



The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes region

Vol. 31, No. 2 • Spring 2019

The Staghorn Cliffs, where the Land Trust recently protected an additional 900 feet of Skaneateles Lake shoreline

Land Trust Acquires Pristine Skaneateles Shoreline

With early support from New York State's Water Quality Improvement Program and private donations, the Land Trust recently achieved a significant conservation victory on Skaneateles Lake. The organization acquired 900 feet of lakeshore along with 90 acres of hillside forest.

Since the property is adjacent to the organization's Cora Kampfe Dickinson Preserve, the Land Trust now owns and manages 2,200 feet of contiguous shoreline here.

This acquisition involves some of the most pristine shoreline remaining in the Finger Lakes region. Near the south end of Skaneateles Lake, the land rises abruptly from the water to form steep cliffs widely regarded for their fossilized coral reef and wild scenic beauty.

Densely forested hillsides directly above the cliffs stabilize erodible soils and provide significant habitat for a variety of wildlife, including Bald Eagles and migratory songbirds such as the Cerulean Warbler—a species of particular conservation concern.

Along this stretch of shoreline is exposed bedrock with abundant staghorn coral fossils, for which this area is named—the Staghorn Cliffs. The cliffs, which rise as much as 100

feet directly from the water's edge, are prized by geologists for their fossil layers, which also include brachiopods (clams), trilobites, and cephalopods (early worms). Together, they are the fossilized remains of 300 to 400 million-year-old sea creatures from the Devonian Period, when the area was covered by a shallow sea.

Once considered too remote and rugged for development, property sales
continued on page 2

An anniversary is a good excuse to take a break from the daily routine and do something different. Please consider using the Land Trust's 30th anniversary as the ideal reason to spend more time out on the hiking trails and become immersed in the natural world this year.

Through our 30 for 30 hike series, you can sample ten diverse and scenic natural areas that highlight some of the best of what the Finger Lakes Land Trust has accomplished. If you like waterfalls, the Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook and Grimes Glen are not to be missed. For birds, get out to see a heron rookery at our Lindsay-Parsons Preserve or the rich diversity of Logan Hill. For scenic vistas, go to the Hinchcliff or Houghton preserves. And to stretch your legs, Steege Hill and Wesley Hill nature preserves provide room to roam.

To visit these spots, you can go on your own or join one of the guided trips that are listed in this issue of *The Land Steward* or at fltl.org/30years. Complete the whole series and hike 30 miles to commemorate and

experience 30 years of conservation! Just be sure to get out there and enjoy these wonderful places that have been conserved forever.

In the meantime, we'll be continuing our work—creating the win/win solutions with landowners and raising the funds needed to ensure that more of these areas are set aside for future generations.



