



The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes region

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Canandaigua Lake—one of four focus areas highlighted in the Land Trust's regional conservation report.

Land Trust Calls for Investment of \$100 Million to Address Threats to Finger Lakes

The Land Trust recently released a report highlighting both the threat of toxic algae and sprawling development on the region's land and water resources and calling for an investment of \$100 million over the next decade to address these threats. The publication, Lakes, Farms, &

Forests Forever, is based on a comprehensive assessment of the region's natural resources coupled with input from 40 non-profit organizations, county and regional planning departments, and government conservation agencies.

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Land Gift Results in New Conservation Area on the Chemung River

In October, the Land Trust gratefully received from Phyllis Kehoe a donation of 43 acres with 1,480 feet of frontage on the Chemung River in the town of Big Flats. The property is across from The Nature Conservancy's Frenchman's Bluff Preserve. Residents of Corning and Elmira have long enjoyed the scenic drive along the Chemung River valley on Route 352, past sweeping farm fields, and steep wooded hillsides. Bald eagles frequently soar along the river as ravens ride the updrafts off

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the hills gently rise
the river flows placidly on—
never the same

—Jack Maze

There is lots of talk these days about investing in our crumbling infrastructure. Throughout our region, it's not hard to find a bridge or roadway that is in need of repair.

Just as we need to invest in our transportation infrastructure, we also need to invest in the “green infrastructure” that helps ensure clean water, locally grown food, and opportunities for outdoor recreation that attract thousands of visitors to our region each year.

The Land Trust’s regional conservation agenda lays out a plan for making the investments in green infrastructure needed to meet these goals. Addressing nutrient runoff into our lakes is at the top of the list. Clearly, we must take action to ensure the future of these 11 lakes that are the centerpiece of our region and the source of drinking water for many.

In addition, we are losing some of our best farmland to sprawling development in places like Canandaigua and the Route 5 & 20 corridor. By purchasing conservation easements on our best farms, we can secure these productive and scenic agricultural lands while allowing farmers to reinvest in their businesses.

At the southern end of our Finger Lakes, we have an incredible chance to create a network of conserved

lands that can provide world class opportunities for outdoor recreation. Ithaca’s Emerald Necklace and emerging greenbelts at the south ends of Canandaigua and Skaneateles Lakes also have the potential to provide recreational options that will draw visitors from afar. Creation of these greenbelts will maintain the inspiring scenery for which our region is known and also help maintain the lakes’ water quality.

While achieving the goals set forth in our Conservation Agenda won’t be easy, the payoff will be great. By investing now, we can retain the qualities that make the Finger Lakes region such a special place and make it even better.



Andrew Zepp,
Executive Director, Finger Lakes Land Trust

Partnership Enhances Wetlands near Seneca Lake

When the Land Trust received a 140-acre wetland as a gift from Enterprise Products Partners, the organization recognized the wetlands’ limited diversity. Specifically, the water levels and the wetlands had been significantly altered by the construction of the adjacent Chemung Canal during the 19th century.

TO enhance the site’s value for wildlife, the Land Trust reached out to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). Through the USFWS’ Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, a water control structure was installed and an existing berm was rehabilitated. Additional support for the project was provided by the conservation group Ducks Unlimited and Cargill, Inc.

The project aims to increase water levels within the wetlands over the course of the year. This will allow muskrat populations to increase, resulting in a reduction in cattail cover (a preferred food of muskrats) and increased habitat diversity.

Gian Dodici of the USFWS says that “the project will benefit many species of birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians and will also provide outstanding wildlife opportunities for the public. The Service was happy to once again work with the Land Trust and other partners to make it happen.”

After a long, dry summer, water levels are now rising within the wetland. If you’d like to take a look, just follow the Catharine Valley Trail south out of Watkins Glen. The site improvements are visible from the trail just south of the village limits. Also keep your eye out for migrating water birds and the occasional mink that frequent this area.

In the future, the Land Trust will transfer this property to



the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation as an addition to the adjacent Queen Catharine Marsh Wildlife Management Area.



Land Trust Calls for Investment of \$100 Million to Address Threats to Finger Lakes *continued from cover*

The report highlights ten priority conservation strategies for the region, emphasizing the need to address both excessive nutrient runoff into the region's lakes and sprawling rural development that threatens farmland, vistas, water quality and recreational resources. "The incidence of toxic algae outbreaks that threaten public drinking water supplies is increasing and is a particular cause for concern," said Wade Sarkis, president of the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association. "Excessive nutrient runoff is a big part of the problem. If we don't address this issue, we risk harming our public drinking water supplies and negatively impacting the region's \$2 billion tourism economy."



