

Spring 2021



**The Chronicle *of*
Woodlands *and* Wildlife**
A Newsletter of Orenda Wildlife Land Trust

IN THIS ISSUE:

Wild Imaginings 2

President's Perspective 3

Cub's Den 3

Stewardship 4

Shifting Sands:

Cape Cod's Land Use Changes 5-7

Into the Maze 8

Land Protection 9

Changing Rhythms 10

Donors and Contributors 11

Wild Imaginings:

Our Changing Landscape - Crisis or Opportunity?

By Jeff Thibodeau,
Executive Director

*"The only thing
that is constant
is change"
Heraclitus*



Change is the only certainty in life. Changes can often be uplifting and liberating, like a cocoon blossoming into a butterfly. Other times, a simple sun shower can explode into a violent storm, creating a crisis out of something that was initially benign. Global crises like climate change, discrimination, political rancor, pandemics, deforestation, violence, and extinction are inherently dangerous and often frightening. Even smaller changes in our daily lives can be overwhelming and often beyond our control, but for those that are within our reach, it is largely our response to them that determines the outcome.

*"It is not the strongest of the
species that survive, nor the
most intelligent, but the one
most responsive to change."
Charles Darwin*

On this fragile, ever changing peninsula, the root of our conservation crisis is that we are losing our ground, literally and figuratively, through development and climate change. It happens one tree, one dune, one day and one

building at a time. Now, after several decades of intensive and rapid change, the problems of declining water and air quality, deforestation, loss of wildlife habitat, and a vanishing sense of place, are impossible to ignore. As nature gets squeezed into ever-finer margins, so too does the wildness that defines it.

*"In a crisis, be aware of
the danger-but recognize
the opportunity."
John F. Kennedy*

As the Cape's essence erodes and we stand at the proverbial fork in the road, which way shall we go? Do we continue along the same path? Or do we take the opportunity to change course, perhaps creating a different destination, and a brighter outcome?

Did you know that between 1951 and 1999 the Cape's natural areas declined by 31%, an area equal to 88 square miles, about the same size as Boston? This area is equivalent to over 42,000 football fields. Between 1996 and 2016, forested areas declined a total of 8 square miles, about half the area of Provincetown. If we continue at that pace, we will lose the Cape's remaining open space sooner, not later.

Cape Cod real estate is a seller's market these days. The same is true for wildlife habitat. Good

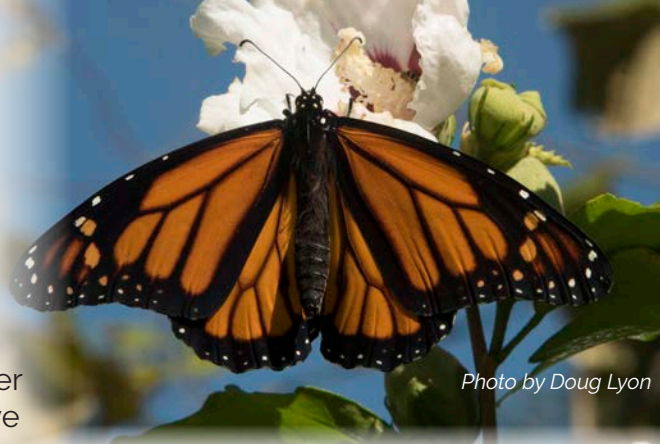


Photo by Doug Lyon

homes are hard to find. Imagine yourself a wild creature seeking the shelter, food, and nesting area you need to survive while being squeezed between highways and houses. Your wildness would be tamed by the pressure of human encroachment. We cannot survive, let alone thrive, on pavement and profits alone.

*"The measure of intelligence
is the ability to change"
Albert Einstein*

Orenda was founded in 1986 when the danger of losing our natural environment, the region's lifeblood, became great enough to inspire widespread action. Now, 35 years later, the challenge is even more pressing and the opportunity for intentional change more potent. We remain at the same turning point, but the bend is sharper, and the consequences are more final.

Protecting conservation land remains a powerful tool and makes a lasting positive impact, but to advance our work, we need your continued support. Development, and the changes it brings, continues at a rapid pace. We must seize the opportunity now to make changes that will create the future we want, for ourselves and for those that come after us.

President's Perspective:

A Challenging Transformation - Our Future, Now

By Daniel Morast,
President



How do your views, thoughts, concerns, and Cape Cod memories compare to those shared by the esteemed conservationists featured in the Orenda newsletter before you?

