

THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 19, No. 2

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Spring 2007

Acquisitions Secure Lands Vital to Canandaigua Lake



In close cooperation with the Town of Gorham, Ontario County, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), the Land Trust has acquired a 96-acre parcel of forested hillside on the east side of Canandaigua Lake. By purchasing this land, from Robert Gathercole of Honeoye Falls, the Land Trust continues its protection of key lands within the Canandaigua Lake watershed.

The newly-acquired property features mature oak-hickory hardwood forest, a portion of Fisher Gully feeding Canandaigua Lake, seasonal views of the lake and an existing network of looping hiking trails.

With the acquisition of the 96-acre Gathercole Property along Canandaigua Lake's east shore (located within this vista), the Land Trust continues its protection of key lands in the Canandaigua Lake watershed

Under an agreement with the NYSDEC, the Land Trust will own the Gathercole land only temporarily. When funds become available, the state will purchase the property as an adjunct to its nearby Bare Hill Unique Area, a 300-acre preserve crowning the historic hill a mile south of the Gathercole land.

continued on page 4

Land Trust Acquires Acreage on West River

In February, the Land Trust acquired a key parcel at the south end of Canandaigua Lake, including 1,700 feet of waterfront along the West River, the lake's largest tributary. Located in the Town of Italy, Yates County, the 16-acre parcel also borders New York State's Hi Tor Wildlife Management Area and contains excellent wildlife habitat, hardwood forest, wetlands and a historic canal

Having acquired this property from the Perlman family of Rochester and New York City, the Land Trust is able to preserve open space in one of the Finger Lakes' largest wetlands complexes. While enhancing public recreational opportunities, the purchase helps protect Canandaigua Lake water quality. The lake supplies drinking water to over 60,000 people.

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Acquiring the Perlman property will ensure the protection of both open space and water quality in one of the Finger Lakes' largest wetland complexes

Professor John Halfman of the Finger Lakes Institute and Hobart and William Smith Colleges will speak on land use and water quality in the Finger Lakes at this year's Annual Meeting at Wells College in Aurora

(see page 10 for details)

PERSPECTIVES



Ready money; cold, hard cash — that's what has enabled the Land Trust to act quickly to protect the properties featured on the

cover of this issue of *The Land Steward*. That cash has been available due to the generosity of our donors along with favorable loans in support of our efforts on Canandaigua Lake from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation and the Rochester Area Community Foundation.

Increasingly, the Land Trust works with public sector partners to purchase environmentally sensitive lands so that they can be preserved as open space. In recent years, New York State has often had significant funds available for this purpose, but there have been cases where the state has been unable to act quickly enough to secure key properties listed for

sale. Without conservation finance, the Land Trust would be unable to jump in to help protect these lands.

Recognizing the need for interim conservation financing, the Land Trust recently established a revolving land protection fund for use in circumstances where quick, decisive action is needed. This fund will be used as needed to purchase "at risk" properties and will then be replenished either when private fundraising efforts are complete or when the Land Trust sells the property to a public conservation agency. At present, the Land Trust's revolving fund is entirely committed to existing projects.

Several important projects requiring interim funding are in the pipeline. They include protecting some of our last remaining undeveloped lakeshore, creating new long-distance recreational trails and acquiring buffer lands for one of our region's premiere state parks. In each case, our public conservation partners have shown their interest, but the need for substantial interim funding is clear.

Conservation finance has allowed us to make a bigger impact than ever before. It has allowed us to be agile and quick as a small conservation organization. But to continue to do so, we need your help.

Please contact me if you would like to consider making a contribution to our revolving land protection fund. By doing so, you'll be making a gift that will keep on giving as the fund finances land protection projects far into the future.

Inher J

—Andy Zepp

Land Trust Acquires Acreage on West River continued from cover

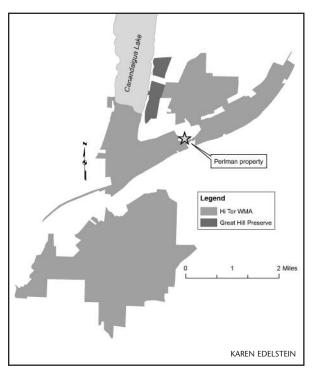
"This project is great from a water quality perspective, as the property is in the lake floodplain," said Kevin Olvany, Program Manager for the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Council. "Undeveloped floodplain is critical for protecting water quality because it acts as a filter for pollutants coming from upland areas and reduces potential for erosion and sedimentation."

A subdivision plan was approved for the property several years ago, but the development was never completed. Narrow individual lots could have accommodated more than a dozen manufactured homes or cottages. But soils in the area are very wet, limiting the use of conventional septic systems.

The wetlands are a popular area for kayakers, canoeists,

wildlife enthusiasts and birders. Recognized as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society, the wetlands provide habitat for uncommon species such as the pied-billed grebe, American bittern and least bittern.

There are also stunning views of steep forested hills and a U-shaped valley left behind by retreating glaciers during the last ice age. A trail along a former rail line traverses the area and provides excellent access to the interior of the wetlands.



