



# The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Vol. 25, No. 4 • Autumn 2013

## Bock Family Donates Woodland Gem for Emerald Necklace

*A 48-acre property with scenic views and near to other protected lands was recently conserved, thanks to a generous donation by the Bock family of Enfield, in Tompkins County.*

The Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve is now protected through a partnership between the Finger Lakes Land Trust, the Finger Lakes Trail Conference and the Cayuga Trails Club.

The property, made up of forest—including a stand of old growth sugar maple, and scenic meadows—lies within the Emerald Necklace Greenbelt in the town of Enfield. In addition to hosting a half-mile of the Finger Lakes Trail, the new preserve lies across Porter Hill Road from the Cayuga Trails Club's Reiman Woods and is in close proximity to the Land Trust's Stevenson Forest Preserve as well as other protected lands.

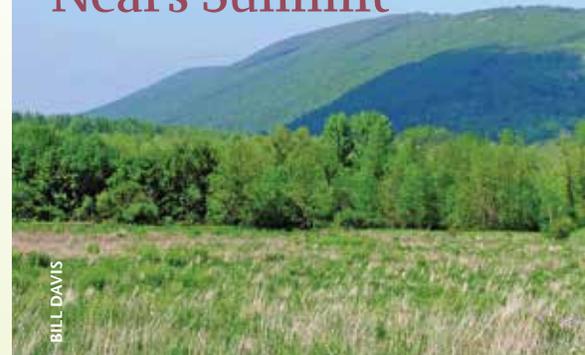
The parcel has been in the Bock-Harvey family since the early 1800s. "This land has been in my family ever since Europeans were in this part of the country," said Dave Bock. The property was once Revolutionary War Tract land that was used as an incentive to enlist New Yorkers to fight in the war. Later, it was purchased by Samuel Harvey, Dave Bock's paternal ancestor.

"From original settler to our youngest spans nine generations" of family members who have enjoyed the land, Dave Bock said. "My dad [Bob Bock] said to me five years ago, how would you kids feel if I gave the old woods to the Land Trust some day. My immediate response was, if you don't do it, I am going to," he added.

*continued on page 4*

*The new Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve is host to a half-mile of the Finger Lakes Trail.*

## Capital Campaign Nears Summit



*The Great Hill Nature Preserve at the south end of Canandaigua Lake is among the targeted areas that will benefit from the Land Trust's first region-wide capital campaign.*

Thanks to early and generous support from our members, the Land Trust's first region-wide capital campaign, *Shoreline to Summit: A Campaign for the Finger Lakes* has raised nearly \$4.5 million and is 89 percent complete. The campaign has a new name (due to a trademark issue), a new website ([www.flit.org/shoreline](http://www.flit.org/shoreline)), and increased momentum; the ambitious goals remain the same.

- By 2014, the Land Trust will have added **four new preserves** to our growing list of lands that are open to the public. The new conservation areas not only feature stunning lake views and protect fragile habitat, but also collectively preserve over 3,000 feet of wild shoreline on Cayuga, Canandaigua, and Skaneateles Lakes.
- Over the course of the campaign, the Land Trust will **protect over 400 acres of critical habitat buffering our streams**, including more than 23,000 feet of land bordering our region's creeks. Projects will secure key tributaries to several of our largest Finger Lakes.
- We will **grow our green revolving fund**, so we are ready to move quickly as time-sensitive

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It was quite a sight and quite a feeling for me: multiple generations of the Bock and Harvey families gathered on a scenic hillside in Enfield, Tompkins County, to commemorate their families' tradition of careful stewardship with the dedication of the new Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve. A palpable sense of family and community ties pervaded the event, as friends, neighbors, and relatives all cheered their wonderful shared commitment to the land.

I truly believe that the Bock and Harvey families have been strengthened by this land legacy. Future generations of the clan will have the opportunity to walk the same trails that their ancestors did and run their hands over the bark of the ancient sugar maples that grace this land.

Not all of us have the opportunity to own family land, however. What is to be our legacy? For every supporter of the Land Trust, this legacy is the ever-increasing portfolio of conserved lands that can be found throughout the Finger Lakes region.

Go for a hike at our largest preserve, Steege Hill,

and enjoy the solitude and the signs of black bear and porcupine; visit our West River Conservation Area near Canandaigua and look for Northern Harrier hunting in the newly restored grasslands; stroll a stretch of wild shoreline at our Van Riper Conservation Area on Cayuga Lake; or admire the splendor of Carpenter's Falls near Skaneateles.

Take the time to enjoy these lands and cherish them—for they are *your* legacy.

Please consider adding to this legacy by making a special contribution this year to our *Shoreline to Summit* capital campaign. Your gift will help ensure that our children and grandchildren will have the opportunity to enjoy the natural world as we have and will one day lead their own children and grandchildren to the same paths and vistas that we so much enjoy today.

Above all, get out there and soak up the pleasures these places offer. You'll be glad you did!  
—Andy Zepp

## Canandaigua Watershed Benefits from Land Gift

The Land Trust recently received a donation of two parcels of undeveloped land in Naples, Ontario County. The parcels—donated by Inez Lipman, a resident of Rockland, Maryland—are located at the southern end of Canandaigua Lake, directly across State Route 21 from the extensive wetlands in the 6,100-acre High Tor Wildlife Management Area.

