



The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

Partnership Helps Protect Cayuga Inlet Water Quality



One of the key aspects of the Land Trust's mission is protecting water quality in the Finger Lakes region, and a critical area of focus is the protection of streams and wetlands. Wetlands and streamside flora create a natural filter system, provide habitat for a diverse array of wildlife, and ease rapid stormwater run-off into our lakes.

Toward that end, the Land Trust recently acquired 43 acres of land

in the town of Newfield, Tompkins County, with several wetlands and significant frontage on Cayuga Inlet. The property, which is completely undeveloped except for a gravel pad intended for a home site, became available as part of an estate sale.

Once part of a farm, the property is a sprawling floodplain featuring open meadow, brushland, and multiple wetlands. In addition, there is a narrow band of forest spanning

the more than 5,000 feet of frontage along the Inlet.

The Inlet is a significant tributary to Cayuga Lake and a popular recreational trout stream. The Land Trust has two nature preserves that border the Inlet—the Tapan Mitra Preserve, which is two miles north of this property, and the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby. Other nearby protected lands include

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Successful conservation depends on strong partnerships and local towns and villages can play a key role by helping to protect our region's lands and waters.

This year, the Land Trust named the Town of Ithaca and the Town of Canandaigua as our 2023 *Conservationists of the Year*. Both towns collaborated closely with us on projects that permanently protect natural areas and farmland within their rapidly growing communities. These municipalities also initiate land protection projects on their own to ensure that their future includes adequate parks and green space. The Land Trust applauds our partners along with every community that actively conserves land and water resources.

Local municipalities can ensure the character, integrity, and resilience of their communities through:

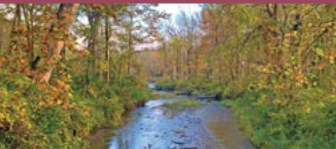
- **Effective Land Use Planning:** To guide future development and conservation efforts, each community needs a carefully developed land use plan as well as policies to ensure the plan's implementation. The nature of the planning process should be tailored to the nature of the community—it is to be expected that the planning process for our most rural communities will differ from that of a rapidly suburbanizing municipality.
- **Land Protection:** While the Land Trust is active across our 12-county region, we simply cannot undertake all of the conservation projects that are worthy of attention. Locally significant conservation projects deserve local attention, and a municipality can

make all the difference. In the western Finger Lakes, for example, the Town of South Bristol worked in partnership with the Land Trust to create Carolabarb Park. Along the banks of the Chemung River, the Town of Big Flats partnered with the Land Trust to secure a public access point.

- **Land Stewardship:** Monitoring and caring for conserved lands is critically important to their long-term health and viability. Municipalities need to ensure adequate oversight of lands under their management. They can also work with the Land Trust to enhance public access to existing nature preserves. For example, several towns have agreed to plow our nature preserve parking lots to help keep them clear of snow during the winter, while others have assisted with parking lot improvements to ensure safe access.

By working together, the public and private sectors can leverage resources and achieve conservation outcomes that are both more effective and more resilient. With development pressures increasing across our region, additional partnerships will be critically important. We are happy to see our *Conservationists of the Year* demonstrating how we can achieve more by working together.

Andrew Zepp, Executive Director



Land Acquisition Protects Land along Cayuga Inlet

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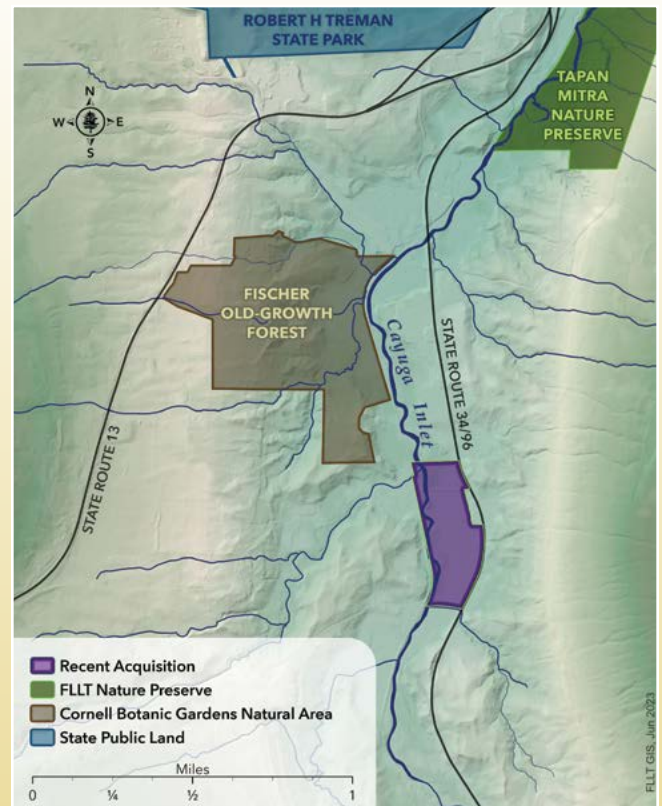
a couple of Cornell Botanic Gardens Natural Areas and Robert H. Treman State Park.

