Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt

VINEYARD FIELD

Grassland Restoration Project

Vineyard Field is located on eastern Long Island in the hamlet of Bridgehampton. The 39-acre old field, formerly a vineyard, sits at the heart of 600 preserved acres in the Long Pond Greenbelt. In 1998, the field was purchased by the Town of Southampton.

Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt entered into an agreement with Southampton Town in 2006 to restore the field to native grassland, a rapidly disappearing habitat, by removing invasive and successional plants, shrubs, and trees that had overrun the field.

Common milkweed growing in a section of the field restored in 2006.
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Mary Wilson, Southampton Town Community Preservation Fund Manager
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ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP

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Mission Statement

Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt is dedicated to the preservation, stewardship, and public appreciation of the unique expanse of coastal plain ponds, freshwater swamps, wetlands, and woodlands in the Town of Southampton known as the Long Pond Greenbelt, which stretches from Lignée Creek in Sag Harbor to Sagaponack Pond in Sagaponack.

The Long Pond Greenbelt

The Long Pond Greenbelt, spectacular in its wealth of rare plants, animals, and ecological communities is widely recognized as one of the state’s most environmentally significant areas. It harbors one of the highest concentrations of rare plants and animals in New York State. The Greenbelt’s most splendid feature consists of a collection of thirteen coastal plain ponds and pond shore communities. The New York Heritage Program classifies many of the Greenbelt’s ponds, fauna, and flora as rare both in New York State and worldwide. In recognition of the area’s unique and fragile status, Southampton has dedicated 14 of its Greenbelt parcels into its Nature Preserve program, which extends the highest degree of protection in town law. The rest of Southampton’s Greenbelt properties are currently in nomination for Nature Preserve status.

Within the 1,100-acre Greenbelt management boundaries (roughly Sagg Road and Sagg Main Streets to the east and the Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike and Ocean Road to the west), more than 600 acres have been preserved outright since 1975 by Suffolk County, Southampton Town, and the Nature Conservancy. New York State has assisted purchases with funds from the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act and long-term, low-interest loans. Greenbelt ponds, which are under the aegis of the Board of Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the Town of Southampton, cover close to 300 acres.

Long Pond
Vineyard Field Restoration Project–2007

AUTUMN OLIVE & JAPANESE KNOTWEED—Challenge—To restore Vineyard Field to its former and historic old-field / grassland habitat.

Before the spread of invasive plant species, an abandoned farm field followed a natural succession of gradual colonization by native shrubs and small trees.

Today, aggressive, fast-growing, non-native species out-compete the natives. And in the case of autumn olive, one seedling will grow into a 15-ft. tree, which can produce from 20,000 to 54,000 seeds per year. See seedlings to left and mature trees below.
2005-2006—After Southampton Town’s chief environmental analyst flagged the wetlands, volunteers began to clear advancing autumn olive and knotweed.

2007—See the following pages for professionals and volunteers clearing autumn olive from the eastern section of the field. By fall 2007, volunteers and professionals had dug the knotweed and covered its root system, pictured above right, under green tarps.

One knotweed seedling matures into a 10-ft. stalk, and its root system may expand 3 yards in a growing season. The 100-ft. by 80-ft. mass below is possibly a single plant.
**Vineyard Field Restoration Project—2007**

**The Importance of Restoring Grassland Habitat**

OLD-FARM FIELDS / GRASSLANDS ARE IN STEEP DECLINE—New York has lost about 66% of its farmland over the past 100 or so years, and agricultural practices and technology have changed, leaving very few hayfields and pastures available to grassland birds as nesting habitat.

A GRASSLAND IS a large, usually flat tract of land with scattered bushes, but few trees.

AN OLD-FARM FIELD IS a fallow farm lot in the process of reverting to woodland. Most beneficial for grassland birds is a field at the early stage of succession where grasses, wildflowers, and scattered shrubs prevail.

**Covering Grasslands**

The Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt’s project to eliminate invasive plant species from Vineyard Field addresses two linked major environmental threats: the rampant spread of invasive plant species and the loss of grasslands and old fields in early succession, both of which result in plummeting populations of grassland birds that are not adapted to live anywhere else.

Worldwide, grasslands are in steep decline, and over the past 100 years or more New York has lost about two-thirds of its farmland to development and succession to woodland or invasive plants. The remaining farmland can become deathtraps for ground-nesting birds when fields are mowed during nesting season (April–July).

“A strong case that ‘grassland birds are an ancient component of biodiversity on the heavily forested East Coast’ is made in a paper by Dr. Robert Askins, a zoology professor at Connecticut College in New London....

“Dr. Askins wrote: ‘Detailed historical accounts and analysis of pollen deposits show that open grasslands existed on the East Coast at the time of European settlement. Extensive grasslands resulted from burning and agricultural clearing by Indians. Natural disturbances, such as wildfire and beaver activity, produced grasslands even before Indians cleared the forest.’

“One of the largest grasslands in the northeast, he said was the Hempstead Plains of Long Island, which supported a rich community of grassland birds until it was subdivided or plowed for truck farms after World War II. —New York Times, 12/31/96

Currently, environmentalists are working to preserve grasslands at the old Grumman airport in Calverton, where plans to transform it into a water park and indoor ski mountain are proposed. While some acres are to be preserved, the proposed development will threaten Long Island’s largest surviving colony of grasshopper sparrows and eastern meadowlarks.

A distinction needs to be made between potato, grape, sod, tree, and produce farm fields, which do not offer protected nesting for grassland birds, and hay fields, fallow-farm fields, and grasslands, which do provide the necessary cover. FLPG is restoring the latter and hopes that Vineyard Field is a model for similar projects.

As long ago as the 1940s, Ernest Clowes lamented the loss of grassland birds and their habitat here on the East End: “Another thing potato culture has done to our landscape has been to diminish both the number and variety of birds. The pasture birds such as meadow larks are practically extinct through the destruction of their nesting places. Quail used to be commonly heard; now they are quite rare as are the many varieties of birds which nest in small trees [on the ground] in or near meadows and feed on the insect life of pastures.”

—Wayfarings, A Collection Chosen from Pieces Which Appeared Under That Title in the Bridgehampton News, 1941-1953
Vineyard Field Restoration Project–2007

Restoration of the Field to benefit Grassland Birds

GRASSLAND BIRDS IN STEEP DECLINE—Of the 47 grassland bird species monitored by the National Audubon Society, ten are on the Red WatchList (facing major threats), six are on the Yellow WatchList (with declining populations or rare), and 31 are in the “holding steady” category. Grassland birds constitute the highest proportion of Red WatchList species of any of the major habitat types.

A GRASSLAND BIRD IS one that is adapted to reproduce nowhere else but grasslands, old-farm fields or hayfields.

Attracting Grassland Birds

Even in the depressing light of declining populations of grassland birds (90% for some species since 1966), FLPG sees positive results in the partially restored Vineyard Field for the 2007 season. Field sparrows, killdeer, and woodcock, plus many other birds, not necessarily categorized as grassland, were present during the breeding season. The field sparrow is one of the North American birds undergoing the greatest population decline. It has decreased 68.8% in just 37 years between 1966 and 2003. The woodcock, formerly very common, draws birdwatchers to view its spring mating flights in the field. Its decline is 55% on the East Coast. We look for the return of the northern bobwhite, which is experiencing a 67.6-82% decline, and possibly the grasshopper sparrow, with a 97% decline.

More encouraging are the wintering bird populations in the field, though some of these are experiencing drastic population declines. Highlights among the overwintering species include the eastern meadowlark (66-72% decline), chipping, field, savanna, song, swamp, tree, white-crowned, and white-throated sparrows, dark-eyed juncos, turkeys, a flock of bluebirds, and red-tailed and cooper’s hawks, a merlin falcon, and 3 northern harriers a New York State threatened species. On migration an American bittern (59% decline) stopped off at the field.

Since 1900 the National Audubon Society has promoted bird conservation and is presently taking the lead to protect grassland birds with its Grassland Bird Program. In New York, it is coordinating the DEC’s Landowner Incentive Program. These programs and the society’s updated WatchList 2007, which categorizes 178 bird species as threatened in the United States, have sensitized both public and private organizations to initiate projects for preservation of grassland birds. The Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt is one of them, and under the direction of the Town of Southampton and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, we formalized our Vineyard Field Restoration project in 2006.

BIRDS OF NOTE IN VINEYARD FIELD 2007–2008

BREEDING SEASON:
Glossy ibis (80 birds feasting on frogs)
Great egret (1)
Green herons
Red-tailed hawks
Killdeer
American woodcock
Eastern kingbirds
Chimney Swifts
Tree swallows
Barn swallows
Field sparrows
Blue-winged warblers
Other more common birds

FALL MIGRATION:
American bittern (1)
Snipe
Solitary sandpipers
Greater yellow legs
White-crowned sparrows
Chipping sparrows
Purple martins

WINTERING 2008:
Great blue herons
Turkeys
Eastern meadowlarks
Bluebirds
Coopers hawks
Merlin (3)
Northern harriers (3)
Red-tailed hawks
Field sparrows
Savannah sparrows
Song sparrows
Tree sparrows
White-throated sparrows
Juncos

NESTING BOXES SET UP BY THE SOUTH FORK NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM:
Bluebird / tree swallow, purple martin, chimney swift, American kestrel, and barn owl
Top ten invasive plants in Vineyard Field

INVASIVE PLANTS, METHODS OF REMOVAL, AND MAINTENANCE—Invasive plants are introduced species that can thrive in areas beyond their natural range of dispersal. These plants are characteristically adaptable and aggressive. They have a high reproductive capacity and spread rampantly.

