



# The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

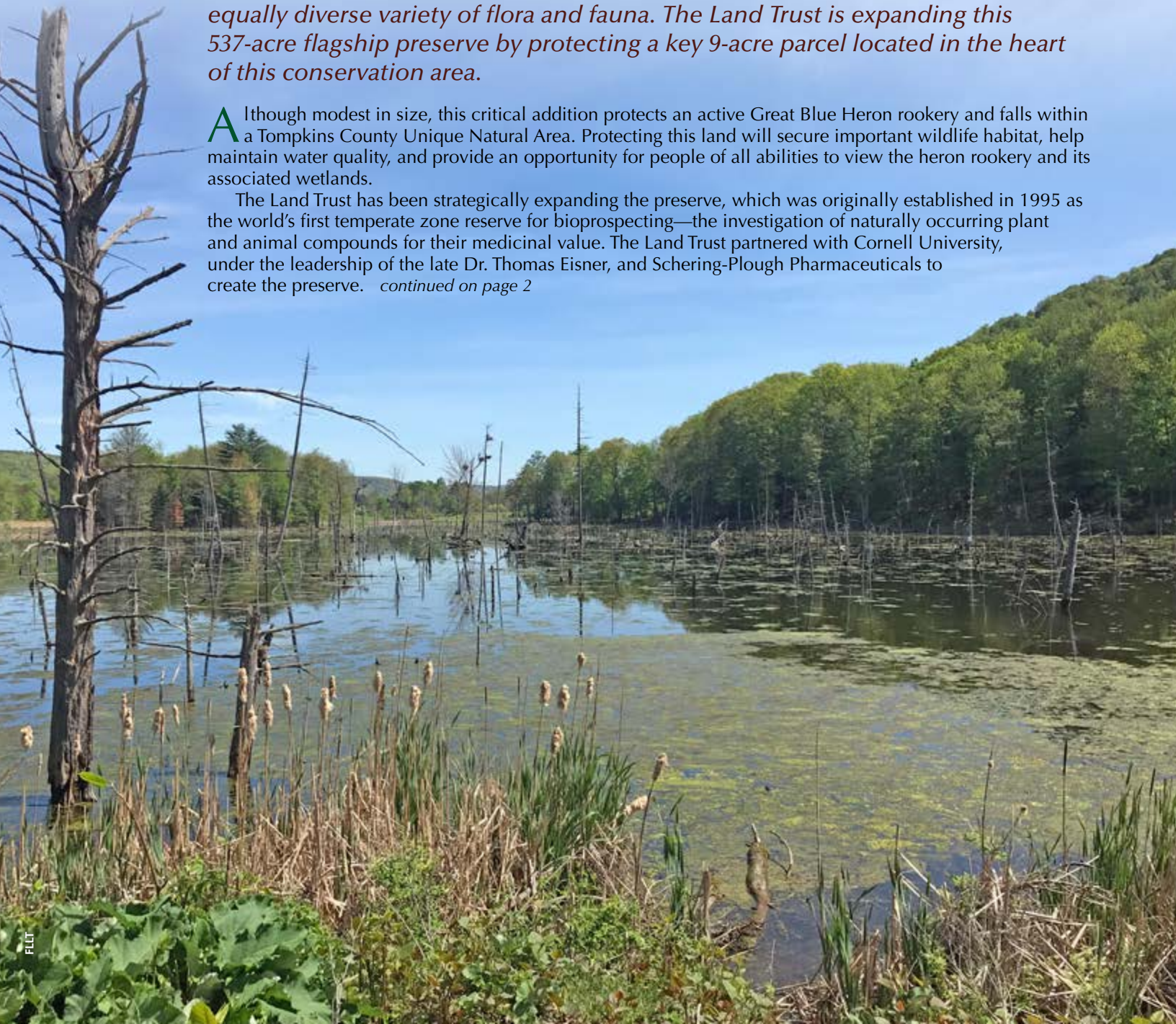
working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes region Vol. 30, No. 3 • Summer 2018

## Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve Expands with New Addition

*Glacier-carved kettle ponds, forests, meadows, and wetlands define the exceptional Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby, home to an equally diverse variety of flora and fauna. The Land Trust is expanding this 537-acre flagship preserve by protecting a key 9-acre parcel located in the heart of this conservation area.*

**A**lthough modest in size, this critical addition protects an active Great Blue Heron rookery and falls within a Tompkins County Unique Natural Area. Protecting this land will secure important wildlife habitat, help maintain water quality, and provide an opportunity for people of all abilities to view the heron rookery and its associated wetlands.

