



The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Vol. 26, No. 1 • Winter 2013-14

Conservation Easement Protects Historic Vineyard on Seneca Lake

There are many unique features that attract tourists and residents alike to the Finger Lakes region. There is the natural beauty of the glacier-carved landscape—rolling hills, hardwood forests, deep lakes, and spectacular gorges. The region also has a rich agricultural history; perhaps the most visible element of this today is the array of vineyards, supporting more than 100 wineries operating around the Finger Lakes.

The Land Trust recently completed a transaction that protects both the landscape and the agricultural tradition of the region, acquiring a conservation easement on a 75-acre parcel owned by the Argetsinger family in Hector, Schuyler County. The property features one of the oldest vineyards in the Finger Lakes, dating back to the 1880s, and has been in the Argetsinger family for more than a century.

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Sam Argetsinger in his vineyard overlooking Seneca Lake

Skaneateles Highlands Acquisition to Become Newest Preserve

In December 2013, the Land Trust announced the long-anticipated purchase of strategically important land in the Skaneateles Lake highlands on the lake's southeast side.

A mile-long stretch of hillside fields, forests, and spectacular gorges above the lake will be turned into a conservation area open for public enjoyment and recreation.

The newly acquired 205-acre property, which borders State Route 41 and Covey Road in the town of Spafford, will become the Hinchcliff Family Preserve. The Hinchcliff family, owners of adjacent lands, provided a leadership gift that greatly helped fund this project. This and other private contributions made the property acquisition possible.

The preserve features over 1,900 feet of frontage along Randall Gulf Creek, a significant tributary of Skaneateles Lake featuring an impressive gorge with waterfalls. The forest on the other side of the gorge belongs to John and Robin Moss Hinchcliff, who last year donated a conservation easement to the Land Trust,

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View of Skaneateles Lake from the Hinchcliff Family Preserve

COURTESY OF STAR-GAZETTE, ELMIRA, NY

JOHN SUTTON

Time sure does fly. It's hard for me to believe that 25 years have passed since I was an eager, if somewhat naïve, graduate student at Cornell who had the good fortune to work with founding board members Betsy Darlington, Lois Levitan and the late Carl Leopold to create the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Back then, we were driven by the simple idea that there was a need for a non-profit organization that focused on bringing people together to achieve the win-win solutions that would secure our most precious undeveloped landscapes while meeting the needs of landowners and local communities.

From humble beginnings in Cornell's Fernow Hall, these ideas took root and have led to the permanent protection of more than 16,000 acres of our region's pristine gorges, scenic farmland, and majestic forests. During the past year alone, we completed 15 land protection projects, provided educational programs to more than 1,000 people across the region, and cared for a growing network of 34 nature preserves and more than 100 conservation easements. To get the work done, our extensive network of volunteers is now supported by 11 staff members. Two thousand members provide financial support to the organization.

And these members should be proud of our many accomplishments—from the splendor of Grimes Glen, Lick Brook Gorge, and Carpenter's Falls to more than a mile of undeveloped Finger Lakes shoreline, and several thousand acres of our most productive farmland. The benefit of our sustained focus is evident at sites like our Lindsay-

Parsons Biodiversity Preserve, the result of 11 separate real estate transactions and still growing!

While we've already met many of our initial goals, even greater challenges lie ahead. Our sights are now set on the creation of a regional network of conserved lands, not just the protection of isolated parcels. We must continue to grow the organization's capacity so that we can meet the many challenges that will inevitably emerge in relation to our preserves and easements. Far more people need to know about the work of the Land Trust, and we need to spread the word both within and outside the region.

At year end, we completed a flurry of project closings—securing the scenic Argetsinger Vineyard overlooking Seneca Lake, productive habitat for wetland birds in Cayuga County, a mile of hillside overlooking Skaneateles Lake, hundreds of acres of woodland within the Emerald Necklace Greenbelt, and a new conservation area within walking distance of Ithaca neighborhoods.

These are the projects we were meant to do. Thank you to all of our donors, volunteers, and partners for making this work possible. During 2014, let us take time to celebrate what we have accomplished and then redouble our efforts to ensure the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes region. Our 50th anniversary will be here sooner than you think!

—Andy Zepp

Shoreline to Summit Campaign Tops 99%

When the Land Steward went to print this month, less than 1% separated the Shoreline to Summit Capital Campaign from our ambitious \$5 million goal. Thanks to overwhelming support from members new and old, the Land Trust's first ever, region-wide campaign is 99% complete and already working to protect more of the lands you love.

Shoreline to Summit campaign dollars are—

- Expanding the Great Hill Nature Preserve on Canandaigua Lake and the Dorothy McIlroy Bird Sanctuary in Cayuga County;
- Protecting threatened shoreline on Canandaigua, Cayuga, and Skaneateles Lakes from development;
- Opening the first link in Ithaca's Emerald Necklace Greenbelt to the public;
- Creating a new preserve overlooking the south end of Skaneateles Lake;
- Enhancing public access to our nature preserves and encouraging outdoor recreation.