The Lipman land gift lies within the Canandaigua Highlands Heritage Area, one of the Land Trust's focus areas in its current regional capital fundraising campaign. The two parcels, which are separated by a small house lot, comprise just over nine acres along the western slope leading down to the High Tor Wildlife Management Area. The properties feature hillside woodlands scored by rugged ravines with streams that feed into the 1,000-plus acres of wetlands at High Tor. The site lies within an Audubon Society-designated Important Bird Area.

"We're grateful to Inez and her family for this generous gift," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "This property is located within one of our region's most significant wildlife habitats. Protection of the land will also help ensure Canandaigua Lake's water quality and maintain a scenic highway corridor that is enjoyed by many visitors to the area."

The properties were originally acquired by Inez Lipman's late husband, Albert, and the land has been held by the Lipman family for decades. Albert Lipman was a Rochester native who loved the Naples area, which he often referred to as "God's country."

"My father appreciated and valued wide open spaces," said Martin Lipman, Inez and Albert's son. "He

would be pleased that this gift will help preserve open spaces and the natural beauty of the land."

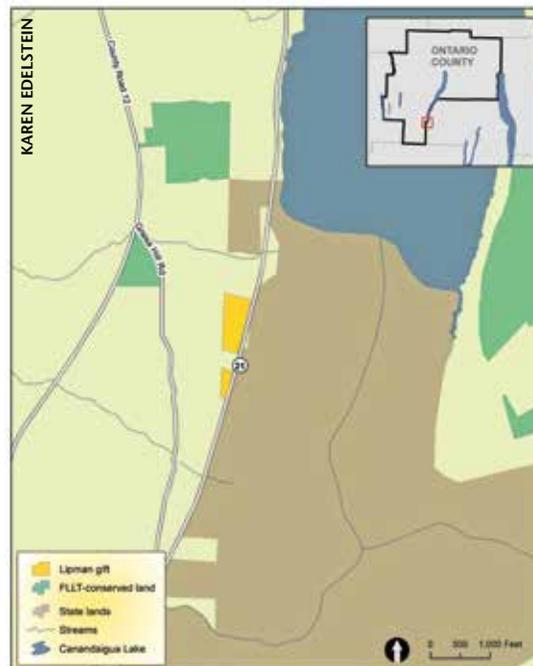
Despite the relatively small size of the parcels, the Land Trust welcomed the opportunity to protect these properties to ensure the integrity of an environmentally sensitive and scenic natural area. The forested lands provide a buffer for the High Tor wetlands and protect streams that ultimately flow into Canandaigua Lake, thereby helping maintain water quality within the Canandaigua Lake watershed.

Protecting these two parcels also helps maintain the existing scenic road corridor along State Route 21, as the properties provide more than 1,300 feet of undeveloped road frontage.

In past years, Land Trust projects such as the Great Hill Nature Preserve and Grimes Glen County Park have added local land resource protection to augment the state's High Tor Wildlife Management Area and Bare Hill State Unique Area.

The Land Trust is actively pursuing the protection of adjacent and nearby parcels. For example, the Land Trust recently acquired 68 acres adjacent to the Bare Hill State Unique Area and partnered with the Town of Canandaigua to secure wetlands bordering Middle Cheshire Road. Land purchases, conservation easements, and land donations from Land Trust friends such as the Lipmans are heartening signs for the future of Canandaigua Lake.  
—Jeff Tonole

*The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Sarah Pellerin of the law firm of Harter Secrest & Emery LLP in Rochester for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.*



## Take a Story Walk

On a beautiful fall morning at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve near Ithaca, more than 40 children, parents, and grandparents journeyed along the trail for the launch of the Land Trust's second Story Walk. Valerie Akers, local educator and founder of Corner of the Sky preschool, led the group through the woods and over a stream, stopping along the way to read *Those Darn Squirrels* by Adam Rubin.

Some children sprinted ahead, while others poked along the path looking for mushrooms and salamanders, but they came together to hear each new page of the story.

Patricia Maule, Land Trust member and grandmother remarked, "The story walk had everything you could wish for—a great setting, an amazing reader, and a group of enthusiastic young children who couldn't wait to race to the spot where they could hear a little more of the book. My granddaughters loved it!"

*continued on page 4*



Local educator Valerie Akers captures the attention of participants at the recent Story Walk at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve near Ithaca.

RICK LIGHTBODY

## Grassland Habitat Restored Near Canandaigua Lake

Thanks to a partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and support from an anonymous donor, what was one year ago an abandoned vineyard characterized by deteriorating grape trellises and non-native shrubs is now a scenic grassland habitat with sweeping views of the extensive wetlands at the south end of Canandaigua Lake.

The transformation started with the donation of this 60-acre property to the Land Trust by Constellation Brands in 2011. The land is located next to High Tor Wildlife Management Area, a recognized Important Bird Area that sprawls across more than 6,000 acres of diverse habitats, including extensive wetlands, hardwood forests, and several rugged gorges.