The Land Trust has been strategically expanding the preserve, which was originally established in 1995 as the world's first temperate zone reserve for bioprospecting—the investigation of naturally occurring plant and animal compounds for their medicinal value. The Land Trust partnered with Cornell University, under the leadership of the late Dr. Thomas Eisner, and Schering-Plough Pharmaceuticals to create the preserve. *continued on page 2*





*You won't forget your first encounter with a Sandhill Crane. Standing up to four feet tall and topped by a cap of red feathers, this bird of wetlands and fields makes quite an impression. Conservationist Aldo Leopold referred to the crane as "the symbol of our untamable past."*

Until recently, cranes were virtually unheard of in our region, but starting with a few pioneering pairs at the Montezuma Wetlands, their numbers have been gradually increasing. In July, a pair was spotted foraging at the Land Trust's West River Preserve near the south end of Canandaigua Lake.

The birds were seen in meadows previously covered with a mess of wire, posts, and invasive trees and shrubs. Thanks to a generous donation of the land by Constellation Brands, and the Land Trust's subsequent partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, more than 60 acres of grassland habitat now grace this site.

Located in close proximity to extensive wetlands along the West River, these grasslands also provide habitat for other "at risk" wildlife such as the Northern Harrier—a raptor that has been spotted in the same area hunting for mice and voles.

Through land protection and subsequent restoration and management, the Land Trust is providing valuable wildlife habitat across our region. In some areas,



we're restoring and maintaining grasslands and shrub lands. In others, we're working with partners to create wetlands and vernal pools that also help filter runoff to our lakes.

Successful conservation work takes time and patience. At West River, the cranes provide evidence that our efforts are paying off.

So, as you travel throughout the region, keep an eye out for

this welcome addition to our neighborhood!

Andrew Zepp,  
Executive Director,  
Finger Lakes Land Trust

## Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve Expands with New Addition *continued from cover*

This acquisition represents the Land Trust's 13th addition to Lindsay-Parsons. Initially only 36 acres, the preserve has gradually expanded with acquisitions of neighboring properties, including fields to the south and major additions to the preserve's mature woodlands. It now spans the floodplain and steep slopes of the Cayuga Inlet valley, extending nearly to the peaks known as Thatcher's Pinnacles in Danby State Forest.

With more than 3.5 miles of trails, Lindsay-Parsons is open to the public year-round for hiking, skiing, birding and quiet recreation. It is located within

a network of conserved lands known as the Emerald Necklace. The Emerald Necklace is an ambitious effort to link 50,000 acres of existing public open space that extends in an arc around Ithaca—from Finger Lakes National Forest in the west to Hammond Hill and Robinson Hollow State Forests in the east. These lands host 78 miles of the Finger Lakes Trail, two Audubon-designated Important Bird Areas, and several dozen Tompkins County-designated Unique Natural Areas. The Emerald Necklace is also recognized as a priority project within New York State's Open Space Plan.

To make a gift in support of this project, please contact Director of Development and Communications Kelly Makosch at (607) 275-9487 or [kellymakosch@fltl.org](mailto:kellymakosch@fltl.org).

