



# THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 20, No. 2

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Spring 2008

## Land Trust's First Easement in Skaneateles Watershed Protects Critical Habitat

For many, Skaneateles Lake and its surrounding landscape embody the visual appeal and pastoral nature of the Finger Lakes region. The farmland's checkered beauty interspersed with sweeping views of the lake conveys a scenic grandeur that captivates residents and visitors alike.

Perhaps less visible, but no less important, is the role this landscape plays in keeping the water quality of the lake nearly pristine. The Land Trust knows the importance of maintaining natural areas for water quality and works hard to protect land along stream courses. For this reason, Land Trust officials were delighted when long time members, Jack and Janet Lowe, donated a conservation easement that will secure 86-acres and 3000 feet of frontage on Bear Swamp Creek. The donation marks the Land Trust's first conservation easement in the Skaneateles watershed and in Cayuga County.

The watershed that feeds Bear Swamp Creek, one of the major

*continued on page 4*



ANDY ZEPF

*Bear Swamp Creek is one of the major tributaries to Skaneateles Lake.*

## Campaign Launched to Expand Protection of Lick Brook

The Ithaca area has a few magical spots where a hillside opens up between the trees, revealing a gorge with a high waterfall and a million dollar view. One such spectacular sight lies in the Land Trust's Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook, just four miles south of downtown Ithaca. Along with its breathtaking "Lost Gorge" and 140-foot waterfall where Lick Brook has cut through the shale, Sweedler Preserve boasts natural amphitheatres and undisturbed woodlands.

For example, fine stands of Eastern Hemlock and White Pine, oak, maple and Cucumber Magnolia cover the preserve. In spring, the forest floor provides a canvas for breathtaking blooms of wildflowers. Birds such as Hermit Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Wild Turkey, and animals such as fox and deer all make their homes here. Historically, Lick Brook's gorge served as hunting grounds for the Peregrine Falcon, until pesticides endangered the birds.

The 128-acre Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook was bought from Moss and Kristin Sweedler in 1993, not long after the Land Trust's birth in 1989. The acquisition represents one of the organization's early successes. Since then, staff and volunteers have worked with landowners to protect adjacent lands. The Sweedler Preserve is currently part of a corridor of contiguous natural areas that includes Robert H. Treman State Park, the Land Trust's recently acquired Cayuga Inlet Conservation

*continued on page 2*

TONY INGRAHAM ©



*Lick Brook is renowned for its wild gorge and scenic waterfalls.*

**BRAD EDMONDSON, JOURNALIST AND DEMOGRAPHICS EXPERT, WILL SPEAK ON THE FUTURE OF THE FINGER LAKES AT THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING AT STEAMBOAT LANDING ON CANANDAIGUA LAKE. (See insert for details.)**



## PERSPECTIVES

The Lowe conservation easement and the Hanson acquisition at Lick Brook, which are featured in this issue of *The Land*

*Steward*, are both beautiful parcels of land as well as pieces of a complex jigsaw puzzle the Land Trust is painstakingly assembling. Both properties are truly extraordinary tracts of land in their own right. They border pristine streams that flow into our Finger Lakes and feature mature woodlands that provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Perhaps more important, though, they are part of larger works in process that involve countless hours of patient negotiation on the part of the Land Trust.

The Lowe property is located along the banks of Bear Swamp Creek. The creek, which flows into Skaneateles Lake, is one of the most pristine in the entire Finger Lakes region. For years now, the

Land Trust has been working with landowners to permanently protect the stream and its headwaters. To date, we've secured four properties, including the Land Trust's Bahar Nature Preserve and the recent acquisition of the Digney property at Carpenter's Falls. While we've made good progress, we've still got a long way to go, as additional lands bordering the creek remain at risk.

Our efforts at Lick Brook date back to the beginnings of the Land Trust. In fact, our initial outreach efforts to landowners came at the time of the organization's incorporation in 1989. Nearly twenty years later, we can look back over the successful protection of Lick Brook's spectacular gorge through the establishment of the Sweedler Preserve and the protection of adjacent lands through a conservation easement.

With development pressures increasing, our focus has shifted upstream. By working in partnership with landowners

along the brook, we now intend to create a protected corridor all the way from Lick Brook's headwaters to its confluence with Cayuga Inlet.

At both Bear Swamp Creek and Lick Brook, the Land Trust has been patiently working for almost two decades. In all likelihood, our protection efforts will continue for at least two decades more.

You can observe the fruits of our labor when you visit Carpenter's Falls or our Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook. As you enjoy the inspiring vistas, please join us in thanking landowners and donors who have made possible these conservation victories. Also, know that a Land Trust staff member or volunteer will be patiently working with other nearby landowners to secure those remaining puzzle pieces that will ensure the future protection of these priceless natural areas.

—Andy Zepp

## Campaign Launched to Expand Protection of Lick Brook *continued from cover*

Area, the Thayer conservation easement, the Finger Lakes Trail and Buttermilk Falls State Park.

To counter the increasing threat from developers looking to build close to Ithaca, the Land Trust is returning to its early conservation vision by launching a campaign to protect Lick Brook, from its headwaters to its confluence with Cayuga Inlet. The Land Trust seeks to protect lands along the stream to maintain an unbroken corridor of wildlife habitat that will also help ensure clean water within Lick Brook's gorge and further downstream in Cayuga Lake.