I find myself seeking inner reflections, remembrances, and relationships central to my life on the Cape. For every herring gull, piping plover, sand dune, beach plum, tidal flat, cottontail or osprey mentioned by others, I embrace the challenge. With expressive, positive humor, My Cape Cod Recollections top yours ... or do they?

I grew up in the down-river suburbs of Detroit. Water for swimming was a wading pool five blocks away; the only wild creatures were robins, jays and grey squirrels (and mosquitoes). The Rouge River would occasionally catch fire.

Escape, for me, was enlistment in the U.S. Army and a tour of duty in Vietnam (as a very young artillery officer). Once home, my life choice to abandon destruction and embrace conservation was immediate, abrupt, and thanks to fate, a move that brought me to Cape Cod some 32 years ago. It was the ocean, the dunes, the boats, and the aquatic, terrestrial, oceanic, and avian wildlife – and meeting so many humans dedicated to conservation,

preservation, scientific discovery, and organized environmental advocacy.

Now, as Orenda's president, I remain thankful, worried, committed ... and hopeful. To help us, please turn to the article, *Land Protection: Conservation Options*, providing various ways you can assist Orenda with our mission to establish and protect wildlife sanctuaries. And the article *Stewardship: Create Your Own Wildlife Sanctuary*, shares insights on how you can create your very own Cape Cod sanctuary for wild creatures, and meaningful memories.

Thank you for caring!

Cub's Den

By Emelia Roberts



This month we pose our question to Emelia Roberts, 7th grader.

Question: "Why is it important to protect land for conservation?"

Hello, my name is Emelia. My family and I enjoy time together on the beach or trails on the

Conversations About Conservation With Our Youth

lower cape. When I am out in nature, I feel relaxed. I think it's cool to be in nature and feel like I could be in any time period. We live in a special place with so much nature to explore but I worry that these special places will change over time by development. Development has caused us to lose land, which leads to habitat loss. Land protection progress has been made, but many rare species are still in danger. More and more areas on the Cape are being protected, so it's important that we stay on that track. Vernal pools for example, are protected because they are habitats to many rare species. An example of a species in danger is the



Drawing by
Bella Thibodeau

piping plover and there are only around 8,000 piping plovers left. I am so glad they are protected as a threatened species by the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. Beaches have blocked off areas during certain times of the year to protect their nests. Without these precautions, so many species could go extinct. If we want Cape Cod to remain a beautiful, nature filled destination, with an abundance of interesting animals, we have to continue to take action and conserve the land. I hope to enjoy Cape Cod just as it is with my own family in the future.

Stewardship:

Create Your Own Wildlife Sanctuary

By Jeff Thibodeau, Zachary Mertz & Stephanie Ellis

With just a little effort, you can make your yard a haven for local wildlife. Just a pinch of food, water and cover and you have the ingredients of good habitat.

Food

- Fill your bird feeders with energy-rich black oil sunflower seed to attract songbirds such as chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, finches, and jays.
- Hang suet, which provides much needed fat in winter, and is favored by woodpeckers, jays, tufted titmice, nuthatches, and chickadees. Try melting and mixing it with peanut butter and cornmeal to form cakes.
- Hang dried sunflowers, corn on the cob or half a pumpkin shell for critters to snack on.
- Peanut butter smeared pine cones rolled in cornmeal is a good project for the kids.

Vegetation

- Plant native or naturalized trees like pine, oak, tupelo, maple, cedar, holly or birch... shrubs like winterberry, dogwood, sumac, chokeberry, blueberry, beach plum, bayberry, arrowwood ... and perennials like butterfly weed, coneflower, lavender, milkweed, thyme, yarrow, goldenrod, black eyed susan, lavender, and bee balm which provide good food,

including pollen and nectar for pollinators.

- Choose a small section of your lawn to leave unmown, as dandelions, clover and longer grass provide food and cover.

Water

- Add some water, the most important ingredient, but make sure it's easily cleanable to prevent mosquitoes and disease.
- Make a birdbath, pool or pond in a shaded area near cover, for a safe place to drink and bathe. Even a dish of water will do.

Cover

- Brush piles provide warm, protected habitat for squirrels, chipmunks, spiders, toads, salamanders, butterflies, and mice. Small critters also provide food for predators higher on the food chain, like coyotes, foxes, owls, hawks and eagles.
- Don't cleanup your leaves, flowers, pruning, and overgrown branches until spring to provide shelter for small animals and insects throughout the winter.
- Create more "edge" habitat, rich in biodiversity, by letting things grow at least 2 feet high to support groundhogs, rabbits, coyotes, deer and foxes.

