



The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Vol. 26, No. 3 • Summer 2014

Land Gift adds to Wetland Protection near Seneca Lake

Thanks to Enterprise Products Partners, 140 acres of wildlife-rich wetlands located in the heart of one of the Finger Lakes region's largest wetlands will now be dedicated to conservation.



BILL HECHT

Aerial view of Queen Catharine Marsh (donated property is on left side of photo)

These lands were recently donated to the Land Trust with the understanding that they would ultimately be conveyed to New York State as an addition to the adjacent Queen Catharine Marsh Wildlife Management Area.

Enterprise Products Partners is a national provider of midstream energy services that operates a natural gas terminal in Watkins Glen, transporting propane to local distributors.

Queen Catharine Marsh is located near the south end of Seneca Lake bordering State Route 14, just outside of Watkins Glen. The wetland is recognized as one of New York's Important Bird Areas. It hosts seasonal concentrations of waterfowl as well as resident Bald Eagles. The marsh also plays an important role in filtering runoff to Seneca Lake.

The donated property is easily viewed from the Catharine Valley Trail, which

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Longtime Member Donates 53-Acre Property in Tompkins County

AN old "Seinfeld" episode introduced the term "re-gifting," which is the act of giving a (presumably unwanted) gift you received to someone else. The practice is generally considered to be ungrateful and inappropriate.

However, in the right context, re-gifting can be a magnanimous act of generosity. For example, Tom Reimers, a former Land Trust president, board member and longtime volunteer, recently donated a 53-acre parcel of land in Danby, Tompkins County, to the Land Trust.

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ANDY ZEPP

Land donor Tom Reimers with Land Trust Director of Development and Communications Kelly Makosch on his gifted parcel in Danby, Tompkins County

This issue of *The Land Steward* includes an article highlighting the Canandaigua Highlands—one of a number of high-priority landscapes where the Land Trust is focusing its efforts to ensure a future network of conserved lands that provide high quality habitat for native plants, fish, and wildlife, and people too!

I was recently reminded of what we're trying to accomplish in such places when I spent an afternoon with my daughter Bella, splashing around in Fall Creek, the largest tributary to Cayuga Lake and a terrific place to explore nature when the water is running clear.

We set out on one of the first warm days of May for an iconic Ithaca spot known as "Flat Rock," where shallow waters and gentle pools make a great spot for kids to get used to the water. Located just a few minutes from my home, its proximity means that we've had the opportunity to get to know it well.

Within just an hour or so, we'd seen ducks, herons, a Belted Kingfisher, a Red-tailed Hawk, a water snake, trout, and many, many crayfish. And since we'd had a dry spell, the water was crystal clear.

We were just getting ready to head home, when we spied a mink making its way upstream toward us, surging porpoise-like against a strong current. It got quite close before spotting us, veering off

and dashing quickly into the woods. It was the first time Bella had ever seen a mink and I'm sure she'll remember the experience.

It was a wonderful afternoon for both of us; the clean water and diversity of wildlife close to home made it particularly special. So that others can have this experience 10 years or 100 years down the road, we need to ensure the future of places like Flat Rock. We also need to go far beyond, to protect the wetlands and floodplains that filter runoff to Fall Creek and help maintain water quality, the corridor of lands needed by the far-ranging mink, and the patchwork of habitats that meet the needs of the Red-tailed Hawk and other raptors.

This comprehensive approach increasingly guides the Land Trust's conservation investments as we try to secure the future of our region's most beloved landscapes. With concerted effort and your support, we can sustain these landscapes that are so vital to our lakes, our wildlife, and our communities.



Andrew Zepp
Executive Director
Finger Lakes Land Trust

Longtime Member Donates 53-Acre Property in Tompkins County *continued from cover*

Where does the re-gifting come in? The same property had been donated to the Land Trust 17 years before.

In 1997, Robert S. Miller donated two adjacent parcels of undeveloped land in Danby, along the southern edge of Tompkins County. Each parcel was approximately 50 acres, and Miller agreed to let the Land Trust sell the two properties, subject to a conservation easement permitting only one dwelling.

At the time, Reimers was the president of the Land Trust board, and he had been seeking a remote piece of land to serve as a quiet, peaceful retreat. "I had been looking off and on for five years, and I finally found the perfect place," Reimers said.

Reimers purchased one of the Miller parcels from the Land Trust in early 1998. The transaction was mutually beneficial—Reimers got the secluded sanctuary he had been searching



View from the porch of the cabin

ANDY ZEP

for, and the Land Trust received much-needed cash that it could put to work protecting other vital land in the Finger Lakes region.

The Land Trust also knew the property was in good hands. Reimers, a retired professor of endocrinology at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, served on the Land Trust board for six years. He is also an active volunteer and past president of the Cayuga Trails Club, which maintains over 100 miles of hiking trails in Schuyler

and Tompkins counties. He has received several awards honoring his tireless volunteer work for both organizations, including the Land Trust's Conservationist of the Year in 2006.

Tom's passion for exploring the local landscape is also evident in "A Brief History of the Finger Lakes Trail," which he wrote in 1992 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the *continued on page 8*

Conservation Focus Area—The Canandaigua Highlands

While the Land Trust pursues conservation projects throughout its 12-county service area, the organization also makes a conscious effort to focus on those landscapes that are regionally recognized for their ecological, scenic, cultural, and recreational values.

The Canandaigua Highlands is one of these areas—a verdant landscape featuring wooded hillsides that embrace the southern half of Canandaigua Lake, rugged gorges, one of the region’s largest wetlands, and a popular branch of the Finger Lakes Trail.

Undeveloped land in this area has long been recognized for its significance to a variety of needs. Lands in the vicinity of High Tor Wildlife Management Area are seen as a priority project within New York State’s Open Space Plan, and the site has also been identified as one of the State’s Important Bird Areas. The lake itself, also serves as a major public drinking water supply.