*The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Nathan Cook, of Counsel to Miller Mayer, LLP in Ithaca, NY for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.*



# West Hill Wildway Expands Through Public-Private Partnership

*Through a partnership with the Town of Ithaca, the Land Trust recently protected 38 acres within the West Hill Wildway—an emerging greenbelt located within walking distance of downtown Ithaca that extends from the west end of Robert Treman State Park to Bundy Road.*

**I**N 2017, the Land Trust purchased the property, previously part of a farm owned by the Babcock family. Since the town already owned conservation lands directly across the road, they were an ideal partner to work with. The 38-acre parcel connects town conservation lands with Cornell Botanic Gardens' Coy Glen Natural Area, creating a protected corridor that safeguards water quality within the Cayuga Lake watershed, provides additional recreation opportunities, and contributes to uninterrupted wildlife habitat.

Situated between Bostwick Road and the east side of Culver Road, the Town of Ithaca already owns and manages three existing preserves here that total 82 acres: Marcia's Woods Preserve, Gerda Knechtman's Glen

Preserve, and Dress Woods Preserve.

An adjacent 35-acre parcel was part of the Land Trust's original land purchase from the Babcocks in 2017, and the Land Trust is again working with the town to determine the best strategies for conserving this additional parcel. This partnership highlights the importance of working together and using multiple tools to achieve conservation goals. In this case, the result is another link in a green corridor important for recreation, wildlife, and water quality protection.

"We're grateful for the town's commitment to conservation and we look forward to additional partnership projects in the future," said Andrew Zepp, Land Trust Executive Director.

In addition to town conservation lands, the West Hill Wildway includes

the YMCA's environmental education facility on State Route 79, Land Trust conservation easements on Sheffield Farm, and portions of EcoVillage. The Land Trust has already worked with partners to conserve approximately 600 acres in the West Hill Wildway and is pleased to add this property as another link in the growing network of conserved lands on Ithaca's West Hill.

—Alli Sribarra

*The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Mark Venuti of the law firm Heaton & Venuti in Geneva, NY for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.*

*View of the Cayuga Inlet valley from the Babcock property*



# Land Gift Helps Protect Ithaca's Drinking Water

*The Land Trust received a donation of 167 acres, nearly all of which is located within the watershed of Six Mile Creek—the source of Ithaca's drinking water supply. The property is entirely forested and is located within the towns of Dryden and Caroline, between Ellis Hollow and Midline Roads.*

The property does not include road frontage and is accessed by a legal right-of-way. The Land Trust intends to conserve the property by selling to a private individual subject to a perpetual conservation easement. Future subdivision of the land will be prohibited and timber harvest will only be allowed under guidelines that demonstrate how water quality will be maintained.

This land donation was made in memory of Helen Edwards, who had deep connections to Ithaca and a long professional history at Cornell University. It was her intention to donate the land before she died prematurely from cancer. The Land Trust received assistance from The Nature Conservancy ([www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org))—a conservation organization working locally and around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people—to complete the transaction.

As development pressures in the Finger Lakes region increase, the Land Trust is working to counter threats to water quality by buffering our streams. Protection of undeveloped lands allows for absorption of storm water and its gradual release into streams such as Six Mile Creek. Large, intact forested parcels also help minimize erosion and runoff through their extensive root systems which help bind soil together.

The City of Ithaca has committed to sourcing its drinking water from Six Mile Creek. In 2015, the City initiated a \$35 million dollar project to rebuild the 112-year-old drinking water treatment facility, refurbish the drinking water supply line, upgrade facilities at the dam and intake structure, and dredge the reservoir and siltation pond upstream of the reservoir. Maintaining high quality water in Six Mile Creek is a priority.

"The most effective way to ensure continued high quality water for habitat and for human consumption is to protect the source," said Michael Thorne, Superintendent of Public Works for the City of Ithaca. "Easements like this provide that protection and safeguard our water resource for future generations."

This is the Land Trust's 26th protection project within the Six Mile Creek watershed. In addition to conservation easements on private lands, the organization owns the Roy H. Park and Peter M. Rinaldo Nature Preserves—both of which border Six Mile Creek.