Listen for the sound of champagne popping and look for an article declaring victory in the next issue. Until then, please support conservation in the Finger Lakes and help us surpass our goal by making a campaign gift today. To give online and learn more, visit www.flit.org/shoreline or call Kelly at (607) 275-9487.



**SHORELINE
TO SUMMIT**



A Campaign for the Finger Lakes

Addition to McIlroy Bird Sanctuary Advances Birding and Fall Creek Protection

The Land Trust's Dorothy McIlroy Bird Sanctuary and its related wetland complex filters the south outflow of Lake Como, a small upland lake tucked away in the remote Cayuga County town of Summerhill. A quiet community of seasonal and year-round homes lines the lake's shores.

Wasco Lake is 10 miles to the northwest, with Skaneateles Lake a bit closer to the northeast. But in the sometimes odd calculus of Finger Lakes geography, the McIlroy sanctuary actually lies near the headwaters of Fall Creek, Cayuga Lake's largest tributary; Lake Como waters, then, filter through the wetlands complex southward, flowing 33 miles to Ithaca before falling finally into Cayuga Lake.

With the idea in mind of expanding sensitive bird habitat and guarding the water quality of Fall Creek at the same time, the Land Trust recently purchased an 86-acre addition abutting the McIlroy sanctuary, bringing the conservation area to 280 acres.

The Dorothy McIlroy sanctuary was established in 1999 and was named after one of the founders of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Dorothy's children worked with the Land Trust to create a preserve in their mother's memory.

This important addition to the sanctuary was purchased through funding from the Land Trust's "Shoreline to Summit" capital campaign targeting wetland conservation, and from a generous grant from the federal government's North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which

pays special attention to the conservation of significant habitat for migratory birds.

From the beginning, the McIlroy sanctuary has been about habitat preservation for birds. The newly acquired property became a high-priority for the Land Trust for several reasons: it abuts the McIlroy sanctuary on two sides; it features high-quality wetland acreage with protective upland buffer to the wetlands; and it removes a long stretch of road frontage from possible development.

The new tract will be managed as part of the McIlroy sanctuary, significantly adding to the site's already rich biodiversity.

Overall, the conservation area is a mosaic of emergent marsh and unique forested areas that provide important habitat

for a diversity of bird species, while also helping to maintain water quality in a publicly accessible and popular trout stream. These lands are recognized as the Summerhill Fen and Forest Complex in New York State's Open Space Plan. Forested wetlands at the site include just over 40 acres that are recognized by the New York Natural Heritage Program as a high-quality example of a rich hemlock-hardwood peat swamp.

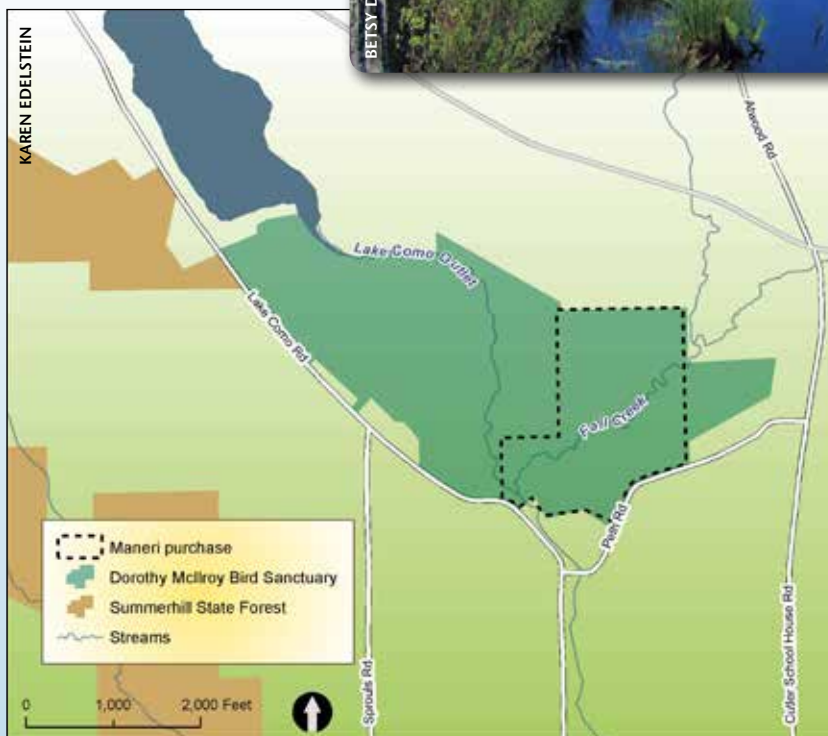
The Dorothy McIlroy Bird Sanctuary is a special place, partly because of its unique micro-climate—a

climate more in keeping with the Adirondacks than with most of the Finger Lakes. A high ridge to the west blocks prevailing winds which, combined with an early freeze on Lake Como, keeps the valley cooler than most areas in the region, with snow lingering on into April. The sanctuary features trails through dense, sometimes wet, forests of hemlock and yellow birch, with patches of tamarack and balsam fir. In the Finger Lakes, these forest communities are usually found only in the highest valley elevations, but they are common throughout forests to our north and east.