The south end of the lake is known for its rich cultural history. The Seneca people say that they were born at “Kanadague,” or the chosen spot. Clark’s Gully (a popular spot for hikers these days) lies at the base of South Hill, or Nundawao. According to legend, it is at Nundawao that the earth divided and the Seneca people emerged.

Farther up the lake, Bare Hill is also regarded for its cultural significance as well as its scenic beauty. In the past, Seneca council meetings were held there, where prayers were offered to the Great Spirit. That spirit of peace and reconciliation still lingers there today. Visitors to Bare Hill State Unique Area can find an inspiring spot for contemplation as well as a great view of the lake below.

Those in search of wildlife encounters can find them in the sprawling High Tor Wildlife Management Area that encompasses thousands of acres of diverse habitats. A canoe trip up the West River provides visitors with glimpses

of herons, waterfowl, and perhaps resident Bald Eagles.

Hikers can get out on miles of trails that include a stretch of the Bristol Hills branch of the Finger Lakes Trail as well as a rail trail that extends through the heart of the West River marshes. And no trip to Naples would be complete

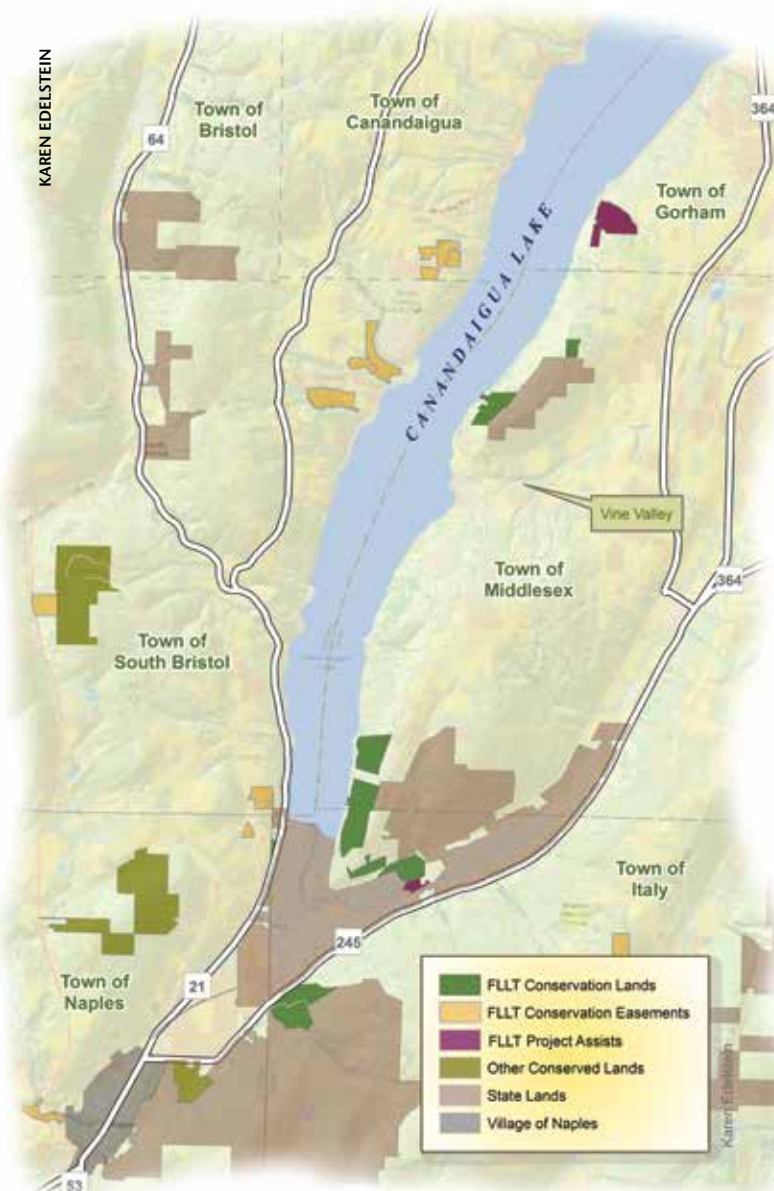
without a trip to the heart of Grimes Glen, a popular spot for cooling off on a summer’s day.

To date, the Land Trust has completed 22 land protection projects within the Canandaigua Highlands, establishing several nature preserves, partnering with public conservation agencies to secure additional lands, and acquiring conservation easements on lands that remain in private ownership. Highlights include the acquisition of key parcels at Grimes Glen and Conklin Gully; the protection of wildlife habitat along the West River and the wooded hillsides of South Hill; the completion of four acquisitions on Bare Hill; and the protection of lands in the vicinity of Bristol Harbor Resort, through the use of conservation easements.

Despite these accomplishments, the Land Trust is committed to accelerating the pace of its conservation efforts in this area. Pressure on the land is increasing as real estate values rise. Our goal of sustaining a network of conservation lands in

the Canandaigua Highlands is a daunting challenge but one that is clearly worth the effort!

For additional information on visiting Grimes Glen and the Land Trust’s Great Hill Preserve, go to www.fllt.org.



STAFF Developments

We are delighted to announce the hiring of Nomi Fridman, who will serve as the Land Trust's Finance Manager.

The half-time staff position, reporting to the executive director, was created to fill the organization's growing need for in-house accounting and bookkeeping services.

Having held the bookkeeping position at Ithaca Bakery, along with Temple Beth El and Cornell Hillel prior to that, Nomi brings with her a wide breadth of experience in fiscal management.

In her spare time, Nomi also teaches Israeli Folk Dancing, enjoys growing her own vegetables and likes spending time outdoors. Having grown up in Israel and then moving to Mexico for two years, Nomi speaks both Hebrew and Spanish and thoroughly enjoys Ithaca's multi-cultural community.

Please join us in welcoming Nomi to the Land Trust staff.



