

AFOOT IN THE FIELD



A Resource for Conservation
Landowners in the Finger Lakes Region

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It's no secret. Spending time outdoors, whether it be for sports, play, or the enjoyment of nature, leads to improved health and well-being. It's the fundamental concept behind field sports, recess at schools, outdoor activity clubs, and most of our own personal motivations for doing things outside, whether it be gardening, farming, hiking, trail running, hunting, fishing, camping, meditating in the woods, or biking around one of the beautiful Finger Lakes. Fresh air, exercise, and spending time in natural settings has immeasurable benefit for all of us – although recently, some of this benefit is being measured, as FLLT Conservation Easement Steward Hannah George points out in this issue of *Afoot in the Field*.

When I was a kid, my siblings, cousins and I got away with spending hours and hours outside playing – sometimes I wonder if our parents were crazy for letting us go from their protective grasp for so long, but we cherished every minute of that freedom to explore and learn and use our imaginations, and I know I benefitted greatly from those experiences. These days I make my own kids turn off the tablet and television once in a while, kicking them out of the house to play outside, or taking them hiking, skiing, or camping when my wife and I can. I love the idea of “Vitamin N” where N = Nature, a term coined by Richard Louv (who also brought us “Nature Deficit Disorder”), and the concept of prescribing time in nature for people with a variety of health conditions. It makes so much sense!

The Trust for Public Land, a national non-profit conservation organization, is working to achieve a society where everyone in America lives within a 10-minute walk of a park, nature preserve, or other special outdoor place. It might be a lofty goal, but it is something that all of us in the land conservation community can relate to and strive for.

As owners of land protected with a conservation easement, you are fortunate enough to already have your own special outdoor place. We hope that you continue to find ways to appreciate it, enjoy it, and share it with your family, friends, and neighbors – especially kids and people with health conditions that may especially benefit from time outdoors.



Chris Olney
Director of Stewardship



Photo: Danna Scott

NATURE & HUMAN HEALTH

by Hannah George

While on a climbing trip to southern Nevada a few years ago, I stopped by the visitor center for Red Rock Canyon before heading out to the cliffs. In the exhibit about the local desert ecosystem, it became clear that the ancient and iconic, yet threatened, desert tortoise was a major focus of education and conservation efforts. As I read through information about the tortoise, I came across a factoid that made me laugh with surprise. “The desert tortoise spends 98% of its life in its underground burrow,” the exhibit stated. “Can you imagine?” I asked my friend, “Spending almost all of your life in a dark hole in the ground?” Without missing a beat, he said, “Well, that’s kind of what people do, except in buildings.”

At first I didn’t believe our lives could resemble that of the desert tortoise, but after a second to reflect on my daily life, I realized that I didn’t spend as much time outside as I had thought. If I didn’t enjoy running and hiking, I wouldn’t have much reason to be outside besides going from one building to another.

Indeed, as a society we are spending more and more time indoors, which is leading to a host of health problems because unlike the desert tortoise, humans are supposed to get outside and move! We all know that going for a walk in the woods is good for you -- but exactly how good is it? Here are some numbers:

BENEFIT	JUST HOW MUCH?
Improved short term memory	20% better after a walk in the forest *
Stress Relief	12.4% decrease in cortisol level after sitting in a forest *
Improved creative problem-solving	50% better performance on a task after 4 days in nature *
Better immune function	50% more natural killer (NK) cells after 2 days in the forest *
Improved mood & self-esteem	Greatest improvement seen in just 5 minutes of exercise in nature *



For children, the benefits of spending time in or near green spaces include:

- Reduced nearsightedness
- Better test scores
- Improved self-discipline and cognition
- Reduced behavioral problems
- Reduced symptoms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
- Mitigation of income-related health disparities *

Spending time in nature should be part of a regular routine of wellbeing. In fact, experiencing nature is now being prescribed by hospitals to treat chronic disease. Treating chronic disease accounts for 86% of U.S. health care costs *, but Dr. Robert Zarr, pediatrician and founder of Park Rx America, has found a cheaper alternative in prescribing nature, while also eliminating negative side effects. For example, Dr. Zarr may prescribe a patient with depression and a nature deficit to visit a specific park, selected for its convenient location, for 30 minutes 5 times per week. Here in the Finger Lakes, Cornell University has implemented a program called Nature Rx to promote well-being and reduce stress and anxiety. Taking advantage of the many gardens and natural areas on campus, medical professionals prescribe nature in a way similar to that of Park Rx America.

