



# THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 18, No. 3

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Summer 2006

## Land Trust Helps In Owasco Flats Wetlands Protection

In partnership with a local nonprofit conservation group, the Land Trust has successfully negotiated an agreement to purchase a key piece of property in the Owasco Flats wetlands complex at the southern end of Owasco Lake, Cayuga County. The roughly 15-acre wooded parcel includes more than 1,000 feet along Rte. 38 in the Town of Moravia and 1,000 feet of frontage along the winding Owasco Lake inlet, the primary tributary flowing into the lake.

Under the agreement, the Land Trust has a legal option to buy the land, which it then intends to assign to Owasco Flats Nature Reserve, Inc., a grassroots organization interested in preserving local lands from development while maintaining public access. Owasco Flats Nature Reserve will take on the responsibility of managing the land, but the Land Trust will hold a conservation restriction.

Both the Land Trust and Owasco Flats Nature Reserve (OFNR) have wanted a hand in conserving delicate wetlands in the area, but it took the lead action of Land Trust Director Andy Zepp to get things started. He contacted the property owner, Ed Larkin, formerly of Moravia but now living in Florida, and began a dialogue that eventually led to the sale agreement in the interest



BILL HECHT

*The Larkin acquisition will secure a key parcel within the Owasco Flats – one of the largest remaining unprotected wetlands in the Finger Lakes Region*

of preserving the property for public enjoyment.

Jean Siracusa, chair of OFNR and a biology professor at the Cayuga Community College campus in Fulton, sees the role of

*continued on page 3*



MARK WHITMORE

*The ten-acre forested Dress Woods site will now be managed as a public conservation area*

## Ithaca Acquires West Hill Woodland With Land Trust Help

In May the Town of Ithaca finalized its acquisition of Dress Woods, a remnant stand of mature forest bordering Culver Road on Ithaca's west side. Acquired with the assistance of the Land Trust, the ten-acre site will be managed as a public conservation area.

Long cared for by botanist and Land Trust member Bill Dress, the site was brought to the Land Trust's attention by forester Mike DeMunn. Dress was considering selling the property and hoped that it might be retained for conservation purposes. Land Trust staff visited the site and were impressed by the magnificent hardwood trees, representing some of the finest forest remaining in Ithaca. The opportunity to conserve the woods was too good to pass up.

After discussions with representatives of the town, the Land Trust negotiated a purchase option agreement on Ithaca's behalf. The option was then assigned to the town, which then bought the land.

"The town is grateful for the Land Trust bringing this project to its attention," said town board member and former Land Trust President Herb Engman. Town Supervisor Kathy Valentino added, "Ithaca is really excited about taking ownership of this beautiful and pristine woodland and is dedicated to preserving it for all of its communities."

The Land Trust recognizes the thoughtful commitment to stewardship demonstrated by both Bill Dress and the Town of Ithaca in protecting these beautiful woods.



## PERSPECTIVES

Thanks to bipartisan support and the tireless efforts of the Land Trust Alliance and the state's land trusts, New

York State now has a tax credit for conservation easement donors. Beginning next year, the Conservation Easement Tax Credit will provide landowners whose land is restricted by a conservation easement an annual refund of up to 25 percent of the property taxes paid on that land, with a maximum of \$5,000 per year.

The credit will be available to all owners of easement-restricted land, regardless of when the easement was created, provided that the easement was wholly or partially donated to a land

trust or government agency. An important aspect of this new incentive is that it is being borne by the state, so local property tax revenues will be unaffected.

The new tax credit is particularly important for the Finger Lakes Region, where many landowners are "land rich" and "cash poor." Current federal tax incentives associated with a conservation easement donation provide limited benefit to retirees and those with modest incomes. The new incentive will ensure that all easement donors, regardless of their income level, will receive some benefit.

Many details relating to the implementation of this new tax measure remain to be worked out.

Representatives of the Land Trust Alliance and some of the state's leading land trusts are right now meeting with staff from the state's Department of Taxation & Finance to ensure that the new incentive is fairly and efficiently administered and that it achieves its conservation objectives.

We'll share additional information as we receive it — both through upcoming issues of *The Land Steward* and on the Land Trust's web site ([www.flit.org](http://www.flit.org)).

—Andy Zepp

## Deer Ticks and Lyme Disease Increasing in the Finger Lakes

The deer tick *Ixodes scapularis*, also known as the black-legged tick or seed tick, is a tiny arachnid that can be a vector for several dangerous diseases. The most serious and widespread of these diseases in the Northeast is Lyme disease, caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

The first symptoms of the disease, which can appear at any point from three to 30 days after the bite of an infected tick, are vague and flu-like: chills and

disease are reported in New York State. However, because the disease is only endemic in the southeastern counties, many people mistakenly think that it is not a public health issue in the Finger Lakes area. Yet the truth is that each year Lyme disease moves further north and seems to become more widespread.