*The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Peter Miller of Ithaca, NY, for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.*

*Acquisition of the property protects the water quality of Six Mile Creek, the source of Ithaca's drinking water.*

DAN ELSWIT



# Partnership with Cornell University Combats Threats to Hemlock Trees

*The Land Trust is partnering with Cornell University to combat the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) as part of the New York State Hemlock Initiative (NYSHI). NYSHI integrates state-wide research, management, and outreach to conserve New York's hemlocks.*

The HWA is an invasive pest from Japan that is killing the eastern hemlock trees found in our forests and gorges. In response, the Land Trust and NYSHI created a partnership to establish biocontrol populations—both *Laricobius* beetles and *Leucopis* silver flies—on several nature preserves. This year, NYSHI released silver flies on hemlock trees at the Land Trust's Ellis Hollow and Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity preserves.

The flies are released into fine mesh bags and placed on one localized hemlock branch where they will lay their eggs. When the fly eggs hatch, the larvae will eat HWA eggs, thus reducing the population of hatching HWA in the late spring and early summer.

"Ecologically speaking, hemlocks are a foundation species, providing the habitat upon which a number of species depend for survival," said Cornell University forest entomologist Mark Whitmore. "They provide winter cover for mammals, shelter migrating birds, and their shade maintains cool water in streams necessary for breeding native brook trout. Hemlocks are an irreplaceable part of the eastern forests and so common we take them for granted. It's hard to imagine that they might disappear, but we have learned hard lessons from the hemlocks' destruction in the southern U.S. and are working hard to implement the long term solution."

In 2013, Mark Whitmore released the *Laricobius* beetle onto hemlock trees at the Land Trust's VanRiper Conservation Area on the west side of Cayuga Lake in the town of Romulus. Hemlocks on the shoreline and in a



*A fine mesh bug bag is placed over an infested hemlock branch so that the released flies stay on that branch to mate and lay eggs. Once the larvae hatch, they feed on the HWA.*



*HWA appear as white, cotton-like sacs at the base of needles along hemlock twigs.*

large gorge located across Route 89 were heavily affected by the HWA. The Land Trust continues to monitor hemlock tree health on its nature preserves in the Finger Lakes region. Any findings of the hemlock woolly adelgid on

Land Trust preserves should be reported to nature preserve manager Jason Gorman by calling (607) 275-9487. They appear as white, cotton-like sacs at the base of needles along hemlock twigs.

The Land Trust is also treating select stands of hemlocks on its nature

preserves with a pesticide applied directly to the trunk of each tree. The pesticide is absorbed through the hemlocks' vascular system, preventing accidental contact with other plants. This treatment lasts from five to seven years and is sustaining the future of hemlock trees in the face of the HWA onslaught.