Runoff of sediment and nutrients into Owasco Lake

BILL HECHT

"All around Seneca Lake, the threat of sprawling rural development is real," said Marti Macinski, co-owner of Standing Stone Vineyards and a Land Trust board member. "The decisions we make today on what lands to protect, and what lands to develop, will have lasting implications. We must act now if we are going to save our best farmland and beautiful lake views."

The Land Trust recommends launching a new region-wide effort to purchase perpetual stream buffers from farmers and also restore and construct wetlands that can filter runoff before it reaches the lakes. The organization further advocates for resumption of a program to purchase conservation easements within the watershed of Skaneateles Lake—the unfiltered drinking water supply for Syracuse.

To address the rural sprawl threatening to degrade the region's famous scenery, the Land Trust calls for increased funding for New York State's existing farmland protection program, as well as the implementation of a program to identify and conserve the highest quality vistas found along the region's state highways and two state-designated Scenic Byways.

To expand opportunities for outdoor recreation, the report calls for linking existing public lands in four focus areas as well as enhancing public access and interpretation of these areas. Public lands at the south ends of Canandaigua Lake and Skaneateles Lake are priorities, as well as the Emerald Necklace (a greenbelt extending around Ithaca) and a stretch of the Chemung River between Elmira and Corning.

A commitment of both public and private resources is required to address the identified needs of the region. "The region truly stands at a crossroads," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "While this may seem like an extraordinary investment to some people, there will be a greater public cost in the long run if we fail to act now."

With the release of the report, the Land Trust is focusing on reaching out to a variety of partners from the public and private sectors to explore how most effectively to implement the report's ten recommendations. The report, along with additional supporting materials, may be found at www.fllt.org/top10.

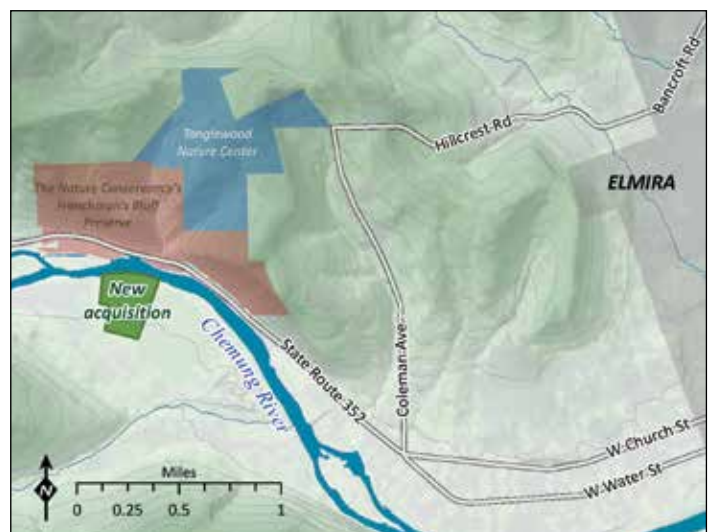
Land Gift Results in New Conservation Area on the Chemung River *continued from cover*

the bluffs, gracing the valley with a sense of simpler times.

The six-mile section of river between Bottcher's Landing in Big Flats and Fitch's Bridge in West Elmira winds its way through this spectacular landscape and has become one of the most popular stretches for paddlers and anglers to visit when water levels allow. In fact, the Land Trust's regional conservation agenda calls for the creation of a world-class assemblage of riverfront parks, conservation lands and protected agricultural lands bordering the Chemung River, recognizing the importance of this area to local residents and local economy.

The Land Trust is working with a variety of partners to achieve this vision. Dedicated parks and conservation lands in this area include property owned by the Town of Big Flats in Chemung County, The Nature Conservancy, and Tanglewood Nature Center. The Friends of the Chemung River Watershed are also actively advocating for conservation of this area as well as enhanced recreational access. "This donation of land will help protect and preserve some of the most beautiful

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Land Trust Receives State Grant Funding to Protect Finger Lakes Farmland

The Land Trust has been awarded \$2.6 million to protect at-risk farmland in the Finger Lakes. Funded through the Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) program, two of the Land Trust's projects were selected for protection through the use of perpetual conservation easements. Grant funds will be used to cover the costs of purchasing development rights, surveying, and associated legal costs.

