

THE *Avon* LAND TRUST

Future generations may not remember our names, but they will certainly be glad that we were here.

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION www.avonlandtrust.org FALL 2024

P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E



Rick Dubiel
Co-President, ALT

Welcome to our 2024 newsletter where we share the many ways we continue our mission of preserving land for the people and wildlife of Avon.

As stewards of over 350 acres of land, our members and volunteers work hard so you can enjoy nature. In this issue, you'll read how our resident trail master, Scott Lewis, and his team not only maintained and improved existing trails, but also blazed new ones. You'll also meet some boy scouts who contributed to major trail infrastructure projects, including a bridge, a raised walkway, and two kiosks.

Our community engagement and hike leader, Jeff Grindrod, continues to introduce hikers to a variety of different trails via monthly hikes (you can find the schedule inside). In addition, he manages our Facebook page which is full of information, notices, photos, and videos of wildlife at our properties. (Please "friend" us!).

Speaking of wildlife, this summer we captured a momma river otter and her 3 pups frolicking at our Oakes Preserve pond and we improved wildlife habitat by installing 2 new wood duck nest boxes, a turtle basking raft, several pollinator gardens, expanded our bluebird nest box trail, and started work on a chimney swift nesting tower.

We've had great success with our educational programming, too, sponsoring a popular Reptile presentation at the library, and hosting a hike and scavenger hunt at our Huck Hill barn parcel which serves as both a workshop for scout projects, a rest stop for hikers, and a neighborhood pocket park. We have visions of doing much more there.

Financially, we held several fundraisers, landed several grants, received our first tax-free IRA distribution, and set up an endowment fund. Still, it is donors like you – renewing or starting a membership – that keep us going. Thank you for helping us keep Avon better natured! ■

Bob Breckinridge & Rick Dubiel, Co-Presidents



Bob Breckinridge
Co-President, ALT

meet **Avi Mukherjee**, *our newest ALT board member*

Inspired by the COVID-19 lockdown, during which he frequented Avon's trails and outdoor spaces, **Avi Mukherjee** decided the best way he could ensure access to these hiking and recreational gems, was to join the team that maintains and protects them. We're happy to have him! A professional project manager for Salesforce and volunteer-leader in both the Boy Scouts and the Lions Club, Avi brings excellent organizational and networking skills to the team, and looks forward to helping us steward Avon's open spaces for others' (and his own) enjoyment.



save the date
calendar
2024

FALL FOILAGE HIKE

10.19.24*

Fall Hike to The Tower.

Meet on Hazen Road

@ 11:00 AM

*raindate 10.20.24

FALL/WINTER HIKES & EVENTS

see schedule inside

alt partners with **local scouts** to help **improve & enhance** our offerings

Over the past three years, the Avon Land Trust has sponsored four completed Eagle and Gold Award Boy/Girl Scout projects, with two more in the pipeline.

As featured in prior years' newsletters, our first scout project was the construction of a puncheon (raised walkway) at our Garvin Trail, completed by **Garbriel DaCunha**; and our second was a number of landscape and structural improvements at our Huckleberry Hill parcel, completed by Girl Scout **Makena Logan**.

Our recently completed third scout project is a new bridge and trailhead kiosk at our Wellner Family Conservation Area behind Staples, completed by **Uttej Kollu**. (Uttej is also the recipient of this year's Avon Land Trust Hugh Blanchard Memorial Scholarship). Our fourth scout project, also completed this year, was the building and installing of two wood duck nest boxes and a turtle basking raft, and side-hill trail improvements by **Ahkil Gottakonda**, at the Oakes Preserve.

Other scout projects currently in the pipeline include **Aaron Mukherjee** installing a kiosk and improving/ extending the raised walkway at Huckleberry Hill, and **Prisha Jindal** installing a storybook trail and fairy garden for kids, also at Huckleberry Hill.



2024 Avon Land Trust Scholarship winner, Uttej Kollu (center), and fellow troop members, in front of the new trailhead kiosk he built and they installed at our Wellner Family Conservation Area property.

