


2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo of Yellow-rumped Warbler captured by Jennifer Shepherd



Norman Bird Sanctuary was established in 1949 through a bequest made by Mabel Norman Cerio. Our mission is to spark people's curiosity to explore, steward, and find peace and joy in nature.



Board of Directors

Liz Drayton, *Chair*

Abigail Rowe, *Vice Chair*

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Lisa Bender, *Director*

Betsy de Leiris, *Director*

Patricia Galuska, *Director*

Deborah Linnell, *Director*

Lynne Mallonee, *Director*

Amanda Ward, *Director*

"Norman Bird Sanctuary is my happy place. I know of no other place where, in a few moments, you can be in farmland, or in the peace of the deep forest, or in wetlands, or on rocky trails where you can see and hear the power of the ocean."

-Chuck Kiven, Trail Monitoring Volunteer and Member



Kaity Ryan, *Executive Director*

Joseph McLaughlin, *Director of Properties*

Jolie Colby, *Director of Education*

Carolyn Moy, *Director of Finance and Operations*

Ireland Boyden, *Welcome Center Receptionist*

Sophie Cleland, *Garden Programs Assistant*

Bayley Forshee, *Development Manager*

John Gendron, *Welcome Center Ambassador*

Sophie Gregory, *Assistant Director of Education*

Brett Hunsanger, *Properties Manager*

Jay Manning, *Conservation Manager*

Erin O'Neill, *Business and Office Manager*

Julie Safford, *Lead Teacher Naturalist*

Sophie Silverio, *Welcome Center Receptionist*

Amanda Stuckey, *Welcome Center Receptionist*

Alden Tucker, *Rentals Manager*

Anna Turner, *Research and Collections Coordinator*

Joye Whitney, *Assistant Director of Properties*

Madison Williams, *Marketing and Communications Manager*

Staff





Paradise Valley Society

Honoring the legacy of Mabel Norman Cerio, who founded the Norman Bird Sanctuary through her will, the Paradise Valley Society recognizes the generosity of those who have made planned or deferred gifts to the Norman Bird Sanctuary. To learn more, get in touch via giving@normanbirdsanctuary.org.

Founding Members

Lewis Arnow*

Karen Augeri Benson

David Beaver

Mabel Norman Cerio*

Maureen A. Coleman

Marguerite T. Davey*

Beth & Walter Everett*

Michele Foster

Patricia Galuska

Thomas L. Harris

Vernon A. Harvey*

Sandra & Roger King

Ruth E. Lelacheure*

Christine & Pierre L. Lorillard

Robert C. Menson

**Deceased*

Frances C. Meroney*

William R. Mershon*

Sharon Mooney*

Harriet Jackson Phelps*

Benjamin C. Reed*

Doris R. Richardson*

Frederick G. Roberts*

Janet Beull Rogers

Charles Anthony Ryerson III*

Harry Trines

Margo Waite

Committees

Executive:

Liz Drayton, *Chair*

Abigail Rowe, *Vice Chair*

John Trifero, *Treasurer*

Elizabeth Gibbs, *Secretary*

Development:

Abigail Rowe, *Vice Chair*

Anne Carlson

Betsy de Leiris

Liz Drayton

Lisa Bender

Candice Sandman

Jessica Stadel

Krista Sturtevant

Finance:

John Trifero, *Chair*

Bill Beuka

Darci Buchanan

Liz Drayton

Ben Fernandez

Pat Galuska

Governance & Nominating

Betsy de Leiris, *Chair*

May Jo Carr

Liz Drayton

Pat Galuska

John Trifero

Protecting Paradise Capital

Campaign:

Barbara Benson, *Co-Chair*

Katie Hamilton Gewirz, Co-Chair

Robert Manice, Co-Chair

Liz Drayton

Ben Ducas

Brian and Debbie Arnold

Dan Benson

Abby Rowe

Krista Sturtevant

Deb Linell

Properties:

Amanda Ward, *Chair*

Karen Barbera

Liz Drayton

Jamie Edwards

Melissa Welch

Education:

Elizabeth Gibbs, *Chair*

Beverley Murphy

Jono Bixby

Mil Kinsella

Lynne Mallonee

Jeffrey Moniz

Taylor Rock

Jacqueline Zahm

A Letter From the Executive Director

This year was marked by continued growth and success. One of the major efforts we undertook was adopting a new Strategic Plan. This plan will serve as a roadmap that will guide our work over the next three years.



