

# Dennis Conservation Land Trust

## Spring 2021

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# President's Message

Joseph Masse, President, Board of Trustees



We all look forward to the season of Spring and its promise of renewal. For many of us, perhaps we look forward to this Spring more than most.

Last year Spring was taken from us, co-opted by fear and masks. We all hunkered down, waiting for better days, searching for ways out of isolation, longing for the companionship of friends and family.

Just out the door and down the walk, Spring waited – but last year, it was a Spring without the usual smiles and waves and a bounce in one's step indicating the ice was gone and warmer, longer days were ahead. It was a wary, scary Spring. By summer we had adapted to what we had been dealt. We are, after all, Cape Codders. We are nothing if not resilient.

Yes, we adapted, we dealt. But last Spring was not one we will remember as normal. It's funny. We used to ask for spectacular, but now we'd all settle for normal.

And yes, 2020 was a year like most of us have never experienced. However, in the words of Chad and Jeremy, "But that was yesterday and yesterday's gone."

The fuchsia, the crocus, daffodils, tulips, flowering crab, and cherry are on their way. The osprey are here, along with finches and orioles. The coyotes have sung their love song, as have the swans, ducks and geese. Oh, it's coming. Spring is coming and now it is here and I'm glad to greet it as never before.

Get out the hoe, bring down the shovel, sharpen the sheers, and check out the lawn mower. It's almost time for us to burst our constraints and greet the longer days and balmy nights of Spring and Summer.

And, LET'S PARTY LIKE IT'S 2019!

I hope to greet all of you soon, on the trails, in the restaurants, at the theater, art museum, stores, and of course at the 2021 Dennis Conservation Land Trust's auction.

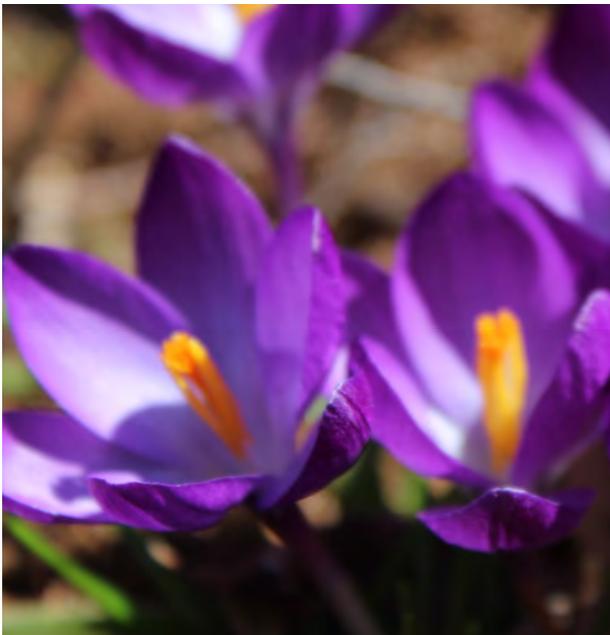


Photo by Julie Early



Photo by Peter Flood

## *Instructions on Not Giving Up*

*“More than the fuchsia funnels breaking out  
of the crabapple tree, more than the neighbor’s  
almost obscene display of cherry limbs showing their  
cotton candy-colored blossoms to the slate  
sky of Spring rains, it’s the greening of the trees  
that really gets to me. When all the shock of  
white  
and taffy, the world’s baubles and trinkets, leave  
the pavement strewn with the confetti of  
aftermath,  
the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin  
growing over whatever winter did to us, a return  
to the strange idea of continuous living despite  
the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then,  
I’ll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf  
Unfurling like a fist to an open palm, I’ll take it all.”*

—Ada Limón



# Notes from Behind the Desk

Julie Early, Executive Director



I am not sure what I love most - the daffodils in Spring, the softness of a woodland covered in winter snow, or in summer, the feel of the warm sand as I play with it sifting through my fingers. And, who

would miss seeing the autumn sunset in the ripples of the beach at low tide?

Thank you to our members and friends who have shared with us your favorite days walking on Dennis trails this past winter. We loved hearing of your appreciation for the lands the DCLT has conserved over time. Places to enjoy in this unusual year. Trying to maintain a sense of normalcy while being vigilant and maintaining safety. We have all adapted to new ways of spending time, and new turns of phrase “maintaining social distance” while also trying to keep hold on some outdoor activities that we have always loved. Dennis certainly has its share of special places to watch the sunrise, fly a kite, run, walk or ride a bike.