Andrew Zepp
Executive Director
Finger Lakes Land Trust

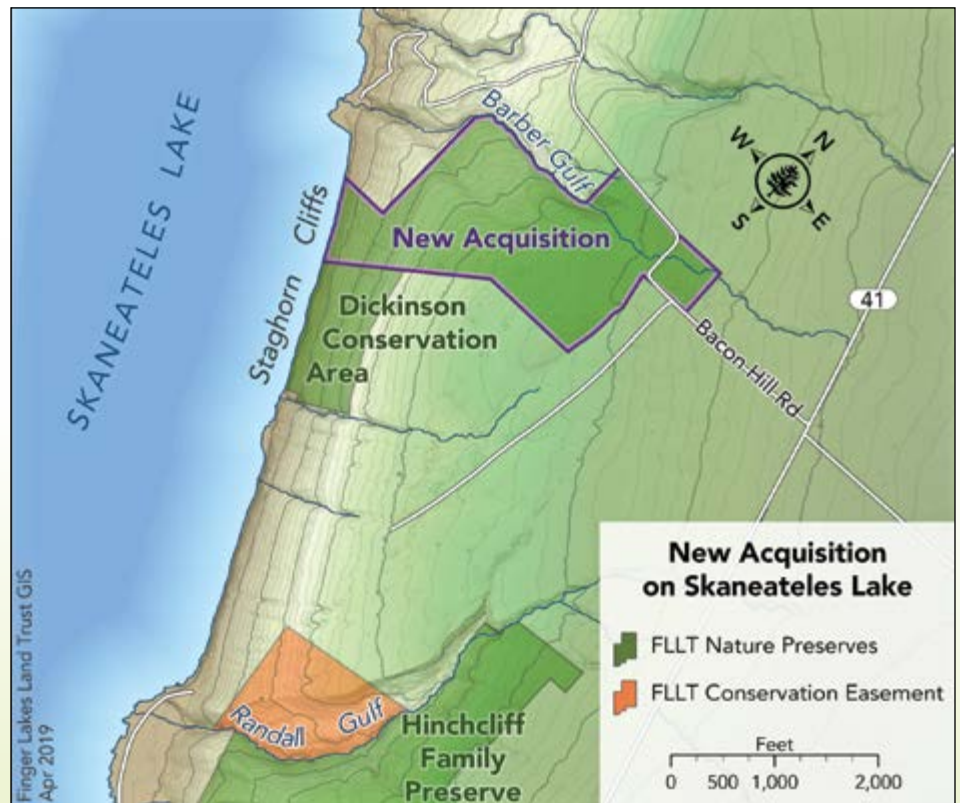


Land Trust Acquires Pristine Skaneateles Shoreline *continued from cover*

in this area are on the rise and new homes are dotting the landscape. This property was identified as a priority for protection as part of the Land Trust's systematic effort to create a greenbelt around the south end of Skaneateles. Other nearby conservation lands include the High Vista and Hinchcliff Family Preserves. The greenbelt is recognized as a priority project within New York State's Open Space Plan and, because of its value for migratory birds, it is also recognized by National Audubon as one of the state's Important Bird Areas.

The recent acquisition is noteworthy for its value to water quality. In addition to its shoreline on the lake, the property features 4,600 feet of frontage on Barber Gulf—a significant tributary to Skaneateles. The Land Trust is also working with partners to implement two projects that will help mitigate runoff to the lake: at the edge of a hay field on the property, we'll partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to create a wetland that will enhance wildlife habitat while retaining stormwater runoff; and along a roadside ditch, we intend to create a swale that will reduce nutrient-laden runoff entering the lake.

During the coming months, the Land Trust endeavors to complete its fundraising campaign while also creating a long-term management



plan for the site. Due to the hazardous nature of the cliffs, public shoreline access will not be allowed here but curious adventurers can visit the cliffs and see the fossils themselves by paddling a bit more than a mile to the site from the town of Scott boat

launch (learn more at gofingerlakes.org/staghorn).

Those who would like to contribute to the project or would like to learn more should contact Director of Development Kelly Makosch at (607) 275-9487 or kellymakosch@fltl.org.

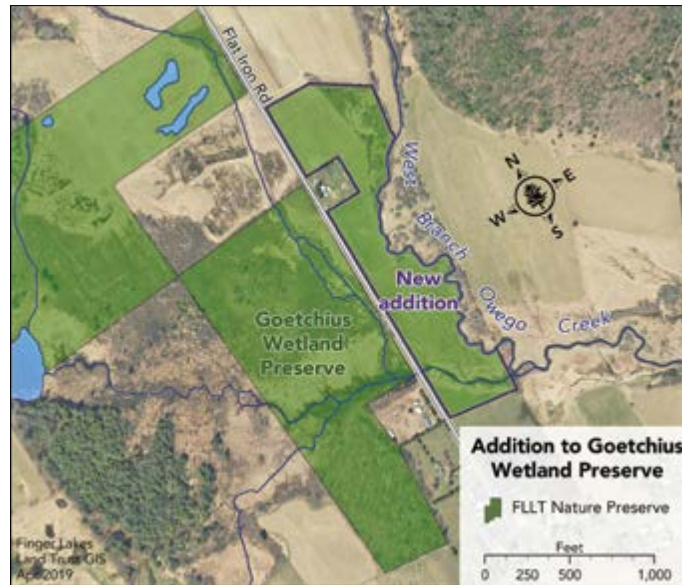
Owego Creek Project Expands Wetland Preserve in Tompkins County

The Land Trust purchased 20 acres along Owego Creek as an addition to its Goetchius Wetland Preserve. The property is located on Flat Iron Road in the town of Caroline on the eastern edge of Tompkins County.