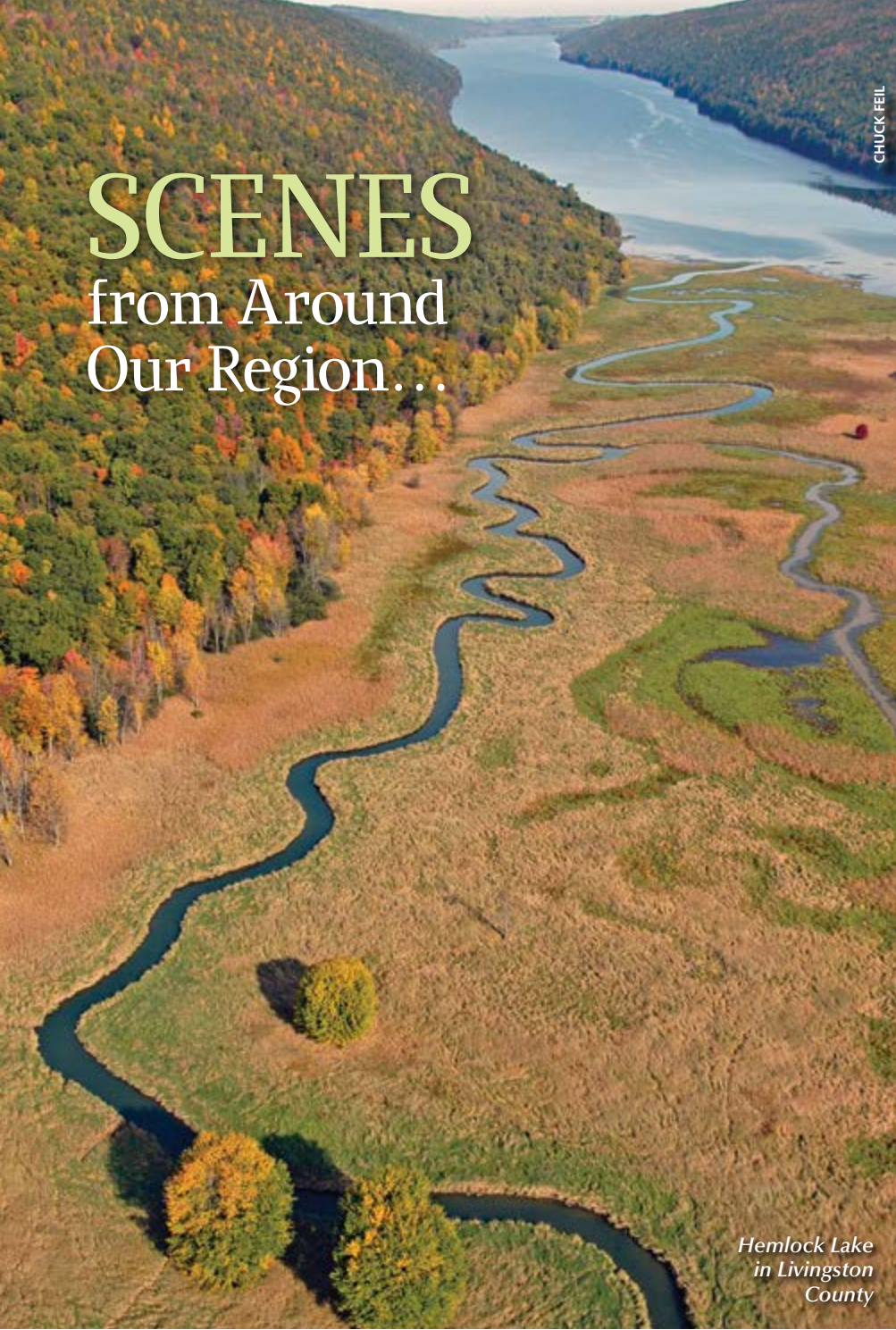
Landowners are especially important in efforts to slow and contain the spread of HWA which reached the Finger Lakes in 2008. In New York, 76% of the forest is privately owned so it is crucial that forest owners know about the threat of HWA and report any findings. More on HWA, including public training sessions, identification guides, and management information can be found at [www.nyschemlockinitiative.info](http://www.nyschemlockinitiative.info).



# SCENES

from Around  
Our Region...

CHUCK FEIL



*Hemlock Lake  
in Livingston  
County*



THOMAS HOEBBEL/WWW.TH-PHOTO.COM



FLIT



*The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
has been assisting the Land Trust with the  
removal of invasive buckthorn in preparation for a new  
conservation area on Owasco Lake in Niles, Cayuga County.*

BILL HECHT





*Volunteer Mark Chao holding an Io moth (Automeris io) at the Roy H. Park Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County during Moth Night, a Talks & Treks event.*



FLIT

*Trailblazers relaxing at the Houghton Land Preserve in Corning, Steuben County, after "First Fridays in the Field" volunteer activities.*



*Wetlands at the Dorothy McIlroy Bird Sanctuary in Summerhill, Cayuga County*



CHRIS RAY

*Great Blue Herons at the new addition to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby, Tompkins County*



## State Grants Provide Support for Development of Regional Conservation and Trail Projects

*The Land Trust was awarded \$62,000 in grant funding through the New York State Conservation Partnership Program. The program is funded through the State's Environmental Protection Fund and administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).*

A total of \$2.3 million in Conservation Partnership Program grants were awarded to 51 nonprofit land trusts across New York. "Land conservation is an essential tool that provides immeasurable environmental and economic benefits for New Yorkers and visitors alike," said DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos. "Thanks to Governor Cuomo's leadership, financial support from the Environmental Protection Fund, and the hard work of New York's land trusts, the Conservation Partnership Program continues to improve our quality of life while

protecting valuable natural resources and state lands."