The Land Trust will permanently protect Brock Acres in the town of Canandaigua, Ontario County. Brock Acres is a 726-acre commodity crop farm which has more than a mile of frontage along Beaver Creek, a primary tributary to the Canandaigua Outlet. Brock Acres is located within 1 mile of Catalpa Farms, a 596-acre crop farm which will also be protected by the Land Trust using FPIG funds. Both farms, totaling 1,392 acres, are located in Canandaigua's proposed "Padelford Brook Greenway," a farmland protection program aimed at reducing commercial and residential development pressure.

The Town of Canandaigua will also contribute \$36,450 toward the protection of Brock Acres. "Farming is vital to our Finger Lakes region and the Canandaigua community," said Canandaigua Town Supervisor Pam Helming. "The Town of Canandaigua has taken proactive steps to foster the continued promotion and protection of agriculture over the past three years, including an Agriculture Enhancement Plan which is currently under review. I applaud area farmers, the Finger Lakes Land Trust, and the Canandaigua Town Board for recognizing and utilizing the Farmland Protection Grant program for the protection of viable agricultural soils for our future generations."

In Cortland and Onondaga counties, Birdsall Farm, a 620-acre beef cattle operation, will also receive permanent protection through the Land Trust. The farm's three 200-acre parcels are located in the towns of Scott and Spafford which both face the threats of subdivision and new home construction. The project is located in a priority protection area for the Land Trust and is adjacent to the Ripley Hill Nature Preserve. The farm also includes scenic frontage on State Route 41 and a 3,000 foot stretch of Grout Brook, a major tributary to Skaneateles Lake.

The Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Program is administered through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Municipalities, counties, soil and water conservation districts and not-for-profit conservation organizations were eligible to apply for individual grants.

The Argetsinger Vineyard on Seneca Lake is one of the farms already protected through New York State's Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Program.



Land Gift Results in New Conservation Area on the Chemung River *continued from page 3*

and undeveloped property along the river,” said Chemung River Friends Executive Director Jim Pfiffer. “It will provide another option for the public to access our waterways and trails to enjoy and learn more about nature and the beautiful environment that is the Chemung River.”

The Kehoe property is nearly laser level flat and was once slated for a residential development including more than 30 homes. “I always wanted to leave the land alone,” Phyllis Kehoe said as she signed the papers granting the property to the Land Trust. Now, because of Phyllis’ generosity and her commitment to environmental protection, her property will live on as a nature preserve with a small parking area and trails to accommodate visitors seeking a quiet walk in the woods and stunning views of Frenchman’s Bluff. Historically, deer have been hunted on the property, and the Land Trust intends to continue this tradition by allowing limited, permit-based deer hunting in the future.

The Kehoe Nature Preserve joins more than 2,000 acres already protected by the Land Trust in the Chemung River watershed, which extends north of Bath and south to Waverly where the Chemung flows into the Susquehanna River. Properties protected and owned by the Land Trust include the Houghton Land Preserve in

Enjoy a short scenic movie featuring the Chemung River between Corning and Elmira, including our new Kehoe Nature Preserve, Steege Hill Nature Preserve, and other conserved land: visit fltt.org/kehoe.

Corning, Steege Hill and Plymouth Woods Nature Preserves in Big Flats, and the Parker Nature Preserve in Bath. The Land Trust also protects six other properties in the watershed, all of which are subject to conservation easements and remain in private ownership.

A fundraising campaign is underway to support stewardship of the Kehoe Nature Preserve. Please contact Kelly Makosch at (607) 275-9487 or kellymakosch@fltt.org if you would like to make a gift toward this project or would like to learn more. If you would like to volunteer to help steward the property, please contact Jason Gorman at (607) 275-9487 or jasongorman@fltt.org.

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney John Alexander of the law firm Sayles and Evans in Elmira, NY for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.

Canandaigua Lake Watershed and Finger Lakes Trail Benefit from Conservation Easement

NIGEL KENT

In 2008, the Land Trust accepted a conservation easement donation that protects 46 acres on West Hollow Road in the town of South Bristol, Ontario County. Eight years later, the Land Trust has received a second conservation easement donation along the same road.

Gladys Gifford and Alvin Schuster recently protected 41 acres in the picturesque Bristol Hills on the west side of Canandaigua Lake through a conservation easement with the Land Trust.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement that sets limits on property development while allowing the land to remain in private ownership and on the tax rolls. The easement can be tailored to meet the specific needs of landowners, who may also be eligible for significant tax benefits. Furthermore, the agreement applies to all future owners of the property, protecting the land in perpetuity.