At the heart of the plan are the values that we as an organization identify with. These values - collectively and unanimously agreed upon by our entire Board and staff - are an element of our updated plan that I am especially proud of:

- Community: We build community and connection with our partners, visitors, and each other. We treat each other with patience, encouragement, and acceptance.
- Inspiration: We foster curiosity and creativity and we try to model what we hope to see in the world.
- Discovery: We like to experiment and explore. We plan, learn, and retool.
- Compassion: We embody kindness, gratitude, and respect for humans, wildlife, and the land we protect.

This is what we are all about and these values come through in every facet of our work.

The other element of the plan that I am especially excited about is embracing the breadth of what this incredible place offers and sharing that with people of all ages and backgrounds. Nature is so multifaceted. And so are we as individuals. What that translates to in the context of our work as a nature center, is meeting people where they are by:

- Offering opportunities for hiking and field trips, of course, but also offering wellness, poetry walks, and art-making programs,
- Expanding our educational programs into the realm of substantive internships for high school and college students and fostering career development skills,
- Providing safe, natural spaces for people to reflect, connect with each other, and disconnect from the world for a bit,
- Honoring the important cultural and historical elements of this place - the stone walls, the graveyards, and buildings - as well as the layers of history that have shaped and influenced this landscape from indigenous people to artists,
- Sharing our knowledge not just to inspire kids, but also to engage and educate adults about protecting the natural resources all around us,
- Making our spaces and activities available in a way that everyone can be included.

In this way we are dedicated to honoring the past 75 years of the organization and using that foundation to build upon and advance the Sanctuary in the years to come.

2024 will bring with it several milestones: the 75th anniversary of the Sanctuary's founding, the 50th anniversary of Harvest Fair, and the 45th season of Summer Camp. In addition to offering special programs and events, we will also be unveiling a few big projects, including an upgraded Universal Trail, a new boardwalk on the Gray Craig trail, and a resurfaced parking lot. 75 is a big birthday and we're going big to celebrate it. I invite you to join us and help commemorate this special milestone in 2024.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kaity Ryan', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kaity Ryan

Thank you to our volunteers!



Pictured: Salve Regina Students

Our work at the Norman Bird Sanctuary would not be possible without the support of volunteers year-round. From Salve Regina University students installing bird boxes in our fields, to the URI Master Gardeners that help care for our gardens, and Pennfield Students joining us at Harvest Fair to make the event more sustainable, we are grateful for this amazing community.



Development Volunteers of the Year: The Pennfield School

We are pleased to recognize students from The Pennfield School as our Development Volunteers of the Year. The Pennfield School is in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, and serves students in preschool through eighth grade.

At this year's Harvest Fair, we were fortunate to have 40 Pennfield students, parents, and teachers serve as our Green Team. As the volunteer Green Team, Pennfield led our sustainability efforts at Harvest Fair. The faculty and administration at Pennfield were enthusiastic about their community's participation in the Green Team and welcomed NBS to the school prior to the Harvest Fair to give a presentation on sustainability. All the students were engaged, knowledgeable, and appreciative.

During Harvest Fair weekend, the Green Team ensured that waste was properly disposed of at Zero-Waste Stations while educating our community about the importance of sustainability. Sustainability is a pillar of the Norman Bird Sanctuary's work, and we are incredibly appreciative of Pennfield's partnership in meeting our Harvest Fair goals.

With Pennfield community's help, we were able to accurately dispose of:

- 691 pounds of trash
- 260.25 pounds of compost
- 209.8 pounds of recycling

We are grateful for Pennfield's partnership and are delighted to share this award and recognition with the students of The Pennfield School.

Education and Properties Volunteers of the Year: The Conservation Crew

Thanks to generous funding from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, the Conservation Crew has had a profound impact on the Sanctuary since its implementation fifteen months ago.

This year the Conservation Crew spearheaded several exciting initiatives, including installing 1,200 feet of dune fencing at Third Beach, removing 20,000 feet of invasive Privet, erecting deer fencing in the cut flower garden, and much more.

The members of the Conservation Crew have become valued members of our community and we are so grateful for the time, sweat, and passion that they devote to the Norman Bird Sanctuary.



