



THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 21, No. 2

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Spring 2009



ROCCI ACQUIRE

In its first collaborative effort with Yates County and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), the Land Trust partnered with Dale and Karen Hallings, owners of Hallpine Farms, to permanently protect their 219-acre farm in the Town of Milo, south of Penn Yan. A conservation easement ensures that fourth-generation Hallpine Farms will remain in agriculture and will not be lost to development.

“Dale and Karen Hallings are the first farmers in Yates County to protect their land through the use of an agricultural conservation easement,” said Peter Landre, executive director of CCE-Yates County and co-chair of the county’s Agriculture & Farmland

Protection Board. “They have shown tremendous vision, patience, and leadership by protecting their family farm for future generations.”

Two factors highlight the importance of protecting this farm to maintaining a healthy agricultural industry in the Finger Lakes region: high quality soils and increasing development pressures. The soils on Hallpine Farms consist of Honeoye, Lima and Kendaia soil types, all of which are officially listed as USDA Prime Soils and Soils of Statewide Significance. Moreover, the farm lies along State Route 14A, a major traffic and tourism corridor with a

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Danby Land Gift: A New Jewel in the Emerald Necklace

Sheela Kingsbury smiles unconsciously whenever the topic of discussion turns to the wildlife that roam her land or the trees and plants that she has discovered on her daily walks around the property. The deep sense of connection that this landowner feels for her land is obvious, so it should come as no surprise to those who know Sheela that she would graciously donate 50 of her prized acres along Jersey Hill Road in the Tompkins County town of Danby to the Land Trust.

Characterized by hardwood forest of oak, maple and beech, with scattered white pines, the property is particularly significant in that the headwaters of Lick Brook take form from the numerous springs located on the property. Starting as a small network of individual watercourses along the southern boundary of the tract, Lick Brook coalesces into a pristine stream that slowly changes in

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ROCCI ACQUIRE

Landowner and donor Sheela Kingsbury, on her property in Danby.

Please join us for our 20th Annual Meeting and Luncheon

This year’s keynote address will feature founding board members of the organization to speak on Celebrating 20 Years of Land Protection and Looking to the Future. See insert for details.



PERSPECTIVES

The Land Trust's new partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension marks an exciting new chapter for our organization. By working together with Extension to ensure the future of farming in our region, the Land Trust joins one of the best known institutions in our region in pursuing a sustainable future for an economy that truly defines the character of so much of our landscape.

Farming is a vital part of our region and its heritage. Farms not only put food on our table—they also provide many of the scenic vistas we value and the open spaces we cherish. For many of our communities, farming and farmland is at the very core of their identity.

Nowhere is the role of agriculture more obvious than in Yates County. While New York experienced a slight decline in the number of farms between 2002 and 2007 (2.3 percent), Yates County actually saw a 20 percent increase! Similarly, while acreage in farmland decreased statewide, Yates saw a 10 percent increase.

Yates has benefited from an influx of Amish and Mennonite farmers, as well as general growth in the entire agricultural

sector. Revenues from agriculture in this county were estimated at \$88 million during 2007 alone!

While these statistics demonstrate the strength of Yates County agriculture, it does not mean that these lands are immune from development pressures. Even the most productive farmland can give way to lake view homes, without careful planning and programs that provide adequate compensation to the farmer in exchange for their right to subdivide and develop.

Our new partnership in Yates County is only the latest in a series of projects undertaken by the Land Trust to sustain our best agricultural lands. We completed our first agricultural easement on Tompkins County's Nesbitt Farm in 1996. We subsequently partnered with Tompkins County in 2006 to secure funds to purchase an easement on the Howser Farm in Lansing. Since then, the county has obtained funding to purchase easements on three additional farms.

Elsewhere in the region, Cayuga County has already protected several thousand acres of prime farmland through the state's farmland protection program. Other counties have become

active in this area as well—Cortland, Onondaga, Seneca, Livingston and Ontario counties have each received funding for these projects.

Given the number of farms in our 12-county region, the Land Trust can not realistically move forward to advance farmland protection on its own. In addition to Cooperative Extension, partners such as American Farmland Trust and the New York Agricultural Land Trust are already playing key roles and will continue to do so in the future. We will work together to ensure that we can all continue to enjoy the benefits of living in a region that hosts a strong agricultural community.

While protecting a farm from development does not ensure that it will be successfully farmed, it does ensure that the opportunity to farm will be there—next year and a generation from now. Thanks to New York's commitment to this effort and the support of local communities, the outlook for farming in our region is bright.

—Andy Zepp

First Agricultural Easement in Yates County to Protect 4th Generation Farm

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high profile for developers.

"Creating a focus for farmland protection in the county in this area makes sense," Dale said. "I believe that if neighboring farms see other farms protected, they would more likely consider this as a viable option to help preserve their valuable farmland, particularly considering the development pressures that are occurring along this corridor."

The farm entered the Hallings family in 1905. "My grandfather bought the land and farmed in partnership with my great grandfather and great uncle," Dale explained. "My father purchased the farm in 1955, and when his health began to fail, I bought it in 1979. I've been farming for 30 years, and I've spent my entire life on this farm."