Carol Mohler, a community health nurse at Tompkins County Health Department, said each year about five to six human cases of Lyme disease are con-

longer season. Last year it was the worst. One day last fall, we found eight deer ticks on our dog. I had three embedded in me last year, and many others found still crawling."

It's not clear why deer ticks are spreading so fast, though ecological changes are probably partly to blame. Upstate New York, with its overgrown fields and expanding suburbs, is rich in "edge habitats" containing a mixture of woodland and open areas. These habitats are favored by the white-tailed deer and the white-footed mouse, two mammals on which deer ticks prefer to feed.

Deer ticks must feed on three different hosts during their two-year lifespan; if they consume blood from one infected animal, they are likely to transmit the disease to all subsequent hosts. The female lays eggs in the fall and early spring. The larva, which hatches in late June or July, is almost invisible — no larger than the period at the end of this sentence. The tiny larva attaches to a bird or small mammal such as the white-footed mouse (the chief reservoir for the Lyme disease pathogen) and feeds for three to five days before dropping off. Hidden in dense vegetation, it molts into a nymph (about the size of a poppy seed) and remains dormant through the winter. When the weather warms up, the nymph lies in wait on low-growing vegetation until an

*The first symptoms of the disease, which can appear at any point from three to 30 days after the bite of an infected tick, are vague and flu-like: chills and fever, headache, fatigue, muscle or joint pain and swollen glands.*

fever, headache, fatigue, muscle or joint pain and swollen glands. (The "bull's-eye" rash that is usually associated with the disease may or may not appear.) If caught early, Lyme disease can be successfully treated with antibiotics. If it is allowed to progress untreated, it may eventually cause severe and chronic symptoms: debilitating pain and fatigue, arthritis, neurological disorders and damage to the heart, eyes and gastrointestinal system.

According to the federal government's Center for Disease Control, almost one-third of all new cases of human Lyme

firming in Tompkins County. Though no such cases have been reported yet this year, "the mild wet winter may have improved tick habitat in Tompkins County," Mohler said.

Sarah McNaull, who lives adjacent to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve, has watched the tick population skyrocket: "I began noticing ticks five years ago. We moved here six years ago, and there were no ticks, on either us or our dog. The next year there were maybe one or two ticks on our dog, in the fall. Every year since there were more ticks, in a

*continued on page 10*

# Land Trust Helps In Owasco Flats Wetlands Protection

*continued from cover*

her organization in terms of land stewardship. “We understand that the real value of the land...is the protection of wetland, watershed and green space for current and future generations of people and wildlife,” she said.

Funds for the purchase are being raised in a cooperative effort between the Land Trust, OFNR, the Nature Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited. In addition, the Land Trust assisted OFNR in securing a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service through the North American Wetlands Council, which has as its primary mission the protection and enhancement of wetlands important to wildfowl migration.

Most of the grant money will be used to enhance the ecological integrity of the land, according to Jean Siracusa. Plans include installing water control structures to restore water depth in the marsh areas and establishing monitoring programs for key plant and animal species found throughout. Plant monitoring programs will focus mostly on invasive populations, such as purple loosestrife, garlic mustard and the common reed. Other monitoring programs will be designed to keep an eye on populations of native plants and animals.

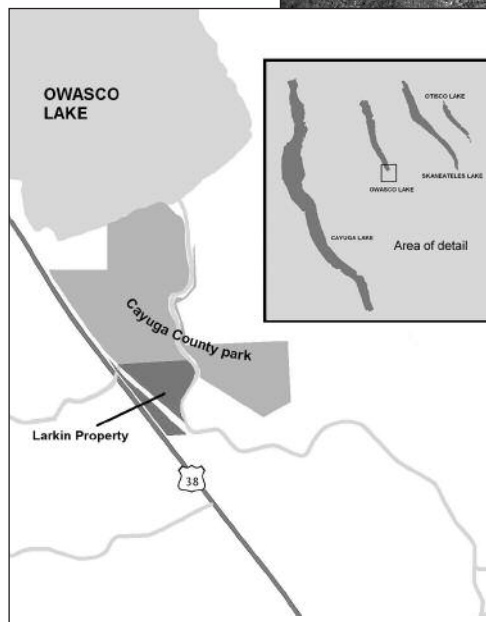
The Larkin property contains a great many plant and animal species associated with bottomland floodplain forest. Notable species of plants include locally rare shellbark hickory, edible Pennsylvania bittercress, poisonous false hellebore, and cinnamon fern, which provides downy fibers that hummingbirds use in their nests. Cerulean warblers nest in the area, as do least and American bitterns, and a host of migratory waterfowl find their way to the inlet that snakes along the eastern edge of the property.

Even as privately owned land, the Larkin property has for years attracted a steady stream of local residents drawn to the fishing possibilities of the Owasco Inlet. Brown and rainbow trout are particularly popular, as are several varieties of bass. Weekend family outings are common along this



BETSY DARLINGTON

*A view of Owasco Inlet from the Larkin Property*



stretch of the inlet. The OFNR intends to maintain open access to the public, while at the same time ensuring that human traffic does not degrade the landscape. There are plans to restrict vehicle access into the tract beyond a simple parking lot on Rt. 38, but grant money will be used to build boardwalks over delicate ground leading to favored fishing grounds.

