



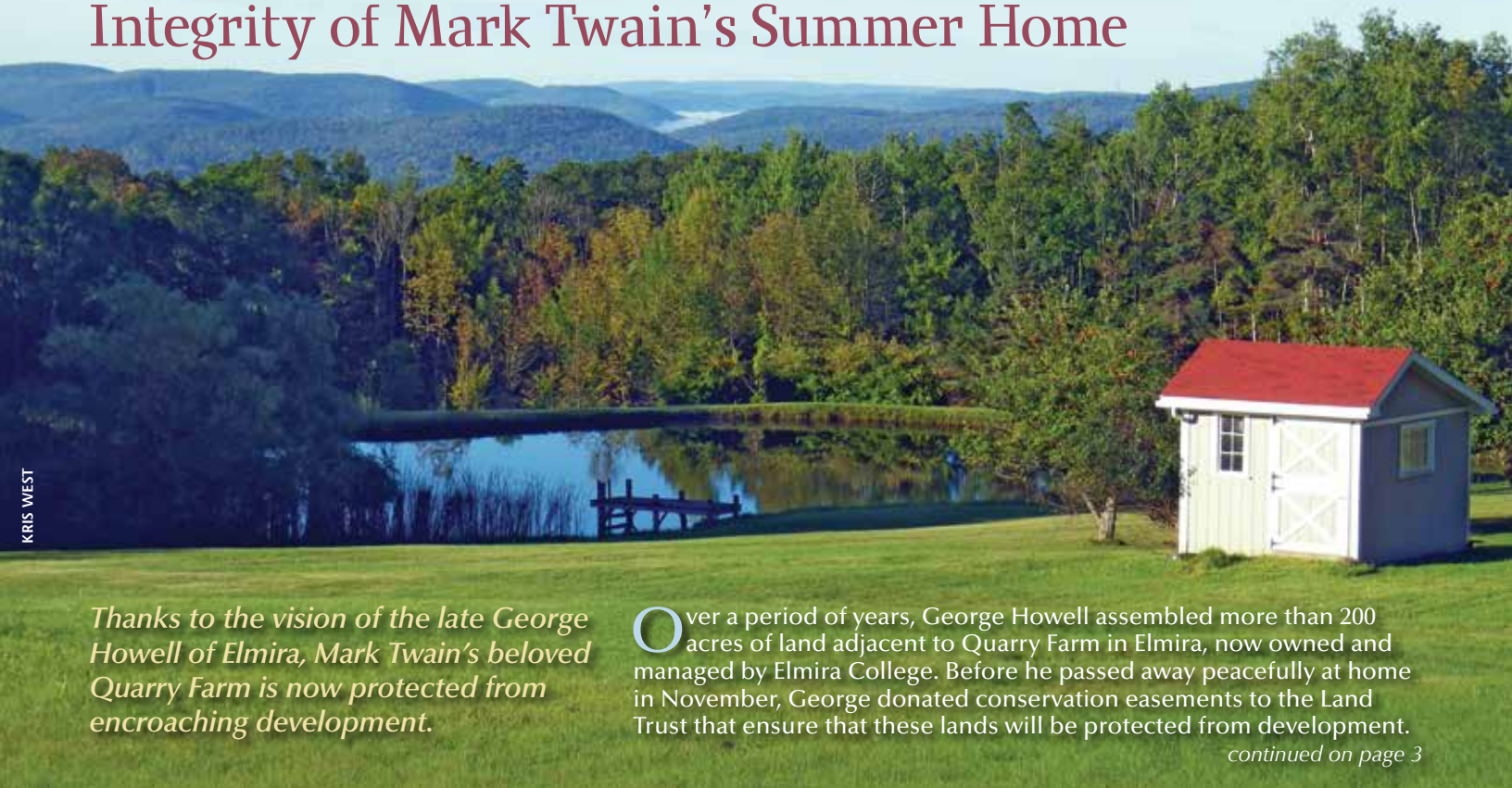
The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes region

