



Oxbow along the Taunton River, Raynham

## A Matter of Faith

**Wildlands' partnership with the Crystal Spring Center is the latest in a series of collaborations with religious communities**

In the course of our work, we engage with a variety of nonprofit entities, including scouting organizations and religious orders. It is the latter group with which we have connected most frequently and successfully. Our religious lands collaborators span a wide spectrum of faiths, and have included the Society of St. Margaret in Duxbury, the Advaita Meditation Center in Plymouth, the NMR Buddhist Temple in Raynham, and the Crystal Spring Center for Ecology, Spirituality, and Earth Education in Plainville, a Catholic-affiliated order of Dominican Sisters.

The Dominican Sisters' presence in Massachusetts dates back more than a century, and in 1949, when the Toner family donated 80 acres that included apple orchards and several buildings, as well as a residence, the Dominican Sisters of Peace ministry in Plainville was established. In its first four decades, Crystal Spring, then known as the St. Patrick's Religious Educational and Charitable Association of Massachusetts, operated an elementary school, a novitiate for the Sisters, and a women's justice center.

Moving into the 1990s, the Sisters' focus evolved to more fully encompass ecological concerns and the profound interconnections between those concerns and their religious faith. Their program offerings correspondingly



From left: Sister Chris Loughlin, Karen Grey, Scott MacFaden, Sister Barbara Harrington

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## United in Our Courage

Tucked away in the Mad River Valley of Vermont, the 140-acre Knoll Farm is home to 100-plus Icelandic sheep, a prosperous berry growing business, and a renowned retreat center. This summer, I was invited to join a retreat at the farm, which brought together 12 non-profit environmental executives to explore how organizational leaders can support each other to reduce burnout and turnover.



Non-profit Environmental Executives at Knoll Farm, Vermont

We were an interesting mix: scientists, fisheries managers, watershed advocates, environmental educators, and land trust practitioners – loosely connected by our jobs to protect natural resources but markedly separated by the respective issues and stressors of our specialized work. Our inimitable retreat leader, Peter Forbes, challenged us to see the commonalities amongst us, despite our vastly different professional worlds that rarely intersect. How could a right whale scientist ever understand the issues of a land trust? Peter continued to prod us until, at some point, a member of our group yelled out, “Courage! Courage is our commonality! We are united in our courage to push on for a greater purpose even when things look bad, and even when we know we might be losing.”

“Yes, and perhaps acknowledging and celebrating that courage is how we support one another,” Peter counseled.

Having the courage to press on for our planet’s sake goes well beyond organizational leaders. It is ubiquitous in our staff, boards, partners, and donors who join us in the belief that the world deserves better. We are looking to the next generation to solve huge problems, and through our courage we are sending them an important message: never give up. Perhaps this will bolster them to see it through.

Thank you for being part of Wildlands Trust.

Karen Grey  
President

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## Newly Protected Land

### Advaita 2 Acquisition

30.7 acres | Plymouth (purchase)

- Landscape Connectivity – directly abuts and expands our Halfway Pond Conservation Area, now over 460 acres in extent and one of the crown jewels of our protected lands portfolio
- Wildlife Habitat – includes pockets of Pine Barrens, a globally rare natural community
- Conservation Value – largest remaining unprotected parcel on Halfway Pond’s west shore

### Sylvester Field Norwell Parcel

5 acres | Norwell (land donation)

- Landscape Connectivity – represents the culmination of the Sylvester Field Preservation Project, through which we previously protected 20 contiguous acres along the Third Herring Brook in nearby Hanover
- Wildlife Habitat – provides important habitat for marsh wrens along the North River

### Schroeder Donation and Deed Res.

11.7 acres | Lakeville (donation; deed restriction)

- Watershed Protection – protects over 900 feet of linear frontage along the Nemasket River, a major tributary of the federally designated Wild and Scenic Taunton River



