



# THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 16, No. 4

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Fall 2004

## Land Gift & Partnership Lead to Protection of Canandaigua Vista

The view from County Route 12 is well known to residents of Ontario County. Looking across Canandaigua Lake, one is rewarded by spectacular views of Bare Hill, South Hill, and the Land Trust's Great Hill Preserve. Thanks to a generous gift of land from Odell Scott, and a unique partnership between the Land Trust and the Town of South Bristol, the public will be guaranteed the opportunity to enjoy these same views in the future.

The Land Trust tapped funds from its Nature's Gift cam-



Courtesy of Mike Fowler/The Naples Record

Odell Scott at his home overlooking Canandaigua Lake

paign to cover the cost of a survey and legal fees. This allowed the Town to accept the gift as a public scenic reserve. To uphold Scott's wishes that the land's beauty is preserved, the Land Trust also agreed to hold a conservation easement on the property.

Scott's property consists of a mix of field and forest, with several ravines leading down toward Canandaigua Lake. The parcel adjoins a scenic overlook already under development by the Town. Its significance for wildlife is enhanced by the fact that it also borders a state wildlife management area.

"I want to make sure that the public has the opportunity to enjoy the same view that I've enjoyed over the years," says Scott, who first acquired land here in 1960. Scott made the gift in honor of Carol Holcomb Scott, his wife of 55 years who

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Emily Eisman



Spectacular shoreline vista from the land gift of Odell Scott

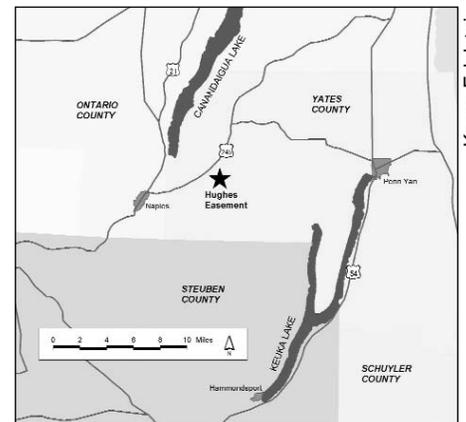
## Hughes Easement Gift Launches Ridgeline Conservation Effort

For more than 40 years, Don and Margot Hughes have cherished their 84-acre property on a scenic hillside above Yates County's Italy Valley, and they did not want to see it lost to subdivisions in years to come. To ensure that this wouldn't happen, they chose to donate a conservation easement to the Land Trust.

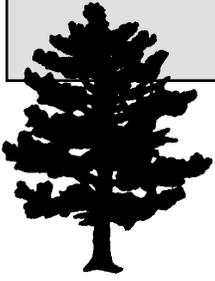
Aside from being a beautiful piece of land located between Canandaigua and Keuka Lakes, the Hughes easement is the first in what the Land Trust hopes will be a series of conservation projects to secure our scenic ridge tops. In many parts of our region, these ridges are cloaked with extensive hardwood forests that provide habitat for returning black bears and woodland songbirds such as the scarlet tanager. These same ridge tops provide the backdrop for some of our region's most scenic vistas.

The Hughes property is one of a number of private holdings along a ridge line more than 1,600 feet in elevation. This ridge crowns a lovely forested slope rising dramatically from the narrow valley floor.

*continued on page 2*



Karen Edelstein



## PERSPECTIVES

During most all-too-brief summer months, we frequently seek respite from the heat and escape to the shorelines of our beloved Finger Lakes. By contrast, this summer's weekend weather may have made a dip in the water less inviting, as we were forced into our closets for sweatshirts and windbreakers!

Generations of residents and visitors alike have fallen in love with our unique blend of quaint shoreline cottages, vineyards, farms, and wild forest areas. With each passing year, however, we're losing this blend as houses become a more dominant part of the landscape. In fact, on lakes such as Canandaigua, the lakeshore is now largely developed and the frontier for new building has already shifted to "lake view" hillsides. The likely conclusion of this development trend was made all too clear to me during a recent visit to North Carolina's Outer Banks. Upon my arrival at this popular coastal area, I picked up a newspaper and read that the town I was staying in was "built out." All available land had been developed. Town leaders were now pondering how best to accommo-

date additional growth. Memories of my trip include beautiful beaches, but also traffic congestion, and vistas dominated by dense housing tracts.

While our Finger Lakes region is unlikely to experience the same magnitude of growth in the near future, these pressures may not be as far off as some think.