The Land Trust was awarded \$40,000 to support strategic planning of a region-wide land protection campaign. The organization is increasing its efforts to protect land and water across the region. The proposed campaign will include funds for conservation as well as educational programs.

An additional \$22,000 was granted to the Land Trust to invest in public

access improvements at its popular Sweedler and Thayer Preserves along Lick Brook Gorge. The preserves experience

**An additional \$22,000 was granted to the Land Trust to invest in public access improvements at its popular Sweedler and Thayer Preserves along Lick Brook Gorge.**

a high volume of visitors and host a trail connecting to Robert H. Treman and Buttermilk Falls State Parks. Funds were awarded to increase the trail's stability and safety and to improve visitor experience. Grant funding for this project was also provided by the Fields Pond Foundation, the Legacy Foundation, the Howland Foundation as administered by the Community Foundation of Tompkins County, and the Tompkins County Tourism Grant Program.

"We're grateful for the continued support of the New York State Conservation Partnership Program," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "The program is really having a positive impact on the Finger Lakes region."



# PRESERVE PROFILE: Otisco Lake Preserve

*With over 1,300 feet of wild shoreline on the west side of Otisco Lake, this new preserve is the Land Trust's first in the watershed.*

## Natural History

Several cascading streams flow through the 38-acre preserve and into the lake below. A hiking trail passes through mature forest and descends steeply to the water's edge. Along the lake's shore, visitors will find a flat point flanked by rugged shale cliffs. Small fossils can be seen here in the surrounding streambeds and cliffs. Concretions, curious round rocks formed from minerals, can also be found embedded in and eroded from the shale.

This preserve provides prime habitat for Bald Eagles and a variety of water birds. Ruffed Grouse are also frequent visitors to the hillsides. Conserving this land protects Otisco's water quality, scenic character, and offers an important outdoor recreational opportunity with rare public access to the lake.



## History

The land that now forms the Otisco Lake Preserve was formerly owned by the Stopyro family, whose grandfather farmed the property as far back as the 1920s. The Land Trust was able to acquire the site in 2015 due to a generous gift from an anonymous donor and broad support from the community. Since then, a half-mile hiking trail with stairs leading to the shore, a parking area, and an interpretive kiosk have been provided for public access to the site.

## Information for Visitors

- Check the Land Trust's web site at [fllt.org](http://fllt.org) before visiting, as this preserve may close seasonally to protect nesting raptors.
- Be prepared for a steep climb up from the lake with a 400 foot elevation gain.

## Directions

From Skaneateles, turn east onto U.S. Route 20 and follow for approx. half a mile to turn right onto New York State Route 41 south. Take Route 41 for 5.5 miles and turn left onto Eibert Road/New York State Route 174 east, in the hamlet of Borodino. After 2 miles, turn right onto Willowdale Road. Continue south on Willowdale Road for approx. 3 miles to the preserve entrance on your left.

*A fundraising campaign is ongoing; to make a donation in support of the preserve, go to [fllt.org/donate](http://fllt.org/donate) and type OTISCO PRESERVE in the comments section.*

*View of Otisco Lake as seen from the trail*



Our appreciation for gifts  
in honor of...

**Aurora and Logan**  
FROM  
*Sandy Wold*

**Dave Birchenough**  
FROM  
*Gary and Bonnie  
Grossman*

**Beth Campbell**  
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*Linda Minde*

**Mark Chao and  
Spring Bird Quest**  
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*James Morin and  
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**Kenn Marash and  
Holley Russell**  
FROM  
*Ralph Marash and  
Carlo Villorente*

**Deb Sadler  
(and her heron and turtle)**  
FROM  
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*Margaret Eaton*

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Our deepest gratitude for thoughtful gifts  
in memory of...