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Photo taken April 17, 2013 at the start of vineyard clearing

STEVE KNAPP

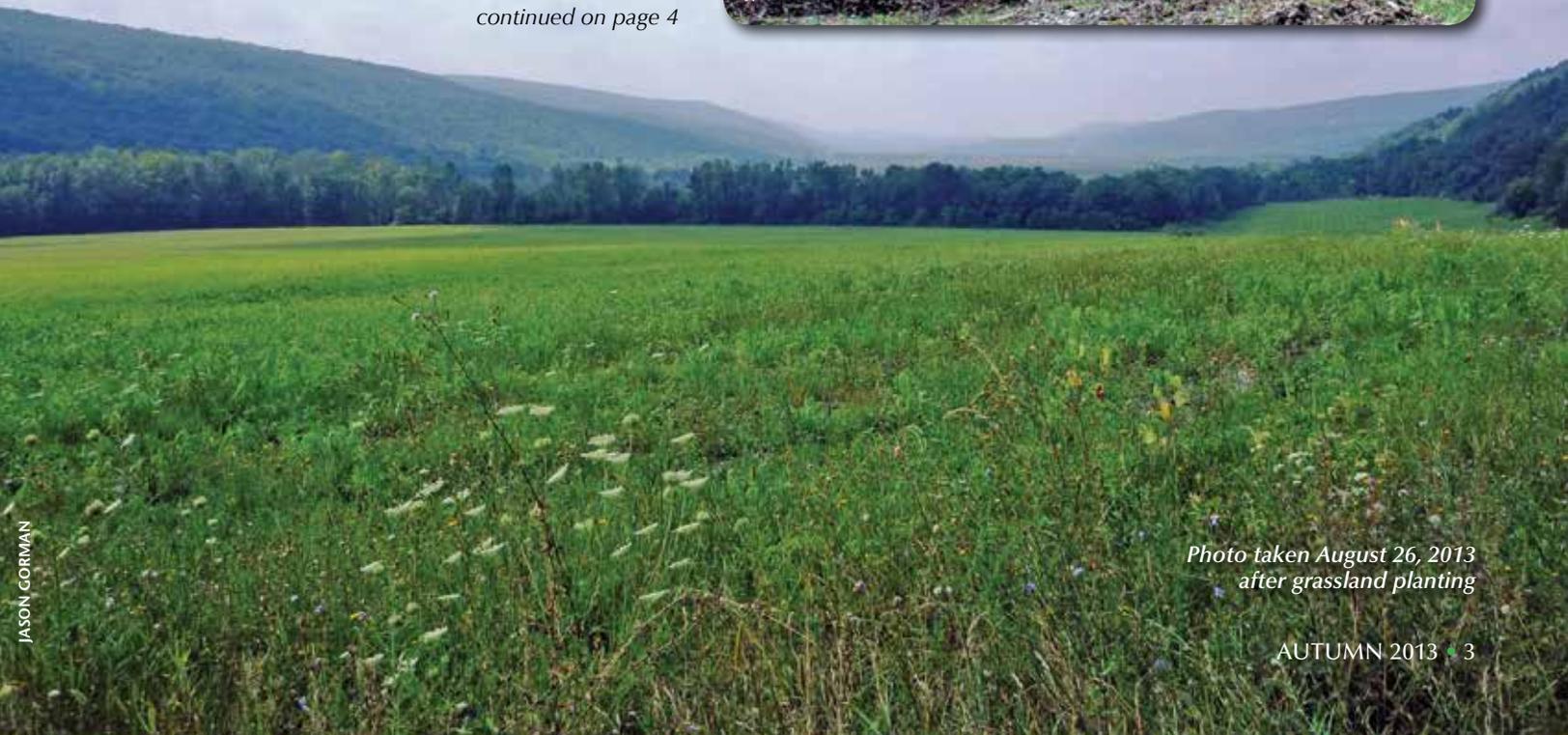


Photo taken August 26, 2013 after grassland planting



## Bock Family Donates Woodland Gem for Emerald Necklace *continued from cover*

As it turned out, Dave Bock made initial contact with the Land Trust about two years ago. Executive Director Andrew Zepp came and looked at the property, expressed interest, and then brought in the Cayuga Trails Club and the Finger Lakes Trail Conference to assist in the transfer of the property from the Bock family. The land is now protected through a partnership: The Finger Lakes Trail Conference owns the land, the conservation easement is held by the Finger Lakes Land Trust, and the Cayuga Trails Club will help manage the property.

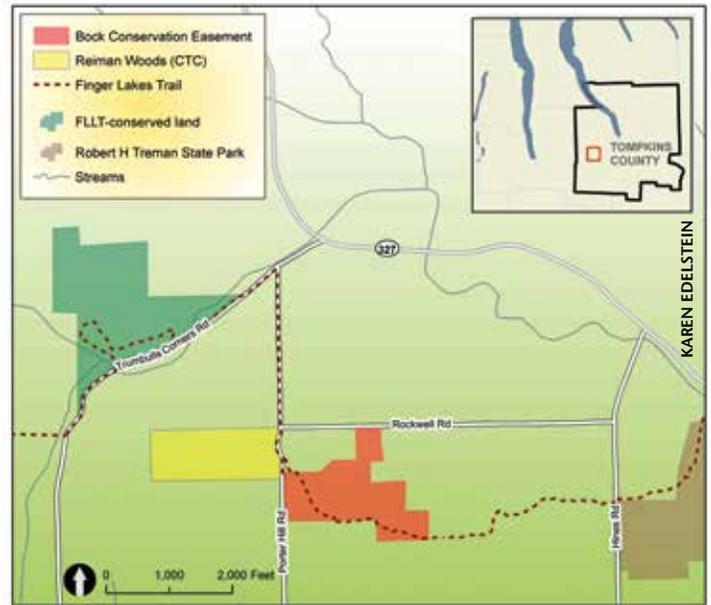
About a third of the forest includes old-growth maples that may be as old as 300 years. "In this day and age, with the value of timber, it's a miracle these [old maples] survived," said Mike DeMunn, consulting forester and ecologist, who has tended the property for years. DeMunn noted that one of the biggest threats to the old trees may have come in the 1950s, when "virtually every sugar maple stand around here was basically cut of their finest big maples for furniture and bowling alleys." A nearby woodlot that DeMunn recently marked had lost all its big maples, for example.