Acquisition Adds to Protected Lands on Canandaigua Lake

The Land Trust has acquired a forested parcel located near the summit of Bare Hill, an iconic landmark on the east side of Canandaigua Lake. The property is located just off Van Epps Road in the town of Middlesex, Yates County, close to the entrance to New York State's Bare Hill Unique Area.

The Land Trust identified the five-acre parcel as a priority for protection due to its location near the summit of the hill and the fact that it is adjacent to other conserved lands. Previous owners Chris and Jill Glattly enjoyed the property for 25 years as a recreational retreat not far from their home in Canandaigua.

"Chris and Jill were a pleasure to work with on this project," said Land Trust's Land Protection Specialist Elizabeth Newbold. "The Glattlys expressed their joy in working with the Land Trust because it meant that their land would be 'returned to Bare Hill.' We're grateful to them for their commitment to the land. The protection of this property is particularly significant given the natural and historical importance of the area."

The Land Trust intends to sell the property to New York State as an addition to Bare Hill Unique Area at some point in the future when funds are available. Like the surrounding lands, the property is entirely forested by an oak-hickory mix.

Bare Hill is well known in the area as the scenic ridge that rises 865 feet above Canandaigua Lake's eastern shore just north of Vine Valley. Old photos show that the area was indeed "bare" in the past, but today it is largely forested, except for its summit which is covered with a mix of meadows and shrub lands. One Seneca legend has it that the writhing of a great serpent swept the hill of its trees and bushes until it was bare. Whatever the cause, Bare Hill is notable for its shallow soils that are susceptible to the stress of drought in most summers.

The Land Trust was able to take advantage of this opportunity through an internal loan from its revolving land protection fund. This is the fourth project the Land Trust has completed at Bare Hill. In 2013, the organization acquired two parcels here, including a rare stretch of undeveloped

shoreline on Canandaigua Lake.

Elsewhere in the Canandaigua Lake watershed, the Land Trust is currently working with partners to restore grassland bird habitat adjacent to High Tor Wildlife Management Area and is promoting the protection of prime farmland in partnership with the town of Canandaigua.

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorneys Sarah Pellerin and Paul Berndt of the law firm Harter Secrest & Emery, LLP in Rochester for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.



Conservationist Award Recipients Honored at Annual Meeting

Kim Rothman: Volunteer of the Year

This year's Volunteer of the Year recipient is Kim Rothman, an attorney with the firm Miller Mayer, LLP, located in Ithaca. Kim graciously contributed many hours of legal work associated with the Land Trust's acquisition of a property overlooking Skaneateles Lake's eastern shore. The acquisition was particularly complex due to local zoning regulations. "Without Kim's assistance, this acquisition wouldn't have happened," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "We're grateful for her tireless efforts on our behalf and also to her firm, Miller Mayer, LLP, which is a long-time supporter of the Land Trust." Kim's dedication to the Land Trust's mission has resulted in the creation of the Hinchcliff Family Preserve, a 206-acre property that will soon be open to the public for quiet recreation. Thanks to Kim, this achievement will also pave the way for a plan to build a greenbelt of public open space around the south end of Skaneateles Lake. As both a Land Trust member and volunteer, we are very grateful for Kim's commitment to conserving land in the Finger Lakes.

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference: Conservationist of the Year

The mission of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference is to build, protect, enhance, and promote a continuous footpath across New York State. The Trail Conference is committed to conserving lands along the 558-mile Finger Lakes Trail. Last year, they partnered with the Land Trust to establish the Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve, a 50-acre property featuring a rare old growth stand of sugar maples and a half-mile of the Finger Lakes Trail located just west of Ithaca. "The amount of volunteer effort that goes into sustaining the Finger Lakes Trail is truly amazing," said Zepp. "We're delighted to have had the opportunity to work together with this effective group."

