



# THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 12, No. 3

working to protect the natural integrity of our region

Summer 2000

## A Permanent Home for Our Land Trust

The capacious multi-gabled three-story Colonial Revival house with its large palladium windows, expansive porches, and massive chestnut double doors—these bespeak a measure of space, even sufficiency. But step into the foyer of the Finger Lakes Land Trust office at 202 East Court Street and look again. The 14'x14' conference room to your left houses the assistant director, the bookkeeper, a couple of student interns, and a steady stream of volunteers—plus lots of committee meetings. Through the archway you'll see the adjoining room, all 12' x 17' of it—occupied by the director of land protection, the office manager, the stewardship coordinator, and yet another intern. Even the executive director's office to your right often does double duty, serving as a meeting space when the conference room is already booked.

"Sure, we can get six people in my office for a meeting," says Executive Director Gay Nicholson. "But everyone's knees are bumping the furniture, and there'd better not be a fire alarm."

It isn't the first time the Land Trust has been popping buttons. "Back in '93, when we moved into our first, one-room office over on Buffalo Street, we thought, how lovely to have so much space," says Betsy Darlington, Director of Land Protection. "After all, we already had 16 conservation easements and 6 nature preserves—and we'd done it all from our homes. But within three years there, we were maxed out. My 'office' was one end of the conference table and a cardboard box of files that I took back and forth from home."

By the time the Land Trust moved to our current address in the fall of '96, we had secured 24 conservation easements and 12 nature preserves. Again, the new office seemed spacious. Yet now, less than four years later, we're once again bursting at the seams.

Currently we manage 37 easements and 18 preserves, and have negotiated 8 additions to preserves that in some cases have doubled or even tripled their size. "It's often difficult to conduct phone transactions with so many people packed in here," says Nicholson. "In general, the crowded conditions make it pretty challenging for staff to focus and work efficiently."

But now the Land Trust can move on without moving out. The building in which we rent our office is for sale. On the other side of the wall from our office suite is a whole other set of offices on two floors, larger than ours—and available; the current tenants have bought a building of their own. The rest of the upstairs contains four apartments. It would be easy to join the two office suites and easy to rent out the second floor offices

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PHOTO BY KAT LIEPERKRECHT

*Inventor Henry Westinghouse built the three-story double house that will become The Leopold Center, the Land Trust's headquarters building.*

## Permanent Protection for More Land Along Six-Mile Creek

Many *Land Steward* readers will recall that the Six-Mile Creek watershed was the Land Trust's first major target area, partly because the creek supplies most of the City of Ithaca's water supply and partly because of the richness of its wide array of habitats. Bob and Ann Silsbee were some of the very early registrants in our Land Stewardship Registry. At that time, they indicated great interest in eventually donating a conservation easement. And now—they have, on about 55 acres of land that stretch from Coddington Rd. (Ithaca) all the way to Six-Mile Creek.

The upper portion of this hillside land consists mainly of open land. Some of it has been grass-covered since at least the '70's, with patchy clumps of goldenrod only now intruding—yet the Silsbees have never mowed it. As you descend toward Six-Mile Creek, the grass gives way to brush, mostly gray dogwood, followed by a spectacular mature forest dissected by two deep, steep-sided ravines leading to Six-Mile. We have found several grand cucumber magnolias, along with hemlock, white pine, oaks, hickories, maples, basswood, tulip, beech, and black

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**SEE INSERTS FOR WATERSHED TALKS 'N TREKS!**

# AT THE SIGN OF THE LONE PINE



During my first days with the Land Trust, late in 1995, I stepped into an initial round of discussions with the City of Syracuse about the potential for developing a partnership that would help them protect

their water supply in Skaneateles Lake. Though the water quality of Skaneateles Lake is excellent, the EPA had given the City a filtration avoidance waiver on the condition that they develop a water quality protection program.

By fall '97 we'd negotiated a contract with Syracuse to educate landowners about watershed protection and encourage their participation in our program to purchase conservation easements on stream corridors and farms in the Skaneateles Lake Watershed. Through 1998 and '99, first under Kristin Rowles' and then Kat Lieberknecht's able direction, we were able to proceed quickly with the many aspects of creating this unique partnership. There were many obstacles to overcome and no model to follow for addressing concerns about equity, marketing, and long-term stewardship.

Data on conservation easements held by municipalities indicate that local governments tend not to have sufficient experience and program consistency for monitoring and enforcing easements. So right from the start, we were clear that we would want to co-hold with the City any easements that we solicited and negotiated for the watershed program. Perpetuity is a long time, and our standards are high.

Endowments, of course, are what insure that the human and financial resources for monitoring, landowner communications, and legal defense are available to the Land Trust over the centuries to come. From the beginning, we stipulated that our involvement in the program would require funding from the City for the stewardship endowments so we could make sure the easements would not be subject to the vagaries of city budgets. Our colleagues in the City's Water Department were amenable to this arrangement, but were unable to obtain a thorough legal review of the program's structure until late last summer. In

February, the City of Syracuse Law Department affirmed its interpretation of New York State law to prohibit municipalities from providing funds for such a stewardship trust. We were unwilling to continue the partnership under these changed circumstances and ended our contract in April 2000.