Also, none of the old maples in the Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve have been tapped for syrup, a practice that introduces fungal spores and decay and shortens a tree's lifespan, DeMunn said.

"Bob Bock told me when he was a boy he used to play in there [the woods] and loved being around those big old trees. And generations before him," DeMunn said.

Indeed, every generation had collected stories of playing in the woods. Dave Bock and his brother and sister recounted riding horses, having egg fights, and daring each other to step in fresh cow pies.

"Wealth comes in many forms, and we now get a chance to pass our amazing legacy along to future generations of kids



unknown.... I couldn't be happier," said Dave Bock, during a dedication ceremony for the preserve led by his niece, Megan Barber, on September 14 in Enfield.

"I hate going in to a woodland and I see giant stumps in there and I wonder what these trees were like," said DeMunn. In the section of Bock's property that still houses some big old maples, "you don't have to wonder what these great trees were like."  
— Krishna Ramanujan

*The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Dick Ruswick of Ithaca for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.*

## Take a Story Walk *continued from page 3*

This was the second Story Walk this year. Earlier in the summer, *Just a Dream*, by Chris Van Allsburg, captured the children's attention with beautiful illustrations and a cautionary environmental tale as they hiked, splashed, and discovered along the path.

Since the initial Story Walk, many children continue to explore the preserve with their friends and family members on self-guided walking and reading adventures through the fern-carpeted forest. Through October, the heavily laminated pages of the Rubin book are located in small groups along the path for all to enjoy. Families who attended the launch, or who complete the walk on their own this fall, can receive a free copy of *Those Darn Squirrels* by visiting the Land Trust's main office in Ithaca, courtesy of a grant awarded by the Friends of the Tompkins County Library.

The Land Trust looks forward to hosting a winter story walk in the coming months. It will be a great excuse for kids to pull on some snow pants and get outside.

The Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve is on Ellis Hollow Creek Road in Dryden, Tompkins County. A map and directions may be found on the Land Trust's website at [www.fllt.org](http://www.fllt.org)

## Grassland Habitat Restored Near Canandaigua Lake *continued from page 3*

The Land Trust consulted with multiple wildlife biologists, and each recommended restoring native grassland habitat on the site. According to Jillian Liner, director of bird conservation for Audubon New York, grassland birds are declining faster than any other group of birds in the state.

It is hoped that Bobolinks and other grassland birds, such as the Savannah Sparrow, will return to the site next year. After careful planning, a contractor cleared the site this spring, and Fish and Wildlife Service staff subsequently planted a mix of native grasses and wildflowers on the property.

The land now hosts a mix of native and non-native grasses and wildflowers. To favor the native species that are still getting established, staff from the Fish and Wildlife Service returned to the site this summer to mow the entire area.

The Land Trust is now raising funds to develop a scenic overlook, interpretive signs, and a birding trail that will link the site to adjacent state wildlife lands. If you would like to contribute to this project, please contact Kelly Makosch at [kelly@fllt.org](mailto:kelly@fllt.org).

# PRESERVE PROFILE

## The Recovered Beauty of Steege Hill

*On a cool, sparkly Monday morning in early fall, all in a whoosh I slammed shut my nagging laptop, loaded film into my camera, grabbed a jacket, jumped into the car, and sped south to the Land Trust's Steege Hill Nature Preserve. The preserve is located in the Southern Tier town of Big Flats, where the Chemung River snakes between Corning and Elmira.*

On the south bank of the Chemung, Steege Hill rises to almost 1800 feet above a deep bend in the river—the river had to get out of the way, it seems. The 794-acre preserve (acquired in 2001 through the generous support of an anonymous donor) has the top of the hill at its center, and I had gorgeous, sunlit views of the river valley below from clearings along the trails. The hiking is mostly gentle, but I was also eager to follow some steeper trails down into intriguing northern forest, hemlock and birch gullies roaring that day from last night's thunderstorms.

In those ravines I could easily imagine the songs of many woodland birds in spring and summer—the Winter Wren especially, but this was already October and, for the most part, migrating birds were either generally silent about their business or just gone. I studied a Brown Creeper foraging for insects in its distinctive way: climbing the tree bark, probing for snacks, then swooping down to the base of a nearby tree to begin its upward creep again.