This year, I am setting as a goal to visit each of the DCLT’s 100 properties and to find ways to increase visitation to the lands that are most accessible, to all members of our community – particularly, those who historically have not known where these properties exist and that they are open to all. AmeriCorps Member Emily Ray has been working diligently this year on new trail maps to get the word out on where these properties are. Our volunteers will be placing more geocaches and story book activities out on

the properties to add more fun to our trail walks. Come visit, and share with your neighbors. From behind the desk, I have watched our volunteers attend to their projects sending out letters, working on databases in the office, heading out on trails and making maps. We will be hiring this Spring/Summer, so stay tuned!

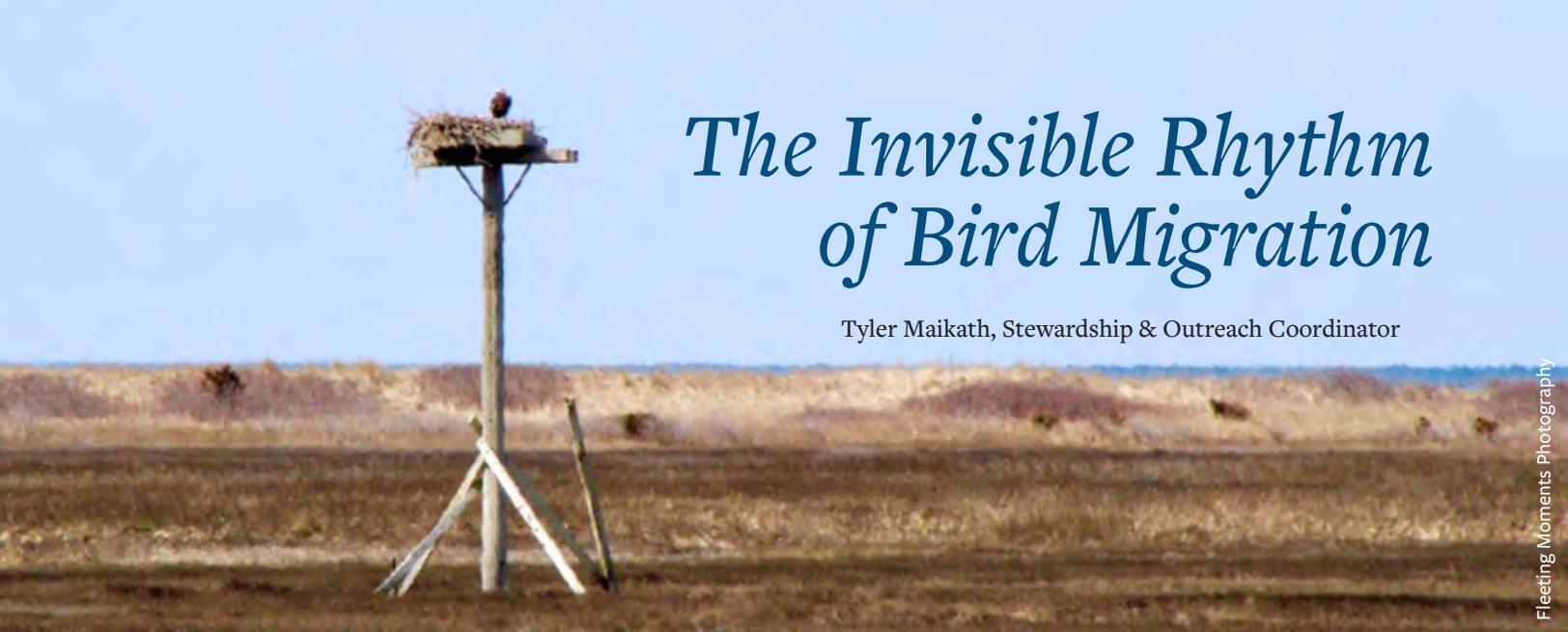
At the end of December, we celebrated the addition of 36 new acres to the DCLT’s portfolio due to the generosity of families along Chase Garden Creek, Sesuit Marsh, and Bass River. The Janet (Spadoni) McSorley Conservation Land off the Blueberry Patch on New Boston Road in Dennis and the David Howes Conservation Land off Salt Marsh Road in East Dennis added almost 10 acres to the Trust’s fee simple (owned in full) properties. We added another 13+ acres to our conservation restricted properties with the Town of Dennis’ Bush parcel, 481 Main Street, South Dennis with beautiful trails along Bass River and parallel to the Cape Cod Rail Trail.