“The acquisition of the Larkin property is a great example of what partnerships can accomplish,” said Land Trust Director Andy Zepp. “By working together with local grassroots involvement as well as the support of some of

our largest non-profit conservation groups and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we’re able to achieve what no one group on its own is able to do.”

The Larkin acquisition is the first step in what the Land Trust hopes will be a much broader effort to protect significant lands within the four square miles of the Owasco Flats. Encompassing extensive wooded swamps as well as marshes and rich agricultural land, this area has been widely recognized for its environmental significance.

The Flats serve a vital role in the region, providing diverse wildlife habitat while its wetlands help to maintain Owasco Lake’s water quality — a public drinking water supply for 70 percent of Cayuga County’s residents. The area has been recognized as a priority within the New York State Open Space Plan and identified as part of the Greater Summerhill Important Bird Area, a designation made by the National Audubon Society.

The Land Trust looks forward to working with local landowners and other partners to ensure the future of this remarkable area. We’ll keep you updated on our progress through future issues of *The Land Steward*.

—Eben McLane

## WANTED

Volunteer to paint the two front porches of the Land Trust’s offices in downtown Ithaca.

Steege Hill Preserve patrollers for the Fall deer hunting season.

Individuals to distribute Land Trust materials in the Skaneateles area.

Volunteer(s) to staff exhibit tables at local fairs and festivals in the Western Lakes Region.



# The Pull of an Owl Prowl – *Talks and Treks* Turns Ten

Ten years ago, in dense nighttime fog and pouring rain, 80 people showed up at the south end of Canadice Lake in Ontario County for an “owl prowling,” one of the first outings of the newly inaugurated Finger Lakes Land Trust Talks and Treks. This series of presentations and activities is designed to bring area residents in touch with the land and the need to conserve it.

Sara Kersting and Meg Ewing, passionate Land Trust volunteers from the Western Lakes region, had wondered how to reach out to landowners and others, to alert them to the need to protect watersheds, to shield land from development and to ensure the lasting presence of wildlife habitat.

An idea emerged one night at a gathering of Land Trust and Nature Conservancy folks in Jim and Sara Kersting’s kitchen. What about a series of talks and activities related to preserved lands?

The idea appealed deeply to the community. “We started in a classroom in Hemlock High School,” Sara recalls. “It fit about 20 people, max. The night Peter Jemison [Seneca Nation artist and manager of the State Historic Site at Ganondagan] came, we squeezed in three times that many. Next year, we moved to the Hemlock Fire Hall.”

At first, the series focused on local history. One early program explored the old building foundations scattered along the western side of Canadice Lake. “We decided to find some local folks who had lived in the cottages, or whose parents had, before the City [Rochester] took over the watershed,” Sara said. Six people responded. John Hopkins, then Canadice Town Historian, was recruited to lead an expedition along the old road where the foundations were. “It was fascinating watching those folks figure out where the different cottages had been, where the hotel was, and the livery,” she added.

That was 1996. Talks and Treks has since become a Land Trust institution, offering two sets of programs each year. One program focuses on the western Finger Lakes, which includes Keuka Lake, and the Hemlock-Canadice and Canandaigua Lake watersheds. The second program sponsors activities in the eastern Finger Lakes including the greater Ithaca area, the Cayuga Lake and Skaneateles Lake watersheds as well as the Chemung River Corridor.

Last year, over 500 Finger Lakes residents and visitors attended the series. A walk through Grimes Glen in Ontario



*At ten years, the Land Trust’s Talks and Treks series has become an institution. Pictured above are participants enjoying the 2004 Hi Tor Paddle Adventure on Canandaigua Lake*

County drew participants from towns across the region including Watkins Glen, Geneseo, Monroe County and Branchport and even one visitor from Massachusetts.

In 2005 some of the offerings included “Managing for Biodiversity,” “The Canandaigua Lake Watershed,” “What Lives in Our Streams?” “The Rattlesnakes of Steege Hill” and “The Butterflies at the Wesley Hill Preserve.” The volunteer trip leaders are all experts in their fields. The programs are free and open to the public.

Through Talks and Treks, the Land Trust fosters an appreciation for and connection to the landscapes of the region. That connection can profoundly affect the decisions residents will make about how they want their community to look today, tomorrow and in the future.

—Caissa Willmer

*The Land Trust would like to thank all of the trip leaders and sponsors who have helped make the Talks and Treks series possible.*

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS SUMMER’S TALKS AND TREKS SERIES. SEE INSERT FOR PROGRAM DETAILS.



