Highlighting this property is the sweeping meadow offering year-round vistas. There's a bench provided Boy Scouts for quiet contemplation - and a front-row seat to the wildlife, including bluebirds.

By MARCIA GREEN, Valley Breeze Editor

CUMBERLAND - It was a Wednesday afternoon in mid-May when I doused myself with bug repellent and hit the High Rock Preserve trail with Frank Matta. We invested an hour in a meandering walk through along the trail and into the adjacent Scott Brook land owned by the town, but that included time for pictures and a chat with a West Warwick couple scouting for birds.

High Rock Preserve, once a dairy operation operated by William Baskin, offers up diverse landscapes of open meadow and woodland, stone walls - of course - and the slight but earnest Scott Brook.

The Land Trust has 73 acres under its protective wing here with another 12 acres held privately. Most, 69 acres, were acquired in 1998 by a state Open Space Grant from the Natural Heritage Preservation Commission and The Nature Conservancy. A year later, another 3.7 acres came from Michael Joyal.
This walk is a departure from wooded trails. Walk a little ways in and the trail opens up to a five-acre rolling meadow known as Bluebird Meadow. National Grid has overhead lines crossing here, north to south.

Bluebirds love the meadow setting and six boxes have attracted a few families this year.

A bench provided by a Boy Scout offers a spot to sit quietly and if you're early and lucky, deer, turkey and even coyote will make an appearance.

Birders love this spot. Expect to check blue buntings, Baltimore orioles, rose-breasted grosbeak, brown-headed cowbird, off your list, I’m told.

As if to prove that point, we spotted Tina and Donald Chausse heading down the path with tell-tale camera slung around Tina’s neck and binoculars in hand.

They turned out to be from West Warwick and have been pursuing the birding hobby for about two years. They'd found High Rock recommended online by other birding enthusiasts and so took a ride. "There's a lot of birds and we very easily found quite a few," Donald told us.

I joked later that Frank had planted this couple who turned up that afternoon at precisely the right moment to confirm what Frank had been talking about.

Like Otis Smith Farm, the High Rock geology lends itself to rare plants that you won't disturb if you stick to established trail. But it’s those plants that helped attract the grants that secured the land.

The property is linked to the town-owned Scott Brook property that stretches some 100 acres all the way to Tucker Field. I’m saving that trail for another day, but you'll see it up the hill where the markers change to little red discs.

We were there while the dogwood was still bursting in bloom, but Frank noted that like Otis Smith Farm, High Rock offers changing vistas around the calendar. He and his wife Suzanne snow shoe here and he recalls the majesty of a herd of deer against the white backdrop this past winter. It's clear that sweeping meadow shouldn't be missed in mid-October.

It's here at High Rock that the trust established its Outdoor Environmental Education Center as a learning center with picnic tables available to groups and individuals for workshops and research. The site, once a garbage heap, says Frank, who’s the one regularly doing the mowing, makes this trail easy to find on Scott Road. There's room for several cars to pull off. Go to cumberlandlandtrust.org, click on contact information, to reserve the space.

- Comments about last week’s Otis Smith Farm trail included one from Greg and Ellen Kwiatkowski, the parents of Eagle Scout Ed Kwiatkowsi, Troop 1 Arnold Mills, who is responsible or buildings and installing the map boxes for the Cumberland Land Trust. A recent CHS graduate, Ed also helped to clear the Otis Smith/Rowbottom trails. Nice job, Ed, and all the Scouts who lent a hand. Boy Scouts have had a hand in helping with other trails in town and I'll try to point that out as I go.
Frank Matta of the Cumberland Land Trust is the volunteer caretaker of High Rock Preserve, including diligent mowing of the education center.

The entrance to High Rock Preserve is easy to spot - look for the grassy area and picnic table on Scott Road that serves as the Cumberland Land Trust's Outdoor Environmental Education Center. The trail is easy to navigate thanks to the Boy Scouts' blue markers. High Rocks Preserve is easy to find along Scott Road, Cumberland.