Vol. 28, No. 1 • Winter 2015/16

Conservation Easement Donation Ensures Integrity of Mark Twain's Summer Home



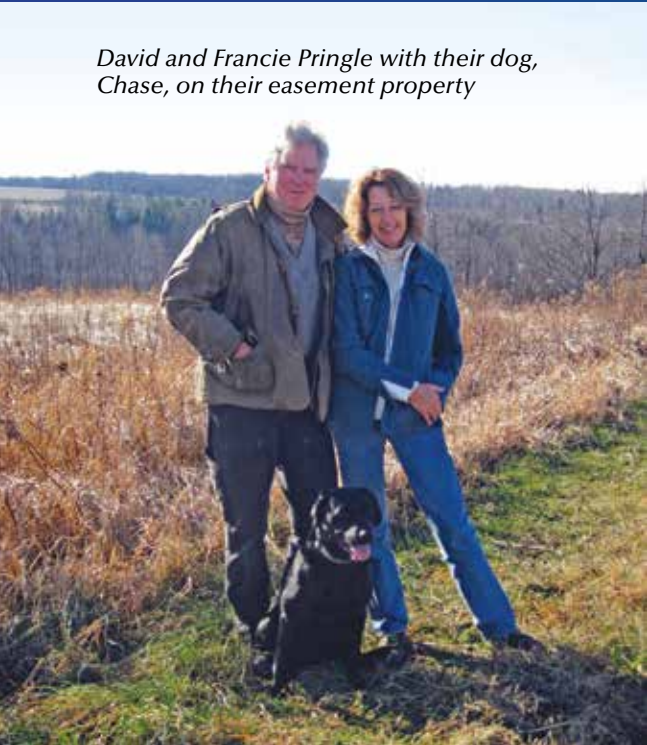
KRIS WEST

Thanks to the vision of the late George Howell of Elmira, Mark Twain's beloved Quarry Farm is now protected from encroaching development.

Over a period of years, George Howell assembled more than 200 acres of land adjacent to Quarry Farm in Elmira, now owned and managed by Elmira College. Before he passed away peacefully at home in November, George donated conservation easements to the Land Trust that ensure that these lands will be protected from development.

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David and Francie Pringle with their dog, Chase, on their easement property



Land Trust Secures Conservation Easement in the Skaneateles Lake Watershed

Over the last few decades, all too frequently stories surface of small farms facing financial pressure and ultimately selling out to developers, who then turn these farms into housing subdivisions. This constant threat is a driving force behind the Land Trust's efforts to protect farmland throughout the Finger Lakes.

But not all of these farms end up in the hands of developers. In the early 1990s, Russell Pringle bought a 200-acre parcel on the west side of Skaneateles Lake from a farmer who was struggling to make ends meet. Russell had no interest in developing the property; he wanted to protect and restore the land to its natural state.

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As we celebrate the season, we also take note of the passing of two conservationists who deserve special mention: Doug Tompkins and George Howell.

Both were businessmen who also had a passion for conservation and used their business acumen to secure lands that are today protected for the benefit of future generations.

The late Doug Tompkins focused on Patagonia, where he acquired hundreds of thousands of acres of wild lands, much of which is now incorporated into Parque Pumalin in Chile. He also helped to establish The Conservation Land Trust to carry out this work. At first, these efforts raised suspicions in local communities, but he prevailed and realized his dream of conserving a broad expanse of pristine shoreline, rugged mountains, and ancient forests in South America.

Here in the Finger Lakes, George Howell was well known for his love of history and of his hometown of Elmira. Before his recent passing, he combined these passions by partnering with the Land Trust to ensure the future of more than 200 acres of meadows and forests bordering Quarry Farm in Elmira, the place where Mark Twain spent many summers writing the stories that made him an American literary icon.

George negotiated several acquisitions to re-unite subdivided parcels that included woodlands and a scenic meadow immediately adjacent to Quarry Farm, which is now owned and managed by Elmira College. He recently donated a conservation easement that is designed to ensure the ecological integrity of the land as well as the historic character of Quarry Farm.

Doug Tompkins was fond of quoting Abraham Lincoln: "Laws change; people die; the land remains."

Both Doug and George took these words to heart and worked faithfully with Land Trusts to ensure that places special to them in particular would be conserved for generations to come.

We are deeply saddened at our loss, but also grateful to these men for their foresight and their commitment to the land.



Andrew Zepp,
Executive Director, Finger Lakes Land Trust

THANKS TO TWO GENEROUS DONATIONS...

the Land Trust is selling two rural properties in Tompkins and Steuben Counties that will be sold subject to conservation easements, limiting development to a single home on each site.