## IN MEMORIAM: Caissa Willmer

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of our friend and colleague, Caissa Willmer. A contributing writer for *The Land Steward*, Caissa was best known for her thoughtful and colorfully written profiles of Land Trust volunteers and business partners. She served on the organization’s Editorial Board for the past ten years, and despite her declining health, continued to contribute articles, including the three pieces that appear in this issue. A devoted member of the organization since 1995, Caissa was also an avid birder and ardent environmentalist. We will miss her dearly.

# PRESERVE PROFILE

## The Robert and Mary Carver King Nature Preserve: A Diamond in the Rough

For the Preserve Profile in the last issue of *The Land Steward*, I had the pleasure of writing about the spectacular Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve near Ithaca. So I wasn't beginning the project of profiling the Robert and Mary Carver King Nature Preserve with a great deal of excitement. I just couldn't imagine the King Preserve to be as nice as Lindsay-Parsons! Fortunately, I've discovered just how wrong I was.

The King Nature Preserve is a perfect example of what occurs when a former farm is allowed to return to a wild state via natural succession. One finds in the King tract a broad range of habitats, ranging from more recently cleared fields covered with native grasses and wildflowers to mature hardwood forest composed of sugar maples, beeches, and white pines, among others. Some of the hardwood-dominated areas appear to have been returning to forest for nearly a century.

The King Preserve lies within a region of lovely rolling hills about 25 miles southeast of Ithaca on Andersen Hill Road, just a few miles outside the Tioga County Village of Richford, and was born of the generosity of dedicated Land Trust members Robert and Mary Carver King. The Kings had searched long and hard for a piece of land to buy and protect. In 1997, they found just what they had been looking for, in the hills south of Richford. In December, 2001 they reached an agreement with the Land Trust to turn the land into a nature preserve, thus ensuring that the land will remain unspoiled forever.

The diversity of bird and other animal life here is as great as the diversity of plant life. On the pleasant April day that Preserve Steward Tom Reimers took me on a tour of the property, we heard a delightful variety of birdsong, including the intricate, high-pitched melody of the Brown Creeper, one of the few North American birds that literally walk up and down tree trunks as they search for insects. Soon after we started down the trail, a Ruffed Grouse burst out of the leaf litter ahead of us. And once Tom saw a flock of about 50 Golden-crowned Kinglets — I wished I'd been there with him then!

For my tour, Tom parked by the gate that blocks vehicular access to an old logging road leading into the preserve. We walked about 500 feet down this initial trail before coming upon a trail register that Tom wishes were used more often by visitors.

Tom led our hike at a brisk pace, flicking small tree branches off the trail with his walking pole. The preserve is bisected, at the bottom of a somewhat steep ravine, by a tributary of the East Branch of Owego Creek, and this adds greatly to the tract's ecological diversity. As we approached this tributary, Tom told me that the water in it is quite clean, and is loaded with salamanders — and it did, indeed, look crystal clear. Tom exuberantly but gently turned over several rocks hoping to find some salamanders, and one zipped away so quickly from underneath a flat, dinner-plate sized stone that, although Tom was able to spot it, I could not.

One scene puzzled me greatly when we came across it. The stone foundation of an old barn or milk house straddles the creek — yes, you read that correctly — straddles the creek. This isn't



BETSY DARLINGTON

*Above: The King Preserve covers a broad range of habitats, ranging from an old field of grasses and wildflowers to...*

*Right: ...a diverse forest along a crystal clear stream*



BETSY DARLINGTON

due to a natural re-direction of the creek over time, as one might assume. Instead, according to the late neighbor of the former farm, the structure was built right on top of the creek so waste could simply be flushed down through an opening in the floor, as was a common practice with milk houses.

The preserve has been purposefully left in an "undeveloped" state so as to best support the birds and other wildlife that live there. Parking is restricted to a widened area at the side of the road by the preserve entrance. Although a more formal trail system will likely be built in future, the mile-long, aptly-named "Tom's Trail," is the sole blazed hiking trail in the preserve at present. Tom notes that this trail is usually wet and muddy, so hikers should wear appropriate footwear.

Don't overlook this little gem of a preserve — a terrific example of all the good that happens when nature is allowed to take her course.

—George Dillmann

**Directions to the King Preserve:** From Route 79 southeast of Ithaca, go south (right) on Route 38 in Richford. Immediately after the village, at the "55 MPH" sign, turn right onto Andersen Hill Road. After a short distance it will make a right angle turn to the west. About 3/10 of a mile up the hill, watch for the entrance—an old logging road—on the right. Please note that Andersen Hill Road is not plowed, so vehicular access to the preserve is limited in the winter. In such cases users may park at either the top or bottom of the hill and walk to the preserve entrance.