Hummingbird Feeder

- Boil 1 part refined white sugar with 4 parts water. Stir. When cooled, serve in a hummingbird feeder.
- Change your hummingbird food every 5 days, or every 2-3 days in hot weather, so the sugar water does not spoil.

Keep Your Windows Dirty

It's for the birds! Help prevent bird window strikes by keeping your windows dirty or add some anti strike decals.

Common Cape Cod Critters

Primary Producers: Plants

Herbivores and Omnivores:

Squirrels, rabbits, turkeys, skunks, rodents, raccoons, groundhogs, deer
Meso-Carnivores (Mammals and Birds of Prey): Foxes, Coyote, Hawks, Owls, Fishers, River Otters

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

Lindsey B. Counsell Wildlife Sanctuary

This spring we will cleanup roadside debris, mark boundaries and install a sanctuary sign, named in honor of Lindsey B. Counsell, long time Cape Cod environmental protection advocate.

Join Our Diamondback Terrapin Turtle Team

We need your help to protect these resilient reptiles during this summer's nesting season at our Margaret Wyman Sanctuary turtle garden.

Become A Sanctuary Steward

Walk one of our Sanctuaries and make habitat and wildlife observations, report stewardship issues, and identify needs. Visits are done once or twice per year and a simple form completed.


Email: jeffthibodeau@orendlandtrust.org for more information.



Shifting Sands:

Cape Cod's Land Use Changes

By Jeff Thibodeau



Changing land use and development patterns have led to the intensive settlement, cultivation, development, and now suburbanization, of Cape Cod. When the first European settlers arrived here several hundred years ago, they found the native population living in harmony with the land. But as the population has grown, so too have the impacts, some positive... but many negative, creating a persistent environmental crisis that demands a consistently urgent response.

Cape Cod Land Use Timeline

Pre-contact Period (before 1500 A.D.)



Source: National Geographic Society

Native Wampanoag lived sustainably as farming, fishing, hunting and gathering tribes that lived according to the changing seasons for approximately 12,000 years. They moved locations about every 5 years to limit land use impacts, allowing the land to recover.

Contact Period (1500-1620)

Basque, English, Portuguese and French explorers, fishermen and traders arrived. Epidemics, and later King Philip's War and discriminatory policies, contributed to a diminishing Native American population.

- 1500: Europeans made first contact with the Wampanoag
- 1602: Bartholomew Gosnold named Cape Cod for codfish
- 1606: Colonization of New England began



Colonial Period (1620-1780)

Farming, fishing, home building, milling, whaling, animal husbandry, and boatbuilding flourished.