Naturally, we're disappointed that we encountered this barrier. Partnerships between local land trusts and municipalities are an excellent means to protect public goods, such as clean water and open space, by combining the skills and stewardship mission of grassroots land trusts with municipalities' access to tax revenues for conservation programs. However, we've learned a great deal about putting these types of partnerships into operation and we are dedicated to removing the legal barriers to collaboration as soon as possible. Land trusts have a clear and simple mission—permanently protecting land. Local governments have a burdensome array of responsibilities. It makes sense for us to partner with our municipalities and relieve them of stewardship obligations that may be difficult for them to oversee and fund on a recurring basis.

Meanwhile, I am very happy to announce the appointment of Kat to fill our vacant Assistant Director position. Bev Abplanalp left the Land Trust in December, and we still had not found a replacement for her when the City announced its decision. Kat will be responsible for coordinating the work of our membership, outreach, and editorial committees. Since we also want to take advantage of her considerable knowledge in the land protection arena, Kat will provide leadership to the Preserve Management and Land Committees in developing new programs for educating our volunteers and stewards on critical issues.

We're sorry that our partnership with the City of Syracuse could not continue, but we look forward to future opportunities to partner with local governments on land protection. Meanwhile, please help me welcome Kat Lieberknecht to our headquarters office. We've got plenty for her to do here!

—Gay Nicholson

## Candace Cornell: Giver of Gifts

Some people are so dedicated to their sense of purpose that their works generate a new ethic in the community around them. The Finger Lakes Land Trust has been lucky to be blessed by such a person. Candace Cornell is truly a "giver of gifts." Her presence imbues the Land Trust with the knowledge that great good can come from our individual contributions.

Candace has been a dedicated volunteer to the Land Trust for more than half of its ten-year existence. She oversaw and edited the Land Trust's newsletter, *The Land Steward*, for about five years, and left last year to accept a position editing the Cornell Environmental

Update, a publication of the Cornell Center for the Environment (CfE). Says Betsy Darlington, "Her work on our newsletter was an amazing volunteer contribution. She was very good at it."

The Land Trust continues to reap the benefits of Candace's commitment to conservation. She has begun a tradition of giving the gift of conservation to her friends and relatives. Assistant Director Kat Lieberknecht says, "Candace has really taken the lead on this; she often gives donations in honor of weddings, memorials, or as holiday presents. More and more folks are following her example." Just flip through the pages of recent

issues of *The Land Steward* and you'll see that Candace makes donations in memory of friends and family, and in celebration of new couple's unions.

What better way to bring the peace of nature to a wider community than to introduce newly married couples, friends, and others to the benefits of Land Trust membership and its timely mission of conservation. Thanks to Candace Cornell for her work and commitment to the natural world! Her example reminds each of us of our capacity for affecting the world we share.

—Rachel Clark

# THE ETHICS OF CONSERVATION

## An Ethical Approach to Quality

*"No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections and convictions."*

—Aldo Leopold 1949

As we watch the deterioration of the Finger Lakes Region, with its stunning lakes and the dramatic hills left behind by ancient glaciers, where lovely forests and vistas are being replaced by shopping malls, interstates, and poorly planned development, we must feel in our hearts a need for a change in our ethical perception of the community. Our sense of loyalty and affection toward our region must lead us to search for a better way to attend to its quality.

Chambers of Commerce may exhort us to be better stewards of our region because of the importance of tourism, the need to attract vacationers to the Finger Lakes. While that may be true in a very limited sense, there is a vastly better and perhaps more subtle reason for stewardship: this place is exquisitely beautiful; its diversity of life irreplaceable.

In 1989, a group of 17 citizens who shared a concern for quality decided to make a change, and to use the legal

device of conservation easements as a means of helping to maintain the beauty of the community. We decided to call ourselves the **"Finger Lakes Land Trust."** We obtained the status of a not-for-profit organization, and set out to protect significant places through two means: cooperative agreements with caring landowners, or outright acquisitions of nature preserves that we would own and steward. We shared a conviction that landowners who feel real love for their land can make a difference in the community through these fairly simple means that provide protection into the future.

Now, almost eleven years later, our membership has grown to exceed 1,100. We have secured conservation easements on 37 parcels of quality land. In addition we have been given or purchased 18 nature preserves. We have protected more than 4,000 acres of special places.

Our preserved areas include a wide gamut of mature forests, wetlands, steep moraines, lakeshores and areas rich in spring wildflowers, or nourishing rare or endangered species. We have one preserve which brags a waterfall of 140 feet in a deep gorge. We have another that is

set aside as a research facility for the study of chemical ecology. We have developed educational programs for half-a-dozen watersheds, and we offer nature education opportunities for schools throughout the region. And our progress is generated almost entirely by volunteers -- all of this work is done with only two full-time and one part-time staff persons.

Of the original 17 organizers, about half continue to be active participants in our programs a decade later. With the members, officers, and staff, we are motivated by the sense that our dedication to quality land-use in the Finger Lakes Region can make a difference. Through the **Finger Lakes Land Trust** we are promoting a change in ethical emphasis through our own loyalties, affections and convictions.