Today, Hallpine Farms is a cash crop farm with a small beef enterprise. Crops grown include corn, soybeans, wheat, alfalfa and timothy. Dale and Karen understand the value of their soils to both their farm and to society as a whole. "Farmland like this is a precious resource, and it cannot be replaced," Dale said. New York State couldn't agree more.

New York's Department of Agriculture and Markets administers a program affectionately known as F-PIG (Farmland Protection Implementation Grants), in which 75 percent of the development value of agricultural land is paid to the landowner with the condition that the land remain in agriculture forever. The

state means to ensure that agriculture remains a strong force in its economy and that individual farmers can avoid development pressures and strengthen their farm for themselves and future generations.

Through the FPIG program, the state and the landowner provide the resources, while a qualified third party—in this case the Land Trust—holds the conservation easement.

Dale plans to farm the land until he retires, but he isn't sure if his kids will take over from him. "We have a son and daughter who at this point do not plan on farming, but they are still young and have to find their places in the world," Dale noted, adding that he felt relieved knowing that, even if his children do not farm the land, someone else will continue on. Dale and Karen's participation in the FPIG program guarantees exactly that.

"Farmland is vital to the future of Yates County and the entire Finger Lakes region," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "We are grateful to the commitment Dale and Karen Hallings have made to both the land and their community. We also greatly appreciate the support of Yates County, New York's Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the Partridge Foundation of Cleveland, Ohio. Each of these partners was essential."

In addition to conserving prime agricultural soils, protecting Hallpine Farms provides valuable open space in a significant watershed. The farm drains into both Keuka and Seneca Lakes

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Landowners Act to Protect Properties Bordering Scenic Byway

The Land Trust announced in February that it had accepted two separate gifts of conservation easement agreements on land bordering the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway in Tompkins and Seneca counties. Both easements, from landowners Don Wilson and John and Holly Bailey, will help ensure the scenic character of State Route 89, protecting open farmland as well as woodlands bordering tributaries to Cayuga Lake.

Don Wilson donated a perpetual conservation easement on 14 acres, bordering State Route 89 in the town of Ulysses. The land being protected through the easement lies within a Tompkins County-designated Unique Natural Area. One of the chief features of the property is more than 1,000 feet of frontage on Willow Creek, including a portion of the creek's rugged gorge. The property also includes mature woodlands visible from both Cayuga Lake and the Scenic Byway.

The Land Trust now holds 64 conservation easements across the region. These easements are legal agreements between landowners and the Land Trust that conserve significant natural resources in perpetuity, while allowing the land to remain in private ownership and on the tax rolls. Conservation easements thus provide for long-term protection of significant open space lands; at the same time, they typically allow for traditional land uses

such as agriculture and forestry. Both Wilson and the Baileys will benefit from state and federal tax breaks associated with their gifts.

In discussing why he agreed to donate a conservation easement to the Land Trust, Don Wilson cited his desire to see his land protected into the future as well as his passion for paleontology. The property has been in the Wilson family for five generations, and he feels that he is continuing a family tradition of sound stewardship. Through a partnership with the Paleontological Research Institute, Wilson has periodically allowed field trips into the Willow Creek Gorge to study fossils on the site. For obvious reasons, land conservation helps maintain the integrity of such sites.

John and Holly Bailey donated a similar conservation



John and Holly Bailey with "Keel" on their recently protected property.



CHRIS OLNEY

Conservation easement donor Don Wilson on his property, which includes Willow Creek Gorge.

easement on their farm property in Ovid, Seneca County, which features a broad sweep of scenic field along State Route 89 and Deerlick Springs Road. Protected as well is a rugged gorge and mature woodlands. John and Holly Bailey live on their property and lease their fields to a local farmer. The land is highly visible to motorists and bicyclists on the state highway and provides open views of Cayuga Lake to the east.

"We have been privileged to live on this beautiful piece of land for nearly forty years, and we wanted to keep the fields and woods beautiful and productive for the generations that follow us here," said Holly Bailey.

"Because of its proximity to the lake, our farm is a prime development target, so it is wonderful that the Finger Lakes Land Trust was here to help us accomplish its conservation."

Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp added, "We're grateful to Don Wilson and the Baileys for their wonderful commitment to the land and our community. By taking action, they're helping to ensure that our region will continue to be known for its clean waters, scenic beauty and diverse landscapes."

The Land Trust invites all Finger Lakes landowners interested in exploring land protection through a conservation easement to contact our Ithaca office at (607) 275-9487 or visit our web site – www.flit.org.

First Agricultural Easement in Yates County to Protect 4th Generation Farm

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(via the Keuka Lake Outlet—itsself recognized for its public natural resource, natural beauty, recreational opportunities and historic preservation sites).

Highly aware of their place in the watershed, the Hallings strongly believe in and adopt progressive soil and water conservation practices that address erosion and non-point source pollution issues.

Yates County is blessed with high quality soils and countless beautiful vistas so often desired by homeowners. The FPIG program offers a means to ensure that farms possessing these soils (and often these vistas) remain in agriculture forever, to the

enrichment of our communities.