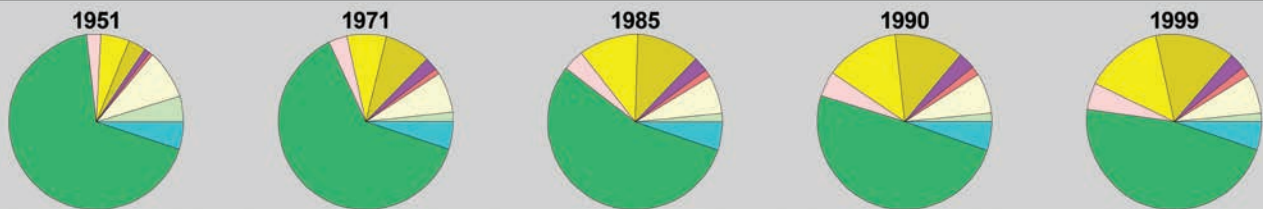


Photo by Jeff Thibodeau

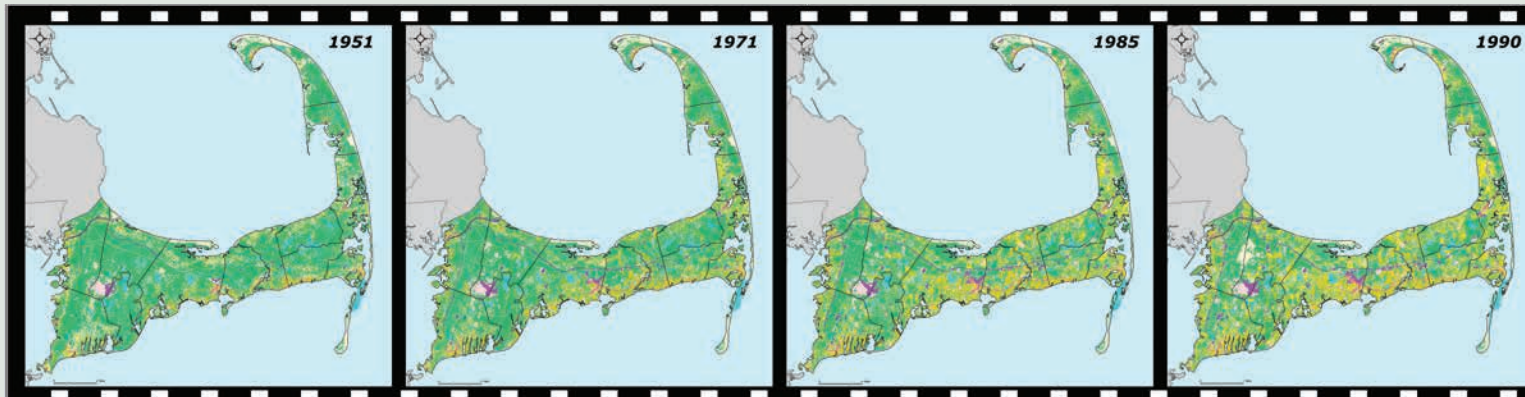
- 1620: Pilgrims landed at Provincetown
- 1621: Pilgrims signed treaty of mutual protection with Wampanoag
- 1628: Trading Posts est.
- 1629: Mass Bay Colony est.
- 1675-1678: King Philip's War
- 1775: First battle of American Revolution
- 1776: Declaration of Independence
- 1778: Commonwealth of Mass. Inc.

~ Cape Cod Development Time Series, 1951 - 1999 ~

- C (Commercial)
- I (Industrial)
- HDR (Higher Density Residential)
- LDR (Low Density Residential)
- U (Urban Open/Institutional/Recreation)
- O (Open Undeveloped Lands)
- A (Agriculture)
- N (Natural Land/Undisturbed Vegetation)
- W (Water)



Note: Only a portion of the natural land (green areas) is protected for conservation



Federal Period (1780-1830)

Stronger Federal government and ratification of Constitution

- 1780: Massachusetts Constitution; 1st state to abolish slavery.
- 1783: Revolutionary War ends
- 1789: U.S. Constitution
- 1816: Cranberry Industry est.
- 1826: First American railroad
- 1830: Peak of whaling industry

Industrial Period (1830-1915)

Population density and land use intensity increased and fishing and farming peaked



Source: Harwich Historical Society

- 1830-1885: Cape Cod farming, livestock, and forest clearing peaked
- 1846-52: Whaling industry peaked
- 1855-75: Livestock population steeply declined
- 1865: Thoreau published "Cape Cod"
- 1891: The Trustees of Reservations (1st land trust)
- 1914: Cape Cod Canal opens

Modern Period (1915-Present)

Cape land use trends changed substantially after construction of the Mid-Cape Highway in the 1950's, dramatically increasing the number of visitors and intensity of development while the tourism, trade and the service industries flourished as well as professional specialties. Declining water and air quality, deforestation, wildlife and habitat loss led to the establishment of several conservation laws, groups and initiatives:

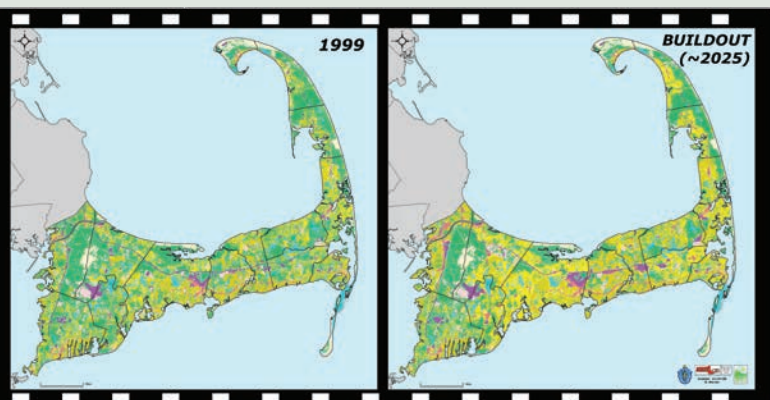
- 1930: Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute
- 1944: Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge
- 1950's: Mid-Cape Highway
- 1957: Massachusetts Conservation Commission Act
- 1962: Chatham Conservation Foundation est. (1st land trust)
- 1965: Cape Cod Planning and Economic Development Commission
- 1965: Land and Water Fund Act
- 1966: Cape Cod National Seashore
- 1968: Association to Preserve Cape Cod
- 1969: National Environmental Policy Act
- 1970: Earth Day
- 1970: Clean Air Act
- 1972: Wetlands Protection Act
- 1973: Endangered Species Act