While our region's cool climate and challenging economy have dampened lakeshore growth to some extent, the fact is that other waterfront areas are rapidly filling up. Increasingly, more people are interested in the Finger Lakes for their second home or place of retirement.

As soon as I returned from North Carolina, an advertisement featuring a lakefront parcel with 700 feet of frontage on Seneca Lake caught my eye. Twenty-two acres. Price tag: \$1.2 million. Ads like this make clear that we must act now if we are to save these last undeveloped lakeshore parcels, as well as our scenic "lake view" hillsides. Conservation of these remaining open spaces will help us retain the character of our lakes. Such actions will also provide important wildlife habitat and help maintain healthy water quality.

So what can we do? First, the Land Trust is reaching out to owners of

undeveloped lakeshore and lake view properties. This effort is very labor intensive and will take time. Over the long run, it will involve working with hundreds of landowners to educate them about their conservation options and develop long-term conservation strategies.

During the coming year, the Land Trust will also engage state officials to ensure that the state's Open Space Plan adequately addresses these issues. In recent years, New York State has allocated millions of dollars for open space protection, but only a small portion of those funds has been directed to the Finger Lakes region.

By giving as generously as you can to the Land Trust, you'll help us conserve these lands through both of these initiatives. We can still retain the character of our lakes if we act now. Please call me if you'd like to learn more about these efforts. We have no time to waste.

—Andrew E. Zepp  
Executive Director

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### Land Gift & Partnership Lead to Protection of Canandaigua Vista

*continued from cover*

passed away in 1992, and Barbara Hawkins Scott, his current wife of 11 years. The site will be named "Carolabarb Park" in honor of the two women.

"Odell Scott's gift to this community is incredible," says South Bristol Supervisor Dan Marshall. "His generosity will guarantee that one of South Bristol's premier vistas will be protected for everyone to enjoy. His gift enhances our scenic overlook project, which adjoins his land. South Bristol's partnership with the Finger Lakes Land Trust will protect this natural environment forever."

"We're delighted that we're able to play a role in helping to make this project happen," adds Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp. "We also hope that our partnership with the Town of South Bristol can serve as a model for other communities in the region. Local municipalities have a vital role to play in ensuring that lands such as these are conserved for future generations."

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### Hughes Easement Gift Launches Ridgeline Conservation Effort

*continued from cover*

Thanks to the Hughes' generosity, the easement ensures that the land will not be subdivided. In the future, there are plans to continue mowing the fields, keeping open the scenic views of the Bristol Hills. Also, the easement allows for careful harvesting of the hardwoods from the property's forests.

Ridges in the area are increasingly threatened by rural residential development as well as the construction of communication towers. In some cases, the construction of a single home can have a significant adverse impact on wildlife populations and scenic vistas.

The Land Trust is right now working with the owners of several other ridge top properties to develop long-term conservation strategies for their lands. During the coming months, the trust will also launch a concerted effort to increase awareness about conservation easements and the benefits of conserving large blocks of contiguous forest habitat.

# PRESERVE PROFILE

## Escape to Ellis Hollow Preserve

If you are looking for a quick decompression — a place to hop out of your car and leave your busy mind behind for a moment of calm and reflection — try Ellis Hollow Preserve. This preserve, located about five miles east of Ithaca on Ellis Hollow Creek Road, has fast become a key asset to the Ellis Hollow community. Established in 2000 through the generous gift of 111 acres by Bobby Keeton and her three children, the preserve hugs the northern flank of a hollow formed by Mt. Pleasant and Snyder Hill, with Cascadilla Creek meandering through its trough. Despite many homes, the community retains a country feel and the local residents, including myself, share an appreciation of nature. A quick review of the journal kept in the kiosk, shows many repeat visitors from the neighborhood.

There are three main trails: blue, red and yellow. The shortest and simplest is the blue trail, a gentle loop filled with the perpetual sound of moving water. There are three traverses of the shallow creek with no bridges, so bring a walking stick or someone's sturdier shoulder for balance, if required. This hike is highly recommended on sunny mornings, when the forested hillside looms and sunlight filtering through the understory reflects off the creek. With a gentle breeze ruffling the water, the dancing light has a truly mesmerizing effect. You are



Rachel Byard

*Misty woods at Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve*

minutes from civilization yet seemingly miles from anywhere.

