



# The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

## Land Trust Member Secures Woodlands Overlooking Canandaigua Lake

On the east side of Canandaigua Lake, a steep forested ridge extends for more than three miles, providing a scenic backdrop enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. The ridge goes by many names: Nundawao, Great Hill, South Hill, or “the Whaleback” and is referred to as the birthplace of the Seneca Nation. The Seneca are known in their own language as Onöndowa’ga:’ or “Great Hill People.”

Land Trust staff immediately noticed when a key parcel of woodlands at the crest of the hill was listed for sale. If developed, this 58-acre property would command scenic lake views and similar spots had already been cleared nearby. Conservation was the better option, and staff hoped to acquire the land and manage it as a nature preserve so the property's mature forests could continue to provide a home for wildlife, filter runoff to Canandaigua Lake, and maintain scenic vistas for which the area is well known.

Negotiations commenced but ultimately led to an impasse. A gap remained between the appraised value the Land Trust was able to offer and the price the seller was willing to accept. Fortunately, a Land Trust member agreed to bridge the gap, stepping in to successfully negotiate a purchase that was acceptable to the seller.

*continued on page 2*

Great Hill (Nundawao) extends for over three miles on the eastern shore of Canandaigua Lake



*Back in 1910, New York voters endorsed the state's first environmental bond act—providing \$2.5 million for land acquisition and the establishment of parks.*

Six years later, they did it again—supporting \$10 million more, and then again in 1924 with the endorsement of \$15 million. Thus started New Yorkers' long held tradition of investing public funds to restore and enhance New York's environment for the benefit of all.

It has been over 25 years since the last bond act and the need for investing in our environment has never been more compelling. Climate change brings with it myriad challenges—from toxic algae outbreaks in our lakes to species migration due to a warming climate to increased flooding threatening our communities.

At the same time, development pressures continue to increase

and land values continue to climb. Public use of our parks and conservation areas is also increasing, resulting in crowding and other adverse impacts.

Here in the Finger Lakes region, we are working to conserve our last remaining undeveloped shoreline and restore streams and wetlands that are vital to the health of our lakes. The cost of conservation is higher than ever.

The proposed "Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act" would provide \$4.2 billion to address these issues and more (see article on page 10 of this issue for additional details). On Election Day, New York's voters will again have the opportunity to make a strategic investment to

provide for the future of our state's environment.

After careful consideration, the Land Trust fully supports this latest environmental bond act and is a proud partner of the Vote Yes for Clean Water and Jobs coalition. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect clean drinking water, modernize infrastructure, and improve quality of life across the state. Please consider flipping your ballot over on November 8, and VOTE YES for the Environmental Bond Act.



Andrew Zepp  
Executive Director

## Land Trust Member Secures Woodlands Overlooking Canandaigua Lake

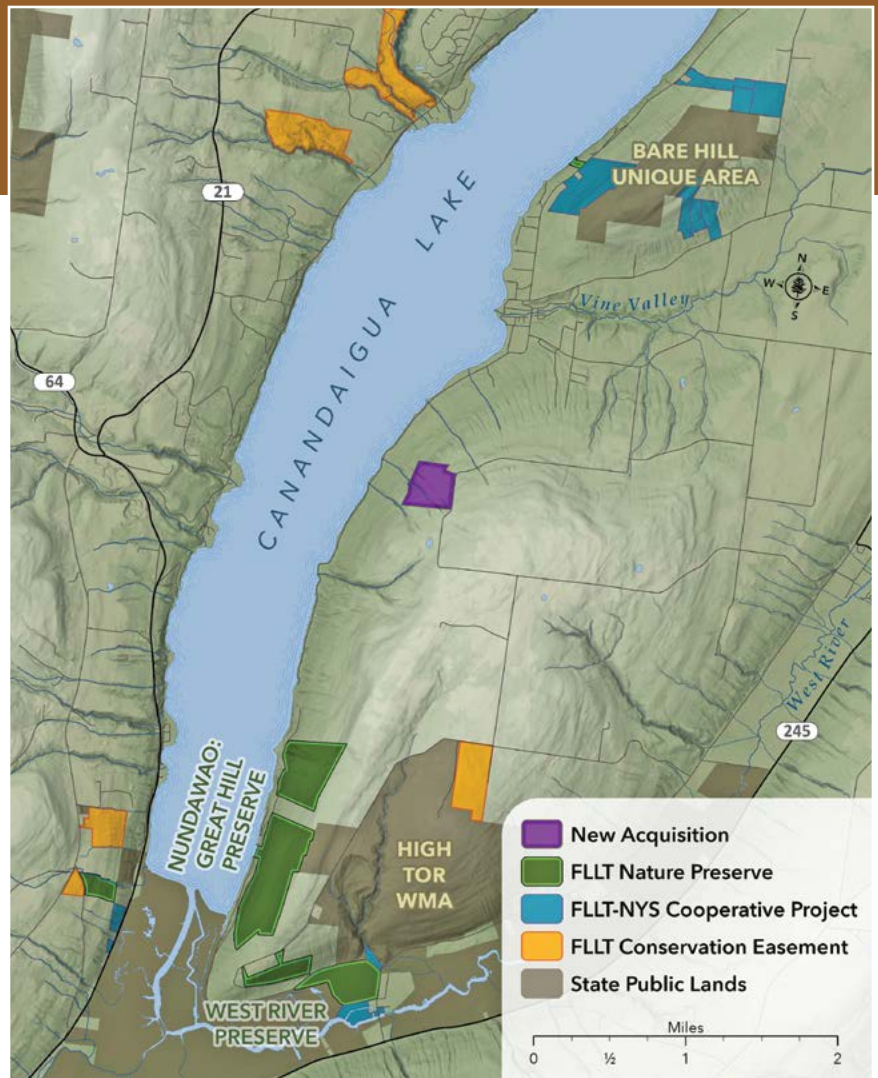
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Immediately upon acquiring the land, the member sold the parcel to the Land Trust for the agreed upon appraised value.