- 1974: Safe Drinking Water Act
- 1977: Clean Water Act
- 1978: American Indian Religious Freedom Act
- 1995: Mashpee National Wildlife Refuge
- 1976: Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies est.
- 1986: The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts est.
- 1986: Orenda Wildlife Land Trust est. (also many others formed in 1980's)
- 1990: Cape Cod Commission Act
- 1998: Land Bank Act
- 2000: Community Preservation Act

Startling Statistics:

- Between 1950 and 2000, the number of lots in Barnstable grew by 500%
- In Barnstable County between 1951 & 1999:
 - Natural areas declined by 31%, an area equal to 88 square miles, about the size of Boston.
 - Residential areas increased by 3.5 times, or 86 square miles, an area bigger than Seattle, Baltimore or Cleveland
 - Urban areas doubled
 - Commercial areas tripled
 - Industrial areas tripled
- In Barnstable County between 1996 and 2016:
 - Developed areas grew by 6%
 - Open space development increased by 7%
 - Forested areas decreased by 5%, totaling 8 square miles, about half the size of Provincetown, or 4,000 football fields!

Data References: NOAA, Cape Cod Commission, Mass GIS, Woodwell Climate Research Center

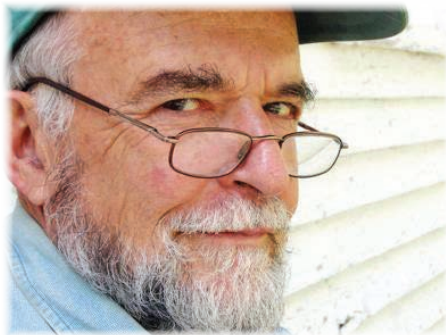


Cape Cod's Future

The pioneering, industrious spirit swept across Cape Cod like a nor'easter, simultaneously creating and destroying the landscape we live in. If we continue to lose our natural areas at the current rate, it won't be long until there are none left. The Cape is approximately 45% developed, 35% protected, with 20% (about 68 square miles) remaining in the balance. Declining environmental quality from development remains a problem, the solution to which requires a multifaceted approach. Land conservation is the most effective tool to prevent the crisis from worsening as we strive to save the essence of Cape Cod. The future of these sublime and shifting sands is, and has always been, in our hands.

Guest Commentary: Into The Maze

By Robert Finch



Change is the coin of this sandy realm, and as long as we are not too close to it, such change delights us. The seasons flow in their rhythmic variety, a little out of sync with the mainland due to the ocean's moderating influence – which pleases our sense of separateness. With them come in the streaming tides of shorebirds, migrating alewives and striped bass, pack ice in Cape Cod Bay, spring peepers in the bogs, gypsy moths in the oaks, and tourists in the motels and restaurants.

Years flow and bring still broader changes, sometimes surprising, not always welcome. Bald heaths grow up to pine barrens, meadows fill in with juniper, abandoned bogs return to cedar swamps or maple swamps, oaks replace the pines, and a charming water view from the deck or terrace disappears under a rising horizon of leaves. With these changes, some new bird species appear, others grow scarcer. Fish populations fluctuate, ponds slowly silt in. New areas of tidal flats are claimed by spreading salt marsh grasses, and each year a few more feet of the ocean cliffs topple into the surf, taking

a beach cottage or two with them. Major alterations of the coastline can and do take place within a man's lifetime, adding a feeling of shared mortality in our relationship with this thin spar of glacial leavings. Yet through all this variety of natural change, we always sense a continuity, not always to our liking, perhaps, but with a fittingness and perceptible identity of its own, an interplay of great and connected forces.

To this natural change, however, we have added our own, in a way that we share with most other parts of the country.