The Land Trust intends to resell this property to New York State to be managed as part of the Hi Tor Wildlife Management Area when funds are available. This is the Land Trust's second acquisition on behalf of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation this year in the Canandaigua Lake watershed. The Land Trust moved to purchase the Perlman property after working with the DEC to assess State interest in the land.

Nonprofit organizations like the Land Trust can facilitate conservation of threatened parcels by acting on the state's behalf, negotiating with landowners and holding lands temporarily until state funds are available. The Land Trust acted in a similar capacity in the recent acquisition of the 96-acre Gathercole property on the eastern shore of Canandaigua Lake (see cover story).

"The DEC is very fortunate to have the Land Trust as a partner," said DEC Regional Director Sean Hanna.

"Maintaining habitat is the cornerstone of

the DEC's mission, and working with the Land Trust allows us to fulfill our mission in ways that would otherwise not be possible."

—Betsy Landre

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney David Dollinger of Dollinger Associates in Rochester, NY for providing pro bono legal services in the acquisition of the Perlman property.

Sangree Easement: Newest Jewel on the Emerald Necklace

A recent conservation easement donated by Lucinda Sangree will add a 215-acre parcel to the Emerald Necklace, an arc of forested land around the south end of Cayuga Lake that the Land Trust is working to protect.

The Sangree property is located about eight miles east of Watkins Glen, halfway between Texas Hollow State Forest and Connecticut Hill State Wildlife Management Area. A tributary of Cayuta Inlet flows through the property on its way to Cayuta Lake a mile away.

The land lies between two steep, forested ridges and includes the Cayuta Inlet valley, as well as meadows that have grown up on former farmland. While the forest on the eastern ridge has been logged fairly recently, the western ridge has not seen logging for a long time. This ridge marks the boundary of two watersheds. Water flowing down the western edge of the ridge feeds into the Finger Lakes watershed while water coming down the eastern side goes into the Susquehanna watershed.

To encourage wildlife diversity in the meadow portion, Lucinda has enrolled it in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. She mows one-third of the meadow each year in rotation, thereby maintaining the meadow at three different stages of maturity. In explaining why she's taken this step, Lucinda expanded on her wider view of land conservation and management for wildlife. "There need to be spaces where people can live in close proximity to other creatures," she said. "If we leave no [viable] habitat for them, they'll disappear."

Lucinda purchased her property through several transactions between 1995 and 2003 and has now placed it all under conservation easement with the Land Trust. The easement features three different degrees of restriction. Almost eight and a half acres of the parcel have the least restrictive easement, such that two private homes can exist on them. A moderately restricted 55 acres, including broad meadows, allow for the abovenoted mowing, yet permit no buildings. The remaining acreage allows for selective timber harvest, but must otherwise remain wild. Currently, the 116-year-old house that Lucinda and her partner share is the only building on the property.

Why put all of this land under a conservation easement? Lucinda cited the great pressure to develop land in the Finger Lakes accessible to nearby large towns — in her case Watkins Glen and Ithaca. To her, the property's most significant asset is its quiet, protected location.

"Often people have looked back and seen what they've lost, but of course by that point it's too late," Lucinda said. "We need to preserve the wildness and beauty of these hills."

—George Dillmann

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



Easement donor Lucinda Sangree (left) and her partner Marge Forth with Ronnie



The easement donated by Lucinda Sangree will add 215 acres to the protected lands of the Emerald Necklace

Public-Private Partnership Saves Forested Hillside

continued from cover

Bare Hill and its environs are awash in Native American history and legend. Seneca legends trace the birth of the tribe to Clark's Gully a few miles to the south, and some archeological evidence indicates Algonquin habitation in the area predating the Senecas. Bare Hill, known as Genundowa in the Seneca language, is the focus of an ancient tribal Thanksgiving tradition. Following the annual harvest in September, Keepers of the Faith lit a bonfire on the hilltop, signaling others to light smaller fires along the lakeside, resulting in a ring of fire, a gorgeous festival of lights.

"We saw an opportunity to protect a half-mile of wooded land above Canandaigua Lake that helped secure the northern flank of Bare Hill," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "But with a considerable price tag, we knew we needed partners to make this happen."

In late 2005, the Land Trust found a willing partner in the Town of Gorham. The Town had recently completed its Open Space Plan and was in the process of forming a conservation advisory board to help implement the plan.

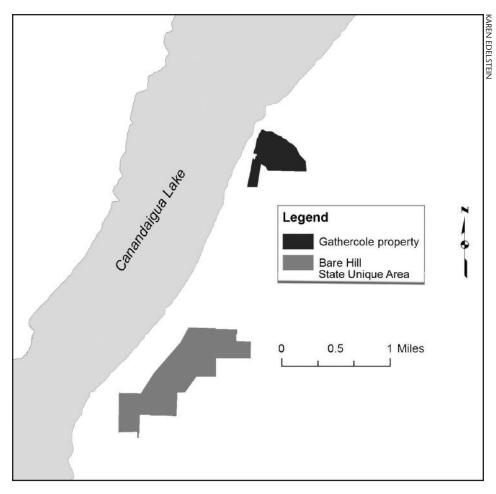
Recognizing the need to conserve land against a tide of creeping development, Gorham Town Board members urged Supervisor Dick Calabrese to work out a plan of action. According to one board member, Calabrese "took the ball and ran with it."