We are grateful to this supporter of the Land Trust, who prefers to remain anonymous. Thanks to their commitment to conservation, as well as their entrepreneurial spirit, this stretch of prominent ridgeline is protected from development forever.

This latest acquisition is the sixth project the Land Trust has completed along this ridge. Our Nundawao/Great Hill Preserve was established in 2000 and spans 255 acres at the south end of the ridge. More recently, the Land Trust acquired part of Clark Gully, also on the south side, and worked with the Decker family to complete a conservation easement on their property which is adjacent to High Tor Wildlife Management Area.

Acquisition costs were covered with an internal loan from the Land Trust's Opportunity Fund. Fundraising is now underway to replenish the fund which will support the protection of additional lands in this area. For additional information and to support this effort, please contact Senior Director Kelly Makosch at (607) 275-9487 or [kellymakosch@flt.org](mailto:kellymakosch@flt.org).





# Overwhelming Support As Finger Lakes Forever Campaign Tops \$20 Million



BILL HECHT

Cayuga  
Lake

*The Finger Lakes Forever capital campaign to save and steward critical lands and waters across the region has already raised over \$20 million. The FLLT is both thankful for and inspired by the many donors who have made gifts large and small to help advance the campaign's ambitious goals.*

Campaign dollars are being put to work now. In the last year alone, the FLLT conserved an additional 2,300 acres and protected over 7,000 feet of lakeshore. The organization worked with partners to open and expand nature preserves on Cayuga and Otisco lakes and overlooking Skaneateles and Canandaigua lakes. Staff, volunteers, and partners worked together on restoration projects that repaired and buffered streams and created grassland bird habitat.

This effort has already involved so many of our members and part of the campaign's achievements are a result of leadership level gifts from anonymous donors. These gifts are having a tremendous impact on the success of the campaign and the pace of our conservation work. The stewardship fund and land and water conservation projects like Bell Station in Lansing have all benefitted from the generosity of anonymous donors who are quietly

supporting our work.

"Even with the unprecedented response to the Land Trust fund raising effort, there are so many other critical conservation projects we want to tackle to keep our precious natural assets safe and healthy, now and long into the future," said Fred Van Sickle, Board of Directors President. "Help us finish this effort as strong as possible."

There is no end to the work that must be accomplished, and our ambitions are much bigger than any goal we could set. Real estate costs are rising, sprawling development along our county roads threatens lake views and rural character, the climate is changing, toxic algae is an annual problem in our lakes. Smart land conservation can and will make a difference, helping to protect our water, secure wildlife habitat, and provide a place to connect with nature. Every gift counts - you can make a real difference with your support.

