



The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region Vol. 24, No. 1 • Winter 2011-2012



Easement Gift to Protect Vital Tributary to Cayuga Lake

Walk with Charles Pearman and Carol Skinner around their 22-acre property on Searsburg Road in the town of Ulysses, Tompkins County, and you will gain a keen sense of their passion for the landscape.

They will show you the gnarled fruit trees that continue to produce quince and heirloom apple varieties.

They will walk you around the small man-made pond, on which they occasionally drift peacefully in a canoe, and out to the agricultural field that is currently leased to a local farmer (and grazed by a neighbor's goats).

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Wetlands and Woodlands Near Montezuma Protected

The Land Trust recently finalized a conservation easement with Cayuga County property owner Kathryn Whitehorne to protect her 127-acre property from future development.

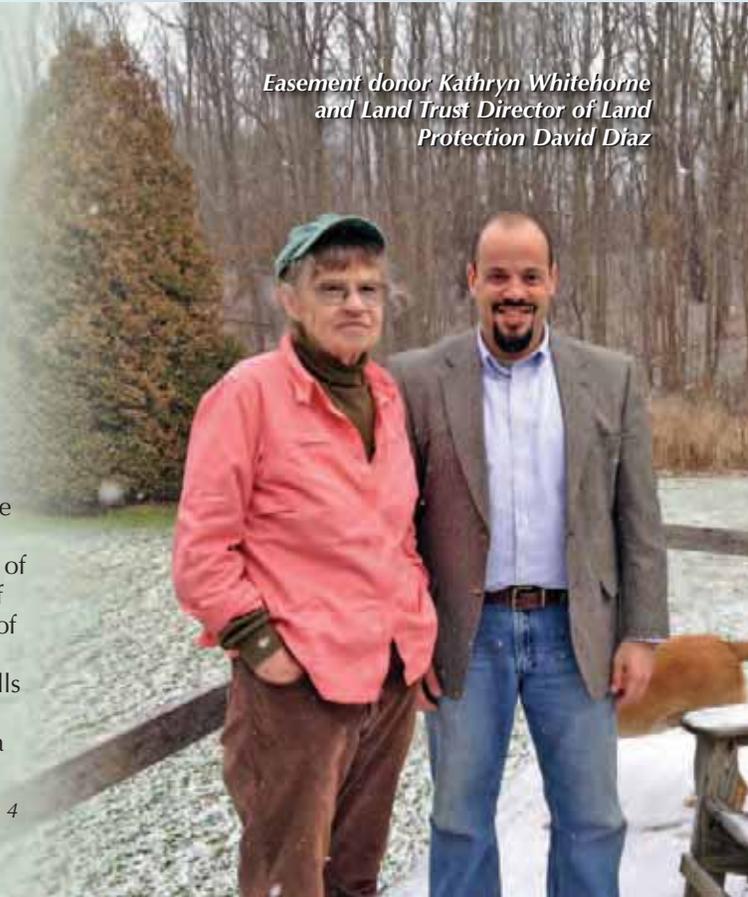
This is the first such easement for the Land Trust in northern Cayuga County and the northernmost in the Land Trust's service area.

This latest Land Trust project reflects how conservation value is sometimes in the eye of the beholder. "The land is 'wasteland.' That's the official tax assessment designation and kind of insulting—good for nothing," Kathryn Whitehorne said. But that wasn't how representatives of the Land Trust viewed it. They instead marveled at the tract's 40 acres of wetlands as well as the towering hardwood forest that hosts a diversity of songbirds and supports a sustainable harvest of timber.

The Whitehorne property lies among the steeply sloping drumlin hills of Aurelius, a town of mixed agricultural and forested land west of Auburn. Virtually all of the parcel consists of reforested farmland, with a broad mix of northern hardwoods covering terrain scored on a north-

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Easement donor Kathryn Whitehorne and Land Trust Director of Land Protection David Díaz



The following article, written by Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp and Board President Stu Schweizer, appeared in several newspapers across the region last fall.

The Finger Lakes are the lifeblood of Central & Western New York State. They provide clean drinking water, magnificent vistas, outstanding habitat for fish and wildlife, and unparalleled recreational opportunities. They also serve as an integral part of a flourishing wine industry and support agriculture and tourism sectors that generate more than \$3 billion annually for our local economy.

Here in the Finger Lakes, we clearly must accelerate our efforts to grow a more robust and sustainable economy based on the region's rich natural resources, strong academic institutions, diversified agricultural economy, thriving tourism sector, and the inherent strengths of our populace. However, given the current technology and practices, we believe the proposed widespread use of hydrofracturing and horizontal drilling for natural gas poses unacceptable risks to the future well-being of this region and its residents. The lure of near-term economic gain is substantially outweighed by the potential for long-term harm to the region's land and water resources as well as its economic competitiveness.

Despite the development of a lengthy environmental impact statement, New York State has failed to adequately address critical concerns regarding shale gas exploitation that are vital to the future of our region:

- Through its proposed regulatory framework, the State provides a higher level of protection for the watersheds that supply drinking water to New York City and Syracuse than it does to the Finger Lakes watersheds, despite the fact that each of the Finger Lakes serves as a public drinking water supply. While these two watersheds are indeed unfiltered drinking water supplies, leading experts are very concerned that conventional water treatment techniques currently applied on water from the Finger Lakes will not remove all harmful components found in the fracking fluids that are used today;
- In the draft impact statement, the State fails to address the huge cumulative environmental impact of a process that is expected to involve the construction of thousands of gas wells,

thousands of miles of access roads and pipelines, and other associated infrastructure;

- The State also fails to address potential adverse impacts upon the region's vital agriculture and tourism industries. A study incorporated into the impact statement simply states that the implementation of widespread gas drilling "could have a negative impact on some industries such as tourism and agriculture" and yet fails to provide any detailed analysis of potential impacts within the Finger Lakes Region which could well be significant;
- The State's draft impact statement fails to address threats to the region's most significant land resources – sites recognized as priorities for conservation in New York State's Open Space Plan, which is a public policy document based on nearly 30 years of input from community leaders, public officials, and staff from the State's Department of Environmental Conservation.

