



# SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST

*Newsletter*

*Spring 2016*

## **Birds, Bees, and the Big Dipper** **Exploring South Hero's Landscape as a Community**



### **Walks Showcase South Hero's Unique Natural Resources and Trails**

It is said that some people see the world through rose colored glasses. We prefer binoculars and microscopes. From the delicate petals of wildflowers to constellations across the summer sky, we are excited to explore our landscape through an array of lenses this year. Each month we are inviting the community to join us on a naturalist-led walk, and explore South Hero's diverse and beautiful landscape. We're planning walks at the Landon Community Trail, Crescent Bay Farm, Round Pond Natural Area, and other spots around town. We hope you will join us to learn more about our unique natural environment, as we focus our lenses on the outside world.

### **Celebrating the New Year at Round Pond Natural Area**

Gray skies and the threat of rain didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the friends and neighbors who joined us in January for a morning of camaraderie and exploration. For our first walk of the year, we headed to the open meadows, cedar forests, and shale beaches of the Round Pond Natural Area (conserved in 2001). The group shared knowledge of forest ecology, wetland wildlife, wild edible plants, and more. A cup of hot mulled cider, generously provided by Hackett's Orchard, was a welcome antidote to the brisk winter wind. Our February walk at Allen Point was an opportunity to explore the lake in winter, from ice formation to fish behavior. We enjoyed learning a bit about the history of the Island Line, and watching great flocks of ducks floating on the open water west of the railbed.

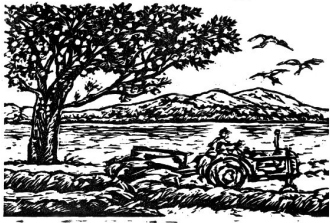


*Round Pond's open finger fields provide important habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife.*

### **Celebrate the First Day of Spring with SHLT**

We invite you to join us to welcome spring on March 20<sup>th</sup> with a wildlife tracking excursion at the Landon Community Trail with naturalist Sophie Mazowita. See our Spring Calendar of Events on page 7 for details.

# SOUTH HERO



# LAND TRUST

a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the farmland, woodland, natural and recreational areas, and open spaces which give South Hero its distinctive quality of life.

PO Box 455  
South Hero, VT 05486  
tel: (802) 372-3786  
www.shlt.org

email: info@shlt.org  
emily@shlt.org  
katy@shlt.org

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# We're Better Together

## A Letter from the Executive Director

*Dear Friends and Neighbors,*

*With bare ground and cold winds outside, we are making the most of the long winter with project development, and planning for the busy summer season. As part of my winter work, I've been participating in regional conversations about land conservation, farm viability, and the working landscape. Land trust and state staff, regional planners, foundations, and others are working together to tackle issues that face our state, like facilitating successful transitions for the many acres of farmland owned by farmers nearing retirement. Keeping that land in agriculture will require careful planning, education and finance tools for new farmers, market growth for diversified crops and value-added products, and other creative team solutions.*

*One of the things that has become apparent in this work is that no single organization or group has all the answers, and that solutions can evolve from surprising roots. We are learning that by bringing together organizations from different sectors, we can take on more complex problems and generate real change. This resonates with my own abiding belief that we are more creative, thoughtful, energized, and impactful in partnership than we are individually. We are better together.*

*Collaboration and partnership have been central to South Hero Land Trust from the beginning, when we made the deliberate choice not to hold conservation easements. We realized that the most powerful tools we could bring to conservation projects were local knowledge and community engagement. Our partner land trusts had legal expertise, stewardship experience, and access to state and federal funding. Working together, we became powerful teams, and accelerated our ability to conserve important agricultural and natural resources in South Hero, and to engage the local community in that process.*

*At South Hero Land Trust, we work hard to bring together stakeholders to meet the needs of our land and people, today and into the future. This is an exciting and valuable role, bringing together ideas and energy from many great partners, and facilitating real action. I am eager to continue this journey with you this year. Collaboration was the impetus for the formation of the Champlain Islands Agriculture Network, and is what makes the Champlain Islands Farmers' Market a success. We're now reaching out to new partners to collaborate on our Outreach Programs as well.*