—Carl Leopold



Founding President A. Carl Leopold.

PHOTO BY ALLEN QUINN

## LAND TRUST 101

### The Real Dirt on Agricultural Conservation Easements

Imagine soaring over the Finger Lakes Region, gazing down at the earth below. Between narrow bands of blue water, the land reflects the cool green of forests, the bright greens and golds of farmland. This is the "working landscape"—land that is managed for income, whether timber from forests or crops from farms. Many communities now recognize how important this working landscape is to the character of our region. In response, land trusts and municipalities are beginning to use conservation easements to protect these

farms and managed forests.

Of the two types of protection, farmland protection has received most of the media and policy attention in the Finger Lakes. Now municipalities that have New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets-approved agricultural and farmland protection plans can qualify for grants to purchase development rights on farmland. Since its inception in 1996, this program has awarded \$27.5 million to farms chosen through a competitive process.

Agricultural conservation easements

are drafted to protect soil and other natural resources while allowing for the evolution of agriculture as an economic enterprise. They limit future uses of the land that are inconsistent with or damage the agricultural value or productivity of the land. Since agriculture is a rapidly evolving industry, agricultural easements are written more flexibly than other types of conservation easements.

Farmland protection can be compatible with many of the other conservation values that we seek to protect. A farmstead and its surrounding fields may pro-

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## Permanent Protection for More Land Along Six-Mile Creek

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cherry—all shading an inviting carpet of ferns and spring wildflowers. The forest hasn't been logged for decades, and even the old grapevines are truly majestic. The entire back portion of the property is rugged, wild, and beautiful.

Our deepest thanks on behalf of the Land Trust and the entire community to the Silsbees for their sense of stewardship and generosity of spirit!

—Betsy Darlington



Photo by Betsy Darlington

Bob and Ann Silsbee recently donated a conservation easement on their 55 acres of meadows and woods located along Six-Mile Creek.

## A Permanent Home for Our Land Trust

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until we need them for additional staff. Also, once the mortgage is paid off, the apartment rentals would cover all building expenses so that we can have a “free” permanent headquarters office for the Land Trust. With burgeoning opportunities for land protection throughout the 12-county, 6000 square-mile Finger Lakes Region, workspace and sufficient staff are imperative needs. Satisfying these will lead directly to the next logical goal: hiring professional staff for our far-flung chapters, to relieve the burden on our dedicated volunteers.

This handsome building in the DeWitt Historical District was owned by Henry H. Westinghouse, inventor of the Westinghouse single-acting steam engine. After just two years at Cornell during the 1870s, Westinghouse joined his brother's business in Pittsburgh, taking with him Ithaca native Clara Saltmarsh as his bride. We don't know what brought this successful businessman and world traveler back to Ithaca at the age of 48. Perhaps his wife Clara's parents were elderly and in need of care. But, it may also have been a fondness for Ithaca and his role as a Cornell trustee that strengthened their Ithaca ties. Whatever their reasons were, the Westinghouses commissioned Clinton Vivian, a fine local architect credited with designing many of Ithaca's stately homes, to design and build a three-story double house on the corner lot inherited from the Saltmarshes. By 1906 they had left the property to their daughter, Catherine, who sold it in 1913. Since then, bankers, publishers, lawyers and even the city assessor have lived in the house. It was converted to a multi-unit in 1957.

We are a stewardship-based organization. Our mission is to protect lands in perpetuity across the Finger Lakes Region. In our search for a permanent home for our headquarters office, it seems significant that our needs may be filled through another act of stewardship

— leading the way for the preservation of this important element of the courthouse neighborhood.

The owners of the house have given us time to explore our options for purchasing the building—and everything looks copacetic. “Already, just by word of mouth, we've gotten over \$92,000 in pledges and donations towards our campaign goal of \$300,000,” says Nicholson. “Our largest gift was from founding president Carl Leopold, and we've decided to call the building *The Leopold Center* in honor of both him and his father, Aldo Leopold. Carl has been such an important, guiding force in this organization. I know I was delighted to make my pledge for the Center in honor of him.”

We are going to need the help of our members and supporters to complete the fundraising campaign for *The Leopold Center*. We want to carry a relatively small mortgage so that we only expend what we already pay in rent for the current office suite. We hope to win some grants for the historic renovation work needed, but it is the land trust community that we must turn to for covering much of the cost of acquisition. Your gift for this purpose will truly help to preserve land, as it will enable the Land Trust to focus on expanding our programs to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region. In fact, solving our need for additional office space is the very first step we must take towards realization of our ambitious strategic plan over the next ten years.

We welcome contributions, large and small, to our *Leopold Center* Fund. Inside, you'll find an addressed envelope for your convenience. Please note on your donation that you want it to go toward *The Leopold Center*. If you prefer to make a pledge (payable over the two-year campaign) please call Gay Nicholson at 607-275-9487.

