

Saco Bay Trails Annual Report 2023



Members

Stephanie Ainsburg	Roberta Gallant	Kathryn Murphy
Ronald Albert	Jonathan Gardner	Kathleen Nahorney
Anne Andrie	Charles Garland	Katy Nicketakis & Clint Chase
Brenda Austin	John and Susan Gold	Audrey Northway
Linda Beane	Ryan and Torie Gorman	Maggie O'Neil
Denise Benedict	Mark and Rayma Griffin	Shawn and Amy Ouellette
Carol Benoit Reynolds	Robelyn Guillerault	Sheila Painchaud
Susan Penna Bernier	Fran Halamandaris	Joanna Pappas
Marty and Jessica Birmingham	Vietta Hamblen	Fred Parent
Marc Boissonnault	Jane and Bob Hamblen	Kate Peterlein
Kyle and Angela Bolduc	Marcia Hanson	Patti and Malcolm Poole
Nancy and Charles Borg	Susan Harper	Lynn Quincy
Colleen Bossie	William Hildebrand	Mogens and Donna Ravn
Barbara Boutet	Justin Hill	Neil Raymond
Maria Brandt	Andrew Holbrook	John Morrill Read
Jacqueline Bucar	Thomas Hopkins	Burgess and Sandra Record
Joan Buotte	Jean Horton	John Riordan
James and Susan Burnell	Caryn & Steve Husman	Sharon Robinson
Margaret Carney	Dennis Jackson	Linda Rogoff
Heather Clark	Jessica Janson	Dan Ross
Denise Clavette	Bill and Mary Johnson	George Roth
Cathy Coffman	David Kortz	Ted Sirois
Lynn & Greg Copeland	Kevin and Carla Lafortune	Susan Slee
Larissa Crockett	Janice Lane	Rosemarie Smith
Wendy Crowell	Peggy Litoff	Lynn Soucy
Samuel Cummings	Susan and Stephen Littlefield	Helen Stevenson
Susan Curtis	Karen and Marston Lovell	Jim Swain
Andrew Dabczynski	Joyce Mailman	John Thompson
Sharon Danis	Karen Malmgren	Beverly Thorpe
Odette Dansereau	Kimberly Matthews	Elaine Vadeboncoeur
Doug Dolan	Christine McAuliffe	Carla Volkert
Doug Ellis	Kim McBride	Wendy Weiler
Joy Elsner	Deborah McKenney	Pieter Whittemore
Glenn Evans	Carolyn Meadows	Patricia Wright
Caryl Everett	Gail and Ernie Merritt	Jim Yoder
Josh Fecteau & Jenny Brown	Greg Miller	Lani York
Jan and Bob Filgate	David Mokler	Diane and Michael Zaitlin
James Gaffney	John and Roxanne Molina	
	Pamela Morgan	

Mission

Saco Bay Trails' mission is to create and maintain this network of trails and to promote its acceptance and use by the public. We are an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and maintaining recreational trails in the Saco Bay Area.

We envision a permanent network of free, easily accessible, well-maintained, well-marked and well-publicized trails, which people with a broad range of abilities can use and enjoy.



Saco Bay Trails
P.O. Box 720
Saco, Maine 04072
We are a 501(c)(3) organization

Trustees

Ryan Gorman, President
Marty Birmingham, Vice President
Janice Lane, Secretary
Steve Husman, Treasurer
Susan Slee, Events & Outreach
Jane Hamblen, Events & Outreach
John Riordan
Andrew Dabczynski

Advisory Trustees

Carol Benoit Reynolds
Michael Bolduc
Jacqui Bucar
Nan Cone
Eric Cote
Ted Cotsis
Odette Dansereau
Caryl Everett
John Gold
Bob Hamblen
Andrew Holbrook
Jean Horton
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Matt McBean
Deborah McKenney
Jonathan Mistos
John Morrill Read
Bruce Napolitano
Marie O'Brien
Shawn Patrick Ouellette
Sheila Painchaud
Patti Poole
Kenneth Rice
Dan Ross
Elaine Vadeboncoeur
Martha M. Wood

Annual report design

Custom Communications
7 Paul Avenue
Saco, Maine 04072

Photos

Ryan Gorman, Susan Slee, and
Andrew Dickinson/City of Saco.