Until these issues are adequately addressed by New York State and the natural gas industry, we are opposed to the use of hydrofracturing and horizontal drilling for natural gas exploitation within the watersheds of the Finger Lakes.

For more than 20 years, the Finger Lakes Land Trust has worked cooperatively with landowners, local communities, and New York State to conserve nearly 13,000 acres of the region's most cherished open space lands. The Land Trust is not typically involved in public advocacy. In this case, however, we feel compelled to speak out as the risks posed to the future of our region are simply too great.

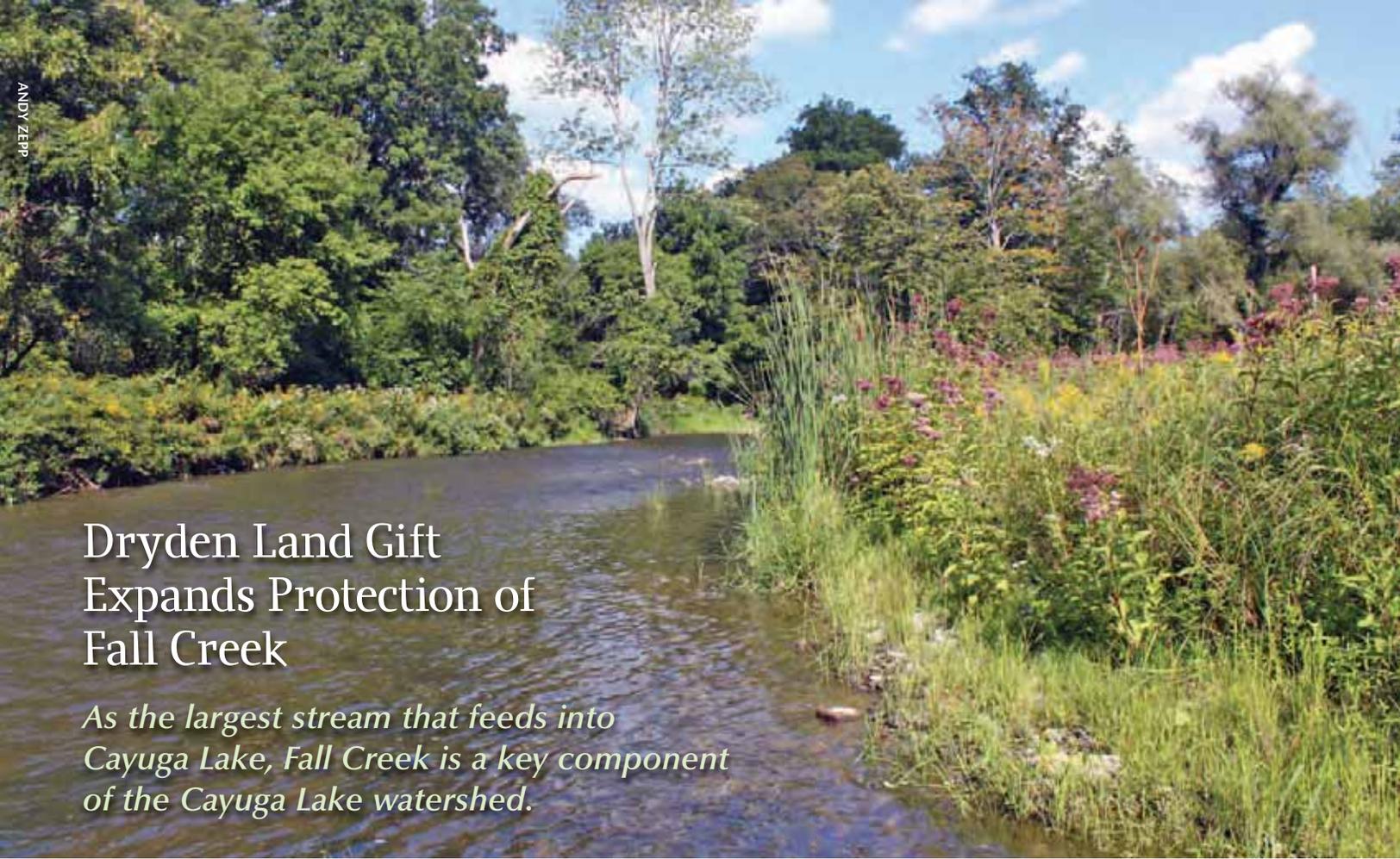
We strongly encourage the State to fully address the serious concerns addressed above before allowing the use of hydrofracturing and horizontal gas drilling techniques, and to work with the federal government and the natural gas industry to develop extraction techniques that are compatible with conservation of the region's natural resources and its natural resource-based economies.



Andrew Zepp
Executive Director
Finger Lakes Land Trust



W. Stuart Schweizer
President
Finger Lakes Land Trust



ANDY ZEPP

Dryden Land Gift Expands Protection of Fall Creek

As the largest stream that feeds into Cayuga Lake, Fall Creek is a key component of the Cayuga Lake watershed.

From its headwaters just above Lake Como in Cayuga County, Fall Creek wends its way through forests, farmland, and several communities until it reaches the Cornell University campus in Ithaca, where it serves as a source of both hydroelectric power and drinking water. After flowing into a deep gorge featuring a series of scenic waterfalls—culminating with the spectacular Ithaca Falls—the creek quietly empties into Cayuga Lake at its southernmost point.

Given its commitment to preserving water quality in the Finger Lakes region, the Land Trust has been actively working to protect Fall Creek and the surrounding landscape. The Land Trust identified lands along the creek as a priority for protection through its Cayuga Watershed Critical Areas Project, a systematic effort to assess land conservation opportunities within the watershed.

Recently, the Land Trust was able to protect another portion of Fall Creek, thanks to a generous land gift in the town of Dryden. The property comprises just over 12 acres of land between Route 366 and Upper Creek Road, just a quarter-mile upstream from the Land Trust's Etna Preserve.