—Mary Woodsen

## Wish List

*The new Leopold Center will have lots of “open space” to fill! We especially need the following items:*

- Filing cabinets • Large conference room table • Meeting chairs (18) • Desk • Computer work station • Desk chairs • Bookshelves • Small exhibit table • Computer scanner • Light-weight portable folding table, • Lopping shears, hedge clippers, pruners • Any of the following topographic maps: Bristol Springs, Campbell, Corning, Middlesex, Naples, Prattsburg, Pulteney

## AWARD-WINNING MEMBERS IN 2000

### Conservationists of the Year: Meg Ewing, Sara Kersting, and Jim Kersting

At our May annual meeting we honored as Conservationists of the Year not one but three people whose lives have been forever altered by their commitment to the Land Trust, and whose contributions have shaped what is so far our most successful chapter organization. Meg Ewing, Sara Kersting, and Jim Kersting have risen from the ranks of previous ordinary people to become the leading lights of a chapter that was our first (1990) and has already accomplished four large conservation easements, conducted a Talks & Treks series since 1996, produced two beautiful brochures, and now boasts its own Wesley Hill Preserve.

I've seen them in action—Meg and Sara pitching the land trust cause to diverse groups as a highly complimentary duo, each of them remarkably articulate and knowledgeable. Jim has given up innumerable weekends talking to



Photo by Kat Lieberknecht

*Conservationists of the Year Meg Ewing, left, and Sara Kersting, right, share a laugh with Executive Director Gay Nicholson. Jim Kersting (not pictured) was also honored.*

landowners and preserve stewards with great patience and warmth. Both Meg and Jim have already served on the Land Trust Board, which means Sara better watch her mailbox. Meg, by education a landscape architect, has also demonstrated

artistic flair and great presentation skills in her productions of shirts, hats, and posters advertising previous Talks & Treks—all while dashing off several more children and perennially remodeling her house. And somehow Sara and Jim work full-time at the Rochester Institute of Technology's National Technical Institute for the Deaf. You can pick them out in a crowd as that tall good-looking couple who talk to each other across whole rooms with their hands.

Jim, Sara, and Meg have found within themselves talents they probably weren't aware of, and in the process of espousing the cause of land preservation, have directly shaped the well-fledged

Western Lakes Chapter. Jim has even been heard to say that he hopes to retire early in order to work full-time on behalf of land trust issues. Thanks, guys.

—Irene Szabo

### Volunteer of the Year: Merry Jo Bauer

It was a bright day for the Land Trust when Merry Jo Bauer walked into the office and offered her services. She was responding to an appeal in *The Land Steward* for volunteers, and brought with her 32 years of experience as an elementary school teacher, a passion for politics, and an amazing capacity for getting things done.

"She's been a life-saver for the Land Trust," says Executive Director Gay Nicholson, referring to the way Merry Jo came to the rescue when the clerical "machinery of membership" was in trouble. Ashortage of work-study students who send out renewal notices and new member packets, and assist with compiling 'thank yous,' had caused the work to fall behind. Merry Jo took over these essential tasks until the machinery was up to speed again.

"Merry Jo is a godsend," says Office

Manager Susan Hurwitz. "Whatever needs doing, she steps in and takes responsibility for it." Assistant Director Kat Lieberknecht concurs. "Every time Merry Jo walks into the Land Trust office we breathe a collective sigh of relief. She's so capable and organized, willing to take on any task and fill every empty space."

One such empty space was the long-felt need to keep our members politically informed on environmental issues. Merry Jo responded by creating "Legislative News," now a regular feature in *The Land Steward*. "Legislative News" summarizes environmental bills currently before the legislatures in Washington and Albany. To fill other empty spaces, she has become the steward of the new Silsbee conservation easement, and spoke recently to an Earth Day assembly of five-year-olds at McGraw Elementary School in Cortland County.



Photo by Gay Nicholson

*Assistant Director Kat Lieberknecht presents Merry Jo Bauer with the Year 2000 Volunteer of the Year Award.*

"Our entire organization is in Merry Jo's debt," says Gay Nicholson. It is our Land Trust's pleasure to acknowledge that debt and to say thank you to Merry Jo Bauer by naming her Volunteer of the Year.

—Edward Ormondroyd

# SHARING OUR MISSION



Photo by George Ewing

*Ora Lee Long, Gabrielle Long, Kat Lieberknecht, Betsy Darlington and Judy Pierpont at the Wesley Hill Preserve.*



PHOTO BY KAT LIEBERKNECHT

*Ted Hullar (left) and George Ewing (right) share a thought while hiking at the Wesley Hill Preserve.*



PHOTO BY KAT LIEBERKNECHT

*Kris Scholl and Bill Hecht join a standing ovation to Executive Director Gay Nicholson at the annual meeting luncheon.*

*A.J. North, Steve Sierigk and Becky Bosch crossing the Cayuga Inlet at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve.*



Photo by Betsy Darlington



PHOTO BY SUSAN HUNWILL

*Terry Blunt, Director of the Connecticut Valley Action Program, shares his experiences in protecting rural landscapes with attendees at the Land Trust's annual meeting.*

## The Real Dirt on Agricultural Conservation Easements

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vide scenic beauty and a large area of contiguous green space, as well as prime cropland. Fencerows, crop rotations and modified mowing regimes may provide valuable wildlife habitat along with productive farmland. And—with the use of best management practices—agriculture may be less detrimental to water quality than some other types of land use.