The property was a priority for conservation because its close proximity to Ithaca and frontage on State Highway 34/96 made it vulnerable to development. In fact, two acres in the southeast corner of the parcel had originally been slated to be the site of a Dollar General store. However, after Dollar General declined to pursue the project, the Land Trust was able to add that acreage to the purchase.

To acquire the property, the Land Trust received some funding from New York State's Water Quality Improvement Program, which helps finance projects that improve water quality, restore aquatic habitat, and/or protect a drinking water source. Additional funds came from the Tompkins County Capital Reserve Fund for Open Space.

The final part of the plan for this property involves donating it to the Wetland Trust, a non-profit organization that is committed to protecting and restoring wetlands across the state of New York. The transfer includes a deed restriction that limits land use to conservation and low-impact recreation. The Wetland Trust currently owns 84 properties covering more than 2,800 acres of wetlands, and the organization's expertise in wetlands management and restoration will help guide the stewardship of this property.

—Jeff Tonole



New Conservation Easement Protects Skaneateles Lake Water Quality

A half-mile from the shores of Skaneateles Lake, Shotwell Brook quietly flows through the permanently protected Fox Run Farm.

Landowners Pat and Jessica Danial purchased this 90-acre property in 2018, which is located along East Lake Road and Pork Street in the town of Skaneateles. In addition to nearly 5,000 feet of stream frontage, the property features 14 acres of mature forest, wetland habitats, and a mix of farmland with 58 acres of prime soils. As lifetime residents of the greater Syracuse area, with the last 8 years spent on Skaneateles Lake, the Danials value the health of the lake as the region's primary source of drinking water. With that in mind, the family committed to granting a conservation easement to forever protect their land's natural resources.

Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements that permanently limit future land use in order to protect the conservation values. Lands subject to conservation

easements remain in private ownership, on local tax rolls, and available for uses such as farming and hunting.

Reducing nutrient pollution through improved farming practices is one of the Danials' main conservation goals. To this end, their easement expands the streamside buffer along the banks of an additional Skaneateles Lake tributary on the property which will allow vegetation to establish naturally. The easement provides extra protection to this sensitive area by designating it as an environmental protection zone.

Pat and Jessica stated, "We're excited to announce our support for the Finger Lakes Land Trust's hard work in protecting the Skaneateles watershed. Through the placement of a conservation easement on our farm, we're taking another small step

towards ensuring the long-term health and vibrancy of the area. As members of the local community, we feel a deep responsibility to preserve the natural beauty of our lake and to safeguard its resources for future generations."

Funding for this project was provided by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) program which has helped the Land Trust secure conservation projects that protect water quality throughout the Finger Lakes region. The WQIP program is a competitive grant program that funds projects that directly improve water quality, aquatic habitat, and/or protect a drinking water source.
—Amy Olney



Partnership Secures Entrance to Ganondagan State Historic Site, Home to the Seneca Art & Culture Center

When Europeans arrived in North America during the late 15th century, what is now known as New York State was home to many distinct groups of indigenous peoples. Inhabiting portions of the Finger Lakes region and Western New York were the Seneca—Onöndowa'ga:' in their own language, which means "Great Hill People." Today, the rich culture, history, and living traditions of the Seneca and other Haudenosaunee Confederacy nations are exhibited at Ganondagan State Historic Site in Victor, in northern Ontario County.