Invasive non-native species are recognized as one of the leading threats to biodiversity. They impose enormous costs to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other human enterprises, as well as to human health. The cost to control invasive species and the damages they inflict upon property and natural resources in the U.S. is estimated at $137 billion annually.

In 2007 the Suffolk County legislature adopted a ban on the sale, introduction, and propagation of 64 invasive plants: 57 will be banned in January 2009, the remaining 7 in 2011. In Vineyard Field FLPG has targeted 10 invasive species for immediate removal and is watching several other plants for invasive tendencies.

**AUTUMN OLIVE:** *(Elaeagnus umbellata)* is a small shrubby tree introduced from Asia. (See pages 10–15, 29, 31, 32.)

Control of mass areas of large autumn olives: Professional crews flush cut the trees at ground level, then chip the cuttings. These mass cuttings are timed for late fall and winter to avoid conflicting with the bird nesting and migration seasons, and periods when snakes and turtles would be above ground. Since a cut tree is guaranteed to sprout multiple leaders, cleared areas must be mowed to deter regrowth.

Control of autumn olive using Roundup: Roundup herbicide (a formulation of glyphosate) has been effective, to a degree, in controlling autumn olive when applied directly to a cut stump within 5 minutes of the cut, when the cut has been made July through mid-September. Roundup, when used, is applied by a licensed applicator. Roundup was used in 2006 but not in 2007, when all cutting occurred after the growing season.

Regrowth of cut autumn olives and seed sprouts: Not only will cut olives sprout (up to three feet a year) from cut trunks not treated with roundup in a timely fashion, but seeds dropped in previous years under areas that have recently been cleared will likely send up seedlings now that sunshine can reach them.

Control of small and scattered autumn olives: These may be dug with a potato fork in any season provided they are not near nesting wildlife. The fork is used to loosen the soil around the autumn olive roots before pulling the tree out. After a rain softens the soil is an ideal time to dig autumn olive. This method causes little soil disturbance, and if all roots are removed there is no regrowth. If the tree is too large for digging, after cutting or sawing the cut ends may be painted with Roundup by a licensed applicator. Otherwise wait for the mowing season.

Keeping regrowth and seedlings in check: It is expected that mowing of the cleared areas will need to occur monthly and possibly more frequently from June through September for consecutive years until the eradication of the invasives, particularly the autumn olive, is accomplished. Once invasives are eliminated, an annual mowing will maintain the field at a stage most advantageous for grassland flora and fauna.
**JAPANESE KNOTWEED:** *(Polygonum cuspidatum)* is in the buckwheat family, but more resembles bamboo. Annual stalks can reach 12 ft. high and spread as much as 10 ft. in a year; perennial roots descend 3 ft. (See pages 18–19, 32.)

**Control of mass areas of knotweed:** Controlling knotweed is still in the experimental stage. Professionals and volunteers dig up the stalk and surface roots and cover the area with tarps. The tarps should prevent light from penetrating and be tough enough to prevent regrowth from puncturing it.

When available, tar paper or black plastic was laid under the cover tarp, and the layers were anchored with donated wooden pallets. The tarps need to be monitored for punctures and deterioration, and covered over when necessary. Cut autumn olives or other cuttings may be placed on top of the tarps to discourage deer from venturing onto the tarps and puncturing the surface. Birds, snakes, and other small wildlife take shelter under these brush piles.

**Control of small areas of knotweed:** Several smaller patches, 30 by 20 ft. at the largest, have been successfully eliminated by weekly digging to remove all the roots.

**Control of spread of knotweed:** Since even a small fragment of a root or cut stalk will send down new roots, all roots and fragments were bagged in thick black-plastic contractor bags that were left in the sun to promote high temperature composting inside the bags.

**Control of knotweed with Roundup:** In 2005, the cut ends of knotweed stalks were painted with Roundup without any positive results. We also have purchased a new product on the market to control knotweed, a Roundup injection gun, but have not tried it yet. All Roundup is administered by a licensed herbicide applicator.

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**MILE-A-MINUTE VINE:** *(Polygonum perfoliatum)* is another buckwheat, this one an annual 20-ft. thorny climbing vine (See pages 20–21.)

**Control of mile-a-minute:** The vine was first seen on Long Island, east of the canal, ten years ago. It was not discovered in Vineyard Field until this summer, when it had already started to go to seed. It must have been in the field for several years to have reached its mass coverage. We do know that it is massed in some places and scattered in others. The only acceptable method of removal is to pull the vines before they go to seed in midsummer. Its shallow roots are easily pulled, but its thorns require gloves for the job.

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**GARLIC MUSTARD:** *(Alliaria petiolata)* Garlic mustard is a cool season biennial herb, which sets seeds in May. Masses of these plants poison and replace native plants as they spread. (See page 32.)

**Control of garlic mustard:** Pulling them up by roots starting in March and April is effective. The seed bank remains viable in the soil for five years or more.

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**MUGWORT:** *(Artemisia vulgaris)* This perennial medicinal herb, native to Eurasia, arrived in the U.S. over 400 years ago. Its extremely fine rhizomes make it next to impossible to dig up successfully. (See pages 16-17, 32.)

**Control of mugwort:** FLPG has an experimental patch covered with a light-impenetrable tarp.

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**MULTIFLORA ROSE:** *(Rosa multiflora)*

**HONEYSUCKLE:** *(Lonicera species)*

**ORIENTAL BITTERSWEET:** *(Celastrus orbiculatus)* Multiflora rose, honeysuckle, autumn olive, and bittersweet were introduced to this country to prevent soil erosion and for wildlife food and cover and ornamental plantings. The problem is that these plants readily spread beyond the desired area and elbow out native species.

**Control:** The same as for autumn olive. (See pages 30, 32.)

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**PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE:** *(Lythrum salicaria)* was first introduced as a garden perennial from Europe during the 1800’s. It is tolerant of moist soil and shallow water sites such as pastures and meadows, although established plants can tolerate drier conditions. It can overrun wetlands thousands of acres in size (See page 23.)

**Control of purple loosestrife:** Easy to spot in the field because of its showy flowers, it can be readily located and dug up before it has a chance to spread or go to seed.

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**COMMON REED GRASS:** *(Phragmites australis)* is a tall grass attaining a height of 16 feet or more. Though commonly a wetland plant it can colonize uplands. Phragmites was discovered and removed from the South Fork Natural History Museum’s man-made pond in 2007.

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**WEEDS TO WATCH:**

Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt
Vineyard Field Restoration Project–2007

AUTUMN OLIVE TREES—The best time to clear large autumn olive trees is in the late fall and winter, avoiding both the spring breeding season and fall bird migration.

The photo above and to the right are views of the north-east section of the field before the start of clearing autumn olive in 2007. Massive autumn olives in the background are advancing on open-field plants, such as goldenrod. In the foreground are sprouts from autumn olives cleared in 2006, which will be mowed in late winter.

Tree-clearing machinery—chipper, front-end loader, and grapple—assembled before starting to clear autumn olive.
Flocks of white-throated sparrows overwinter in the field, feeding on seeds. They may fall victim to the harriers.

Valuable seed source for wintering wildlife is pictured in the open-field foreground, which was cleared in 2006. The field will be mowed in late winter to control autumn olive seedlings and sprouting stumps. Note the red-cedar trees left after clearing. They provide year-round shelter for birds. In the background is the same mass of autumn olive pictured at left, but now leafless.

Three northern harriers, uncommonly observed raptors, frequented the field this winter, hunting for rodents that forage for seeds in the field.

Close-up of clearing the autumn olive patch pictured above.

Flocks of white-throated sparrows overwinter in the field, feeding on seeds. They may fall victim to the harriers.
Vineyard Field Restoration Project–2007

AUTUMN OLIVE TREES CONTINUED—Giant piles of chipped autumn olive are all that remain from clearing 10 acres of solid autumn olive in 10 days.

Everyone who views the field after recent clearing of areas of massive autumn olive is surprised to see just how large the field is.

This section of the field was so solidly filled with large autumn olive that there were no cedars to preserve for wildlife refuge.

Note piles of chipped autumn olive.

Autumn olive trees, sometimes classified as large shrubs, will grow multiple trunks. This one had 8 trunks.

Grants and individual donations have enabled FLPG to hire Richard Leland’s hard-working crew to clear massive areas of autumn olive in a timely fashion.
Vineyard Field Restoration Project—2007

A BEAUTIFUL GRAY BIRCH IS SAVED FROM BEING SMOTHERED—Gray birch is a successional tree, which colonizes old fields, and is rarely found in the Greenbelt. This may be the only remaining healthy specimen in the Greenbelt.

In the process of freeing the birch from autumn olive and mile-a-minute vine.

The gray birch’s range is narrow, growing only in the northeast U.S. and eastern lower Canada. Just one lovely birch was found in the field. We hope it will reproduce as its seeds and buds are fed on by a variety of birds.