But it's important to recognize that a single conservation easement cannot protect everything. In fact, a conservation easement with a very specific purpose may actually impede other conservation goals. For example, an easement designed to protect grassland bird habitat may use mowing or burning to maintain open field habitat, thereby restricting the return of woodland plants and animals. Along similar lines, an agricultural easement may allow activities that are necessary for the continued economic viability of a farm, but that may not be scenic. Industrial-style metal sheds lack the idyllic charm of red dairy barns, yet agricultural easements can't be designed to pickle a landscape.

At this time the Finger Lakes Land Trust doesn't hold any true agricultural easements—that is, easements that are primarily focused on protecting soil qual-

ity and quantity. We do hold easements on five properties that can be used for commercial agriculture. These easements protect habitat and open space; agriculture is allowed if it doesn't substantially impede these two primary conservation goals.

As more communities recognize the importance of protecting the working landscape, and as the statewide farmland protection program gains strength, we have an opportunity to take a leadership role in the growth of agricultural conservation easements in the Finger Lakes Region. Our participation may range from providing advice to communities as they design a farmland protection plan to mediating between farmers and municipalities to holding and stewarding these easements.

True conservation depends upon how well we integrate the protection of our landscape's natural integrity with our human community's economic viability. Of course, agricultural conservation easements are not an economic or ecological panacea. But the growing popularity of farmland protection will strengthen our voice in land use discussions throughout the Finger Lakes Region.

—Kat Lieberknecht



Photo by Casey Deamington

*Gordon Nesbitt (right) chats with Land Trust volunteer Joel Gagnon. The Nesbitts donated a conservation easement on their 300-acre farm to the Land Trust in 1993.*

## Bequest of Land Will Expand Wesley Hill Preserve



Photo by Nancy Lawing

*Chris White weaves a tale at the Frosttown Walk last summer, one of the Honeoye Lake Watershed Talks 'N Treks.*

Warm accolades to Chris White, founding Western Lakes Chapter member! Chris has bequeathed nineteen acres on Wesley Hill Road in Richmond, overlooking Honeoye Lake—because, as he says, “It connects very closely to our new Wesley Hill Preserve and would make a nice addition.”

Indeed! This wooded piece is one property away from our northern boundary, and the owner of the intervening 30 acres is keen on selling his piece of woodland. Together, the three properties would complete the western boundary of the Monroe County Humane Society's Anna V. Brown Wildlife Refuge—and, between them, provide protection to 400 contiguous acres between Gulick Road and Wesley Road.

Our long-term vision sets the Wesley Hill Preserve as the cornerstone of a greater Briggs Gully conservation area, ultimately linking the Cumming Nature Center at the headwaters of Briggs Gully to the lakeshore, across the inlet's

wetlands and westward to the state-owned Harriet Hollister Spencer Park. With Chris White's bequest, less than one year after the acquisition of Wesley Hill, that goal seems more within our reach.

Chris acquired his parcel of woods about a decade ago, intending to build his house there. Before he could begin, though, a house on Gulick Road became available. Preferring to keep the Wesley Road land undeveloped, with its rich variety of plant and bird life (including wild turkeys and woodcocks), Chris moved to Gulick Road instead.

We are grateful that Chris has demonstrated his love for this region, not to mention his faith in the Land Trust, by making this bequest! This is a wonderful legacy, one that we hope will motivate others to plan years ahead for the future stewardship of their beloved land.

—Meg Ewing

# CHAPTER REPORTS

## Keuka Chapter

An ancient Seneca Indian worshipping ground was the Keuka Chapter's first site visit, on March 29, 2000. The Big Gully and The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, owned by Don Jud of Jud's Stonehouse Nursery, Penn Yan, is an awesome 164 acres of majestic waterfalls, woods and fields, located in the town of Jerusalem. Besides its inherent beauty, The Big Gully is an important watershed for Keuka Lake. Don's goal is to preserve this land with a permanent conservation easement. Thanks to members Lisa Saether and Susan Black for helping with the site visit.

The Yates County Planning Board has received a grant to begin protecting scenic vistas of Yates County. Our Land Trust will be working with the Planning Board's Scenic Vista committee to implement the grant which hopefully will form the baseline for scenic vista preservation. This project is the brainchild of Keuka Chapter member and Planning Board member Phil Whitman. Phil wrote the grant and is organizing the project. Thank you, Phil!!

The Keuka Chapter welcomes new members and volunteers.

—Debbie Koop

## Skaneateles Chapter

The Skaneateles Chapter is pleased and excited to offer the first spring/summer season of public access to the Bahar Nature Preserve. We encourage you to explore this woodland treasure within the Bear Swamp Creek ravine and make sure to stop for a look at scenic Carpenter Falls.

Join the Chapter Saturday July 8th, 9am-Noon for a morning work party at High Vista Nature Preserve. Trail maintenance, sign replacement and junk removal are needed. This is a great chance to meet fellow members and visit a fine natural area at the southeast end of Skaneateles Lake.

For brochures on the preserves or other Chapter information call 315-497-3066.