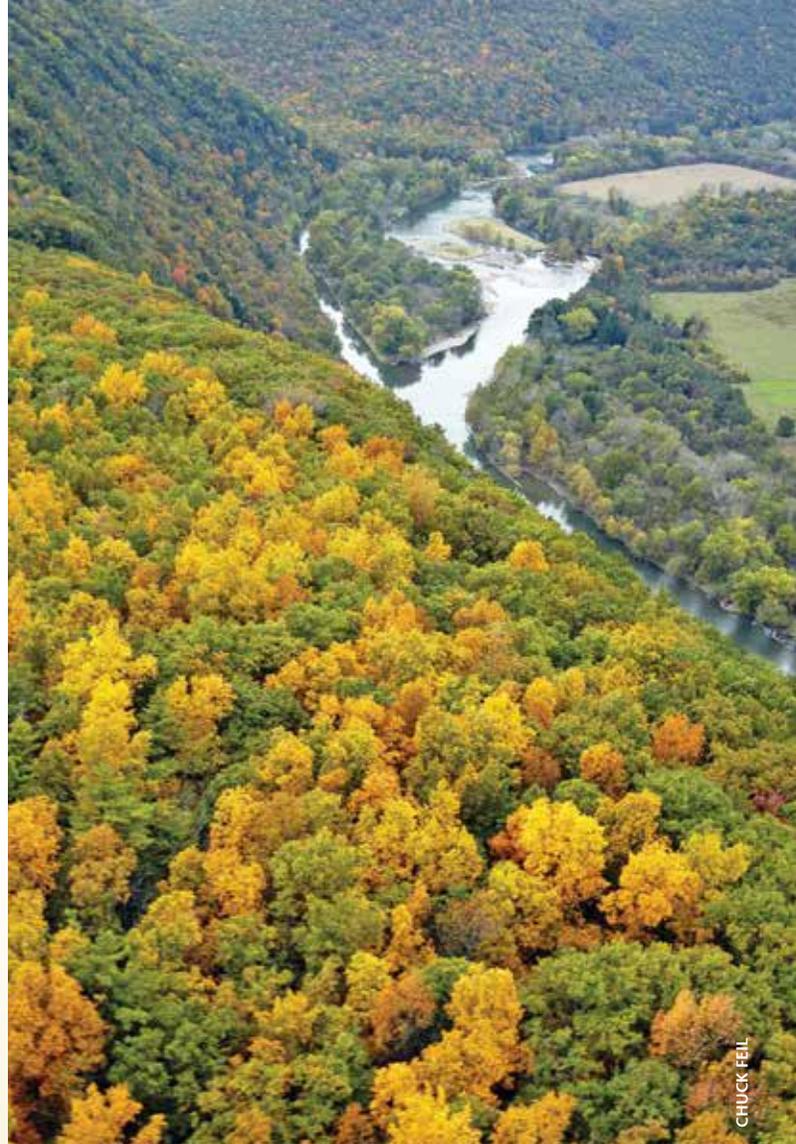
Farther along the trail, a lone, silent Blue Jay harvested acorns high above, dropping most (for later gathering, perhaps) and then swooping down to crack open a few for a quick meal. Chickadees flitted through the undergrowth, chatting quietly as they searched for insects on the underside of leaves and pine needles.

Migrating birds I met just by soft sounds, thin "tsips" of hidden wood warblers staying in contact with each other as they fed during daylight hours before continuing their southward journey. The preserve has varied forest habitats, with an unusual range of tree species, making it an ideal place to return to for more birding.

Walking along the network of trails through the Steege Hill woods, I guessed at the preserve's land-use history, finally focusing on farming. Some trails follow old farm tracks flanked by the rubble of old stone walls to clear pastures now choked with young maples and cherries, and there are two large foundations just off one trail. When I reached a broad, grassy clearing at the very top of the hill, it was easy to imagine sheep and cattle grazing.

It turns out I was both right and wrong about the land-use question. Although there was at least one 19th-century farm on the hill, most of the rutted tracks and forest clearings are much more recent. I had missed the bigger picture.

In the 1970s Steege Hill was heavily logged, nearly to the point of ruin. The town of Big Flats, in fact, grew so alarmed



CHUCK FEIL

*Autumn foliage atop Steege Hill with the Chemung River below*

by the land degradation that it shut down the operation and passed a law regulating future logging within town limits. It was the first town in the state to do so.

Now the original forest is obviously making an impressive recovery and will continue to do so under careful Land Trust stewardship.

Volunteer steward Bob Corneau, who grew up nearby and still lives on land adjacent to the preserve, maintains a color-coded network of trails, most of them over old logging roads that lead visitors to just about every corner of the preserve. In addition, he maintains several clearings in the forest as well as a couple of attractive ponds. (Picnicking, I thought, would be ideal on a warm summer day.)

Corneau has taken an interest in the timber rattlesnake population at the Steege Hill preserve. Rare in our area, these endangered reptiles have attracted much attention over the years, including a visit by Sir David Attenborough and a film crew from BBC's "Life on Earth" to shoot footage of rattlesnakes in the preserve. [see Autumn 2006 issue of *The Land Steward*]

I saw no sign of rattlesnakes on my walk, as they were probably safely below ground for the long winter, but I noted the postings at the preserve entrance cautioning hikers against careless wandering from late April to late September—and I gave sunlit rocks a wide berth.

*continued on page 8*

# SCENES

from  
Our Nature  
Preserves..

*Sediment core sampling being taken at a bog at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve by Dan Karig (at the auger) and other researchers at Cornell's Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences*



LOUISE MCCARRY



JASON GORMAN

*Volunteers from the incoming freshman class at Hobart and William Smith Colleges helping out at the Bishop Nature Preserve in Fayette, Seneca County*



*A entranced participant at the recent Story Walk at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve in Dryden Tompkins County (see article at the top of page 3)*



TOM REIMERS

*Autumn foliage at the Roy H. Park Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County*



RICK LIGHTBODY



BETSY DARLINGTON

*Cornell University's Herpetological Society on a recent field trip to the Etna Nature Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County*

## PRESERVE PROFILE

### The Recovered Beauty of Steege Hill *continued from page 5*

Steege Hill Nature Preserve also contains the distinctive nests of Allegheny mound ants. An informative sign next to one nest mound explains, among other things, that the ants will destroy shade plants growing too near, so that the nest is assured of adequate sunlight for warmth. They'd done pretty well for themselves, it seemed to me.

