fortunate we were.

Much of this time on the water spurred contemplation as to how I'd like to spend the next chapter. MITA had been a part of my world for a long time and was the only nonprofit I wanted to dedicate my energy to. Stewardship, access, membership. Community and connection. Intention and authenticity. Passion. Beauty. The satisfying feeling of participating in a movement much larger than myself. The stars aligned, I joined the team in June, and asked myself once again, "How could life get better?"

*Bluey*, by the way, was sold to a friend who is learning to kayak, and I saw *Helga* last summer, still puttering along happily, with a young couple aboard, beginning their own journey.

A monarch butterfly with vibrant orange wings and black veins is perched on a purple flower. The background is a soft, out-of-focus natural setting.

# BUT MOST OF ALL, I SHALL REMEMBER THE MONARCHS

By Doug Welch, Executive Director

PAUL VANDERWERF FROM BRUNSWICK, MAINE, USA, CC BY 2.0

A monarch butterfly resting on a flower on the Maine coast.

## **After her wins on behalf of raptors and the sea, how ironic that one of Rachel Carson's last delights on earth—the monarch butterfly—is now endangered.**

**I**t is a bluebird Monday morning in August as I aim the bow of my kayak at Hendricks Head Lighthouse, across the Sheepscot River from Five Islands, and make my way. Yesterday, the river was loaded with boats ranging from large yachts to buzzy little jet skis, but today just one single lobster boat thrums in the far distance. A porpoise breaks the surface and soon the rest of a pod of four joins in, their intermittent breaths audible across the calm water.

I'm heading out vaguely looking for

Silverledges—the summer cottage of famed marine biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson from which she did so much of her oceanic research and gained her environmental motivation. I have been reading a book on seaweed that I found randomly in the cottage where my wife and I have been staying in Georgetown. I suppose like most of us, I have never given seaweed much thought. It's obviously a family of plants that grows in the ocean where sunlight penetrates the water.

Except that it's not. I'm embarrassed

to say that in the book's first few pages I've learned that seaweed is not a weed or even a plant. It's an algae. Any resemblance to terrestrial weeds and plants is simply that—a resemblance. Seaweed has no roots, just some gluey cells to attach to a hard surface, and its stems are not vascular cells the way a plant's are. What look like leaves are nothing of the sort, but they capture sunlight and nutrients from the water flowing past. I remember that, as kids, my brother and I played with seaweed. Rockweed was everywhere in

Maine, but the slimy leather of giant kelp and the air-filled sacs of bull kelp were always most amusing. We would squish the bladders and see who could make the loudest pop—the exploration through creative destruction that dominated my childhood.

Today I've set out to explore the seaweed and tidepools of Rachel Carson's Southport Island.

Reading about seaweed the night before got me thinking about Carson, and with virtually no effort I found a website that told of Silverledges. In the later years of her life, Rachel had befriended Dorothy Freeman, sharing outdoor explorations and intimate observations about the



Rachel Carson (Smithsonian Institution)

planet and its human and nonhuman inhabitants. In 1963, knowing she was dying of cancer, Carson spent an extraordinary late summer day with Freeman in nearby Newagen. What caught my attention in her account of this lovely day was that rather than the sea, this great champion of the ocean recalled to her friend the extraordinary impression made upon her by a flight of hundreds of butterflies. Carson noted soberly that neither these migrating butterflies nor she herself would ever return to Maine.

The timing of this small discovery of mine could not have been more poignant. As some readers may know, this past July

the monarch butterfly was placed on the endangered species list. That gentlest of small creatures most kindergartners have seen evolve from a green caterpillar on a milkweed plant into a winged marvel capable of flying for thousands of miles in their mysterious species-wide migration south. Of the animals we enjoy most ubiquitously, few are as beautiful, fascinating, and lovable as the monarch butterfly.