The addition will protect over 3,000 feet of streambank of the West Branch of Owego Creek, a tributary of the Susquehanna River. The expansion of the Goetchius Wetland Preserve helps to achieve landscape conservation goals for the Emerald Necklace, an initiative to connect conservation lands from Finger Lakes National Forest in Schuyler County to Yellow Barn State Forest in Tompkins County.

Owego Creek is one of the Finger Lakes region's highest priority trout streams. The headwaters support a native brook trout population and provide critical juvenile rearing habitat. Accordingly, Owego Creek has priority conservation status with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This project is the latest of eleven completed by the Land Trust in the Owego Creek watershed, where it has already protected nearly 850 acres.

Additionally, the property protects valuable bird habitat. There are over 120 species of birds on the most recent Goetchius Wetland Preserve species list, and this acquisition will provide both wetland and upland habitats for migrant and resident birds. The property includes floodplain wetlands and roadside meadows recognized for their aesthetic value in Tompkins County's inventory of



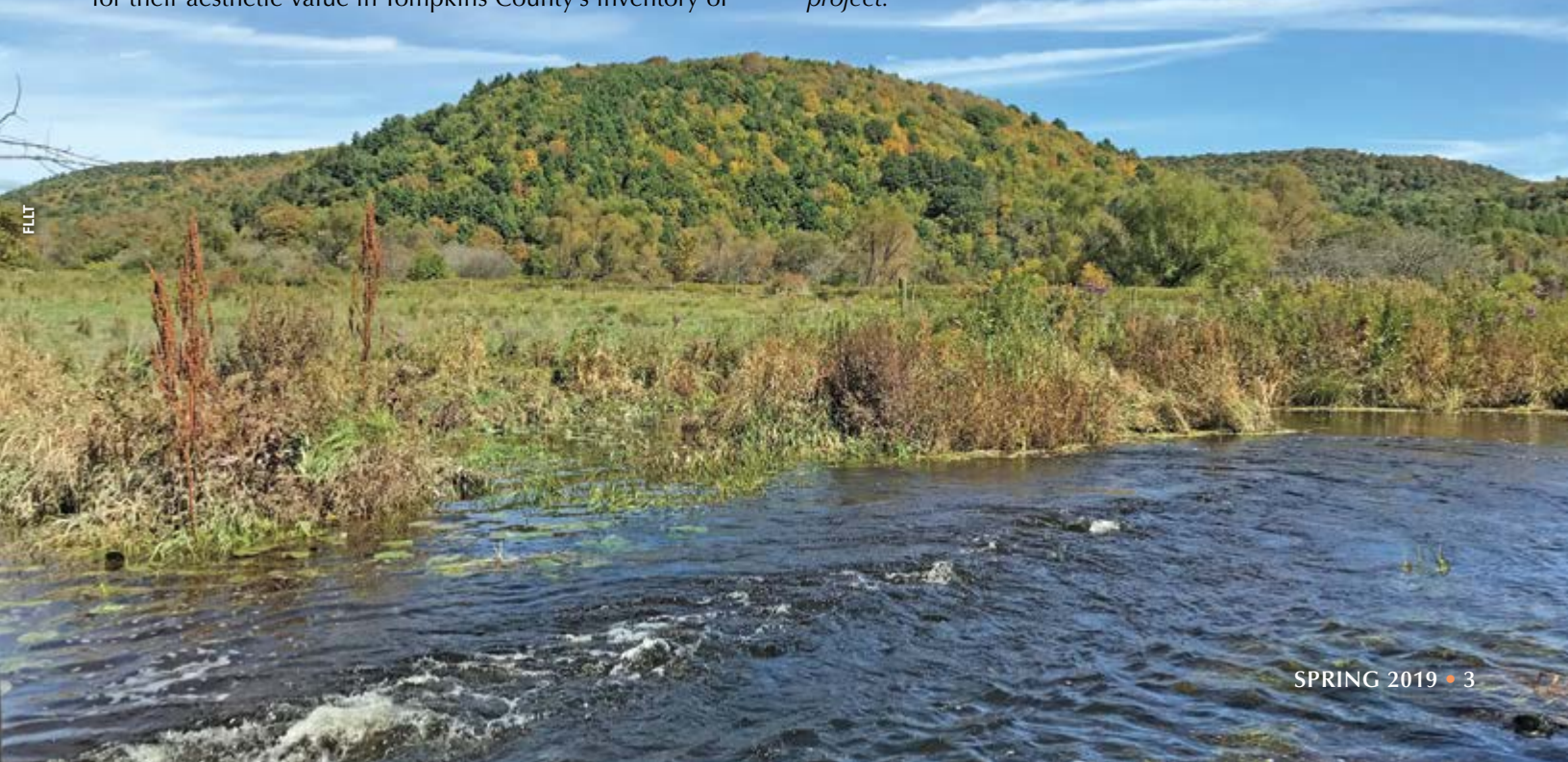
scenic resources. The fields provide panoramic vistas of neighboring Hammond Hill and Robinson Hollow State Forests.