"Lick Brook is not a large stream, but it is remarkably pristine, given its proximity to Ithaca," said Andy Zepp, director of the Land Trust. "Also, protection of additional land here is particularly significant, given that this is all part of a network of open space that now totals more than 2,000 acres."

The Land Trust seeks to raise \$125,000 for the purchase of a key parcel bordering protected lands, and also to cover the costs of stewardship of existing lands and a pledged gift of land along the brook.

Currently, the Land Trust is finalizing the purchase of approximately seven acres of mature forest bordering Sand Bank Road, in the Town of Danby at its border with Ithaca. Just upstream of the Sweedler Preserve and bordering the Thayer conservation

easement, the new acquisition includes 1,100 feet of frontage on Lick Brook, which makes the acquisition especially valuable. The

property boasts mature hemlocks, hardwoods and pines along the stream's sloping banks. The Land Trust jumped to secure the property when it learned that the land was slated for development.

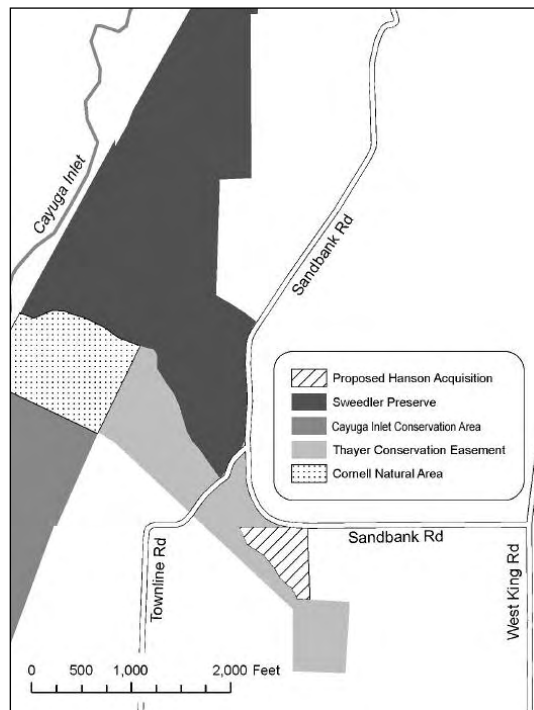
"Given its location, we felt we had to step up," Zepp said of the planned purchase.

The Land Trust is also reaching out to other landowners along Lick Brook and anticipates protecting at least one additional property in the area through the use of a conservation easement.

In addition to capital needed for land acquisitions, funds raised through the campaign will also provide for trail improvements at the Sweedler Preserve and the long-term stewardship of upstream lands that have been pledged as a gift by a Land Trust member. Look for additional details in the next issue of *The Land Steward*.

For more information about how you can support the Land Trust's campaign for Lick Brook, please contact Jan Hesbon in the Ithaca office.

—Krishna Ramanujan



# State Acquires Key Parcels for Conservation

During the past few months, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) completed three acquisitions that will secure significant open space lands at sites identified as priorities for protection by the Land Trust.

Within the Canandaigua Lake Watershed, the DEC completed its acquisition of the Gathercole property from the Land Trust. Located on the northern flank of Bare Hill, this 95-acre property features woodlands overlooking Canandaigua Lake. The Land Trust acquired the property last year, with the understanding that the state would purchase the land when funds were available. The land will be managed as an addition to Bare Hill State Unique Area.

In Seneca County, the DEC acquired a 105-acre parcel including frontage on Newton and Lowery Ponds, two of the Junius Ponds. Long known to naturalists, the Junius Ponds host five rare wetland plants. "The Junius Ponds complex is a unique assemblage of bogs, fens, ponds and other wetland types that support endangered and rare plants and animals and sensitive ecological communities," said DEC biologist Jim Eckler.

The state purchased the land from the Village of Lyons, which once utilized the site as a public water supply. The acquisition includes both Newton and Lowery Ponds. The Land Trust assisted the DEC



ANDY ZEPF

*The Junius Ponds complex is host to a unique assemblage of rare and endangered species.*

with its initial outreach to village officials.

Within the Emerald Necklace Greenbelt, just east of Ithaca, the DEC also recently acquired a 60-acre woodlot that was entirely surrounded by Hammond Hill State Forest. The acquisition will eliminate the threat of inappropriate development while also enhancing recreational opportunities and reducing boundary maintenance costs.

"This is a classic inholding that the state celebrated acquiring," said DEC forester Rich Pancoe. "It truly protects the primitive and rustic values of this area."

Financial backing for each of these acquisitions came from the State's Environmental Protection Fund. The Land Trust strongly supports growth of this state fund, to keep pace with rising real estate values and an increasing need for the environmental programs supported by the fund. In addition to the acquisition of environmentally significant lands, the fund finances a variety of conservation programs, including farmland protection, efforts to improve water quality and projects involving the remediation of contaminated lands.

## Gifts Fuel Conservation Planning and Outreach Efforts

A generous contribution from the van der Stricht family will allow the Land Trust to work with partners to develop a comprehensive protection plan for remaining open space lands within the Canandaigua Lake Watershed. Another grant from an anonymous donor will support a similar assessment of open space resources within Seneca County.