Rachel Carson, as most every conservationist knows, was famously distressed and motivated by the nationwide dispersal of the pesticide DDT after World War II. In addition to killing agricultural pests, DDT weakened the shells of bird eggs. As a consequence, our nation's proudest symbol, the Bald Eagle, was rapidly approaching extinction because their eggs could not physically withstand gestation in the nest. The parents would accidentally break the diminished shells in such numbers that the entire species was gravely threatened. *Silent Spring*, her book on the environmental harm caused by the indiscriminate use of pesticides, was Carson's declaration of war against DDT—a battle she ultimately won while enduring an increasingly malignant and ultimately fatal breast cancer.

Were she alive today, I am sure Rachel Carson would be fighting for the monarch butterfly. Among the many causes

for its declining numbers (including deforestation and climate change-driven droughts and fires) is a class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids that kill pollinators, eradicate milkweed (the monarch's sole host plant), and potentially poison butterflies directly. Unlike DDT, which was more commonly used in large-scale farming practices, neonicotinoids are present in many of our own garden sheds today in household herbicides and pesticides. The good news there is that we can all be part of their elimination. But will that be enough?

While I marvel at the seaweed waving slowly as I pass overhead in my kayak, I can't help but wonder how Rachel Carson would view the things I'm seeing. Would she be thrilled, as I am, by the colors and variety of seaweed? Or would she be distressed by the lack of mussels and other species that were so common in the 1950s? I would guess that both would be true. Rachel Carson adored the intertidal zone, almost single-handedly got DDT banned by the federal government, and spent her last summer enthralled by monarchs. Who will pick up her torch and defend the king of butterflies as she did the king of eagles?

Paddling along the Newagen shore, I am stunned and delighted by a flash of orange overhead. I stop paddling to marvel and absorb the heartbreaking irony of a lone traveler fluttering past.

***What caught my attention in her account of this lovely day was that rather than the sea, this great champion of the ocean recalled to her friend the extraordinary impression made upon her by a flight of hundreds of butterflies. Carson noted soberly that neither these migrating butterflies nor she herself would ever return to Maine.***



MITA STAFF

The author and his craft.

**I needed a tender for my Com-Pac 16 sailboat.** The problem was that no self-respecting boat wants a tender that is almost half as long as she is. People would laugh.

My usual go-to for such things had always been an inflatable dinghy. So I started there, looking for something six feet long. It turned out that they don't come in such a diminutive size. The smallest I could find was 7 feet 6 inches and that just would not do.

Back to the drawing board, and hence my bright idea to build what I needed. I had never built a boat before, but how hard could it be to put together a 6-foot plywood pram? I had a good workshop and decent carpentry skills, after all.

Finding a suitable set of plans required some time. I took the safe option and bought plans from Clark Boats, a well-established company. I also cheated a bit and bought the kit that went with them.

Life got in the way at this point. We moved house. The kit of parts ended up under the newly-built garden shed, and the house became all-consuming for a year.

Finally, though, the project began. The workshop floor was cleared, the plans laid out, and the clamps counted. That was one piece of advice that had resonated from all my reading about boatbuilding:

"You can never have too many clamps."

I don't recall anything along the lines of: "The prospective boatbuilder must

# All Hands to the Clamps!

By Stu Haddon, Editor

**All things considered, it looked to me as though this was a project that could be comfortably completed in six weeks.**

**That was five years ago.**

ensure that he is equipped with three hands or, preferably, four." Stage One brought this omission into sharp focus. It involved attaching the plywood sides to the forward transom (the flat, front end of a pram), using epoxy glue and ring nails. The angles involved (not to mention the unwieldy nature of the resulting splayed-out sides) defeated my clamping attempts, and two hands proved woefully inadequate for the challenge. I made the fatal error of plunging ahead anyway, and the event deteriorated in a welter of dripping epoxy and flying nails, which steadfastly refused to go where they were intended.