The acquisition was completed with multiple partners including the Upper Susquehanna Coalition and Tompkins County's Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreation Resource Protection. Protecting the property provides an opportunity to restore grazed wetlands and expand streamside buffers, thereby enhancing habitat for wetland-dependent migratory birds and improving water quality in the downstream

Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay watersheds.

The Land Trust is developing a site restoration and management plan in partnership with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition which will include extensive plantings of native trees and shrubs to restore a native vegetated buffer to the creek. Long-term management goals for the site include restoration and maintenance of streamside wetlands, riparian forest, and wet meadows.

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Richard Ruswick, of Counsel to Levene Gouldin & Thompson, LLP in Ithaca, NY for providing pro bono services in support of this project.



Finger Lakes and Central New York Land Trusts Collaborate on Land Bequest in Manlius

The Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) and the Central New York Land Trust (CNYLT) are teaming up to protect 55 acres of land in the town of Manlius, Onondaga County.

The land was previously owned by Dawn Cottrell, a former teacher and longtime FLLT member. According to Dawn's daughter Laurie, Dawn and her husband Jack purchased three acres in 1946, where they built a house and an office for the family's land survey business. Over time, the Cottrells acquired adjacent undeveloped properties as they became available, eventually totaling 58 contiguous acres.

After Jack died in 2012, Dawn began discussions with the FLLT about the possibility of conserving her family's land, which is located in an area that is experiencing substantial development pressure. "My parents had always wanted to keep it forever wild," said Laurie.

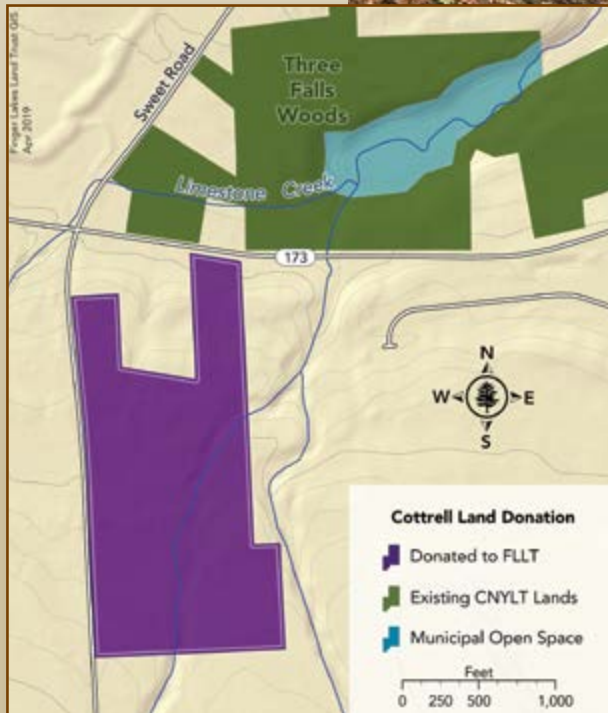
When Dawn passed away in 2017, she bequeathed the entire property, except for the original three acres, to the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

The Cottrell property consists primarily of a mixed hardwood forest, as well as planted conifer stands of pine and spruce.