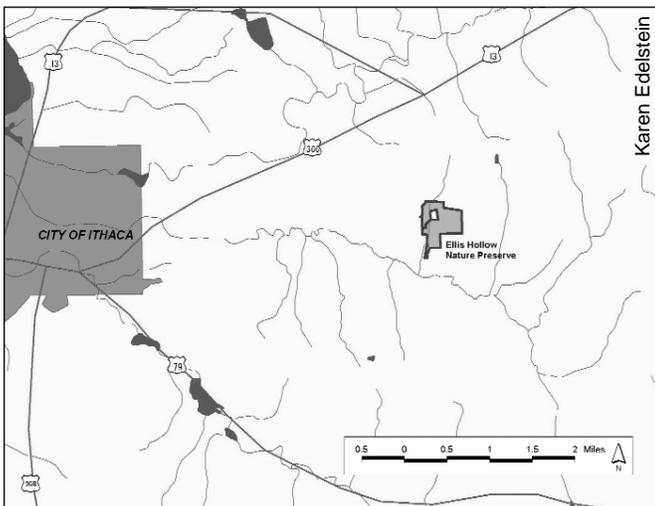
Undulating terrain is the secret to the preserve's magnificence. The entire outer loop, otherwise known as the red trail, is one-and-a-half miles with multiple ups and downs. This remarkable terrain was sculpted first by ancient glaciers, then more recently by several streams and run-off from Mount Pleasant. One spot in particular reveals the power of water and gravity to transform a hillside. Toward the northern boundary of the preserve, where the red trail crosses the main stream, a tributary to this stream cuts a deep and narrow ravine into the hillside. The tributary is often dry but comes alive with heavy rains and snow melt.

Alton Reed, 78, who farms the top of Mount Pleasant above the preserve, recalls this area from a time

when large tractors still rode on steel wheels and lugs, in other words before the introduction of asphalt roads. Bud Bizzell, who lives in the old Genung farmhouse to the west of the preserve, recalls that when he moved in, there were only three houses on Genung Road. The preserve itself, beyond the narrow flat close to Cascadilla Creek, was never cultivated because of the uneven terrain.

The preserve affords a remarkably varied set of habitats. Ascending the yellow trail, you will meet a ravine dominated by hemlock. Picking up the red trail, the land flattens and you enter mature northern hardwood forest, with lofty maples, oaks, birch, cherry, basswood, ash and beech trees. As the red trail descends toward the first streambed, hemlock dominates again. A quick up and down from here, the red trail travels along a glacial deposition esker ridge, and leads to a minor stream that is not noted on the map. This section is wet and boasts a vernal pool — a pool of spring runoff water that dries up as summer approaches — fantastic habitat for salamanders and frogs.

*continued on page 8*



# Fundraising Makes Key Addition to Lindsay-Parsons Preserve Possible

*The Land Trust added a key 14.7-acre parcel to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve, purchased from Land Trust member Jeremy Coleman with funds from a highly successful fundraising campaign.*

With this latest acquisition, the preserve encompasses almost 500 acres, with approximately one mile of frontage on State Route 34/96.

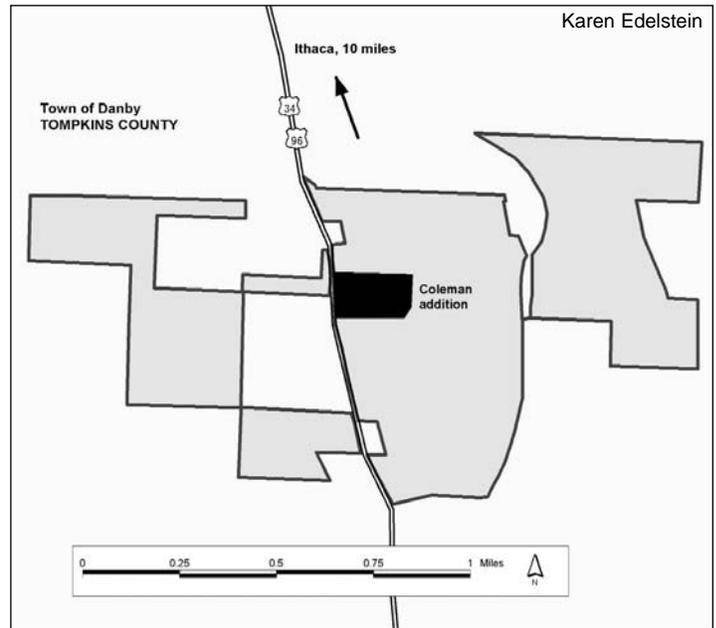
Although the piece of land is relatively small, acquiring it was important since it borders the preserve on three sides.