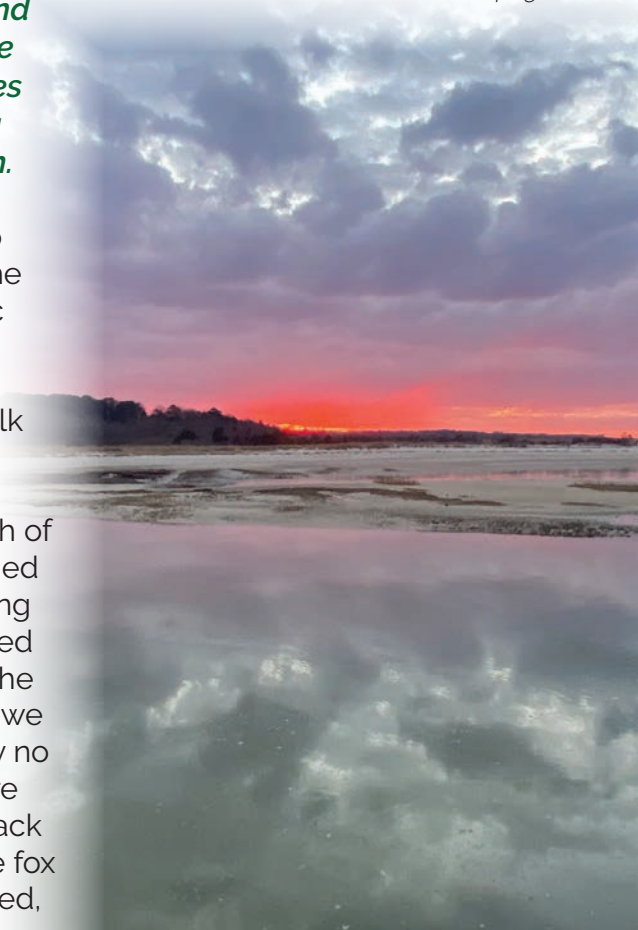
In the beginning we may have desired only to "fit in" to this natural scene, to enjoy what it has to offer; and yet in doing so on such a mass scale and on our own terms, we have inevitably introduced forces that have had increasing repercussions of their own.

We move here in winter onto some quiet street and find the following summer that traffic makes it unsafe to cross the road for our mail. A piece of woods where we used to walk our dogs is turned, almost overnight, into roads and building lots. An open stretch of coastal bluffs that once formed a background to our clamming on the mud flats is now clotted with condominiums. Along the Mid-Cape Highway the deer we noticed for years are one day no longer there; in their stead are houses and tennis courts. Back roads and open fields, where fox stalked and woodcock courted,

all at once sprout shopping malls, golf courses, new schools, and sewage treatment plants. And so on.

Countryside is suddenly suburban, suburban areas become densely developed, and in places our highway and urbanized areas begin to take on an aspect that makes us look hard at the exit and street signs in order to reassure ourselves we are not in Boston or New Bedford, yet. Having increased our individual mobility in both the physical and social sense – the speed and ease with which we can travel from place to place as well as the power to choose our hometowns – we find ourselves less and less sure of where it is we have finally arrived.

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Land Protection: Conservation Options

By Mark Robinson
and Jeff Thibodeau

Orenda's mission is to protect open space for wildlife habitat, fresh air, and water quality, in sanctuaries on Cape Cod and throughout Massachusetts. We accomplish this using various conservation options.

Gifts of Land:

Land donated outright will be held in its natural state for conservation purposes. The appraised value of the land at the time of the gift is deductible against federal income taxes (up to 30% of adjusted gross income each year for 6 years). Elimination of property tax.

Conservation Restriction (CR):

A voluntary agreement that enables the owner to retain privacy and title to the land while removing some development rights in all or part of the property. The diminished value of the land becomes a deduction against 50% of adjusted gross income

each year for up to 16 years. Property tax reduction is considerable, if building sites are extinguished.

Reserved Life Estate:

A transfer of title to the land trust now, while allowing lifetime occupancy and use of the property by the donor. Actuarial tables and appraised value of the property determine the federal deduction value.

Charitable Sale/Bargain Sale:

Landowners who agree to sell their land for conservation for less than appraised value can claim the difference as a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes. Savings on federal and state capital gains taxes often accrue.

Bequest:

Property can be given to conservation via your will. Estate taxes will be reduced as the land's value is removed from the estate. Conservation restrictions left in a will or chosen by the heirs can also

generate a bonus 40% reduction in inheritance taxes.