Both properties were donated with the understanding that they would be used as "conservation tradelands"—parcels that don't meet the Land Trust's criteria for retention as a nature preserve but still have conservation value. These lands are then sold with conservation restrictions and the proceeds are used to support the organization's land protection and stewardship programs.

The first property available is a 52-acre tract on Tallow Hill Road in Danby, Tompkins County. It has a small cabin and features mature woodlands as well as a hilltop meadow. The property is listed for sale at \$109,000. Inquiries should be directed to realtor Ed Finegan at (607) 279-0234.

The second tract consists of 200 acres located at the end



53 acres for sale in the town of Danby, Tompkins County

ANDY ZEPP



200 acres for sale in the town of Prattsburg, Steuben County

STEVE KNAPP

of Butts Road in Prattsburg, Steuben County. Once a farm, the property has been a family retreat for decades. It now consists of hardwood forest and conifer stands with some meadow areas. The parcel also features a pond and extensive frontage on Ten Mile Creek. The property is listed for sale at \$260,000. Inquiries should be directed to realtor Mike Keenan

at (585) 374-6690 or keenan1@frontiernet.net.

For additional information about the Land Trust's "Conservation Tradelands" program, please contact Director of Land Protection Zack Odell at (585) 576-1017 or zackodell@fllt.org.



A view of Quarry Farm (lower center of photo), the Howell easement lands and the City of Elmira

Conservation Easement Donation Ensures Integrity of Mark Twain's Summer Home

continued from cover

Quarry Farm is located on a scenic hilltop just north of downtown Elmira. For years, the farm served as a summer home and writing retreat for Samuel Clemens, the writer well known as Mark Twain. Clemens' famous octagonal study, which had spectacular views overlooking the Chemung River, has been removed from the farm and reassembled on the campus of Elmira College.

In 1869, Quarry Farm was purchased by Samuel Clemens' sister-in-law, Susan Langdon Crane, and her family. Parcels of the original farm were later broken up and sold. During recent years, George Howell purchased most of it.

The Clemens family used the property as a summer home for 20 years, where Mark Twain spent much of his time writing. Works completed there include *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, both masterpieces of American literature.

Protection of the property will maintain the historic

context of the adjacent farmhouse, originally owned by the Langdon family and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The farmhouse is managed by Elmira College as a residence for visiting Mark Twain scholars. The property has further conservation significance because it is adjacent to property owned by the City of Elmira Water Board. It is also visible from nearby Interstate 86 and contains steep erodible hillsides above the Chemung River Valley.

The conservation easement encompasses nearly 200 acres of mainly oak-hickory forest, as well as several scenic meadows, one of which is adjacent to the historic farmhouse. The land also borders Watercure Brook, a tributary to the Chemung River. The easement helps to maintain the rural and historic character of the area, which is just a short distance from downtown Elmira.

George Howell passed away shortly after the conservation
continued on page 5



Land Trust Secures Conservation Easement in the Skaneateles Lake Watershed *continued from cover*

The property is now owned by Russell's son and daughter-in-law, David and Francie Pringle. Like Russell, they fell in love with the land and wanted to ensure that it remained unspoiled. Toward that end, the couple recently donated a conservation easement on the property to the Land Trust. The easement establishes a management plan for the property and protects it from development in perpetuity.

The parcel is located in the town of Niles, Cayuga County, in the highlands above Skaneateles Lake. It has significant frontage on State Route 41A, a highway that runs the length of the western side of the lake, as well as frontage on Glen Haven Road and Bear Swamp Road. Access from major roads is an attraction for developers looking for sites to build housing developments, so the Land Trust viewed this property as a priority for protection.

The Land Trust has also been actively protecting land at the south end of Skaneateles Lake through its Skaneateles Highlands Protection Project. The Land Trust's High Vista Preserve and Hinchcliff Family Preserve are key components of the greenbelt on the east side of the lake.

The Pringle property borders a 100-acre parcel that is already protected by a conservation easement held by the Land Trust. It is also located in close proximity to Bear Swamp State Forest, the Carpenters Falls Unique Area, and the Land Trust's Bahar Preserve.

Although a portion of the Pringle property remains a working farm—the Pringles currently lease about 20 acres along Highway 41A to a local farmer—the diverse terrain also includes lush meadows, hardwood forest, and a riparian floodplain. As David Pringle noted, "It's a wonderfully varied and truly special place."