“The acquisition of this parcel ensures the future integrity of the preserve; it would have made a prime development site,” says Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp.

Sometime during the next few months, workers will demolish a small concrete building on the parcel and remove power poles on the site. This will restore the area to a more natural condition.

Just prior to the purchase, the Land Trust successfully completed a \$100,000 campaign that provided the funds needed for this acquisition, as well as another addition to the preserve completed last fall. Funds raised were also used to bolster the Land Trust’s stewardship endowment and cover the cost of preserve improvements, including an interpretive kiosk and footbridge.

“We’re delighted by the outpouring of support that



allowed us to complete these projects,” says Land Trust President John Rogers. “All of us at the Land Trust greatly appreciate the generous support of those who contributed to this campaign.”

## Thanks to all our members and supporters who made the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve campaign and Field Days a success!!

### \$10,000 +

John and Polly Guth

### \$5,000-9,999

BorgWarner Morse TEC  
Priscilla Browning  
Helen Thomas Howland  
Foundation  
Ted and Joan Hullar  
Albert and Pauline Joerger  
Elizabeth Kirchner  
Jason A. Sokoloff  
Sweet Water Trust

### \$1,000-4,999

Anonymous  
Donald Chandler  
Tom and Maria Eisner  
Greg Garvan  
Jerold Meinwald

### \$500-999

Jim and Terry Byrnes  
Cayuga Trails Club  
Claire Gilbert  
Bill Hecht  
M&T Charitable Foundation  
Tom Reimers  
Don and Nancy Robbins  
Sciarabba, Walker,  
& Co., LLP

### \$250-499

CFCU Community  
Credit Union  
Clarity Consulting, Inc.  
Eastern Mountain Sports  
Tompkins Trust Company

### \$1-249

Banfield & Associates Inc.  
Ramsey and Melissa Brous  
Richard and JNelle Cahoon  
Robert and Vanne Cowie  
Bill Evans  
Gimme! Coffee  
HOLT Architects, P.C.  
Karta Iglesias  
Larry R. Jensen  
Carrie and Michael  
Koplinka-Loehr  
Eileen and Max Maxwell  
James Miller and Chrissie  
Schelhas Miller  
Marvin and Allison Pritts  
Don and Sue Rakow  
Joan M. Ramage  
Irvin Rapp  
Lyle Raymond

Reagan Land Surveying  
Claudia Stoscheck and  
John Rogers  
Harris Rusitzky  
Brooke Oropallo and  
Kris Scholl  
John Semmler  
Patricia J. Sullivan  
Ann Weiland  
Andrew Zepp

### In-Kind Donation of Goods or Services

Tom Brown, Locust Lumber  
LoPinto, Schlather,  
Solomon, & Salk  
Museum of the Earth at PRI

## ALBANY

Although the New York State Legislature was four-and-a-half months late in producing a budget for FY 2004-05, when finally finished it was a gain for the environment. The most important line item concerning Land Trusts and land preservation in general is the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), about which we write every year, though things have changed this year. The EPF budget is for \$125 million, but in the last several years money from the EPF was “off-loaded,” or taken, and used for other general fund expenses. This year, however, the Legislature refused to “off-load” again and so 100 percent of the \$125 million EPF budget will actually be used for its intended purpose. \$500,000 of this year’s budget has been

allocated to the New York State Conservation Partnership Program which is administered by the Land Trust Alliance. The New York program provides grants to Land Trusts to be used for land acquisition. A total of \$32 million was allocated for land acquisition, state-wide, and \$12.6 million for farmland protection. The Land Trusts’ long-term goal is to increase all of those figures: \$250 million for the EPF, and within the EPF, \$50 million for land acquisition and \$17 million for farmland protection.

All of the legislators who voted for this deserve a note or word of thanks from us, as citizens and Land Trust members.

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Congress is on its summer break with just a few legislators remaining in Washington working on homeland security issues and reorganizing the intelligence community. It is expected that when the Congress resumes business in September there will be a flurry of legislation and then adjournment before the November election. However, there is much environmental activity in the talking stages at the moment because many issues can be taken care of by Executive Order. When that happens, public hearings are required on issues such as whether or not to permit logging in “roadless forests.” Those hearings are going on right now. We’ll report on the outcome in December.