While scout projects require a significant investment of our time and energy, the benefits far outweigh the cost. Knowing we have eager scouts on hand inspires us to undertake aspirational projects and helps stretch our limited funds. Working alongside them, their fellow troop members, friends, and family creates a wonderful sense of community and fellowship. It helps educate the next generation on the value of trusted land and the importance of land stewardship, while providing the public with new and better trails, and local wildlife with improved habitat.

In addition to the scouts, we would also like to thank Avon's only lumberyard, **Sanford and Hawley**, located at 30 Sandscreen Rd, off Old Farms Rd. They provide substantial discounts on the materials required for scout projects.

If you are (or know) a scout interested in partnering with the land trust for a gold or eagle scout project, please reach out via our website: www.avonlandtrust.org. We'll gladly provide our wish list of project ideas from which to choose! ■

what does your local **land trust** do?

- We preserve and protect open space in Avon, and promote the conservation and stewardship of the land and its diverse habitat.
 - Currently, we own and preserve 39 parcels and maintain over 350 acres of public land in Avon!
- We clear and maintain trails, build footbridges and gazebos, and install benches and tables on our properties to create gathering spaces and encourage public access and enjoyment.
 - We've added 6.4 miles of new trails in just the last 18 months!
- We thoughtfully landscape properties and build and install birdhouses and pollinator gardens to support the health of wild habitat.
- We lead free educational nature programs and events for adults and children.
- We partner with local scouts to take on large building and landscaping projects.
- We partner with Avon Dollars for Scholars to award an annual scholarship to an AHS grad who demonstrates a commitment to nature.

And we do this all with **donor** money and a very small corps of committed **volunteers**.

You can help by joining us as a dues-paying member and/or volunteer using this QR code or via www.avonlandtrust.org. ■



H A P P Y T R A I L S

One of the Avon Land Trust's primary roles is mapping out, clearing, and maintaining a local network of recreational hiking trails. As a result, our town is host to an abundance of beautiful trails for hikers of all ages, abilities, and interests. In this issue, we highlight two of them:

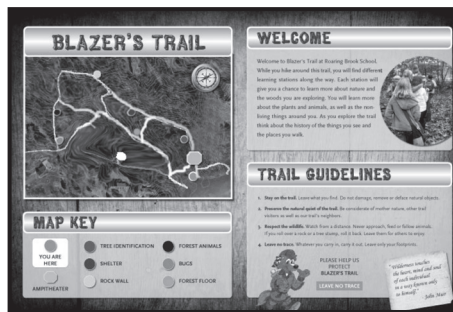
1 new thompson-osborne trail

The Avon Land Trust's Thompson-Osborn Preserve, located on Scoville Road between Apple Rehab and Fox Den Road, features a unique habitat that is home to the land trust's newest hiking trail. Donated to the ALT in 1979, the land is comprised of two parcels – one, the gift of **George and Irena Osborn** and the other, the gift of **Oliver Thompson**. The front part of the preserve crosses wetlands on walkways and the back part contains lots of princess pine and a large grove of mountain laurel with part of the trail walking along hand-dug canals from yesteryear. Less than a mile in length, this loop trail is a flat, easy hike and a good place to see and hear birds. To get to the trail, we recommend you park at the Avon Senior Center, cross West Avon Road at the traffic light and walk down the sidewalk on Scoville Road to the trailhead which is right next to the ALT property sign.



ALT co-President, Rick Dubiel, and head trailblazer and Treasurer, Scott Lewis, pose while working on the Thompson-Osborn loop.

2 newly improved blazer's trail



member, **Joe Pereira**, has maintained and expanded this peaceful respite and wonderland of nature exploration.