A Year of Growth and Resilience: Saco Bay Trails in 2023

Dear Members,

As I reflect on 2023, I am filled with immense pride for our organization and the incredible things we accomplished together. Our dedication to preserving Saco Bay Trail's network shines brighter than ever, and I am grateful for each and every one of you who contributes to our success.

Our year began with a testament to our community spirit. When the Atlantic Way Trail bridge was dislodged by a winter storm, over 50 volunteers, including 30 members of the UNE hockey team, rallied together, lifted the bridge, and carried it back into place. This heartwarming display of teamwork solidified the importance of Saco Bay Trails and the impact we have on our community.

Financially, we remain on solid ground. In 2023, the City of Saco once again generously approved us as a support entity. This funding from the City covers a majority of our administrative costs, ensuring every dollar from our members and donors goes directly towards trail development, maintenance, and outreach programs. This financial stability allows us to focus on what matters most...connecting people with their local trails.

The beating heart of Saco Bay Trails is our incredible volunteers! Over 2023, our volunteers dedicated their time during monthly work parties, tirelessly raking, clipping, and clearing miles of trails, ensuring accessibility and enjoyment for everyone. Their efforts even included constructing a new 20-foot bridge in Horton Woods that now guides hikers safely across a previously impassable ravine.

Beyond regular volunteers, we were also inspired by the dedication of Eagle Scouts Patrick and Wyatt from Troop 310 in Saco. They each completed impressive trail improvement projects this summer, and we are incredibly grateful for their leadership and countless hours of work that made a significant impact on our trails.

Lastly, 10 amazing volunteers from IDEXX rolled up their sleeves and gave three bridges on the Wildwood and Atlantic Way Trails a much-needed makeover. They applied a weather-proof stain, something the bridges hadn't seen in years. This hard work will ensure the bridges remain safe and sturdy for everyone to enjoy for years to come. Huge thanks to IDEXX for

helping keep our trails awesome!

Beyond trail development, we actively engaged the community in 2023, sharing our passion for trails at over a dozen community events! Our Mobile Trail Workshop, adorned with twinkling lights, was a crowd-pleaser in the Festival of Lights Parade. Our popular Spring bird walk series, led by Josh Fecteau, had close to 100 total participants across 5 guided walks, fostering a deeper appreciation for our local wildlife during the spring bird migration.

ing the spring bird migration.

Finally, our second annual Fairy House Building Day, sponsored by Saco and Biddeford Savings, was a huge success, attracting an estimated 500 attendees! A huge thank you to Sue and Jane for their tireless efforts, and to all the volunteers who brought magic to this special event.

These diverse outreach efforts solidify our commitment to connecting people with their local trails and the wonders of

the outdoors. Looking ahead, we are excited to continue these initiatives and explore new partnerships to bring the joy of nature to even more members of our community.

However, challenges remain. The Ferry Landing Trail requires major boardwalk restoration, and coastal storms and flooding continue to pose threats to our trails. Additionally, recent timber harvesting and heavy rains have heavily impacted the Sylvan Trail, necessitating a reroute in a few years after the area regrows.

We're committed to tackling these issues head-on, but we need your support. With your help, we can secure the funding and resources needed to restore these trails, ensuring the long-term health and accessibility of our entire trail network for generations to come.

Looking ahead, I am confident that with your continued support and dedication, Saco Bay Trails will continue to thrive. Together, we can create a vibrant network of trails that enriches our community and connects us all to the beauty of nature.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey.

Sincerely,
Ryan Gorman





Clockwise from above: Replacing the bridge on Atlantic Way; Participants at the Fairy House event; the SBT trailer decked out for the Saco Christmas Parade; An Eagle Scout project for troop 310 by Patrick Y; bulding a bridge at Horton Woods.