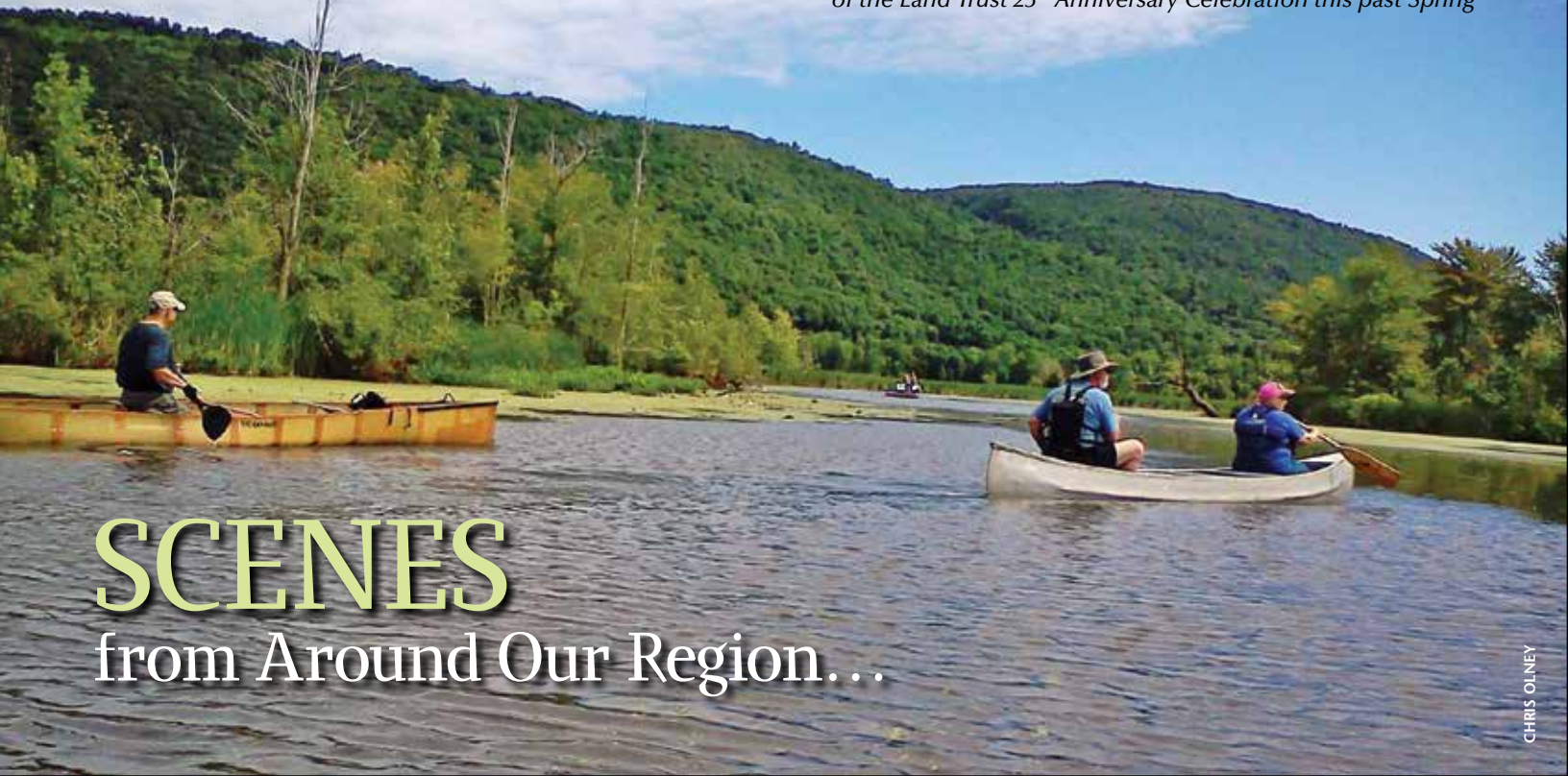
After the Bock family contacted the Finger Lakes Land Trust, Land Trust staff reached out to representatives of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and the Cayuga Trails Club to develop a partnership whereby the three organizations will work together to provide for the long-term protection of the land. As a result, the property was donated to the Trail Conference subject to a conservation easement held by the Land Trust. The Trail Conference enthusiastically accepted ownership of the Bock property as well as its stewardship in perpetuity. "The Finger Lakes Trail Conference welcomes the opportunity to accept ownership of the Bock property," said Conference President Pat Monahan. "We plan to be good stewards of the land forever. This is a wonderful jewel that can now become a permanent part of the Emerald Necklace."

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference is a member-supported, nonprofit organization that has built and maintains the Finger Lakes Trail system, which includes nearly 1,000 miles of footpath across New York from Allegheny Park to the Catskills and to Niagara Falls and the Adirondacks, including 400 miles of the North Country Trail and the New York section of the Great Eastern Trail. We are pleased to honor the Trail Conference as the Land Trust's Conservationist of the Year.

Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp (center) presents Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) President Pat Monahan (left) with this year's Conservationist of the Year Award as long-time FLLT/FLTC volunteers Irene Szabo, Tom Reimers, and Roger Hopkins (left to right) look on with Land Trust Board President Stu Schweizer.



Participants paddling on the West River through High Tor Wildlife Management Area at the foot of Canandaigua Lake—part of the Land Trust 25th Anniversary Celebration this past Spring



SCENES

from Around Our Region...

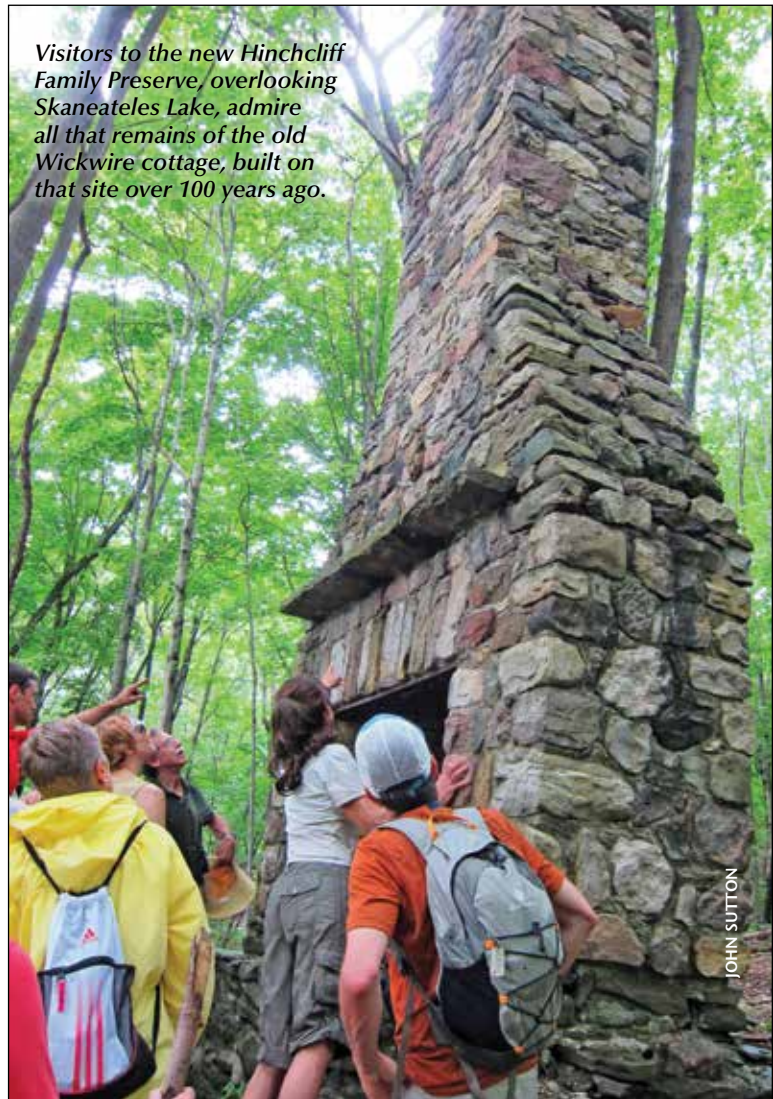
CHRIS OLNEY

Lime Hollow Nature Center's Associate Director Peter Harrity, kicks off the Land Trust's 2014 Talks & Treks series with a nature walk at Bear Swamp State Forest