— *Merry Jo Bauer*

## BUSINESS PARTNER PROFILE

### Messenger Post Newspapers

It was my first autumn in the Finger Lakes. As the Land Trust’s new office manager, I was asked to assist at a holiday party for members and friends of the organization’s Western Lakes Chapter. The event was scheduled to take place in Canandaigua and would be hosted and sponsored by the Daily Messenger, a local newspaper with a daily circulation of 14,000.

As I would come to learn, the Messenger Post Newspapers is an important Land Trust business member, contributor, and in-kind donor of both goods and services — all of this because of the enormous generosity of the paper’s owners, Margaret and George M. Ewing and their family.

On that night, I arrived two hours early to check out the town, and tour my seventh Finger Lake. The air was crisp and cold, the steel-gray sky foretelling of an early December snowstorm — the

perfect ambiance for a holiday party, I thought.

I was greeted at the door by Margaret Ewing’s radiant smile. Meg, as she prefers to be called, is a driving force in the Land Trust organization, a founding member of the Western Lakes Chapter and a former Land Trust board member. She is also a very busy hockey-playing mom to three energetic sons. Her husband, George Jr., is president and publisher of Messenger Post Newspapers.

The family’s history with the newspaper began in 1959, when George’s father purchased the Daily Messenger. Reporting the news for the last 206 years, the Daily Messenger is the seventh oldest continually published newspaper in the country. Indeed, the paper was even around to print George Washington’s farewell address as current news.

In 1988, George Jr. became the paper’s assistant publisher and, in 1993,

he became publisher. By 1999, the Ewing family had acquired an additional 10 weekly newspapers in and around the greater Rochester area to form what is now called the Messenger Post Newspapers. In the fall of 1999 the organization moved into a new 30,000 square-foot facility in Canandaigua where it is now headquartered. With five additional offices throughout Monroe County, the company now has a total staff of around 200.

Following a private tour of the new pressroom led by Meg herself, and still giddy from the truly sumptuous holiday party, I stepped out into the cold night air, huge snowflakes dancing in the sky. I thought to myself, wow, how lucky we are to have member-businesses like these so committed to our organization.

— *Abbey Chernela*

# Scenes' from our Protected Lands...

Bill Davis



*View of Honeoye Lake from Harriet Hollister Spencer State Park in Ontario County. The Land Trust is working in partnership with New York State and The Nature Conservancy to conserve additional lands in this area.*

*Green gold,  
The first peace of afternoon.  
All creatures rest, watch the day,  
And awaiting nightfall  
Feel the satisfaction of knowing home.*

— Visitors' log, Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve



Betsy Darlington

*Visitor enjoying the daisies at the Parker Nature Preserve in Bath*

Betsy Darlington



*Cornell freshman remove invasive honeysuckle on the Percy Browning Tract of the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve*



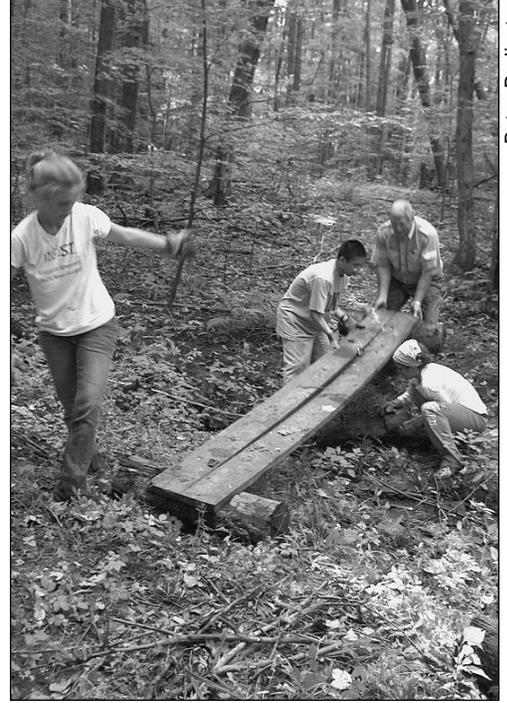
Betsy Darlington

*Ithaca Learning Web participants battle Oriental bittersweet at the Ellis Hollow Preserve*

Bob Growe



*A Conservation Easement donated by Don and Margot Hughes now protects this lovely property in the Town of Italy (see article on page 1)*