Middle Goosefare Trail

The Middle Goosefare trail is a point-to-point trail roughly parallel to Route 1 in Saco, offering a surprising variety of landscape features and lovely views. One of the finest overlooks is marked by a bench placed by SBT in 2022 honoring our late friend, Max Brandt, former owner of the property. In August of 2023, a work party was held to help maintain the trail. The kiosk at the south entrance was stained. Parts of the path from the south access were improved and stabilized, a drainage issue on the path leading to the pond was addressed, and the nearby bog bridges were repaired. The trail was raked and clarified through the picnic area and the Old Camp Loop. We stabilized the picnic tables and cleared them of debris. We will continue to make this often-overlooked gem-of-a-trail more easily accessible.

Horton Woods

Busy year at our largest set of trails this year. We started out the year by re-directing the first section of the trail away from all of the root beds. More work still needs to be done here as

roots are already starting to be exposed on the re-direct trail.

The City of Saco built and installed a top-quality section of elevated boardwalk over the first wet area just as you start down the trail from 112 entrance. This is a huge improvement and much needed.

Saco Bay Trails was the recipient of two Eagle Scout projects this year:

- In June, Patrick Young and his volunteers built over 100 feet of new bog bridging on the Big Pine Trail, significantly improving accessibility, and protecting the fragile ecosystem. Additionally, Patrick generously donated over \$250 to SBT from his project's fundraising efforts.
- In July, Wyatt Williams and his volunteers rerouted a section of the Blue Heron Trail, offering scenic creek views and bypassing a steep climb, making the trail more enjoyable for hikers of all abilities.

One of our largest work parties of the work party season was to build a new bridge on the new section of the Blue Heron Trail. John Riordan pre-cut and pre-assembled parts of the bridge

Trails Report

ahead of time. We had a great crew with many volunteers that helped to carry all the tools and components needed to build the bridge, while another crew worked with John to build the 20' long bridge in place. A huge thank you to Jean Horton for allowing us to access this area through her yard and giving us a place to stage everything as closely as possible. Hard work done by many made for a very successful days work.

Mary Merrill Trail

This year, the Mary Merrill Trail continued to shine with minimal maintenance needed, primarily occasional minor clearing of debris. Thankfully, the Ecology School handles all the mowing, making our job much easier. We've seen a surge in the trail's popularity, with hikers starting from both the trailhead and connecting through the Horton Trail. In 2024 we will revisit this trail to do some minor clipping, updating the blazes for clarity, and adding a beautiful new bench by the river, perfect for enjoying the scenery.

Cascade Falls

Cascade Falls saw a number of permanent additions to its trails in 2023. In February, Saco Parks and Recreation completed a permanent bridge across Cascade Brook. The bridge is high above the stream so there is little fear of it washing away. It allows visitors to safely cross the stream any time of the year. The trail then leads past the old bear cage down to the falls and the old slate mine. This area allows a lot of space for viewing the falls and an opportunity to get up close to them while staying off the steep bank.

The next addition was on the Trout Brook Loop. A wattle archway created by Woven Wood of Kennebunk was added to the entrance of the Fairy House Village. Near the archway are two permanent signs designed by Mira McKenney. The first is a Welcome sign and the second is a sign with guidelines for building Fairy Houses.

In June, over 20 volunteers came to the work party to assist in raking, establishing the new trail from the end of the bridge, placing signs and planting.

Saco Bay Trails has attempted some plantings so people will not walk down the steep hillside to the falls. We are trying to encourage people to stay on the established trails and limit erosion throughout the park.

Sylvan Trail

The Sylvan Trail was closed during the summer due to selective wood cutting done by the property owners, the Leary family. That work combined with the summer's heavy rainfall, has required SBT to do some rerouting of the trail. The work party in August raked the existing trail up to the area that was used for storing the cut logs. Here, volunteers laid a wood chip trail across the open space, directing walkers in the direction of the trail. We had three gas powered weedwhackers going to cut back the tall grass which resulted from all the rain. Volunteers ran out of gasoline and energy on that hot, humid day before getting to the field at the back of the Leary Farm. In the

spring, we will be evaluating the work that can be done in 2024, to reestablish the loop trail. This trail is almost 1.5 miles long and will need many hands to bring it back to where it was prior to the logging operation, and the heavy rainfall. Look for updates on our website to join in the work party to help renew this trail.