Sylvester Field Norwell Parcel, Norwell



Halfway Pond Conservation Area, Plymouth

## Wildlands Trust Expands a Critical Conservation Area in Plymouth

Wildlands Trust has added a longtime conservation priority to its 550-acre Halfway Pond Conservation Area. The Advaita Meditation Center had purchased the land and its accompanying 11,000-square-foot building as a retreat center in the 1980s, but in 2015 its aging membership was rethinking the future. In July 2022, Wildlands Trust purchased the 30-acre property, the largest privately owned parcel remaining on the west bank of the pond. The Meditation Center will retain rights to use the retreat center several times a year. Halfway Pond Conservation Area is a significant holding within the Atlantic Coastal Woodland (ACW), a 20,000-acre forested corridor in Southeastern Massachusetts. Wildlands Trust has focused much of its work over the last 50 years on protecting this landscape, recognized as the largest contiguous forest in one of the fastest-growing regions in the Northeast. In addition to iconic features like cranberry bog complexes and scrub oak, ACW has the second-largest remaining tract of Coastal Pine Barrens worldwide. It also includes globally rare plant species which help glacial deposits filter and protect the largest drinking water aquifer in Massachusetts. Plans are underway to expand trail systems and establish a stewardship training center on the property.

Brockton Audubon Preserve, Brockton

## Upcoming Events

### POST-FEAST WADDLE

Friday, Nov 25 | 10:00 am  
Davis-Douglas Farm, Plymouth

It's our seventh annual Post-Feast Waddle! Opt outside this Black Friday and walk off your Thanksgiving feast with the whole family in America's Hometown

## Upcoming Programs

### HIKE WITH MALCOLM

Saturday, Nov 12 | 10:00 am  
Foothills Preserve, Plymouth

### MINDFUL BEACH WALK

Wednesday, Nov 16 | 9:30 am  
Shifting Lots Preserve, Plymouth

### HIKE & HOPS

Sunday, Nov 20 | 1:00 pm  
Minot Forest, Wareham

### HIKE WITH MALCOLM

Sunday, Dec 11 | 10:00 am  
Eel River Preserve, Plymouth

### WINTER SOLSTICE MEDITATION

Wednesday, Dec 21 | 9:30 am  
Davis-Douglas Farm, Plymouth

### LAST DAY HIKE

Saturday, Dec 31 | 10:00 am  
Halfway Pond Con. Area, Plymouth

To learn more and register for events, visit our website: [wildlandstrust.org/events](http://wildlandstrust.org/events).

## Working Together for D.W. Field Park

We are well on our way to creating a new master plan for Brockton's well-loved D.W. Field Park, thanks to the dedication of various local organizations. The widespread participation of the community is at the forefront of this process, and by building partnerships with organizations who will work together and with the community to achieve common goals, we will produce a plan that reflects the community's needs.

In March of this year, Wildlands was awarded a grant to work with the City of Brockton Department of Parks and Recreation to plan for the revitalization of the city's D.W. Field Park. The planning work focuses on improving the ecological functioning, infrastructure, and recreational and educational opportunities at this 700-acre park. Wildlands has worked with the city over the past ten years on restoration projects like the Brockton Audubon Preserve (a Wildlands property) and Stone Farm Conservation Area (a city property) but creating a new master plan for a city park is a decidedly different undertaking. We have spent the past eight months building partnerships throughout the city to participate in this planning process.

First and foremost, the City of Brockton Department of Parks and Recreation, which owns and maintains D.W. Field Park, is our primary partner throughout this planning phase and in future implementation phases. Superintendent of Parks Tim Carpenter supports this initiative and has contributed staff time and funding to support our collaborative efforts. Mr. Carpenter will be instrumental in garnering support from the city and ensuring that our planning focuses on implementable projects.

The engineering firm Environmental Partners is leading the charge on Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Management planning, working this coming spring with students from The Conway School, a graduate school for sustainable landscape planning and design based in Northampton, MA. The Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC) has developed a survey to gather information from the community about the park's current and potential uses, which is being deployed through the fall and winter. OCPC has also gathered transportation data for vehicles and bicycles in the park, which will be used in infrastructure and recreation planning.