We hope you will be a part of this remarkable commitment to the future of the Finger Lakes! A video, conservation project highlights, and additional information is available at [flt.org/forever](https://flt.org/forever). To support the campaign, visit [flt.org/give](https://flt.org/give) and type "forever" in the comments field. To learn more, please contact Senior Director Kelly Makosch at (607) 275-9487 or [kellymakosch@flt.org](mailto:kellymakosch@flt.org).

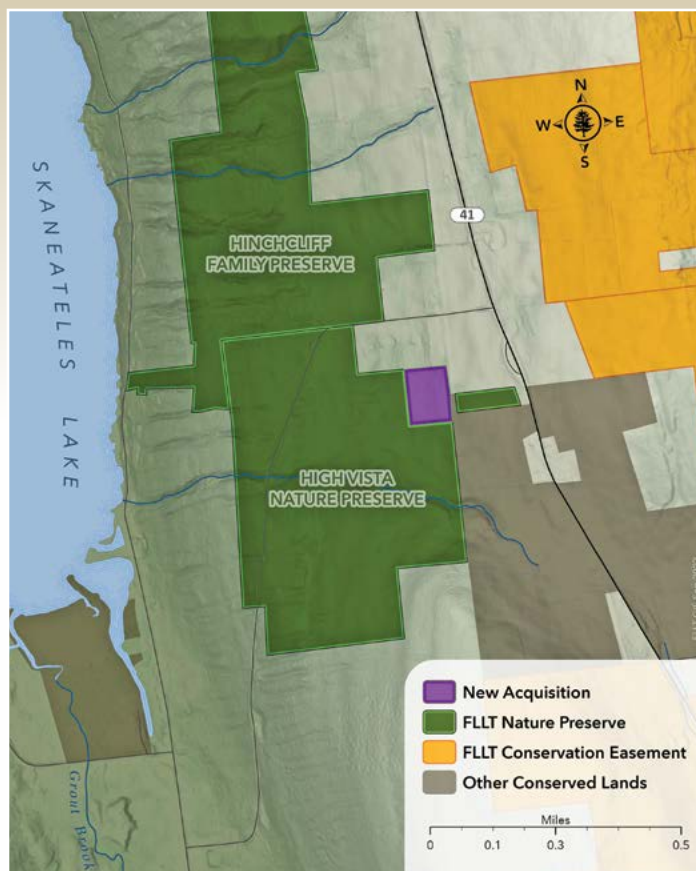


# Acquisition Expands High Vista Nature Preserve above Skaneateles Lake

The Land Trust's High Vista Nature Preserve, in the town of Scott, is a diverse hillside forest high above the eastern shore of Skaneateles Lake's south end. The preserve has numerous seeps and springs, a diverse array of tree species, and a small wetland hidden away in the middle of the forest. Extending protection in this environmentally sensitive area is a priority for the Land Trust, as the steeply sloping hillsides are vital to the health of Skaneateles Lake—the source of drinking water for the city of Syracuse.

The Land Trust has been steadily expanding the High Vista Preserve, and the contiguous 303-acre Hinchcliff Family Preserve, by securing key parcels of surrounding land. In August, the organization purchased six forested acres adjacent to High Vista that is close to a previously acquired parcel that buffers the State Route 41 overlook. The new property will be added to the preserve, expanding it to 153 acres of publicly accessible lands.

*continued on page 9*



# New Addition to Seneca Lake's Catharine Creek Wildlife Management Area

Catharine Creek Wildlife Management Area lies at the southern end of Seneca Lake, between Watkins Glen and Montour Falls. This 1,000-acre wetland complex is a rich, biologically diverse area with seasonal concentrations of waterfowl and resident Bald Eagles. Recognized as one of New York's Important Bird Areas, it also plays an important role in filtering runoff to the lake.

In 2014, Enterprise Products Partners donated 140 acres of wetlands bordering Catharine Creek WMA to the Land Trust with the understanding that the land would be sold to New York State. The property is located in the towns of Dix

and Montour Falls and is adjacent to both State Route 14 and the popular Catharine Valley Trail. The Land Trust sold the property to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in August, as an addition to Catharine Creek WMA. Proceeds from the sale will cover costs associated with other land transactions with the state and a portion will be allocated to the Land Trust's Opportunity Fund to enable future time-sensitive acquisitions.