Perhaps the crown jewel is an expansive stretch of Bear Swamp Creek that flows through the property. Bear Swamp Creek is the largest tributary

feeding into Skaneateles Lake. It originates in Bear Swamp State Forest, meanders through the village of New Hope (where it once powered the well-known New Hope Flour Mill for more than 150 years), and then drops steeply down to the lake. The creek harbors native brook trout and attracts a variety of other wildlife, including mink, fishers, otters, and beavers. In fact, beaver dams on the property have created wide and deep ponds that the Pringles have found to be perfect for canoeing.

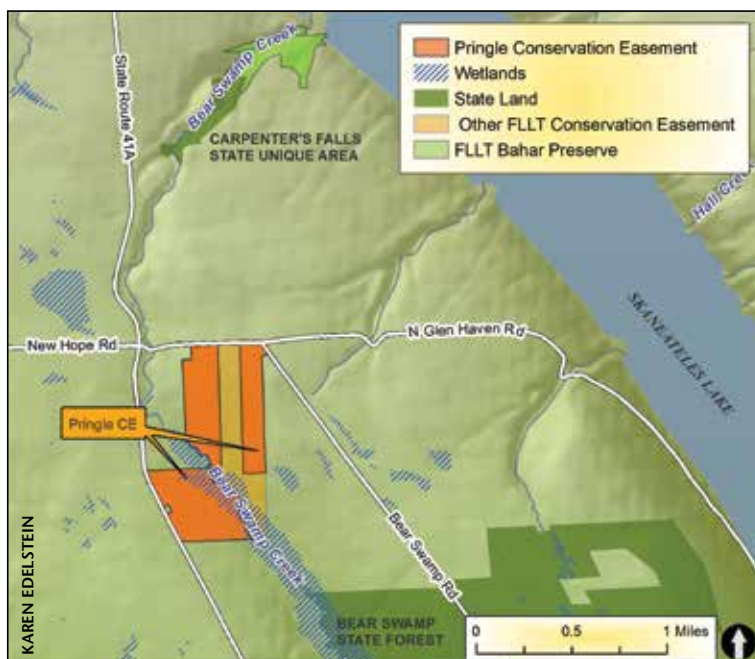
In recent years, the Pringles have taken steps to restore wildlife habitat on the property. The couple have planted native grasses to provide cover for deer and ground-nesting birds. Working with the federal government's Natural Resources Conservation Service

(NRCS), they are managing these meadows to sustain the nesting period for songbirds that rely on grasslands for breeding, including bobolinks and savannah sparrows. According to David, the songbird population on the property has skyrocketed since this management plan was put in place.

The Pringles are also working with the NRCS to repair riparian habitat along Bear Swamp Creek and control non-native plants on the property. "It's an ongoing battle," said David. "Buckthorn, honeysuckle, and multiflora rose are our primary enemies, and they are especially difficult to remove."

Russell Pringle is now 90 years old, but he still makes regular visits to the property that has been his passion over the past 20 years. "The work we

are doing on this land, including protecting it with a conservation easement," said his son David, "is about honoring my father's legacy and his commitment to the land."
—Jeff Tonole



The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Laura Smith of the law firm Harter Secrest & Emery LLP in Rochester, NY for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.



Congress Approves Enhanced Tax Incentive for Conservation Easements

Congress recently passed a \$1.1 trillion tax and spending bill that will make permanent an enhanced tax incentive for donations of conservation easements. Under this legislation, landowners who donate a conservation easement can claim a federal income tax deduction—an incentive that has increased the pace of land conservation by about 33% across the United States, exceeding one million acres per year.

The conservation easement tax deduction allows a landowner to claim a federal income tax deduction for the appraised value of a donated easement—similar to other charitable donations. The value of the easement is calculated by determining the difference in property value before and after the easement. That's the amount of value the landowner gave up by agreeing to protect the land.

The enhanced incentive can make a big difference for landowners who are thinking about donating an easement. In particular, it allows working farmers, as well as landowners with modest incomes, to realize more of the value of the deduction.

Here's what the enhanced incentive does:

- Raises the maximum deduction a donor can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of their adjusted gross income (AGI) in any year to 50%
- Allows qualified farmers to deduct up to 100% of their AGI
- Increases the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 to 16 years



The Land Trust now holds 118 conservation easements throughout the Finger Lakes region.