The property was donated by Elizabeth Henderson and her partner Roger Beach, in memory of Elizabeth's late brother, James Henderson. The Hendersons grew up in the Ithaca community of Forest Home, adjacent to Cornell, where their father was a professor. James and his siblings spent much of their youth playing and swimming in Fall Creek, which passed near their house. Years later, inspired by these childhood memories, James purchased the 12-acre tract along the creek in Etna.

James Henderson passed away in 1997 and bequeathed the property to Elizabeth, who left the property alone until the Land Trust contacted her as part of its landowner outreach program. She quickly agreed to donate the land.

"Jim was an avid outdoorsman with a love of nature," said

Elizabeth, who now lives in Boston. "The idea of donating this land for protection is something he would have wanted."

"We're grateful to Elizabeth and Roger for this thoughtful memorial to James Henderson," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "The property provides excellent habitat for fish and wildlife and will help ensure water quality within Fall Creek and Cayuga Lake. It is also part of a growing network of protected lands along the creek."

The Henderson property features hardwood forests on both sides of Fall Creek, and it also encompasses several grassy islands within the creek that provide habitat for butterflies and abundant birdlife, including herons, ducks, and geese. The creek itself is relatively wide and shallow in this area; crayfish roam the creek bed, and larger fish can be found in some of the deeper spots. Access to the site is provided by a gravel pull-off located on the west side of Route 366, just south of its intersection with Kirk Road.

In addition to several conservation easements it holds within the Fall Creek watershed, the Land Trust owns and manages two preserves that border the creek: the Etna Nature Preserve (located in the hamlet of Etna) and the Dorothy McIlroy Bird Sanctuary (in Summerhill), as well as a third, the Thurber Preserve, that is located a short distance away from the creek near the hamlet of McLean. The Land Trust has also partnered with the Town of Dryden and the Village of Freeville to establish public conservation areas along the creek. This latest acquisition is the 14th land protection project completed by the Land Trust within the Fall Creek Watershed.

—Jeff Tonole

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Dick Ruswick in Ithaca for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.



Wetlands and Woodlands Near Montezuma Protected *continued from cover*

south axis by ancient glaciers. Lying within the watershed of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, a few miles to the west, the Whitehorne property's wetlands include vernal pools teeming with amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates. These wetlands drain west into the refuge.

Tom Jasikoff, manager of the refuge, welcomes all land conservation partners into the watershed. "I totally support the Finger Lakes Land Trust in preserving lands in our area," he said, "not just for their own inherent value but from a broader ecosystem standpoint and a landscape standpoint."

A related consideration that led the Land Trust to identify the property as a conservation priority is its nearly mile-long stretch of undeveloped road frontage, a rapidly disappearing scenic resource in our region. Located along a busy travel corridor between Auburn and Seneca Falls, and with nearby access to the thruway, Aurelius is under increasing scrutiny by developers.

A conservation easement provides landowners with a way of protecting their land from subdivision and development after they've moved on. The passion behind a conservation easement

almost always comes from the owner's deep feeling for the land itself and for its personal, sentimental value.

Kathryn Whitehorne has been interested in the ideals of land conservation for more than the 40 years she has owned her property. Her desire "to live in the woods" brought her from a stately Victorian house in Auburn to the old farmhouse just off Turnpike Road that she has lived in since 1971.

Long before the existence of the Finger Lakes Land Trust, she followed the newsletters of the Land Trust Alliance and other conservation organizations. And she retains a strong interest in environmental issues, generally, while watching her own woods, keenly noting changes in the plants and animals that have happened around her over the years.

She has also noted the changes in housing development in her area: "Over the years, you could see all around you the houses springing up, and you just knew the land wasn't going to stay the way it was—it certainly wasn't going to stay woods indefinitely."

Kathryn credits her son Alex with convincing her to move forward toward a conservation easement with the Land Trust.

"I had been interested in land conservation for a long time, and I'd been talking about an easement for a long time," she said. "Finally, Alex said to me that the land was the best thing I could possibly leave behind if I just did it. That made sense....I'd been saying it all along."

"It would be sad," she reflected, "if you ran all around in the woods as a kid and then came back as an adult to see a bunch of houses, wouldn't it?"

Her two other children, Mark and Olive, were in complete agreement. "You couldn't do something like this without your family's support," Kathryn said emphatically. She noted a case familiar to her, in which grown children had thwarted a parent's desire to put family property under a conservation easement, "all because they just wanted the money," she said.

"As anyone with children or siblings can tell you, differences in family member's wishes can be contentious," said David Diaz, Land Trust director of land protection, and a key figure in moving the Whitehorne project forward. "But how wonderfully united and conservation-minded the Whitehorne family is! The Land Trust is excited

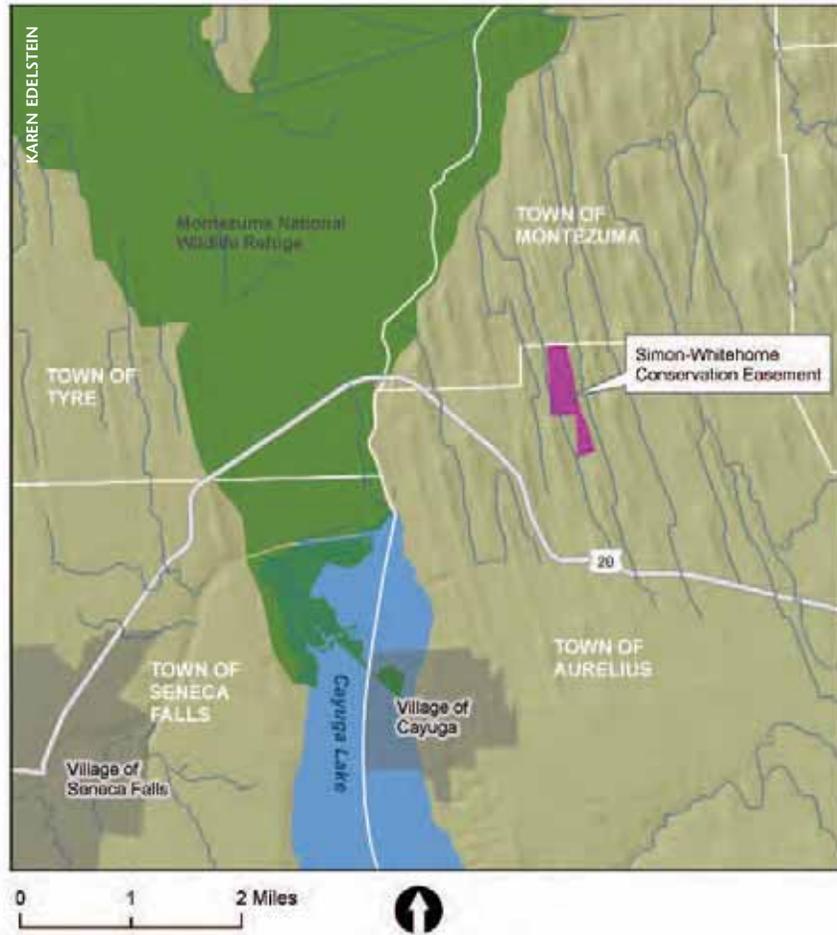
to have completed this amazing project with Kathryn and her family."

