

UPGRADE UPDATE

TLT ADVANCES THE PROJECT TO UPGRADE THE TUCKERNUCK FIELD STATION



Through the summer of 2024, the Tuckernuck Land Trust focused attention on the upcoming upgrades to the Tuckernuck Field Station. As plans align for a new well and a new solar-powered electrical system, TLT has been raising the funds to enable the project. As of September 30, over 40% of the \$50,000 goal had been raised.

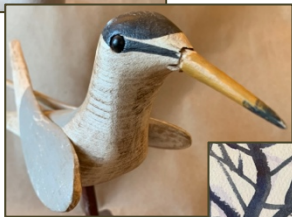
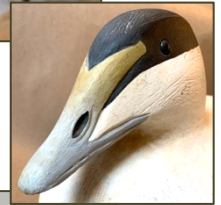
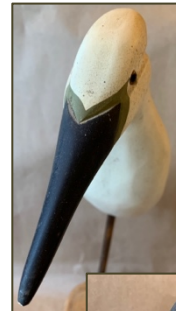
A portion of that success was achieved through TLT's first-ever online auction, held at the end of the summer. A combination of Tuckernuck art and vintage decoys and bird carvings was offered through three weeks of electronic bidding. The art included original paintings generously donated by Ginger Andrews, Priscilla French, Eliot Goss, and Margaret La Farge and a photograph by Skyler Kardell; among them, images of East Pond, East End vistas, and classic Tuckernuck wildlife and architecture proved appealing to bidders. Equally attractive were the other items offered in the auction: selected bird icons from the estate of TLT

director and longtime shorebird protection coordinator Edie Ray. These ranged from vintage authentic decoys to old and new bird carvings, many of them signed by the artists. Nine of the twenty items appear below.



Altogether, the online auction raised nearly \$4,000 for the upgrades at the Field Station, and it connected TLT with new friends and fans. Our thanks to all who joined in the fun by placing bids, and congratulations to the canny high bidders!

There is still time to join in the effort to make the TLT Field Station virtually carbon-neutral. Use the enclosed envelope to mail in your gift, or visit www.tuckernucklandtrust.org to contribute online.



Features from TLT's Online Auction

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER AHLBORN

BIRDS, BROKEN BLADES, AND A TRANQUIL LAGOON

COASTAL STEWARDSHIP IN THE SUMMER OF 2024

with Mikaela Neary, 2024 TLT Coastal Steward



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKAELA NEARY

TLT's 2024 Coastal Steward,
Mikaela Neary

Following her successful debut as the Tuckernuck Coastal Steward in 2023, TLT was pleased to welcome Mikaela Neary back to the island for the 2024 season. She jumped right back into the island's rhythms at the beginning of May, adjusting the fencing that had been set up a month earlier (thanks to Ella Potenza and Dick Veit) and beginning to chronicle the nesting activity of Piping Plovers and American Oystercatchers.

Through their breeding season, Mikaela chronicled twelve Piping Plover pairs and twelve American Oystercatcher pairs nesting on Tuckernuck in 2024. Regrettably, she couldn't confirm that any Piping Plover chicks fledged, and the primary culprits appeared to be other birds. "They seemed to have a rough summer with avian predation, and it looks like Nantucket also had low Piping Plover success. But," she concluded, "I'm sure they will be back next summer and hopefully they have better luck!" The Oystercatchers did better, fledging three chicks around the island.

Thanks to Libby Buck, a master bird bander who serves as the Conservation Science and Land Steward for the Linda Loring Nature Foundation, four Oystercatcher chicks were banded, so, as Mikaela noted, "if they return to Tuckernuck, we will know!"

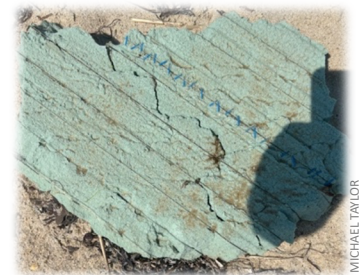
On their slightly later nesting season, a small Least Tern colony established on Bigelow's Point. Other tern species will intermingle in colonies, and this year a Common Tern pair nested within the Bigelow's colony—a first for Tuckernuck. While the eggs didn't hatch, this new development was exciting.

Perhaps the most common topic of Tuckernuck conversation this summer was the accessibility of the Lagoon. With boat access to the island's primary harbor severely curtailed by the shoaling of the Lagoon opening, Whale Point saw only infrequent visitors.

TLT's weekly summer programs started up in July. Among the offerings were "Rockin' Tuckernuck," "Tuckernuck and How it Got that Way," "How's the Water?" and "Bug Bonanza." See page 4 for more details on the programs.

Each summer presents its own peculiarities for the TLT Coastal Steward. The variation for 2024 was one that made national news: in late July, a blade broke from one of the wind turbines south of the island, and fiberglass and foam debris washed up on Tuckernuck and Nantucket. The public was asked to leave debris collection to representatives from Vineyard Wind, but TLT asked the company to minimize interference with the shorebirds by allowing Mikaela to serve as the official clean-up crew for Tuckernuck, which saw less impact than Nantucket. Mikaela corralled the distinctive green and white debris, which was then collected by officials, and she was glad to report that she didn't observe any negative effects on the birds, which were fortunately at the end of their nesting season.

Mikaela appreciated spending another summer helping to conserve Tuckernuck and its habitats. She summarized, "I'd like to thank the Tuckernuck Land Trust for having me for another summer, and everyone on Tuckernuck who made it such a welcoming place. Shout out to Ella Potenza, Mark Souza, and Dick Veit for all their help this summer; I couldn't have done it without them!"