The Finger Lakes Land Trust was among the 1,100 land trusts to support the incentive through a collaborative, multi-year campaign headed by the Land Trust Alliance, the national land conservation organization that led the campaign for permanence.

Here in New York, easement donors may also benefit from the State's Conservation Easement Property Tax Credit, which provides reimbursement of 25% of school, town, and county taxes paid on land upon which a conservation easement was donated.

Also in the tax and spending bill is a three-year renewal of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), setting the stage for important legislative action next year. Celebrating its 50th year in 2015, the LWCF is an important tool for creating parks and public lands across America. This fund takes a portion of revenues from offshore oil drilling and uses that money to pay

What is a conservation easement?

A CONSERVATION EASEMENT is a voluntary agreement to protect land in perpetuity. Although filed with the deed, it does not transfer land ownership, but rather spells out a landowner's commitments to protect the existing character of the property. It is a flexible tool, and is written to protect land in accordance with the landowner's wishes and the Land Trust's mission.

for public lands. Both the Finger Lakes National Forest and the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge have acquired lands under the LWCF.

For additional information please contact the Land Trust's Ithaca office at (607) 275-9487 or visit www.fllt.org. Additional information may also be found on the Land Trust Alliance's web site—www.lta.org.

Conservation Easement Donation Ensures Integrity of Mark Twain's Summer Home *continued from page 3*

easement agreements were completed. He dedicated nearly 60 years of service to his family's business, F. M. Howell & Company, a leader in the packaging industry. He was the third generation of the Howell family to lead the company.

Of great importance to George throughout his life was his service to the Elmira community. Among his numerous good works, he served on the Trustee Council of the Preservation League of New York State, as Trustee Emeritus of Elmira College, and he was a founding board member of Historic Elmira, Inc. He was also an Honorary Trustee of the Arnot Art Museum and the Chemung County Historical Society.

"I am unable to think of anyone who, during my lifetime,

has had a bigger positive impact on the Elmira area than George Howell," said former Land Trust President Stu Schweizer. "George's gift of a conservation easement in the final few months of his life is one more wonderful testimonial to a life well-spent, making important contributions for the future benefit of the community that he cared for so deeply."

This project is part of an ongoing effort by the Land Trust to conserve lands in the vicinity of the Chemung River and its valley. The Howell easements represent the third and fourth conservation easements in Chemung County, which is also home to the Land Trust's Plymouth Woods and Steege Hill Nature Preserves.



SCENES

from Around
Our Region...

*Winterberry at the Goetchius
Wetland Preserve, town of
Caroline, Tompkins County*