The easement Kathryn worked out with the Land Trust provides for a house site set back from the road, an area behind the current barn for fencing and farm animals such as horses, woodlot management for firewood, and sundry details that she called "common-sense stuff and good use of the land."

Kathryn is well aware of her land's proximity to the national wildlife refuge in Montezuma, and of its importance to the watershed in general; the Land Trust had this watershed in mind, too, when it pressed ahead in the fall of 2011 to complete this new conservation easement fulfilling Kathryn's long dream.

—Eben McLane

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Stephanie Sechler in Ithaca for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.



The Faces of Stewardship

Beyond office walls, behind the scenes and out of sight, many people contribute mightily to the work the Finger Lakes Land Trust has set out to do. You won't find their names on the masthead of this newsletter and may not see them mentioned in its columns. But in their anonymity lies a well kept secret: thoughtful, passionate stewardship of the land is alive and thriving in the Finger Lakes.

Following are three brief portraits of folk the Land Trust is proud to have as associates in its continuing stewardship mission. We hope to introduce you to more in future issues.

Dan and Pam Maurey

Stewards of the Parker Preserve in Steuben County

Dan and Pam live on eight acres entirely surrounded by the wooded preserve, and so are ideally suited to be the Land Trust's eyes and ears—not to mention hands and feet—in that remote corner of our region.

Soon after buying their house in 1999, they met Betsy Darlington walking along the road (Betsy was then the Land Trust's Director of Preserve Stewardship), and Pam says she "instantly" signed on to monitor the preserve. For the past 11 years, the Maureys have walked the preserve borders, maintained signs and trails, and kept the Ithaca office informed of all developments on the land.

Dan and Pam met at Corning, Inc., where they both work as research technicians—Dan on green energy solar-voltaic glass, and Pam in the solid oxide fuel cell program. Pam also trains dogs in their back yard and enrolls them in agility competitions. Gator and Reese are regular companions as the Maureys walk over the preserve, noting any changes to the forest, making mental lists of things that need to be done.

"There's always a lot to be done," Dan said. "That's fine with me. It's my way of giving back to nature. It costs me zero money to donate my time to help where other people can come and visit this great place and enjoy it just as much as I do."

Bernd Blossey

Associate Professor at Cornell University and Tioga County landowner

Interest in land conservation has been the driving force behind Bernd's scientific research and teaching, whether in wetland regions earlier in his career, or in forests, where he now spends most of his time.

The Land Trust has opened its nature preserves and other conserved lands to Bernd and his students at Cornell so that they can conduct studies on the negative impact of earthworms and deer on forest plant communities. He has worked in the Sweedler, Lindsay-Parsons, and Ellis Hollow preserves, and he is now talking with the Land Trust about setting up a more intensive deer exclosure research project. "The Land Trust is a natural ally in this work," Bernd said, noting that "the preserves should have not just hiking benefits but also conservation benefits."

An important first step in mitigating some of the effects of human neglect of forest stewardship is understanding where the problems lie. Garlic mustard may be an invasive plant, but its impact



Bernd Blossey planting oak seedlings



Dan and Pam Maurey kneeling beneath the new preserve sign they just finished installing with the help of volunteers (L) Roger Hopkins and (R) Lanrik Kester

Pam contemplates her role as preserve steward in terms of the larger picture: for her, stewardship means "being a partner of land that will always be forever wild in a time when the 21st century is slowly crowding into nature and [spoiling] the purity of it."

on forest communities is relatively inconsequential, Bernd thinks.

He has found that non-native earthworms [did you know that there are NO native earthworms in our area?] and deer are having a much more profound impact on the way local forests are shaping up. Earthworms, with their voracious appetites, eliminate most of the leaf layer, leaving a hardened forest floor and making it difficult for new plants to establish themselves. Meanwhile the deer are, as Bernd put it, "browsing out the natural heritage of area forests," eating the understory of spring flowers and seedlings.