Conservation Crew

The Conservation Crew was created in 2022 with generous funding from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation. This year the Conservation Crew spearheaded several new projects including:

- Removing large patches of the highly invasive Japanese Knotweed across the property
- Contributing to the restoration of the stonewall along Third Beach Road as part of the Aquidneck Island Stonewall Initiative
- Installing split-rail fencing at our Third Beach property to protect the dunes
- Clearing a tangle of invasive plants behind the Norman Bird Sanctuary Welcome Center to make room for the Food Forest
- Clearing 20,000 square feet of invasive Privet along the Woodcock Trail

Education continues to be a key element of the Conservation Crew model - many Crew members join us without any experience in land management. Through their experience at NBS, they learn how to tackle different assignments as well as the value of environmental stewardship.



20,000

Square feet of invasive
Privet removed



Building a “Journaling Bench”



Collecting data on Salt Marsh Sparrows



Presenting a field trip lesson plan

Conservation Crew Internship

With the generosity of Larry and Elizabeth Allen, a youth internship called the Conservation Crew Internship Program (CCIP) kicked off this summer. Launched to provide underserved high schoolers an opportunity to participate in conservation and land stewardship, the CCIP accepted 5 participants ranging in age from 14 to 18 years of age.

Throughout the program, the interns took part in a number of service projects that included:

- Working as a group to create a habitat analysis of the Sanctuary’s salt marsh for endangered Salt Marsh Sparrows
- Creating recommendations for future stewardship of the Salt Marsh
- Building a “journaling bench” to enhance guest experiences on our trails by providing an interactive site to draw, journal, and connect with nature.
- Working with the properties team to assist in managing land by weeding and other tasks.
- Assisting in efforts to eradicate Japanese Knotweed from the Shady Glade Trail



Italian Honeybees buzz over to NBS

This year, two NBS staff members, Brett Hunsanger and Joye Whitney, undertook a beekeeping course with the Rhode Island Beekeepers Association (RIBA).

After becoming beginner beekeepers, Brett and Joye purchased thousands of Italian Honeybees for NBS and oriented them to a new home in our beehives, which are strategically placed adjacent to our Herb and Pollinator Garden.





Gardens Blossom

In a year of expansion, the Norman Bird Sanctuary's **8 gardens** have continued to grow and thrive:

- Over 1,000 pounds of produce were harvested from our Good Gardens and donated to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center Food Pantry
- Two additional Hugelkultur beds were added to the Good Gardens, and they produced dozens of pumpkins for the Harvest Fair
- An herb and pollinator garden was installed, providing herbs and cut flowers to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center
- Invasive plants were cleared from land adjacent to the Welcome Center and replaced with native pollinator plant species
- Hundreds of summer campers joined educators in Mabel's Garden for a "Mabel's Mindfulness" program throughout the summer

This year a “Food Forest” was installed with a grant from the USDA and the Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District. A special visitor, U.S. Senator Jack Reed, helped us break ground!





Bird Box Season

Once again, we partnered with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology as an official chapter of their NestWatch program. In the 2023 season Norman Bird Sanctuary staff and volunteers installed more than 300 nesting boxes in our North and South fields, providing habitat to thousands of migrating birds.

With help from Dr. Jameson Chace and his Salve Regina University students, we were able to collect three times more data this nesting season than we did in 2022!

In line with 2022, we saw a statistically significant difference in the number of Tree Swallows over House Sparrows. While Tree Swallow nests were far more likely to fail, they still raised nearly twice as many successful juveniles as the House Sparrows.

One exciting note is that the Tree Swallows at the Norman Bird Sanctuary are showing high rates of philopatry, meaning the same birds are returning to these same fields year after year. We are delighted that they have found a safe home at Norman Bird Sanctuary and that this indicates a healthy ecosystem.



252

Boxes Used

89

Fledged Tree Swallows

57

Fledged House Sparrows

2023 Summer Camp

This summer we celebrated our 44th season of Summer Camp! We welcomed over 400 campers and, once again, each session was a sell-out.

This year we raised a record \$34,481 in scholarship funds. We were able to provide 98 scholarships to underserved youth in our community thanks to the generosity of our grant-making partners and donors.

Campers enjoyed new and old traditions and embraced their summer in the outdoors. We can't wait to celebrate 45 years of Summer Camp in 2024.





Summer Camp Fast Facts

832

Camper Spots Filled

98

Scholarships Awarded

\$34,481

in scholarship funding

44th

year of Summer Camp

Education



Throughout the year, 161 educational programs were offered, ranging from Owl Prowls to Fireside Lectures and everything in between! We got to meet and connect with hundreds of visitors while offering exciting programs that engaged participants of all ages.