Both projects will involve a systematic assessment of land resources, along with outreach to local municipalities and landowners. Using techniques developed through the recent Owasco Flats Conservation Planning Project, staff and consultants will work together to collect data, secure public input and develop consensus. They will also educate landowners and local officials about conservation easements and the Land Trust.

Both projects will result in the development of detailed conservation plans for identified focus areas as well as a published report of project findings that will be distributed to the general public. Public workshops will be held in conjunction with each of the projects later this year. "With limited resources, it's essential that we invest in planning and outreach efforts like this so that we clearly define our conservation priorities – both for ourselves and our partners," says Land Trust President Jim Kersting. "We also need to get the word out to landowners and local officials so that they are fully aware of the various conservation options that are available."

*The Land Trust is most grateful to the van der Stricht family and our anonymous donor for their generous support of these projects.*



BILL HECHT ©

*Aerial view of the south end of Canandaigua Lake.*

# Forest Restoration at Bishop Preserve

Nearly half of New York's 18.6 million acres of forest are thought to be second-growth woodlots that were established on abandoned farmland beginning in the late 19th century. The widespread clearing and cultivation of the 18th and 19th centuries represent the most extensive disturbance to northeastern forests since glaciation, and the effects of that disturbance can still be observed.

Some researchers have suggested that these forests will either require active restoration efforts to reestablish diverse native plant communities, or centuries of time for the plants to widely colonize through natural seed dispersal or vegetative growth. In addition, the large deer populations that currently exist throughout central New York further limit the ability of many native woodland species to establish, grow and reproduce.

The Land Trust's 35-acre Bishop Preserve, in Fayette, Seneca County, is a prime example of the post-agricultural woodlots that exist throughout the state. Bruce and Helen Bishop purchased the abandoned

farmland near their home and, for 30 years, labored to establish a variety of shrubs and conifers at the site. They donated their property to the Land Trust in 1993. The Land Trust's Preserve Management Committee recognized that although forest cover is present on much of the site due to the Bishops' efforts, the site would benefit from additional restoration of a diverse native plant community there. All it would take is a dedicated work force.

Last October, students from the Marcellus High School Outdoor Club, along with their advisor, John Birmingham, rose to the occasion. Under the guidance of Land Trust volunteer Jim Engel, the students spent a day sowing thousands of seeds of native woodland wildflowers, shrubs and trees across the property. In addition to sowing seeds as far and wide as possible, the students joined me, a forest ecologist at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, to establish experimental plots that we can monitor long-term and control for plant damage by foraging deer. The New



CRCG MCCFEE

*Jim Engel and High School volunteers establish one of the experimental plots for monitoring plant damage by foraging deer.*

York Biodiversity Research Institute and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation provided equipment and supplies for the experiment.

The efforts of Jim Engel and the Marcellus High School students will serve as a case study to help guide future efforts to restore native plant communities throughout much of New York's impoverished post-agricultural forest landscapes. The Land Trust is thankful to them all for their care and hard work.

—Greg McGee

## First Easement in Skaneateles Watershed Protects Critical Habitat *continued from cover*

tributaries on the southern end of Skaneateles Lake, covers approximately 6,000 acres. Identified as a conservation priority by New York State's Open Space Plan, the creek originates in Bear Swamp State Forest and is particularly notable because of the number of protected and rare plants and the quality of wooded wetlands found along its banks.

Located off Glen Haven Road, the Lowe's property sits high off the lake, surrounded by working farms and panoramic views. While much of this area of Skaneateles Lake still holds onto its agrarian charm, the ever-present push of development and pressure from those seeking to be near the lake without the tax burden of lakeshore property has slowly begun to change the character of this landscape.

In talking with the Lowes, one can easily sense the practical dedication that inspired them to donate an easement. "We are strongly committed to our land and don't want to see development here that would change the nature of our property," said Janet Lowe.

"That really sums it up," agreed Jack. "We are committed to doing something positive for our land and hope that it will have a beneficial impact on the long term character of the area."

Part of an old farm site, the gently

sloping fields make the land a prime candidate for future development. Instead, the multitude of wildlife habitats, including successional shrub land, mixed hardwood and hemlock forest, and the sensitive wetlands along Bear Swamp Creek, will be protected in perpetuity.

While these habitats may seem no different from the general regional landscape, they have special importance to certain at-risk bird species. Audubon New York has identified the southern Skaneateles Lake forest area as an "Important Bird Area" and critical habitat for a number of songbirds and raptors, the Cerulean Warbler and Northern Goshawk among them.

"This is an outstanding project," said Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp. "This easement gift will protect excellent fish and wildlife habitat, help ensure the water quality of Skaneateles Lake and secure scenic views from State Route 41A. We're most grateful to Jack and Janet Lowe for their wonderful commitment to the land and the community."

The Lowe's generous donation also expands the Land Trust's conservation outreach in the Skaneateles area. While recent acquisitions have allowed the Land Trust to secure a mile-long corridor of Bear Swamp Creek, from Carpenter Falls to the shoreline of Skaneateles Lake, the

greatest conservation potential lies in working with private landowners who voluntarily want to protect their property through an easement.