# Scenes

from Our  
Nature Preserves

BETSY DARLINGTON



Hikers enjoying the “Sunset Symphony” field trip at Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve, part of this year’s Talks and Treks series

BETSY DARLINGTON



Land Trust staff caught during a brief repose (left to right) Mark Whitmore, Rocci Aguirre, Betsy Landre, Karen Edelstein, Andy Zepp, Emily Eisman, and Abbey Chernela (holding the camera was Betsy Darlington)

JOHN SMITH



Early morning mist at Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve



BETSY DARLINGTON



Board Member Nick Gavrielides alongside the new kiosk that he just completed for Carpenter's Falls

BETSY DARLINGTON



Flood plain woods along the trail at the Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook

*“There is a way that nature speaks, that land speaks. Most of the time we are simply not patient enough, quiet enough, to pay attention to the story.”*

—Linda Hogan (1947- )

BOB CROWE



The 200-acre Green farm, owned by fourth generation farmer Don Green, is the Land Trust's 50th conservation easement and its sixth in Ontario County

BETSY DARLINGTON



Board Member and Preserve Steward Nick Gavrielides surveying the boundaries of a Land Trust parcel along Fall Creek in southern Cayuga County

# REFLECTIONS ON CONSERVATION

## Taking Up the Wetlands Challenge

I'll bet the first native Americans to ply the waters of the Finger Lakes in birch-bark canoes or rafts, were duly impressed by what they saw. And walking the primeval forest and the many wetland marshes along the inlets and outlets of these lakes must have been a wonderful experience. The water courses provided transportation routes, access to food and other resources, as well as escape from enemies (including mosquitoes!).

Over the ensuing years, forests have been cut down, canals have been dug, wetlands have been drained, houses and factories have been built and major transportation corridors developed. It is estimated that over half the wetlands present at the time of colonization have been lost. The amazing thing is that in spite of all these perturbations, the area has in many places retained much of its original beauty. In many respects, wetlands remain integral to the character of the Finger Lakes region, but careful conservation practices need to be in place to protect these lands and preserve native habitat.

What is it about wetlands that makes them so special?

Wetlands usually occupy the transition areas between upland and aquatic areas. Ecologists call these transition areas ecotones. Aldo Leopold, the father of modern wildlife management, recognized the importance of the "edge effect." Where two communities come together, the ecotone between them contains organisms from each of them and some that are unique. Thus, an organism may be able to satisfy its need for food, water, cover and reproduction in this transition zone, without having to move from place to place. Wetlands are key places on the landscape, then, because they fulfill a broad range of the needs of a diverse group of animals.

The major wetlands in the Finger Lakes are found at the southern and northern ends of the lakes, connected with the inlets and outlets that move the waters northward into Lake Ontario. But there are many other wetland habitats throughout our region. All are vital to populations of invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, fish, mammals and birds. A healthy wetland is a complicated place, able to sustain a fox in the grasses as well as a blue-winged teal on the water, or a cerulean warbler in the lowland forest as well as a muskrat sneaking along a marsh edge.

A current boon to wetlands preservation efforts, wildlife viewing has become big business. In the latest survey of outdoor recreation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, bird watching was the fastest-growing pursuit of outdoor enthusiasts nationwide. Although much is made of the wineries that dot our landscape and of the visitors they attract, nature-based tourism in the Finger Lakes is growing by leaps and bounds, not least because of efforts to make wetlands better able to sustain a diverse plant and animal community.

At least a dozen State Wildlife Management Areas and a National Wildlife Refuge in the Finger Lakes are devoted primarily to the management of wetlands and their plants and animals. Together, these areas attract many thousands of visitors every year who come to view wildlife, to fish, to hunt and just to enjoy the outdoors. The spring and fall waterfowl migrations attract the most visitors, particularly to areas such as the Montezuma complex in Cayuga and Wayne counties.

The 1986 North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) outlined a strategy for restoring continental waterfowl



CHARLES FEIL ©

*Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge at the northern end of Cayuga Lake*

populations through wetland habitat protection and restoration. The Montezuma Wetlands Complex was identified as the state's flagship focus area under this program. The Finger Lakes Highlands is another NAWMP focus area centered on Seneca and Cayuga Lakes. Often overlooked, the grasslands bordering these wetlands are receiving more attention through several programs supported by New York DEC, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon, and others. The Finger Lakes is one of the focus areas for these grassland restoration efforts.

In addition, New York Audubon and the New York DEC both have programs emphasizing the value of the Finger Lakes area to migratory birds, with special emphasis on wetlands habitat. In addition to this work, local land trusts, The Nature Conservancy and several other organizations are increasing their focus on the greater Finger Lakes area and its wetlands.

As I see it, however, the work is just getting underway. In spite of the efforts already mentioned, there are a considerable number of privately-owned parcels that will probably never be owned by public agencies or even land trusts. These provide a challenge, particularly if they need restoration or management in order to reach their potential as fully-functioning wildlife and plant communities. I believe that obtaining conservation easements on these lands is a good approach, but not without its pitfalls. To be successful, these easements must be managed by a responsible group, organization or government agency.