The Land Trust's partnership with CCE and Yates County provides an easy-to-follow template for interested landowners to protect their lands. The success with Hallpine Farms marks the beginning of what is expected to be a fruitful collaboration for the Land Trust and the farmers of Yates County. —*Jamie Hawk*

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

Land Trust Launches Farmland Protection Partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension

The New Year marked a new beginning for the Land Trust's efforts to permanently protect the region's most productive farmland. Following on the successful completion of the Hallpine Farms conservation easement (see page 1), the Land Trust and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County joined to formally launch an expanded partnership to protect farmland and at the same time educate farmers and local officials about options for conserving prime agricultural land.

The partnership has already secured funding for the purchase of a second conservation easement on additional farmland adjoining Hallpine Farms. During the coming months, additional farmland protection projects will be launched in both Yates and Ontario County. Also in the works are a series of educational workshops on conservation easements.

"This partnership is a great opportunity for us," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "We worked closely with Cooperative Extension to complete the Hallpine Farms project, and this next step will provide both organizations with additional capacity to undertake more projects like this."

"The State's Farmland Protection Implementation Program is fairly complex and time consuming; however, the potential long-term benefits for farmers and the community are tremendous," said Peter Landre, executive director of Yates County Extension. "We have created a unique partnership and process in the county to navigate through the program as efficiently as possible."

Landre added: "The county Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Finger Lakes Land Trust work together to screen potential applicants, select projects for state submission, write the project proposals and submit proposals on behalf of farms to the state. For projects

that are funded by the state, CCE and FLLT work together to fulfill the many requirements to complete a project, including development of a site plan, survey, appraisal, baseline study, monitoring plan, conservation easement, title report and purchase agreement."

This new initiative will involve a number of staff members and volunteers but will be spearheaded by Jamie Hawk, a Yates County resident who has been hired as a joint staff member of both the Land Trust and Cooperative Extension. For the Land Trust, Hawk will take the lead on a number of farmland protection projects in several Finger Lakes counties while also expanding our land protection efforts within the Keuka Lake Watershed.

Through Cornell Cooperative Extension, Hawk will also provide staff support to Yates County's agriculture and farmland protection board and advance other Extension programs related to the sustainability of agriculture in the county.

Hawk brings a diverse background to his new position. He has most recently served as Yates County Extension's sustainable viticulture program director. Earlier he was employed as research coordinator and assistant vineyard manager for Hunt Country Vineyards in Branchport. Hawk also served in the Peace Corps in Zambia.

To learn more about the Land Trust's new partnership, contact Jamie Hawk at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County – (315) 536-5123.



Land Protection Specialist
Jamie Hawk

Danby Land Gift: A New Jewel in the Emerald Necklace *continued from cover*

character as it flows from the rolling hills of Danby towards the rugged gorge that defines its lower reaches and its confluence with the Cayuga Inlet.

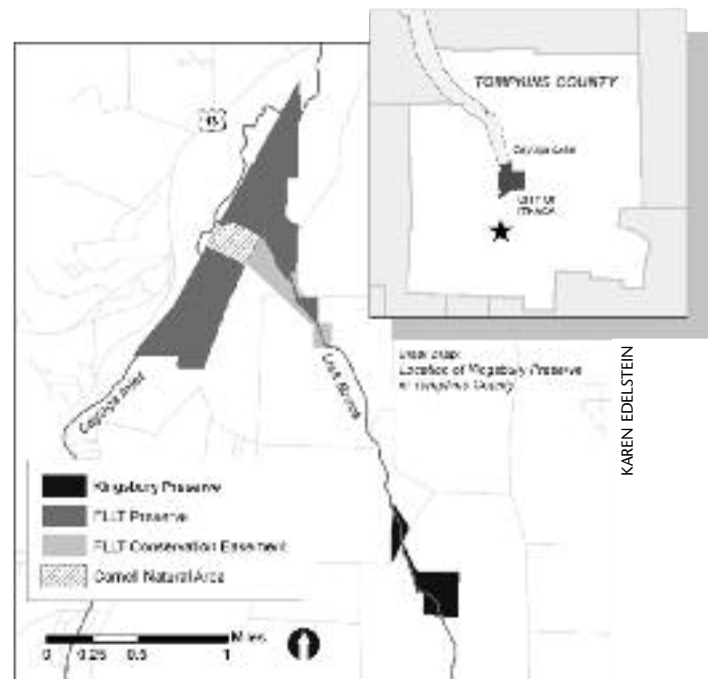
The Land Trust will manage this new parcel, with over 6,000 feet of frontage along Lick Brook, as protected open space known as the Kingsbury Woods Conservation Area. The Kingsbury land reflects much of the character that makes this area special. It is the latest jewel in the Emerald Necklace, the 50,000-acre arc of public open space surrounding Ithaca.

"I love the image of the Emerald Necklace and the fact that this unique place will now be a place of serenity and relaxation that my neighbors and the entire community can come and enjoy too," Sheela said recently, adding, "On a certain level I believe that land really belongs to everyone—working with the Land Trust allowed me to simply make that a more formal relationship."