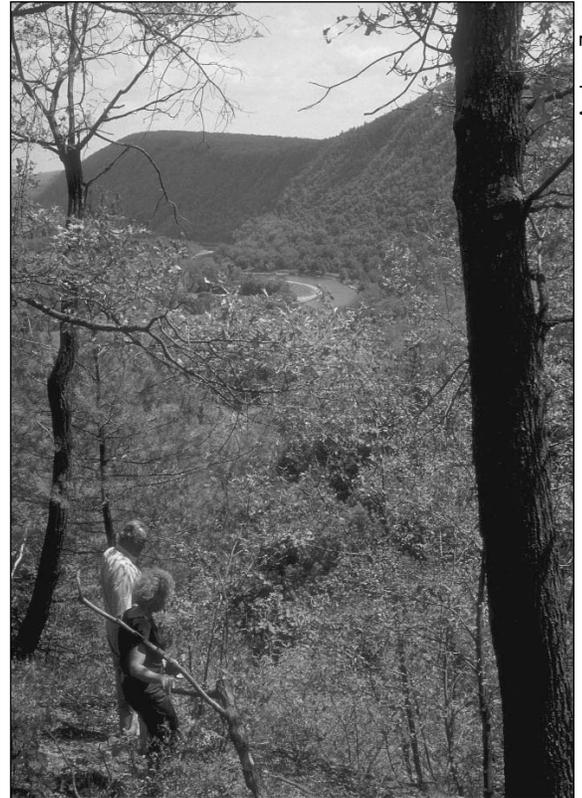
Betsy Darlington

*Cornell students help volunteer John Smith at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve*

Betsy Darlington



*Ithaca Learning Web participants cooling off after hard work at the Ellis Hollow Preserve*



Andrew Zepp

*View of the Chemung River Valley from Steege Hill, near Elmira*



Early spring at the High Vista Preserve

## Escape to Ellis Hollow Preserve

*continued from page 3*

Near this pool, my dog often scares up deer. And not far from here, I have twice seen a large red fox with a grey muzzle. A resident across the street from the preserve entrance has routinely sighted three young foxes here. As a result, he built a coop for his chickens.

Near the blue trail-head lies an old wooden boat. While some may consider this an eyesore, I prefer to regard it as part of the living history of the land. Linda Genung observes in an entry in the kiosk journal that this boat was here when she was a child. Coincidentally, the patches of paint that still cling to the boat match the blue trail marker, a beautiful complement to the more abundant green moss and paler lichens that are overtaking the hull. For those who will visit this wonderful preserve again and again for years to come, this decaying boat will illustrate the power of time over matter.

— Rich Sheiman

### Directions to Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve:

Take East State St. (Route 79) in Ithaca. Turn left on Route 366, then leave it where it bears left, and continue straight on Mitchell St.—Ellis Hollow Rd. After about 3 1/2 miles, turn left on Genung Rd., then right on Ellis Hollow Creek Rd. Very soon—right after a small creek—park off to the side of the road. The preserve entrance is just east of the stream, on the north side of the road.

## New Trail Created at High Vista Preserve

*Volunteers and staff recently joined together for several days of labor to create a new trail, while also restoring an existing one, at the Land Trust's High Vista Preserve.*

Improvements to this woodland preserve also include a new entry sign and a footbridge over a seasonal stream.

High Vista Preserve is located on Vincent Hill Road in the Town of Scott, Cortland County. The Preserve encompasses more than 130 acres of hardwood forest on the hillsides above the southeastern shore of Skaneateles Lake. These forests provide a home for a variety of wildlife, including the cerulean warbler, a bird considered to be of "high conservation concern" by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Special thanks to our wonderful volunteers who pitched in to make this preserve more accessible to the public. We hope that you'll join us in dedicating the new trail on Saturday, October 16th at 1:30 pm. Please check out our web site or contact the Land Trust office for directions to the preserve.

## Land Trust Bids Farewell to Liz Brown

We bid adieu to our friend and part-time staff member Liz Brown, who is stepping down from her position to pursue other interests. In her capacity as Director of Outreach and Development for the Western Lakes Chapter, Liz was instrumental in the success of our Nature's Gift Campaign. We wish her good fortune in all of her endeavors.

Kat Lieberknecht

We will begin recruiting for Liz's successor shortly. Interested parties should call Abbey Chernela at the Land Trust office 607-275-9487.