Sample debris from failed wind turbine, collected July 17, 2024

MICHAEL TAYLOR

CENTRAL STATION TLT'S 29TH ANNUAL MEETING, JULY 6, 2024

Usually, the Tuckernuck Land Trust alternates the location of its Annual Meeting between the West End and the East End, to balance its accessibility for all constituents. In 2024, however, a year when the organization's focus is on the sustainability of its home base on the island, TLT for the first time hosted the Annual Meeting at the centrally located Field Station. This allowed the assembled supporters to see the existing features of the building and to visualize the proposed improvements.



While the upgrade project was featured among TLT's future plans, President Jamey French began the meeting by commemorating the contributions of two constituents recently gone: John Phinney, who showed kindness and generosity in his willingness to do anything possible for his Tuckernuck neighbors; and Edie Ray, who ensured the solidity of TLT's stewardship and education programs through years of dedicated hands-on management.

THE FUTURE OF WHALE POINT

Because of significant conservation benefits, inherent to its mission on Tuckernuck Island, the Tuckernuck Land Trust is petitioning for ownership of the land that has accreted to form Whale Point. As the primary owner of adjoining land, TLT hopes to maintain the accessibility of the point for recreational use while becoming better able to protect the significant wildlife sanctuary features.

Elaborating on the conservation benefits, Dick explained that terns take two years to develop from hatching to breeding, and in the interim they "stage" in the tern colonies. To illustrate, he described the approximate 700-900 terns then present on Whale Point, including Black, Roseate, Common, and Least Terns and one Arctic Tern.

Noting that Common and Roseate Terns have never nested on Tuckernuck [see Coastal Steward's report, page 2, for an update on that front], Dick stressed that Tuckernuck's relatively undisturbed beaches provide this critical space for the conservation of terns, in particular the federally endangered Roseate Terns.

This effort is ongoing, and TLT looks forward to sharing further reports of progress.



In addition to reports on the organization's debt-free financial status from Treasurer Michael Taylor; the progress of shorebird monitoring thus far in the season from Coastal Steward Mikaela Neary; and the upcoming summer programs from Katharine Robinson Grieder, the gathered crowd heard an update on TLT's leadership, including thanks to Charlie Howard for his two terms of service and willingness to continue as 2nd Vice President, to Malin Pinsky for renewing his directorship for a second term, and to Dick Veit and Lynn Zimmerman for agreeing to new terms on the Board of Directors. The President invited any others to express interest in becoming involved with TLT's efforts to conserve Tuckernuck.

Dick Veit provided a report on TLT's efforts to conserve Whale Point by petitioning the state for ownership of this accreted land adjacent to TLT's existing East End open-land holdings. [More details are available at left.]

Having thanked Ella Potenza, with the help of Kat Robinson Grieder and Ginger Andrews, for taking on the tasks previously managed by Edie Ray; Lynn Zimmerman for her daily oversight of TLT's management; and Jennifer Ahlborn for her administration of TLT's work, Jamey adjourned the meeting and invited everyone to enjoy the potluck celebration and to ask questions about the planned upgrades to the Field Station.



PHOTOS BY LYNN ZIMMERMAN

A SUMMER OF TUCKERNUCK EXPLORATIONS TLT's 2024 SUMMER PROGRAMS

From bugs to Bigelows and fields to formations, the TLT summer programs in 2024 provided many opportunities to learn about the unique qualities of Tuckernuck Island and its importance to species' sanctuaries and ecological sustainability.

Debuting the summer season, new presenter RJ Turcotte, the Nantucket Land and Water Council's Nantucket Waterkeeper, answered the question **How's the Water?** with a discussion of the water quality around Tuckernuck and how it's related to the state of the eelgrass meadows. (Tidbits: Eelgrass is a flowering plant, not seaweed, and Tuckernuck's is some of the healthiest in the area!)



The Nantucket Conservation Foundation's Plant Research Ecologist/Botanist, Kelly Omand, returned to Tuckernuck to update her ongoing research into the plants of the Nantucket Islands, and she shared some of the distinctive features of Tuckernuck's plant communities in this year's commemorative **Bam's Ramble**.

Also visiting from the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, Interpretive Education Coordinator Neil Foley explored Tuckernuck's diverse plant habitats with a naturalist's eye toward ethical foraging in **Fields and Foraging**.



Participants sought out specimens of Tuckernuck's wide range of insects to explore the **Bug Bonanza** with William Evans and Sarah McCabe, Maria Mitchell Association's Camp and Youth Engagement team.

Returning this summer for **Rockin' Tuckernuck**, Maria Mitchell Association's Scientist-in-Residence, Rich Blundell, Ph.D., delved further into the geologic formation of earth's continents and how it produced Tuckernuck's vast array of rocks,



different even from mainland Massachusetts. The group combed the West End beach for unusual rock samples for Dr. Blundell's expert evaluation.

A week later, Nantucket naturalist and author Peter Brace expanded from the geological to the topographical formation of Tuckernuck and the development of its unique flora and fauna, in **Tuckernuck and How It Got that Way**.

Wrapping up the season with a piece of the island's sociological history, Nantucket historian and author Frances Ruley Karttunen, Ph.D., introduced **The Colorful Bigelow Family** and its ties to Tuckernuck's westernmost point.



Throughout the summer, TLT's Coastal Steward, Mikaela Neary, hosted and supported the visiting program leaders, ensuring another successful season of education through hands-on exploration in a variety of topics designed to help reveal the wonders of the singular Tuckernuck.

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