I left the preserve that day marveling at the swift recovery in a forest nearly wiped out just decades ago and full of gratitude to the Land Trust for stepping in and allowing this recovery to take its natural course.

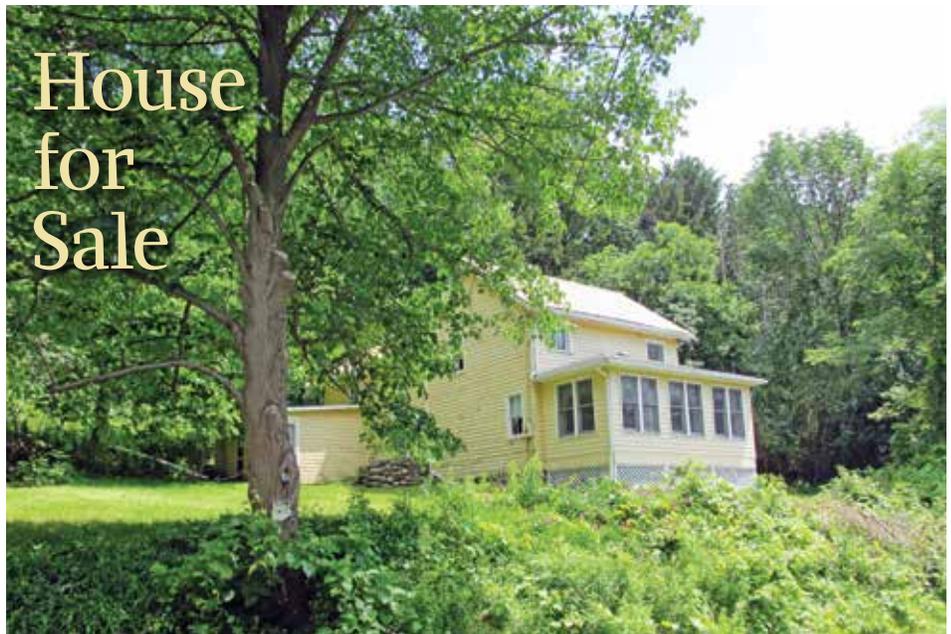
—Eben McLane



**Directions to the Preserve:** From Route 17 in Big Flats, take exit 49. Turn south from the exit ramp and go to Olcott Road. At the "T" intersection, turn right on Route 64 (unmarked), and right again on Route 352. Turn left on South Corning Road, cross the river, and turn left on Steege Hill Road. Go about 1 mile and pull into the parking lot on the left, just before the pipeline cut. (Or park off the pavement on the shoulder of the road.) Please visit the Land Trust's website at [www.fllt.org](http://www.fllt.org) for a map of the preserve and additional information.

## 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 location only. 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.



*The Land Trust seeks a buyer for an attractive farmhouse—in need of significant work—located on a 1.5-acre lot overlooking Canandaigua Lake in the town of Middlesex, Yates County.*

Recently acquired with adjacent conservation land on Bare Hill, the property is now listed for sale at \$59,000. The house is one of the oldest in the area. While it features a relatively new roof, it lacks functional heating and plumbing systems. Please contact Kristen Meyer of Powers Realty at 607-426-7225 if you would like more information or wish to see the property.

# Create your legacy

**A little planning today will help protect the lands you love tomorrow.**

**Invest in the mission of the Land Trust through gifts from your estate.**

Discover the many ways you can conserve the place you call home, maximizing your philanthropic giving and meeting your financial goals.

**Join the White Pine Society**

For more information please call Kelly Makosch in the Land Trust office at 607-275-9487.

## Reduce your taxes

*Did you know that Congress extended the charitable IRA roll-over through December 31, 2013?*

*This is how it works:*

**I**F you have a traditional IRA, you are required to make yearly minimum distributions starting at age 70½ and pay tax on the withdrawals. With the extended charitable IRA rollover, a donation sent directly to the Land Trust from your IRA can count against the minimum required distribution you would otherwise be required to take.

The roll-over allows you the freedom to give up to \$100,000 from your account to the Land Trust, which will reduce your adjusted gross income, satisfy your minimum distribution, and demonstrate your clear commitment to local conservation.

It's important to note that, to satisfy requirements of the new law, your IRA administrator—not you personally—must send the gift directly to the charity of your choice. Please consult your tax advisor to learn more about how both you and the Land Trust can benefit from the charitable IRA roll-over this year.



## BOARD & STAFF Developments

*This past year has brought many shining new stars to the ranks of the Land Trust that include the following five board members and an assistant director of development:*

**J**ohn Alexander is an attorney and managing partner at Sayles & Evans, a law firm in Elmira. He is a past board member of both the Central New York Chapter of the Nature Conservancy and the Tanglewood Nature Center. John has provided *pro bono* counsel to the organization on several occasions.