Interns at Manomet, our partners in environmental education, spent the summer surveying both habitat and breeding birds through the park, and co-hosted the youth Green Team with Wildlands, where Brockton teens spent six days completing park improvement projects. The D.W. Field Park Association supported Green Team and continues to provide free programming for the community like Tower Fest, held on Saturday, October 8, 2022.



Wildlands Trust Director of Special Projects, Rachel Calderara, walks the park with Beth Lambert (Massachusetts Department of Ecological Restoration), Scott Turner (Environmental Partners), and CJ Lammers (The Conway School)

Shifting Lots Preserve, Plymouth

## Working Together for D.W. Field Park (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

Additionally, students in the Ecology class at Massasoit Community College are piloting a water quality study at the park, and the Brockton Area Transit Authority (BAT) added a bus stop at the main entrance and is working on building a bus shelter as well.

By this time next year, the master plan for the park from Oak Street to South Street, the most used and centrally located section of the park, will be complete. Wildlands will work with the city to secure funding to begin implementing improvement projects as soon as 2024, as well as creating plans for the park's northern and southern sections.

To stay up to date with this initiative, visit [wildlandstrust.org/dwfieldpark](https://wildlandstrust.org/dwfieldpark) and sign up for email updates.

## Support Wildlands When You Shop!

The next time you order from Amazon, please consider supporting Wildlands Trust while you shop through the AmazonSmile program! The holiday season is fast approaching, and as shoppers turn to online stores, there is a way to make purchases meaningful. With just a few keystrokes, 0.5% of the cost of your eligible Amazon purchases can be donated to Wildlands Trust.

Using the website [smile.amazon.com/ch/04-2973205](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/04-2973205), you can shop for all your favorite items and keep using your Amazon account with the added bonus of donating to our organization. Your selected charity will be stored whenever you shop at smile.amazon.com or when you activate AmazonSmile in the Amazon app, and every eligible purchase you make through AmazonSmile will result in a donation for your selected charity. AmazonSmile will occasionally contact you about donation amounts disbursed to your chosen charity or about the program.

Wildlands Trust appreciates every dollar we receive because it goes directly towards our work to permanently protect and steward important habitats and landscapes in Southeastern Massachusetts. Thank you for choosing to participate as an AmazonSmile shopper!

For assistance, contact:  
Sue Chamberlain  
774-343-5121 x114  
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## A Matter of Faith

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evolved to embrace two primary dimensions: ecological retreats and workshops for adults, and earth-focused programs for children. To better reflect their expanded mission, in 1998, the Sisters changed the name of their organization to Crystal Spring Center for Ecology, Spirituality, and Earth Education.

Wildlands' initial engagement with Crystal Spring came in the mid-2000s, when we had the pleasure of meeting with Sister Chris Loughlin. Sister Chris, who unfortunately passed away a few months ago at the age of 84, became involved with nascent efforts to promote dialogue between the land conservation community and the religious community, both to find common ground and to promote the preservation of ecologically significant, religious-owned land. Ever conscious of the value of setting a good example, Chris ensured the permanent preservation of Crystal Spring by completing the 2008 grant of a Conservation Restriction (CR) on 33.5 acres to Wildlands Trust, protecting most of Crystal Spring's campus.

For some years, Sister Chris recognized the historical moment as calling Crystal Spring to re-invent itself while continuing its mission to fold the human imagination into a living relationship with the

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soul of the place. In faith that Crystal Spring should always be “bio-regionally appropriate,” Sister Chris initiated efforts for Crystal Spring’s transition to ensure an orderly dissolution. As part of that process, she successfully advocated for adding an additional 2.4 acres to the Crystal Spring CR, which now encompasses 35.92 acres. We completed that addition in February of this year, and then assigned the CR to another qualified conservation organization—the Attleboro Land Trust. This assignment was necessary because later this year Crystal Spring will convey the outright ownership, or “fee simple” interest in the property, to Wildlands, and it isn’t permissible for an entity to hold a CR on land it already owns.