Landowners like the Lowes are a critical component to long term conservation success throughout the entire Finger Lakes region. By working with the Land Trust to tailor an easement to their specific needs, the Lowes show that individuals have an opportunity to protect their land in a way that is meaningful and personal. The Lowes' example also expands the conservation dialogue within a community and allows people to see that there are options available to them that they might not have known about.

And while each landowner's motivation to protect their property is unique, the Lowes have quietly shown how small acts can have a powerful impact on us all.

*The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges the Allyn Foundation and the Joan Rothenberg Family Foundation for their generous support of our conservation efforts within the Skaneateles Lake Watershed. We also express our gratitude to Attorney Mary Schubert and the law firm of True, Walsh, & Schubert, LLP, for providing pro bono legal services in support of this conservation easement.*

—Rocci Aguirre

# A Bird Watcher's Guide to Our Protected Lands in the Ithaca Area

To watch birds on Land Trust lands is to witness firsthand the wonder of biodiversity. Especially in spring and summer, the birds put on an incomparable show — a long cast of characters, costumed in riotously varied color, playing out the high drama of courtship and birth, predation and survival. Experiencing this wonder, and then letting it motivate us to understand and protect this precious diversity of life, is what the Finger Lakes Land Trust Spring Bird Quest is all about.

Consider the diversity of birds on Land Trust properties in terms of sheer numbers. More than 120 species breed on Land Trust preserves and protected lands. If we include migrants passing through on their way to and from breeding grounds to our north, the annual species tally is likely well over 200, spanning three-dozen taxonomic families.

Thriving biodiversity depends on the protection of varied high-quality habitats. Land Trust preserves comprise a rich variety of ecosystems, from deep forests to open scrub to wetlands, all supporting a distinctive mix of birds and other wildlife.

Here we briefly highlight several of the Land Trust preserves most renowned among birders. All listed sites are within a 30-minute drive of Ithaca. We encourage you to visit these and all of the Land Trust's preserves to explore the unique habitats and avifauna of each. For more information on all the preserves, including maps and detailed directions, visit:

[http://flt.org/protected\\_lands/index.php](http://flt.org/protected_lands/index.php).

**Park Nature Preserve.** Irish Settlement Road, Dryden. Newly christened as the Land Trust's 25th preserve, the Park Nature

Preserve is home to at least a dozen breeding warbler species and many other birds. Around the pines and spruces near the entrance, look for Prairie Warblers, Magnolia Warblers and Indigo Buntings. In the hemlock woods, you might find Black-throated Green and Canada warblers, Blue-headed Vireo, or even a Barred Owl or Red-shouldered Hawk. Down by the ravine, listen for the incomparably long and virtuosic song of Winter Wren

and look along the creek's edge for Louisiana Waterthrushes, incessantly bobbing their tails.

**Goetchius Wetland Preserve.** Flatiron Road, Caroline. No other Land Trust site in central New York has quite such a combination of expansive marsh, grasslands and forest as this preserve. Search the wetlands for several swallow species, wading birds and possibly calling rails. In the open fields and neighboring farms, one can readily hear the ebullient clanking of Bobolinks and the thin buzz of Savannah Sparrows. The small wooded area resounds with the voices of many birds, including the distinctively hoarse yet melodic phrases of the Yellow-throated Vireo.

**Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve.** Route 34/96, West Danby. This is surely one of the premier birding sites in the area, not to be missed if you want to maximize your species count for the Spring Bird Quest weekend. Seventeen or more warbler species have been observed here in the breeding season, including Blackburnian Warblers galore in the hemlock woods, Worm-

eating Warblers on the steep slope as well as Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers in the rolling areas of open scrub. The preserve also abounds with cuckoos, kingbirds, thrashers, Wood Ducks and much more.

## Salmon Creek Bird

### Sanctuary.

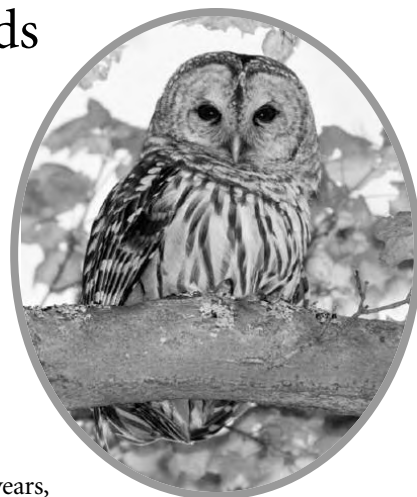
Salmon Creek Road, Lansing. In recent years, this site has been most renowned as a home for breeding Cerulean Warblers, a species of very high conservation concern. For the past few years, Cerulean Warblers have become increasingly hard to detect here, but they have been sighted as of 2007. Walk slowly along Salmon Creek Road and listen for their high, buzzing song. The preserve has a dazzling variety of other birds, too. On a still morning in spring, those skilled at identifying birds by ear can easily count 30 species in half an hour here. Given its clear sight lines from the road into the tall trees, this preserve also offers unusually fine opportunities for viewing Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Wood Thrushes and Baltimore Orioles.