Sheela's respect for the landscape and deep appreciation of the individual role she herself could play in forging a link between her community and the natural surroundings made the Kingsbury gift a natural fit for the Land Trust.

"This is a wonderful gift to the community," says Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "With development starting to crowd Lick Brook, now is the time to protect these critical lands. We're very grateful to Sheela and her family for this wonderful gift."

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20TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES

A Young Land Trust Spreads Its Roots: *The Western Lakes Expansion*

A hundred and fifty years ago, Hemlock and Canadice Lakes were indistinguishable from the other Finger Lakes: the surrounding forests had been logged and farms dotted the hills. In 1852, however, in response to a devastating cholera epidemic, the city of Rochester began piping clean drinking water from Hemlock Lake; in order to safeguard the water quality, the city purchased all of the land within two hundred feet of both lakes, destroyed standing buildings and reforested the clearings. Today, they are the only two Finger Lakes with largely undeveloped shorelines and intact natural landscapes.

Thanks to modern science, however, it is no longer essential to keep the lakes pristine in order to ensure an uncontaminated supply of water to the city: a filtration plant on Hemlock Lake now makes the water even cleaner than it was before. Subsequently, the lakes have become the target of intense development pressures—and equally intense conservation efforts.

In September 1990, Steve Lewandowski, a watershed conservationist and a member of the newly founded Finger Lakes Land Trust, called a meeting in Canandaigua to discuss the possibility of establishing a local land trust chapter. One month later, the Ontario Chapter (later to become the Western Lakes Chapter, or WLC) of the Land Trust was founded.

Lewandowski was joined in the formation and early development of the WLC by other western lakes residents, including Meg Ewing, Jim and Sara Kersting and Jim Fralick. They came from different backgrounds but had a common cause: the protection of watersheds and open space lands throughout the western Finger Lakes.

The first years of the chapter were filled with disappointments. A spot on a local radio show didn't attract any interest. An effort to protect land near the Ontario County town of Victor hit a dead end. The first attempt at a conservation easement was even more disheartening. After a year of painstaking negotiation, the chapter had finally worked out the details of an easement on property in Canandaigua—only to find, when they arrived to sign the final papers, that the owner had changed his mind.

Their luck started to improve in 1993, the same year that the Hemlock Lake water filtration plant was built. That year, the WLC acquired its first preserve, the Bishop Nature Preserve, a small woodland tract bordering the Seneca-Cayuga Canal in Seneca County. Two years later, it negotiated its first conservation easement for a parcel on the east side of Canadice Lake; the owners of that property, Al and Sybil Craig, were to become staunch supporters of the Land Trust. In response, the owners of two neighboring properties were inspired to place conservation easements on their own lands. And, as founding member of the chapter, Jim Kersting remembers, "Things just snowballed from there."

With so few resources and so much land to protect, the chapter had to rely on the incredible creativity of its all-volunteer staff. In 1996, the WLC started an outdoor-education series called "Talks and Treks," now a Land Trust institution. The first year was grueling: events were scheduled every other week from May through October. As Meg Ewing recalls, "We were on stage all through the summer. It was a madhouse. But we brought in so many people that membership started climbing right away."

Its influence in the region increased in 1999, when the WLC bought the first parcel of the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve above Honeoye Lake, the flagship preserve for the Western Lakes. An

anonymous donation made the purchase possible, but it didn't cover all of the costs. To raise the needed money, the chapter launched several fundraisers, including an annual gala of sorts dubbed "Artistic Roots." This popular event, held in a historic theatre in the village of Naples, featured local musicians, poets and artists.

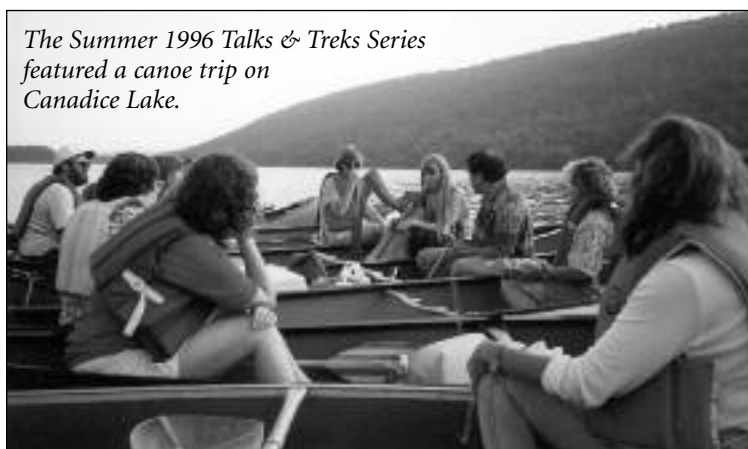
The following year, Thomas and Sandra Hansen of Middlesex, NY, donated a 221-acre parcel of land that

was to become the Great Hill Preserve at the southern end of Canandaigua Lake. There was one problem, though: the board of the Land Trust refused to accept the donation because one of the landowner's employees owned a five-acre inholding. Undeterred, Jim Fralick bought that land from the employee and promptly donated it to the Land Trust. The preserve, which is located on a steep, forested hillside and can be seen for miles, could not have been more apt; with this acquisition, the chapter finally gained enough visibility to become a strong force in the region's land conservation efforts.