As for bird habitat, emergent marsh and scrub-shrub wetlands attract an abundance of migratory songbirds and water fowl, including Wood Duck, American Black Duck, Green Heron, Virginia Rail, Willow Flycatcher, Mourning Warbler, and Swamp Sparrow.

Surrounding forested wetlands provide habitat for additional species, such as Yellow-billed Cuckoo,

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Skaneateles Highlands Acquisition to Become Newest Preserve *continued from cover*

ensuring the future protection of their beautiful woodlands.

The purchase is part of the Land Trust's efforts to create a publicly accessible greenbelt of undeveloped lands around the south end of Skaneateles Lake, securing the integrity of the area's scenic landscape while also helping to maintain water quality for Syracuse and other communities that rely on the lake's water.

The new property includes a 120-foot-wide trail corridor extending east for 4,000 feet, uphill, connecting it to the nearby Central New York Land Trust's 130-acre Ripley Hill Preserve. The Finger Lakes Land Trust assisted in the establishment of this preserve.

To the south of the new property lies the Finger Lakes Land Trust's High Vista Preserve, with only a small stretch of forest separating the two. At the lakeshore to the west, the Land Trust established the Cora Kampfe Dickinson Conservation Area in

2011, which includes a portion of the Staghorn Cliffs, one of New York's premier paleontological sites, known for its ancient fossilized coral reef from the Devonian Period.

This long-term greenbelt project ambitiously aims to connect these lands on the east side of the lake to conservation lands on the west side of the lake, including Bear Swamp State Forest, Carpenter's Falls and the Land Trust's Bahar Preserve.

Though the Hinchcliff Family Preserve will serve as the lynchpin property in the plan to create this greenbelt of public open space, it will also be enjoyed just for itself. The property contains a mix of fields—some still in agricultural use and some abandoned—and hardwood forest, shading into hemlock along the edges of gullies. It features both gentle and rugged terrain and at least one sweeping, awe-inspiring view northward up the lake from one of the old fields. (For those

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Conservation Easement Protects Historic Vineyard on Seneca Lake *continued from cover*

"We're grateful to the Argetsinger family for their devotion to their land and their commitment to preserving it," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "We're also grateful to Schuyler County and New York State's Department of Agriculture & Markets for partnering with us on this project. This scenic property would be in high demand for its development potential, but the conservation easement will ensure that this land remains a beautiful vineyard."

Perched on the steeply sloped hillside above the southeastern shore of Seneca Lake, the Argetsinger property is extraordinarily scenic, offering sweeping views of the south end of the lake. The vineyard is bound to the north by the rugged Tug Hollow Creek gorge and Hector Falls Creek on the south.

In an already unique region for growing grapes, the Argetsinger property stands out. The vineyard's shallow, limestone-rich soil contributes a crisp, mineral character to the fruit; the steep slopes keep the soil well drained; and the deep ravines bordering the vineyard help ease the frigid temperatures during the winter. As a result, the vineyard has a true *terroir*—a special combination of geography, geology, topography, and climate that cannot be reproduced anywhere else.

The Argetsinger family are wine grape growers and cultivators rather than vintners; most of the grapes from the vineyard are sold to Ravines Wine Cellars, a local winery with locations on both Keuka and Seneca Lakes. In particular,

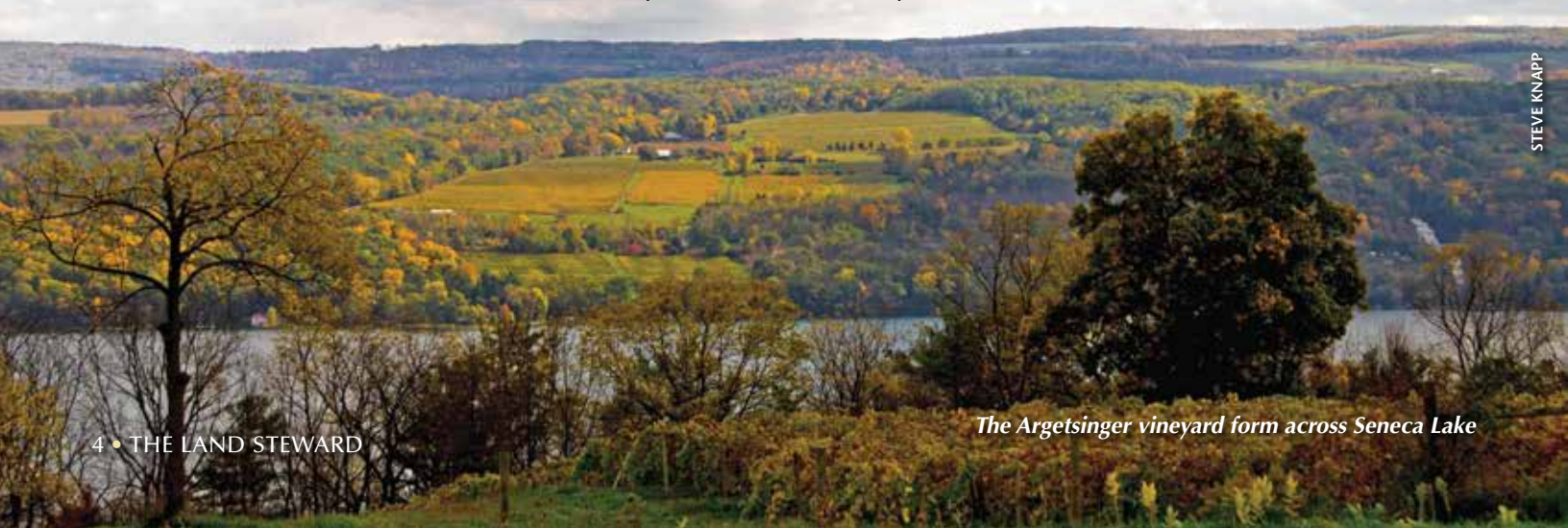
Ravines makes a dry Riesling exclusively from Argetsinger grapes that has become renowned among oenophiles.