We are so pleased that more of our members and friends are out walking the land in Dennis and across Cape Cod. As Florence Williams indicates in her 2017 book *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative*, nature inspires, literally grounds us, and is for many of us, our touchstone. The health benefits, physically, mentally and spiritually for spending time in nature are immeasurable. We are nature. Our ancestors knew this, we now know this, and we can and must share this with the next generation, and generations to come.

This Spring, we celebrate the diversity within and all around us, we may acknowledge nature’s resilience, and share with you this season of renewal.

# The Invisible Rhythm of Bird Migration

Tyler Maikath, Stewardship & Outreach Coordinator



Fleeting Moments Photography

## *Spring is arriving and so are many of our favorite winged friends.*

Over 350 species of birds in North America are migratory, returning to places like Cape Cod this Spring to take advantage of the seasonal abundance of food sources and nesting locations, while spending much of the year in the tropics, from the Caribbean islands to South America. These species depend heavily on insects for their dietary needs. Neotropical migrants (those birds that spend a portion of the year in Central and South America) include familiar, stable, or increasing species like the Red-eyed Vireo, Gray Catbird, Baltimore Oriole, and Great Crested Flycatcher. Though the factors regulating the migratory behavior of neotropical migrants are not well understood, some ornithologists theorize that birds may be triggered to begin their migrations based on small changes in photoperiod – the amount of daylight experienced each day, local weather conditions, and food availability.

As climate change has affected both the tropics and their northern breeding habitats, some neotropical bird species have begun migrating earlier to their breeding grounds while others (often the longest distance migrants, specialists) are migrating later than usual. The asynchronous and unequal effects of climate change around the globe affect bird survival and reproductive success. The timing of plant flowering and leaf out affects food availability for insect populations, which in turn affects migratory birds. Research has shown that leaf-out is advancing at a rate of five days per decade. A Black-throated Blue Warbler, relying on photoperiod as a cue to prepare for migration, that is now delayed, may arrive too late to time their nesting activity to peak caterpillar abundance, the most critical food source for their nestlings. Of the 143 breeding bird species evaluated in Mass Audubon's State of the Birds report (2017), 43% are classified as Highly Vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including many warblers.

Encouraging the widest diversity of plants through active management of invasive species, and introducing near-native species with more southern affinities, are actions that may ensure our food webs remain robust and continue to support neotropical migratory birds. Land trusts and landowners have a role to play in managing land both to reduce the effect of climate change and to be of most benefit to wildlife species.



Baltimore Oriole (Kaytee)



Red-eyed Vireo (ThoughtCo)

# Janet (Spadoni) McSorley Conservation Land, Chase Garden Creek

Pam Kukla, Member and Volunteer



Egidia Spadoni, grandchildren and son - Paul, Janet, and William Spadoni. (Photo Courtesy of Janet S. McSorley)

Janet (Spadoni) and John McSorley, long-time Dennis Conservation Land Trust members and volunteers, recently donated 2.25 acres of land in Dennis to the Trust. The land is located at 0 Salt Meadow, off Simpkins Neck.

Janet's paternal grandmother, Egidia Spadoni, gave Janet the deed to the land many years ago. Mrs. Spadoni (pictured in this photo from 1962) and her husband came to America in the early 1900's. They opened a grocery store in Attleboro, MA not long after their arrival. For them, owning land as soon as they were able to do so was essential to building their new identity as Americans. The property in East Dennis, along with their home in Attleboro, reinforced that identity.

Janet McSorley said, "I believe that, especially given the fragility of our peninsula, it's important to preserve open land on the Cape for the future. Donating the land at 0 Salt Meadow to the Trust was a way to do that and also to honor my grandmother and my father."

"We thank Janet and her family for their generosity with this donation within one of the Trust's key conservation areas, the Chase Garden Creek marsh system" said DCLT Executive Director, Julie Early. "We hope other landowners will consider doing something similar for other important wetland areas in Dennis that need protection."

# David Howes Conservation Land

Pam Kukla, Member and Volunteer



David Howes Conservation Land along Sesuit Creek (Photo by Tyler Maikath)

Sesuit Creek Marsh extends from Sesuit Neck Road in East Dennis to Sesuit Harbor where the waters meet Cape Cod Bay.