At the request of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), the Land Trust recently purchased 15 acres directly across from the entrance to Ganondagan on County Road 41. The property features meadows and a pond which provide habitat for grassland birds in an area that is facing significant development pressure. The property will eventually be transferred to New York State as an addition to Ganondagan, ensuring the natural character of the surrounding landscape.

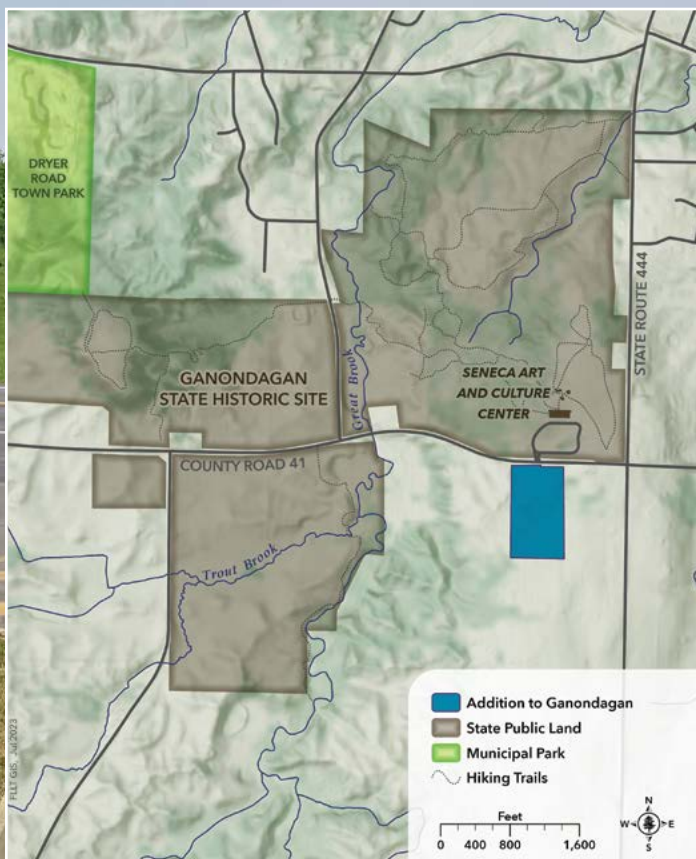
This project is part of an ongoing effort by OPRHP to safeguard the property before its rural surroundings are lost to encroaching suburban development. Spanning 569 acres, Ganondagan is the original site of a 17th century Seneca town and home to the 17,300-square-foot Seneca Art & Culture Center, a Seneca Bark Longhouse, and a series of interpretive trails. Built into the surrounding natural landscape, the Art & Culture Center is a year-

round interpretive facility featuring a theatre, gift shop, and multimedia exhibits. Ganondagan, a National Historic Landmark, is New York State's only historic site dedicated to a Native American theme, and the only Seneca town interpreted in the United States.

"Ganondagan is a site of both national and local historical importance and is particularly cherished by the Haudenosaunee people," said Michael Galban, Ganondagan's Site Manager. "We seek to protect the site and preserve it into the future, for the seventh generation to appreciate and enjoy. The partnership with the Finger Lakes Land Trust plays a critical role in that mission and we thank them for all they do."

The purchase was made possible by the FLLT's Opportunity Fund, an internal revolving loan fund that is utilized for time-sensitive acquisitions and then replenished either through fundraising or the sale of land to a public conservation agency.

The Land Trust is also working to protect additional ancestral Seneca lands at the south end of Canandaigua Lake. Most recently, the organization acquired 58 wooded acres on the east side of the lake in the town of Middlesex. The property, which will be managed as a nature preserve, is located on a steep forested ridge revered by the Seneca as the birthplace of their people. Extending for more than three miles, the ridge goes by many names, including Nundawao, Great Hill, South Hill, or "the Whaleback."



The Town of Ithaca supported the expansion of the FLLT's Tapan Mitra Preserve which protects more than a mile of frontage on the Cayuga Inlet.