Sam Argetsinger is as colorful and unique as the vineyard he owns and manages. A former woodsman who speaks several Iroquois languages, Sam has a keen feeling for a living, almost sentient land that echoes Iroquois traditional beliefs. He speaks energetically about the inter-connection between the grower and the land. Walk around the vineyard with Sam, who is the fourth generation of his family to work the land, and you get a clear sense of the passion he brings to his role as land steward and caretaker.

"This project is a positive statement from the land," Argetsinger said. "So many people of the good mind share this vision that the land has for the future and for future generations. It has been a real privilege for me and my family to work with the Finger Lakes Land Trust, who are real stewards, and with New York State's Department of Agriculture and Markets, who understand the business of farming."

Funding for the conservation easement came from a competitive grant program for farmland conservation through the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets. Since the program's inception, the state has protected more than 200 farms and 50,000 acres of farmland. Schuyler County served as the fiscal agent for the grant funding. The Argetsinger family has generously agreed to donate a portion of the easement's value as part of the transaction.

—Jeff Tonole



STEVE KNAPP

Land Gift Expands Town of Ithaca Natural Area

In *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold wrote that a land ethic “enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.”

Frank and Blythe Baldwin have embraced Leopold’s characterization of community. In 1969, after spending two years in Afghanistan with the Peace Corps, the couple moved into a house on Pine Tree Road in Ithaca, where they still live today. For 45 years, the Baldwins—Frank is a retired orthopedic surgeon, and Blythe is a former teacher who ran a nursery school from their home—have been active members of their community.

They have also upheld Leopold’s land ethic by contributing to the community through land stewardship and conservation.

Most recently the Baldwins donated an undeveloped 14-acre parcel behind their house—which Frank likes to call the “Pine Tree Road Wilderness Area”—to the Town of Ithaca. The Land Trust will hold a conservation easement on the property, which links with a previous Baldwin land donation to create a natural area of nearly 40 contiguous acres.

“Frank and Blythe Baldwin have been amazingly generous benefactors to their neighbors and the entire Town of Ithaca,” said Town Supervisor Herb Engman, a longtime member and past president of the Land Trust. “This is a wonderful gift to their community.”

The Baldwins have a long history with the Land Trust. “We worked with Carl Leopold on a tropical reforestation project in Costa Rica,” said Frank, referring to Aldo’s son and the founding president of the Land Trust. “It was through Carl that we learned about the Land Trust.”

In 1991, the Baldwins donated a conservation easement to the Land Trust on 57 acres of undeveloped land in Dryden near the Yellow Barn and Hammond Hill State Forests. The Baldwins were very accommodating as private landowners, allowing regular public access to their property, which included a particularly beautiful stretch of Six Mile Creek. The Baldwins eventually sold the tract to the Land Trust at a significantly

discounted price in 2007, and it is now part of the Roy H. Park Preserve, one of the first jewels in the Emerald Necklace surrounding Ithaca.



As Blythe Baldwin said at the time, “land such as this should be for everyone who will enjoy it responsibly.”

The Baldwins have continued their dedication to land protection closer to home. Back in 1969, the land behind the homes on Pine Tree Road, extending from Snyder Hill Road to Slaterville Road, was pasture for a livestock farm. In the late 1970s, when the farm was no longer active, the Baldwins purchased the 14-acre parcel directly behind their house for conservation purposes. They partnered with another family from the neighborhood—Roy and Susana Colle—to buy the remaining 25 acres of pasture a few years later.

Over time, the pasture land reverted to woods and shrubs. About a decade ago, the Baldwins and Colles donated the 25-acre property to the Town of Ithaca to be maintained as a natural area.