*As you'll read further in this newsletter, we've just launched a series of Naturalist Walks. We hope these walks will bring together community members and friends for a deep exploration of our landscape. We invite you to share your passions through these walks, whether identifying wildflowers, finding constellations, tracking animals, or sharing legends about the changing seasons. These walks are one more way for us to celebrate our connection to the land here in South Hero, through collective knowledge and passion. We hope that these walks will lead us to a culture of land stewardship and environmental awareness in our community, which in turn will help us tackle new challenges in the future, together.*

*See you on the trails!*

*With gratitude,*



# Planting Roots in South Hero

## A Conversation with East Shore Vineyard's Ben Durant

### East Shore Vineyard Brings New Life to the Landon Farm

In the mid-1800s, early settlers of South Hero's Landon Farm oversaw construction of the Sand Bar Bridge, which would connect the town of Milton to the picturesque farmland of the Champlain Islands (Stratton 1980). Two centuries later, the Landon Farm's latest stewards hope that visitors from near and far will cross this same causeway on their way to the farm in its newest incarnation, East Shore Vineyard. Breathtaking views of Mount Mansfield and an array of bright and balanced local wines wait at the end of the journey.

We caught up with East Shore Vineyard's owner, Ben Durant, to learn more about the farmer and family behind South Hero's newest winery. East Shore Vineyard moved to the 170 acre Landon Farm in the fall of 2014. Ben and his crew have been hard at work ever since- planting and harvesting grapes, making wine, and settling into their new South Hero home.

### Diverse Work and Life Lessons

Ben wears many hats on the farm. "We do everything ourselves," he says, recounting the array of responsibilities that fall on his plate. On any given day, you might find Ben in the office

cultivating business partnerships and customer relations, tasting and critiquing his product in the winery, or clad in a tool-belt, putting finishing touches on their newly renovated on-site tasting room. His duties as boss and farmer often coincide with his responsibilities as a dad, and one or more of his three young children may be found playing apprentice as he moves through the day. We asked him if there was anything he would like his children to learn from being on the farm. "I want them to have an entrepreneurial spirit," he explains, musing over childhood days running a lemonade stand. "I love the idea of working hard to earn money, doing something for yourself, carving your own path."

### New Career Renews Personal Connection with the Land

Despite his early days in the lemonade business, wine-making has not been life-long dream. Ben has been both a banker and a teacher. In 1999, his career changed directions when he married his wife Amy. Amy's parents, Bob & Linda Livingstone, founded East Shore Vineyard in 2000, and Ben began assisting with the burgeoning business. Ben took over the winery in 2012, and has overseen its evolution since. Farming "is a much more natural thing," he explains. "It follows the rhythm of life, the seasons."



*The Landon Community Trail provides visitors with views of the farm's working open fields.*



*Ben uses a special lift to transfer grapes into a crusher, and remove stems and seeds.*

Ben's love of the natural world is evident in his hobbies- boating on Lake Champlain's shimmering waters and skiing in the Green Mountains with his family- as well as in his work at the Landon Farm. A history enthusiast, Ben took time to research the farm's past- a labor of love that revealed what he describes as the Landon Farm's profound historical significance for the Islands community and its agrarian past. "It feels very powerful to be a guardian of the property," he explains, and "to inherit the values and bring it through to the next century." He describes a feeling that he has not only inherited the physical land, but also a deep-

## *Member Spotlight:* Strong Farms & Local Food with Christine Mack



After leaving South Hero as a young adult, head chef and owner of Cook Sisters Catering (and SHLT Director), Christine Mack, returned to her native home to raise a family. She loved the idea of nurturing her kids in the community where she grew up, a town she describes as “one of the most beautiful places in the world.” Christine feels a close connection to the many people of South Hero’s rural community that surrounded her during her own childhood. A first job in an orchard instilled in her the importance of local agriculture, and a love of fresh-picked apples! Christine values the work that South Hero Land Trust does to protect local farms and keep them in production. “Many of my friends are farmers,” she tells us. “I want to see them thrive.” She hopes that SHLT’s work in conservation and community stewardship will preserve the qualities that make her childhood home a healthy and nurturing community for people of all ages and walks of life.