Photos of clearing southeast section of the field.

Removing a tangle of invasive olives and vines at the edge of the woods.

Also rare to the field are woodcocks. They are attracted to the edge of the woods and the field, where they probe the damp field and wetlands for grubs and worms with their long beaks. Each spring birdwatchers gather to witness their evening mating-flight displays.
Sites E, F, and G were cleared previously. G is revegetated.

Chickadees feed on birch seeds.

Woodcock probe damp soil for insects.
Vineyard Field Restoration Project—2007

WORK TO BE DONE AND MAINTENANCE—Areas cleared of autumn olive must be maintained by mowing, and other invasive plants, like Japanese knotweed, must be systematically held in check.

The photo above, taken in spring 2007, shows acreage cleared of autumn olive in 2006. A year later in 2007 (see two photos below and one to right), the autumn olive had regrown to 3 feet tall and must be mowed by spring. The regrowth did not flower and go to seed.

In some areas cleared in previous years, just a few autumn olives regrew, and those may be controlled by volunteers to prevent spreading. The open field in fore- and background was cleared in 2006.
Mugwort, a rhysomatous perennial invasive weed, which, once introduced, rapidly forms dense stands and replaces native flora. Asters photoed in a mugwort patch last year did not survive in 2007.

Mugwort resists conventional methods of elimination. FLPG is experimenting with covering smaller patches of the weed with tarps. (See photos above and upper left.)

Purple martin nesting gourds were set up by the South Fork Natural History Museum to attract the birds.
Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt

Vineyard Field Restoration Project–2007

INVASIVE PLANTS—JAPANESE KNOTWEED—Both hired professionals and volunteers are pictured clearing in 2007.

Site A off camera  Site B Knotweed is being dug out  Site C  Site D

Sites E, F, were cleared previously and are covered with tarps. Site G, after being covered and then roots dug up, is now revegetated.

Site D (above and below): a knotweed area measuring 100 ft. by 80 ft. was dug up and covered.
Site C (above): Knotweed was dug up and covered with tarps and pallets.
Site A (below): Knotweed is still being cleared.
MILE-A-MINUTE—The invasive vine was introduced to the U.S. in the 1930s, but it is rather new to our area. It was discovered in Vineyard Field in the summer of 2007. The vine was growing in masses along the northern and eastern borders of the field and in other small scattered patches. Volunteers began to pull the annual plant after discovery. Mile-a-minute is easily pulled out, but the vines must be removed before their seeds set in July.

One seed can grow into a thorny 20-ft. vine. Branching as it grows a “mile a minute,” it can easily scale and smother a shrub, tree, or grassland plants. Seeds remain viable for at least 2 years.

Each vine is reported to produce 100 or more seeds. FLPG’s experience with the vine suggests this number is greatly underestimated. A seed-laden vine is pictured advancing on goldenrod.
A beautiful gray birch tree was rescued from being smothered by autumn olive trees and mile-a-minute vines by clearing in November and December 2007. The reddish mile-a-minute vines are circled in white. Gray birch trees are becoming scarce on the South Fork. The freed birch is pictured at right.
Vineyard Field hosts a number of plants listed as rare or species of concern in New York State. It is rewarding that hyssop hedge-nettle and St. Johnswort have spread since clearing began.

Clockwise are hyssop hedge-nettle (closeup and population), little ladies’ tresses (an orchid), tooth cup, and St. Johnswort.
Not all beautiful wildflowers are native. FLPG removed about 10 invasive purple loosestrife plants which would have spread. We saved a beneficial look-alike, spirea.

A range of wildflowers and grasses bloom and go to seed on varying schedules, providing nectar and seeds spring through fall.

Some introduced wildflowers naturalize and are not aggressive, such as Venus’ looking-glass.
Migrating monarch butterflies were observed in late summer and early fall. On September 26th, hundreds nectared on goldenrod in areas formerly covered by invasive autumn olive trees.

This sachem skipper, photographed in Vineyard Field in 2007, is the first recorded sighting of this species on the South Fork. (Other species of skipper butterflies are common in the field.)
Butterflies: Masses of grasses and wildflowers growing in portions of the field cleared in 2006 fed larval and mature butterflies in 2007.

The American copper’s host plants (larval foods) are dock and sorrel, both growing in the field.

A common buckeye is nectaring on hyssop hedge-nettle, a rare plant in New York State.

The American lady butterfly is nectaring on slender-fragrant goldenrod along with honey bees, which are critical pollinators experiencing a nation-wide threat. In the field, there are 8 species of goldenrod, which supply bees with honey through winter.

The pearl crescent’s larval plant is asters, also growing in the field.
REWARDING RESULTS—Butterflies are beautiful, but many other insects also contribute to the biodiversity and food chain in the field and are easily observed on hikes and nature walks.

A popular find on nature walks in the field is the northern walkingstick, which feeds on foliage of trees and shrubs.

The marginated carrion beetle (note also the larva) is a rarer find in the field, where it feeds on decaying carcasses.

The beautiful iridescent dogbane beetle feeds on species of milkweed.

The animated milkweed bug also feeds on milkweed and is entertaining to watch scurrying around in milkweed leaves.
Grasshoppers are abundant in the field and feed on grasses and other low vegetation. They can be a crop pest, but in Vineyard field they are good food for birds.

A local moth expert who has been surveying the moths in Vineyard Field since 2003, has recorded over 300 species. Some are designated rare by the N.Y. Natural Heritage Program and are associated with the grasslands found in the field. Moth larvae are highly nutritious meals for bats and nestling birds.

A special nature walk was held this year to observe dragonflies and appreciate how the field’s habitat gives them a place to breed, sun, and feed on numerous insects.
Today it takes machinery and professional workers to restore a field in advanced succession to the old-farm field it was 10 years ago. In 1998 Southampton Town bought and preserved 39 acres of the former Bridgehampton Winery field in the Greenbelt. Over the past decade with no cultivation the autumn olive, an invasive small tree, soon crowded out native meadow species. Now with willing workers and machinery from two tree-care businesses, Ray Smith Assoc. and Scott L. Wilson Landscapes, and Wainscott Sand & Gravel the invasives are being removed.

In pre-European times, hurricanes, lightening fires, and Long Island Indians opened woodlands, thereby creating field environments. Indians and wolves were then the top predators of deer. They kept the deer population below desired prey levels to provide the Indian food supply, and it is thought that to increase the deer population, the Indians burned woodland to assure plentiful deer browse. With colonization, farm land and old fields increased and plentiful deer browse. With coloniza-tion, farm land and old fields increased and plentiful deer browse, forested areas became rare due to development. It is not the deer population that is now threatened, but old-field plant and the animal species dependent on meadow habitat for survival.

Bird surveys, including the New York State’s Breeding Bird Atlas, 2000, report the decline of bird species requiring a field, brushy field, or edge-of-woodland habitat. These include the bluebird, blue-winged warbler, bobwhite, field sparrow, goldfinch, meadowlark, northern harrier, some owls, rufous-sided towhee, among others. For an alarming example, between 1965 and 1990 the meadowlark population declined 80% in New York.

While you probably enjoy watching butterflies nectaring at your garden flowers, survival of these butterflies depend on plants not likely found in your garden, but they are found in an old field. A butterfly, to feed its larvae, lays eggs on a plant it has evolved with. The most obvious example is the monarch’s larvae feeding exclusively on milkweed. The common American lady’s larvae feed on pearly everlasting, and the frosted elfin’s on lupine or wild indigo. Do you have these plants in your garden?
Web of Life in a Field

How a meadow/field works is not too different from how a woodland works. The field too has a canopy, mid-zone, and ground level, each characterized by different species, the main difference being that a field’s canopy reaches to just waist high. By late summer/fall lower levels are shaded and crowded by a canopy of taller flowering goldenrods, asters, and tall grasses. These all die off in winter; spring is the time to study the lower layers: soil and ground-hugging plants like mosses, wild strawberries, cinquefoils, and violets. These plants are pollinated and go to seed before being shaded by mid-zone plants like grasses, daisies, milkweeds, and legumes like false indigo. In the woods ground-level starflowers and blueberries bloom before the tree canopy leaves out and shades the ground. Old-field soil is enriched annually by plant die-off and animal feces, which are made usable to plant roots by bacteria, fungi, worms, insects, and other invertebrates.

Goldenrod, being a top competitor among old-field plants, may take over a field if not for beetles partial to a diet of goldenrod. And were it not for birds and spiders preying on the beetles, fields might be devoid of goldenrod.

Birds are most often observed preying on field insects like grasshoppers, caterpillars, leaf hoppers, and aphids, but field spiders play a similar role to birds in the woods, where an oven bird hunts on the ground, gnatcatcher in the middle of a tree, and tanager on the top. In the field, the webless wolf spider seeks its insect prey on the ground, while the also webless big-eyed jumping spider leaps from mid foliage onto prey. Higher up, a nursery web spider hides in foliage, or the conspicuously patterned argiope field spider spins an orbital web in space between plants.

Flora and fauna that do not fit in the balance between prey and predator are ones we call invasive. Most, like the autumn olive featured last month, are imported and thrive where no animal or fungal predator exist to limit their takeover of native species.