Since it was established, the WLC has protected more than 2,300 acres, including cherished natural areas such as Grimes Glen and Wesley Hill. In addition, the chapter has protected some of the region's best farmland and forged strong partnerships with local municipalities. Today, land conservation efforts are focused on the Canandaigua Lake watershed, where development pressures are greatest. Efforts to protect land within the Hemlock and Canadice Lake watersheds also continue. To date, in this area, the Land Trust has secured three properties through the use of conservation easements.

The WLC still exists on paper, and the region has its own field representative, but it is no longer a semiautonomous entity. Sara Kersting explains, with a laugh: "We started out by being a western 'territory,' and now we're a state. We're now fully integrated."

— Jacqueline Stuhmiller



The Summer 1996 Talks & Treks Series featured a canoe trip on Canadice Lake.

Stay tuned for our next 20th Anniversary Series article on the rise of conservation easements.

Looking Back

Highlights from the Last 20 Years

1988

Andy Zepp proposes creation of a regional Land Trust in the Finger Lakes as part of his Master's project at Cornell University

1989

The Finger Lakes Land Trust is incorporated to serve a 12-county region

1991

Bob Beck is hired as the first Executive Director.
Land Trust acquires its first nature preserve, on Seneca Lake.

1993

128-acre Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook is established just south of Ithaca. Land Trust embarks on first fundraising campaign to cover associated costs.
Gordon and Margaret Nesbitt donate first conservation easement on agricultural land on their 300-acre Tompkins County farm.

1996

Talks and Treks, a series of guided hikes and talks to educate people about the Finger Lakes region, is launched by a group of volunteers in the western Finger Lakes.



BILL HECHT



Carl Leopold, Founding President, reports 195 members, and 'operating on a shoestring'.

Land Trust accepts its first conservation easement, donated by Betsy and Dick Darlington on their property in Tioga County.

1990



JOHN SMITH

The Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve is established through the encouragement of Dr. Tom Eisner of Cornell University, who proposes the world's first temperate zone reserve for the study of biochemical interactions of organisms in their natural environment. The preserve now spans more than 500 acres.

Craig family donates first conservation easement in the western Finger Lakes on their 120 acre retreat in the Hemlock/Canadice watershed.

1995

Gift of the 13-acre Whitlock Preserve protects 500 feet of frontage on Cayuga Lake

1998

First parcel acquired within the Honeoye Lake watershed to establish the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve, which features the dramatic Briggs Gully, one of the region's largest gorges. Ten years, later, through a series of five acquisitions, this preserve now spans more than 300 acres.

1999

“If there were no Finger Lakes Land Trust, it would need to be invented.”

—THE LATE ARCH DOTSON,
CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONOR, 1992

2000

Establishment of the 800-acre Steege Hill Preserve overlooking the Chemung River; Land Trust's first acquisition within the Southern Tier.

Gift of 226 acres on South Hill, above Canandaigua Lake, becomes Land Trust's 20th nature preserve known as Nundawao: Great Hill Preserve.

2003

Andy Zepp returns to the Land Trust as Executive Director

2006

The Land Trust and its partners launch the Emerald Necklace Greenbelt Project, an ambitious effort to link 50,000 acres of public open space in an arc around Ithaca.

The Land Trust successfully supports Tompkins County's first purchase of a conservation easement on the 430-acre Houser Farm in the Town of Lansing.

2009

Land Trust establishes partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension to protect prime farmland in the Finger Lakes. The protection of the 220-acre Hallpine Farm is the first project resulting from this effort.

Acres protected by the Land Trust exceeds 10,500 with membership now topping 1,800.



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1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009



EMILY EISMAN

Land Trust partners with landowner Odell Scott and the Town of South Bristol to create a scenic park overlooking Canandaigua Lake.

2004

Carol and John Krebs donate the Land Trust's largest conservation easement to date on their 430 acre farm in Livingston County.

Land Trust opens office in Canandaigua to support greater activity in the western Finger Lakes.

2002

The primary public access to Carpenter's Falls acquired by the Land Trust, securing a cherished natural area within the Skaneateles Lake Watershed. A subsequent purchase results in a mile-long greenbelt between this waterfall and the lake.

2005



BETSY DARLINGTON

Record-setting year of 16 transactions and over 1,000 acres protected.

Land Trust completes multi-year effort to secure the heart of Grimes Glen, one of the region's premiere gorges. The Land Trust retains a conservation easement on the site, which is now owned and managed by Ontario County as a park.

2008

The Roy H. Park Preserve is established along Six Mile Creek. This preserve represents the Land Trust's 15th completed project within this watershed, the source of Ithaca's drinking water supply.

Using low interest loans, the Land Trust acts quickly to purchase 95 acres of forested hillside above Canandaigua Lake; later sold to New York State as an addition to Bare Hill State Unique Area and the loans are re-paid.