*The Wenrich Cabin at the
Wesley Hill Nature Preserve*



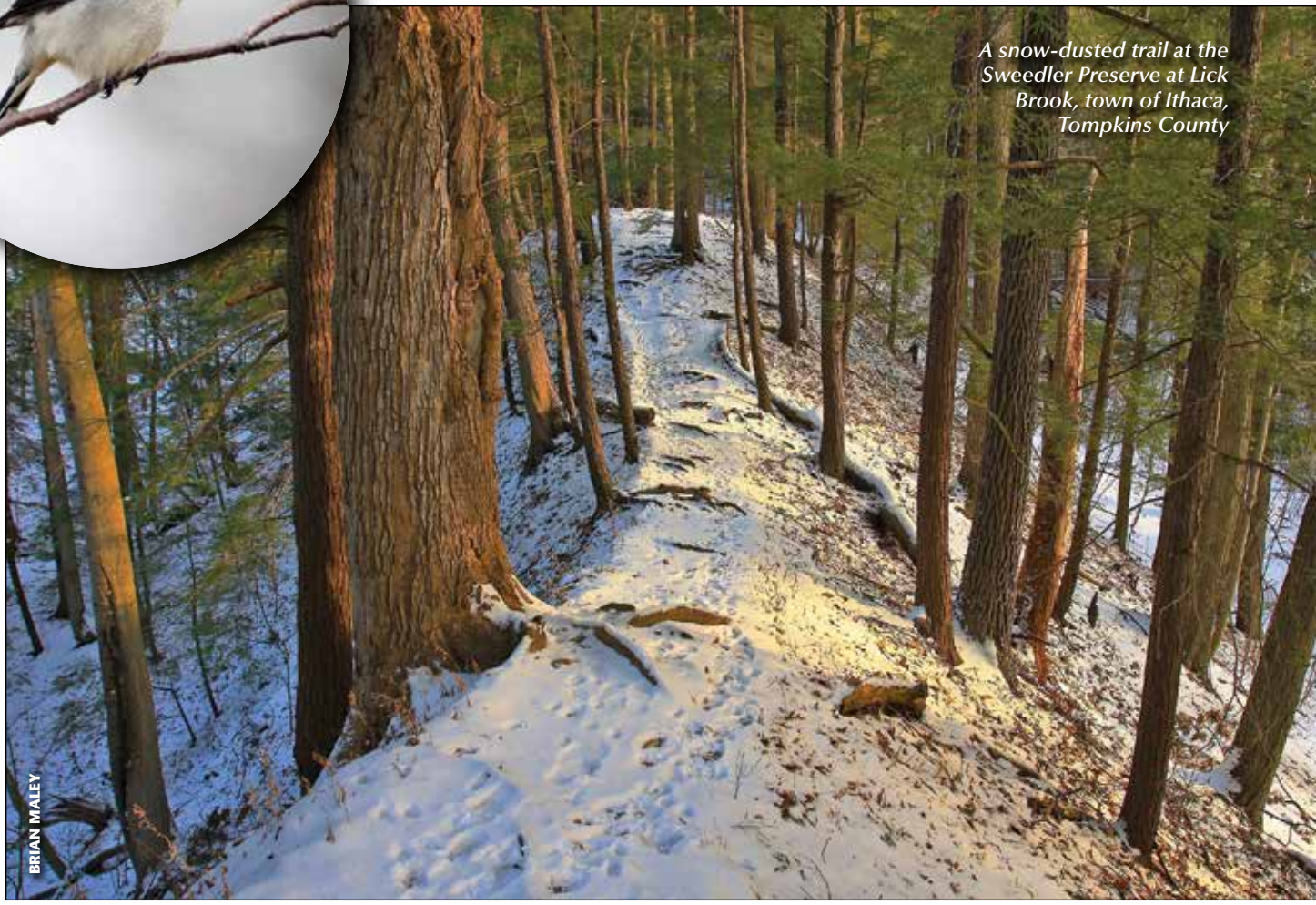
A fun volunteer work day at the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve, towns of Richmond and South Bristol, Ontario County

BETHZAIDA E. CARRANZA



MARIE READ

The Northern Shrike, a tundra-breeding bird, has been spotted at the Goetchius Wetland Preserve and Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in recent years.



A snow-dusted trail at the Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook, town of Ithaca, Tompkins County

BRIAN MALEY

NIGEL KENT

PRESERVE PROFILE: Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve

A highlight of the 585-mile Finger Lakes Trail, this wooded 48-acre preserve in Enfield—just west of Ithaca—offers ideal options either for an easy walk or for connection to a much longer, more challenging hike. Owned by the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and subject to a conservation easement held by the Land Trust, the Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve features some of our region’s oldest, most majestic sugar maples.

NATURAL HISTORY

Starting from the parking area, the trail leads through a grove into a large meadow, once a hayfield, now rife with goldenrod and other wildflowers. At a fork in the trail, a yellow-blazed path leads to the “old-growth loop,” which passes by the preserve’s tallest maples, thought to be 300 years old. It is remarkable that they have survived through the centuries, despite intense market demand for their wood. The maples were also never tapped for sugar, thus escaping added vulnerability to fungal spores and decay.

In another direction, the trail leads to an overlook, where one can see both active and retired farms, clear across the valley of Enfield Creek to the wooded slopes on the other side. This vista is truly stunning during peak autumn foliage, but well worth a stop at all times of year. The trail continues

into younger successional woods, past a lean-to shelter, over dry stream beds and eventually back to more mature hardwood forest along the Finger Lakes Trail.

About half a mile of the Finger Lakes Trail runs across the preserve, connecting across Porter Hill Road with Riemen



Dave Bock on the “Ponder Log.”

ROGER HOPKINS

ANDY ZEPP

Woods, also owned by the Finger Lakes Trail Conference. The Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve is close to the Land Trust's Stevenson Forest Preserve, Robert H. Treman State Park, and other conserved lands. Together these lands all help make up the Emerald Necklace, an ambitious effort to link more than 50,000 acres of protected land in a continuous corridor around Ithaca.