In December, 2020, East Dennis resident David Howes donated 7.3 acres of salt marsh his family owned to the Dennis Conservation Land Trust to be conserved in perpetuity.

Born and raised in Dennis Village, David bought the property in 1963 at the beginning of his seagoing career after he graduated from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Although he was going to be traveling waterways around the world much of the time, he wanted to be sure he had a place to call home in Dennis.

In the original deed, the salt marsh area of the property is described as “9 tons” – a reference to the amount of salt hay that could be harvested annually in colonial days, typically using wagons hitched to horses equipped with wooden snowshoe-like footgear on their hooves so that they wouldn’t sink into the marsh.

Howes still lives on the property adjacent to the marsh, which he and his children have always appreciated

for the views and birdlife. His entire family was enthusiastic about conserving this property for all to enjoy through donating it to the Trust. “Wetlands protection is tremendously important, especially in our times, when so much of the Cape is being developed and habitats are being compromised or destroyed,” Howes said. “The Dennis Conservation Land Trust is the key element advocating for the protection of conservation land in our town. I’m happy to support their mission with this donation.”

“  
*Wetlands protection is tremendously important, especially in our times, when so much of the Cape is being developed and habitats are being compromised or destroyed*”

—David Howes

“We thank David and his family for this outstanding contribution and support of our mission,” Executive Director Julie Early said. Coastal lands have tremendous ecological, historical and cultural elements. This land serves as bird and shellfish habitat and as a buffer to inland areas from storm surge. It is also a culturally important area for human history that occurred within and surrounding the marsh for thousands of years.

# Why Native Plants are Gaining Greater Recognition

Catherine Cetta, Member and Volunteer



Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) thrives in dry, sandy soils and has colorful orange-yellow flowers. (Photo credit: Growjoy)

You may have heard more people using the term “native plants” over the last few years. But what does “native” really mean and why are native plants so important?

The accepted definition of native specifies that the plant species was present here before European colonization, or about 1620. A plant can be native to a large area like North America or the northeastern U.S. but it might not have been originally found within our landscape here on Cape Cod.

Non-native plants have been introduced over the years because of their unique and attractive features. Some have spectacular flowers, some are useful as herbs, and some can create dense privacy barriers. There are other reasons, too. Gardeners and landscaping firms may bring various plants here to fill our gardens and yards that are actually native to other areas. It’s important to note here that, as long as the plant has not become invasive, crowding out plants that are native to this area, there is nothing wrong with a non-native plant. However, there are very good reasons to incorporate natives into our yards and gardens as well.

Plants and animals - including insects, bees, butterflies, birds, and mammals - evolve together in the ecosystem they live in. Many of the relationships they form are

very specific. For example, monarch butterflies have evolved to feed only on certain milkweeds when they are in their larval stage. Without milkweeds, they cannot survive. A seemingly small disruption in the food chain can impact many species. Birds, for example, who may feed on butterflies, lose a food source when butterfly populations decline.

Non-native species, and native species that have been altered through plant breeding, may not support local ecosystems. Highly bred cultivars or hybrids of native species may be altered in ways that reduce their value as food sources. For example, hybrids derived from native *Lobelia* species resemble the cardinal flower parent species and still attract hummingbirds. However, a study at the University of Vermont discovered that the plants produce only 20% of the normal amount of nectar. Ornamental plants bred to have purple or red leaves (from the original green) can be unpalatable to insects because the red and blue pigments have a different taste from chlorophyll.

There are numerous native plants to choose from and many make excellent substitutes for non-natives. A useful resource for further exploration is *Native Plants for New England Gardens* by Mark Richardson & Dan Jaffe (Globe Pequot, 2018).

# My Remote Internship with DCLT

Thuy Hanley, Winter Intern



Thuy Hanley

In January, when I was home in San Jose, CA on winter break, I spoke to a friend of mine about my interest in the nonprofit sector. She told me about work she was doing with the Dennis Conservation Land Trust during her winter term, having worked for the organization last summer.

As a human physiology and sociology double major with an interest in the public health sphere, I had learned about how interconnected human health is with the environment and the importance of environmental conservation. So when my friend, Christina Park spoke about the work that DCLT does, I was excited to learn more. After applying for an

internship, I was hired to assist with grantwriting for the month of February. Though it was only for a short time, it proved to be an invaluable experience. DCLT made sure to personalize the internship to teach me about the philanthropic field and land trusts beyond the tasks I was assigned. Through this experience, I learned about grant writing and the grant application process. I also got the chance to exercise my creativity by redesigning the DCLT's brochure.