There is plenty of work left. Let it be a challenge to the Finger Lakes Land Trust to see that the wetlands enhancing the landscape we leave to our grandchildren are more secure and better functioning than the ones we began with.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO:

<http://www.dec.state.ny.gov/website/dfwmr/wildlife/bca/index.html>

[http://ny.audubon.org/IBA\\_new.htm](http://ny.audubon.org/IBA_new.htm)

—Dave Odell, Regional Wildlife Manager, NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation



# CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

## *Blazing Conservation Trails:*

### Tom Reimers, Conservationist of the Year

Tom Reimers has helped maintain thousands of miles of hiking trails from North Dakota to the Adirondacks and the trails of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and Cayuga Trails Club. Steward of the Land Trust's King Preserve in Richford, he has created, re-routed, and maintained trails there, and worked on and blazed trails at other preserves.

As a member of the Land Trust since its beginning, Tom helped, in essence, to blaze that trail, too. "He has been tireless on behalf of land protection throughout our region, helping with site visits, training new easement stewards, serving on the Land Trust's Board and in many other capacities," said Director of Preserve Stewardship Betsy Darlington. "Tom is as dedicated to land conservation as anyone I know."

Quiet and unassuming, he was flabbergasted when told he had been chosen Conservationist of the Year. He's proud of his preservation work, however. "I bought 53 acres of mostly forested land in southern Tompkins County, for personal recreation (hiking, wildflowers, mushrooms, animals, etc.) and protection," he explained. "I almost immediately granted a conservation easement on the property to the FLLT. I visit the property almost weekly throughout the year, and I'm happy and proud of what I did to protect the land. I thank the FLLT for holding the conservation easement and for protecting my property long after I'm no longer the owner."

The Land Trust is thankful, in turn, that Tom Reimers has come along to, as Betsy Darlington adds, "keep the Land Trust on track with its many land protec-



*Conservationist of the Year recipient Tom Reimers (left) accepting the award from Land Trust Board President Jim Kersting at this year's Annual Meeting in Skaneateles*

tion projects as chair of the Land Committee. He's well-organized and runs wonderfully efficient meetings. He does a huge amount of work." The Land Trust is proud and grateful for the dedicated efforts of Tom Reimers.

—Caissa Willmer

# VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

## *Whistling While He Works:*

### John Smith, Volunteer of the Year

Like some latter day St. George, whistling all the while, John Smith attacks and slays invasive shrubs at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve — not with a sword, but with a mowing attachment he has invented for his tractor. He has led numerous forays for the Land Trust, especially at Lindsay-Parsons, constructing bridges, improving the entrance, and keeping trails mowed. Astride backhoe or bulldozer, he was in the forefront of the cleanup of a huge dump in one of the parcels, and he has taken down more unused utility poles there than anyone can count, storing them in one of his barns until they can be used. And when needed, John takes his heavy equipment all the way to the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary and the King and Ellis Hollow Preserves.

For this and more, John Smith has been cited Volunteer of the Year, and it makes him uncomfortable. The work he does for the Land Trust is much the same work he likes to do for fun. "With the Trust, I get to do it on hundreds of acres, not just my little 40," he said. "I admit a high degree of selfishness; the work allows me to derive more benefits than anyone else from the trails, views, and environment, since I hike the [Lindsay-Parsons] preserve practically every day."

But Betsy Darlington cannot praise him enough: "He has the ideal combination of brains and brawn and the willingness to use them to help us. He also takes extremely high quality photos of our preserves; I've got two on my office wall. During last year's workshop for vol-



*John Smith hard at work on the new kiosk for the Dorothy McIlroy Bird Sanctuary*

unteer stewards, he set up a laptop with those photos going continuously. It was a big hit. He makes my work so much easier."

—Caissa Willmer

# Deer Ticks and Lyme Disease Increasing in the Finger Lakes

*continued from page 2*

animal brushes against it. It is at this stage that the tick is most dangerous to humans because its small size makes it almost undetectable. The nymph again feeds for three to five days, drops off, and molts into an adult about the size of a sesame seed.

In the fall, the adult tick again waits on vegetation for one last blood meal. Although its preferred host is the white-tailed deer, a dog, horse, or human will do just as well. Only the female tick is a disease vector; the male does not stay attached long enough to transmit pathogens to its host. The female feeds on the blood of her host for seven to ten days, eventually swelling to the size of a small pea before dropping to the ground and laying eggs that will hatch in the following spring.

Perversely enough, ticks do not

always adhere to this timeframe. During warm winters, they may remain active year-round, and sometimes not even the cold weather puts them off. In the Lindsay-Parsons Preserve, McNaull said, "We have gotten ticks every month this year, one on a 10 degree day." As winters become warmer and milder due to global climate change, we can probably expect more Lyme disease-carrying ticks to remain active over a longer season.

Experts ask people to take sensible precautions to protect themselves. People should stay out of brushy areas; wear light-colored clothing that covers one's arms and legs, and make sure that shirt-tails and pant legs are tucked in; apply a repellent containing DEET or permethrin; and, most important of all, check one's self, children and pets regularly for ticks and nymphs. It is unlikely that a tick

will transmit disease until it has been attached for 24 to 36 hours.