Although the couple lives in Buffalo, Gladys grew up in Ontario County, “just a few hills over from Canandaigua,” as she put it.

Gladys and Alvin are longtime members of the Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC). In the mid-1990s, the couple was looking for some property out in the country with trail access, and they came across a property listing in the FLTC newsletter that included more than a half-mile of the Bristol Hills Spur of the Finger Lakes Trail. “We went to look at the property and fell in love with it immediately,” said Gladys. They bought the property in 1998.

Now retired, the couple uses the parcel as a summer retreat. There is no house on the property; just a small shed and a concrete pad near the road. Gladys and Alvin have an RV that they use as their summer home.

The rest of the property consists of undeveloped and widely varied terrain, including open meadows that were once farmland and a healthy hardwood forest that includes shagbark hickory, ash, and black cherry. The property also features a pond and several acres of associated wetlands. Protecting wetlands within the Canandaigua Lake watershed is critical to maintaining water quality in the lake, which is the source of drinking water for approximately 70,000 people.

For Gladys and Alvin, the conservation easement is driven by their desire to protect the land for wildlife. “The land has given us much pleasure over the years, and we’ve come to appreciate it as a place for wildlife to flourish,” Gladys said. “We are delighted that the Land Trust will help maintain our commitment to protect this land.”

The property is near a number of other conservation lands in the Bristol Hills area, including Ontario County’s Gannett Hill Park, the Cutler Boy Scout camp, and the Cumming Nature Center. In addition, the Land Trust’s Wesley Hill Nature Preserve lies several miles to the north.

—Jeff Tonole

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Katie Henderson of the law office of Donald A. Schneider in Penn Yan, NY for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.

SCENES

from Around Our Region...



1st place

Joel Cisne

*Two runners in the Finger
Lakes National Forest*



2nd place

Nicole Macpherson

Canadice Lake

Photo Contest Winners

The Land Trust's "People in Nature" summer photo contest received a lot of fantastic entries! The contest, aimed at collecting photos that the Land Trust will use to advance conservation in the Finger Lakes, was announced through social media and our e-newsletter, *The Living Land*. Stay tuned for future photo contest announcements! Here are the winners...



3rd place

Brian Maley
Danby State Forest



Volunteers from the Learning Web in Ithaca at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County



Autumn at Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby, Tompkins County

Happy 10th Anniversary, Emerald Necklace!

Ten years ago, the Finger Lakes Land Trust embarked on an ambitious journey to link 50,000 acres of existing public land extending from the Finger Lakes National Forest in the west to Hammond Hill and Yellow Barn State Forests in the east. Known as the Emerald Necklace, the project will, as the name implies, string together a network of protected green space in an arc south of Cayuga Lake.

The network of forested lands in the Emerald Necklace are comprised of six state forests, two state parks, a state wildlife management area, a national forest, eleven Land Trust preserves and six Cornell Botanic Gardens' Natural Areas. Using a variety of conservation tools and partnerships, including land purchases and conservation easements, land conservation within the Emerald Necklace protects our water, wildlife and recreational opportunities.

to protect an unbroken chain of forest. One example of what this looks like can be found at the Roy H. Park Preserve. This 241-acre preserve was the first project in the Emerald Necklace to link two state forests, Hammond Hill and Yellow Barn. More than one mile of Six Mile Creek, the drinking water source for the City of Ithaca, flows through the preserve. The preserve protects upland forests and wetland along the stream corridor, and is also home to beavers, herons, spotted

salamanders, and wood frogs.

Together with the two state forests, the Roy H. Park Preserve also borders Cornell Botanic Gardens' Old 600 Natural Area, making the preserve a prime example of the connectivity the Emerald Necklace project seeks to create. The preserve also highlights the long-term strategy and investment needed for a project like the Emerald Necklace to succeed. The Land Trust acquired the first 80 acres of the land for the preserve in 2007, gradually adding properties over the course of the next seven years until the preserve reached its current size in 2014.