CHRIS RAY

Towns of Canandaigua and Ithaca Awarded as Conservationists of the Year

AT its annual meeting in June, the Land Trust recognized both the Town of Canandaigua and the Town of Ithaca as its "Conservationists of the Year." Both municipalities acted quickly to secure significant open space over the course of the past year and continue to build on their ongoing commitment to land and water conservation.

The FLLT recognized the Town of Canandaigua for successfully acquiring a key addition to McJannett Park. The property is located within a planned greenbelt that may ultimately connect the FLLT's Canandaigua Vista Preserve to the town's Onanda Park on the western shore of Canandaigua Lake.

This recent acquisition continues a partnership between the Town of Canandaigua and the FLLT that includes collaboration on multiple farmland protection projects and the town's financial support for the FLLT's acquisition of the Canandaigua Vista Preserve.

The Town of Ithaca was recognized for its creative and timely acquisition of a property bordering Cayuga Inlet that features significant fish and wildlife habitat. The property is located within the proposed Black Diamond Rail Trail



Canandaigua Town Manager Doug Finch, FLLT board president Dave Birchenough, State Senator Pam Helming, volunteer Marty Dodge, landowners Duannah Barnum and Suzie Underhill, and FLLT Executive Director Andy Zepp at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening of the Canandaigua Vista Nature Preserve in fall 2021.

KELLY MAKOSCH

extension that will ultimately connect the city of Ithaca to Robert H. Treman State Park. This is the second property that the town has acquired for conservation in this area.

The FLLT and the Town of Ithaca also have a long-standing partnership that includes collaborating on the creation of three town-owned nature preserves as well as the town's financial support for expanding the FLLT's Tapan Mitra Preserve and creating public access.

"We are grateful to both of these communities for their commitment to conservation," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "The Land Trust couldn't possibly succeed in its mission without strong support from communities like Canandaigua and Ithaca."

2023 VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR Stu and Lucy Schweizer Dave and Amy Allyn

The Land Trust is thrilled to award this year's Volunteer of the Year to four incredibly deserving members—Stu and Lucy Schweizer of Pine City, and Dave and Amy Allyn of Skaneateles. The four worked tirelessly together as co-chairs of the Finger Lakes Forever capital campaign. The campaign, which just concluded, raised a record-breaking \$22.45 million for land and water conservation and has already helped fund 79 protection projects.

Both Stu and Amy served on the board of directors and all four of our Volunteers of the Year are deeply committed to advancing the Land Trust's mission. Please help us thank Stu, Lucy, Dave, and Amy for their leadership, dedication, and love of the Finger Lakes.

BILL BANASZEWSKI

SCENES

from Around
Our Region...



FLLT Director of Stewardship Chris Olney, Nature Preserve Manager Jason Gorman, and Senior Director Kelly Makosch at an early spring tree planting at the VanRiper Conservation Area in Seneca County. Cayuga Landscape Co. in Ithaca donated over 20 trees for an ongoing stream restoration project at the preserve.

ERIC MASTROBERTY



MATT CHAMPLIN



KELLY MAKOSCH



The serene McIlroy Bird Sanctuary in Cayuga County is located along the Lake Como outlet and is bisected by Fall Creek near its headwaters.



Laura Kammermeier of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology led a walk to discover what birds species were to be found at the Canandaigua Vista Preserve in Ontario County in early June.

FLLT



Rod Howe, Town of Ithaca Supervisor; Aveek Majumdar, nephew of Tapan Mitra; Andrew Zepp, FLLT Executive Director; Katie Borgella, Tompkins County Director of Planning & Sustainability; and Polly McClure, President of Cayuga Trails Club, at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the dedication of the Tapan Mitra Preserve in Tompkins County.



In May, a group of volunteers from the Corning Professional Network finished much-needed trail improvements at the Plymouth Woods Nature Preserve in Chemung County.

JASON GORMAN

ITHACA AREA NATURE PRESERVES Expand with New Acquisitions

Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve Grows with 14th Addition

A favorite spot for birders, hikers, and other nature enthusiasts, the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in Tompkins County has expanded with the recent purchase of 8.5 acres. Located off Station Road in West Danby, the property adjoins the northeastern corner of the preserve and represents the 14th addition to this growing conservation area which now stands at 554 acres.