The property is easily viewed from the Catharine Valley Trail, located on the east side of the tract, adjacent to a

*continued on page 9*

The new 140-acre addition to Catharine Creek Wildlife Management Area lies to the left of the canal



# Public Access Improvements at Summerland Farm Preserve and Potato Hill State Forest

*The Land Trust recently partnered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) on the construction of a new parking area at Potato Hill State Forest in Caroline, Tompkins County. The improvements were initiated to address public access needs for the forest and the adjacent Summerland Farm Nature Preserve on Blackman Hill Road.*

**W**ith partial support from Finger Lakes Trail Conference's Sidote Trail Preservation Fund, the Land Trust funded construction of the parking area, designed by DEC, on the state forest property. It is now open to the public, providing safe access to Potato Hill, the Summerland Farm Preserve, and the Finger Lakes Trail, which traverses both properties.

"DEC values our partnership with Finger Lakes Land Trust and the Finger Lakes Trail Conference," said DEC Region 7 Director Matthew Marko. "This collaboration is

an essential component of our comprehensive efforts to connect New Yorkers and visitors to the great outdoors."

"The Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) is pleased to support the construction of this new parking lot with a grant from our Sidote Trail Preservation Fund," said Finger Lakes Trail Conference Executive Director Debra Nero. "The lot provides safe parking for people hiking this portion of Finger Lakes Trail."

Potato Hill State Forest encompasses 915 acres of land and is a popular destination for recreational activities including hunting, hiking, snowmobiling, camping, birdwatching, and fishing. The 140-acre Summerland Farm Preserve has a stunning mix of forest and meadow and sweeping views of the surrounding hills. Both properties are part of the Emerald Necklace, 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 Yellow Barn state forests in the east. These lands host 78 miles of the Finger Lakes Trail which traverses some of the most scenic land in New York.



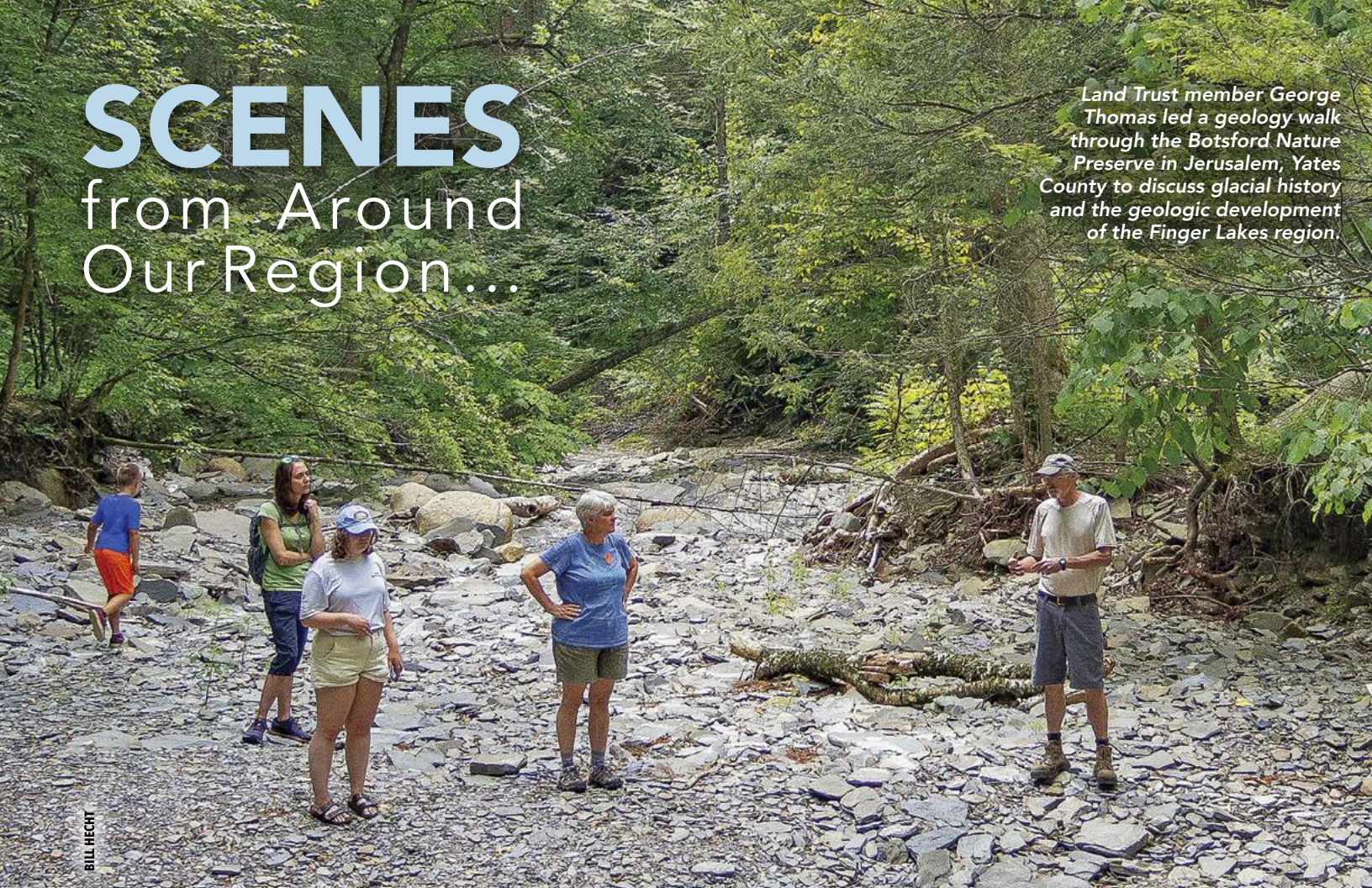
*The Summerland Farm Preserve hosts more than half a mile of the Finger Lakes Trail which guides visitors to a scenic hilltop with sweeping views of the surrounding landscape.*