**Helen Chamberlain**  
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Did you know you can save lands and waters during  
your lifetime with a gift from your IRA?

**I**f you are 70 1/2 or older, you can make direct distributions of up to \$100,000 per year from your IRA to the Finger Lakes Land Trust. These distributions can be counted towards your Required Minimum Distribution, and you won't need to include the distribution as part of your taxable income. A direct distribution to the Land Trust can result in lower

taxable income and may allow you to remain in a lower marginal tax bracket.

Please consult your tax advisor to learn more about how both *you and the Land Trust can benefit from gifts of assets during your lifetime.*

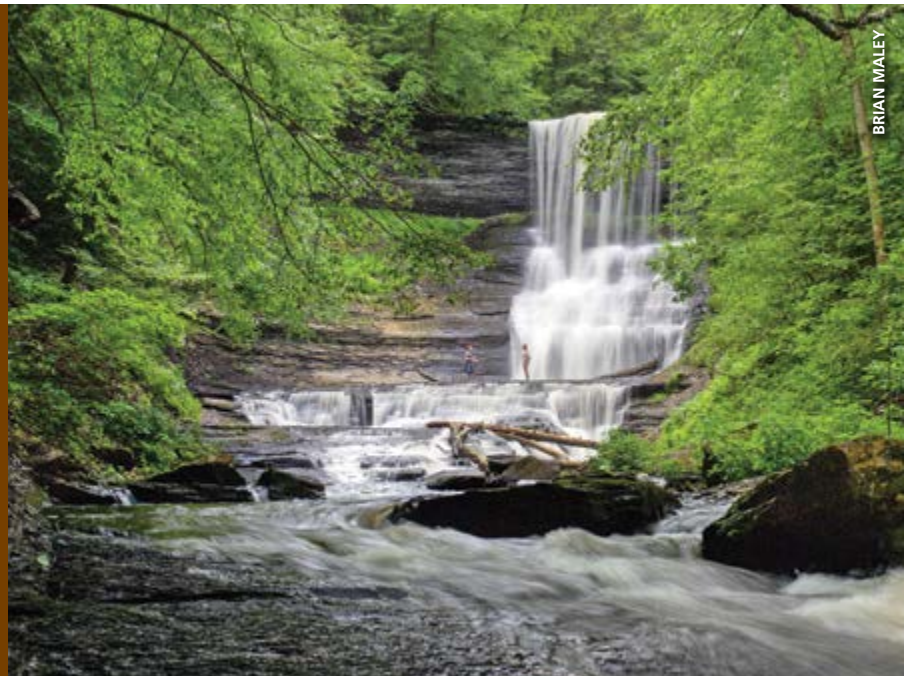
To learn more, contact Kelly Makosch at the Land Trust office at (607)275-9487

NIGEL KENT

Send Us Your Best Photos

The Finger Lakes Land Trust will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2019—marking 3 decades of collective effort to save lands and waters. The celebration begins now with our 30th anniversary photo contest. In addition to great prizes, the winning photos will be featured in a printed book and on the FLLT's social media as it promotes conservation and recreation across the Finger Lakes. Categories include: Nature and People, Wildlife, Landscape, Young Photographer, and Mobile. All submissions must be taken on FLLT protected lands (fllt.org/map).

Visit [fllt.org/contest](http://fllt.org/contest) for details!



BRIAN MALEY



## The Life History of the Luna Moth

*We can thank Linnaeus for the name of the luna moth, *Actias luna*, an apt epithet for this, perhaps the most beautiful of our nocturnal insects. It seems likely that Linnaeus recalled the Roman moon goddess Luna in 1758 because of the moth's distinctive hindwing spots—translucent discs with a dark crescent edge, like the moon when it's nearly full. Perhaps he also realized that the entire moth is a living avatar of the moon—at rest by day, on the move by night, exquisitely pale, subtle yet spectacular.*

Luna moths are among the largest moth species in North America, with a wingspan of 3 to 4 inches. They are common in deciduous forests from Saskatchewan to Texas, and from Nova Scotia to Florida. Scientists believe that populations of luna moths throughout their range have adapted to prefer particular local hardwood trees as host plants, including birch, hickory, beech, willow, and cherry.