Ted Wells Memorial Trail

2023 was another quiet year for the Ted Wells Trail. Thanks to the reroute in 2021, the well-established path requires minimal maintenance annually, primarily minor pruning. Given the recent heavy rain and coastal flooding, we'll thoroughly evaluate the trail and bog bridges in the spring, assessing any potential damage and necessary repairs.

Atlantic Way, Plymouth, and Vines Trails

Atlantic Way Trail

During a winter storm in December 2022, severe flooding dislodged the Atlantic Way Trail bridge, sending it floating 20 yards up the trail. Thankfully, the bridge suffered no structural damage. In a remarkable display of community spirit, over 50 volunteers, including 30 members of the UNE hockey team, joined forces on the first weekend of January to lift the bridge back onto its foundations.

In June, weathered plywood gusset plates on the Atlantic Way bridge were reinforced with new, bolted-on plates. Later in August, IDEXX sent a crew of ten volunteers who generously applied weatherproofing stain to the Atlantic Way bridge, revitalizing its appearance and improving its resilience to the elements. Finally, in preparation for winter storms and tidal flooding, the Atlantic Way bridge received new ground anchors and chains for added security.

Plymouth Trail

The Plymouth Trail enjoyed a relatively quiet year, except for some crucial improvements made this fall. The bog bridges near the intersection with the Atlantic Way Trail underwent a significant reconfiguration, ensuring safer and smoother passage for hikers. Looking ahead, we'll be conducting a thorough evaluation of the trail's blazes in 2024 to ensure they remain clear and guide hikers effectively.

Vines Trail

The Vines Trail saw quiet use in 2023. In 2024, we'll assess this connector trail to ensure its continued ease of use, we'll be conducting a thorough evaluation to assess clipping needs and updating any faded blazes.

Wildwood & Branch Brook Loop

In August, dedicated volunteers from IDEXX revitalized the Wildwood Trail by applying a weatherproofing stain to its two bridges, significantly improving their weather resistance and appearance. Later in November, a work party tackled fall

TRAILS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Annual Meeting Minutes: April 11, 2023

Call to order and Introductions - President Ryan Gorman called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Trustees attending were Marty Birmingham, Andrew Dabczynski, Ryan Gorman, Jane Hamblen, Andrew Holbrook, Janice Lane, John Riordan, and Sue Slee. In addition to the board, 8 members attended.

Business:

President Gorman welcomed all to the meeting, declared a declaration of a quorum, and introduced the board members.

Minutes of the 2022 annual meeting were reviewed and accepted.

M: Marty Birmingham S: Jane Hamblen

Financial reports for 2022 were reviewed and accepted.

M: Sue Slee S: Andrew Dabczynski Jane Hamblen

2022 Trail report review: Marty reviewed the trail work done – a list is provided on page 4 & 5 of the annual report.

There will be two Eagle Scout projects on the Horton Woods trail this spring/summer. One will consist of building 400 feet of bog bridging. The scout has raised \$458 to cover the cost of materials. The second project is in the planning phase.

The box trailer purchased last year has allowed us to consolidate all of our tools into one location and to bring them to work parties. Plans for 2023 include adding a roll out canopy to provide sun/rain protection while at work parties/outreach events. The logo on the side of the trailer has helped to advertise our organization and generate interest in our events.

Events for 2023

There will be work/walk parties the second Saturday of the month thru October. The November work party will be held on Sunday due to hunting season.

Our 2022 bird walks were well attended. We will host 5 walks in 2023 – the first will be May 4th at 7 am.

On June 3, in celebration of National Trails Day, we will participate in Bark in the Park from 10-2. Our goal is to engage dog walkers and acquaint them with our trails.

Saco School Wellness Fair – on June 7th we will have a presence at the fair to provide families with information about our trails.