# SCENES

from Around  
Our Region...

Land Trust member George Thomas led a geology walk through the Botsford Nature Preserve in Jerusalem, Yates County to discuss glacial history and the geologic development of the Finger Lakes region.



BILL HECHT



JASON GORMAN

New interpretive information at the Parker Nature Preserve in Bath, Steuben County, where the Land Trust has completed several improvements to the hiking trail and parking area.

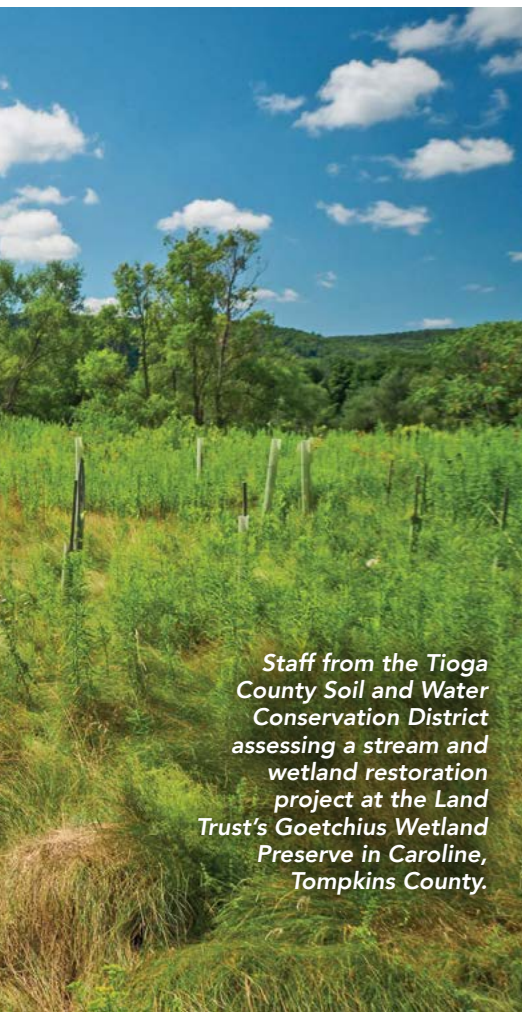


CHRIS RAY





The Land Trust's Director of Conservation Max Heitner, Conservation Projects Manager Amy Olney, and Land Conservation Specialist Kate Riley at Carpenter Falls in Niles, Cayuga County



Staff from the Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District assessing a stream and wetland restoration project at the Land Trust's Goetchius Wetland Preserve in Caroline, Tompkins County.



JASON GORMAN

The Land Trust gave partial funding to the Greater Ithaca Activities Center's (GIAC) Outdoor Adventure Program, designed to connect youth to nature. In August, a group from GIAC spent an afternoon with Land Trust staff at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby, Tompkins County to learn about geology, invasive species, beaver activity, and more.



# Volunteer OF THE YEAR Nelly Farnum



The recipient of the Finger Lakes Land Trust Volunteer of the Year Award for 2022 is Cornelia Farnum, a resident of Tompkins County. Nelly, as her friends call her, and her partner Jack Booker, have been great supporters of Land Trust's conservation efforts for many years. In 2011, they donated conservation easements to protect two properties in the town of Caroline. Those properties were then donated outright to the Land Trust in 2019 for resale (still subject to the conservation easement), so the proceeds could further support the organization's conservation projects. Nelly and Jack also gave the Land Trust a car and a lawnmower!