The mostly wooded property features a small wetland and a tributary to the Cayuga Inlet. Protection of this parcel safeguards water quality in the inlet, a major tributary to Cayuga Lake. Partial funding for the purchase came from the FLLT's Finger Lakes Forever Campaign and the Estate of Margaret Bald.

The Land Trust has been steadily expanding the Lindsay-Parsons Preserve since it 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. Initially only 36 acres, the preserve now spans the floodplain and steep slopes of the Cayuga Inlet valley, extending to Danby State Forest.

The preserve is also located in the Emerald Necklace, an 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, 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.

An exceptional place for bird watching, the Lindsay-Parsons Preserve is open year-round for quiet nature observation and low-impact recreational activities such as hiking and cross-country skiing. Nearly four miles of trails lead visitors through forest, meadows, and past a lake and glacier-carved kettle ponds. A wetland overlook offering plenty of wildlife viewing opportunities can be found on Sylvan Lane next to the West Danby Firehouse, opposite the main preserve entrance on Route 34/96. More information can be found at fllt.org/lindsay.



CHRIS RAY

New Etna Preserve Addition Adds to Protection of Fall Creek

Eleven acres with more than 3,100 feet of frontage along Fall Creek in the town of Dryden, Tompkins County were recently added to the organization's Etna Nature Preserve.

Protection of this new parcel safeguards habitat for fish and wildlife as well as water quality within Fall Creek—the drinking water supply for Cornell University and a major tributary of Cayuga Lake.

Situated between Upper Creek Road and New York State Route 366, the newly acquired property is a floodplain along this section of Fall Creek. It also adjoins the northern

boundary of the Etna Preserve, bringing the total protected streambank here to 6,200 feet. The new parcel is accessible from an existing pull off on Route 366.

The FLLT's Etna Nature Preserve consists of woods, wetlands, and streams, with a short hiking trail that complements the landscape and facilitates bird watching. The trail passes by a wetland, crosses

a bridge over a tributary to Fall Creek, and loops through a spruce plantation.

Partial funding for this project was provided by the Land Trust's Finger Lakes Forever campaign and the estate of Margaret Bald. More information on the Etna Nature Preserve can be found at flt.org/etna.

30K
ACRES
CONSERVED FOREVER

Thanks to the dedication of Land Trust members, partners, and volunteers, the organization has protected more than 30,000 acres of forests, farms, meadows, and lakeshores across the 12-county Finger Lakes region.

That makes 30,000 small victories for conservation—and 30,000 big reasons to say thank you!

Achieving this 30,000 acre milestone follows the completion of the organization's Finger Lakes Forever fundraising campaign which advanced 9 conservation projects, resulting in the protection of 5,937 acres of land, 33.5 miles of streambank, and 14,124 feet of lakeshore.

To date, the organization has protected more than 5 miles of lakeshore and has 45 nature preserves open to everyone, with over 53 miles of trails. So, get outdoors and enjoy these lands! See the map at flt.org/map.

Our deepest gratitude for thoughtful gifts in memory of

Linc Adams
FROM

Neha Khanna and Eric Rosario

Grace Doyle
FROM

Cheryl and David Richardson

Christian M. Duttweiler
FROM

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Pam Schu
FROM
Alfred University Wellness Center

Joan Tregaskis
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*Tamara Farrell
Cora Lee Foster
Cynthia Hagin*

Our appreciation for gifts in honor of

Sue and Tom Beresford
FROM
Brenton and Joanne Wiggins

Dave Birchenough
FROM
Tony and Kelly Scalzo

Karen Confer
FROM
Laura Stenzler and Karel A. Schat

Betsy Darlington
FROM
Mary and Robert Hanno

Jim and Nancy Johnson
FROM
Nancy and Craig Johnson

Your Car Needed for Conservation!

The Land Trust seeks the donation of a late model vehicle to support outreach and stewardship efforts across our 12-county service area. Contact Senior Director Kelly Makosch (kellymakosch@flit.org or 607-275-9487) for additional information.

OUR FOREVER WORK...

Our Forever Home

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 flit.org/planned-giving or call (607) 275-9487.

Peregrine Falcon: *The Pilgrim Bird*

"For ten years I spent all my winters searching for that restless brilliance, for the sudden passion and violence that peregrines flush from the sky. For ten years I have been looking upward for that cloud-biting anchor shape, that crossbow flinging through the air."