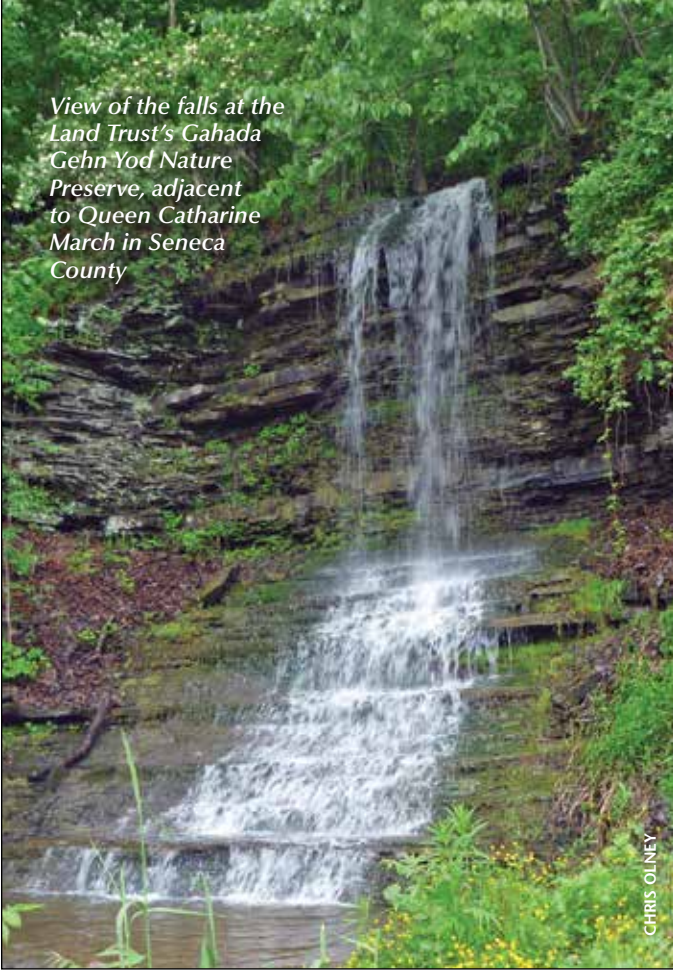
BILL HECHT

Visitors to the new Hinchcliff Family Preserve, overlooking Skaneateles Lake, admire all that remains of the old Wickwire cottage, built on that site over 100 years ago.



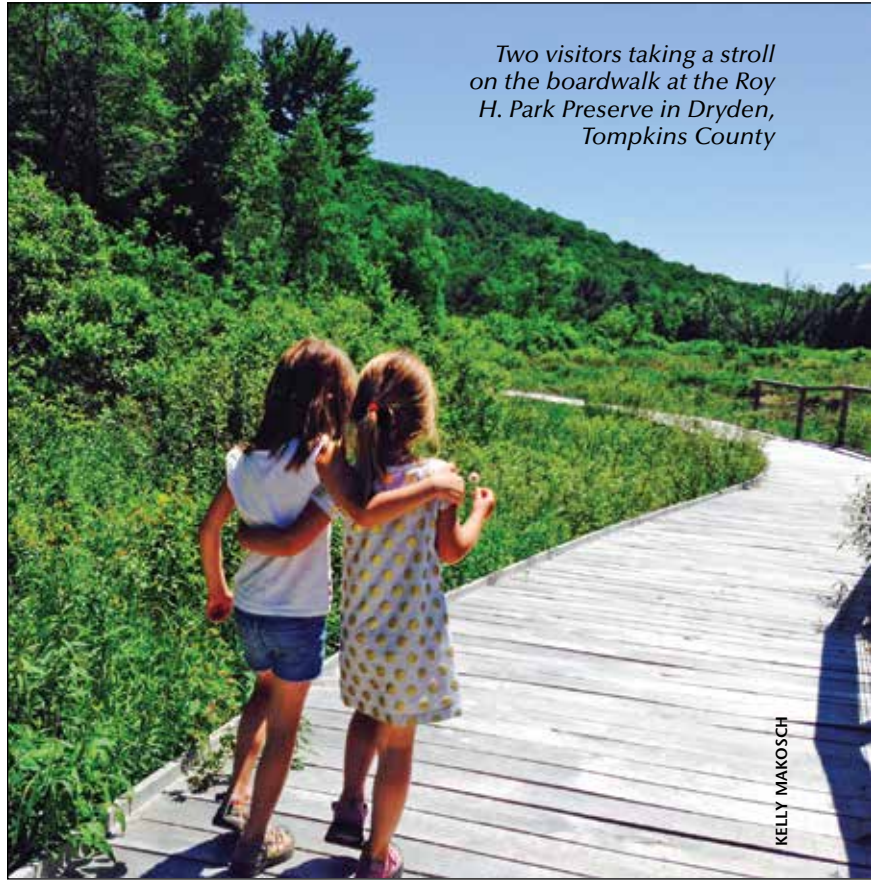
JOHN SUTTON

View of the falls at the Land Trust's Gahada Gehn-Yod Nature Preserve, adjacent to Queen Catharine March in Seneca County



CHRIS OLNEY

Two visitors taking a stroll on the boardwalk at the Roy H. Park Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County



KELLY MAKOSCH

The recent schedule of events celebrating the Land Trust's 25th Anniversary included this birding trip at Steege Hill Nature Preserve in Big Flats, Chemung County led by Bill Ostrander of the Chemung Valley Audubon Society.