**Dorothy McIlroy Bird Sanctuary.** Lake Como Road, Summerhill. Avian diversity at this preserve is outstanding; like Lindsay-Parsons, it should be a priority destination for those aiming for a high species tally for the Spring Bird Quest. The sanctuary hosts 15 or more species of breeding warblers, including Northern Waterthrush and Canada Warbler. The brushy open areas by Lake Como Road house Alder Flycatchers, both cuckoo species and many songbirds. Be sure to visit the observation platform too, for views of Solitary Sandpipers and other wetland birds.

—Mark Chao

Left Photo: *This Northern Waterthrush was photographed at the Dorothy McIlroy Bird Sanctuary during last year's Spring Bird Quest.* PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID RUPPERT©

Top Photo: *A Barred Owl at the Land Trust's new Park Nature Preserve.* PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID RUPPERT©



## Land Trust Hats Are Back!

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND, the Land Trust hiking cap is once again available. Our hand embroidered baseball style hiking cap in stone-washed green, proudly displays the Land Trust's official white pine logo. A tasteful accessory for long summer hikes, the Land Trust hat also makes the perfect gift and is a great way to show your support. Hats are available at the Land Trust office for \$15 or \$20 shipped.

TO ORDER YOURS TODAY, please call Abbey at the Land Trust office at 607-275-9487.



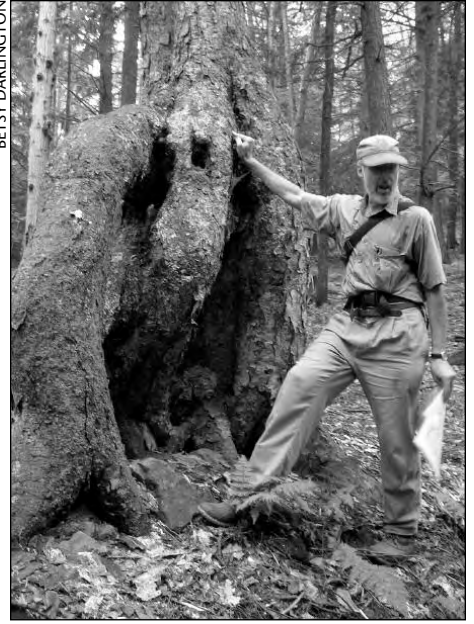
# Scenes' from Our Protected Lands...

EMILY EISMAN



A tributary of Cascadilla Creek making its way through the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve in Tompkins County.

BETSY DARLINGTON



Cornell Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Peter Marks expounding on an old yellow birch during a nature walk at the Martin Preserve in Schuyler County.

*“So often we enjoy these woods, once or twice a week or more, yet rarely write how much pleasure and replenishment it gives us—immense amounts in all seasons!”*

— Comments from the visitors' log at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve

BETSY DARLINGTON



(left to right) Land Trust volunteers Judy Pierpont and Gary Mallow with Land Trust President Jim Kersting at the Great Hill Preserve in Yates County.

BETSY DARLINGTON



*Naturalist Linda Spielman pointing out bear marks on a utility pole during Tracks and Signs at the Steege Hill Preserve – part of last year's Talks & Treks Series.*

BETSY DARLINGTON



*Volunteer Carol Klepack helps out at a work party last Fall at the Land Trust's new Park Nature Preserve in Tompkins County.*

BETSY DARLINGTON



*A hemlock forest at the Land Trust's new Park Nature Preserve in Tompkins County.*

RICK LIGHTBODY©



*Hikers hit the road again during last Fall's Emerald Necklace Hike & Lecture Series.*

# VOLUNTEER PROFILE

## Roger Hopkins and Dave Schurman: *What to do with the skilled, energetic, organized and willing?*

The Land Trust had a problem to solve, and quickly. As you may have read in the Winter issue of *The Land Steward*, beavers had built a new dam along Cayuga Inlet on the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby, Tompkins County. Waters impounded by the dam threatened the nearby railroad tracks which run through the preserve. Betsy Darlington, charged with Land Trust preserve stewardship, wanted to find a solution that would be acceptable to the railroad company and would protect the beavers at the same time.

So Betsy called upon, as she said, “the skilled, energetic, organized and willing.” She was referring to volunteers Dave Schurman and Roger Hopkins. Working from plans Betsy had obtained from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Schurman and Hopkins spent dozens of hours engineering a solution that protected the railroad tracks from flooding without harming the beavers, among other important concerns. They also needed to take into account the beavers’ irresistible urge to build a dam when they hear or feel rushing water.

Hopkins and Schurman put their considerable talents and experience together. They designed and redesigned the water control project, shopped for materials and organized the work crew that Betsy had recruited. First, they went to the site, got in a kayak and measured water depth. The pond is about an acre in size and six feet deep.

“It was an impressive engineering feat on the part of the beavers,” Hopkins said admiringly. “It’s amazing how tight their dam is, using nothing but sticks and mud.”

In their final plan, they used a culvert in the top of the dam that was 20 feet long and a foot in diameter. The upstream end of the pipe — submerged below the water’s surface — is lower than the downstream end. Thus the water enters the pipe without noise or significant current; the pond’s water level stays



JEAN SCHURMAN

*Volunteers Roger Hopkins (left) and Dave Schurman congratulating each other after installing the new beaver pond leveler at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve.*

at the height of the pipe end downstream — just beyond the top of the dam.