—Kris Scholl

## Western Lakes Chapter

Our goal of \$100,000 for acquisition and stewardship of the Wesley Hill Preserve is nearly 75% complete as of May 1. This is exciting news, made all the more exciting by Chris White's bequest of land near the Preserve (see page 7). But we have only until the end of June to take advantage of the 1-for-2 challenge offered by our anonymous donor and reach our goal. This means that we need raise only \$17,000 to receive the remaining \$8,500. We're counting on the support of our membership to make this campaign a resounding success. Please send your tax-deductible donation to the Land Trust office today, earmarked for Wesley Hill.

The Summer Talks & Treks season is underway with two (yes, that's right!) series scheduled, thanks to our swelling ranks of volunteers and a partnership with the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Task Force (CLWTF). Schedules are included in this newsletter.

Our new volunteers, Nannie and Curt Nehring Bliss and Mark and Joy House, took on the formidable task of planning—in two short months—a fundraiser for Wesley Hill Preserve. The Artistic Roots Celebration with poetry and music at the Bristol Playhouse in Naples attracted over 70 enthusiastic participants, bringing in new members and donations alike.

For the first time, we are partnering with local organizations to sponsor events and activities. In addition to co-sponsoring the Canandaigua Lakes Watershed Talks & Treks with CLWTF, we joined with CLWTF, Canandaigua Lake Pure Waters, and Ontario Pathways to haul trash and debris from Atwater Meadow in honor of Earth Day. Naturally, we were pleased to have Canandaigua Mayor Ellen Polimeni working with us at this city-owned lakefront property.

Welcome to our new volunteers! Have we told you how much we like having you with us?

—Meg Ewing

## Student Helpers

Holly Gosse has been a member of our Finance Committee for 2 years as well as our Conservation Easement Stewardship Coordinator for 2 years. She also took on the duties of Membership Coordinator this past semester—for which we are very grateful. Holly is a graduate student at Cornell's Johnson School of Management. She received her MBA this May and will complete her MPA this August—and she already has a job waiting for her at the accounting firm of Deloitte and Touche. Good luck, Holly.

Franco Ardito is a work-study student who has been with us since February as Special Events Coordinator. Franco is a junior at Ithaca College majoring in TV/Radio, with an emphasis in video production. This coming fall, he will be in Los Angeles doing a video production internship. Our fingers are crossed that he'll return.

Emily Eisman is a volunteer who has been donating her time for the past year with such tasks as sending out membership mailings and copying. She is a junior at Cornell University in the School of Agriculture. Thank you for your continued help, Emily.



Photo by Susan Hurwitz

Student interns Franco Ardito (left) and Emily Eisman and Holly Gosse (bottom, from left to right).



Photo by Neil Leutenknecht

## Amphibian Antics at the Stevenson Preserve

It was a dark and stormy night... at least, that was the forecast (“100% chance of rain... heavy at times...”). In the cool of early spring a forecast like this can mean just one thing: spotted and Jefferson salamanders are on the move from their forest hideaways for a brief return to the ponds of their birth. I called up various hard-core amphibiophiles, and we headed out to the Stevenson Preserve.

Clad in rain gear and armed with flashlights, we set off through the woods toward the preserve’s trio of small shallow ponds. As we approached our stake-out spot at the west-most pond, we spied a robust Jefferson salamander clad in cryptic blue-gray crawling down the slope toward the water. We gently held it up for a really good look. At nearly 8” long, spotted and Jefferson salamanders are large, beefy creatures—at least compared to redbacks and spotted newts. In the pond itself, we saw only one or two more Jeffersons, although my husband and I had seen about a dozen in that same spot just two days before. But we did see a *lot* of spotted salamanders and wood frogs.

The elegant spotted, black with bold gold spots, were swimming around mostly singly or in twos, but we saw a few clumps of several each, gracefully twisting and turning together. We surmised that the biggest, fattest ones were females and the lean, quick-moving ones were males, as is generally the case with amphibians.

Males had deposited white spermatophores on dead leaves at the pond’s bottom. The male places seminal fluid, intended for pick-up by the females, on the very top. We dragged out one leaf to get a better look. To our surprise, the white, irregularly shaped pedestal was perched on a small, clear gelatinous glob that glued the white part to the leaf. The whole affair was maybe a centimeter high.

Fascinating as the salamanders were, it was the wood frogs that stole the show. After we had settled down and the rain had become a steady downpour, they

began popping to the surface, first looking dead as they floated on their tummies. But soon they got frisky, scooting about by themselves or in hot pursuit of another. Several bold, revved-up souls began their duck-like cackle, and soon a wonderful clackety chorus echoed all around us. Our flashlights and talking seemed not to affect them at all. Maybe we were drowned out by the splash-splating of the rain; maybe they thought the lights were many moons. Or maybe they were too preoccupied with their main mission at this time of year: breeding.

Several nights later we were back again. We found many more spotted salamanders, some in congregations having at least 10 or 12 individuals in them, maybe more—but darned hard to count as they twirled in and out, frequently disappearing beneath leaves in the shallow water. Once past breeding season, salamanders are languid swimmers.