Stationed along the .5-mile trail loop, called **Blazer's Trail**, are beautifully crafted educational kiosks that explain the local flora, fauna, and environmental history. A seasonal "Story Walk" invites hikers to read a book along the trail and complete a creative activity afterwards. This summer's story was "How To Catch A Garden Fairy" by Alice Walstead, and the activity was building fairy houses



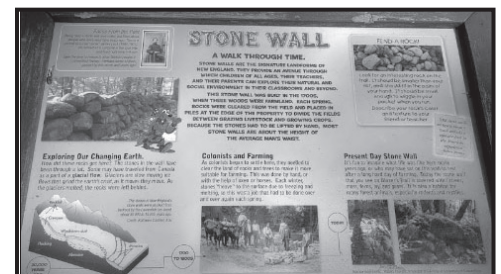
loop filled with nature-themed books for anyone to enjoy on their visit to the trail.

If you have young ones – or you're just young at heart – put a visit to Blazer's Trail at the top of your list! The trail is open to the public outside of school hours. ■

The first Unplugged Learning Project project was the construction of an amphitheater and hiking loop in the woods behind Roaring Brook School. For fifteen years now, teachers have brought their students to this "unplugged classroom" to read books, write and draw in journals, do mathematics sorting exercises and, of course, study natural science. Over that time, the RBS Unplugged team, led by teacher and original ULP committee



– which now reside in the "fairy village" around the amphitheater. There is also a little lending library at the beginning of the



hunting_{for} treasure along the huckleberry hill trail



Hikers and teachers pose for a photo outside the Dubiel barn.

The ALT board is eager to connect with local residents and groups interested in land preservation and recreation. Knowing how important nature is to the development of children, we are particularly eager to host events for young people.

In April, for example, ALT board member, **Jeff Grinrod**, partnered with **Jenn Jepsen**, Director of Pine Grove Nursery School, to lead a nature scavenger hunt for a class of lucky four-year-olds. The group of 14 children and 12 adults (teachers, parents, and hike leaders) met behind the old Huckleberry Hill School where they entered the woods for a .5-mile hike to the new access path to the Dubiel Barn, affectionately called "Marge's Barn." Along the way, children "hunted" for

many natural and manmade items like streams, stonewalls, plants, trail markers, bird feeders and, of course, the circa 1830 barn.

At the barn, the children enjoyed snacks, and the ALT team offered tours of the barn and the many birdhouses, pollinator gardens, scarecrows and other features around it. Some parents also got a first-hand look at the developing "museum" in the loft of the barn. The event was a big hit and plans are already in place for a second one for the incoming class of four-year-olds.

If you are interested in bringing your class or community group "into the woods," please let us know. We'd love to partner with you! Contact us at www.avonlandtrust.org ■



Little hikers trek along the Huckleberry Hill trail.



Little hikers inside the barn.

The **Avon Land Trust** invites subject-matter experts to lead educational events throughout the year. Mark your calendars for these great speakers coming this fall/winter:

- **Finding Your Feet:** Presented by Hiker and Author *Rhiane Fatinikun*, 10/23 at 1:00 pm
- **Interesting Stories from Avon's History:** Presented by ALT's own *Scott Lewis*, November date TBD
- **New England Stone Walls:** Presented by Professor *Robert Thorson*, 12/10 at 6:30 PM

All events held in the **Avon Free Public Library** community room.



hike-of-the-month club

Last year, the land trust partnered with the town recreation department to lead one hike per month, each on a different property, along a different trail. The hikes are designed for all ages and abilities and are led by knowledgeable guides. We had a small but mighty crew of eager hikers this past year and we're hoping to see many more this year.

Here is the schedule of hikes for the balance of 2024. Join us whenever you can by registering on the Avon Land Trust Facebook page under "Events". ■

SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
9.28.24 FOREST BATHING RAMBLE <i>starting from Nod Way trail head @ 10am (event runs 2.5 hours)</i>	10.5.24 FOUNDLAND HIKE <i>meet at Northington trail head @ 10am</i>
OCTOBER	OCTOBER
10.9.24 FISHER MEADOWS <i>meet at Country Club Road parking lot @ 5pm</i>	10.19.24 ALT FALL HIKE TO THE TOWER TOOT FESTIVAL <i>meet at Hazen Road trailhead @ 11am</i>
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
10.26.24 WELLNER/NANCY NATION TRAIL HIKE <i>meet behind Staples on rt 44 @ 10am</i>	11.2.24 CO-OP HIKE WITH TOWN OF AVON <i>@ tbd</i>

ARE YOU A CURRENT MEMBER OF THE AVON LAND TRUST?