Due to careful planning by Hopkins and Schurman, the installation with the legion of volunteers went smoothly.

“It was very satisfying that it all came out as well as it did,” Roger said. “Though we think we have successfully tricked the beavers, we’re standing by to see what happens.”

Perhaps this is the most dramatic project these men have implemented, but both Hopkins and Schurman have served the Land Trust in many other ways.

Every week this past summer, Schurman hauled his lawn mower from Trumansburg to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve to mow the trails when the neighboring volunteer helper became seriously ill.

Together, the two men built a new kiosk at the Sweedler Preserve, using durable black locust, prefabricating the parts at home, then transporting it and assembling it on site. “If our budget was

unlimited, it would have been easy,” Hopkins said. “But working for a non-profit, you take salvage. We had to come up with some unique designs.”

In addition, they have helped with numerous work parties, including a huge brush clearing on trails at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve and a daunting cleanup of over six tons of tires at a new acquisition. They both gave the Land Trust substantial help — logistical and otherwise — with the ambitious Emerald Necklace hike last September.

According to Schurman, the two men “have a unique complementary perspective that allows our vision to work together well. It makes it fun.”

Schurman recommends volunteering with the Land Trust for two reasons. “The Land Trust is at the top of the list of organizations that really appreciate what you do.” And, “my wife and I love to hike and canoe. Work inside or play outside? I always choose outside.”

—Margot Brinn

*Readers can see pictures of the event at [www.waterfeller.com/FLLT/BeaverDamDrain](http://www.waterfeller.com/FLLT/BeaverDamDrain).*



# Finger Lakes Land Trust Spring Bird Quest 2008

Memorial Day Weekend  
Saturday, May 24 –  
Monday, May 26

Celebrating birds and preserving habitats in the Finger Lakes

## SCHEDULE

### Friday, May 16

Registration deadline. See below for contact info. A registration fee of \$25, or \$15 for Land Trust members or students, is requested.

**PLEASE NOTE** that all events listed below are non-mandatory. Registrants are free to choose what FLLT preserves to visit and when to do so over the weekend. Guided walks are open to both registrants and non-registrants. Check with the Land Trust for late additions to the schedule of walks.

### Thursday, May 22

4:00-6:00 PM  
Spring Bird Quest Open House  
Finger Lakes Land Trust  
202 East Court Street, Ithaca

### Saturday, May 24

8:00-10:00 AM  
Guided birding walk  
McIlroy Bird Sanctuary

### Sunday, May 25

8:00-10:00 AM  
Guided birding walk  
Lindsay-Parsons  
Biodiversity Preserve

### Monday, May 26

4:00-6:00 PM  
Wrap-up celebration  
Finger Lakes Land Trust  
202 East Court Street, Ithaca

## TO REGISTER, OR FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

Emily Eisman  
Membership and Outreach  
Coordinator  
Finger Lakes Land Trust  
Phone: (607) 275-9487  
Email: [emily@fllt.org](mailto:emily@fllt.org)

Sponsored by



### You're invited!

You're invited to join this year's *Finger Lakes Land Trust Spring Bird Quest*, a unique celebration of our local breeding birds, and an opportunity to support the Land Trust's vital efforts to preserve their dwindling habitats.

### Birding on FLLT lands — a dazzling spectacle

In late May, FLLT lands offer a birding spectacle without equal in the Finger Lakes. Resplendent in their breeding colors, birds have begun a season of song, courtship, foraging, and raising young. In 2007, Spring Bird Quest participants collectively tallied over 110 species over Memorial Day weekend.

### Help the Land Trust to protect birds

Participants are urged to gather pledges from friends, family, and other supporters, per bird species found on the FLLT's protected lands over the weekend. If you can't participate but want to support the event, your pledge is most welcome, either for an individual participant or for the collective tally. All proceeds benefit the Finger Lakes Land Trust, and are tax-deductible. Spring Bird Quest participants and supporters raised over \$6,000 for the Land Trust in 2007!

### Prizes

Registered participants are eligible for great prizes generously donated by event sponsor *Wild Birds Unlimited* and renowned wildlife photographer *Marie Read*.



MARIE READ

Nashville Warbler, Park Nature Preserve  
(Baldwin Tract).



MARIE READ

Magnolia Warbler, Park Nature  
Preserve (Baldwin Tract).

### Everyone is welcome!

Participants of all ages and levels of experience are welcome. We will hold guided walks especially for newer birders at two preserves. (See schedule.)

**Participants are NOT expected to devote the whole weekend to the event.** You can bird as little as one hour on one day at one Land Trust preserve, or twenty hours over three days at a dozen preserves. The idea is to get out, have fun finding birds, and help the Land Trust, within your means and your schedule.

## Board Developments



*New Land Trust Board Member Steve Green*

The Land Trust is delighted to welcome new board member Steve Green. Steve is the environmental manager for Nucor Steel Auburn, Inc., a steel recycler in Auburn, New York. Nucor is one of the nation's largest steel manufacturers, producing steel from recycled scrap. They are the largest recycler in the country. Both Steve and Nucor have been generous Land Trust supporters since 2004.