A small creek runs through the property, eventually joining a larger stream just beyond the eastern border of the parcel.

The land also sits across State Route 173 from another protected area known locally as "Three Falls Woods." A hidden gem long enjoyed by hikers in the area, the property containing Three Falls Woods was recently donated to the CNYLT.

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Land Trust Acquires 7th Property on Canandaigua Lake's Bare Hill

The Land Trust recently purchased 11 acres on Bare Hill—the iconic promontory overlooking Canandaigua Lake's eastern shore. The property is located off of North Vine Valley Road in the town of Middlesex, Yates County, in close proximity to New York State's Bare Hill Unique Area.

Bare Hill is well known in the region for its scenic views as well as its place in Seneca lore. Legend has it that a mighty serpent encircled an Indian village that once stood there—swallowing residents until it was slain by a brave young boy. In its death throes, the snake cleared the land and swept the hill bare.

The entirely wooded parcel—which represents the organization's seventh project in the area—will be conveyed to New York State as an addition to Bare Hill Unique Area when funds become available. The Land Trust hopes to work with the state, and other partners, to construct a hiking trail on nearby conserved lands from the lakeshore to the summit of Bare Hill.

Elsewhere within the Canandaigua Lake watershed, the Land Trust has worked in partnership with Ontario County to establish Grimes Glen County Park, and with the Town of South Bristol to create Carolabarb Park. The organization has also partnered with the Town of Canandaigua to protect two farms as well as wetlands off Middle Cheshire Road. Near the south end of Canandaigua Lake, the Land Trust owns and manages hundreds of acres of conservation land and has worked with New York State to conserve Conklin Gully.

The Land Trust hopes to work with the state, and other partners, to construct a hiking trail on nearby conserved lands from the lakeshore to the summit of Bare Hill.

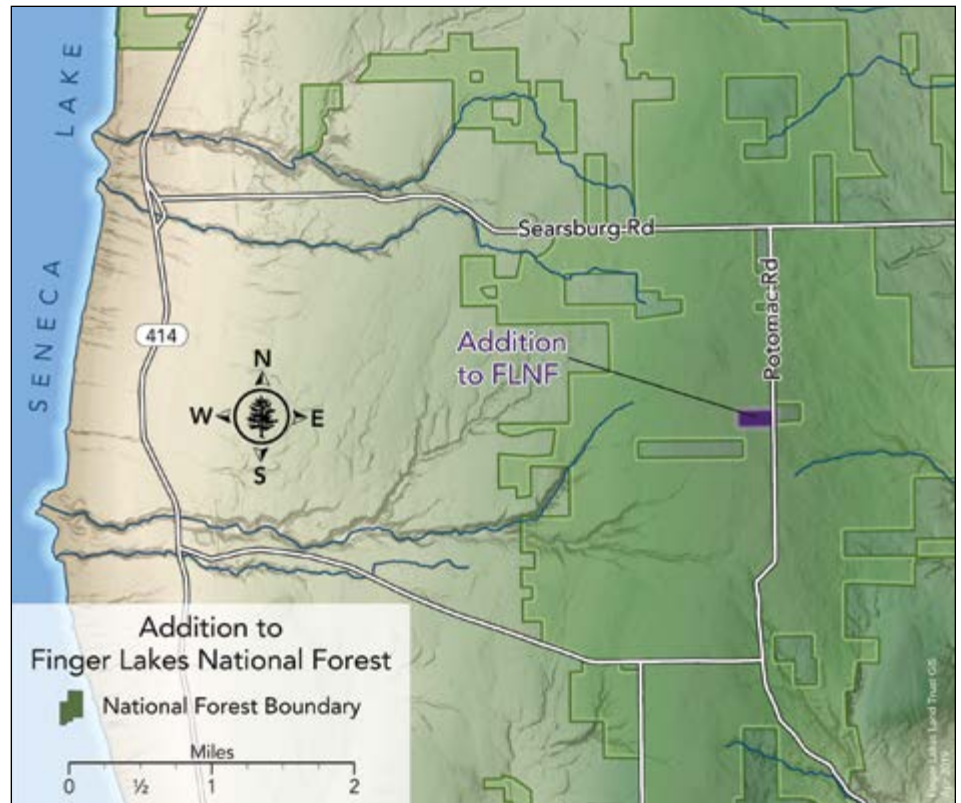
Bare Hill overlooking Canandaigua Lake, as seen from the town of South Bristol