With support from the Central NY Regional Planning and Development Board, the Land Trust completes the Owasco Flats Conservation Plan, a consensus-based guide to conserving one of the region's largest remaining unprotected wetlands.

2007

THANK YOU!

The past year was a time of significant growth and accomplishment for the Finger Lakes Land Trust. In 2008, we completed a record-setting 16 projects, protecting over 1,000 acres of land and surpassed 10,000 acres of protected land in the Finger Lakes. While these numbers are impressive, what is more significant is the continued dedication and generosity of our members and supporters. 2009 marks our 20th year in existence, and it could not happen without you.

Thank you to all our members for your commitment to the future of our home landscapes. The Land Trust can now boast the support of 1800 families across the region. Due to space constraints, listed below are donors who made leadership gifts in 2008.*

Land and Conservation Easement Donors

John & Holly Bailey
Bev Higgins
Dan Karig & Joane Molenock
Sheela Kingsbury
Robert & Judith Lockwood
Jack & Janet Lowe
Sarah Newman
Frank & Jean Schonfeld
Polly Spedding
Don Wilson

\$100,000+
Anonymous
Estate of Albert B. Craig, Jr.
Dorothy D. Park

\$50,000-99,999
Joshua Allyn

\$20,000-49,999
Anonymous
Town of Ithaca
Park Foundation
Fred & Margaret Sibley
Sue van der Stricht
Tompkins County

\$10,000-19,999
Anonymous(2)
Priscilla Browning
Estate of Douglas B Fitchen
Albert & Pauline Joergers
NYS Conservation
Partnership Program
through Land Trust
Alliance Northeast and
the State of New York
Nucor Steel Auburn, Inc.

\$5000-9999
Lew & Dawn Allyn
Kenneth & Marjorie
Blanchard
The Cayuga Foundation/
McIntosh Family
Tanya Dillon
Dominion Foundation
Tom & Maria Eisner
Peter & Kathy Gerbic
Gerald Morsello & Elaine
Rees
Seneca Meadows, Inc.
Helen Thomas Howland
Foundation
Joan Rothenberg Family
Joan Foundation
John Ben Snow Foundation
Esther Dotson
Jack & Janet Lowe
Polly Spedding

\$1000-4999
Anonymous(4)
Molly & Barry Adams
Tom Babcock
Joe & Nancy Briggs
Marjory Brooks
Larry & Laura Buffam

James & Terry Byrnes
Canandaigua National
Bank
Catherine Caneau
Diane & Roger Cass
John & Louisa Cohlman
Corning Incorporated
Foundation
Gregory Craig
Louise & Burch Craig
Patty & Tom Davis
Brad Edmondson &
Tania Werbizky
Myron & Barbara Egtvedt
Meg & George Ewing
Martha Feger
James & Ellen Fralick
Harry & Marion Fulbright
Marty & Cathy Gardner
GE Foundation
George M. Ewing & Marie
Merrill-Ewing Foundation
Gill Foundation
Jean L. & Carl F. Gortzig
Kurt & Sorel Gottfried
Edward & Irene Grandt
Steve Green
Donald Green
Robert & Elaine Growe
John & Polly Guth
Barbara & Stephen Hamlin
John S Harding
Harriet Budke Revocable
Trust
Edward Hart
Howard Hartnett
Bill Hecht
Peter & Susan Henry
Ruth & Roger Hopkins
Dr. & Mrs. Robert T. Horn Jr.
HSBC Bank USA, N.A.
Isabel Hull
IBM Corporation
John & Josephine Ingle
Mark & Mickie Jauquet
John W. Bristol Trust
Peter & Peggy Kane
Jim & Sara Kersting
Elizabeth Kirchner
Bill & Carol Klepack
Carl W. Kohls
Gene & Joan Lane
Carl & Lynn Leopold
Robert & Judith Lockwood
Lee & Staffan Lundback
M&T Charitable Foundation
John & Candace Marsellus
David S. & Linda M. Marsh
Bob McGuire & Judy Keil
Rick Naro
Norcross Wildlife Foundation
Pike & Rosemarie Oliver
Chris Proulx
Tom Reimers
Richard M. Morse
Conservation Club
Don & Nancy Robbins
David Ruppert
Greg & Betsy Russell
Daniel Ryan
Nancy & Charles Scholes
John Schroeder

Stuart Schweizer
Stephanie Sechler
Erron Silverstein &
Maria Montgomery
Bonnie & John Sirianni
Thomas & Donna Sokol
Peter & Betty Stahlbrodt
Robert Strominger &
Karen E. Miller
Douglas B. Sutherland &
Nancy Kramer
Jan & Susan Suwinski
Ree Thayer
Liz & Ed Thorndike
Tompkins Trust Company
Velmex, Inc.
Peggy Walbridge
David Weinstein &
Christina M. Stark
Jim & Kris West