After a prolonged cleanup, I took a more sober look at the situation and jury-rigged a support structure from odds and ends of lumber, chewing gum, and sticky tape (you think I jest?) which held the key components together while I drove bronze screws into the joints until the epoxy oozed out nicely.

Stage Two involved building the "seat tank," a key structural element that runs across the middle of the boat, preventing the sides from collapsing inward, while at the same time providing a convenient support for the center thwart (seat). Two cunningly shaped pieces of plywood



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The stern of the unfinished but well underway little pram. A set of oarlocks ("rowlocks" in the UK) convey some dignity.

formed the long sides of the structure, with squares of oak forming the ends of the “tank.” This turned out to be an even more complex mess of angles. To take account of the eventual vertical slant and horizontal curvature of the hull, every damn surface seemed to require an angle. Once more, into the breach with clamps and many hands. Once more, I retired defeated and sweating.

It’s hard to believe, I know, but I eventually set the tank upside down on the workbench (the top being the only flat reference available), epoxied all the joints and then stood for what seemed like an interminable time, holding that sucker together as best I could until the epoxy set. This was no unmoving tableau, but rather a sculpture in constant motion as I sweatily attempted to maintain all the joints and pieces in their correct angle and position. Epoxy glue, I discovered, is almost frictionless until it starts to go off. It was the kind of thing which would have gone viral, had I thought to video it.

Next up, the seat tank had to be epoxied and clamped to the hull sides which then, by dint of considerable force, had to be pulled in at the stern end to meet the aft transom (the rear of the boat). I shall gloss over the details of this. Suffice to say, it involved a thin rope, a slipknot and a stick. Think “tourniquet” and you might get the idea.

On the positive side, I now had something that looked like a boat and I was on a roll. A series of wooden strips running bow to stern now had to be attached (chines, inner and outer sheer moldings). In the moment, my splendid collection of clamps suddenly seemed terribly diminished. I deployed every one and needed twice as many. Lesson learned.

The rest of the build was easy by comparison, but by the time I got to the filling, fairing and painting stage, when I would have been finally back in my comfort zone, spring was in the air and other projects were calling me away.

At the time of writing, I have yet to complete my creation. That will be one of this year’s projects. Hopefully.



Katrina Martin collecting a washed-up lobster buoy on Stevens Island in Addison.

## The Buoy Fairies

By Christina Hassett, Regional Stewardship Manager

*Editor's note: Always secure permission from the Department of Marine Resources ([maine.gov/dmr](http://maine.gov/dmr)) before cleaning up derelict commercial fishing gear.*

**This past winter when I was traveling in Norway**, I lost a beloved hat that a dear friend had knit me. I was walking through Oslo to catch a train when I realized it had somehow fallen out of my pocket. Dismayed, but with no time to retrace my steps, I despondently decided I had to let it go. Returning to Oslo late that same evening, all I could think about was my hat, likely lying sad and dejected in some slushy puddle I thought. On my walk back from the train station, I happened to look up to navigate through some sidewalk construction. And there, comically perched atop one of the large orange traffic cones, was my hat. Dry and unscathed it sat, having been lovingly scooped up and carefully placed by a stranger who I will never meet nor have the opportunity to thank. I still cannot help but smile when I think back to my utter disbelief and pure joy at seeing it there. It makes me wonder if that is the same feeling that fishermen

get when they answer their door to see Katrina Martin standing on their doorstep, holding one of their buoys.

Born and raised in Maine, Katrina has been summering in Jonesport with her husband, Chuck Monroe, for the past 20 years. They have spent countless days exploring the waters and islands around Moosabec Reach by kayak, and while paddling, have collected what floating trash they find to bring back to home for disposal. The first time they encountered a lost fishing buoy, Katrina remembers being a bit flummoxed. Knowing the buoys belonged to the fishermen and not in the garbage, she decided to bring these lost buoys home in the hopes of finding a way to return them to their owners.