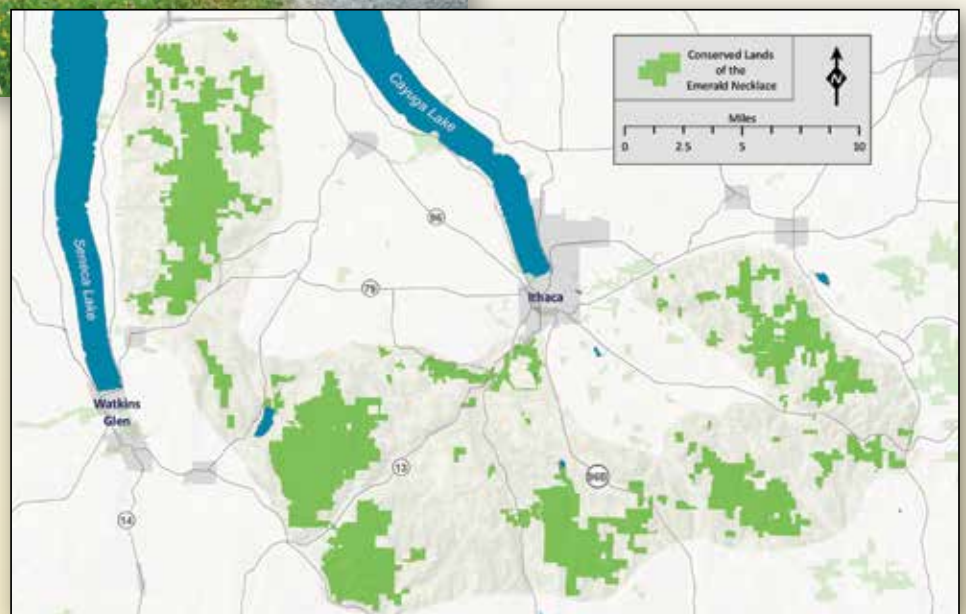
"We've had tremendous success in the past 10 years but our work in the Emerald Necklace is far from over," said Andy Zepp, executive director of the Land Trust. "I look forward to the day when anyone can hike the 100 miles of the Finger Lakes Trail that traverses this area and know that they're walking on conserved land."

As the Emerald Necklace celebrates its 10th birthday, we celebrate all that we've done already and look forward to furthering conservation of this regional gem for the next ten years and beyond. For additional information about the Emerald Necklace, visit fllt.org/emeraldnecklace.
—Alli Sribarra



Projects like the Emerald Necklace become increasingly important as the region faces growing pressure from development, a pressure that will only be compounded by new challenges such as climate change. The intact ecosystems and connected open areas of the Emerald Necklace make it easier for both humans and wildlife to adapt to our changing environment and this is just one reason the Emerald Necklace is highlighted as a conservation priority in New York's Open Space Plan.

Since 2006, the Finger Lakes Land Trust and our partners have added 3,000 acres of protected land to the Emerald Necklace, bringing us closer to our goal



Partnership Advances Land Protection in Canandaigua Lake Watershed

The Land Trust acquired 86 forested acres on Parrish Hill Road in the town of Italy, Yates County, from the estate of Martha Parker, a well-known community member. The property has long been identified as a priority for protection because of its proximity to High Tor Wildlife Management Area.

Once farmed, the property is now entirely forested and includes considerable frontage on both sides of Parrish Hill Road. It is located within an Audubon-designated Important Bird Area and encompasses steeply sloping hillsides with several ravines above the West River Valley.

Acquiring the land will expand recreational opportunities for the public, as the property will ultimately be conveyed to New York State as an addition to High Tor Wildlife Management Area. The High Tor WMA consists of approximately 6,100 acres in Ontario and Yates Counties, a portion of which borders the south end of Canandaigua Lake.

“Here is a great example of how varied sources are working to protect our Finger Lakes,” said Land Trust board member Bob Brancato. “This acquisition will not only expand the wildlife area but will also help protect water quality by keeping development off steep, sensitive slopes. It coincides with the hard work the Towns of Middlesex and Naples have been doing to better manage proposed steep slope development in their areas that include parts of the High Tor area. Working together on projects like these can positively impact the quality of Canandaigua Lake now and into the future.”

Earlier this year, the Land Trust conveyed two separate parcels—143

acres in total—to New York State as additions to High Tor Wildlife Management Area, including the northern half of Conklin Gully. The Land Trust has protected over a dozen parcels in this area and also owns and manages the Great Hill and West River Nature Preserves.

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorneys Don Snyder and Sara Pellerin of the law firm Harter, Secrest, and Emery LLP in Rochester, NY for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.