ARE YOU CONSIDERING JOINING OR RENEWING?



It's a great time to do either. And, new this year, ALL Avon Land Trust members receive our beautiful new ALT WalkBook with photos, descriptions, and maps of every trail.

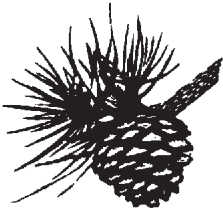
Visit www.avonlandtrust.org to get yours today!

have you seen the
scarecrow family
waving beside marge's barn?



They are easy to spot on the right-hand side of Huckleberry Hill Road heading north (just before the old Huckleberry Hill School) and they are looking to make new friends. Please come visit! ■





THE *Avon* LAND TRUST

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THE *Avon* LAND TRUST

membership form

Yes, I/we would like to make a tax-deductible annual membership donation to the Avon Land Trust, at the following level:

- _____ \$500 Oak Membership
- _____ \$250 Maple Membership
- _____ \$100 Birch Membership
- _____ \$ 50 Family Membership
- _____ \$ 30 Individual Membership
- _____ \$ 25 Senior/Student Membership
- _____ Please allocate my donation to the Unplugged Learning fund
- _____ Please allocate my donation to the trail maintenance fund

name _____

address _____

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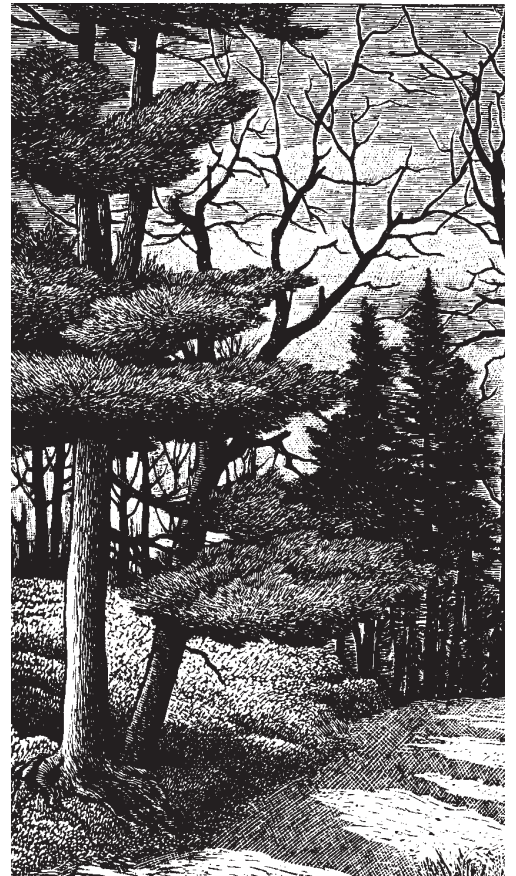
Please make checks payable to The Avon Land Trust, and mail to: The Avon Land Trust, P.O. Box 267, Avon, CT 06001.

... or pay on-line by visiting our website: www.avonlandtrust.org.

Please let us know if you can help the ALT in any of these other ways:

- My employer will match my contribution.
- I would like information on how to include ALT in my will or estate plan.
- I am interested in donating land to the ALT
- I would like to help the ALT as a member-volunteer

Thank you for becoming a 2025 member of the Avon Land Trust!



The Avon Land Trust is 501(c)(3) certified, so your donation is tax deductible. If your employer offers a matching gift program, or participates in the United Way, please consider making the Avon Land Trust a beneficiary so your money can go even further.