A healthy old-field is a marvelous place to observe the balance of nature within just 30 inches. To do so, take precautions to avoid ticks, chiggers, poison ivy, and sunburn.

Autumn Olive was introduced to the US in 1830 from southern Europe and Asia. Over a century later, backed by the US Soil and Conservation Service, it was in common use to provide food and cover for wildlife, and erosion control along highways and Long Island beaches. Despite its positive uses, the tree’s invasive characteristics are now recognized to outweigh its benefits.

Autumn Olive

Elaeagnus umbellata

“Volunteers wanted to help clear autumn olive from Vineyard Field,” often appear in FLPG Minutes. About 1980, after the Bridgehampton Winery abandoned the field, these shrubby trees appeared everywhere (except in the wettest areas), replacing varieties of wild grasses, sedges, wildflowers, and the field itself with a monoculture of autumn olive, just as the tree has done elsewhere on the East Coast. The invasion went unchecked in the field until this year, when we cut it back to fulfill our commitment to preserving the old-field habitat and the fauna and flora dependent on the field environment, which are rare on the East End.

Autumn Olive was introduced to the US in 1830 from southern Europe and Asia. Over a century later, backed by the US Soil and Conservation Service, it was in common use to provide food and cover for wildlife, and erosion control along highways and Long Island beaches. Despite its positive uses, the tree’s invasive characteristics are now recognized to outweigh its benefits.

OBJECT OF THE SAW

The shrubby autumn olive tree grows to 15 feet. Its alternate leaves, 1 to 3 inches long, are light green above and silver below. The 1/4 inch fruit ripens red in late summer.
The very qualities responsible for its value account also for its proliferation. Relished by 50 species of mostly birds and some mammals; the fruit is eaten in quantity, and the seeds widely dispersed. The outer layer of the seed is impermeable to digestive juices. Just one mature tree can produce fruit with from 20,000 to 54,000 seeds per year.

Autumn olive thrives because it fertilizes itself, thus making it able to spread into many types of soil, including sand, glacial till, and disturbed soils. The Elaeagnaceae family members fix atmospheric nitrogen: their root nodules are infected by an endophyte (fungus) that maintains a symbiotic relationship with the roots and provides nitrogen and nutrients for the tree.

While the tree produces food for itself all year, its fruit for birds is available only in late summer-early fall. Notice the tree’s leaves are untouched by insects, thus depriving wildlife a balanced meal. Just as we do, wildlife need a balanced diet year round. Autumn olive destroys the balance that the indigenous variety of native plants offers and attracts.

P.S. The berry contains lycopene up to 17 times higher than in a raw tomato. Researchers are looking at lycopene as a preventative to prostate and other cancers.

From Minutes 2/24/04

The Value of Vineyard Field and Our Work March 1, 2004

Dear Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt,

On behalf of the South Fork Natural History Museum, I would like to thank the Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt for your ongoing efforts to remove invasive alien plants, like Autumn Olive, from the Old Field behind our Museum.

Because they are so easily developed, Old Fields and other types of grassland have become among the most rare ecosystems on Long Island. As a result, the plants and animals that are found in this type of habitat have become scarce and in many instances have disappeared completely. For this reason the work your organization is doing is an essential part of insuring that the Long Pond Greenbelt retains the biological diversity that makes it such an extraordinary place.

In the past year, since we moved into the new museum building, some interesting and surprising discoveries have been made in the field, and I have no doubt that more will be discovered as a fuller inventory of what exists is made. Some of the unusual plants that have been discovered are Tooth Cup, Creeping Saint Johnswort, Hyssop Hedge-nettle, Seedbox, Slender Blue Flag and many other herbaceous plants and grasses found in fields and meadows.

Some of the birds seen that are associated with old fields and grasslands are Meadow Lark, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow and Woodcock. All of these are species that are in decline because of dwindling habitat.

It is evident to me that the field is a vibrant and thriving grassland community that can only improve if proper management procedures are put in place. However, as past history has shown, this type of habitat can often be considered expendable by well meaning but uninformed individuals, and constant vigilance will probably be needed to make sure that the only viable grassland in the Greenbelt does not disappear.

It is gratifying to know that the volunteers and local landscaping companies that have donated their time and equipment to this cause are willing to give so much to ensure that some of the natural wonders of the South Fork will be preserved for future generations.

Sincerely, Jim Ash, Executive Director

From Minutes 9/28/04

Hot on the Trail of Alien Species

By Bill Jacobs, [formerly] Invasive Species Specialist for The Nature Conservancy

Did you know that portions of the Long Pond Greenbelt are being invaded by alien species? These invaders are not from outer space, although they have traveled far to get here. Just who, or what, are these silent green invaders?

The intruders are exotic plants from other parts of the world that have been introduced here, intentionally or accidentally, by people. In their new surroundings, these invaders can rapidly spread out of control, crowding out the diverse blend of local plants and wildlife that make the greenbelt such a wonderful place to explore. Thankfully, efforts are underway by the Southampton Trails Preservation Society, Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt, The Nature Conservancy, Weed Watchers, and public and private landowners to slow or halt this invasion.

One of the most destructive invaders is the common reed or Phragmites australis. Although this species is native to Long Island, our local phragmites has been replaced by a more aggressive
Eurasian strain. At 10 to 14 feet tall, and with its ability to spread by underground stems, phragmites has begun to devour the shores of the greenbelt’s globally-rare coastal plain ponds. These awe-inspiring ponds, and their neighbors to the west in the Central Pine Barrens, harbor the state’s highest concentration of rare plants and animals.

The name “Phragmites” is derived from the Greek word for fence, phragma. No word could be more fitting for this weed. Just one or a few seeds or plant pieces can start a large colony that is as impenetrable for people, plants, and animals as any solid fence.

This summer, members the societies mentioned conducted their first major “invasive weed sweep” of the greenbelt. A weed sweep entails hiking the trails, checking areas of past adverse disturbance, and checking the boundaries between developed lands and the greenbelt to identify infestations. Once the baseline sweeps are completed, Conservancy staff will produce a map of the greenbelt showing pristine, weed-free areas and threatening weed infestations.

The recent weed sweep uncovered several potentially serious invaders, including Japanese barberry, Japanese honeysuckle, tree-of-heaven, and Asiatic bittersweet. All of these species are known to displace local plants and animals. Plans will be developed soon to control the highest risk infestations.

Over the past few years, efforts by land managers and volunteers to eradicate phragmites from around Long Pond have been amazingly successful. Native species are returning to areas that were once overrun with phragmites. Control methods include cutting, digging, and wiping herbicide directly on the offending plants.

Upcoming weed management will focus on controlling additional areas of phragmites, periodic monitoring, and the control of new invaders.

Only with careful stewardship, including the management of invasive plants, will the dynamic balance of life in the greenbelt be preserved for future generations. If you would like to learn more about invasive plants in the greenbelt, please contact the The Nature Conservancy at 631-329-7689.

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**From Minutes 12/12/05**

**Autumn Olive Has all the Advantages**

Autumn olive was profiled in this column Nov. 2003, but the many questions asked about this invasive tree prompt a repeat of parts and more.

In 1830 a U.S. nursery imported autumn olive and its cousin Russian olive for ornamental use from their native range in China, Japan, and Korea. The trees’ welcome was ensured following the dust bowl of the 1930s when the U.S. Soil Conservation Service studied the trees and eventually promoted Russian olive for western states and autumn olive for eastern states to stabilize soil erosion. By the 1960s autumn olive was widely distributed and planted along highway edges and beaches, and in wildlife habitats to provide food (the berries) and cover for some 50 species of wildlife, mostly birds.

The birds had not heard the unresearched claim that the tree rarely escaped from cultivated areas. Local and migrating birds descended on the trees, devoured thousands of berries, and later excreted the indigestible seeds, which sprouted distances from parent trees. Because autumn olive roots fix atmospheric nitrogen and fertilize themselves, they thrived in a variety of soils, including nutrient poor sandy, loamy, and somewhat clayey textures. They also tolerate pH ranges of 4.0–6.5, soils with high salt concentrations, and drought. No wonder the trees are invasive in most habitats in its eastern range except very wet areas and dense woodland.

With the abandonment of the Bridgehampton Winery in the mid 1990s, Vineyard Field began the process of succession from an uncultivated field to woodland. Excluding autumn olive from the scenario, our usual slow succession occurs as birds swallow a fruit from our native red cedar and drop its two seeds, eat a wild cherry and pass its one seed in a nearby or distant field where they germinate. Meanwhile voles search out, clip, and eat seedlings like maples, and white-footed mice collect seeds of pines and oaks for food. Together these rodents slow the rate of trees colonization in a field. In time, and the field becomes scattered mostly with cedar, cherry, and shrubs like bayberry.

Add autumn olive to the scene. One mature tree can produce fruit containing from 20,000 to 54,000 seeds a year. Birds eat quantities of its red fruit and distribute the indigestible seeds widely, where, unaffected by a natural system of control, they grow rapidly and produce fruit in 3 to 5 years. Take a look at Vineyard Field for the result: masses of autumn olive in all stages of growth, plus scattered cedars, cherry, and bayberry.
From Minutes 2/21/06

Intolerant Invasives

Jim Ash tells of the time he came across a few sickly phragmites plants protected by fencing and given a caption explaining their rarity. He was in London’s botanical garden. For the last 5 years, plant researchers have sought to answer the question. What is it that turns a plant like phragmites, which is in balance with neighboring flora in home soils, into an invasive one in foreign soils? So far, researchers offer several probable explanations.