Nelly and Jack began volunteering with the Land Trust in 2012 as conservation easement stewards. It was in 2014, however, when Nelly really stepped up as a significant contributor of volunteer time. She began to spend countless hours inspecting the Land Trust's nature preserve files, summarizing information, and drafting management plan updates. These draft plans saved a lot of time for stewardship staff and helped to expedite approval by the Land Trust's Preserve Management Committee (PMC). Speaking of the PMC, Nelly joined as a member of that committee in 2017 and remains a valued member. A huge *thank you* goes out to Nelly for her dedication and commitment to conserving the lands and waters in the Finger Lakes region. —Chris Olney

8 • THE LAND STEWARD

## Enhancing Protection of the Finger Lakes National Forest

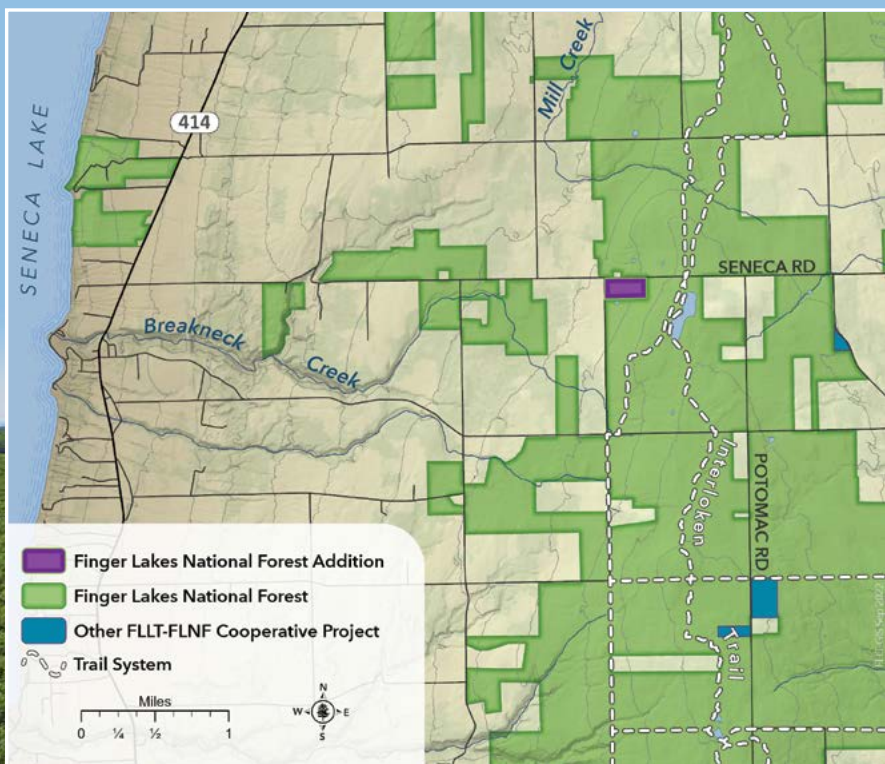
Well known for its miles of multi-use trails, the Finger Lakes National Forest is a patchwork of fields and forests that provide varied recreational opportunities as well as habitat for a diversity of wildlife. Nestled between Cayuga and Seneca lakes, the forest spans over 16,000 acres and is recognized as one of New York State's Important Bird Areas.

In 2017, the Land Trust purchased 24 wooded acres in the town of Hector, Schuyler County using its Opportunity Fund, a dedicated account created by the organization to make time-sensitive acquisitions possible. Surrounded by existing national forest land, the 24-acre inholding was identified as a priority for protection because of its location and frontage on two public roads: Seneca and Wardner Corners.

The Land Trust sold the property to the U.S. Forest Service in September as an addition to the national forest. Proceeds from the sale will be returned to the Opportunity Fund to support the organization's future conservation projects.

Protection of this parcel prevents subdivision that would eliminate intact hardwood forest and degrade the ecological and recreational value of adjacent public lands. The Finger Lakes National Forest is a key component of the Emerald Necklace, an emerging greenbelt that will ultimately link 50,000 acres of existing conservation land in an arc around Ithaca, from the national forest in the west to the Hammond Hill State Forest in the east.