*“Many of  
my friends  
are farmers.  
I want to see  
them thrive.”*

*Tell us why the work of South Hero Land Trust matters to you!  
Email [katy@shlt.org](mailto:katy@shlt.org) to be featured in our Member Spotlight.*

rooted legacy of hard work and reverence for the gifts of nature.

In keeping with the Landon Farm’s rich agricultural heritage, Ben and his team feel a responsibility to keep the land in production and employ stewardship practices that protect its hayfields, hardwood forests, and lake views. A strong business and viable farm are essential to keeping the land productive. Less than two years after moving the business to South Hero, East Shore Vineyard is producing several varieties of wine produced entirely from estate-grown grapes. Ben is eager to use his team’s talent and expertise to continue creating products from ingredients grown on the farm as he diversifies his operation in the coming years.

### **Tasting Room & Space for Community Gatherings**

The East Shore Vineyard tasting room, which opened in February, features a copper bar, rustic exposed beams, and welcoming couches. Visitors can sample wine, such as Sweet Adelaide (named after Ben’s oldest daughter), in the cozy tasting room or outside on the deck overlooking the vines.

Ben spoke of the extraordinary support that East Shore Vineyard has found in the South Hero community, which has allowed him to realize his dream of creating a public space where people can gather and enjoy the company of friends and neighbors. “I want the community to see this as their land- a place to have a beverage or a picnic. This place is really integral to our future,” he says, with palpable enthusiasm. Though the Landon Farm is and will remain private property, Ben is collaborating with the South Hero Recreation Commission to plan an expanded trail system on the farm.

We can’t help but be excited for the South Hero community as East Shore Vineyard plants deep roots here. With three tasting rooms now open in the Islands (East Shore Vineyard, Snow Farm Winery, and Hall Home Place), along with farmers’ markets, farm stands, food trucks, and more- it’s a great time call the Islands home. East Shore Vineyard’s Tasting Room’s winter hours are: Friday, 12:00-7:00 pm, Saturday, 12:00-6:00 pm, and Sunday 12:00- 5:00 pm.

#### *References:*

Stratton, A.L. (1980) *History of the South Hero Island Being the Towns of South Hero and Grand Isle, Vermont (Vol I)*. Burlington, VT: Queen City Printers.

*This article is part of our Conservation & Stewardship Series, in which we take a closer look at the people and families who are stewarding our working and natural landscape in South Hero.*

# Small is Beautiful at Capsand Creamery

## News from the Champlain Islands Agriculture Network

### Eco-Friendly Management Practices keep Capsand Creamery Goat Herd Healthy

Capsand Creamery is small in size but big in innovation. Former research scientist and Capsand Creamery owner Christine MacMillan raises Nigerian Dwarf Goats and creates fudge, caramels, and an array of silky soaps and lotions from their milk. Champlain Islands Agriculture Network members were fortunate to tour Capsand Creamery during their Fall Farm & Food Gathering this past November. Christine showed network members the pens, milking stations, and her moveable pasture grazing system, designed to promote the health the herd and protect soil quality. They learned about the breeding process, as well as the environmentally-conscious home veterinary regimen Christine uses to keep her heard healthy and happy. The goats, free to roam between the indoor paddocks and their outdoor pen, were friendly and curious, flocking toward visitors as they approached the fence.



*Christine explains the goat breeding process during the tour.*

### Small Footprint Yields Big Rewards

From her diverse vegetable garden to experimenting with different varieties of goat's milk cheese for her family, Christine brings energy and creativity to all aspects of her operation. She even forages for acorns, which she turns into flour that she uses in pancakes, fritters, and more. Her homesteading techniques embrace a way of living that produces a smaller footprint on the natural world.



After the tour, Champlain Islands Agricultural Network members enjoyed tasting Christine's goat's milk fudge and caramels- the perfect end to a great afternoon with an inspiring South Hero farmer. Capsand Creamery is yet another example of how small and simple can have great- and delicious- rewards.