Fairy House Building – our event last year was very well attended despite the 92 degree temperature. This year Saco & Biddeford Savings will be sponsoring this event. A formal entrance to the fairy village will be created from Woven Wood.

Membership Picnic – on September 16th we will host a pic-

nic for our members

Plans also include participation in Saco's Pumpkin Harvest Festival in October and the Parade of Lights in December.

President Ryan Gorman shared his 2023 goals for the organization, which are basically the same as 2022.

- Increase membership engagement
- Increase brand awareness
- Provide trail maps on-line

In 2022 we had 10 volunteer work events that generated \$9,000 worth of volunteer hours.

Our main focus for 2023 will be to engage families, build up our board/volunteer base and re-establish the Trail Steward Program.

President Gorman updated the membership on a couple of financial matters for 2023:

- Rachel Carson is planning a large project to restore the marsh land and work to eliminate misquotes in the Atlantic Way trail area. They have obtained a \$400,000 FLAP grant for the project which will become available in fiscal year 2024. We helped them in obtaining the grant and our responsibility will be future maintenance of the trail.
- We hope to again obtain \$3,000 from the City of Saco as a supported entity in 2023

Board

Patti Poole, past president and current treasurer, will be leaving our board this year after a long tenure with Saco Bay Trails.

A motion was made to vote Steve Husman onto the board.

M: Sue Slee S: Jane Hamblen. The motion carried.

Proposed 2023-2024 Board:

Ryan Gorman – President
Marty Birmingham – Vice President
Steve Husman – Treasurer
Janice Lane – Secretary
Andrew Dabczynski
Jane Hamblen
John Roirdan
Sue Slee

Motion to accept the slate of board members: M: Andrew Dabczynski John Riordan S: Sue Slee

The motion was carried.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 pm. M: Ryan Gorman S: Sue Slee

The motion was carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Lane, Secretary