NIGEL KENT

Partnership Enhances Wildlife Habitat and Recreational Opportunities in New York's only National Forest

A missing piece was recently added to the Finger Lakes National Forest (FLNF), thanks to a partnership between the Land Trust and the U.S. Forest Service. Located in the town of Hector, Schuyler County, the 11-acre property was an "in-holding"—a piece of private property surrounded by public land. The land was generously donated to the Land Trust by Pennsylvania residents Charles and Nancy Cladel with the understanding that it would be conveyed to the forest service when funds became available.



The parcel has a mix of white pine, mature oak, maple and assorted other hardwoods. Several small vernal pools form in shallow depressions in the forest floor, and the property lies adjacent to wetlands.

Funds from the sale of the property will be placed in the Land Trust's "Opportunity Fund," a dedicated account created by the Land Trust to make time-sensitive acquisitions possible. The Opportunity Fund is currently being used to finance another

pending addition to the FLNF.

This latest project is the Land Trust's seventh buffering the national forest. Spanning more than 16,000 acres, the FLNF is located between Cayuga and Seneca lakes. It is well known for its miles of multi-use recreational trails and dirt roads. The forest's patchwork of fields and woodlands also provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife and is recognized as one of New York State's Important Bird Areas.

"This parcel is a wonderful addition

to the national forest, providing not only greater habitat connectivity but also increased recreational opportunities," said Jodie Vanselow, District Ranger for the U.S. Forest Service. "We thank the Finger Lakes Land Trust for working with us on securing this parcel."

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Jim Miller of the law firm Miller Mayer, LLP in Ithaca, NY for providing pro bono services in support of this project.

Finger Lakes and Central New York Land Trusts Collaborate on Land Bequest in Manlius *continued from page 4*

Given the CNYLT's commitment to managing this adjacent conservation area, the FLLT reached out to the organization about a collaboration. The FLLT and CNYLT plan to work together to turn the Cottrell parcel into a land preserve, including the development of a hiking trail with potential connectivity to Three Falls Woods. Once work on the preserve is complete, the FLLT will transfer ownership of the property to the CNYLT, subject to a conservation easement.

"The Cottrell property is an important addition to our Three Falls Woods Preserve," said CNYLT Executive Director Albert Joerger. "The gift celebrates generations of community

mindedness in the Cottrell Family. I am humbled by their generosity."

"In addition to protecting the integrity of land that is worthy of conservation, this is a great opportunity to expand the growing network of protected land in an area that is likely to see significant development in the future," said FLLT Executive Director Andrew Zepp. —Jeff Tonole

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Don Crittenden of the law firm Harris Beach, PLLC, in Ithaca, NY for providing pro bono services in support of this project.

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

If 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.

thank you

You helped make a difference this year! Thanks to the contributions of over 2,500 members, donors and volunteers, the Land Trust now protects over 21,500 acres—ensuring scenic vistas, local foods, clean water and wild places for everyone.

We are very grateful for gifts of all sizes and promise to use them wisely to protect more land and water. In particular, we wish to acknowledge everyone who generously gave \$100 or more in 2018. Please accept our heartiest thanks!*

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A CLOSER LOOK

Firefly Bioluminescence

When the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God./ It will flame out, like shining from shook foil,” he might have been speaking of the wondrous phenomenon that scientists today call bioluminescence. Creatures from dinoflagellates to sharks emit light in a rainbow of colors. Unlike the glow from a red-hot coal, however, this light is “cold”: the chemical reaction that produces it gives off no heat.