First, plants grown in foreign soils grow more vigorously than when in their home soils, which contain pathogens constraining their expansion. As plant species evolved together in home soils, each species exuded specific root toxins that hindered a neighboring species’ expansion. Over the eons these neighbors developed a limited tolerance for one another’s toxins, and biodiversity survived.

Freed of its home soil constraints, some nonnative species proliferate when introduced to a foreign place like Vineyard Field, where native plants are vulnerable to the invaders’ toxins. Both nonnative mugwort and Japanese knotweed, which are highly aggressive in the field, are suspected of having toxic properties. Roots of knotweed exude a number of chemicals possibly to deter other species. Nevertheless, its thick roots form an impenetrable mat descending up to 2 yards and expanding 3 yards in a growing season. On top of that, its decomposing stalks and leaves are found to deter surrounding vegetation.

Mugwort infests the edges of paths and is spreading into Vineyard field. Unlike knotweed, its root system is fine and fragile, traveling just under the surface, but like knotweed it sends up new plants along its expanding root system. In studies, its roots and especially leaves demonstrate toxic effects on neighboring species.

Some 90% of plants depend on underground mycorrhizal fungi to digest and transfer nutrients to the plants. Of nonnative plants, the ones that are able to take advantage of a broad range of fungi in their new home gain extra muscle power and become invasive.

Most members the mustard family are not mycorrhizal. In the case of invasive garlic mustard, its root exudates kill off fungi beneficial to the natives. This advantage helps explain the carpets of garlic mustard in the field and Greenbelt. More factors contribute to invasiveness, and all explanations do not apply to all invasives.

• See also FLPG Minutes features on autumn olive, 12/13/05 and 11/25/03.
• Of New York’s 24 most invasive plants, at least 9 infest Vineyard Field.

From Minutes 8/14/04

Birds Love Pokeweed

Note: all parts of pokeweed, Phytolacca americana, are poisonous and potentially lethal.

Today our native pokeweed is overlooked if not reviled as rank and unsightly. But for the first Americans, the Indians, its first spring stalks were sought after, then carefully prepared to eliminate the poison, and eaten like asparagus. Poultries, teas, and solutions made from all parts of the plant were used by medicine men to treat cancer, skin irritations and wounds, rheumatism, fever, and the irritated nipples of nursing mothers, and to purge the body of toxins.

In the days of exploration and colonial settlement, the ingredients for medications primarily came from plants. Explorers and settlers not only brought their own plants from Europe, but they were instructed to discover medicinal plants in the new world. In 1672, the earliest mention of pokeweed was published in London by John Josselyn, scientist-explorer of New England. He reported that the Indians cured wounds with the plant. Because Josselyn also wrote admiringly of the Indian’s superior survival skills
From Minutes 10/16/06

Mice, voles, shrews, and moles—what’s the difference?

Often reviled at your home, these mammals are free to roam in the Greenbelt from ocean shore to uplands and bay active mostly out-of-sight under leaves, logs, vegetation, or in underground burrows. Should you see these mammals, class Mammalia, they sort of look alike.

**Mice and voles** are in the order Rodentia and family Muridae, all having 2 long incisors in the upper and lower jaws, which grow continuously and must be kept worn down by gnawing. They lack canine teeth and have a space between the incisors and back teeth. Only 4 clawed toes are on the front feet.

**White-footed mice**, in the subfamily Cricetinae, have large eyes and ears, and long legs and tail. They forage on the ground and climb trees seeking seeds, nuts, fruits, insects (including gypsy moths), nestling birds, mice and voles.

**Voles** (sometimes called mice) are in the subfamily Microtinae, and are distinguished from mice by their short tails, smaller eyes, ears, and legs. Voles eat and often store succulent roots, seeds, grasses, and tender shoots of green plants. Their gnawing bark causes major injury and sometimes death to trees.

**Shrews and moles** are not rodents, but are in the order Insectivora, all having uninterrupted sharp teeth resembling those of carnivores and packed into a long pointed face. Ears are not visible, and tiny eyes offer little sight; their front paws have 5 clawed toes.

**Shrews** are members of the family Soricidae. Only the short-tailed shrew’s saliva is poisonous, similar to cobra venom. While their diet is primarily insects and larvae, and worms, they will attack animals 2x their size, like any of those pictured here when encountered in their runways and underground tunnels. Though we may not see them, they are not strangers to one another.

**Moles**, in the family Talpidae, have even smaller eyes and no external ears. Their front paws are dramatically broad and turned outward for digging tunnels in search of underground invertebrates, like June-bug larvae, and worms.

Mice, voles, shrews, and moles constitute an essential link in nature’s food web by devouring insects, controlling plant growth, and in turn, becoming food for hawks, owls, fox, raccoon, and snakes.

compared to the white man’s and of Indian women’s self-reliance, his work was received poorly.

Nevertheless, pokeweed’s fame spread by the early 1700s and 1800s when colonial statesmen-scientists were excited by the Indians’ knowledge of medicinal plants. Cadwallader Colden (a physician, botanist, and lieutenant governor of New York), John Bartram (botanist), Peter Kalm* (student of Linnaeus), Benjamin Franklin, and William Barton, M.D., communicated the Indian’s use of pokeweed throughout the colonies, to Linnaeus and others in Europe. Dr. Barton featured pokeweed among the 50 plants he selected for his Vegetable Materia Medica of the United States, 1817. From 1820 to 1916 pokeweed appeared in the U.S. Pharmacopoeia.

Pokeweed’s disappearance as a medicinal is not to be mourned. Its roots, leaves, and berries are imbued with a poison that induces a burning sensation in the mouth, vomiting, diarrhea, convulsions, respiratory failure, and death if administered improperly.

But it’s time to restore pokeweed’s fame, not as a medicinal, but as a favored native berry devoured by 52 species of birds and some animals. Its crimson berries ripen in late August and early September. The plant prefers damp disturbed areas along partly sunny trails, or up against a fence in your back yard, where migrating birds are sure to remember it each year. But keep the kids away from the enticing but poisonous berries.

*A common Greenbelt shrub, the mountain laurel, Kalmia latifolia, is named after Peter Kalm.*

P.S. In 1969 Tony Joe White sang the praises of Pokeweed in his “Poke Salad Annie.” Elvis picked up the song too.
From Minutes 4/9/07

Man-made Vineyard Field—A History of the Land

Plans to develop the 74 acres of Vineyard Field and Woods into a 9-hole golf course and 8-lot subdivision had progressed between 1993 and 1997, when the Friends of Black Pond, joined by Southampton Trails Preservation Society, the Group for the South Fork, and the Sabin Conservation Fund, initiated a successful campaign to preserve the land. In 1997, Skip Heaney announced that the Town of Southampton approved the purchase of the 39 acres of former agricultural land, and County Executive Robert Gaffney announced that Suffolk County would buy the 31 acres of woodland.

Following the preservation, the Friends of Black Pond recognized that continued vigilance was needed to protect the Greenbelt, so the group evolved into the Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt 10 years ago.

10,000 years ago, the glacier was receding, leaving behind a wet outwash plain at Vineyard Field and Woods. Over time the land vegetated into oak woodland and remained unaltered by humans, except for possible disturbance by Indians at Black Pond.

Settlers from Southampton probably made the first mark on the land in 1690 when they cut a cart path (now the Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike) to what is now Sag Harbor and thus defined the land’s western border. Merchants Path (now Narrow Lane and Haines Path) lay to the south and east.

The next two man-made changes to the land occurred before 1750. Its distance from settlers and its solid woodland made it the perfect setting for a smallpox house in the days when isolation was the only accepted defense against the disease. When Dr. Silas Halsey inoculated his patients, Southampton Town prosecuted him for doing so in 1772. He may have treated Lemuel Howell, a descendent of a Southampton Town Founder, Edward Howell, who died at the Pock House. Lemuel owned the fulling mill at Sag Swamp.

The available wood probably attracted Daniel Moore to build the first farm house on a portion of the land located opposite Norris Lane. Any foundation left would be under the LIRR tracks running to East Hampton, which were laid in 1893.

Sometime about 1850 Lester Bennett built the farm house, now occupied by John the Locksmith. Three generations of Bennetts cleared and farmed a portion of the land until the mid-1930s, when Mike Skonieczny bought the farmhouse. With his sons, he farmed the land and, after World War II, most significantly, he dug the pond on the east side of the field. Mike’s daughter married Carl Yastrzemski, and during the time they lived in the farmhouse, their son, “Yaz,” was born in 1939. Batting left-handed, he grew up to win the Triple Crown, while playing for the Red Sox.

Other owners and renters followed until 1979, when Lyle Greenfield, in the name of the Bridgehampton Winery, attempted to raise grapes and produce fine wines on the parcel. When cultivating the land, he dug the pond on the west side of the field behind SoFo’s museum. The winery failed, and the South Fork Natural History Museum purchased the winery building in 1997 and reconstructed it to create the present museum.