On one edge of the property, the town built the Vincent and Hannah Pew Trail, a multi-use trail connecting Pine Tree Road with the Eastern Heights neighborhood.

The newly donated property will be accessible via foot paths from the Pew Trail and the adjacent natural area. Frank, his son, and his grandchildren created several of these paths themselves. There have also been conversations about putting in a community garden near a popular winter sledding slope.

“Through the generosity of people like the Baldwins, the land protection skills of the Land Trust, and the stewardship of the Town of Ithaca, residents will be able to enjoy our beautiful local open space forever,” said Ithaca Town Supervisor Engman.

Despite their significant contributions to land protection in the greater Ithaca area, the Baldwins remain modest and humble about their land ethic. “The goal is to protect wilderness from development,” Frank said. “You don’t boast about it. There’s always more to be done.” —Jeff Tonole

Addition to McIlroy Bird Sanctuary Advances Birding... *continued from page 3*

Winter Wren, Canada Warbler, Nashville Warbler, and Northern Water Thrush. In adjacent upland fields, forest, and brush lands, visitors may find American Woodcock, Wood Thrush, Broad-winged Hawk, Black-billed Cuckoo, Scarlet Tanager, and Blue-winged Warbler.

The sanctuary is also recognized for its flora. Locally rare balsam fir and tamarack trees attest to the site’s “northern” microclimate. Further, the entire Fall Creek watershed, which is in part protected by the McIlroy complex of conserved lands, contains at least a dozen fens between Lake Como and the hamlet of McLean. Among the great variety of flowers to be discovered are wild calla, turtlehead, swamp rose, wood sorrel, spreading

globeflower, and a number of rare, native orchid species.

This latest addition to the sanctuary will hopefully help build momentum for the protection of additional acreage in the area. Through a combination of projects involving direct acquisition of lands and the use of conservation easements, the Land Trust hopes to continue its work in this remarkable niche of the Finger Lakes. —Eben McLane

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Virginia A. Tesi of the law firm Barney, Grossman, Dubow, Marcus, Orkin & Tesi, LLP in Ithaca for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.

SCENES

from Around Our Region...



Naturalist and Outdoor Educator Akiva Silver speaking to participants at this year's Tree Identification Walk at the Stevenson Forest Preserve in Enfield, Tompkins County

BETSY DARLINGTON

Winter landscape at the Goetchius Wetland Preserve in the town of Caroline, Tompkins County



BETSY DARLINGTON



Last year's restoration of the abandoned Constellation Brands vineyard near Candandaigua Lake has resulted in a scenic grassland habitat (see Autumn 2013 issue of The Land Steward).

NIGEL KENT



Ray Helmke's photo taken at the Etna Preserve in Tompkins County (see Photographers Raise Funds for Land Protection on page 10 for details)

RAY HELMKE



PETER WIEDMANN

Red Fox near Six Mile Creek in the Emerald Necklace, Tompkins County



JASON GORMAN

Volunteers George Dillman (left) and Tom Reimers (right) with summer intern Megan O'Keefe hard at work removing Japanese barberry at the Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook, Tompkins County

Land Trust Takes Aim at Threat to Hemlocks on its Nature Preserves

In response to the rising threat of an invasive insect species that could devastate our region's eastern hemlock trees, the Land Trust has initiated a two-part control program on its preserves.

A tiny aphid-like insect native to East Asia, the hemlock woolly adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*, or HWA) was introduced into British Columbia on nursery stock in 1924. It was first detected in the eastern United States in the Shenandoah Mountains in the 1950s, and has since spread steadily northward, in possible correlation with rising average winter temperatures. HWA first appeared in the Finger Lakes in 2008. Once limited to our lakeshores, HWA is now present even above elevations of 1,600 feet.

The presence of HWA is most commonly revealed by their white, cottony egg sacs, laid at the base of hemlock needles twice per year. Adult adelgids are extremely difficult to see. They feed on sap by means of a piercing tubular mouth part. Infested hemlocks, robbed of nutrients, can die within four years.

Hemlock trees are rightly beloved simply for their beauty, but the defining reason for their preservation is their role in unique ecosystems. The dense canopy of mature hemlocks provides food and cover for at least 90 bird species. Voles and red squirrels, among other mammals, are also beneficiaries of a healthy hemlock population. The shade of hemlocks keeps the forest floor dark, moist, and cool. Notably, one study of Appalachian forests by the U.S. Department of the Interior has revealed that the colder waters of hemlock-shaded streams support 37 percent more aquatic invertebrates and three times more brook trout than streams of hardwood forests.

The Land Trust has surveyed its preserves, rating them in terms of size and significance of their hemlock stands and determining the status of HWA in each. As of late November 2013, degrees of infestation vary widely. While several preserves are evidently clean for now, moderate to severe HWA

problems loom at others in the Ithaca area, including the Sweedler and Thayer Preserves at Lick Brook, the Stevenson Forest Preserve, and the Whitlock Preserve and adjacent VanRiper Conservation Area.