Steve is a member of the Air & Waste Management Association, the Water Environment Federation, and has served on the Registrar Accreditation Board and the Leadership Cayuga Board with the Cayuga County Chamber of

Commerce. He holds a B.S. degree in environmental resource management and a M.S. degree in environmental pollution control, both from Pennsylvania State University.

He lives on Cayuga Lake in Union Springs.

*Welcome aboard, Steve!*



### Are You Planting Seeds for the Future?

Like this little girl,  
YOU can Plant Seeds...  
Seeds for Land Conservation

#### Make a Gift from Your Estate to the Land Trust.

Your Bequest Will Help Keep Natural Areas Natural For Future Generations...So That They May Inherit Protected Lands!

*Finger Lakes Land Trust ~ protecting land since 1989.*

Contact: Jan Hesbon, Director of Development; [janhesbon@fltl.org](mailto:janhesbon@fltl.org); (607) 275-9487

### *Our sincere thanks for gifts in honor of:*

**Luke and Robin Lorenzo**

FROM

**Peter Merrill**

**Rachel Miller**

FROM

**Mr. and Mrs. Mitch Moore**

### *Our deepest appreciation for birthday gifts to:*

**Betsy Darlington**

FROM

**Kate Beare**

**Jean Darlington and Ed Marchena**

**Lois Darlington and Alfredo Rossi**

### *We are deeply grateful for donations in memory of:*

**Geoffrey Wheelock**

FROM

**Paula Coyne**

**Patty and Tom Davis**

**Herbert and Lorraine**

**Elmer**

**Wallace Fish**

**Scott Fletcher**

**Henry and Magdalene**

**Hagedorn**

**Frank Meleca**

**Steven & Christine**

**Moolin**

**Leia Raphaelidis and**

**Steven Vanek**

**Steven Wheelock**

**Hui Zhu**

**Charles and Florence**

**Babcock**

FROM

**Tom Babcock**

**Kirk Shreve**

FROM

**Alex Wood**

**William Thayer**

FROM

**Ree Thayer**

**Laura Lee**

**Weisbrodt Smith**

FROM

**James and Janis Smith**

## A CAPITAL IDEA Gifts of Stock

**Did you know** that a gift of stock or mutual funds to the Finger Lakes Land Trust will not only protect more land in the Finger Lakes region but can also save you income and capital gains taxes?

### HERE'S HOW...

**IF THE STOCK HAS APPRECIATED**, and you have owned the stock for more than one year and a day, you would pay no tax on the capital gains when you donate the stock to the Finger Lakes Land Trust. AND, you could deduct the fair market value as of the date you make the gift, reducing your income tax.

*For example, Mr. & Mrs. Conservator own 500 shares of Gizmo stock purchased at \$10 a share 30 years ago with a total value of \$5,000 at that time. Today, the stock is worth \$50 a share, and the total value is \$25,000. If the*

*Conservators had sold the stock, they would have paid capital gains tax on the appreciation of \$20,000, or \$3,000 at the 15% capital gains tax rate. By donating the stock to the Land Trust, the Conservators would pay no capital gains tax, and their deduction of the \$25,000 fair market value of the gift could provide a tax savings of approximately \$8,750 at the 35% federal tax rate.*

**IF THE STOCK HAS DEPRECIATED**, you may sell it, and give the proceeds to the Land Trust, and you will receive a deduction for the value of the proceeds, and possibly utilize a capital loss.

For tax advice, please consult your professional advisors.

For instructions about how to transfer a gift of stock to the Land Trust, call our office at 607-275-9487.

# A CLOSER LOOK

## Forest Ephemera: Vernal Pools

Vernal pools, also known as woodland pools, are small (usually less than an acre), ephemeral wetlands found throughout the northern forests of the US and Canada, including our Finger Lakes region. These shallow depressions fill with water in the spring and sometimes again in the fall, yet seem to disappear into the forest floor during the rest of the year.

Vernal pools may form when rain, wind, snow, glaciers or running water create gentle hollows in the earth. Pools in old-growth forests may also be formed by the trees themselves: when mature trees die naturally, they fall over and their root balls pull out of the ground, creating pits that may later fill with water. Before European settlement, the microtopography of our area was far more varied than it is today, and wetlands of all kinds, including vernal pools, were far more numerous. As generations of European settlers removed the forests, drained the wetlands, and plowed the land, the shallow depressions and slight mounds that characterized the primeval forest floor were flattened and in many cases disappeared altogether. Ironically, the same human activities that destroyed one ecosystem could create another: drainage ditches sometimes transform into vernal pools long after the original wetlands have disappeared.

It has been suggested that vernal pools are “keystone ecosystems”: that is, that their role in the landscape is larger than one would expect, given their small size. Vernal pools limit flooding downstream, recharge groundwater, reduce erosion, and serve as critical breeding, rearing and foraging habitats for many animals. Because they hold water only at certain times of the year, they cannot support fish and are therefore relatively safe nurseries for a number of species. Mole salamanders (named so, due to their habit of burrowing), wood frogs and fairy shrimp are so-called obligate vernal pool species — in other words, they must breed in vernal pools. Other animals (such as the spring peeper, American toad, and spotted turtle) are known as facultative vernal pool species: they can use the pools for all or parts of their life cycles, but are not strictly dependant on them. The pools also provide foraging habitat for a wide range of other species, including turkeys, white-tailed deer, raccoons, mink, bats and raptors; Wood Ducks often nest by large vernal pools.