If you notice any suspicious symptoms after being in a tick-infested area, seek medical attention immediately. If a tick has bitten you, send it to the New York State Department of Health Tick Identification Service. This free service will tell you the species of the tick, whether or not it is engorged with blood, and whether or not the mouthparts are present (if they aren't, that probably means that they are still in your skin). However, the Tick Identification Service will not tell you whether or not the tick is carrying Lyme disease.

For more information, go to:  
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/environment/lyme/tickid.htm>

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller

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

*Ralph Bolgiano*  
From  
Elizabeth and William Gordon

...

*Robert Burnett*  
From  
Skippy Raines

...

*Dr. Ivan Gotham*  
From  
Richard Ball  
Guthrie Birkhead  
Alexandre and Carol Galskoy  
Carolyn Haase  
Mary Clare Hamlin  
Thomas Hamlin  
Valerie Harris  
Michael Keenan  
Susan Legendre  
William Moyer  
Edward and Frieda O'Hanlon  
Julie Odenbach  
Shirley Ross  
Kathleen Swift  
Kenneth and Janice Tefft  
Scott and Vickie Trumbower

*Henry D. and Marion E. Miller*  
From  
Rachel Miller

...

*Dr. Donald Raines*  
From  
Renee, Jack, Bjorn and Bianca Beam  
Katharine Corti and William Cooper  
Cornelia Farnum  
Barbara and Stephen Hamlin  
Ivar and Beatrice Hultman  
Linneaus Garden Club  
Pete and Sara Merrill  
Greg and Ruth Morris  
Martha Parker  
Dr. and Mrs. James Pilioid  
Mr. and Mrs. John P. Schaefer  
Dave and Jean States  
Faith and Roger Weig  
Howard and Nancy Webber

*Virginia Allen Sibley*  
From  
Friends at Bookfinders at Fox Den

...

*Laura Lee and Ora Smith*  
From  
James and Janis Smith

...

*Robert Wegman*  
From  
Skippy Raines  
...  
*Caissa Willmer*  
From  
Betsy Darlington  
Tom and Linda Clougherty

## Our sincere thanks for gifts in honor of:

*The fathers of Ton Schat and  
Laura Stenzler*  
From  
Linda Clougherty

*John Efroymsen and  
Carole Dennis*  
From  
Slade Kennedy



# A CLOSER LOOK

## Damsels and Dragons

Meena Haribal, a chemist at Cornell's Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, lugged the ancient office laptop down to the visitor's area to show me her photos of her favorite animals: dragonflies and damselflies (Order *Odonata*).

"They are fascinating creatures," she told me. "They have interesting behaviors, and they are beautiful to look at. Everything about them I like." As she showed me her detailed photos, I wasn't sure if I unreservedly agreed with her assessment. They are indeed beautiful from a respectful distance. But some of her remarkable close-ups did not depict my idea of beauty.

My reservations might have been even more apt 300 million years ago, when oxygen levels were 70 percent higher, when most insects were bigger, and *Odonata*, in particular, had a wingspread of two feet or more. Their larvae, 16 inches long, attacked anything they could catch and would have made stream and pond wading extremely unpleasant.

Of the approximately 7,000 species of *Odonata*, 110 have been recorded in Tompkins County, according to Fred Sibley, a retired Yale ornithologist, who currently lives in the area and studies dragonflies.

One simple way to distinguish these *Odonata* families: Damselflies are smaller than dragonflies and rest with wings folded back above their abdomen; dragonflies and their even larger cousins, the darners, rest with wings outspread.

Haribal has observed 70 of these species. "The green darners come first to the region," she said. "I spotted the first one outside my office window in the ornithology lab a few days ago [mid-April]." Aurora damselflies also arrive early in the Finger Lakes. They are gone by June or July. Canada darners, with blue-green stripes, are common patrollers of pond shores.

Fred Sibley spoke about another of our local species, the gray petal-tail found in Watkins Glen and Robert Treman State Park. "They're similar to those in the dinosaur age," he said. "They're very large and tame. They'll often land on a hiker's head or shirt. They're in their northern edge of range here."

The early life of the dragonfly is biologically intricate, composed of many stages. It progresses from a nearly microscopic egg laid in water to a formidable bottom-dwelling nymph, hunting mosquito larvae, smaller nymphs, tadpoles and even small minnows. It catches prey with a lightning-fast snap of its toothed lower lip. In turn, the nymph is also prey to other water predators, especially fish.

If the nymph survives throughout its complex larval stages in the water, it eventually climbs out onto a plant or on shore, emerging soft and vulnerable — land-bound for a few hours until its wings and body harden. At this point, it is easy prey for birds, frogs or other dragonflies. From egg to adulthood, dragonfly mortality rates could be as high as 90 percent.