Believe it or not, dissolving a nonprofit organization is not accomplished easily or quickly. All of Massachusetts’ 23,000 registered nonprofits are subject to the strict oversight of the state Attorney General’s office. Beyond this necessary but time-consuming oversight, the intrusion of the Covid pandemic has served to further delay the dissolution process, as did advancing a new plan of land through the Land Court.

While the memory of these procedural details will quickly fade, we will always fondly recall our interactions with the Crystal Spring community. All of us at Wildlands treasured the opportunity to make periodic site visits out to Crystal Spring. The Sisters and the entire Crystal Spring community always welcomed us with grace, hospitality, and home-baked bread fresh from the oven.

Sister Chris exuded a serenity that was both calming and reassuring. In her presence, one felt the stresses of the day dissipate. That outward calm belied a resolute commitment to land preservation that manifested locally, regionally, and even nationally. Close to home, Sister Chris was the leading advocate for and the primary architect of the effort to devise the

best possible conservation outcome for the Crystal Spring campus she so loved. Moving beyond Plainville, Sister Chris co-founded and led the Religious Lands Conservancy (RLC), an ad hoc group operating in partnership with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition. The RLC’s primary purpose is to identify lands of conservation interest owned by religious orders, and to help facilitate dialogues between those orders and the conservation community, with the goal of achieving preservation outcomes for those lands of conservation interest. The RLC’s efforts have helped precipitate multiple preservation outcomes across Massachusetts, and nationally as well. The RLC has assisted religious communities in New York, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, and Louisiana. The RLC’s work stands as yet another dimension of Sister Chris’s conservation legacy.

As Sister Chris’s longtime colleague, friend, and Crystal Spring board member, Kathy McGrath recalls, “The Crystal Spring Center was one of those very special places. A place where all were welcomed, where the Sisters—Chris, Barb, and Carole—demonstrated their reverence for Earth and respect for all beings, where music and the arts flourished alongside their community garden. Chris was the heart of this place. She often said the Sisters held this land in sacred trust for the whole Earth community. It was her most fervent wish that, in the spirit of the original gift of the Toner family, the land be freely given and preserved as a sanctuary for all beings. The Crystal Spring Board of Directors and the Dominican Sisters of Peace have faith that Wildlands will create a preserve that reflects the vision of the Dominican Sisters who enlivened Crystal Spring with their spirits.”

The Crystal Spring property that Sister Chris so loved is but a quarter mile from the strip malls and general cacophony of Route 1, yet it offers a tranquility reminiscent of Sister Chris herself.

It contains mostly wooded upland with a variety of mature tree species, including White Pine and Red Oak, and includes numerous specimens of American Chestnut, once a denizen of our northeastern forests but reduced to stunted understory stragglers by the arrival of the chestnut blight in the early 20th century. Despite their struggles, it is nonetheless fascinating to come across these vestigial remnants of this species. The property also includes a trail network that extends into an adjacent 65 acres owned by the Town of Plainville, which in turn abuts state conservation land. These trail connections will enable a variety of hiking options for area residents and a green corridor for wildlife.

Barring any dreaded “unforeseen complications,” we expect to finalize the transfer of the property to Wildlands by year’s end. We will manage the property as a “Community Preserve,” our very first in Plainville.

All of us at Wildlands extend our deepest gratitude to everyone involved with Crystal Spring past and present—for their optimism, dignity, unceasing commitment to leaving their corner of the world better than they found it, and for entrusting their beloved land to our stewardship. Sister Chris and her colleagues established a very high standard in all respects, and we will endeavor to maintain that standard. Sister Chris would expect no less!