B ioluminescence first evolved in the oceans and is still most common there. Most deep-sea animals have light organs that they use to communicate with each other, attract prey, deter predators, camouflage themselves, or dimly illuminate the dark void. Deep-sea bioluminescence is usually blue-green, since only shorter wavelengths travel effectively through water. Terrestrial bioluminescence evolved later, is much rarer, and is increasingly hard to see in our light-polluted world, but it shines in our own backyards. The larvae and adult females of the seldom-seen glowworm beetle (*Phengodidae* spp.) are festooned with yellow-green lights. The forests sometimes shimmer with so-called foxfire, the icy green glow of bioluminescent wood fungi such as the bitter oyster mushroom, *Panellus stipticus*. Perhaps foxfire was the ultimate origin of the will-o'-the-wisps, those ghost lights that early European settlers swore they saw in the swamps and fens of North America.

But nothing shines so brightly in the Finger Lakes as the fireflies, beetles of the family *Lampyridae*. Their bioluminescence may have originally evolved as a defense against being eaten and only later adopted as a mating signal. Diurnal animals usually warn predators of their toxicity using bright colors or striking patterns, but only a glowing message stands out in the dark. The mostly nocturnal firefly larvae cull toxic steroids from the slugs and snails that they eat; their lights serve as a menacing public service announcement, as does the sullen glow of the noxious firefly pupa. Adults likewise flash their light organs to warn bats that they are poisonous. Even the eggs of some species luminesce when they are disturbed, like fairy globes hidden in the leaf litter.

Of course, it is the grand courtship displays of the fireflies that we know the best. On sluggish, hot summer nights in the Finger Lakes, the wet meadows and moist forest edges are streaked with sparks flying from a phantom fire. It is a gala event: more than twenty species of firefly are known to live in New York state, though *Photinus pyralis*, the common eastern firefly, is the most common. The males fly in species-specific flight patterns, flashing amorous code to females, who wait on the ground below. If a female approves, she signals once; the male then

their lights: as bait. The *Photuris versicolor* female beams seductively at *Photinus* males, although her flash pattern isn't quite right. If a male is foolhardy enough to ignore the red flags and approach her anyway, she will attack and eat him, gaining calories and the all-important defensive toxins for herself and her offspring. It is a sad irony: *Photinus*' lights, which evolved to protect him, serve only to attract a *femme fatale* bent on taking his poison for her own.

In order to avoid rapacious *Photuris* females, some fireflies have taken drastic measures, becoming



The *Aquatica lateralis* firefly

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approaches her gradually, flashing grandly all the while. Although the speed of light production is dependent on ambient temperature, females still seem to like males that flash a bit faster than average. The fireflies even color-coordinate their displays: species that are active earlier in the evening glow yellow in order to differentiate their lights from the green foliage; those that come out later in the evening tend to glow green.

There is a yet third way that some female fireflies have learned to use

diurnal. The adult black firefly, *Lucidota atra*, and the winter firefly, *Ellychnia corrusca*, have lost their fire, though they still glow as larvae and pupae. The winter firefly has gone a step further to stay out of *Photuris*' way, mating in early spring rather than midsummer. These lightless lightning bugs still taste just as bad as their nocturnal cousins, a fact that they announce with brilliant red stripes along the sides of their heads.

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller

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Raise a Glass for the Finger Lakes!

The Land Trust will be hosting two happy hour fundraisers in June for anyone interested in learning more about our projects. Meet and mingle with staff, members, and volunteers and enjoy a cold pint in support of conservation in the Finger Lakes! For every beverage served, \$1 will be donated to the Land Trust.

Thursday, June 6, 2019, 5:00-7:00pm
Finger Lakes on Tap, 35 Fennell Street,
Skaneateles, NY

Thursday, June 20, 2019, 5:00-7:00pm
Lock 32 Brewing Company,
10 Schoen Place, Pittsford, NY