It may not be long before your doctor uses nature as one way to combat illness in patients, but there's no reason to wait for a prescription to receive your natural health and mood boost. **See you outside!**

For references to source material in this article*, please email hannahgeorge@flt.org

gofingerlakes.org

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650 miles of trails • 12 counties • interactive map • photos & videos

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brought to you by the nonprofit, member-supported Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT.ORG)

TIPS FOR GETTING OUTSIDE IN WINTER

It can be hard to get motivated to spend time outdoors when the weather outside is frightful or when it's already dark by 5pm! Here are some of the Land Trust staff's favorite tips for enjoying nature in the winter.

Bundle up! Who says snowpants are just for children? By dressing in multiple warm layers from head to toe, you'll be ready for the chilly air and swirling snowflakes.

Pack snacks and water. Stay fueled up and hydrated when active in cold weather. An insulated mug of hot cocoa gives you a cozy feeling when you're far from your fireplace.

Share the fun. Making plans with a friend or taking the dog for a walk will help get you out the door.

Get a grip! Icy conditions can make your usual hiking route treacherous, but with "microspikes", "Yak Tracks" strapped to your boots, you'll be better able to gain traction on an otherwise slippery trail.

Catch the sunrise. The sunrise is later than at other times of year, so it's easier to go see its spectacular colors. For lively color any time of day, go for a hike in hemlock forests or a fern-laden wetland to be immersed in green.

Find appreciation for what sets winter apart. Since leaves are down, you'll get better views of branches, bird nests, and the sky. Other bonuses? Catching sight of tundra-breeding owls and hawks, following animal tracks in the snow, and no bug bites!

Pick up a snow sport! Getting into snowshoeing, skiing, snowboarding, ice skating, or ice fishing makes you excited about cold temperatures.

Pack up the Adventuremobile. Keep your winter gear in the car and build a little extra time in your schedule, so that your travels can spontaneously turn into an adventure if the conditions are right.



Photo: Betsy Dartington

DID YOU KNOW?

The best time to identify the non-native, invasive Hemlock Woolly Adelgid by its "wool" at the base of the hemlock needles is from November through April!



RAISE A WILD CHILD: Tips for Engaging Children in Nature

Maybe you've heard about "nature-deficit disorder," the idea coined by Richard Louv describing how children don't spend enough time in nature and are worse off for it. Unexpected as it may sound, the "wilder" the child, the better off they will be. Here are suggestions for kid-friendly outings:

Make a scavenger hunt! Start your list with simple natural objects, such as: an acorn, a fossil, animal tracks, a woodpecker hole.

Use tools and technology...wisely. Bring tools that help children engage with nature in new ways, such as binoculars, a camera, magnifying glass, or bug net. Silence and put away electronics that distract from the experience.

Sing songs! From lullabies to camp songs, singing about some element of the natural world infallibly lifts spirits.

The more the merrier. Encourage the child's friends and their families to come too!

Hand them the map. Have your child help plan the itinerary, whether it's for an afternoon outing or a road trip (all fourth graders and their families can get a free pass to our National Parks at www.everykidinapark.gov).

Volunteer. Adopt a trail to maintain as a family, and let the kids learn about volunteerism and how to help keep the path clear for others (when they're not busy playing in the creek or building shelters for newts!).

Do your research. Find out what is special about a certain species of plant or type of rock, & explain that to your child. Your own excitement will be sure to catch on.

Get dirty! Don't be afraid to let your children get good and muddy. Take a kid to the Anarchy Zone at the Ithaca Children's Garden at Cass Park.

For more ideas, check out Richard Louv's new book, *Vitamin N* (the "N" being for Nature).



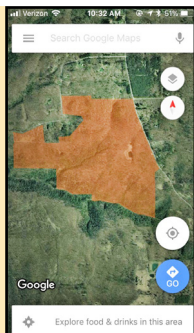
TECHNOLOGY CORNER

Would you like to be able to view your property boundaries in Google Maps on your phone? Or would you like to receive occasional emails about workshops and talks related to wildlife, invasive species, and land management?

Simply go to this website to get signed up!

fllt.org/techcorner

We will not share your email with any outside parties.



LANDOWNER PROFILE:

Wayne Chauncey

Wayne and Mary Chauncey, of Jamesville, NY, own 36 acres of forest in the Town of Danby, Tompkins County. The property was originally donated to the Finger Lakes Land Trust by Priscilla Noetzel-Wilson, and then sold to the Chauncey's subject to a conservation easement.