Over the course of that summer, a small pile of buoys started to form in the entryway of the house—and with each recovered buoy, the pile grew. All too soon, buoys were starting to spill out into the yard, and when they began to take over the garage Katrina decided she needed some assistance. Enlisting the help of Cathy Fetterman, Maine’s Director of Licensing at the Department (CONT. PAGE 18)

of Marine Resources, Katrina explained her plight. After hearing what Katrina was trying to do, Cathy provided her with that year's Maine Lobster License List which contained the 4,000+ license numbers and corresponding contact information for every single lobsterman fishing from Cutler to Kennebunk. Since having access to that list, Katrina has been able to contact the lobstermen whose buoys she finds, and in many cases coordinates a hand delivery! And while "The List," as she calls it, has played a vital role in reuniting the vast majority of buoys with their owners, every now and again there are some stubborn few that have required Katrina to get a little more creative. In instances where a buoy doesn't have a license number identifying it, Katrina calls one of her "life lines." This is a group of individuals (largely neighbors and friends) who she fondly refers to as "buoy savants"—long-time fishermen who have been on the water for so many years that they seemingly know every buoy color scheme and to whom they belong within a 50-mile radius. And if all else fails, Katrina turns to more modern technology, posting images of mystery buoys on Facebook

groups where tech-savvy fishermen have proven vital in identifying owners.

In the last few years, Katrina's mom, Rebecca, has joined in the fun and has since dubbed the two of them the "Buoy Fairies." The pair has hand-delivered over 280 buoys (and counting) back to fishermen. Katrina and Rebecca typically set out early in the morning with the trunk (and often the back and front seats) of Katrina's car packed with buoys of all shapes, colors, and sizes, having carefully mapped out a route to stop at the house of every single fisherman who has a buoy in that car. These delivery trips can last all day, especially as the simple act of delivering a buoy often leads to long conversations, shared laughs, and meaningful connections.

Katrina says of the experience: "I can't tell you how fun it's been. Sometimes it's a quick drop off in the dooryard and other times we stop and talk for an hour. Always they are appreciative, and it's been really great to give my mom and me some purpose."

On one particular day, Katrina remembers returning a buoy to a lobsterman who told her that his brother

had been lost at sea three years earlier, and that it was immensely meaningful for him to have that buoy.

Another time, she happened to meet the Beals Island Elementary School principal during a delivery. After chatting for a while, they ended up working together to organize a beach cleanup with the school's students, collecting 13 bags of trash from Seaduck Point Preserve on Beals Island.

Katrina enjoys returning the buoys both as a way to help fishermen and to raise awareness around the issue of trash in the ocean, with her ultimate goal of inspiring more folks to take action to combat the problem. Katrina's mom Rebecca relishes the work as an opportunity to meet and interact with people and also as a way to spend meaningful time with her daughter. "I just love everything about it," she says.

One thing both Katrina and Rebecca have learned is that the work of a buoy fairy is never done, as Katrina is in the midst of planning a trip to Nova Scotia where a fisherman patiently waits for his buoy, which had been retrieved some 200 miles from home so that one day it may be returned and put back to use.

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# 2022 PHOTO CONTEST WINNER

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## **Derek DiGuglielmo** Buckle Island

“We were exploring the Stonington archipelago in the middle of June, right before the beginning of summer. Usually, Maine is a place to vacation at this time of year—warm, inviting, relaxing even. On this trip, it couldn’t have been further from that. We were constantly wet, with coarse rocks in every crevice of our bodies, and little to no shelter protecting us from the howling winds and rough seas.

We found comfort in the little things—listening to the sound of the symphonic waves washing up on the rocks, tasting the sun melt into the salty clouds, watching wild birds move with ease at their home on the water. Life was simple during those days, both harsh and peaceful.

The trip was memorable in a lot of ways, but this particular morning was paramount. We were awakened by the music of boats encircling lobster traps just after 4am to a cool morning breeze and such a terrific drama as the sky transitioned from blue to the most precious gold.”