Skonieczny and Greenfield ponds attracted endangered tiger salamanders, and the field soon hosted several species of rare and common plants and declining species of fauna dependent on a grassland habitat.

The Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt’s grassland restoration project is a continuation of this series of man-made alterations that benefit flora and fauna at Vineyard Field.

From Minutes 9/10/07

Goodness Snakes Alive!

During the 2006 growing season, volunteers clearing Vineyard Field were treated to numerous wildlife sightings, but work always stopped when one of us came upon a black racer snake. Peg Conklin spotted three of them in a writhing mating ball, the two males vying to connect with the female. When the Japanese knotweed crew unrolled a tarp in preparation to cover a cleared section, inside was a large black racer. A couple of days before snakes shed their skins, they stop eating and take refuge in a hiding place. The one found rolled up (see photo) was quite gray including the skin covering the eyes, this snake’s color prior to shedding. From the number of skins found—some nearly reach-
ing a maximum length of 6 feet—at the edges of our tarps, we conclude that tarps are a favored place to shed. The snake’s flicking tongue tested the air to judge if the onlookers were prey or predator. After the tongue retracted to a narrow canal (Jacobson’s organ) for scent analysis by the brain, the snake fled.

The observers happened to be admirers of this species known to control rodent populations, and with them, disease-carrying ticks. Less informed spectators might have tried to kill the black racer. In earlier years that was always the case as reported in the local papers.

From the Sag Harbor Express, October 19, 1871: “Accidents.—Clifford B. Smith, son of A.D. Smith of this place, while out gunning on Saturday last, in company with Frank Schellenger, came near losing his life, and in a very heedless manner too, which should be a warning to all youth who indulge in the use of fire arms. Seeing a snake squirming himself along, he jabbed at him with the breech of his gun, while the muzzle was pointed toward him, the consequence was that the jar raised the hammer, discharged the gun, and the contents entered the left arm, between the shoulder and elbow. Fortunately the bone was not severely injured, although the flesh was horribly mangled, the cords shot off and one of the main arteries severed. Although near Crooked Pond at the time of the accident, after tightly bandaging his arm, he walked about two miles, to the residence of S.T. Hildreth (near Mashashimuet Park), who harnessed his horse and took the unfortunate youth to the office of Dr. H. Cook, where the wound was dressed.”

Besides rodents, insects and nesting birds fall prey to the black racer, which climbs trees and even greased poles in search of eggs and nestlings. To prevent predation of birds in SoFo’s nest boxes, a snake and raccoon guard encircles the posts of the boxes and the purple-martin tower.

Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt
Vineyard Field Restoration Project—2007

REPORTED MINUTES RELATING TO THE FIELD—

From Minutes 3/25/03
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for new and ongoing projects—
• Vineyard Fields —Dai reported a new project in Greenbelt to reclaim the grasslands at Vineyard Fields. Need volunteers to join Southampton Town, STPS, GSF, and SOFO on May 17th and June 14th. Also need a tractor with bucket and roto-cutter. Volunteers call Dai Dayton at 537-0660.

From Minutes 7/22/03
• Update on Vineyard Fields reclamation project —The autumn olives that we cut in the spring are already sprouting new growth, and the autumn olive infestation is so extensive that whether chopping them down can successfully eradicate them is in question. FLPG, nonetheless, plans another cutting session in mid-September. Bruce reported that Laura Smith of Southampton Town’s Community Preservation office is exploring more methods to control this invasive species. Bruce also suggested the possibility that The Nature Conservancy with Americorp teams could help with the project.

From Minutes 8/26/03
• Vineyard Field reclamation—See announcement at right; please come and help.
• Sat., Sept. 13, 9 am. Vineyard Fields Reclamation Project. Meet at SoFo
Museum on the BH-SH Turnpike (1/10 mile north of LIRR tracks.) Bring loppers and heavy gloves.

**From Minutes 9/23/03**

- Volunteers needed to help Clear Autumn Olives at Vineyard Field—Dai Dayton announced the next work day will be Sat., Nov. 15. Call Dai, 537-0660, for information.

**From Minutes 2/24/04**

- Help Clear Invasive Autumn Olive Trees from Vineyard Field, Sat., March 27—See details under Greenbelt Events. Future cuts are scheduled for April 24 and May 8.

**From Minutes 12/13/04**

- Upcoming Expenses—Speaking of restoration, we are looking toward the most expensive project we have yet engaged in. It has become clear that our small group of volunteers, cutting autumn olive from Vineyard Field / Bull Head Field, is unable to do the job of returning the field to the now rare “old-field” habitat, which is so important to wildlife. So it is with pleasure that we note we are financially ahead of last year, giving us a head start on raising funds for the project.

**From Minutes 3/14/05**

- Clearing autumn olives from Vineyard / Bullhead Fields—Laura also gave an update on Vineyard Fields. The town received two bids to remove the invasive autumn olives, but both bids were rejected as too expensive. Other removal techniques were discussed, including simply cutting the trees for later removal. FLPG will begin cutting in May. Volunteers call 537-0660.

Last year FLPG joined The Nature Conservancy’s survey team identifying both invasive plants and weed free areas in the Greenbelt. In an effort to create a weed free area, TNC will begin removing invasive multiflora rose bordering the trail at the north end of Long Pond. At this site, Phragmites has been removed and is nearly under control, allowing for growth of both common and rare native plants. For more information, call Stacy Golden, 631-367-3225 x131.

On April 2, the South Fork Natural History Museum will lead a hands-on workshop on how to control invasive plants using the “tarp technique.” See details in calendar below.

**From Minutes 4/11/05**

- Update Vineyard Fields / Bullhead Plain—Bids offered to clear invasive autumn olive trees from the field were turned down by Southampton Town for being too high. We discussed alternative methods to cutting, chipping and removal of the autumn olive from the field. We then voted to spend $700 of FLPG’s funds to cut the trees. Dai will call the Town and a contractor for a date to proceed. Dai and Jean will apply for the Southampton Town Human Resources Grant to help with this work.

**From Minutes 5/9/05**

- Autumn Olive removal—The job of clearing autumn olive from Vineyard / Bullhead field is proving complicated—it comes back like garbage in the Greenbelt. As a result, we are seeking more advice on removal. Sandi is applying to Suffolk County for a grant to remove invasive species. Jean suggests study sites to determine the most effective means of removal. The discussion will continue next meeting at which Laura Smith of Southampton Community Preservation Fund will attend.

**From Minutes 6/13/05**

- Update on autumn olive invasion of Vineyard Field—Laura Smith of the Southampton Community Preservation Fund, reported that she and Jean Held visited the field to evaluate the autumn olive eradication project. While regrowth has occurred where cuts low to the ground were made last fall, in those areas where the cuts were higher little regrowth was found.

Laura suggested a three-prong approach to the autumn olives. **First,** the smallest seedlings can be cut or mowed or dug. Mowed areas should be repeated annually. **Second,** in the delicate wetland areas, olives can be cleared only very carefully, one at a time, under supervision. Jean Held has offered to spearhead the wetland clearances. **Third,** and most daunting, is the large area that has become dominated by shrub-and tree-sized olives, where nothing else is growing. For these areas, Laura presented information on grants available through both the state and federal government for grassland restoration. Whatever proposals are developed can be submitted to Southampton Town for matching funds. Laura estimates a cost between $25,000 and $50,000 to clear the whole infestation. She reiterated that old-field areas are rare and disappearing faster than any other type of habitat across North America, and that the restoration of Vineyard Fields could serve as a model for the entire East End.

**From Minutes 7/11/05**

- Autumn olive removal at Vineyard / Bullhead Field—Members of FLPG met on two occasions to remove invasive species: autumn olive, Japanese knotweed, and *Rosa multiflora* in select-
ed areas where the plants are replacing some of New York’s rarest plants. Laura Smith and Ron Carter (SHT) will pick up the piles of removed plants. FLPG has purchased supplies for the project, which SOFO is storing for us. Sandra, Susan, and Bruce Horwith will apply for grants to remove concentrations of autumn olive in the 39 acre field.

From Minutes 8/8/05
• Autumn olive at Bull Head Field/Vineyard Field—Laura reported that CPF could enter into a stewardship agreement with FLPG for old-field restoration, allowing the sale of non-native spruce trees growing in the field. Sandra is organizing a meeting with representatives of SH Town, TNC, SoFo, and FLPG to address the autumn olive crisis. Jean asks for volunteers to help clear small autumn olives on Wednesdays. Call her at 725-2690.

From Minutes 9/12/05
• Autumn olive removal from Vineyard / Bullhead Field—On September 14th, members from the Southampton Community Preservation Department, SOFO, TNC, and FLPG will meet to discuss methods of removing the autumn olive trees, (which are overtaking the field), and funding for the project. In the meantime FLPG has had several work sessions to clear the smaller trees from areas of noted and rare plants. We thank those FLPG members whose funds are dedicated to this project.

From Minutes 10/10/05
• Autumn olive removal from Vineyard / Bullhead Field—Bill Miller and Associates helped conduct an experimental cutting of the trees to determine the best method for future removal. Thank you Bill, Kenny, and Octavio.