Dave Birchenough is the retired owner of a small manufacturing business in Syracuse. Raised in Skaneateles, Dave has been involved with several community organizations and is now serving his second term as President of the Skaneateles Festival.

Phil Greenberg is Senior Managing Director of C-III Capital Partners, a real estate and investment management agency based in New York City. A resident of Ithaca, Phil is a chartered financial analyst and has an MBA from the Cornell's Johnson School of Management. He was previously Director of the Office of University Investments for Cornell University.

Holly Gregg is the Chief Operating Officer of Patience Brewster, Inc., a giftware business in Skaneateles that he runs with his wife Patience Brewster. He is a founding board member of the Skaneateles Festival and currently sits on the board of the Skaneateles Area Arts Festival. He is also a founding and current board member of Citizens to Preserve the Character of Skaneateles (since 1989).

Carrie Pollak is an associate at the law firm of Miller Mayer in Ithaca, where she provides legal counsel on matters including land use, land preservation and conservation, oil and gas law, wetlands mitigation, and in-lieu fee programs, stormwater management, real estate and tax issues. Carrie is co-author of several publications on environmental law and has provided *pro bono* counsel to the Land Trust on several occasions.

Last, but certainly not least, we're delighted to announce the addition to our staff of Edie Jodz, Assistant Director of Development. Edie comes to us from Family & Children's Service of Ithaca with a strong background in event planning, donor relations, marketing, and communications. A resident of Ithaca for the past 17 years and a graduate of Ithaca College, Edie has a strong interest in conservation and enjoys spending time outdoors, hiking and biking with her husband Steve and their three-year old son Jacob.

Please join us in welcoming John, Dave, Phil, Holly, Carrie, and Edie!

# Capital Campaign Nears Summit

*continued from cover*

opportunities arise in our strategic focus areas. These resources will support future land protection projects that will build upon our existing conservation work in places like the south end of Skaneateles Lake, Ithaca's Emerald Necklace, and Canandaigua's southeastern shore.

- **Outreach** to landowners, municipal officials, and local communities will increase through smart use of campaign funding to **educate stakeholders**, host public workshops, involve families, and provide targeted outreach to key landowners.
- We will **bolster the Stewardship Fund** so we can expand our support and training of volunteers, increase our efforts to control non-native invasive species, and provide for the long-term management of the Land Trust's growing network of nature preserves and conservation easement properties.

To learn more about the projects in the campaign or to support our effort, please visit [www.flit.org/shoreline](http://www.flit.org/shoreline) or call Kelly at (607)275-9487.

## With a Little Help from our Friends...

*Keeping 32 nature preserves safe and beautiful and ensuring the integrity of 104 conservation easements requires the investment of hundreds of volunteer hours each year.*

Luckily, the Land Trust has a robust network of nature preserve and conservation easement stewards who believe in our mission and are committed to defending our lands.

We are grateful for the long-term commitment of our stewards, their personal investment in a particular piece of land, and their ongoing effort to help us meet our many stewardship-related responsibilities. For preserves, these goals include safeguarding special natural areas, tending to our trails, and keeping our lands open for the community to enjoy. For conservation easements, these tasks include conducting formal, annual inspections to document changes in property conditions and landowner outreach to help us maintain relationships and good communication.

We wanted to extend a special thanks to recently "retired" stewards: Richard Cole, Harry Ash, Leslie Connors, Jonathan Zisk, Pam Maurey, Pam and Fred Hoyle, Mike and Wendy Cartwright, Sarah McNaull, Steve Kress, Elyssa Wolfson, Paul and Sherri Trietley, Darlys McDonough, Ashley Miller, and Krissy Faust for all of their help over the years.

In addition to nearly 100 stewards, the Land Trust relies on the support of many other volunteers across the region to accomplish our work and promote our mission. Thank you!

## Our appreciation for gifts in honor of

**Daughter's 12th Birthday**  
FROM  
*Robin and Joan Stein*

**Robert Miller**  
FROM  
*Carol Sue Hai*

**Paula Peter and Mike Ward**  
FROM  
*Elizabeth Gordon*

**Jo and Bob Werner**  
FROM  
*David and Patricia Blackwell*

## Our deepest gratitude for thoughtful gifts in memory of

**Clara Marie Allen**  
FROM  
*Laura Stenzler and Karel Schat*

**Gordon S. Campbell**  
FROM  
*May E. Campbell*

**Nancy Davis**  
FROM  
*Kimberly A. Merchant*

**Norman C. Dondero**  
FROM  
*Patricia Kehe*

**Norman C. and Wilma Dondero**  
From  
*Betty J. Birdsey*

**Tom Galusha**  
From  
*Anonymous Friends of Tom Galusha*

**Howard Hartnett**  
FROM  
*Phil and Irene White*

**Steven Holzner**  
FROM  
*Schmitt Real Estate*

**Kenneth W. Keenan**  
FROM  
*Christopher Baker  
Katie and John Brahm  
Roy Bruno  
Susanne Delaney  
Andrea DeSalvo  
Susan A. Ferraglio-Genecco and  
Leo Genecco, Jr.*

*Sharon and Jack Fredericks  
Susan Gibson  
David and Jacqueline Johnson  
Lauretta and Bill Kenyon  
Madhari Kondugari  
Leanna Landsmann and  
Chip Block  
Raymond Montcrieff  
SE Group*