Under the guidance and steady support of Mark Whitmore of Cornell's Department of Natural Resources, the Land Trust has assessed options for HWA control and developed an action plan.



Forest Entomologist Mark Whitmore releasing predatory beetles to help control an infestation of hemlock woolly adelgid at the VanRiper Conservation Area in Seneca County

This plan includes two components: 1) biological control through introduction of a beetle that preys on HWA; and 2) chemical treatment of selected trees.

Studies have shown that introduction of a beetle native to the Pacific Northwest, *Laricobius nigrinus*, may provide effective and sustainable control of HWA. With a life cycle synchronous with that of HWA, the beetle successfully reproduces only on a diet of adelgids, thus posing no known threat of unwanted ecological impact. Whitmore released 800 *L. nigrinus* beetles at the VanRiper Conservation Area in October 2013. More beetles will be released at other Land Trust preserves during 2014.

It can take up to 12 years for the beetle to become established and effective. Furthermore, they are expensive and difficult to raise. Whitmore is currently working to

establish a lab at Cornell where the beetles can be bred, making them more affordable for local release.

Meanwhile, the Land Trust is also seeking in the immediate term to protect a limited number of vulnerable hemlock stands via chemical treatment. The chosen approach involves placement of tablets of a widely-used, relatively affordable insecticide called imidacloprid in the soil around the

tree. Over two years, the tablets gradually release the chemical, which the tree then takes up into its tissues. Protection lasts for five to seven years. After consulting with a leading expert on HWA and partner organization Cornell Plantations, the Land Trust decided on this treatment method, considered to have minimal impact on native species and the environment.

So far, the Land Trust has chemically treated 65 hemlock trees along Lick Brook, on both the Sweedler and Thayer Preserves. Further treatments are planned for

spring 2014 at VanRiper, the Stevenson Forest Preserve, and the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve. Beyond preserving individual trees, the goal is to preserve a strong gene pool of local hemlocks, so that populations might remain viable until biological controls become established.

Even with all this committed effort and strong partnership, it is cost-prohibitive and technically implausible for the Land Trust to stop the spread of HWA, eradicate it, and save every hemlock tree. The goal, instead, is to limit HWA to a level where hemlocks can still survive, reproduce, and continue to flourish as a keystone species for their habitat. The Land Trust, with Whitmore's help, will plan out further action upon monitoring and evaluation of the success of these initial steps.

— Mark Chao

Land Trust Helps NYS Parks Secure “Missing Link” in Black Diamond Trail Corridor

From 1896 until its final run in 1959, the Lehigh Valley Railroad’s signature Black Diamond Express passed through Ithaca and the Finger Lakes on its way to Buffalo and Niagara Falls from New York City. Nicknamed the “Honeymoon Express,” it treated passengers to plush velvet seats, fine dining, and large, plate glass windows for viewing the scenic landscape.

Now, imagine riding your bike across 15 miles of interconnected paths where the Black Diamond Express once coursed through fields and forests. Throughout the journey, you relish the views of orchards, farms, and waterfalls and the chance to explore four state parks. It’s a future Ithaca and neighboring communities have anticipated for almost 30 years, and thanks to a recent land acquisition by New York State’s Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP), it is one step closer to reality.

The ultimate goal of the Black Diamond Trail is to connect Taughannock State Park, Allan H. Treman State Marine Park, Buttermilk Falls State Park, and Robert Treman State Park. The first phase involves filling in the corridor between the city of Ithaca and Taughannock Falls State Park. While the Parks Department procured most of the land and easements needed for this trail corridor years ago, a critical stretch of forested hillside along the lower west side of Cayuga Lake remained in private hands.

Over the course of several years, Land Trust staff supported the state’s efforts to negotiate for the acquisition of this missing link and partnered with the nearby Museum of the Earth to cover the cost of an appraisal of the property. In November,



NYSOPRHP acquired the 69-acre parcel on Ithaca’s West Hill with funding from the state’s Environmental Protection Fund.

“The ability to secure this last missing piece, finally gives us the ability to complete the Black Diamond Trail,” announced Fred Bonn, regional director of state parks.

“With this purchase, a major road block to the completion of the trail has been cleared,” added the Land Trust’s director Andrew Zepp. “The project will improve access to the outdoors, one of Ithaca’s most popular draws for tourism and a vital aspect of residents’ quality of life.”

The newly protected parcel holds great value for ecosystem protection, too. Most of the property consists of mature hardwood forest visible from the lake and steep slopes that could easily erode if cleared.

According to Bonn, state engineers and landscape architects are now in the process of pulling together plans for the trail’s construction. “We expect to be able to repair damage done to the trail during last year’s floods, and get it ready for surfacing this year,”

he said. “We’ve already begun posting to notify users what property is part of the Black Diamond Trail and what is private property.” The newly-protected parcel is located behind the Museum of the Earth with frontage on the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway (State Route 89).