Financials

Saco Bay Trails Profit and Loss: Prev. Year Comparison: January - December 2023

	JAN - DEC 2023	JAN - DEC 2022 (PP)	CHANGE	% CHANGE	JAN - DEC 2022 (PY)
Revenue					
Donations					
Annual Appeal	910.84	2,427.85	-1,517.01	-62.48 %	2,427.85
General donation	3,649.69	1,849.15	1,800.54	97.37 %	1,849.15
Memorial Donations		1,650.02	-1,650.02	-100.00 %	1,650.02
SacoBiddefordSavings Doer Prog		200.00	-200.00	-100.00 %	200.00
Total Donations	4,560.53	6,127.02	-1,566.49	-25.57 %	6,127.02
Funding from Municipalities	3,015.00	7,500.00	-4,485.00	-59.80 %	7,500.00
Fundraising					
Memberships	1,762.49	1,796.38	-33.89	-1.89 %	1,796.38
Trail Guides		100.00	-100.00	-100.00 %	100.00
Total Fundraising	1,762.49	1,896.38	-133.89	-7.06 %	1,896.38
Income Adjustment	11.00		11.00		
Interest Income	32.43	44.57	-12.14	-27.24 %	44.57
Total Revenue	\$9,381.45	\$15,567.97	\$ -6,186.52	-39.74 %	\$15,567.97
GROSS PROFIT	\$9,381.45	\$15,567.97	\$ -6,186.52	-39.74 %	\$15,567.97
Expenditures					
Administrative Expenses	554.00		554.00		
Annual Report Expenses	485.97	606.32	-120.35	-19.85 %	606.32
Bank Fees		1.01	-1.01	-100.00 %	1.01
Filing Fees	54.99	75.00	-20.01	-26.68 %	75.00
Insurance	1,625.50	1,599.75	25.75	1.61 %	1,599.75
Letterhead/envelope printing		227.41	-227.41	-100.00 %	227.41
Maine Annual Report	35.00		35.00		
Meeting expenses	380.45		380.45		
Meeting refreshments	116.83		116.83		
Membership Software	420.00	442.80	-22.80	-5.15 %	442.80
Misc. office supplies/copy chgs	23.20	74.95	-51.75	-69.05 %	74.95
Office Supplies		429.14	-429.14	-100.00 %	429.14
Post Office Box Rental	274.00	283.00	-9.00	-3.18 %	283.00
Postage		100.00	-100.00	-100.00 %	100.00
Website expenses	326.05	246.00	80.05	32.54 %	246.00
Total Administrative Expenses	4,295.99	4,085.38	210.61	5.16 %	4,085.38
Correcting entry		224.13	-224.13	-100.00 %	224.13
Fundraising Expense					
Annual Appeal					
Annual Appeal Postage	66.00	128.80	-62.80	-48.76 %	128.80
Annual Appeal Printing Expense	136.92	35.84	101.08	282.03 %	35.84
Total Annual Appeal	202.92	164.64	38.28	23.25 %	164.64
Total Fundraising Expense	202.92	164.64	38.28	23.25 %	164.64
Outreach Expenses	601.91	300.00	301.91	100.64 %	300.00
Brochure Printing	63.30		63.30		
General event expense	356.52	379.35	-22.83	-6.02 %	379.35
Outreach Expenses - Other		854.44	-854.44	-100.00 %	854.44
Outreach Postage	66.00		66.00		
Trail Map Printing		434.02	-434.02	-100.00 %	434.02
Total Outreach Expenses	1,087.73	1,967.81	-880.08	-44.72 %	1,967.81
Purchases	1,150.54		1,150.54		
Taxes	5.50		5.50		
Taxes (state/federal)		13.64	-13.64	-100.00 %	13.64
Total Taxes	5.50	13.64	-8.14	-59.68 %	13.64
Trails Expense		6.34	-6.34	-100.00 %	6.34
Trail Building & Maintenance	2,541.05	844.57	1,696.48	200.87 %	844.57
Total Trails Expense	2,541.05	850.91	1,690.14	198.63 %	850.91
Volunteers	53.33		53.33		
Gifts for leaving board members	50.00		50.00		
Miscellaneous expenses	253.98		253.98		
Total Volunteers	357.31		357.31		
Total Expenditures	\$9,641.04	\$7,306.51	\$2,334.53	31.95 %	\$7,306.51
NET OPERATING REVENUE	\$ -259.59	\$8,261.46	\$ -8,521.05	-103.14 %	\$8,261.46
NET REVENUE	\$ -259.59	\$8,261.46	\$ -8,521.05	-103.14 %	\$8,261.46

Balance Sheet

Checking	0.00
Paypal	0.00
Petty Cash	17.75
Saco Valley FCU	0.00
Saco Valley FCU- SA	0.00
SBS - CD	0.00
SBS - Middle Goosefare	4,897.94
SBS - Savings Capital Account	15,980.41
SBSJ Checking	9,268.65
Wix Payments	0.00
Total Bank Accounts	\$30,164.75
Other Current Assets	
Undeposited Funds	0.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$0.00
Total Current Assets	\$30,164.75
Fixed Assets	
Land Values	12,000.00
Storage Trailer	4,900.00
Total Fixed Assets	\$16,900.00
Other Assets	
Equipment and Supplies	1,782.00
Total Other Assets	\$1,782.00
TOTAL ASSETS	\$48,846.75
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
Accounts Payable (A/P)	0.00
Total Accounts Payable	\$0.00
Total Current Liabilities	\$0.00
Total Liabilities	\$0.00
Equity	
Opening Bal Equity	56,447.74
Retained Earnings	-1,890.90
write off/depreciation of asset	-5,450.50
Net Revenue	-259.59
Total Equity	\$48,846.75
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$48,846.75