J.A. Baker's *The Peregrine*, published in 1967, was a requiem for a dying world. Falcons had been methodically slaughtered in England several decades earlier in order to protect homing pigeons carrying wartime messages. Now the surviving populations were being decimated by organochlorine pesticides.

"Few peregrines are left, there will be fewer, they may not survive. Many die on their backs, clutching inanely at the sky in their last convulsions, withered and burnt away by the filthy, insidious pollen of farm chemicals." DDT, one of those chemicals, thinned eggshells so that they crumpled like paper. In the U.S., the same thing was happening. There were almost no peregrines east of the Mississippi and only a few more in the west. The species was placed on the Endangered Species list in 1970.

It was an ignominious ending to a millennia-long partnership. Before the invention of accurate firearms, tamed raptors were used to hunt birds, and peregrines have clutched the gloved fists of many generations of falconers. Releasing a bird to hunt is like launching an autonomous military drone. Once it sees a pigeon down below, it draws its long wings, small head, and streamlined body into a dart: one wonders if early arrowhead-makers were imitating the shape of hunting falcons. As it freefalls toward the earth at over 200 mph, baffles in its nostrils allow it to breathe, a shuttering third lid keeps its eyes moist and clear, and its black mask reduces glare from the sun. The unlucky pigeon is sliced by its talons at one-third the speed of sound: instant death.

The efficient savagery of the peregrine is in curious tension with its poetic name, which has been used since at least the fourteenth century. *Peregrine* comes from a Latin word meaning "foreigner," "pilgrim," or "wanderer." There are many theories of its origin, none satisfactory. Some say that it comes from the fact that falcons nest on high cliffs, so chicks had to be taken during their first flights, or "pilgrimages." Others say that it is because

they choose nesting sites far from where they hatch, or because they migrate long distances (though this is only true of some populations). Ironically, *Falco peregrinus* is no foreigner: it is found on every continent except Antarctica, and in all but the harshest environments.

Perhaps its characteristic black hood reminded people of the headgear of medieval travelers. Or perhaps—and now I am merely speculating—its striking yellow-ringed eyes and black mask made it seem alien, possibly even a messenger to the gods. There is, after all, archeological evidence that peregrines played a role in the spiritual lives of peoples as far apart as the Mississippi Valley and North Africa. The Egyptian god Horus had the head of a peregrine.

Once revered for its fierceness and connection to spiritual realms, the peregrine had transformed into a bad omen by the 1960s. Apex predators were most vulnerable because DDT accumulated in their tissues, but soon all of the birds would fall silent.

Citizens, scientists, lawyers, and politicians sprang into action in response to the imminent disaster in a way that seems almost miraculous today. Cornell ornithologists collected birds in Alaska, bred them in captivity, and released them into the wild. DDT was banned in 1972, though it took years for it to degrade in the environment. The peregrine population climbed steadily, and the species was taken off of the federal Endangered Species list in 1999.

Although they are still considered endangered in New York State, these pilgrim birds now breed in the Adirondacks and the Hudson Valley. They have even journeyed outside of their historic range in order to live in cities, which are full of urban cliffs like skyscrapers and bridges. After 74 years of absence, a nesting pair took up residence at Taughannock Falls in 2020. J. A. Baker mused, "The eye becomes insatiable for hawks": delighted and grateful locals would agree.

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller



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Finger Lakes Land Trust

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Upcoming Events

Geology of the Finger Lakes Saturday, September 9 at 9:30 a.m.

Join geologist George Thomas on this trip to visit two iconic Finger Lakes Land Trust nature preserves in Tompkins County—the **Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve** and the **Thayer Preserve**—to view different aspects of the local geology. George will discuss the geologic origins and setting of each of these preserves and their relationship to the overall geologic development of the Finger Lakes region.

Raise a Glass!

Prison City Brewing • 251 North Street Auburn, NY
Sunday, September 17 from 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Enjoy a cold drink in support of conservation! Prison City Brewing will donate **\$1** for every glass served to the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Mingle with staff, members, and volunteers, and learn about the Land Trust's latest land and water conservation projects.

See full details including registration info and directions at fllt.org/events.