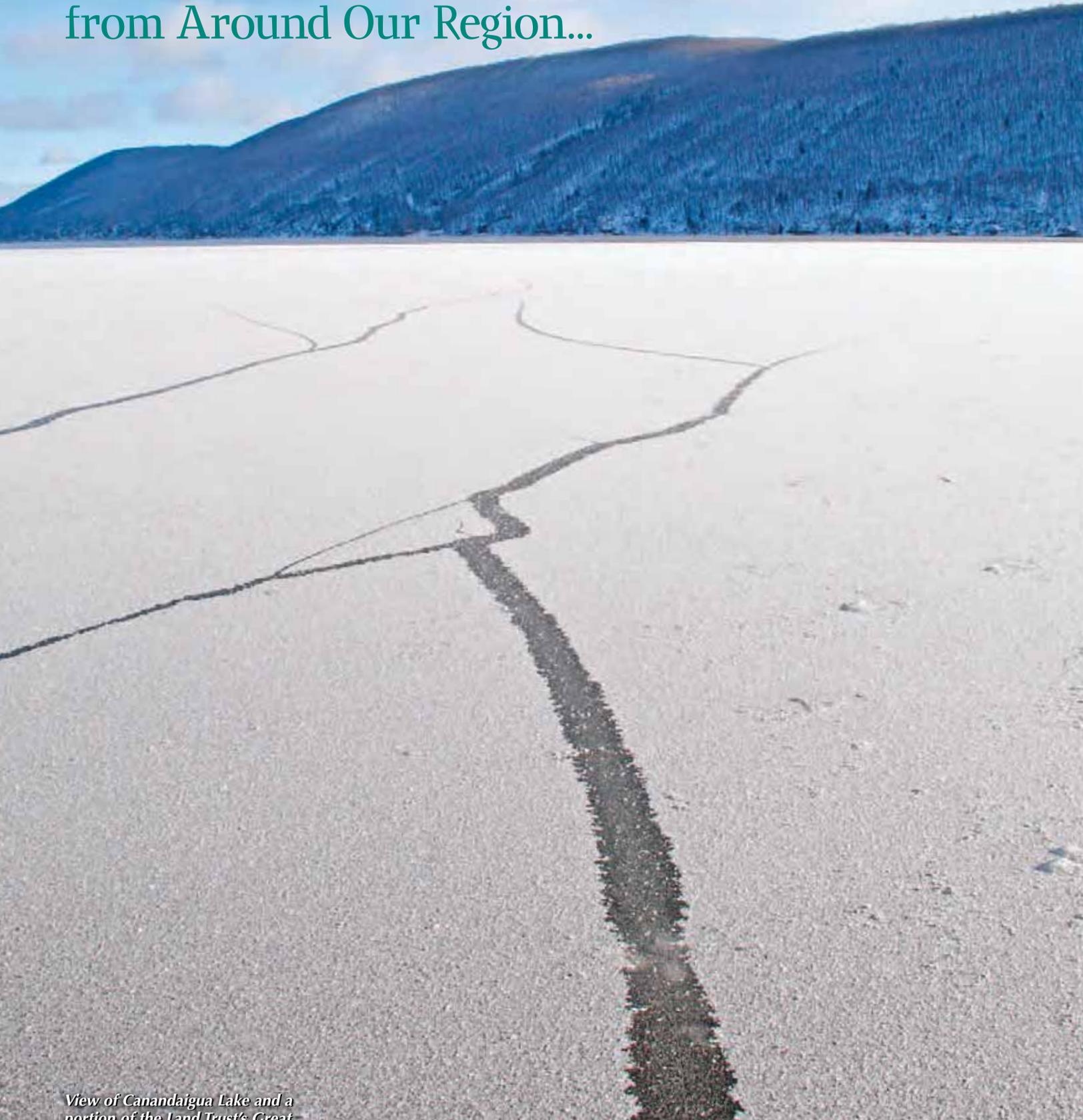
"I do not think we can take a hands-off approach to land management; we can't simply step out of our responsibility, as we used to," he said. "I'm trying to be an advocate for a positive role of humans in conservation and land protection."

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SCENES

from Around Our Region...

JULIE BERTRAM



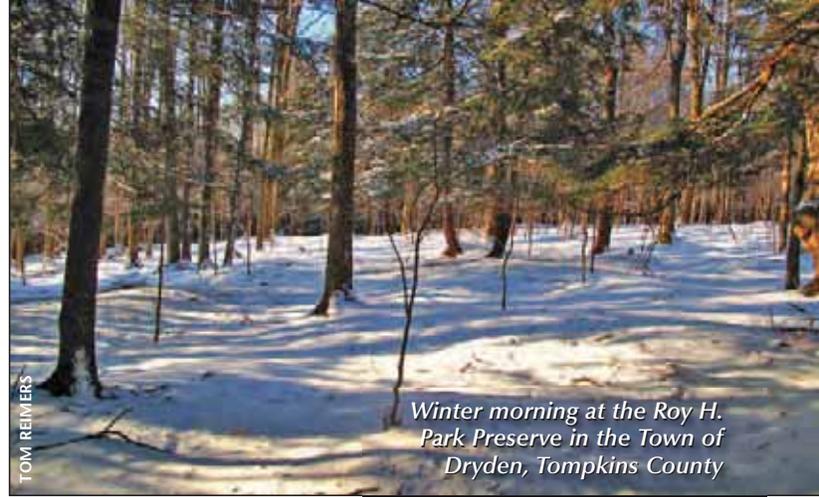
View of Canandaigua Lake and a portion of the Land Trust's Great Hill Nature Preserve



PHOTO PROVIDED

(left to right) Volunteers Ron Egan, Jr., Bob Lyke, Bob Zimmerman, Randy Briffa, and Ron Egan, Sr., in front of the gate they just refurbished at the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve in Ontario County

Cornell University Mycologist Kathie Hodge (left) leading the ever popular Fabulous Fungus walk through the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve in Ithaca



TOM REIMERS

Winter morning at the Roy H. Park Preserve in the Town of Dryden, Tompkins County



EMILY EISMAN



DEANNA LAURENTZ

The Cayuta Lake Outlet – a focus of Land Trust protection efforts – as viewed from the Finger Lakes Trail in Schuyler County

They will take you to a bench on a promontory located just inside a hardwood forest overlooking Trumansburg Creek, which traverses the eastern edge of the property.

You can climb up into the tree house they built in an old oak, which serves as a relaxing getaway and an excellent place to watch the sunset. (If you're lucky, their dog Margaret may join you.)

They will whisk you into a secret hideaway deep within a stand of pines and firs that is a cool remove on a warm summer day.

It is their devotion to and passion for this land that led the couple to donate a conservation easement on the property to the Land Trust in November. The easement prohibits subdivision and additional development of the property in perpetuity, though it allows continued agricultural use and limited timber harvesting.

Pearman and Skinner were initially attracted to the property more than a decade ago by the Greek Revival house that is the main structure on the land. Pearman, an architect, admired the unique features of the house, including columned entries on two sides of the building. The couple bought the place in 2002, remodeled and expanded the living quarters from the inside out, and went about discovering and enjoying the varied terrain of the surrounding acreage.

"This is a wonderful property full of natural beauty," said Skinner. "It's very important to us that the field and woods here remain intact after we're gone."