## Thank You for Your Contribution

Wildlands Trust relies on private philanthropy to fund our work to save land throughout the region. We would like to thank those who have recently given in honor or memory of a loved one. Your gifts help us permanently protect the natural beauty of Southeastern Massachusetts.

### In Memory Of:

#### GRIZZY ADAMS

- Leslie E. Plimpton | *Plymouth, MA*

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- Brockton Adult Learning Center | *Brockton, MA*

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- Anne & Joseph Balboni | *Plymouth, MA*





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## Property Highlight

# Striar Conservancy | Halifax

### GIFT OF:

Steven and Brian Striar and Soozen Striar Tribuna | 153 acres, 1999; 5.01 acres, 2000  
Ernest Stevens and Jeanne Wilson Baum | 3.6 acres, 2018

### PURCHASE:

Funded by Sheehan Family Foundation and L. Knife & Son, Inc. | 6.5 acres, 2001

The Striar Conservancy along the lower Winnetuxet River includes rich wildlife habitats, meandering trails, and a feeling of having left the 21st century behind. The Winnetuxet River is in the Taunton River basin, the second largest river basin in the state. The river and the preserve's large area of undeveloped land provide ideal habitat for as many as 90 species of birds, making this a paradise for birders. Enjoy views of the Winnetuxet and its flood plain as you watch for wood duck, woodcock, and ruffed grouse. The upland sandpiper and barn owl, state-protected species, occur close to the preserve. Walk the trails through the mature woodlands and across spring-fed streams. A trail-side display interprets many of the property's natural features.



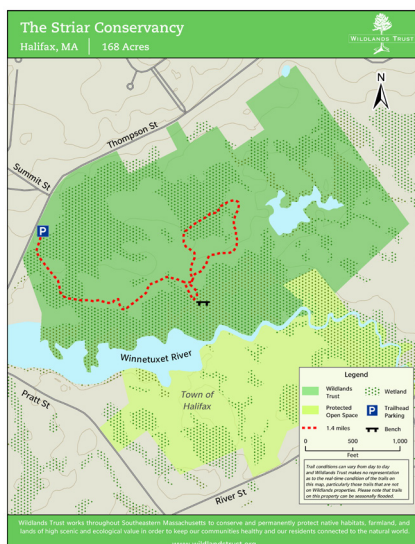
Striar Conservancy, Halifax

The diversity of the area's river habitats, including marshes and seepage swamps, is exceptional. This preserve supports state-listed rare species, including the bridge shiner, Coopers hawk, and Mystic Valley amphipod. Deer, fox, and the locally uncommon river otter all thrive in the area, and the marshes and meanders of this segment of the river support one of the best warm water fisheries in Southeastern Massachusetts. The beautiful, old, constructed pond near the trail's end provides a worthy goal for a long ramble.

**HUNTING ADVISORY:** Hunting is allowed on Striar Conservancy land. Safety is the highest concern for all visitors and pets during hunting season. On preserves where hunting is permitted, visitors should wear bright orange or red clothing. Hike on marked trails only. Stay informed on hunting season and visit Mass Wildlife website: [www.mass.gov/topics/hunting](http://www.mass.gov/topics/hunting)

**DIRECTIONS:** From Route 3: Take Exit 18 (old Exit 9) merge onto MA-3A N/Main St. Take a slight left onto MA-106 W. Continue on MA-106 W for roughly 8 miles, then turn left onto MA-105 S. Continue on MA-105 S for 2 miles. Parking lot is on the left. From Route 44: Take MA-105 N/Plympton St. Drive for roughly 0.5 mile and turn left onto MA-105 N. Continue on for roughly 4.3 miles. Parking lot is on the right, off Route 105.

Download trail maps at [wildlandstrust.org/trails](http://wildlandstrust.org/trails)



Wildlands Trust works throughout Southeastern Massachusetts to conserve and permanently protect native habitats, farmland, and wild of high scenic and ecological value in order to keep our communities healthy and our residents connected to the natural world.  
[www.wildlandstrust.org](http://www.wildlandstrust.org)