Massachusetts Conservation Land Tax Credit:

Beginning in 2011, landowners with eligible land may qualify for up to \$75,000 in refundable tax credits from Massachusetts, in addition to federal deductions cited above, for donations, CRs, and bargain sales. You do not need to live in Massachusetts or pay taxes here to qualify.

If you would like to talk about your options, email jeffthibodeau@orendalandtrust.org



Photo by Doug Lyon

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Sometimes, watching a chickadee or a junco at the window feeder at the end of winter's day, ruffled and tossed by a wet wind and alone at the coming of darkness, I am tempted to pity its lack of human comfort and security. But the bird at least was born to the condition in which it lives. It is part of an unbroken past of this land and knows where to find itself, despite all human and natural change, during the night and in the morning. Can I say as much for myself?

What is Cape Cod today? Rural? Semirural? Suburban? Seasonally urban? Bits and parts of each, perhaps. For this particular moment, at least, the term subrural seems as accurate as any: a patchwork of conflicting claims and uses hanging on to the remnants of a distinct rural culture that now exists almost completely in the past. And once we have named it, what then? What are we to make of it? How are we to know where we are? How are we to get here, once we have arrived?

*Robert Finch has lived on and written about Cape Cod for over fifty years. He has published nine collections of essays, co-edited *The Norton Book of Nature Writing* and received a Guggenheim Fellowship for his work. His radio essays can be heard twice a month on WCAL's "A Cape Cod Notebook." During the 1980s he co-chaired the Brewster Land Acquisition Committee, which succeeded in acquiring the 800-acre conservation area known as the Punkhorn Parklands. He currently lives in Wellfleet.*

Guest Commentary:

Changing Rhythms of Cape Cod's Fragile Environment

By Greg O'Brien



Change is the coin of life, a friend once told me.

Cape Cod, indeed, is a place of change for those with the eyes and innocence of a child. For it takes a child's curiosity in all of us, and sense of wonderment, to fully appreciate the innate beauty and changing nature of Cape Cod, a place I first embraced as a child close to 70 years ago. In this endless, stunning change—the seasons, the ebb and flow of nature, and how the serenity of the Cape gently washes over us—one becomes a more cerebral witness of life in all ways.

That's the blessing of Cape Cod.

I remember as a young boy marveling at the flats of Cape Cod Bay where the tide goes out in Brewster for almost a mile. I wondered where all the water went and why. It was, and is today, as if someone had pulled a plug in a bathtub.

I can remember the first night I sat on a sand dune in the highlands of Truro and looked up at a clear, moonless sky—a stark black canvas that had been flecked with a million specks of

white. The view was exhilarating, yet why did it make me feel so small.

Change...

I was always in awe of graceful herring gulls skimming the surface of the sea in search of another meal, and ever amazed at the brute force of waves as they broke in steady cadence on the lip of the beach. Where did the gulls nest? And what caused the ocean's soothing pulse?

Change...

I remember catching hermit crabs on the flats, and watching in bewilderment as jellyfish slipped through cracks between my fingers. Why did the crabs pinch and the jellyfish ooze?

Like many of my young friends, I wondered about such things as: do fish sleep and how fast is a snail's pace? And why does the water glow at night?

My universe as a child was the beach. But as I grew older, I came to understand Cape Cod as a unique collection of fragile and diverse ecosystems, dependent on the same healthy environment.

I'm in reverence of the wisdom of Henry David Thoreau who urged, "Drink in the soft influence and sublime revelations of nature."

Fast forward. Now at 71, I seek to teach my grandkids the instincts of close observation, the eyes of a child, in a changing environment—Adeline, 4, Timmy, 1, and a new arrival to come.

Though, the more things change, the more they remain the same, French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr observed in the 1800's. My prayer today is that the rhythm of change in nature, and the appeal therein, will sustain the Cape's majestic environment beyond the motivations of those less perceptive.

Greg O'Brien is a career journalist and author/editor of several books, including [A Guide to Nature on Cape Cod](#) and [the Islands and On Pluto: Inside the Mind of Alzheimer's](#)



Photo by Jeff Thibodeau

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Orenda is grateful for all donations of time, energy, land and money. A gift made during your lifetime allows you enjoy the fruits of your generosity while bequests leave an indelible legacy. For guidance on planning a donation or bequest, contact jeffthibodeau@orendalandtrust.org

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We are thankful to Doug Lyon for sharing his incredible photos with Orenda. Doug began photographing wildlife in 1974, while living in Alaska. He has been interested in wildlife and being in wild spaces since he was a boy on Cape Cod, where he currently does most of his nature photography.