\$500-999
Ben Arthur
Harriet Brittain & Family
Johanna Chao
Mark Chao & Miyoko Chu
Alfred & Patricia Clark, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. David Courtney
Jean Darlington &
Eduardo Marchena
Daniel Eckstrom
Gayle & Phil Edgerton
D. W. & Marilyn Edington
Herb Engman
Michael J. Falcone
Shirley Fallon
Jean France
Nancy Gabriel
James Hamlin
Peter & Mary Lou Harriott
Christopher L. Henley
Jan Hesbon & Jo Becker
Carman & Sandy Hill
Laurel Hodgden
Eva Hoffmann
Kenneth & Barbara Horowitz
Ithaca Cayuga Optical Service
John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
Barbara Keeton
Carolyn Kenyon &
Robert Dattola
John & Louise Kingsbury
Bruce & Jen Klein
Lakeland Rovers
Helen Launt
Lois Levitan
Rick Lightbody
Ed Marx
Rick Marx & Alan Grethel
Todd & Hadley Matarazzo
Maxie's Supper Club
Roger & Darlys McDonough
Gordon & Margaret Nesbitt
Deborah O'Connor &
Peter Lepage
Bernard Oseroff
Walter Pintner
Pioneer Printing
Joe & Linda Piskorowski
Precision Filters, Inc.
Skippy Raines
Elizabeth & Dennis Regan

Jean & Betty Rowley
Anne Schaff
Bob Scheer
Kris Scholl & Brooke Oropallo
Sciarabba, Walker, & Co., LLP
Anne Shapiro
Thomas & Patricia Sills
James & Janis Smith
Jewel Snow
T.G. Miller P.C.
The Peddler Foundation
Genevieve Thompson
Michael & Marina Todd
Tompkins Investment
Services
Robbert VanRenesse &
Lesley Greene
Charles & Jane Walcott
John Wertis
Margaret White
Bill & Valerie Yust
Andrew & Rocio Zepp

\$250-499
Anonymous(4)
Adirondack Mountain Club-
Finger Lakes Chapter
Adirondack Mountain Club-
Onondaga Chapter
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**Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of this list. If we have made an error, accept our apologies and feel free to notify us.*

Danby Land Gift: A New Jewel in the Emerald Necklace *continued from page 4*

The Kingsbury gift also exemplifies the Land Trust's top-to-bottom approach when it comes to working on a specific conservation outcome. Working with Sheela and other committed landowners in the Lick Brook corridor has allowed the Land Trust to protect over 300 acres in the Lick Brook area so far, including over 15,000 feet of stream frontage.

Opening the land to the public is part of the initial work the Land Trust hopes to undertake through the spring. Plans include a parking area and information kiosk, as well a formal trail system that looks to take advantage of the trails Sheela herself has built and maintained over the years. Like similar projects undertaken by the Land Trust, all work is done with the intent of preserving the ecological integrity of the site and keeping things in scale for the size of the property.

It's a sentiment echoed by Sheela: "I am grateful for the time and resources that the Land Trust was able to invest in this project and for making it possible to protect this land for future generations. I hope it inspires others to think of ways to have a positive impact on the natural world around them." —*Rocci Aguirre*



ALLISON BERNETT

The new Kingsbury Woods Conservation Area features 6000 feet of frontage on Lick Brook.

We are deeply grateful for donations in memory of:

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Our sincere thanks for gifts in honor of:

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Besty Darlington (*on her birthday*)
FROM
Jean Darlington &
Eduardo Marchena

Spring Bird Quest 2009:

Celebrating Birds and Preserving Habitats in the Finger Lakes!
MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, MAY 23-25, 2009



MARIE READ



LANG ELLIOTT



MARIE READ

Join us again this year to celebrate birds and bird diversity on Land Trust protected lands. Come experience the stunning diversity of breeding birds this spring while also raising funds to protect critical bird habitat!

In late May, Land Trust 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.

This year, Land Trust volunteer and experienced birder, Mark Chao, will lead participants on three guided walks on Land Trust protected lands. The walks are free, but donations are strongly encouraged.

Saturday, May 23, 8:00-10:00AM, Guided Bird Walk at the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary in Summerhill, Cayuga County. This preserve features a variety of wooded wetland and wetland habitats, as well as a viewing platform.

Sunday, May 24, 8:00-10:00AM, Guided Bird Walk at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby, Tompkins County. A diversity of habitats including wetlands, open fields, and mature forest.

Monday, May 25, 8:00-10:00AM, Guided Bird Walk at the Park Nature Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County. Successional fields and mature forest host a diversity of bird species.

Mark will also be collecting pledges per bird species found on Land Trust protected lands throughout the weekend. We welcome you to pledge in support of Mark's efforts or to visit Land Trust sites, count birds, and raise pledges yourself!

Contact Emily Eisman, Outreach and Membership Manager at 607-275-9487 or emily@fllt.org

A CLOSER LOOK

The American Woodcock: Our Quirky Harbinger of Spring

Night falls in April on a weedy field in the Finger Lakes. The sky, moments ago ablaze with color, now shows just a faint glow on the horizon, and above that, a deepening blue. An early ensemble of spring peepers and rippling runoff from melted snow provide mellow background music for the still silhouettes of the landscape.