New internship opportunities were launched that engaged high school and college students in environmental education and stewardship opportunities. Students from Salve Regina University joined their professor, Dr. Jameson Chace for place-based, environmental studies ranging from dune restoration to water quality assessments.



1,203
Students served
during field trips

74%
Attendees rate a 10/10
experience

161
Public Programs
offered



2023 Harvest Fair

This year, we celebrated our 49th annual Harvest Fair on September 30 and October 1. Despite rainy weather on Saturday, we had a blast all weekend with over 5,000 guests from all over New England.

Harvest Fair would not be possible without the 219 volunteers that joined us this year. Our “Green Team” helped us compost and recycle 470.05 pounds of waste with the support of Lead Sustainability Sponsor, 11th Hour Racing.

We are looking forward to October 5 and 6, when we will host the **50th annual Harvest Fair!**

Harvest Fair Fast Facts

5,123

Attendees

45

Craft & Food Vendors

18

Sponsors

470.05

pounds of waste recycled
and composted



Growing up on Third Beach Road:

*Champ Zumbrun reflects on a childhood
down the street from the Sanctuary:*



*Champ (left) with his
brother Keith (right) and
a cousin posing on Third
Beach Road, after a day of
fishing in Gardiner Pond.
1958.*

When Mabel Norman Cerio bestowed the priceless gift of the Norman Bird Sanctuary to the public in November 1949, I laid in a crib at 285 Third Beach Road just several hundred yards away from her magnificent Rhode Island estate.

During my early childhood in the 1950s, I simply jumped over the stone fence from our yard and walked across the Sachuest Golf course onto NBS property.

With my younger brother Keith and best friend Billy, we romped and played for hours throughout the Sanctuary. We treated this property as our own personal paradise, and indeed it was, for in the early days, when NBS was just getting off the ground and organizing, it was a solitary place. There were no environmental programs to attract people to the site, and there was a sole staff member: the first Director, Jim Baird. Keith, Billy, and I had this entire natural wonderland to ourselves.

Hanging Rock was my primal, special place where I spent many joyful moments as a child. From here, one can see a panoramic view of Second Beach and the surrounding shoreline that seemingly stretches on forever. Keith, Billy, and I sometimes looked for imaginary pirate ships as we gazed out over the far horizon. If we needed a hideout, we took refuge in the crevice situated just below the crest of our overlook.

Often while walking out to Hanging Rock, Keith, Billy, and I would take a diversion to see what Mr. Baird was up to. At the time we knew him only as “the ranger,” a very kind man who allowed us to watch him tend to injured hawks and owls and would teach us about the rehabilitation process for these birds. He had a natural way of connecting with kids and wanted genuinely for us to learn about and appreciate the wonders of nature.

I think these encounters with Mr. Baird steered me toward a career in Natural Resources, in which I managed 50,000 acres of public land as a Forest Ranger in western Maryland. For many years as an adult, I looked for the ranger, hoping to meet him again in person and to thank him for the kindness he showed me as a kid.

I was deeply saddened to learn of Jim Baird’s passing, and I am eternally grateful to him for his influence, kindness, and dedicated stewardship of the Sanctuary, which inspired my own rich and fulfilling career in the outdoors. I now know that, beyond being inspiring teachers, Jim Baird and the Sanctuary gave me an extraordinary gift: an enduring, lifelong love for the ocean, forests, trees, and wildlife. I send heartfelt condolences to Jim’s family and friends—his impact spread far and wide across his lifetime and we are all better for it.

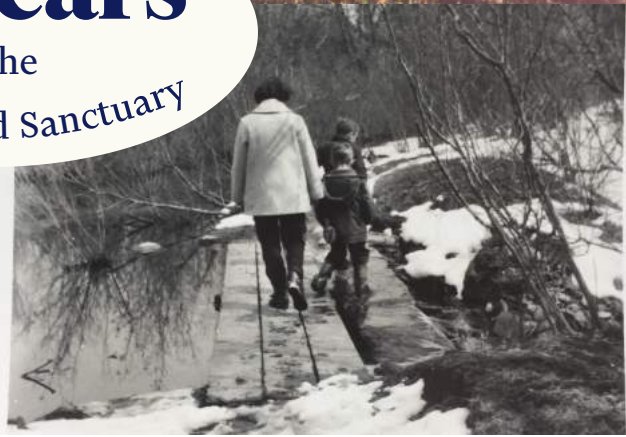
-Champ Zumbrun





75 Years

of the
Norman Bird Sanctuary



Celebrating our 75th Anniversary in 2024

For nearly 75 years, the Norman Bird Sanctuary has been a beloved community resource, providing educational programming to generations of visitors, preserving critical wildlife habitat, and protecting over 300 acres of open space on an island where undeveloped land is rapidly disappearing.