FLLT: How did you come to own your conservation easement property?

WC: We sat down at the Ithaca Bakery one day, and picked up a copy of your newsletter and saw an advertisement – Mary saw it, and she said, wait, this may be exactly what you're looking for. So we called, and got a hold of the realtor who was handling it. He took me up there and I fell in love with it. When we were up there [on that first visit], an 8 or 12 point buck jumped out and ran across in front of us. I put in a purchase order and ultimately closed on it in April of 2012.

FLLT: Since then, what kind of relationship have you had with the FLLT?

WC: A good one. Socially it's always fun – we try to get to the Christmas Party when we can. We remained active dues-paying members. Being a member is important to me, but I regard myself more as a student or a learner because you guys have been able to not just teach me about what the land trust does and what a conservation easement is, but also about exactly what you told me today – whether its wooly adelgid or emerald ash borer, or how to get rid of multiflora rose.

FLLT: What kind of threats to your property have you observed, or are concerned about?

WC: Because of the preponderance of the white ash tree up there and of the hemlock forest, emerald ash borer and hemlock wooly adelgid are the two biggest worries I have. If it gets hit hard up there, you're going to see a whole hillside here bare in ten years.

FLLT: How do you and your family spend your time while at the property?

WC: It's pretty easy, really. They live close, no further away than Syracuse and some as close as Groton. I'm maintaining the logging trails as hiking trails only and abandoning some of them, except to say that the kids can use them to explore. They love to turn over a log, and find a red-spotted newt, or some of those big old centipedes or millipedes. They'll collect them, and bring them back to camp and give them names. They love to climb, both the hill and the trees. With the Finger Lakes Land Trust's permission, I have begun construction of a tree fort/thinking place – that's Graeme's term, his "thinking place."



Wayne's grandson Graeme, 8, with a monarch caterpillar at the easement property in Danby



There were some established [cement] footings that form a 12x12 area that I have put a platform on for pitching a tent. It's great for just day camping, and certainly a whole week or weekend. The kids so far love to do it. The campsite is at the highest elevation of the property and the property boundary is well marked. They always know that if they get lost away from the campsite, if they go uphill they'll find it again.

FLLT: *Can you tell me about spending Thanksgiving outside in your woods?*

WC: It was a little cold that day, but it was great. Mary and I went up, built a fire in the fireplace and when it got down to coals we placed a pan in it, within it had prepared everything – stuffing, potatoes, stew – and we took a bottle of wine, and we toasted and celebrated and gave thanks for what we could see right there around us. We've done that before in other woods in the southern tier, down in Tioga County. That's what we like to do. We're resolved to spend every Thanksgiving in that way, somehow, and we're so thankful we have that nice little knob up there to do it on.

FLLT: *How does going for a walk in the woods impact your day?*

WC: Very positively. It's such a stress reliever. It's absolutely therapeutic out there.

STEWARDSHIP GOES TO RALLY!

From October 26-28, four FLLT staff members, including Director of Stewardship, Chris Olney, and Conservation Easement Steward, Hannah George, went to Denver, CO for Rally, the Land Trust Alliance's national land conservation conference. Nearly 2,000 people from the land trust community across the country and world gathered to hear inspiring speakers, meet other professionals, share insights, learn from experienced land conservation practitioners, and develop skills.



Land Trust staff Hannah George on a hike in the mountains of Colorado

This was Hannah's first time at the conference, and she reports that "it was an incredible feeling to be surrounded by people who care so deeply about the land, and are all working so hard to protect it." Having focused on learning best practices in easement stewardship during the conference, she has already incorporated some of what she learned into her site visits and plans to keep streamlining our stewardship practices.



Photo: Stefanie Delaney

Newell Conservation Easement in Schuyler County *Land Owner Anastasia Newell and her white horse*

The Finger Lakes Land Trust is a member supported, non-profit conservation organization that works cooperatively with landowners and local communities to conserve forever the lands and waters of the Finger Lakes region, ensuring scenic vistas, local foods, clean water, and wild places for everyone.

***Afoot in the Field** is a newsletter provided by the Land Trust for landowners in the Finger Lakes who own properties that are permanently protected with a conservation easement, or who are otherwise committed to, or interested in, land conservation and wildlife habitat protection and improvement. For questions or concerns regarding your conservation easement, please contact Chris Olney by calling the Land Trust at (607) 275-9487 or email chrisolney@fllt.org*

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