Then a sudden pulse of sound zaps the calm. “*BEENT!*” After a few seconds, again— “*BEENT!*” Listening closely, we hear these weird nasal buzzes being met by others from every corner of the field. We sense that we are surrounded not only by sound, but by unseen movement and drama. The place is alive with something strange and wonderful. It’s springtime, and American Woodcocks are displaying again.

Easy to overlook at any other place and time, the woodcock is the star of this evening’s show. But its intrigue extends beyond the brief period in spring when it grabs our attention. The more one learns about this species, the more distinctive and remarkable and lovable it seems.

The American Woodcock is a real oddball among our local birds. For one thing, it’s a shorebird—but it’s not found along shores. The American Woodcock is the only shorebird in North America to prefer wooded areas. It spends its days silently feeding on the soft forest floor, walking with a distinctive rocking gait and probing for earthworms. The bird is uniquely adapted for

this way of foraging. Its bill is long, flexible, and sensitive at the tip. Its huge, bulging brown eyes sit high and close together atop the head, allowing the bird to see in all directions above itself, even when sticking its bill into the ground.

The American Woodcock is a real oddball among our local birds.

The unusual size and position of the woodcock’s eyes throws the rest of the skull organs into a bizarre arrangement. The ears are in the middle of the bird’s face, between the eyes and the base of the bill. This placement may make it possible to locate prey by sound as well as touch. The woodcock’s brain is “upside down” inside its skull cavity. With most other birds, the brain sits atop the eyes, with the olfactory bulb in front of the other brain parts. With woodcocks, however, the olfactory bulb sits toward the back of the head, while the rest of the brain curls around under the eyes toward the face, up to the base of the bill.

As hunters and birders know, the American Woodcock is very difficult to find on the ground, because of its impeccable camouflage. More often, people detect woodcocks when they flush suddenly from the ground, issuing a telltale twittering after takeoff. Such woodcock encounters are still quite rare, even in frequent visits to suitable habitat.

But for a few precious weeks each year, from March through May, woodcocks come out in the open, shedding their usual



MARK CHAO

The woodcock’s long flexible bill is perfectly suited for finding earthworms in the soft forest floor.

retiring ways in a most flamboyant manner. There is nothing remotely like it in the lives of any other birds in our region.

Woodcocks display mostly at dusk and dawn, but sometimes throughout the wee hours on moonlit nights. Having convened in an open field, several males each stake out a space and start issuing that explosive buzz. After a few of these calls, a male woodcock suddenly takes to the air. Quickly achieving a maximum height as high as 100 meters, the woodcock flies in wide circles for a minute or so. Then, just as abruptly as he lifted off, the woodcock descends, plummeting in a crazy zigzag pattern and chirping like a songbird. The male woodcock touches down. He pauses for a few beats. Then again— “*BEENT...BEENT...*”

All this sound and spectacle is presumably irresistible to female woodcocks (for some reason, hardly anyone calls them woodhens), who visit display grounds before nesting and even after laying eggs and hatching young. But the full details of female response to the display remain undocumented. We do know that males sometimes display at several widely spaced sites and mate with multiple females. Males do not assist at all, however, in tending the nest or rearing young.

The American Woodcock, then, is both mystery and marvel. It is a joy and inspiration to witness the bird in the wild, to contemplate its life, and to start to understand its secrets. As the onset of spring awakens the American Woodcock’s urge to display, so can the woodcock in turn awaken something in each of us—a connection with nature, a sense of wonder, and an appreciation of the living things around us.

— Mark Chao

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SPRING 2009 CALENDAR

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 11:30 AM: Annual Meeting and Luncheon at the Harbor Hotel in Watkins Glen. Please join us for our 20th Annual Meeting and Luncheon, where this year's keynote address will feature founding members of the organization to speak on: Celebrating 20 Years of Land Protection and Looking to the Future. *See insert for details.*

2009 SPRING BIRD QUEST: (SEE PAGE 10 FOR DETAILS)

SATURDAY, MAY 23, 8:00-10:00AM, Guided Bird Walk at the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary in Summerhill, Cayuga County. This preserve features a variety of wooded wetland and wetland habitats as well as a viewing platform.

SUNDAY, MAY 24, 8:00-10:00AM, Guided Bird Walk at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby, Tompkins County. A diversity of habitats including wetlands, open fields, and mature forest.

MONDAY, MAY 25, 8:00-10:00AM, Guided Bird Walk at the Park Nature Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County. Successional fields and mature forest host a diversity of bird species.

Hike for the Highlands Series:

Join Executive Director Andrew Zepp for a series of daylong hikes through the wilds of the Skaneateles Highlands, the Bristol Hills, and the Finger Lakes National Forest. The hike series will provide participants with an introduction to these scenic landscapes while at the same time help raise funds to secure their protection. *See insert for details.*

Saturday, May 30th - Hike through the Skaneateles Highlands

Saturday, June 6th - Hike through the Bristol Hills

Saturday, June 13th - Hike through the Finger Lakes National Forest

PLEASE SEE ENCLOSED INSERT FOR OUR 2009 TALKS AND TREKS SERIES

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.