MONIKA WOOD



Land Gift adds to Wetland Protection near Seneca Lake *continued from cover*

is located on the east side of the tract, adjacent to a remnant stretch of the Chemung Canal. The canal once extended all the way to Elmira and was one of a number of New York's commercial waterways that declined with the advent of the railroads.

With the donation now complete, the Land Trust intends to work in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to enhance the property's wildlife habitats. Over the years, the site's hydrology and vegetation have been altered by construction of the canal as well as several nearby roads. Efforts will be made to increase wetland habitat diversity and the site's associated value for migratory birds.

Once restoration efforts are complete, the Land Trust will work with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the locally based, non-profit Wetland Trust to provide for long-term management of the site.

"This is a great addition to a growing network of conserved lands in this area," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "By donating this property, Enterprise will ensure the future of these productive wetlands

while providing us with the opportunity to enhance their value for wildlife."



Conservation efforts in the Queen Catharine Marsh will protect habitat for wetland birds such as the American Bittern.

Acquisition of these wetlands will be the fifth project undertaken by the Land Trust to secure lands in the vicinity of Watkins Glen and Montour Falls. The organization has already protected more than 200 acres of steep hillsides on the west side of State Route 14 and 200 additional acres of woodlands near the headwaters of Glen Creek, the popular stream that flows through Watkins Glen State Park. These lands were protected through direct acquisition as well as the use of conservation easements.

Look for photos and additional information on our wetland restoration efforts in upcoming issues of *The Land Steward*.

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorneys Elena Flash and Carrie Pollak of the law firm Miller Mayer, LLP in Ithaca for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.

Longtime Member Donates 53-Acre Property in Tompkins County *continued from page 2*

Finger Lakes Trail System.

The parcel of land that Reimers purchased consists primarily of forest land, along with a meadow surrounding a ridgetop that was once used as farmland. Two streams also run through portions of the property. Reimers built a small cabin on the ridgetop, and allowed the forest to begin reclaiming the meadow.

"I used to love sitting on the porch of the cabin and watching the sunset," Tom recalled. "When I first built the cabin, just one artificial light was visible at night. Now the forest has grown up and eclipsed even that one light. You just get the stars."

Not surprisingly, Reimers created a trail system on the property and spent a great deal of time hiking through the forest. He even put up a couple of trail video cams, hoping to catch sight of a black bear. The elusive bear never materialized, but Reimers saw (both on video and in person) a fisher—a rare sighting in this part of the state.

In recent years, Reimers found he wasn't spending as much time on the property as he used to. Although he still

loves the property—"it's a special place," Tom said with feeling—Reimers decided that the best course of action was to give the parcel back to the Land Trust.

The Land Trust is currently pursuing a sale of the parcel, which will raise additional funds for its conservation efforts. The conservation easement remains in place—no further development is allowed on the property beyond the single permitted home site.

As for Tom, you can find him out on the local trails. The most likely spot is on a four-mile stretch of the Cayuga Trail that he maintains; the Cayuga Trail runs for more than eight miles through the Cornell University campus and eastward along Fall Creek. He will continue his proclivity for re-gifting as a trail steward, clearing and maintaining trails so more people can enjoy the natural beauty of the Finger Lakes region.

—Jeff Tonole

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

Conservation Land for Sale with Cabin

As described above, the Land Trust is selling this 53-acre gifted property subject to a conservation easement at the land's appraised value of \$140,000. For further details, please contact realtor Ed Finegan at 607-279-0234.



The property includes a number of hiking trails through mature forest.

2014 SPRING BIRD QUEST: Report from the Field

The first stretch of trail at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve takes you down into a little grove, an island of tall trees surrounded by sweeping grassland. Every spring, sure as the arrival of the season itself, you'll find a Chestnut-sided Warbler here, defending his territory right along the path with an emphatic song.

A little further on, you'll pass hedgerows where Common Yellowthroats breed annually, then shrubby open areas with nesting Field Sparrows and Indigo Buntings, and finally a second isolated patch of trees down near Coleman Lake—the perennial breeding grounds of Prairie Warblers, Brown Thrashers, and more Chestnut-sided Warblers.

The return of the birds to the same sites year after year is a wonder of ecology and evolution, made possible by the close relationship between each species and its habitat, as well as the remarkable capacity of these birds to migrate hundreds or even thousands of miles and somehow find their way back to where they started. Of course, the other necessary condition is that the habitat actually still be there. If the preserve hadn't been created by the Finger Lakes Land Trust, who knows if the Chestnut-sided Warbler might have returned one year only to find its sunny grove edge replaced by a house and lawn? Without land preservation, site fidelity in birds turns from a miracle to a tragedy.

In another sense, I suppose that I too have recently exercised a certain site fidelity with the Finger Lakes Land Trust Spring Bird Quest (SBQ). We have settled into a standard slate of bird walks—the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary on Saturday, Lindsay-Parsons on Sunday, and a Memorial Day two-for-one special of the Goetchius Wetland Preserve and the Roy H. Park Preserve. I have a familiar list of stalwart annual supporters who pledge support for my SBQ fundraiser and who show up for my walks. And the birds, as noted, often appear right on cue as we retrace paths trod every year. This routine is all very comforting, all the more precious for its familiarity—a little like returning home every year for the holidays and finding things pretty much the way we remember.

But the routine is no rut. Every SBQ reveals new discoveries and gradual landscape changes and occasional big surprises, this year maybe more than usual. I found two SBQ "life birds," a Wilson's Warbler at the Etna Nature Preserve and a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Lindsay-Parsons. We welcomed many new participants, some with very little previous connection to birds or the Land Trust. We also visited two major new tracts recently acquired by the Land Trust, one at McIlroy and one at Park.

In the end, I found 94 species on Land Trust properties over the weekend. Over 70 people joined our four group bird walks, counting repeat participants. On-the-spot donations, combined with pledges in support of my species tally, will yield around \$3,000 to support the Land Trust's continued efforts to preserve vital habitats and a long future of safe returns for the birds, other wildlife, and us, the lucky residents of the Finger Lakes.