*Liz Brown, former Director of Outreach and Development for the Western Lakes Chapter*

*Our sincere thanks  
for a donation  
in honor of:*

**Ree Thayer**  
*from*  
**Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lisowski**

*Our sincere thanks  
for gifts in celebration  
of the weddings of:*

**Gail Blake and Jennifer Dotson**  
*from*  
**Monica Bosworth and Paul Viscuso**  
**Allen Quirk**

• • •

**Jackie Grant and Matt Weeg**  
*from*  
**Tom and Maria Eisner**

• • •

**Patti Giordano and David Fuller**  
*from*  
**Laurel Gibbs**

• • •

**Alice Scheffer and Paul Mason**  
*from*  
**Cynthia Irvine and Dave Frankunas**

*Pennies From Heaven?*

Gracious thanks to the anonymous Angel who left a 30-pound sack of "Pennies from Heaven" on our doorstep Wednesday night, July 28th. This was by far the most original means of contributing to land protection that we've seen yet!

*We are deeply grateful for donations in memory of:*

**Rollin Bauer, Jr.**  
*from*  
**Ursula Bauer**  
**Dick & Betsy Darlington**  
**Shannon Carlin**  
**Paula Celestino**  
**Linda & Michael Duttweiler**  
**Elizabeth Moore & David Drach**  
**Gary Giovino**  
**Andrew Hyland**  
**Pat Hysert**  
**Edward and Kristin Johnson**  
**Doris Morrison**  
**Tom and Polly Morrison**  
**John & Judith Reppy**  
**Mary Schuler**  
**Margaret & Paul Taylor**  
**The Tobacco Control Program**  
**Statewide Coordinating**  
**Committee**  
**NYS Tobacco**  
**Control Program**

**Avery Beer**  
*from*  
**Albert and June Butkas**  
• • •  
**Louise Dart**  
*from*  
**Candace Cornell**  
• • •  
**David Hamlin, Jr.**  
*from*  
**James Fralick**  
**Hugh Hamlin**  
**Megan & David Kindle**  
**Matt Lynaugh, Gloria Lee,**  
**Mason & Sam**  
**Louise Radak**  
**Tom and Martha Schwartz**  
**Alan Stone**  
**Tarry & Mike Shipley**

**Gary Hanson**  
*from*  
**Jim & Sara Kersting**  
• • •  
**Charlotte Kersting**  
*from*  
**Buzz and Gretchen Roberts**  
• • •  
**Richard Morse**  
*from*  
**Tom and Martha Schwartz**  
• • •  
**Maria Ranti**  
*from*  
**Sally Perreten**

# Stewardship and the Role of Planned Giving

The Finger Lakes Land Trust has already taken on the commitment of ensuring the permanent protection of 24 nature preserves and 46 properties subject to conservation easements. Today, more than 7,000 acres fall under the Land Trust's stewardship programs. In addition, the pace of our land protection efforts is actually accelerating! According to Director of Land Protection Betsy Darlington she is "busier than ever" with a multitude of projects.

Stewardship involves a broad range of activities. At its preserves, the Land Trust must provide for proper resource management while also providing for some degree of public access. Trails must be maintained, non-native invasive plant species controlled, and boundary lines posted. As more of the countryside is developed, we also expect that we'll need to spend more time educating preserve neighbors about the Land Trust and its preserve policies. Conservation easements must be monitored on an annual basis and, in the event of a violation, the Land Trust must be prepared to enforce the terms of the easement.

To provide for these activities, the Land Trust must ensure that its financial resources grow along with its commitments.

Toward this end, we are continually adding funds to the organization's stewardship endowment. A painless and meaningful way in which you can help the Land Trust provide for the future is to include the Land Trust in your estate plans. A bequest to the Land Trust will also allow us to expand our work with conservation-minded landowners who may be interested in donating a conservation easement, but lack the financial means to make a contribution to the endowment.

There are many options for making a planned gift to the Land Trust. Bequests can be made by allocating a specific amount to the trust, leaving a percentage of your estate or naming the Land Trust as the recipient of the residue after other legacies have been made. Donors can also name the Land Trust as a conditional beneficiary in the event that someone who has been named as a beneficiary is not living at the time the donor's will is probated.

Please contact Andy Zepp at the Ithaca office at (607) 275-9487 if you would like to learn more about planned giving options and how you can help ensure the stewardship of our most cherished places.

— Andy Zepp

## THREE CHEERS to Our Volunteers!

For hard work at the Leopold Center, the Western Lakes Chapter office, and Nature Preserves, and helping with educational and fundraising events;

• • •

For leading, helping with, or giving inspiring, entertaining walks or talks;

• • •

For many hours of legal or technical support;

• • •

For serving on committees or as stewards of our conservation easements and nature preserves;

• • •

Special thanks to Phil Zach for donating some wonderful brand-new tools, and Tom Brown ("Locust Lumber of Newfield") for giving us a large discount on locust lumber.