*Capsand Creamery's herd of Nigerian Dwarf goats range in color from black to tan to white, with names such as Stormcrow and Andromeda.*



## The Champlain Islands Farmers' Market Summer Season Opens in May!

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The Market opens May 25<sup>th</sup> and runs weekly to October 8<sup>th</sup>

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Wednesdays at the St. Rose of Lima Church,  
on Route 2 in South Hero, 3:00-6:00 PM

Saturdays at St. Joseph's Church,  
on Route 2 in Grand Isle, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM



# Cold as Ice

## *Exploring Winter on Lake Champlain*

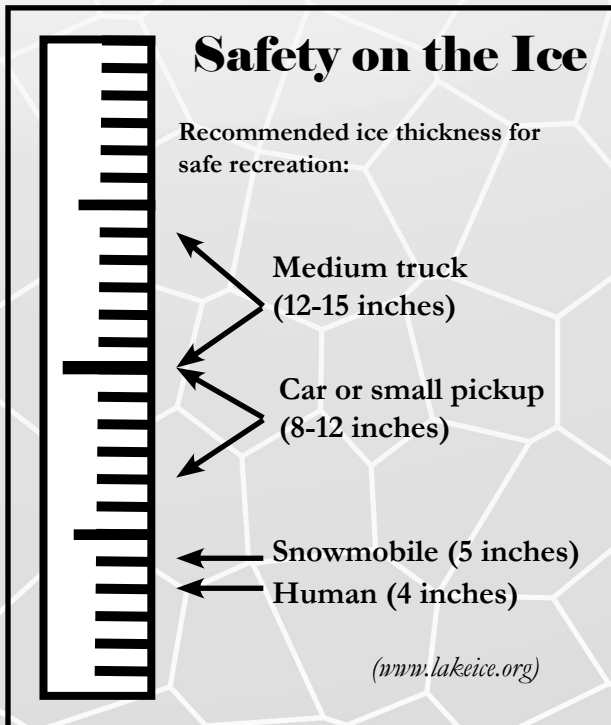
Living in the Islands, Lake Champlain is an ever-present force in our lives. In winter, the sparkling waters turn to a frozen expanse as ice spreads across the surface. On the shore, rough masses of ice crack against each other, piling up in jagged formations, while fishermen are tiny specks against a white background in the distance. Though the freeze was slow to come this year, we took a closer look at the cold and mysterious world of the lake in winter.



*Lake ice glimmers in the sun at South Hero's White's Beach.*

### *Did you know...?*

- From the mid-1800s until the 1930s, ice harvesting provided jobs to residents of the Islands. Workers cut large blocks of ice from the frozen lake and hauled them by horse and wagon to local icehouses. In the summer, ice cutters were employed full time, cleaning sawdust from the ice and loading it onto freight cars carrying produce and dairy on the Rutland Railroad Island Line. (*Lake Champlain Islands by Tara Liloia*)
- Ice can form on the bottom of the lake! This occurs when water drops below its freezing point but remains liquid, a phenomenon known as supercooling. When extreme cold temperatures occur simultaneously with heavy turbulence from wind, supercooled water may be mixed to the bottom of the lake, where it begins to crystallize and attaches to objects on the lakes bottom, forming what scientists refer to as “anchor ice”. (*Lake Champlain Committee*)
- Although cold water holds more oxygen than warm water, ice can prevent oxygen from entering the lake. To compensate for the lack of oxygen, many of Lake Champlain’s fish species slow their movement down almost to a halt during winter. Species such as small mouth bass and carp enter diapause, or a dormant state where their metabolic rate is drastically reduced. (*Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*)
- Freeze records have been kept to document ice cover on Lake Champlain since the 19<sup>th</sup> century! In recent decades, complete freeze-overs have happened less frequently. When the lake does freeze over, it happens an average of two weeks later than it did in the 1800s. (*The Nature Conservancy*)
- Pancake ice, grease ice, corn ice, and ice octopus are all terms used to describe the variety of ice formations that can occur under different temperatures and atmospheric conditions. (*Lake Champlain Committee*)