Annual Appeal Donors

Ronald Albert
Susan Penna Bernier
Walter & Kathleen Bissell
Nancy and Charles Borg
Colleen Bossie
Christina Buckley
Joan Buotte
D.M. Capezzuto
Joy Elsner
Caryl Everrett
Josh Fecteau & Jenny Brown
James Gaffney
Charles Garland
Gerard Gaudette
Jane and Bob Hamblen
Marcia Hanson
William Hildebrand
Andrew Holbrook
Jean Horton
Barry Hudson
Caryn and Steve Husman
Susan and Stephen Littlefield
Joyce Mailman
Karen Malmgren
Carolyn Meadows
Gail and Ernie Merritt
Maurice and Claudette Nadeau
Dan Ross
George Roth
Beverly Thorpe
Diane and Michael Zaitlin

Seven Reasons to Attend Our Spring Bird Walks

1 As the green season unfolds and the first flowers of spring open, you can also witness the populations of birds around us shift and change. Some species head north to Canada after spending the white season in Maine, and almost daily, others arrive from the south. That's why one spring bird walk isn't enough. We'll meet on five Thursdays: April 25 and May 2, 9, 16 & 23 to witness the changes among our local winged ones. While you're welcome to attend any number of the bird walks, attending more than one will afford you with opportunities to practice your identification skills and add new species as the season progresses.

2 You can enjoy the springtime beauty of Laurel Hill Cemetery. This site's paved paths, native and planted trees, and view of the Saco River make for an ideal birding destination. We often stop to point out a favorite tree or answer a nature question prompted by the lovely landscape. We also usually walk to the river overlook, where the tidal waters attract birds we might not otherwise notice.

3 You can wake up with the birds! These walks will start at 7:00 a.m., in the parking lot behind the chapel at Laurel Hill Cemetery. Many folks have asked why we begin so early. Well, we start early because the birds start early! Many birds tend to be busiest and most vocal early in the day, which helps bird observers see and hear more birds. As a reminder, be sure to bring binoculars, if you have them, and wear appropriate outerwear because it can be chilly at the start!

4 You can share your time with other people who love birds or are bird-curious. We often start our walks by sharing our names and a recent bird sighting, and folks often chat for a minute or two between bird observations, so this is a nice chance to meet people. Beginner and experienced birders alike are welcome to attend. As always, this event is free and open to the public.

5 You can learn from local birder and naturalist Josh Fecteau who will once again guide these walks. Josh is passionate about birds and hopes you'll catch the birding bug, too! Josh is also available after each walk for an informal Q & A session for any bird or nature questions we haven't answered during the walk.



6 You can observe and identify more birds. With several people paying attention to our feathered friends, you're likely to meet up with more birds than you would on your own. You may also be able to put a name to a face or a voice you've noticed but not yet identified, or to learn about the common behaviors or nesting preferences of your favorite and familiar birds.

7 You can expect to see (and hear!) Chipping Sparrows, Eastern Bluebirds, Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and Eastern Phoebes, to name a few, and with luck, also have opportunities to glimpse a variety of other songbirds, like vireos, tanagers, orioles, and warblers!

By Josh Fecteau

TRAILS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

cleanup, raking, and clipping along the trail and strategically creating water bars to control drainage and prevent erosion.

The Branch Brook Trail also received some attention, with its bog bridging reset a few times due to tidal flooding. Given the recent heavy rains and coastal flooding this winter, we'll assess the trails and bridges in the spring to identify any potential damage and necessary repairs.

Ferry Landing Trail

Ferry Landing Trail's beloved boardwalks are in dire need of repair. While recent donations from Hancock Lumber and Charlie Garland provided 50 new boards, replacing these revealed a much larger problem: the majority of the decking (hundreds

of 5-foot-long boards) require replacement. The current piecemeal approach of replacing 30-50 boards annually is simply not sustainable.

Further complicating matters is the hidden trailhead sign, currently inaccessible for wheelchair users due to overgrown brush, and a poorly designed exit ramp on one boardwalk. These issues highlight the need for a comprehensive solution that addresses both safety and accessibility.

To ensure the continued enjoyment of this treasured trail, a major boardwalk repair project is essential, along with relocating and clearly marking the trailhead sign, and redesigning the problematic exit ramp.

With your support, we can preserve Ferry Landing Trail for generations to come, ensuring its beauty and accessibility remain a source of joy for all.