HISTORY

The land of the Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve was once part of the Central New York Military Tract, a vast territory set aside by Congress and the state legislature of New York as a bounty for soldiers enlisting in the Revolutionary War. In the early 1800s, Samuel Harvey purchased the land. The property then was passed on through many generations of Harvey's direct descendants in the Harvey and Bock families.

Throughout their centuries of ownership, the Bock and Harvey families cherished and faithfully protected their land, including those grand old maples. Then, in 2012, the Bock family approached the Land Trust about donating their land and ensuring its protection in perpetuity. Recognizing the importance of the property to hikers, the Land Trust engaged the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) and the Cayuga Trails Club (CTC) in a partnership. All parties agreed that the land would be conveyed to the FLTC, with the Land Trust

holding a conservation easement and the CTC assisting with maintenance and outreach.

The shelter, named the "Locust Lean-To" for its location among black locust trees, was built out of tamarack logs by the Finger Lakes Trail Alley Cats and volunteers from the Cayuga Trails Club in June 2015. This site also features a fire pit, picnic table, and a fenced privy nearby. (Fans say that it could well be the most scenic latrine on the Finger Lakes Trail!)

DIRECTIONS

The Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve is located near the intersection of Porter Hill Road and Rockwell Road in the town of Enfield. From downtown Ithaca, take Route 13 south, then turn onto Route 327 toward Robert H. Treman State Park. After 3.5 miles, turn left onto Hines Road, then take the first right onto Rockwell Road. The parking area for the Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve, prominently marked with a sign, is on the south side of Rockwell Road. Hikers can also reach the preserve from the west via the Finger Lakes Trail, entering from Riemen Woods along Porter Hill Road.

Camping is permitted at the lean-to. There is no reservation system. All users are expected to share the site as needed. Note that water is not available in the preserve; hikers and campers must pack in their own drinking water.

—Mark Chao



MARK CHAO

Our appreciation for gifts in honor of...

Patti and Jules Burgevin FROM Peter Burgevin and Margo Alexander	Holly Gregg "2015 Skaneateles Citizen of the Year" FROM Patty Weisse and George Thomas	Molly McLeod FROM Jeff Katris	Nina Miller Sonya Pancaldo Terry and Enid Probert Sid and Dolores Saltzman Juanita Serang Susan Soboroff Susan Straight David Weinstein and Christina M. Stark Mitch Weiss and Martha Hamilton	Ian Golden and Red Newt Racing FROM Sherry Golden
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Our deepest gratitude for thoughtful gifts in memory of...

Robert Bock FROM Bill and Sherry Alberta Don Barber and Rita Rosenberg Dave and Joanna Bock Greg Bock Carol Dickerson and Lucia Jones Habitat for Humanity of Ontario County, NY The Hagen Family: Abby, AJ, Alex, Emma, Rebecca and Sam Ruth and Roger Hopkins Tom and Shirley Itin Bob and Laurie McCarney Joseffa Meir Tom Reimers Nancy Spero and Robert Sullivan John Wertis	Jim Eyster FROM Stephen and Natalia Emlen	Mary Louise Booth Johnson FROM Mary Elizabeth Iandoli and Todd Miner	Abby Stone FROM Alan Avery Jr. Douglas and Sharon Beattie Irving and Carolyn Beitz Keith Bunker Lisa Cochrane Grace Cole Mike and Barb Crowley Karen Crupi Tom and Emma Edwards Sandra Ewert Stefanie Foster Matthew Frey Tom and Carol Geles Harlan and Gwendolyn George Deborah Guenther Maryann Haigh The Hay Family: Rachel, Patrick, Connor and Abby Stuart and Janis Hempel Holland Teachers Association Kenneth and Rosalie Lyons Patricia Murphy Stephen and Barbara Murphy Dillwyn and Sally Otis James and Mary Jane Packard John and Kathleen Schaefer Elizabeth Shockey Gary Shockey	George and Martha Spinnegan Benjamin Stone Ryan Stotz Alicia Stouffer Jim and Maryanne Sweeney Scott Wilson Arthur and Carol Zimmer
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A CLOSER LOOK

Snowy Owls: Coming to an Airport Near You

*In the winter of 2013-2014, there was a massive southward irruption of Snowy Owls (*Bubo scandiaca*); it was, by some estimates, the largest in a century. Snowies (as the species is affectionately called) breed in the Arctic and normally winter in Canada.*

However, two years ago, the giant raptors showed up in unprecedented numbers from the Midwest to the Carolinas; a few stragglers even made it as far south as Mississippi and Florida and as far out to sea as Bermuda.