Photo by Doug Lyon



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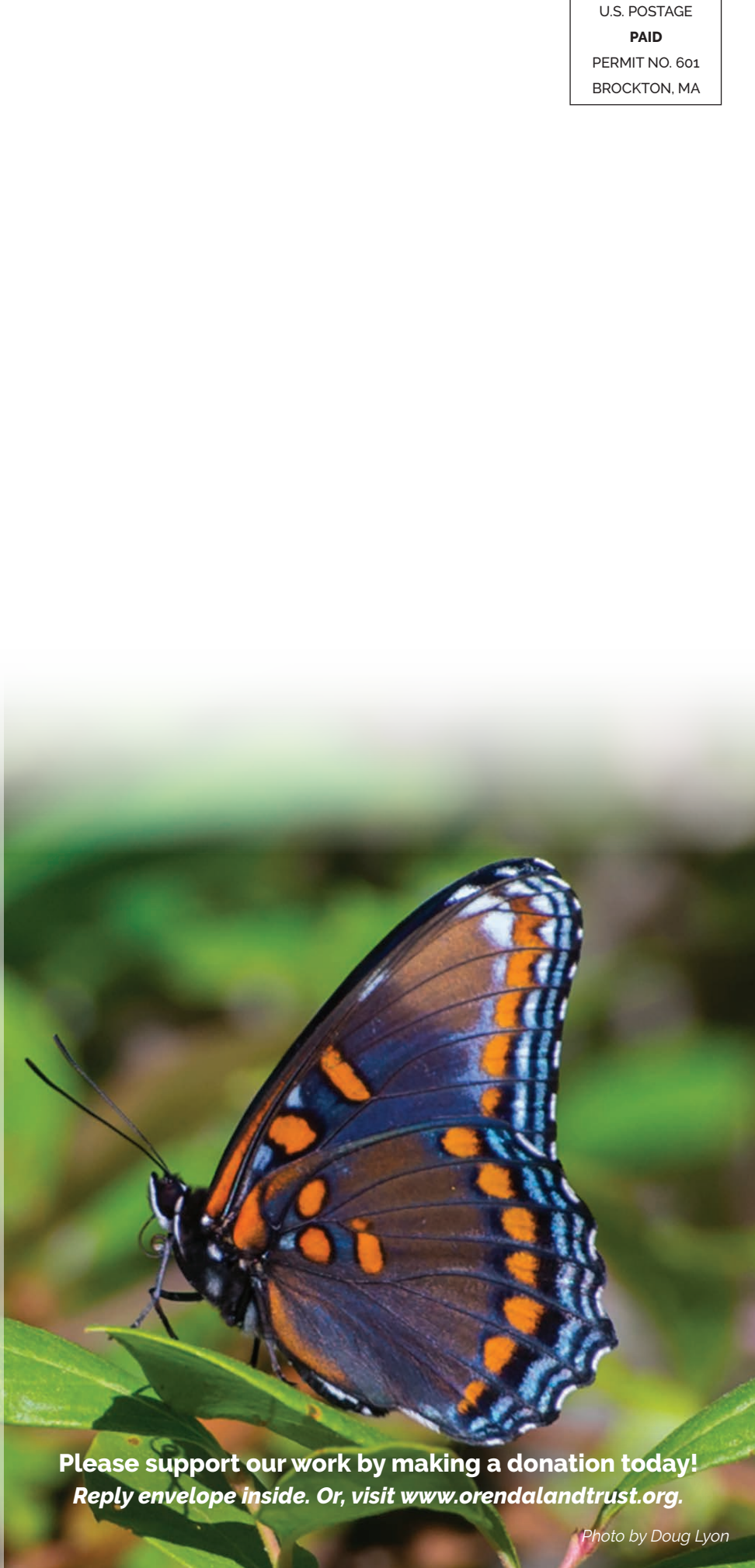
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Orenda's Mission

Founded in 1986, Orenda Wildlife Land Trust works to preserve and protect open space for wildlife habitat, fresh air, and water quality, in sanctuaries on Cape Cod and throughout Massachusetts.

All contributions to Orenda Wildlife Land Trust are tax-deductible under federal regulations.



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Photo by Doug Lyon