Despite their ecological importance, vernal pools have very little protection under either federal or state law. They are regularly destroyed, often unknowingly, by development, agriculture, off-road vehicle use and the introduction of invasive plants and animals. Well-meaning landowners may turn the seemingly useless “soggy” areas on their land into permanent ponds stocked with amphibian-eating fish. Perhaps because the number of suitable breeding habitats is in decline, the Jefferson salamander and the blue-spotted salamander — two obligate vernal pool species that are species of special concern in New York State — have begun to interbreed; non-hybrid individuals are increasingly rare.

Even when vernal pools are not destroyed or altered, they are always at risk from contaminants.

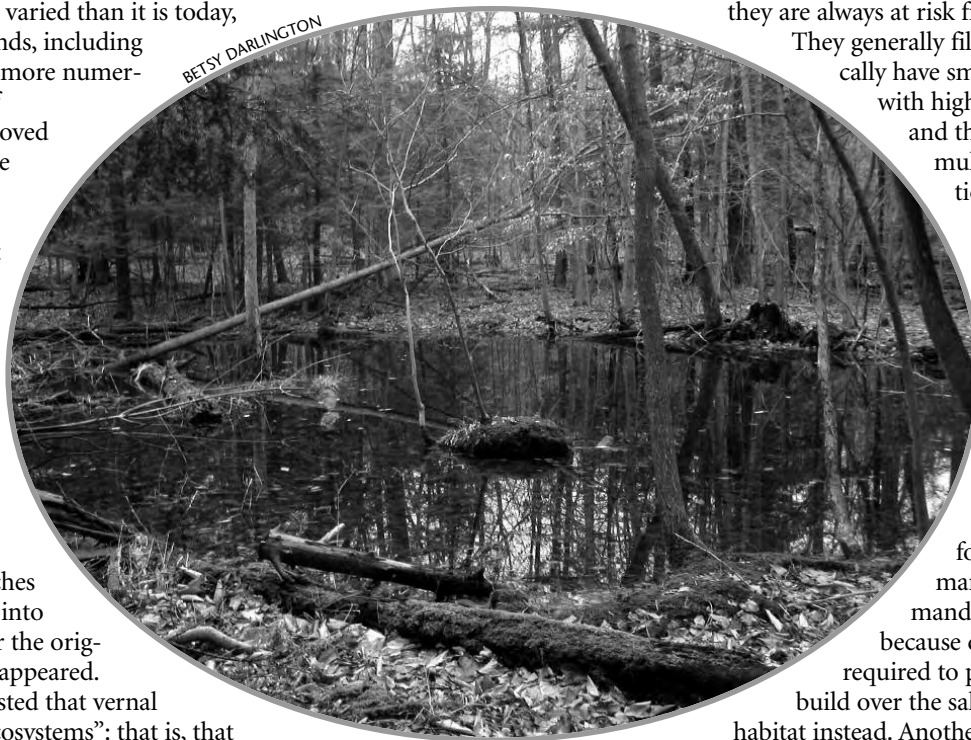
They generally fill with runoff and typically have small water volumes with high evaporation rates, and therefore they can accumulate high concentrations of pollutants.

Protecting vernal pools, however, is only part of the equation. It's just as vital to preserve the land surrounding them, since species that breed in pools spend the remainder of their lifetimes in adjacent mature forests. On Long Island, marbled and tiger salamanders are threatened because developers, who are required to preserve vernal pools, build over the salamanders' upland

habitat instead. Another problem arises when man-made structures, such as roads, cut pools off from each other: isolated populations are more vulnerable to environmental changes, and road traffic is devastating to migrating animals. Some species, such as the spotted turtle (another species of special concern in New York State), are especially vulnerable to road mortality because they lay very few eggs, mature very slowly and travel quite far in search of wetlands.

Although wetland ecosystems in the Finger Lakes have experienced much damage, there is a lot we can do to preserve and restore vernal pools as well as create new ones. Two local organizations that educate the public about vernal pools and are currently collecting data on the whereabouts of existing pools are the Upper Susquehanna Coalition at: <http://www.u-s-c.org/html/vppage.htm> and the Woodland Pool Steward Program at: <http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/woodlandpools/>.

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller



*Vernal pools, such as this one at the Stevenson Forest Preserve in Enfield, serve as critical breeding, rearing and foraging habitats for many animals*

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## SPRING 2008 CALENDAR

**SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 11:30 AM: Annual Meeting at Steamboat Landing in Canandaigua.** Please join us for the Land Trust's 18th Annual Meeting at Steamboat Landing on the shore of Canandaigua Lake. See insert for details.

**SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1:00 PM: Garlic mustard pull at Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby.** See insert for details.

**SUNDAY, MAY 18, 9:30 AM: Garlic mustard pull at Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby.** See insert for details.

**MAY 24-26: Finger Lakes Land Trust Spring Bird Quest.** See ad on page 9 for details.

**SATURDAY, MAY 31, 10:00 AM: Garlic mustard pull at Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby.** See insert for details.

**PLEASE SEE ENCLOSED INSERT FOR OUR 2008 TALKS AND TREKS SERIES**

**See our website 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.**