The larvae have five molt stages, or instars, culminating in the formation of a pupa encased in a papery cocoon and wrapped in leaves. After about three weeks, their metamorphosis now complete, adult luna moths cut their way out using serrated spurs near the base of the front edge of their wings. They typically emerge in the morning, leaving time to spread and dry their wings before their first night of flight.

Adult luna moths do not eat at all, and therefore have only vestigial mouthparts and no digestive system. Their sole purpose in life is to reproduce. They have only about a week to do so before they die.

The females emit a sex pheromone, which the males can detect even at a great distance with their broad, feathery antennae. They usually mate after midnight. The females begin laying eggs by the following night, continuing for several nights more. The eggs hatch after another week, and the cycle begins anew.

In the northern parts of their range, including our Finger Lakes region, luna moths typically breed once per year in June. In the south, luna moths breed up to three times a year. For the year's last generation, the shorter duration of sunlight late in the season causes the pupa to enter diapause, a state of suspended development. Late-forming pupae fall to the ground in autumn with the leaves that encase them, and then spend the winter waiting in the leaf litter on the ground until the longer days of spring signal that it's time to emerge.

Luna moths, especially large larvae and adults, are high-value targets for insectivores. Therefore, luna moths have evolved remarkable adaptations to foil predators.

The caterpillars are light green, matching the color of the leaves they feed on. But when they sense a predator about to strike, the caterpillars abandon attempts at concealment. Instead, they rear up their heads, possibly to confuse the predator, sometimes making a clicking sound with their mandibles, followed by regurgitation of foul-tasting liquid.

Luna moths likewise rely on visual camouflage as adults. Their green wings blend right in among any cluster of broad leaves. Furthermore, the forewings have reddish-brown leading edges that branch to teardrop-shaped spots, looking just like twigs with little emergent buds. Therefore, people rarely find luna moths in their natural habitats, instead encountering them most often near buildings illuminated by artificial lights at night.

Most amazingly, adult luna moths have even evolved *acoustic* camouflage to evade capture by echolocating bats. The key is the long twisting tails on the moths' hindwings. In 2015, biologists at Boise State University recorded that bats captured 81 percent of luna moths whose tails were removed, but only 35 percent of those whose tails were intact—in the latter case, commonly directing their

attacks at the moths' tails instead of their bodies. Then in 2016, experts in applied physics and neuroscience at the University of Washington and Johns Hopkins University determined that the tails not only shift the location of the echoes, but because of their twists, also scatter the reflected sounds in all directions.

Thus the luna moth embodies not only the full moon in its pale majesty, but also the new moon in its obscurity and unrevealed potential. Hidden among the green leaves, unseen on the forest floor, undetected even by close-range sonar calibrated through eons of evolution, the moth eludes the senses even as it fires the imagination. And just as the ancients saw divinity in the new moon advancing to fullness and waning again, so too can we marvel at the moth's life history, from egg to caterpillar to pupa to adult and repeating in a never-ending cycle, miraculous in all its phases.

—Mark Chao



COLDEN KINAPP



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# Summer 2018 Calendar

## Raise a Pint for Owasco!

Thursday, September 27, 2018, 5:00-6:30 pm.

Prison City Pub & Brewery, 28 State Street, Auburn, NY

Join us at Auburn's award-winning Prison City Pub & Brewery on September 27 to help raise funds for our Owasco Shoreline Protection Project while enjoying a cold beer. Prison City has generously agreed to donate \$1 for each pint served between 5:00 and 6:30 pm. Join us for a good cause and meet other Land Trust members and volunteers!

Learn more about our efforts to conserve 1,100 feet of Owasco Lake shoreline through the acquisition of 74 acres in the town of Owasco, Cayuga County at [flit.org/owascoproject](http://flit.org/owascoproject).