The couple's relationship with the Land Trust dates back to 2004, when Charles Pearman approached the Land Trust about preserving land he owned along Ellis Hollow Creek Road, east of Ithaca in the town of Dryden. After intermittent discussions



Charles Pearman & Carol Skinner with Margaret

over a period of several years, Pearman sold a 39-acre parcel to the Land Trust at a price significantly below fair market value; that parcel, now known as Pearman Woods, became part of the Land Trust's Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve. Pearman also donated a conservation easement on an adjacent 11 acres.

Given that history and a shared land ethic, it was a natural fit for Pearman and Skinner to turn to the Land Trust once again in establishing this latest conservation easement. "When it comes to the land,

our values match up well with those of the Land Trust, and we support and appreciate their land protection efforts," said Skinner.

For the Land Trust, the Pearman/Skinner property was identified as a priority for conservation primarily because of its 2,900 feet of wooded frontage along Trumansburg Creek, which is a significant tributary to Cayuga Lake. The opportunity to preserve existing agricultural land was another attractive feature of the property.

"All of us at the Land Trust applaud Carol and Charles for their wonderful commitment to the land," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "This latest conservation easement will help ensure water quality within Cayuga Lake while also ensuring the continued use of prime agricultural land."

The conservation easement on the Pearman/Skinner property is the Land Trust's 81st and its fourth within the town of Ulysses. Other easements within the town secure portions of Willow Creek and Taughannock Creek, and provide a buffer to Taughannock Falls State Park. Elsewhere within the Cayuga Lake watershed, the Land Trust recently protected 2,000 feet of frontage on Fall Creek in Dryden (see story on page 3) and acquired 1,400 feet of frontage on the western shore of Cayuga Lake in Seneca County.

—Jeff Tonole

Interest in Water Trails Increasing Throughout Region



Following recent acquisitions on Cayuga and Skaneateles Lakes and conservation planning efforts elsewhere in the region, Land Trust staff have been reaching out to a variety of partners to explore the feasibility of creating "water trails" throughout the Finger Lakes. These are networks of conserved shoreline as well as businesses that cater to kayakers, canoeists, and other small boat users.

Several of these trails already exist in New York State, including one traversing Lake Champlain. Water trails and the acquisition of undeveloped Finger Lakes shoreline recently received federal attention with the release of the *Great Outdoors America* report by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The report highlights more than 100 of the country's most promising projects designed to protect special places and increase access to outdoor spaces. The report recognized enhanced public access to the Finger Lakes and the creation of a region-wide water trail as one of the nation's top conservation projects.

"We're delighted that this report recognizes the importance of enhancing public access to the Finger Lakes," says Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp. "We're already working with partners on the development of water trails for Canandaigua and Cayuga lakes. These projects have the potential to provide the impetus for the conservation of

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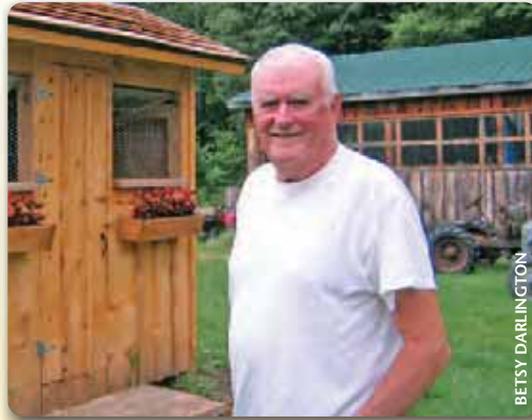
Tom Brown

Saw Mill Operator and Retired Engineer in Newfield, Tompkins County

A long-time friend of the Land Trust, Tom Brown contributes to the Land Trust's stewardship mission by supplying black locust lumber for kiosks, sign posts, foot bridges, benches, and other projects at our nature preserves.

Extremely tough and naturally rot-resistant, black locust is the Land Trust's first choice for outdoor ground-contact construction. Other wood products are available, but these are either pressure treated with toxic chemicals that can leach into the soil or they require cutting old growth cedar and redwood. The benefits of a fast growing, locally available hardwood with the durable qualities of locust are not lost on the Land Trust, nor are they lost on Tom Brown.

Tom began a small enterprise cutting posts for farm fences of red and white oak as a way of paying his way through college in north central Pennsylvania. Although oak is durable enough, he found he preferred the lasting quality of the locust.



A series of management jobs in engineering eventually brought him north to the Ithaca area, where he started the saw mill after retiring from his engineering career twelve years ago. He came across letters in local newspapers written by Betsy Darlington, which impressed him by their "common sense" approach to land conservation and stewardship. From that time on, Tom began working with Betsy and other Land Trust members on building projects at the preserves.

"All my life I've been environmentally conscious—an outdoors person," he said. "I recognize that in society there are many things you can do to benefit the environment. And you have choices, some of which don't go in that direction. I've always tried to select what can help and avoid what hurts."

As if having a reliable supply of black locust lumber weren't enough for the Land Trust, Tom as often as not generously "forgets" to send a bill. "I know money is scarce for non-profits," he said. "I just try to do what's right."

—Eben McLane

Partnership Forged with Bluff Point Association

With the stroke of a pen, the clasp of a handshake, and the welcome receipt of a \$5,000 contribution, the Land Trust and the Bluff Point Association (BPA) recently launched an innovative partnership aimed at promoting voluntary land conservation on properties that are vital to the future of Keuka Lake.

Visible for miles, Bluff Point is the prominent ridge of woodlands, farms, vineyards, and lakeshore cottages that separates the two forks of Keuka Lake. The BPA was founded in 1988 to address quality of life in the area as well as issues relating to conservation, development, and the cost of owning property.