## Wanted:

Volunteers interested in outreach and willing to undergo a very brief training session in order to be able to staff an information table for the Land Trust.

*Please call Emily at the Ithaca office 607-275-9487, if interested.*

## HIGH VISTA DEDICATION

*Please be sure to join us on Saturday, October 16 at 1:30 pm for a dedication and inaugural hike at the High Vista Preserve. A new trail and preserve improvements will be unveiled.*

See the calendar listings on page 12 for further details.

# A CLOSER LOOK

## The Thrush in My Woods

*It's hard not to love a Wood Thrush — Thoreau called it "a Shakespeare among birds." We know the Wood Thrush mostly by its strong, clear woodland song.*

Frequently described as "flute-like," the song of the Wood Thrush sounds more like bursts of sweet electronic music to my ears, especially in the buzzing trill at the end of each phrase. The haunting spring and summer music of these birds resonates through the trees from early morning until they seem to take a midday break. Later, in the evening, the Wood Thrush often sings until nightfall.

In my neck of the woods, on forested slopes above Owasco Lake, several breeding pairs around my house have stirred me for years. They return each May from winter grounds in Central America to nest and raise their young under the protection of the rich forest canopy and understory shrubs found throughout the Finger Lakes.

Although they are reputedly not secretive, I rarely glimpse the cinnamon-colored birds as they go about their daily routine, foraging for food in the moist leaf litter or building their nests of grass and fine strips of grapevine. Typically, Wood Thrushes in this area raise two broods each season, and gathering food is a full time job.

'My' Wood Thrushes, as I can't help thinking of them, seem vigorous and prolific, yet I am aware of an accelerating decline in the overall population since the mid-1960s.

Radical deforestation of wintering grounds in Central America has taken a toll on their numbers. Also, forest fragmentation caused by human development has disrupted the Wood Thrushes' traditional breeding ground here in North America. New roads, houses and commercial development have opened up previously undisturbed forest habitat to forest fringe predators such as raccoons, crows, jays, cowbirds and house cats. Many songbird nest sites are at a greater risk as a result.

A 2002 Cornell study of Wood Thrush population decline, by Ralph Hames and others, pointed to an unexpected additional threat to the breeding success of these birds: acid rain.

preferred diet for breeding Wood Thrushes.

A steady supply of calcium-rich snails and slugs helps the female thrush produce strong egg shells. But where soil acidity is greatest, snail and slug populations do poorly, leading in turn to weakened egg shells and smaller clutches of eggs for the Wood Thrush. As the snail goes, so goes the thrush.



Lang Elliott©

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*)

According to the study, Wood Thrush numbers in the eastern U.S. have declined by more than 40 percent since 1980. The steepest declines have occurred in areas with the heaviest acid rainfall, especially in elevated forests of the Appalachians, as well as in the Adirondacks.

Acid rain and snow deplete the soil of calcium, putting a great strain on all organisms depending on calcium to survive and reproduce. Low on this food chain are snails and slugs, the

Could the breeding success of other favorite song birds be in question as well?

Thoreau once wrote that, with its song, "The thrush alone declares the immortal wealth and vigor that is in the forest." This is what I hear in my little piece of forest, too, but I catch a wistful note now and again.

—Eben McLane

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## FALL 2004 CALENDAR

### Saturday, October 16, 1:30 pm

Join us for a dedication and inaugural hike at the High Vista Preserve. A new trail and preserve improvements will be unveiled. The High Vista Preserve is on Vincent Hill Rd. off Route 41 in the town of Scott on the east side of Skaneateles Lake.

### Sunday, October 17, 2-4 pm

Fall Foliage Hike at the Wesley Hill Preserve. Meet at the Gulick Rd parking lot. This moderately strenuous hike will include walking in the creek bed in Briggs Gully and a steep climb out of the gully. Rain or shine. Call Jim at 585-367-2301 for more information.

### Sunday, November 21, 1:30 pm

Year-End Nature Walk at the Steege Hill Preserve. Led by Bob Corneau and Betsy Darlington. From Rt. 86 (formerly Rt. 17) take exit 49. Go south on Olcott Rd. Turn right on Rt. 64, then right on Rt. 352, take next left onto South Corning Rd. Cross the bridge and go left on Steege Hill Road about 1 mile. Parking lot on left.

*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.