Many thanks to all participants, supporters, and especially the Land Trust itself!
—Mark Chao

Spring Bird Quest participants watching sandpipers at the Goetchius Wetland Preserve in Caroline, Tompkins County



A female indigo bunting with nest material at the Roy H. Park Nature Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County

SUAN YONG

BETSY DARLINGTON

Land Trust Board Grows

The Land Trust announced three new board members at its 25th Annual Meeting held last month. The new members, Percy Browning, Myra Shulman, and Patty Weisse, bring wide-ranging talents and experience to the organization's leadership.

Percy Browning is a Cornell University alumna, who returned to Ithaca in 1995 and became actively involved with local philanthropy. A member of the Land Trust since 1997, Percy donated a tract of land adjacent to our Stevenson Preserve as well as a parcel adjacent to our Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve. More recently, Percy chaired the Land Trust's Shoreline to Summit Capital Campaign, which just completed its campaign goal of raising \$5 million.

Myra Shulman currently trains Indonesian students, academics, and staff from the non-profit organization Conservation International, in marine ecology, biodiversity, and conservation. Prior to that, she was a senior research associate in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell University where she taught courses in ecology, evolutionary biology and marine biology. Myra and her husband live in Ithaca.

Patty Weisse is a consultant for the Gifford Foundation and is currently working with the Onondaga Earth Corps on capacity building. Prior to that, she was the executive director for the Baltimore Woods Nature Center, where she created the award winning Nature in the City program for urban elementary schools. Patty and her husband live in Skaneateles.

Our appreciation for
gifts in honor of

Our deepest gratitude for
thoughtful gifts in memory of

Betsy Darlington
FROM
*David Feldshuh and
Martha Frommelt*

Ed Marx
FROM
Beverly Quimby

Donna Scott
FROM
Lynn Scott

Ruby Smith
FROM
Jackie Bays

Adelaide Tracey
FROM
Robin Steuteville

Marty Weiss
FROM
Gerry Weiss

Pat Burnett
FROM
Skippy Raines

Charles and Mabel Cladel
FROM
Nancy and Charles Scholes

Art Davis
FROM
Bob and Ellen Kanuck

James Francis, Sr.
FROM
Marilyn Baader

David Hamlin
FROM
Bonnie Hamlin

Howard Hartnett
FROM
Paula Peter and Mike Ward

Hatti Hutzel
FROM
Skippy Raines

Jeanne Marie Keane Jud
FROM
*Robert Evans
Preferred Brands
Marion and William Wilmot*

Carola Keller
FROM
Taylor Keller

Kenneth Kennedy
FROM
Betsy and Dick Darlington

Carl Leopold
FROM
Amy Jaffe

Marjorie Loomis
FROM
Skippy Raines

Sidney Metzger
FROM
Skippy Raines

Paul Moonan, Jr.
FROM
Melisa Moonan

Dr. Edward P. O'Hanlon
FROM
*Bruce and Jane Baker
Brendan and Mary Brady
David DiRaddo
Barbara and Stephen Hamlin
Lisa Jacobs
Petra and Stephan Keller
Paul and Shirley Kellogg
Bruce Kennedy
Lecesse Construction
David S. and Linda M. Marsh
Adrian Melissinos
Robert and Phyllis Purple
Gail and Paul Silvestri*

Peter Rinaldo
FROM
Dorothy W. Rinaldo

Create your legacy

**A little planning today will help protect
the lands you love tomorrow.**
*Invest in the mission of the Land Trust
through gifts from your estate.*

Discover the many ways you can conserve the place
you call home, maximizing your philanthropic giving
and meeting your financial goals.

Join the White Pine Society

*For more information please call Kelly Makosch
in the Land Trust office at 607-275-9487.*

Newly Aquired Motor Pool

*(left to right) Director of
Stewardship Chris Olney and
Land Steward Jason Gorman
showing off the Land Trust's
recently acquired motor pool:
a 2007 Honda Civic donated by
Pike and Rosemarie Oliver and
a 2006 Chevy Silverado donated
by Burch and Louise Craig.
These generous gifts will make
it possible for the organization
to save money on travel and,
at the same time, expand its efforts
at managing its lands. **Special
thanks to the Olivers and Craigs!***



A CLOSER LOOK

Turkey Vultures: Buzzards with a Bum Rap

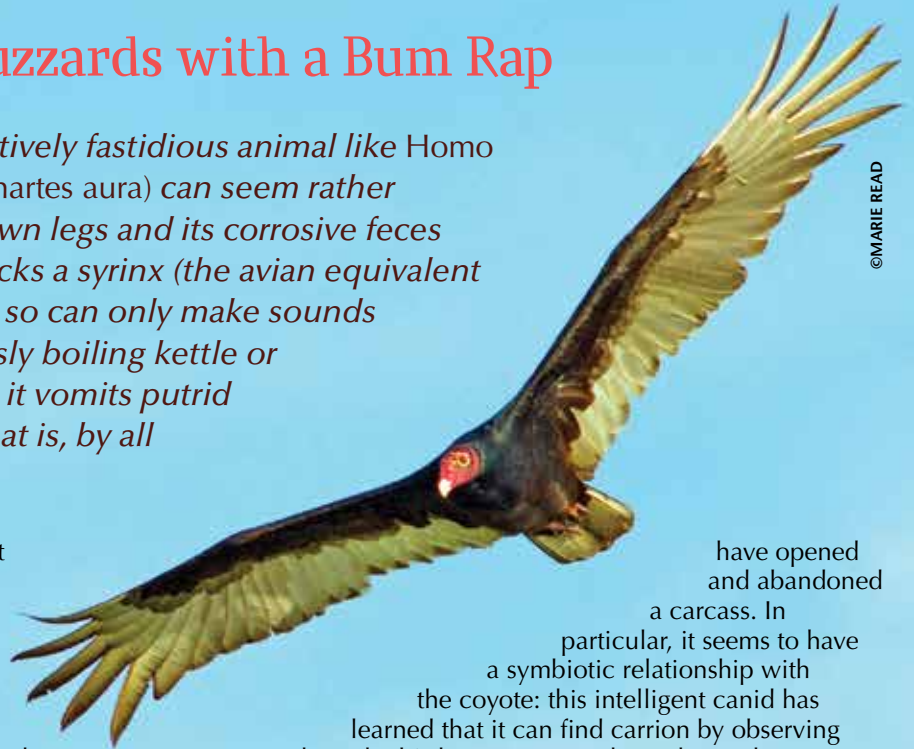
From the point of view of a relatively fastidious animal like Homo sapiens, the Turkey Vulture (Cathartes aura) can seem rather repugnant. It defecates on its own legs and its corrosive feces can take the paint off a car. It lacks a syrinx (the avian equivalent of our larynx, or voicebox), and so can only make sounds that are reminiscent of a furiously boiling kettle or an angry cat. When threatened, it vomits putrid meat on its attackers, a tactic that is, by all accounts, extremely effective.