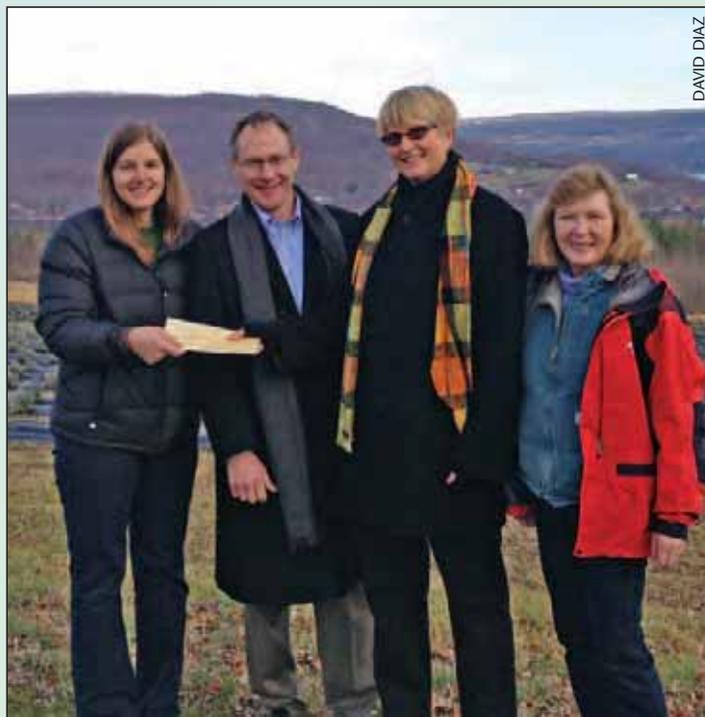
During the past two years, the Land Trust has launched outreach efforts at the Bluff to educate land owners about conservation easements and other options for conserving their land. To support these efforts, the BPA has agreed to help the Land Trust connect with landowners and local officials and has also generously committed funds to defray transaction and stewardship costs associated with easement donations at the Bluff.

"We live on a particularly sensitive and beautiful natural resource," BPA Director Lisa Saether said. "This partnership with the Land Trust will give us the tools that we need to help landowners conserve and protect their lands."

"We need to tap grassroots local support if we are to succeed in conserving Bluff Point and other places like it," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "We're grateful to the Bluff Point Association, both for their generous support and their strong commitment to conservation."

Both the BPA and the Land Trust seek the participation of active volunteers to help organize educational workshops and outreach meetings that are planned for this spring and summer. Please contact the Land Trust's Penn Yan-based Land Protection Specialist, Elizabeth Newbold at (315) 536-5123, ext. 4375 if you'd like to get involved.

(left to right) Land Trust Land Protection Specialist Elizabeth Newbold receives check from Bluff Point Association Co-Directors Scott Demmin and Lisa Saether with Debbie Koop, Steering Committee Member for the Bluff Point Association Conservation Fund.



Interest in Water Trails Increasing Throughout Region *continued from page 8*

undeveloped shoreline, while strengthening the local economy.”

Recently, the Finger Lakes Land Trust published *A Vision for the Canandaigua Lake Watershed* (may be viewed at www.flit.org/linkfiles/cndgareport.pdf), which made a number of recommendations for protecting environmentally sensitive lands threatened by significant growth in recent years. The creation of a water trail was one of the recommendations and was based upon strong public support expressed for the idea through the planning process, leading up to publication of the report.

So far, more than 20 locations on Canandaigua Lake have been identified as potential launching and destination sites for non-motorized boaters, according to Betsy Landre, a senior field representative with the Land Trust and the lead author of *A Vision for the Canandaigua Lake Watershed*.

“Water trails add another dimension for recreation on the Finger Lakes,” says Ed Marx, commissioner of planning at the Tompkins County Planning Department. “Whether for day trips or long distance multi-day excursions, it is essential for paddlers to know where put-in and take-out locations are and where services such as food and lodging may be found,” he added.

The Land Trust supported a successful grant proposal submitted by the planning departments of Tompkins, Cayuga, and Seneca counties to design a water trail for Cayuga Lake. The proposal was successful, and it is anticipated that a consultant will soon be hired to lead the process and obtain input from local communities. The Land Trust is considering how a portion of the 2,200 feet of shoreline the organization owns on Cayuga Lake might be used along the water trail.

The Land Trust is committed to working with local communities to provide appropriate public access to our lakes and other natural resources in a way that is sensitive to the resource itself as well as adjoining landowners. Steve Lynch, director of Cayuga County’s Department of Planning and Development, adds that “these projects recognize that access to nature is important, and many people live here because they value the quality of life we all enjoy.”

—Land Trust staff with additional reporting by George Dillmann

Our appreciation for gifts in honor of:

Patty and Jules Burgevin

FROM

*Peter Burgevin and
Margo Alexander*

**Betsy and Dick
Darlington**

FROM

*Jean Darlington and
Ed Marchena
Lois Darlington*

William Demarest

FROM

Jason Demarest

Steve Doudt

FROM

Alan and Kristie Braun

Michael Eck

FROM

Richard Brickwedde

**Ashley Miller and
Gene Endres**

FROM

Eric Broberg

Martha Fischer

FROM

*Linda Folley and Camila
Faraday*

*Kenneth and Roberta
Robinson*

David Flinn

FROM

Susan Quick

Martha Folley

FROM

*Linda Folley and Camila
Faraday*

Sana Gardescu

FROM

Donald Walker

William Klepack

FROM

Kathryn Ferger

Ann Livingston

FROM

Barb and Stephen Hamlin

Paul Paradine

FROM

Karen Eldredge

The Podulka Family

FROM

The Yntema Family

Tom Reimers

FROM

Barbara Nussbaum

Jesse Ross

FROM

Jay Ross

Vincent Ruffo

FROM

Helen Wyvill

Wendy and John Sinton

FROM

Christopher Sinton

Claudia Stoscheck

FROM

John Rogers

Glenn Swan

FROM

Eve Swan

Randy and Amy Wayne

FROM

Lynn Leopold

Our deepest gratitude for thoughtful gifts in memory of:

James Baker

FROM

*Mary Baker
City of Canandaigua
Bonnie and John Magin
Robert and Phyllis Purple*

Dora and Bill Brown

FROM

Jim and Susan Eyster

**Corwin and Nancy
Brumley**

FROM

Sally and Kip Keller

Albert and Sybil Craig

FROM

*Lisa and Jon Gandelot
The Matarazzo Family
The Craig Family
The Lundback Family
Gregory Craig
John Gibson Craig*