Our most unlikely observations involved a couple of weird salamander-frog interactions. First, a salamander and frog bumped into each other, and the frog tried to swallow the salamander, head first. They remained in limbo for a surprisingly long time, head in frog’s mouth, before the frog realized that the salamander was *way* too big to devour. At last it released the salamander and they swam off in opposite directions.

Abit later, another confused frog mounted a salamander that happened to be swimming past underneath it, presum-



Photo by Betsy Darlington

*A preserve visitor has a close encounter with a spotted salamander.*

ably assuming it was a lovely lady frog. It grabbed hold of the salamander with its front legs and held tight, the salamander’s head extending out under and beyond the frog’s. We watched them for a long time and they remained like that till we departed, the frog probably wasting sperm right and left. The salamander didn’t struggle to escape. Who knows—perhaps next year we’ll find lots of gold-spotted frogs!

The temperature was mild when we began, but we could feel it dropping. Besides, it was getting late. Still, it was hard to leave. Few experiences rival sitting in the dark by a pond, the early spring rain pouring down, watching frogs and salamanders and listening to the music of the forest.

—Betsy Darlington

### *Louisiana water thrush*

*Brown-streaked breast  
Body bobbing, patrolling  
Woodland stream edges*

*Pointy bill jabs tiny creatures  
Who turn into graceful bird  
Of rocky stream gorges*

*wade in the water bird,  
head cocked to spy insects  
at the water’s edge*

*clicking its call  
repeating as it forages  
watery edges*

—Becca Harber

## BUSINESS PARTNER PROFILE

### Canandaigua Nature Company

“Canandaigua Nature Company, Finger Lakes Most Unique Gift Shop,” the sign says, pointing the way down Niagara Street. “Something for Everyone.” Any suspicions you may entertain about these claims start to dissolve as soon as you see the store. After all, Canandaigua Nature Company is housed in a firehouse that dates from 1874.

Inside, some of the building’s history is still evident, but you probably won’t notice. You will be much too distracted by the store’s assortment of “something for everyone.” Kim Wheaton runs the store with plenty of help from her husband, David. “When we bought the store in 1998 it was only on this side of the building,” Kim explains indicating one of the firehouse’s two bays. “We specialized just in bird feeders and feed, then.”

Though they still carry a complete line of bird products, two years and a lot of effort have greatly expanded the business in size and scope. Canandaigua Nature Company’s product line now includes a wide selection of nature-oriented gifts and outdoor and garden decorations.

Not only have they doubled their on-site retail space, they now sell at three additional locations. On Thursdays you can find the Wheatons at the Hanna Junction Farmer & Craft Market. Saturdays they offer their wares at the Windmill in Penn Yan. And, in keeping with the times, they are also as close as your nearest internet access at [www.cnature.com](http://www.cnature.com). “We only have two hundred products on the web right now,” David says, “but we hope to have over a thousand by the end of the year.”

Nonetheless, it is the firehouse at 13 Niagara Street in Canandaigua that is the soul of Kim and David’s business. Only there can you choose from their full array of products. Whether you are looking for nature gifts or garden gargoyles; binoculars, bird feed, or bat houses; or, most likely of all, surprising yourself with something you haven’t even thought of yet, visit Kim and David Wheaton at the Canandaigua Nature Company. They support the Land Trust by offering a 10% discount on their merchandise to our members.

—Allen Quirk



Photo by Allen Quirk

*Kim and David Wheaton, co-owners of the Canandaigua Nature Company, surrounded by their store’s assortment of nature gifts and wild bird supplies.*

### Volunteer Opportunities

*A volunteer to do—or help with—our newsletter layout.*

*A volunteer to answer phones during the weekday afternoons.*

*Volunteers to help with office tasks.*

*A volunteer with professional design skills to help us create new displays.*

*A volunteer with writing skills to update our brochures.*

Please call (607) 275-9487 for more information.

### NEED THE PERFECT GIFT for your land-loving friends?

Check out our really *neat* Land Trust hats (baseball style) for a minimum donation of \$16, our beautiful Land Trust T-shirts & wonderfully comfortable Leopold benches! **Gift memberships or donations to the Land Trust make the perfect gift for those who crave nothing but more protected land!**

### In Memoriam

*We are deeply grateful for the donations given to the Land Trust:*

In memory of  
Dr. J. Edward Gilda  
from Dr. & Mrs. Kirby M. Milton

In memory of  
Rev. Dr. & Mrs. Stanley Sears  
from Robert and Mary King

### Land For Sale

**HEMLOCK LAKE:** conservation-minded buyer wanted. 40+ acres, spectacular views overlooking Hemlock Lake, abundant wildlife; adjoins 100 acres that will be protected by conservation easement. Terms available. Call (716) 346-0582.

**ABUTTING FINGER LAKES NATIONAL FOREST:** 40-acre parcel on Chicken Coop Hill Rd., with conservation easement. 15-acre woodlot, sweeping views, gently sloping fields. Trumansburg School District. Call (607) 387-8080.

### INVASIVE CUISINE

#### Geo Kloppel’s Garlic Mustard Delight

*It’s a bit late to make this recipe this year, so clip and save for next season!*

Several bunches of garlic mustard tops (unopened flower heads & upper leaves, about 2" of the stem)  
Red bell pepper  
Onion  
Garlic  
Olive Oil

Slowly sauté onions, red pepper, and garlic in olive oil under a cover until very tender and sweet. Add the tops of the garlic mustard. Replace the lid and steam them over the pepper and onion mix until wilted. Serve over pasta with fresh Parmesan.