  On Sept. 14th, Sandra, Dai, Bruce Horwith (TNC), Jim Ash (SoFo), Laura Smith (SH Town CPF), and Mary Wilson (SH Town CPF) met to discuss the project. The value of old fields for wildlife and plants was again stressed. They are becoming very, very rare. FLPG would like a commitment from the Town to finance the clearing. Because Vineyard Fields was purchased through the Open Space program, and not CPF funds, Mary and Laura could not offer funding but suggested presenting the plan to Marty Shea and Jeff Murphree. Jim Ash thought SoFo might volunteer to mow the field annually once the olives had been removed. (SoFo board voted yes.) Sandra will inform Mary and Laura. Bruce discussed the option of burning the olives once they have been cut and stacked in piles. He also offered to ask the company which TNC works with to find the price of removing the olives. Jean suggested we contact County Legislator Jay Schneiderman for funding. Suffolk County has established a water and land invasives control task force to develop and implement an invasives control program for Suffolk County lands and waters.

From Minutes 12/12/05
• Progress on grant application to remove autumn olive and invasives from Vineyard Field—Laura reported on her meeting with Polly Weigert from the USDA Soil Conservation Service. Polly is making the biological analysis for the grant to remove invasives from Vineyard Fields. The grant would be for 10 years and cover 75% of costs for 22-25 upland acres. None of the wetlands would be disturbed. Laura, Jim Ash (SOFO), and Dai will meet with Polly and a Suffolk County Conservation Biologist to walk the field and further discuss the grant.

From Minutes 3/13/06
• Vineyard Fields Grasslands Restoration Project update—Laura reported that we are still waiting for the town to send our letter of access to Vineyard Fields for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) grant. The Town Board of Southampton is working on a resolution regarding insurance issues to cover volunteers removing autumn olive and invasive plants from Vineyard Field.

From Minutes 4/10/06
• Vineyard Fields Grasslands Restoration grant update—The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) grant is close to finalization.

• Autumn olive removal—Experimental cuts performed by Bill Miller Associates last year appear to be successful showing no signs of regrowth.

• Sign up to help with Vineyard Fields Grasslands Restoration Project—Times and days for work sessions will be varied. Please call Jean at 725-2690 and give your name and phone number to be added to a volunteer list.

From Minutes 5/8/06
• Vineyard Fields Grasslands Restoration grant is finalized—Details will be announced next FLPG meeting. Call Jean at 725-2690 to be added to a volunteer list.

From Minutes 6/12/06
• Vineyard Field reclamation grant is finalized—It’s official: FLPG has been awarded an $18,898 10-year grant from the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. Under the USDA/ NRCS’s Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), FLPG will work to...
Field grant update
From Minutes 12/13/06

Laura Smith of Community Preservation Office and Suffolk County’s Soil and Water Conservation Service, FLPG will target the removal of the two most prevalent and destructive invasive species—the Japanese knotweed and autumn olive—which have colonized large areas of former meadow, shouldering out native grasses and flowers. A work plan is currently being devised that will focus on knotweed removal during the late fall and early spring. Volunteers are needed for both undertakings and as soon as the timetable is set, we will let FLPG members know just how and where they can pitch in. In the meantime Jean works in the field Tuesdays or Wednesdays. Call Jean to help now, 725-2690.

A special thank you goes out to Polly Weigand of Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District for their help in developing the grant proposal and for their guidance.

From Minutes 8/14/04

Vineyard Field Restoration update—Sept. 1st will be the beginning date set by Southampton Town for active removal of autumn olive. A flyer requesting financial support is in the works. Bruce Horwith (TNC) has suggested contractors for the clearing.

From Minutes 9/11/06

Vineyard Field Reclamation Project—The Vineyard Field fund-raising brochure and letter is completed. We stuffed envelopes during the meeting, but are waiting for the return envelopes.

Laura informed us of more Nature Conservancy tested methods to remove autumn olive regardless of the time of year.

We voted to hire Dick Leland to begin removing and chipping autumn olive from one acre. Work should begin this month.

We are grateful to the Southampton Trails Preservation Society maintenance crew for donating a work session to begin removing a 8,000 square foot patch of solid Japanese knotweed. See photo above. Rudi Lemp has made several inroads on the weed since. Jean continues to work in the Field on Wednesdays. To volunteer and see the field call 725-2690.

Minutes 10/16/06

Great progress on the Vineyard Field Restoration Project—FLPG has raised $9,516.00 and so far cleared invasive autumn olive and knotweed from approximately 8 acres from the 39-acre field at a price of $7,909.00—not including donated labor and materials. After payment, the Friends’ LPG Fund balance is now $1,607.00. More fund raising brochures will be sent out in the near future. We would like to thank all who have contributed time and funds to this project. Please come to the field and view the progress.

Hunting season in the Greenbelt—Laura reported the hunting regulations for Southampton Town lands in the Greenbelt located between the Bridgehampton/Sag Harbor Turnpike and Toppings Path/Widow Gavits Road.

All hunting is still regulated by NYS DEC laws. There is no upland shotgun season in the LPG on town lands. Bow hunting is not restricted except on lands posted with No Hunting signs. Waterfowl hunting is allowed on or over all water bodies; access is regulated by the Southampton Town Trustees.

From Minutes 11/13/06

Vineyard Field Restoration good-news update—State Assemblyman Fred Thiele who has secured a forthcoming $5,000 NY State grant for the project. And we are grateful to Riverhead Building Supply for donating two 20x40 tarps and two 20x20 tarps to cover knotweed and to Home Depot for $250 worth of black plastic to cover knotweed patches. Finally thanks to all volunteers who showed up on a beautiful November day to clear invasives. See photos. The Sag Harbor Express reported it with a picture on their front page.
• Vineyard Field Restoration fund raising—We have raised almost enough to pay for another day of professional clearing, and in the meantime, Dai and Susan are investigating other grant opportunities, and donations of supplies. We are also exploring reprinting the fund-raising brochure.

• Vineyard Field clearing scheduled—The Southampton Trail Preservation Society Work Crew is planning to clear knotweed, Thursday, November 30.

**From Minutes 12/11/06**

• Greenbelt conversation—Stacy and Dai discussed organizing volunteers to maintain the cleared sections and cut back new growth of autumn from the acres of Vineyard field which we have cleared this year. Stacy, who works with local schoolchildren and teachers through the Cooperative Extension, thought she might be able to organize groups to adopt sections of the field.


And on November 28, Richard

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Vineyard Field Volunteers

• In November, Sag Harbor teachers Ewa Szuchowska, Ruth White-Dunn, and Doug Doerr, and students Damian Syranos and Beau Riva, and Peg Conklin, Ken Spadafora, Pam Schiel, and Audrey Lyons (not pictured) all dug out Japanese knotweed. Jean Held, Sandra Ferguson, Liza Wetanson, Dai Dayton, Evan Marks, Joe Giunta, cleared autumn olive from the field. All enjoyed refreshments and watching flock of bluebirds—a rewarding sign of our work.
Leland and his crew of professional clearers spent another day in the field. An estimated 10 acres are now cleared. The field is more open and the fund is now a little in the red.

**Survey of Vineyard Field**—Dai and Laura will be meeting with WHIP representative Polly Weigand at the field on to survey the field and finalize the WHIP, (USDA/NRCS’s Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program), grant money earned this year.

**From Minutes 1/8/07**
- **Vineyard Field Restoration Project**—Sandra gave a special thanks to Dai Dayton and Jean Held for their outstanding contribution to the project.
- **Restoration Project Grants**—Dai reported that she met with Polly Weigand (Suffolk Soil & Water Conservation District) for the final 2006 inspection of the field. Polly will have the report ready for our next meeting and has applied for the reimbursement funds from the WHIP grant. We have also sent in applications to the Evan Frankel Foundation and for the NYS grant organized by State Assemblyman Fred Thiele.
- **Councilperson Linda Kabot** referred our grant appeal to Southampton Town to the Environmental Fund Program, and the restoration project was approved for a $5,000 grant. Special thanks go to Linda for the recommendation.
- **Equipment Needed**—We need a tractor for mowing the field. A 6-foot rotocutter can be used.
- **Volunteers Needed**—Lauren Jarrett (EECO Farm) has offered pallets to keep down the tarps on the cleared patches of Japanese knotweed. To help Dai will pick them up, call 537-0660.
- **Spring Volunteer Program Discussed**—We will need many volunteers to cut down shoots from the Autumn Olive bushes. An “adopt an acre or 1/2 acre” program was suggested. Possible contacts for volunteers might be SOFO, TNC, Bridgehampton High School Native Planting program, Stacy Meyers from Cornell Cooperative Extension.

**From Minutes 2/13/07**
- **End-of-Year Thanks**—The financial report does not reflect the generous contributions donated by our members and the community of their services and materials that went into producing the newsletter, making our annual Celebration a success, and the many expenses associated with the restoration of Vineyard Field.

**Vineyard Field Restoration Update**—FLPG received $2,970 from the WHIP grant for our 2006 work. The funds were put to use immediately for another day of clearing. Laura reported that the mowing schedule for the next 3 years will be done on a need basis. FLPG will ask Bill Masterson (Superintendent of Highways) for help mowing the field.