I was lucky that I was able to intern remotely, since I wouldn't have been able to commute to and from Cape Cod. And from this experience, my determination to work in the non-profit sector has been solidified, and my interest in philanthropy and environmental conservation has only grown. As I continue to seek new opportunities in the non-profit sector, I know that the lessons I learned during my time with the DCLT will prove invaluable.

## Time to Test your Soil

Spring is a great time to test your soil and get a soil check up from the experts at UMass. Learn five great reasons to test your soil to improve the health of your plants and prevent damage to our drinking water and waterways. You might be surprised that fertilizer is a source of phosphorous pollution and algal growth in our freshwater ponds, streams and rivers. Check this informative website: [Soil and Plant Nutrient Testing Laboratory \(U. Mass Amherst\)](#)



# The AmeriCorps 2020-2021 Experience

Emily Ray, DCLT/DNR AmeriCorps Member



Emily Ray

In case you haven't heard about me yet, I'm Emily, the AmeriCorps member serving the town of Dennis this year, in the 22nd year of the AmeriCorps Cape Cod program. I grew up in Shelburne, Vermont and studied environmental studies and geography at Middlebury College in

Middlebury, VT. I graduated, remotely, in my backyard, in May of 2020. In the summer of 2020, I was lucky enough to come across the opportunity to be a remote intern at DCLT through a Middlebury alumni job board. As a Dennis Conservation Land Trust intern this past summer, I spent most of my time working on articles for the fall newsletter. I also spent time reviewing preliminary maps for trails on DCLT properties. This was my first taste of working on trail maps, and I liked it so much, that I found my way back to DCLT through the AmeriCorps program. This fall and winter, I had the opportunity to create new trail maps for DCLT. My interest in ongoing projects at DCLT, along with my interest in doing environmental service in a coastal area, led me to apply to AmeriCorps Cape Cod.

As an AmeriCorps Cape Cod member, my placement is with the Dennis Conservation Land Trust, two days per week, and with the Dennis Department of Natural Resources, one day per week. At the DCLT, my main project has been creating trail maps, which will be part of a brochure. At the Dennis Department of Natural Resources, I have been out on the trails a lot, checking for maintenance needs and dumping, and I am also working on pamphlets with information on town conservation areas. I serve with other members of the program on Mondays and Fridays in towns across the Cape. We help out with projects ranging from the removal of invasive species like Asiatic bittersweet or Japanese knotweed to filming a video teaching kids in Cape Cod schools about the aquifer.

Let's get back to the trail map project, starting with why I made these maps. Trail maps serve as a way to motivate anyone living in Dennis or visiting Dennis to get excited about going for a walk on the trails maintained by the land trust. Hikers can find out what to expect on the trails, what vegetation and wildlife to look for, how to get there, and where to park. It's important to know where to find the things like the trailhead or a bench with a view. See the bench overlooking Swan Pond River below.