*The Ebony Jewelwing damselfly (Calopteryx maculata) (above) and a red Meadowhawk dragonfly (Sympetrum sp.) (left), photographed at the Dorothy McIlroy Bird Sanctuary last July 13th by Stewardship Ecologist Mark Whitmore*

Those that survive seek mates. Dragonflies have unique mating habits. When a male is ready to mate, he transfers sperm from his lower abdomen to a storage spot closer to his thorax. When a female of the same species comes nearby, the male uses the tip of its tail to lock onto an analogous "keyhole" structure on the head of the female. Then the female curves her tail up to receive the sperm from the storage area.

Many species mate in flight; others alight on perches. The males of several species continue to clasp onto the female until she has laid her eggs to prevent competing males from mating with her. Males of some other species release the female but stay close by to chase away any competitors.

As adults, dragonflies are carnivorous, eating every type of insect they can manage to catch. Haribal reported that while once holding a damselfly in her hand, a dragonfly swooped down to eat it. In turn, *Odonata* are eaten by many bird species, especially flycatchers. Sibley noted that the American kestrel migration coincides with the green darter migration because the kestrels depend on them for food.

Still, we know little about dragonfly migration. Our knowledge of *Odonata* is in its earliest stages. "Interest in dragonflies has blossomed in the last ten years," Sibley said. "Before that, it dragged 100 years behind birds. If you want to see a parallel, look at bird books from the turn of the last century."

Although dragonflies and damselflies are everywhere and easy to find on a sunny summer day, they often go unnoticed. If you want to observe *Odonata*, bring boots, binoculars, maybe insect repellent, and a guidebook to your favorite pond, stream or field, and just enjoy these remarkable insects.

—Margot Brinn

## Finger Lakes Land Trust

### Officers:

Jim Kersting, *President*  
Brad Edmondson, *Vice President*  
Ann Weiland, *Secretary*  
Jim Fralick, *Treasurer*

### Board Members:

Katherine Borgella	Albert Joerger
Nick Gavrielides	Don Rakow
Bob Growe	Nancy Robbins
Barbara Hamlin	Stephanie Sechler
Howard Hartnett	Scott Winkelman

### Advisory Council:

James Byrnes	Suzanne Lee
Thomas Eisner	Robert Mrazek
John Fitzpatrick	David Zorn
Ted Hullar	

### Staff:

Andrew Zepp, *Executive Director*  
Raul Aguirre, *Land Protection Specialist*  
Abbey Chernela, *Office Manager*  
Betsy Darlington, *Director of Preserve Stewardship*  
Karen Edelstein, *CE Stewardship Coordinator, and GIS Specialist*  
Emily Eisman, *Outreach and Membership Coordinator*  
Betsy Landre, *Senior Field Representative*  
Mark Whitmore, *Stewardship Ecologist*

### Newsletter Editors:

Eben McLane  
Krishna Ramanujan

### Newsletter Layout:

West Hill Graphics, Inc.

### Advisors:

*Legal Counsel:* Elizabeth Bixler; Susan Brock; Dan Hoffman; Randy Marcus; Miller Mayer, LLP; Peter Miller; Richard Ruswick  
*Forestry Consultant:* Michael DeMunn  
*Founding President:* A. Carl Leopold

### Western Lakes Chapter:

Jim Kersting, *Chair* 585-367-2301

### Eastern Lakes Chapter:

Kris Scholl, *Chair* 315-497-3066

### Keuka Chapter:

Debbie Koop, *Contact* 315-595-2523

## Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 E. Court Street  
Ithaca, New York 14850  
Ph: 607-275-9487 • Fax: 607-275-0037  
email: info@fllt.org • www.fllt.org

### Western Lakes Office

120 North Main Street, Suite 40  
Canandaigua, NY 14424  
Ph: 585-394-4189

## Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 E. Court Street  
Ithaca, New York 14850



## SUMMER 2006 CALENDAR

**Saturday, July 22, 9:30 AM** Carpenter's Falls trail work party. Led by Scott Winkelman. Come help improve one of the more treacherous trails at this spectacular site! *Interested volunteers should call the Land Trust office at 607-275-9487.*

### SUMMER 2006 TALKS & TREKS SERIES

*Explore fascinating and beautiful places this summer!*

**Saturday, July 15, 9:00 AM** "What Lives in a Stream? Stream Discovery at Grimes Glen"

**Tuesday, July 25, 7:00 PM** "How Land Conservation Benefits Us All" Vine Valley Community House

**Saturday, July 29, 10:00 AM** "Spiders Everywhere!" at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve

**Saturday, August 5, 9:00 AM** "Canadice Lake Pond Exploration and Bike Trip"

**Saturday, August 19, 9:00 AM** "Bugs of Wesley Hill Preserve"

**Saturday, August 19, 9:00 AM**, "Summer Sights and Sounds" at the High Vista Nature Preserve

**Saturday, August 26**, Carpenter's Falls: Past and Present

**Saturday, September 9, 10:00 AM**, "Fabulous Fungus" at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve

**PLEASE SEE ENCLOSED INSERT FOR DETAILS ON OUR 2006 TALKS AND TREKS SERIES!!**

*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.