**From Minutes 3/12/07**
- **Vineyard Field Restoration Project Update**—Two more days of invasive removal have been completed in the field. Southampton Town has approved our application for the $5,000 grant. All volunteers must sign in before working. The DEC grant Fred Thiele secured for us is pending our NY State Charities Bureau registration. Sandi has filed the necessary paperwork.

**From Minutes 4/9/07**
- **Vineyard Field Grassland Restoration Project**—Laura reported the Southampton Town Highway Dept. will stabilize the existing access into Vineyard Field. FLPG received a $5,000 grant towards the field restoration from Southampton Town. FLPG has been nominated for a $500 grant from the Evan Frankel Foundation.

Laura is organizing a presentation on the grasslands restoration project to be held at the Schaffner House. May 9th is the suggested date. She will contact Jim Ash to talk about the importance of grasslands, Polly Weigand to talk about the WHIP grant and threats to the grasslands, and Dai Dayton to discuss the ongoing project in Vineyard Field. (See insert.)

**From Minutes 5/14/07**
- **Vineyard Field Grassland Restoration Project**—FLPG was granted $500.00 from the Evan Frankel Foundation.
- The incident of two men running their dogs in the field and scaring up the nesting birds was reported to Ron Carter, SH Town code enforcer.
- **On May 9th, the first of a series of Long Pond Greenbelt presentations** was held at the Long Pond Greenbelt Nature Center. Jim Ash (SoFo) talked about the importance of grasslands; Polly Weigand explained WHIP grant and threats to the grasslands, and Dai Dayton discussed FLPG’s ongoing grasslands restoration project in the field.

**From Minutes 6/11/07**
- **Vineyard Field Update**—Due to the flooded condition of the field and access road, mowing and commercial removal of Autumn olive is stalled until the field dries out. Laura reported that the town highway department will then stabilize the existing access road. In the meantime, Jean ordered an injection-gun to control knotweed, and volunteers are removing knotweed, which must be dug and covered with tarps. We have set weekend work dates to do this work. To volunteer call Jean 725-2690.
- To explain the unfortu-
nate appearance of knotweed removal, we will order signs explaining the project.

- **Vineyard Field Fund**—FLPG is grateful for a recent personal and the Evan Frankel Foundation’s contributions to the LPG Fund, which we will use to purchase new tarps and black plastic to cover the knotweed areas. Susan is working on applications for future grants.

### From Minutes 7/9/07

- **Vineyard Field update**—We voted to purchase more tarps and black plastic to cover invasive Japanese knotweed.
  
  Grant applications have been filled out and sent by Sandi for a DEC Terrestrial Invasive grant, by Dai to Brine Family Charitable Trust, by Susan to American Express, and she is working on one to the Tiffany Foundation.

### From Minutes 8/13/07

- **Treasurer’s report**—Included in our total bank balance of $40,890.85 are new additions to the Vineyard Field Restoration Fund of $26,666.67 from the Brine grant (2/3 of grant) and $1,250.00 from the Fred Thiele/DEC grant (1/4 of grant). Also included is $5,520.00 raised from our 10-Year Anniversary Party.

- **Vineyard Field Grassland Restoration Project**—The Brine Family Charitable Trust grant will greatly accelerate our restoration project. With these funds we plan to remove the remaining 20 acres of autumn olive infestation by the end of this year. We will continue removing the Japanese knotweed and other invasives and mow the autumn olive regrowth in the initial 10 acres, which were cleared last year.
  
  Jean reported that the rampant invasive mile-a-minute vine has been found in Vineyard Field.

- **FLPG 10-Year Anniversary Party**—The party was a success thanks to all who attended or contributed! Special thanks go to John Brancato who donated his time and his beautiful home on Long Pond. Over 100 neighbors attended and enjoyed the delicious-donated food thanks to: Agave South of the Border, Alison Restaurant, The American Hotel, Tina Bevins, B. Smith’s Sag Harbor, Conca D’Oro, Dai Dayton, DePetris Liquor Store, The Dock House, Sandra Ferguson, Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt—[41]

Thank you to State Assemblyman Fred Thiele for attending and giving a rallying speech.

We received a letter from Southampton Town Board member Linda Kabot thanking us for our dedication to the preservation and protection of the Long Pond Greenbelt.

From Minutes 9/10/07

• Vineyard Field Restoration Project—Dai hired diggers from Faustino Juarez Contract & Digging to remove knotweed two days this month. They are doing a fantastic job. Jean continues to remove miles of mile-a-minute weed. The field is ablaze with goldenrod liberated from the presence of autumn olive, and migrating birds and butterflies are stopping off the field.

• Vineyard Field Volunteer Work Dates—Sat., Oct. 13 and Sun., Oct. 21. Meet in the field behind SoFo Museum, 9 a.m.-noon. Dress for protection against ticks and bring gloves and clippers if you have them. For more information call 631-537-0660.

From Minutes 10/15/07

• Vineyard Field Grassland Restoration Project—Dai reported that Sunday, Oct. 14th, she, Sandi, and Jackson Dodds worked with student volunteers, Ethan and Zack Dayton from the East Hampton High School, to remove autumn olive trees along the trail. Removal of mile-a-minute vine and knotweed (by professionals) is ongoing. Dai is meeting with Mr. Leland to establish a plan for removing the remaining autumn olives. Thanks to our Brine grant we will have an entire week of removal. It was rewarding to see the field in glorious blooming goldenrod, which attracted thousands of migrating monarch butterflies, and migrating birds are taking advantage of all the flower and grass seeds.

From Minutes 11/12/07

• Vineyard Field Grassland Restoration Project—Beginning November 19, 2007, Richard Leland’s company has removed 10 acres of autumn olives from the southeast corner of the field.

Anita Wright, Environmental Educator with the Group for the East End has volunteered to help with our grasslands restoration project to begin March 26, 2008 from 1 p.m.–3 p.m..

The Southampton Press, Aug. 16, 2007, reported FLPG’s volunteer work day
Mark Your Calendar

SOUTHAMPTON TRAILS AND FRIENDS OF THE LONG POND GREENBELT EVENTS—2007

• Sun., April 1—7pm. April Fools Night Before Full Moon Hike. Meet at the SOFO museum parking lot on the Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike. Enjoy the beautiful Vineyard Field trail by moonlight. Leader: Dai Dayton, 631-537-0660.


• Sun., Aug 26—Long Pond Greenbelt. 8-10 am. Meet at the South Fork Natural History Museum on Bridgehampton Tpk. 4 plus miles through this glacial remnant. Dai Dayton, 537-0660.

Sun., Sept. 9—Greenbelt south. 8 a.m.-10AM. Meet at the SoFo Natural History Museum on Bridgehampton Tpk. Hike through Vineyard Field into the unknown. 4-5 miles. Dai Dayton, 631-745-0689.

• Sat., Oct. 6, 9-11 a.m.—Long Pond Greenbelt hike. Meet at the SoFo Museum on Bridgehampton Tpk. A 4 mile hike through Vineyard Field to Crooked and Deer Drink ponds. Dai Dayton, 745-0689.

• Tues., Jan. 22 [2008]—Full Moon Hike. 7p.m.–9p.m. Meet at the South Fork Natural History Museum on Bridgehampton Turnpike. Bring a flashlight, dress warmly. Leader: Dai Dayton, 631-745-0689.

In addition to scheduled events, the Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt have given personalized tours to interested individuals.

Aside from scheduled events daily visitors to the museum take walks along Vineyard Field’s trails mowed by Dai Dayton—Southampton Trails Society and Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt.

SOUTH FORK NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM EVENTS IN THE FIELD

• Sat., Jan 13, 10 a.m.—Insects in Winter. Join Crystal for a walk in the field and forest behind SoFo to search for our dormant insect neighbors.

• Sat., Feb. 3, 7 p.m.—Moonlight Owling. Joe, an expert bider, will present a brief slide show and then take you into the field to call owls in for actual sightings.

• Sat., March 3, 7:30 p.m.—Spotted Salamander Search.

• Sat., May 5, 10 a.m.—Build a Bird’s Nest. Participants will learn the secrets of nest-making as they go into the field with Crystal to discover some bird-made nests, then come back with her to the museum to create a bird’s nest of their own.

• Sat., May 26, 5:30 p.m.—Hunters of the Night: Owls

• Sat., June 2, 10 a.m.—Salamander seining for Children and Adults.

• Sat., July 14, 10 a.m.—Hidden World of Ponds for Children 8 years and older.

• Sat., July 21, 8 p.m.—Magic of Moths. … Dr. Hugh McGuinness, whose professional research involves monitoring moth populations in various habitats on Long Island,
will take us out into the field behind the museum to set up lights and other attractants that will draw in moths for examination and study.

• Sat., July 28, 10 a.m.—Dragonflies: Their Remarkable Life Histories and Behavior. (see article)

• Sat., Nov. 17, 10 a.m.—Family Nature Walk. Join Crystal for a walk in the field and woods behind the South Fork Natural History Museum and discover the plants and animals that live there and the signs and sounds that help us know that they are around.

• Sat., Nov 24, 7 p.m.—Nighttime Owl Prowl. Prowl the night with Joe… and it’s out into the field to call in some of these hunters of the night.

Annual Inspection of Vineyard Field Restoration Project