The story of this extraordinary event began months earlier and thousands of miles away, with a population explosion of lemmings. Lemmings, which are rodents of approximately the same size and general appearance as hamsters, are a foundational species of the Arctic: they eat the plants of the tundra and everything else eats them. Although Snowy Owls will hunt birds and mammals as small as voles or as large as snow geese, they rely primarily on lemmings to feed themselves and their chicks during the breeding season. Snowy clutch sizes are dependent on food supply: during flush years, mated pairs may lay up to 14 eggs; during times of lemming scarcity, there may be no chicks at all. In the summer of 2013, a superabundance of bite-size rodents seems to have ensured that the clutches were very large and that no chicks starved to death. As the bumper crop of young owls left the nest and struck out on their own, they were forced to move farther and farther south in order to find winter territories to occupy.

The deluge of Snowy Owls was all the more noticeable because they are a highly visible species. Unlike most owls, they are active during the day as well as at night, an adaptation to the high latitudes in which they live; there is, after all, no darkness during the Arctic summer. They have no innate fear of humans and are attracted to open, flat areas with minimal snow depth that resemble their native tundra: fields, wetlands, shorelines. For some reason, they seem to be particularly fond of airports, where they can pose a serious threat to planes.

Even people who pay little attention to birds are likely to notice the arrival of Snowy Owls because their appearance is so striking. With their mostly white plumage (females and immature birds tend to be heavily

barred with brown), round heads, and piercing almond-shaped yellow eyes, they look a bit like very large, earless Persian cats. As with most raptors, females are larger than males, and a large female can be two-and-a-half feet high and have a five-foot wingspan. Although a white bird is difficult for humans to see against the blinding snow, Snowies do not seem to be taking advantage of cryptic coloration. Like all owls, they do not change the color of their plumage from season to season, and their white feathers are highly visible against the arctic summer vegetation. In addition, they only appear white to species like ourselves who cannot see UV radiation; to other animals, they appear dark gray. There are few places for prey to hide on the tundra, anyway, so perhaps their coloration is merely a practical energy-saving strategy, since melanin is energetically expensive to produce.

The future of the Snowy Owl may ultimately depend on the fate of the lemming, which in many places is increasingly uncertain. As the tundra warms because of climate change, the grasses, mosses, and lichens that lemmings eat are replaced by trees and shrubs. The rodents rely on thick, stable layers of snow in which to hide and raise their young, but warmer temperatures often bring less snow, or snow that is wet and icy. As a result of these changes, the lemming populations of Scandinavia and Greenland have dwindled, and Snowy Owls are disappearing in some parts of Europe.

In North America, however, climate change seems to be working in both species' favor, at least for now. Snowy Owl irruptions have become an almost annual event, and we seem to be on track for another one this year. The giant white birds have already begun appearing in large numbers in the

Upper Midwest, and several have been seen in the farm fields of Seneca County and at the Syracuse Hancock International Airport.

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller



The giant white birds have already begun appearing in large numbers in the Upper Midwest, and several have been seen in the farm fields of Seneca County and at the Syracuse Hancock International Airport.

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Winter 2015/16 Calendar

Sunday, April 3, 2:00-4:00pm: *Tree Identification Walk – Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook.* Join Akiva Silver, naturalist, landscaper, and outdoor educator for a walk that will focus on identification, natural history, wildlife value, the role of invasive plants, as well as survival uses of trees and shrubs. The walk will last two hours or more so please come prepared with appropriate clothing and footwear for the weather and terrain. **FROM ITHACA:** follow Rt. 13 south to just past Buttermilk Falls State Park. Turn left on Sandbank Road. At Y intersection bear right on Town Line Road. Park immediately on right side of the road (before the bridge). Sweedler Preserve is to the right, Thayer Preserve to the left.

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

Walks go rain, sun or snow. Please bring snacks and water and wear sturdy shoes. Call the Land Trust at (607) 275-9487 for details or visit www.flit.org/events.