## A CLOSER LOOK



TRILLIUM BY ROBERT WESTBY (INSET); GARLIC MUSTARD BY WOODSTOCK GRANT (BACKGROUND)

*Trillium (inset) is just one of our native wildflowers that is being overwhelmed by the non-native invasive garlic mustard (background).*

## Garlic Mustard

Just as the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve is a microcosm of the Earth's natural world, so too, is it a place where you can see the impacts of unwelcome, outside forces. Lindsay-Parsons is home to a wonderful array of native plant, insect, animal, and fungal life—but it has also become the adoptive home of some non-native invaders. Garlic mustard (*Alliaria officinalis*) is one of these. And it is a threat to the preserve's integrity.

Garlic mustard is a biennial plant that spends its first year as an over-wintering rosette; during the second it shoots up white flowers, with as many as ten thousand seeds. It was first recorded in Long Island in 1869, but is now regularly seen as far west as Nebraska and Minnesota—and has even been reported in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia. Its southern range extends to Georgia. According to Dr. Bernd Blossey, a researcher at Cornell University, the

plant's spread occurred even faster than what has been estimated for purple loosestrife—another invasive non-native. Blossey spends much of his time working on biological control of non-native plant species. In fact, his work has led to some major success controlling the wildfire-like spread of loosestrife. But unlike loosestrife, whose invasive characteristics are well understood, Blossey says it's not yet clear why garlic mustard is so successful.

"It's a biennial, with many fewer seeds than the perennial loosestrife. Yet it's really good at colonizing biodiversity hotspots," says Blossey. "You find it right in there with native plants and spring ephemerals like Trillium species, Trout Lilies, and Toothworts."

The Land Trust is already working to reduce the impact of garlic mustard at Lindsay-Parsons. "There is a huge amount of it there," says Betsy Darlington. "So we're focusing on one small, pristine area with lots of lovely

native flowers." Since garlic mustard bullies its way into native plant hotspots, it's vital to keep it at bay in places where rare natives flourish. Last spring, we started our control efforts and had volunteers go out while the garlic mustard was flowering and manually pull up or break off the flowering shoots. Says Darlington, "We'll go back and do this again each spring. We'll probably have to do it for many years because there's a good seed bank out there and more is likely to move in from elsewhere."

The white flowers were popping out everywhere along forest edges this spring. Put the leaves in your salad for a garlicky flavor, or turn them into pesto. You'll get tasty pesto and a hefty dose of vitamin C—but eating it isn't going to control it. There's just too much. In fact, the plant is listed as one of the top twenty invasive plant species in New York State.

—Rachel Clark

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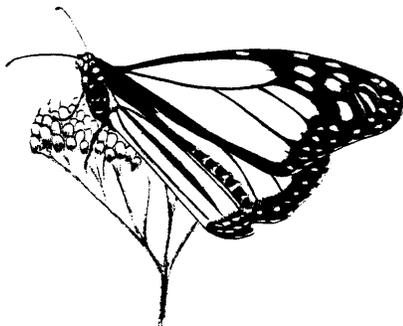
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www.FingerLakesLandTrust.org



## Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 E. Court Street  
Ithaca, New York 14850



## SUMMER 2000 CALENDAR:

**TALKS 'N TREKS** in the Canandaigua and 'Little Lakes' Watersheds  
(SEE INSERT)

**July 8, Sat., 9AM-Noon: WORK DAY AT HIGH VISITA NATURE PRESERVE**, at the southeast end of Skaneateles Lake. Trail maintenance, sign replacement and junk removal are needed. This is a great chance to meet fellow members and visit a fine natural area.

For brochures on the preserves or other Chapter information call 315-497-3066.

**July 22, Sat., 12 PM to 3 PM: ERIE CANAL CRUISE**, 3-hour boat cruise on the Erie Canal, beginning in Syracuse. Come learn about this important factor in our region's development. Bring a potential new member and win a prize! \$35 per person includes lunch and cruise. Call (607) 275-9487 for reservations and carpooling by July 14th—space is limited!

**August 12, Sat., 9 AM-Noon: EXPLORE NEW TERRITORY AT THE LINDSAY-PARSONS BIODIVERSITY PRESERVE** in West Danby, with local naturalist Geo Kloppel. Hike through our 100+ acre addition to this lovely preserve! Meet at preserve parking lot on Rt. 34/96.

**September 24, Sun., 1 PM to 6 PM: FALL PICNIC**, Stewart Park on the southern end of Cayuga Lake in Ithaca. Please bring a dish-to-pass and a potential member! Come and enjoy the afternoon with the Land Trust. Hikes, volleyball, good food, friends, and a Hawk and Owl Show by a local wildlife rehabilitator. Directions to Stewart Park: From Rt. 13, take the Stewart Park/34 exit. Go north on 34, take the first left after the overpass. Follow signs to Stewart Park. Meet at the large pavilion.