We do all this in honor of our founder, Mabel Norman Cerio, a woman whose legacy has impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, living creatures, and community members. It is because of Mabel that we are here today, serving and protecting this incredibly special place.

In 2024, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Norman Bird Sanctuary and Mabel's incredible gift. We ask you, our members, visitors, and friends, to join us for a year of celebration and reflection as we commemorate this milestone and plan for the next 75 years.

Throughout 2024 we will present a year of 75th Anniversary events and programs, including a 75th Anniversary Lecture Series, "Sightlines," the 50th Annual Harvest Fair, 45th Summer Camp season, and more.

Norman Bird Sanctuary has also been selected as the site of the 25th annual BioBlitz: a community science event that focuses on finding and identifying as many plant and animal species as possible in a 24-hour window. We will present the BioBlitz in collaboration with the Rhode Island Natural History Survey in June 2024.

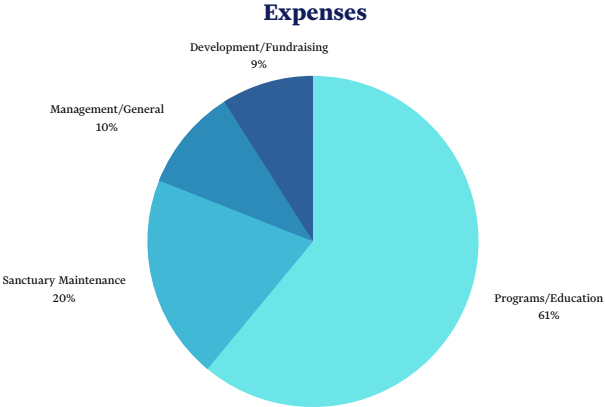
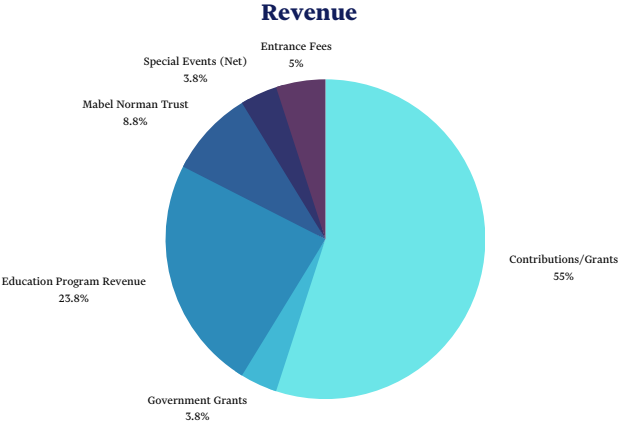
Keep an eye out for special announcements and opportunities in the coming year. We look forward to celebrating, hiking, learning, and exploring together with all of you.



The operating revenues in our fiscal year ending March 31, 2023, totaled \$1,323,306 and the expenses totaled \$1,314,732 The resulting change in net assets from our operations (or net revenue) was \$8,574.

At the beginning of the 2023 fiscal year, we adopted a budget projecting operating income of \$1,812,975 and \$1,810,096, in operating expenses. Expenses and revenue came in under expectations. In the last fiscal year, 47% of all revenues came from contributions and grants.

Other key revenue sources include educational programs, memberships, the Mabel Norman Trust, entrance fees, and earned income from the Paradise Farmhouse and other rental income.



CONDENSED STATEMENT OF OPERATING ACTIVITIES

Year Ended March 31, 2023

REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT:

Public Support	\$576,295
Contributions/Grants	576,295
Total Public Support	\$576,295
Grants and Contracts	
Federal, State, and Local Government Grants	40,363
Total Grants and Contracts	40,363
Other Revenue	
Education Programs	248,616
Mabel Norman Trust	96,894
Membership Fees	103,176
Special Event Income (Net)	42,623
Entrance Fees	53,880
Earned Income & Other	161,459
Total Other Revenue	706,648
TOTAL REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT	\$1,323,306

EXPENSES

Education Programs	\$802,438
Sanctuary Maintenance	259,418
Management & General	135,463
Development & Fundraising	117,413
TOTAL FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE	\$1,314,732