“It’s exciting to see this project about to come online,” Bonn added. “Without the help of the Finger Lakes Land Trust in acquiring the property to complete the Black Diamond Trail, and the close working relationship we’ve forged, we’d still be struggling to finish it.”
—Kate Frazer

Skaneateles Highlands Acquisition to Become Newest Preserve *continued from page 4*

who know the scenic pullout nearby on State Route 41, the view from the new preserve is even more striking!)

The Land Trust plans to tear down an abandoned house at the bottom of Covey Road and build a small parking lot to accommodate visitors. An interpretive kiosk is also planned at the start of a loop trail roughly 1.5 miles long that will guide hikers to the natural highlights of the new preserve.

While acquisition of the property was funded through the Land Trust’s Shoreline to Summit Capital Campaign, fundraising to cover the cost of site improvements and long-term preserve management continues.
—Eben McLane

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

House for Sale

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.

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Cynthia Signorelli
Syracuse Scottish Pipe Band
Mary Lou and Cynthia Wagner*

Howard Hartnett
FROM
Bradley and Mary Grainger

Bill Houghton
FROM
Jim and Sara Kersting

Susan Kier Hoyer
FROM
Francis and Jane Gallagher

Charles and Ann Jankey
FROM
Walter and Sarah Medlin

Carola Keller
FROM
Sally and Kip Keller

Margaret Kennedy
FROM
Jose and Cor Drost

Carl Leopold
FROM
*Bruce Johnson
Judy Rossiter and William Kaupe
Cyrus Umrigar*

Dorothy and James Lynaugh
FROM
Matthew Lynaugh

Mary T. March
FROM
John March

Alan McAdams
FROM
Patty and Tom Davis

George H. Prentiss
FROM
Bard and Gina Prentiss

Dick Root
FROM
Barbara B. Page

Stephanie Scheck
FROM
Dennis Scheck

Vince Sirianni
FROM
Tom and Maureen Welch

D. Michael Smith
FROM
Charles and Julianne Hoffman

D. Michael and Donald W. Smith
FROM
Helen M. Smith

Polly Spedding
FROM
*Lawrence Jones and Vera Versteeg
Catherine Nelson*

Timothy Spencer
FROM
Richard Retallick

John Thompson
FROM
Nancy Gates

PHOTOGRAPHERS RAISE FUNDS FOR LAND PROTECTION

A group of photographers who study with Harry Littell, Assistant Professor and Chair of Photography at Tompkins Cortland Community College, collaborated this fall on a project to photograph several of the Land Trust's nature preserves.

The results of their combined efforts culminated in a group show, *Hidden in Plain Sight: Land Trust Landscapes*, which was on view at the Main Street Gallery in Groton this past December. The exhibit, a benefit for the Land Trust, reflects the students' interpretations of their favorite sites across the changing season. (Please see centerfold for Ray Helmke's photo taken at the Etna Preserve.)

Commenting on the works of her colleagues at the gallery reception, class member Marjorie Pryse noted, "Even when the trails in the Land Trust beckon onward, these photographs suggest the rewards of pausing, allowing the eye to notice the moment when light penetrates the depths of the forest floor, reflects off foliage, or bends beneath the surface of water. As you view the images on exhibit here, imagine seeing the natural world in a new way."

Proceeds from the sale of the students' works were generously donated to the Land Trust.

Special thanks to Harry and his photography students, violinist Nora Littell for filling the gallery space with her beautiful music during the reception, Damiani Wine Cellars for providing wine, and of course, Main Street Gallery owners Jeff Toolan and Lorna Apper.

At press time, Harry and his students were looking at other galleries in the Ithaca area to exhibit the show in 2014. Please stay tuned.



Assistant Professor of Photography Harry Littell (center) with Land Trust volunteers Garry Thomas (left) and Rick Lightbody (right) at the opening night reception for *Hidden in Plain Sight*

A CLOSER LOOK

Norway Maple and Ailanthus: A Tale of Two Troublesome Trees

In 1996, The New York Times mournfully reported that the Big Apple's Norway maple trees (*Acer platanoides*) and ailanthus trees (*Ailanthus altissima*) were mysteriously dying. The former is a beloved street tree; the latter is often the only greenery in blighted urban areas. Now, nearly 20 years later, the irony of those articles is sadly apparent: far from disappearing, these trees can be found in nearly every corner of the state and have become a serious threat to natural areas in the Finger Lakes.

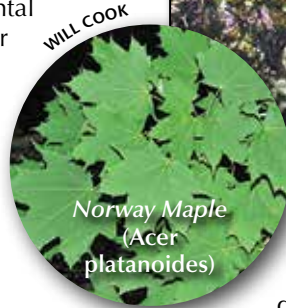
Both trees were first brought to this country in the 18th century. The handsome, broad-spreading Norway maple was very widely planted to replace native elms destroyed by Dutch elm disease; there are many attractive cultivars, including some with dark red or variegated leaves. The graceful, tropical-looking ailanthus, a native of eastern Asia, was first a fashionable ornamental (Frederick Law Olmsted used it in his design for Central Park) and, later, a popular choice for a city street shade tree. Both are well-suited in many ways to city living, being fast-growing and very tolerant of poor soils and pollution.