*Whether its frozen Lake Champlain or the frost on your window, we want to see your best photos of the Islands in winter. Visit us on Facebook to submit your photo and learn more about our programs and events.*

# Winter & Spring Calendar of Events



## **March 20<sup>th</sup> Naturalist Walk: Animal Tracking at Landon Community Trail**

Celebrate the first day of spring with a tracking expedition. Expert naturalist Sophie Mazowita will lead a walk at the Landon Community Trail, as we look for tracks and other signs of animal activity. Sophie is a Naturalist Educator and Consulting Ecologist for the South Burlington Recreation & Parks Dept. We are excited to have her share her deep knowledge of Vermont wildlife and their habits.

*10:00-11:30 am. Meet at the Landon Community Trail trail head. RSVPs welcome. Free.*

## **March 22<sup>nd</sup> Wally's Place Bagel & Deli Celebrates 8 Year Anniversary with South Hero Land Trust Benefit**

Celebrate 8 years of awesome bagels in South Hero! On Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Wally's Bagels will donate 25% of their proceeds to South Hero Land Trust. Stop in for a delicious breakfast, lunch or a sweet treat to support our work in conservation and community.

*Wally's Place will be open from 6:00 am- 2:00 pm.*

## **April 2<sup>nd</sup> Naturalist Walk: Trees of Vermont & Maple Extravaganza**

Have you been wondering how to identify the diverse array of trees in South Hero's forests? Go out on a limb and join us for the fourth walk in our 2016 Naturalist Series, an exploration of our native forests. Ellen Gawarkiewicz from the UVM Field Naturalist Program will join us on Fox Hill at Crescent Bay Farm to answer questions about maples, pines, hemlock and more. In conjunction with the VT Maple Open House weekend, Snow Farm Winery and Crescent Bay Farm will host a pop-up Farmers' Market and sugaring demonstrations. Stick around for the festivities!

*10:00-11:30 am. Meet in the Snow Farm Winery Parking lot. RSVPs welcome. Free.*

## **May 7<sup>th</sup> Green Up Day Clean-Up and Annual "Thank You" BBQ**

Join your friends and neighbors to clean up South Hero's roads, trails, and shoreline; then celebrate at our Annual "Thank You" BBQ at the Folsom Education and Community Center playground. Volunteer activities will include roadside litter pickup, White's Beach Clean-Up, and a Round Pond State Park eco-restoration project. Call the South Hero Land Trust office to learn more and sign up.

*More details coming soon!*

## **May 14<sup>th</sup> Meet the Lambs at Paradise Bay Farm**

Bring the kids to Paradise Bay Farm to meet this year's lambs! Enjoy a spring wagon ride, see a spinning demonstration, and say hello to the donkeys at this casual afternoon event. This is a particularly great event for families with young children, but all are welcome!

*1:00-2:30 pm. Please meet promptly at 1:00 at Haycorn Hollow Road. Please RSVP. Free.*

## **May 21<sup>st</sup> Spring Ephemeral Wildflower Walk at Landon Community Trail**

Community member Chuck Hulse will teach us the basics of wildflower identification. Discover which native plants are in bloom in May at the Landon Community Trail. A South Hero resident and nature enthusiast, Chuck has recently completed a wildflower guide for the Landon Farm, which will be available soon on the SHLT website.

*10:00-11:30 am. Meet at the Landon Community Trail trail head. RSVPs welcome. Free.*

# SPRING 2016 NEWSLETTER



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## *Save The Date* **Green-Up Day 2016** Saturday, May 7

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Join us as we celebrate community and stewardship in  
Vermont, and Green-Up South Hero!

### Fun Volunteer Opportunities for the Whole Family:

- Join a road side trash clean-up crew
- Remove invasive wild parsnip at Round Pond State Park
- Clear litter and debris from White's Beach
- Help with spring trail maintenance along the South Hero Rail Trail

We'll celebrate a cleaner, greener South Hero with our  
Annual "Thank You" BBQ at the Folsom Education  
& Community Center Playground.

## More details to come!