To date, the Land Trust has completed six conservation projects within the forest and will continue to prioritize acquisitions in this area. With more people discovering this part of the Finger Lakes, pressure on this land is increasing. The organization is committed to working with landowners, the Forest Service, and other partners, to ensure the future of this expansive stretch of countryside.





## Acquisition Expands High Vista Nature Preserve above Skaneateles Lake

*continued from page 4*

The preserve can be accessed from a trailhead on Vincent Hill Road or from within the Hinchcliff Preserve, and ambitious hikers can now travel over 4.5 miles within the two. The trails are open during daylight hours for quiet nature observation and low-impact recreation such as hiking and trail running.

The Land Trust is working to create a greenbelt of protected lands around the southern half of Skaneateles Lake, extending from State Route 41 on the east side to State Route 41A on the west. Other publicly accessible conservation lands in the area include Carpenter Falls State Unique Area, Bear Swamp State Forest, and the Land Trust's Bahar Nature Preserve.

## New Addition to Seneca Lake's Catharine Creek Wildlife Management Area

*continued from page 4*

remnant stretch of the Chemung Canal. The canal once extended to Elmira and was one of many commercial waterways in New York that declined with the advent of the railroads.

Before transferring the property, the Land Trust worked in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a wetland restoration project to increase habitat diversity and the site's value for migratory birds.

This is the eighth project undertaken by the Land Trust to secure lands in the vicinity of Watkins Glen and Montour Falls. The organization has already protected more than 200 acres of steep hillsides on the west side of State Route 14, over 500 acres of farmland on the hillsides east of Watkins Glen, and 220 acres of woodlands near the headwaters of Glen Creek, the stream that flows through Watkins Glen State Park. These lands were protected using a mix of direct acquisition and conservation easements.

## New Ithaca Bakery Bread Cards Available

**ITHACA BAKERY** is generously offering bread cards to all current Land Trust members again this year. The bread card entitles members to one FREE loaf of bread per month with a \$5 minimum purchase at the 400 N. Meadow Street and Triphammer Marketplace locations. Please visit the Land Trust's main office at 202 E. Court Street in Ithaca if you would like to pick up your bread card.



## Double Your Impact with Our \$100,000 Matching Gift Challenge

**F**inger Lakes Land Trust members do so much each year to support our conservation work in the region. Thank you! This year, your support will go even further, advancing land and water protection across the region. An anonymous family will match any increase over your 2021 giving dollar for dollar, up to \$100,000. Not a member yet? All new gifts will be matched 1:1.

*Please give generously today at [fltt.org/give](https://fltt.org/give) so that we can protect more land and water in the beautiful Finger Lakes region!*

DEBORAH LITTLEJOHN



# Voters to Consider First Environmental Bond Act in More Than 25 Years

**ON** Election Day, voters across New York state will have the opportunity to show their support for the first environmental bond act on the ballot in more than 25 years. The Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act is a historic piece of legislation that, if passed, will fund critical environmental protection and restoration projects throughout the state.

The \$4.2 billion proposal will support projects that:

- Safeguard clean drinking water, preventing contamination and pollution
- Update aging or failing water and sewer infrastructure
- Reduce carbon pollution that causes climate change
- Preserve forests, wetlands, and other wildlife habitats
- Build renewable energy at public facilities
- And more!

The Bond Act will help advance environmental justice and address inequities by directing 35 to 40 percent of total funding to disadvantaged communities.

The Finger Lakes Land Trust strongly supports this measure and views it as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to invest in the future of New York's environment. For the Finger Lakes, the Bond Act will provide much needed funding to protect our last undeveloped lakeshore, restore critical wetland habitats, conserve family farms, improve public water infrastructure, and reduce local climate risks including flooding-related threats.

The Bond Act would clearly have a significant positive impact on our collective efforts to restore and enhance New York's environment. It is also estimated that the Bond Act would ultimately create nearly 100,000 good jobs.

The lands, waters, wildlife, and communities of the Finger Lakes—and across the state—need your vote! Now is the time to get informed and get involved. Learn more about the Bond Act at [voteyescleanwaterandjobs.com](http://voteyescleanwaterandjobs.com) and vote yes on November 8th.

## Our appreciation for gifts in honor of

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## Our deepest gratitude for thoughtful gifts in memory of

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Family

**Bob Werner**  
FROM  
Ron and Rose Ann Gay

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Your gift will help us protect the lands and waters of the Finger Lakes region, the special places we call home.