Fleeting Moments Photography

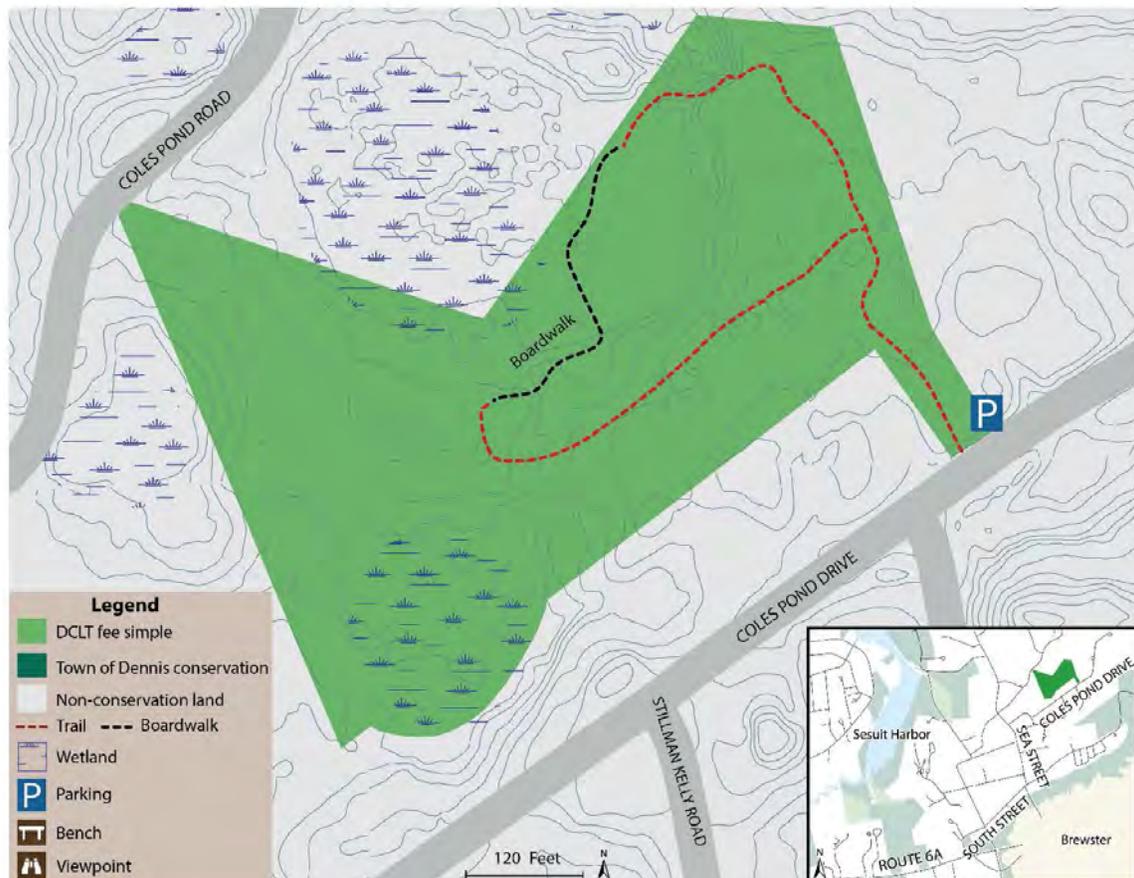
These maps are accessible on DCLT’s website under “Properties,” however, there are also plans to print them in the form of a brochure so that as many people as possible can access the maps.

Which properties are on the trail maps? I made trail maps for four trails on DCLT-owned land. There’s Old Fort Field, off New Boston Road, near the intersection of Nobscussett Road and Route 6A. There’s also Swan River Outlook, a trail winding down to the southern section of Swan Pond River, near Lower County Road. Then, there’s Sesuit Neck, a trail off Sesuit Neck Road, near the intersection of Route 134 and Route 6A. Finally, Coles Pond Bog is located further east, near Coles Pond and Crowes Pasture, and accessible off Coles Pond Drive.

How did I make the trail maps? In short, I used Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, and Adobe Illustrator. To start, I collected data from the GIS Specialist at the Town of Dennis, Alicia Messier, as

well as from DCLT and MassGIS. MassGIS is the state’s database of spatial information, accessible to anyone. If you’re curious, check out the online interactive mapping tool at MassGIS (also called Oliver), where you can explore different data layers, from shellfish suitability areas to probable locations of state designated rare and endangered species. After collecting data, I added it into a map project in GIS. Geographic Information Systems are computer and software tools that provide a framework for gathering and analyzing spatial data. You can map, query, and analyze data based on location. For trail maps, there isn’t too much analysis going on. Once the data was in GIS, I changed the way it was displayed. For example, I changed the symbology, or how geographic features are represented on a map, by varying color, size, and more. The most important change was to display the protected land in Dennis with different colored parcels according to different owners of the conservation land - primarily the Town of Dennis and the DCLT.

## Coles Pond Bog



The background of the entire page is a dark blue night scene. At the top, a string of white lights hangs across the frame. Below the lights, the text is centered. In the lower half, a white tent with a green flag on top is illuminated from within. The tent is decorated with a garland of white flowers and a yellow light. In the foreground, there are silhouettes of a deer on the right and a smaller animal on the left. The sky is dark blue with some stars and a bird in flight.

The Dennis Conservation Land Trust  
invites you to a

# Mid-Summer's Night Dream Auction Event

Sunday, July 25th, 2021 at 5pm  
The Dennis Inn

For tickets - information - online Silent Auction  
[www.DennisConservationLandTrust.org/Auction](http://www.DennisConservationLandTrust.org/Auction)

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*Drawing by Mimi Green, 11th Grade, Dennis-Yarmouth High School for Ecology Class Assignment; Instructor Carl DuPuy*



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