Wilma Dondero

FROM

Philip Erickson

Thomas Eisner

FROM

*Mary Berens and
Paul Feeny
Jane Wicklund*

Beverly Fridie

FROM

*Silvie and Michael
Wieczorek*

Robert Gilbert

FROM

The Yntema Family

Harry Hart

FROM

Debbie Koop and Len Saner

Maya Hobday

FROM

*Natalie Baker
Henry and Patricia Maus
Niles Seldon*

Anthony Jarczewski

FROM

Joyce Bleiweiss

Carl Leopold

FROM

Lynn Leopold

**Dorothy and James
Lynaugh**

FROM

Matthew Lynaugh

Cornelia Marks

FROM

Diana Kreutzer

D. Michael Smith

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*Joyce Flinko
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Joanne Stewart*

Larry Smith

FROM

Tom and Maureen Welch

Gisela Stoscheck

FROM

Claudia Stoscheck

John Taylor

FROM

*Brad Edmondson and
Tania Werbizky*

Edward John Thompson

FROM

*Ellen Fowler
James Thompson
William Thompson*

A CLOSER LOOK *(But not too close!)*

The Prickly Porcupine

You probably won't see them, though you may detect signs of their presence. Anything containing sodium and left outside overnight may be destroyed by gnawing teeth: wood siding, painted signs, truck undercarriages. You may notice "witch trees" whose branches are stunted and twisted from years of browsing. You might even come across the animal's distinctive wavy track in the snow, created by a waddling gait and a heavy, dragging tail, or smell its turpentiney urine. And if you look up while walking through the woods in the winter or early spring, you might catch a glimpse of the porcupine itself doggedly feeding on bark or buds, looking for all the world like a squirrel nest on the move.

The porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*) is the second-largest North American rodent, surpassed in size only by the beaver; it may be up to two feet long, not including the tail. Unlike its sleek cousin, it looks permanently disheveled, as if it's just been rudely awakened from sleep. Nevertheless, it is exquisitely adapted to a life high above the forest floor. Its extremely thick fur offers excellent insulation against harsh winter temperatures. Its feet have a single footpad covered with pebbled skin much like the surface of a basketball, as well as very long, curved claws that hook into even the tiniest crevices. On the underside of its tail are short, backward-pointing bristles that act as crampons. Since they spend most of their lives pressed against trees, porcupines have no quills on the belly, and no external genitalia.

In contrast to the social and proverbially energetic beaver, the porcupine is nocturnal, solitary, and does everything, including reproducing, very, very slowly. Native Americans revered the animal because it so often saved them in times of famine; it is so confident in its quills, and so slow, that it can be easily clubbed to death. Today, the porcupine's worst enemy is the automobile. Many are killed each spring on highways where they congregate in order to feed on road salt. Coyotes, mountain lions, and owls have been known to eat porcupines, but their only specialized predator is the fisher. This weasel-like animal attacks the porcupine's head repeatedly until it is wounded and disoriented, then flips it on its back.

The porcupine's warning system, like the skunk's, uses black and white, the colors most easily seen by nocturnal predators. A black stripe runs down the length of its tail and white quills bristle from the sides; the quills contain a fluorescent pigment that makes them seem even brighter. If an animal ignores this message, the porcupine will chatter its teeth, release a warning odor, erect its quills in all directions, and swing its tail like a mace. The quills, which can be up to four inches long, are coated with tiny barbs; under an electron microscope, they look like the fringed trunks of palm trees. On impact, the quills loosen from the porcupine's skin and lodge in the attacker's flesh, and muscle movements gradually draw them inward. A predator may be killed by a quill that pierces a vital organ or makes it impossible to eat, but it will probably not die from infection. Quills are coated with grease that facilitates penetration but also has antiseptic properties. This adaptation is designed not to spare the porcupine's predators but to protect itself. Porcupines live dangerously, venturing out onto slender branches in order to feed; they often fall from great heights and impale themselves on their own quills.

Official maps show that porcupines are present in every corner of upstate New York, but in fact they seem to be uncommon in the Finger Lakes. They are found regularly in the

Southern Tier, including the Land Trust's Parker, Plymouth Woods, and Steege Hill preserves, in the Connecticut Hill area, and they have recently been spotted in the town of Danby, Tompkins County. However, there are many areas of what would seem to be prime porcupine territory that are apparently unoccupied. Perhaps habitat fragmentation is partly to blame; the porcupine will not readily venture into open areas in order to cross from one forest block to the next. In addition, the arrival of two new species may make life even more tenuous for the porcupine. The fisher is making a comeback in the region, and the woolly adelgid, an invasive insect, is wreaking havoc on the hemlocks that provide food and shelter for porcupines in the winter. The sight of a porcupine high in the trees, never common even at the best of times, may become even rarer.

—*Jacqueline Stuhmiller*



Porcupines spend most of their lives pressed against trees.

Finger Lakes Land Trust

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Winter 2012 Calendar



Wednesday, March 28, 7:00 PM, Screening of *Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time* in conjunction with Baltimore Woods Nature Center. This documentary focuses on the life and philosophy of the legendary environmentalist Aldo Leopold. Aldo's son, Carl, was the founding president of the Land Trust and is featured in the film. Event will be held at Baltimore Woods Nature Center, 4007 Bishop Hill Rd. Marcellus, NY. For more information on the movie, visit www.greenfiremovie.com

Saturday, April 21, 1:00 PM, Earth Day Tree Walk at the Kingsbury Woods Conservation Area. Join outdoor educator and naturalist Akiva Silver to learn about identification, natural history, wildlife value, the role of invasive plants as well as the survival uses of trees and plants. The walk will last two hours or more so please come prepared with appropriate clothing and footwear for the weather. The walk is free and open to the public. The Kingsbury Woods Conservation Area is just off Jersey Hill Rd in the Town of Danby.

See our web site for maps and photos of the preserves.

WALKS GO RAIN, SUN OR SNOW. PLEASE BRING SNACKS AND WATER, AND WEAR STURDY SHOES. CALL THE LAND TRUST AT (607) 275-9487 FOR DETAILS.



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