Located in the center of this photo, the Parker Trust property features mature forest adjacent to High Tor Wildlife Management Area.



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and Robert**
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FROM
Benjamin Stone



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NIGEL KENT

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To learn more, please call Kelly Makosch at the
Land Trust office at (607) 275-9487.

A CLOSER LOOK

Black Bear Hibernation: Bearing the Cold of Winter

All through the spring and summer, black bears (Ursus americanus) have been eating everything they can find, up to 20,000 calories a day in the form of plants and grasses, berries, acorns, insects, honey, and even birdseed and garbage.

When the weather grows cold and the food supply finally dries up, they will retreat to their winter dens. Males bed down around mid-December and emerge in mid-March; females, which give birth during the winter and stay with their cubs for two years, remain in their dens longer, from late November to mid-April.

There is some debate about whether or not bears truly hibernate; some scientists prefer to describe their winter sleep as “lethargy” or “torpor.” The bodies of so-called “true” or “deep” hibernators such as rodents or bats drop to near-ambient temperatures and their metabolic rates plummet to almost nothing within a few hours. Some species, such as the chipmunk, periodically wake up to eat and pass waste; others, like the bat, tough it out the whole winter without any sustenance at all. In comparison, the bear sleeps only lightly. Its body temperature drops slightly and its metabolism slows, but it will wake if it is disturbed or if the weather turns unusually warm. This light sleep is likely a survival mechanism, as bear dens can be in surprisingly exposed locations: scratched into hillsides, in rock crevices or hollow trees, under brush piles or downed trees, or even in open areas of the forest floor. Sleeping bears seem to be able to sense the presence of intruders, and they are able to wake up very quickly in order to defend themselves: midwinter explorers, take care.

Unlike many “true” hibernators, the bear does not eat or drink anything for months on end, and it does not urinate or defecate. If we were to do this, even if we could survive without food, our muscles would atrophy and our bones would become porous and brittle (osteoporotic). Remarkably, although a bear may lose fifteen to thirty percent of its body mass over

the course of a long winter, it may actually have more muscle mass at the end of the winter than it did at the beginning, and its bones will retain all of their strength. The bear’s body is able to use the nitrogen in urea, a byproduct of fat metabolism, to synthesize proteins that it then uses to maintain muscle and organ mass. In addition, it recycles its own water all winter, thereby avoiding dehydration and kidney failure. When a bear metabolizes fat during hibernation, its blood cholesterol levels double, but it does not seem to experience the ill effects that a human would suffer from sky-high blood cholesterol levels (atherosclerosis, gallstones). Perhaps the only downside to this perfectly self-contained system is the fact that the bear’s intestines continue

to produce feces all winter long and it must seek out plants with laxative effects in the spring.

Bears mate during the summer, but the fertilized embryo does not implant in the female’s uterus until after she has denned, and then only if she has sufficient fat stores. Six to eight weeks later, in midwinter, she gives birth to one to three cubs. No other northern animal gives birth at such a hostile time of year, and few mammalian species have young that are so tiny in comparison with the adults—from whence the old belief that bear cubs are born dead and must be licked into shape and life by their mothers. The mother dozes off and on for the rest of the winter as her cubs feed, grow fat, and wait for spring. —Jacqueline Stuhmiller



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SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 9:30am, Wildlife Tracking and Signs—Roy H. Park Preserve, north entrance, town of Dryden. With over 20 years of experience in environmental education, tracker and naturalist Linda Spielman will lead a trip to discover what's been visiting this preserve. This trip will focus on interpreting animal behavior by identifying various tracks and other signs. **DIRECTIONS:** From Ithaca, take Rt. 13 North towards Dryden. Go approx. 12 miles and turn right on Irish Settlement Rd. Continue on Irish Settlement approx. 4 miles to find the NORTH parking area—where the boardwalk is—on the left (approx. 0.5 mile after Hammond Hill Rd).

SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 2:00-4:00pm: Tree Identification Walk with Akiva Silver—Stevenson Forest Preserve, town of Enfield. Join Akiva Silver of Twisted Tree Farm 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. **DIRECTIONS:** From Ithaca, take Route 13 South to Route 327. Turn right onto Route 327 (Enfield Falls Road) and go 4 1/2 miles to Trumbull Corners Road. Turn left and go approximately 1/2 mile to preserve parking area on the right side of the road.

Except in the event of extreme weather, walks go rain, sun or snow. Please check our Facebook page or our web site for updates at www.fllt.org/events.