The Turkey Vulture isn't the handsomest of birds, either. Like its namesake, the Wild Turkey, it has a squat, dark body, featherless legs, and a small, brightly colored, wrinkled, naked head. Even its large feet are surprisingly turkey-like: because it rarely eats live animals, it does not need the strong, curved talons of a predatory bird.

Yet the Turkey Vulture's greatest public-relations hurdle is not its awkward appearance or its bad habits, but its association with death. In Westerns, its appearance is always a bad sign: it circles high overhead, waiting for weakened animals and people to perish. In truth, it cannot sense distress, only decomposition. It appears to be attracted by the scent of ethyl mercaptan, a volatile gas given off by rotting carcasses. (This unpleasant-smelling compound is also added to natural gas, which is otherwise scentless, so pipeline leaks often attract Turkey Vultures.) Until it detects its next meal, it conserves energy by coasting on thermals, updrafts of warm air, on which it floats, with only an occasional wing flap, for hours.

Long considered to be disease-carrying vermin and destroyed on sight by farmers, the Turkey Vulture in fact actively removes toxins from the environment. Disease agents such as botulism, cholera, and anthrax are usually destroyed on their trip through the bird's powerful digestive system. In its own way, the vulture is even rather tidy. The parts that are likeliest to touch rotting meat are free of feathers and therefore relatively easy to keep clean; the guano that coats its legs may further protect it from infection. Any pathogens remaining on the bird's body are destroyed by UV radiation, which is one reason why vultures are often seen sunning themselves, wings spread, on high perches.

The Turkey Vulture is not an entirely indiscriminate diner—it prefers the relatively fresh carcasses of small animals and will avoid flesh that is in an advanced state of decomposition—but, in a pinch, it's not fussy. Its weak beak cannot rip through the tough hides of larger animals, so it often has to wait until stronger scavengers



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have opened and abandoned a carcass. In particular, it seems to have a symbiotic relationship with the coyote: this intelligent canid has learned that it can find carrion by observing where the birds congregate. The Turkey Vulture may occasionally also eat fledglings, rotting vegetable matter, insects, or even the feces of other animals.

In the early 1900s, the Turkey Vulture was only a rare summer visitor to New York. Today, it is ubiquitous in the warmer months throughout most of the lower 48 and into southern Canada. Conservation measures may account for some of the population increase: the food chain contains far fewer organochlorines (such as DDT) than it once did, and Turkey Vultures are now protected by law. However, the dramatic shift in the species' range can probably be attributed to changes in the landscape, which has become much more hospitable to scavengers of late. Landfills, dumpsters, and roadkill (sometimes known as "TV dinners") provide easy pickings. A skyrocketing deer population, coupled with a rapidly increasing coyote population, has ensured that there is more carrion available than ever. Even the winds have changed: concrete and asphalt warm up faster and hold heat longer than do fields and forests, and the rising hot air over urban areas creates the thermals on which vultures rely. Global climate change may be responsible, too; in a warmer climate, carcasses freeze later or not at all.

Whether we like it or not—and many people strongly object to sharing space with Turkey Vultures—it would seem that we have entered into a sort of mutualistic symbiosis with these homely, uncouth birds. They can only live here because we have made the place habitable for them with the byproducts of human progress, garbage and roadkill; we can only live here if they continue to clean up the messes that we make.

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller

Finger Lakes Land Trust

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Summer 2014 Calendar

Friday, August 1, 8:00pm: *Star Gazing and Observatory Tour at Mees Observatory, Naples.* A unique opportunity to see the stars high atop the Bristol Hills at the University of Rochester's observatory! Learn about celestial bodies and deep space objects while gazing through the 24-inch telescope. Space is limited and registration is required, please call (607) 275-9487. Meet at the Gannett House at 6604 East Gannett Hill Road in Naples.

Saturday, September 13, 10:00am – 12:00pm: *Goldenrods and Asters at the Roy H. Park Preserve, co-hosted with the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society.* Join Susanne Lorbeer to learn more about the fall wildflowers at the Roy H. Park Preserve in Dryden. The group will meet at the NORTH parking area. From Ithaca, take Rt. 13 North towards Dryden. Go approx. 12 miles and turn right on Irish Settlement Rd. Continue on Irish Settlement Road approx. 4 miles to find the NORTH parking area—where the boardwalk is—on the left (approx. 0.5 mile after Hammond Hill Rd).

Saturday, September 20, 10:00am – 12:00pm: *Fall Fungus at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve.* Join mycologist Kathie Hodge again this year to explore the curious fungus kingdom that sprouts around us in the fall. From Ithaca, follow Ellis Hollow Road 2.5 miles past East Hill Shopping Plaza. Turn left on Genung Road, then right on Ellis Hollow Creek Road. Preserve entrance is located 0.2 miles past intersection, on left side of road.

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.