Planned gifts come in many forms and can help you live your values.  
Learn more at [flt.org/planned-giving](http://flt.org/planned-giving) or call (607) 275-9487.



MATT CHAMPLIN



# A CLOSER LOOK

## Beauty, Behavior, Benefits *The Diversity and Value of Our Native Bees*

**OF** all the insects, bees occupy a uniquely prominent place in our society and collective consciousness. Everyone knows bees. They're visually striking, economically important, behaviorally remarkable, and to some, maybe even a bit frightening. Their iconic image is everywhere, from preschoolers' yellow-and-black crayon drawings to stylized logos – often these days, with a message to “Bee Kind” or “Save the Bees.”

But who exactly are the bees, and what does it mean to save them?

Most people envision bees as hive-dwelling, honey-making, stinging creatures with a queen at the center of a complex society. This is true only for one species – the honey bee (*Apis mellifera*), introduced to North America by European settlers in the 17th century, and still present in most of our settled and natural landscapes because of continued domestication.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of bees go unappreciated and often, completely unnoticed. There are more than 20,000 known species of bees. A small subset indeed does have yellow and black bands, but bees cover a much more expansive range of dazzling colors—black, white, green, blue, purple, red, orange, yellow, and tan, in all manner of sheen, shade, texture, and pattern. North America has more than 4,000 species of wild native bees—more than twice the number of bird and mammal species combined.

More than three-quarters of bees are solitary nesters. This means that each female is both a worker and a queen, solely responsible for building her own nest, filling it with pollen provisions, and laying eggs, without any division of labor or social organization. Solitary bee behavior and life history are marvelously diverse. Most solitary bees nest in tunnels that they dig in loose soil. Many others nest in existing cavities such as hollow stems, often with protective inner structures made of leaf fragments, resin, or other material. Still others build nests out of mud. Another 10 to 15 percent of wild bees are brood parasites, which do not build nests or collect pollen at all, but rather lay their eggs in other bees' nests. The adult brood parasite or larva kills the host egg or larva, and leaving the parasite offspring to eat and grow in its place.

We depend on honey bees for pollination, especially for certain crops such as almonds and lemons. But native bees are also vitally important pollinators of most crops, including squash, melons, tomatoes, cherries, blueberries, cranberries, soybeans, and sunflowers. In many cases, native bees pollinate more efficiently than honey bees. Perhaps most notably for our Finger Lakes region, recent research has shown that native bees pollinate apple trees as effectively as honey bees, or more so, even when the native bees are fewer in number. Over 100 species of native bees visit apple orchards in the Northeast.

Native bees are also essential for native flowering plants, and vice versa. According to the USGS Native Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab, native bees pollinate

about 80 percent of flowering plants. In many cases, plants and bees have evolved in such close, specialized mutual association that they rely directly on each other. When one declines or disappears, the other follows.

Over 450 species of bees have been documented in the state of New York. From 2017 through 2021, the New York Natural Heritage Program conducted the Empire State Native Pollinator Survey (ESNPS) to determine the



distribution and conservation status of pollinators, including eight selected genera of bees. The survey report, released in summer 2022, concluded that out of 191 bee species in these focal genera, 46 species were at risk of extirpation. Another 20 bee species from historical records were not found in the survey nor in any other studies since 2000.

The ESNPS proposes actions to address key threats to New York's native bees, including reducing pesticide and herbicide use, promoting plant diversity, and supporting pollinator habitats in forests, wetlands, and settled areas. The ESNPS discourages high densities of honey bee hives, citing a growing body of research showing that honey bees may outcompete native bees even outside the agricultural lands where they are intentionally introduced, and may transmit disease or parasites as well.

We need native bees and native bees need us. But truly saving the bees means more than what our first assumptions might suggest. To save the bees, we first need to appreciate their amazing diversity, their ways of life in the wild, and their value to our economy and our ecosystems. We can then piece together an understanding of their distribution and needs. With this will and knowledge, we can take action to reduce threats and sustain landscapes where our wonderful, diverse native bees can thrive.

—Mark Chao

Visit [www.nynhp.org/projects/pollinators](http://www.nynhp.org/projects/pollinators) to learn more about the Empire State Native Pollinator Survey.



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### Advisors:

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[gofingerlakes.org](http://gofingerlakes.org)

 [instagram@gofingerlakes](https://www.instagram.com/gofingerlakes)  
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BILL BANASZEWSKI