**Elliot Landsman**  
FROM  
*Richard M. Morse Conservation Club, LLC*

**Fred Manzella**  
FROM  
*Fran Manzella*

**Charles and Ann Martin**  
From  
*Gene and Joan Lane*

**Charles Pearman**  
FROM  
*Yohko Tsuji*

**Dick Root**  
FROM  
*Simon and Carole Levin*

**Edward Spedding**  
FROM  
*Beverly Laforce*

**Timothy Spencer**  
FROM  
*Beverly Henriquez  
Georgeadam Petino  
Loretta J. Schlatzer  
Thomas and Carolyn Shea*

**John F. Thompson**  
FROM  
*William and Betty House  
Catherine Paddock*

**John F. Thompson and his son,  
Edward Thompson**  
FROM  
*Aimee Anderson*

**Paul and Beatrice Tolle**  
FROM  
*Steven Tolle*

**Keith VanDerzee**  
FROM  
*Phil Dankert  
Elizabeth R. Fait  
Richard Gibson  
Patricia and Clifford Hotchkiss  
Daniel J. Roketenetz  
Thomas VanDerzee and  
Jane Bender VanDerzee*

# A CLOSER LOOK

## *But Handle with Care! Snapping Turtles*

With its long, spiny tail, muscular legs, long claws, and low, flattened carapace, the common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) looks ponderous and primitive, rather like an iguana trying to hide beneath a snow saucer. Although not nearly as daunting as its much larger southern cousin, the alligator snapping turtle, it's no slouch, either: it can reach 35-45 pounds, with a shell over a foot long; exceptional individuals may grow even larger.

The snapping turtle appears prehistoric because it is. The genus *Chelyridae* evolved in North America 90 million years ago, and modern specimens look very little different from their ancestors. While giant marine reptiles swam in the shallow sea that covered much of North America, and the Tyrannosaurus Rex and Triceratops squared off on land, chelydrids hunkered down in the mud. They survived the meteor impact 65 million years ago that killed the dinosaurs and have weathered countless natural and man-made disasters. These tough reptiles can eat almost anything and live almost anywhere, including polluted bodies of water with low oxygen levels, and even sewer systems. Although they are the official state reptile of New York, they are found everywhere from southern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, from the east coast to the Rockies.

The snapper's scientific name means "snake-like turtle," a reference to its very long, agile neck, which it can whip out with unnerving speed to grab prey items or warn off would-be predators. Apart from its rather unpredictable business end, however, the animal is very sedentary. It prefers to spend its days hidden by mud and algae at the bottom of shallow, still or slow-moving, bodies of water. Every now and then, it will lift its long neck to the surface to take a sip of air. When it needs to get around, it usually walks or bounces along the bottom rather than swimming. The majority

of its diet is made up of plants and slow-moving fish, but it will also eat carrion, invertebrates, amphibians, and anything else that happens to float by. Its reputation for taking game fish or waterfowl is undeserved, however; although it will snatch a duckling if it gets the chance, in general, it is simply too slow to catch healthy, fast-moving animals.

In the water, the snapping turtle is surprisingly un-snappish and will flee rather than retaliate, even when stepped on. However, it is usually cantankerous on land, perhaps because it feels vulnerable: unlike many other turtles, it cannot pull its head and legs into its shell. Snappers are most likely to be ashore in the summer; between late May and early July, the females search for nest sites, and animals of both sexes sometimes bask on sun-warmed asphalt. The jury is out as to whether a snapping turtle can actually snap off a finger, but it can undoubtedly do a lot of damage with its sharp beak. If you find one on land, it is wisest to leave it alone. If you must pick it up, hold its back end firmly, keeping your hands as far away from the head as possible; never pick one up by its tail.

Snappers live a very long time, mature very late, and lay a relatively small number of eggs per year. This strategy helps the species survive an unpredictable environment in which harsh weather and heavy predation kill almost all turtles before they reach breeding age. Unfortunately, it also means that populations can be devastated by the loss of adult animals. Many turtles, especially females looking for nest sites, are struck and killed by cars. In addition, the demand for turtle meat has increased in recent years and in some areas of the country—though not yet in the Finger Lakes—populations of snapping turtles have dropped precipitously; once again, gravid females are the most vulnerable because they are the most mobile. The turtles have the last laugh, however: since they are at the top of the food chain and live a long time in nutrient-rich waters, their flesh is often heavily contaminated with toxins.

The populations of many other native turtles are in steep decline, but snappers generally seem to be holding their own. If the past is any guide, they'll probably still be here long after we're gone.

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller



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## Autumn 2013 Calendar



**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 10:00 am: Tree Identification Walk at the Stevenson Forest Preserve in Enfield, Tompkins County**—kiva Silver, naturalist, landscaper, and outdoor educator, will lead a walk focusing on identification, natural history, wildlife value, the role of invasive plants, as well as survival uses of trees and shrubs. The walk will last two hours or more so please come prepared with appropriate clothing and footwear for the weather and terrain. **From Ithaca**, take Route 13 South to Route 327. Turn right on to Route 327 (Enfield Falls Road) and go 4½ miles to Trumbull Corners Road. Turn left and go approximately ½ mile to preserve parking area on the right side of the road.

See our web site for maps and photos of the preserves.

WALKS GO RAIN, SUN OR SNOW. PLEASE BRING SNACKS AND WATER, AND WEAR STURDY SHOES. CALL THE LAND TRUST AT (607) 275-9487 FOR DETAILS.

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