As so often happens, these transplants from the Old World found the new continent welcoming and quickly struck out on their own. It's hard to get a handle on the current distribution of these trees in the Finger Lakes, as their presence and rate of invasion in any given location depend on current and prior land use as well as climate, soil type, and existing vegetation. In some areas, only one or the other tree is a problem; in other places, neither is known, or both may be present.

Norway maple is probably the more troublesome of the two. It provides scant food for native wildlife, and the dense canopy that makes it such a fine shade tree also makes it a problematic neighbor. Its leaves cast a much deeper shade than that of native maples and its shallow roots siphon off nutrients; it may also chemically suppress the growth of other plants, though this has not been proven. To add insult to injury, the tree leafs out earlier and holds its leaves longer than most native maples; its seeds also sprout earlier. As a result, one of the few things that can grow underneath a Norway maple is another Norway maple.

The Norway maple can be found almost anywhere, but the ailanthus is generally a denizen of disturbed areas: roadsides, railroad embankments, even sidewalk cracks. Its scientific name means "tree of heaven," but it is also known as the "ghetto palm" because of its habit of growing in empty lots. Like the immigrants whom it symbolizes in Betty Smith's novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, ailanthus is endlessly adaptable and resourceful. It eagerly colonizes new ground with both

suckers and seeds; it grows very rapidly, suppressing competition through allelopathic activity (the suppression of growth of one plant species by chemicals produced by



another), and quickly resprouts when cut. It seems not to mind compacted soil, drought, or toxins; the only thing it cannot stand is heavy shade. Once it gets a foothold, it can quickly invade natural areas and crowd out native species.

These two trees have become so widely naturalized that most people have no idea that they're exotics. Although the Norway maple leaf looks very similar to the sugar maple leaf, it is typically larger, and less indented. Its sap is milky, as opposed to the clear sap of native maples. It shows its true colors in the fall: whereas the sugar maple and red maple turn brilliant orange, gold, and red, the Norway maple typically changes to a clear yellow.

The pinnately compound leaves of ailanthus closely resemble those of native plants such as black walnut and, especially, staghorn sumac; in fact, the plant was originally assigned the genus *Rhus* (sumacs). In the Finger Lakes, ailanthus tends to colonize the same scruffy territory favored by native staghorn sumac. So how do you quickly tell the difference? Sniff the flowers or foliage in order to tell which is which: the ailanthus has a strong odor that has been likened to rotting peanuts or cat urine (whence another of its nicknames, "stink tree").

There is still time to halt the invasion of these trees into the Finger Lakes, but not much. Dave Steckel, a forester in Pennsylvania, warned, "If you don't address Norway maple within a decade, the understory's going to be dominated by it."

But "It makes excellent firewood," he added.

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller

Finger Lakes Land Trust

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Winter 2013-2014 Calendar

SAVE THE DATE

Please join us on **Saturday, March 17th** for the Land Trust's 25th Annual Meeting and help us celebrate our 25th year of protecting the land you love. *Details to follow.*

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 9:00 am: Winter Wildlife Tracking Walk at the Roy H. Park Preserve, North Parking Lot. Strap on your snowshoes (or hiking boots) and join naturalist and tracker Linda Spielman to discover what animals have been visiting the Roy H. Park Preserve this winter. The walk will be held with or without snow, so come prepared for the weather. Please dress warmly and wear proper footwear; there will be some stopping and standing along the way to observe the tracks. *Directions: From Ithaca, take Rt. 13 North towards Dryden. Go approx. 12 miles and turn right on Irish Settlement Rd. Continue on Irish Settlement approx. 4 miles to find the NORTH parking area—where the boardwalk is—on the left (approx. 0.5 mile after Hammond Hill Rd).*

TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 7:00 pm, Presentation by David Owen Brown: Water Travels; Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods, Ithaca. Join underwater filmmaker/photographer David Owen Brown on a visual voyage through the world's waterways. From pole-to-pole and throughout the tropics, from faraway seas to jungle rivers, Brown's cameras have recorded the wealth of wildlife and cultures that thrive wherever there is water. He weaves these experiences into a visual narrative of global travels, returning to the lush aquascape of the Finger Lakes where he was raised. The presentation is designed to illustrate the connections we all share via water, providing unique amphibious perspectives on the vibrant and vital waterways of New York.

SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2:00 pm: Tree Identification Walk at the Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook. Akiva Silver, naturalist, landscaper, and outdoor educator, will lead a walk that will focus 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 steep terrain. *Directions: From Ithaca, take Rt. 13 south. Turn left on Sandbank Rd., just past Buttermilk Falls State Park. At Y intersection, bear right on Town Line Road; park on right side of 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.