"Obviously, there is a growing need to preserve the land surrounding the Finger Lakes," Calabrese said. "In particular, this parcel is an example of a great, scenic view that deserves to be protected from development."

Together, the town and the Land Trust contracted for an appraisal, negotiated a purchase option with the landowner and pursued state interest in the property. Zepp, for one, was impressed by the deepening relationship. "I have to say that the people in Gorham deserve a gold star," he said. "They were partners at every stage along the way."

"We had considered a variety of scenarios, including state acquisition and were particularly pleased when the DEC favorably reviewed the project," he added.

The partners learned late in 2006 that state funding had been approved for the project, but with the purchase option set to expire before state funds became



available, the Land Trust quickly moved to close on the property in Jan. 2007.

Interim funding for the project was provided by an exceptional package of low-interest and interest-free loans from the Rochester Area Community Foundation (RACF) and the Norcross Wildlife Foundation. This is the first time the Land Trust has financed its conservation work through low-interest or interest-free loans from foundations.

"The foundation is delighted to support this project," said Jennifer Leonard, President and Executive Director of the RACF. "As our Finger Lakes region grows, we must work together to protect lands, like the Gathercole property, that are vital to both the health and character of our lakes."

The new acquisition is the Land Trust's sixth project in the area. During the coming months, the Land Trust will work with its partners in the area to make the Gathercole property accessible to the public, while also extending outreach to other Bare Hill landowners to protect Canandaigua watershed lands through acquisition or conservation easement.

—Eben McLane

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

WISH LIST:

Quality

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Our sincere thanks for a gift in honor of the birthday of:

Jane Doyle
FROM
Susan and Joel Brock

Partner Grant to Protect Nearby Finger Lakes Trail

With help from the Land Trust, Tompkins County has secured a grant of \$36,500 from New York's Quality Communities Program to develop a trail corridor protection plan for the portion of the Finger Lakes Trail lying within Tompkins and Schuyler counties.

This stretch of the trail winds through the Emerald Necklace, highland forest territory the Land Trust has committed to protect for the sake of public recreational access and enhanced environmental stability of the region.

Other partners in this effort are the Cayuga Trails Club, Finger Lakes Trail Conference, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Parks and the U.S. Forest Service.

This project has become necessary, all partners feel, because there has been a failure to comprehensively and strategically address the trail corridor's future in a collaborative manner.

The Finger Lakes Trail is significant at the state level because it provides attractive recreational opportunities. It also passes through three of Tompkins County's 14 Natural Features Focus Areas designated in the County's Open Space Plan.

The goals of this twoyear project are substantial and will greatly enhance the beautiful Finger Lakes Trail. The Land Trust and its partners in this project aim to develop a comprehensive protection and enhancement plan for the 74 miles of the trail covered by the grant. Particular attention will be paid to 19 of those miles, comprising four trail segments, which have been identified as most at-risk from potential real estate development.

Specific steps of the project are to produce detailed maps of the

74-mile corridor and to systematically assess its condition by interviewing key persons involved with the trail, conducting GIS analysis and carrying out targeted fieldwork, again with special emphasis upon those 19 miles facing the greatest development pressure.

The as-yet-to-be-determined project contractor will then lead the partners and other key stakeholders (such as landowners and local officials) in developing a variety of solutions that will protect the trail corridor's integrity. Such solutions might involve re-routing the trail off public roads wherever possible; acquiring access and conservation easements

along the trail; purchasing land in select cases; and increasing local municipal involvement with the long-term protection and management of the corridor.

Four workshops will be held for stakeholders within the high-risk 19 miles of trail so as to obtain their input into the protection and enhancement plan.

Once the plan has been finalized, representatives of the partners will meet regularly to ensure the plan's implementation and to coordinate trail enhancement and protection activities.

Viewing the trail as a shared resource, as well as planning for its shared management, represents a major shift in the way trail protection and upkeep has been done. The partners in this project will enter into an ongoing dialogue about the trail's needs, thereby more effectively managing it without encroaching on adjacent property owners.

To build awareness of the resources along the Finger Lakes Trail and the need to conserve this recreational resource, the Finger Lakes Land Trust is working with the Finger Lakes Trail



The Finger Lakes Trail passing through misty woods at the Land Trust's Stevenson Forest Preserve in Enfield

Conference and the Cayuga Trails Club to hold an "Emerald Necklace Hike." The public will be invited to join Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp and other hikers as they traverse more than 70 miles of the Finger Lakes Trail within the Emerald Necklace.

The hike will take place from September 10th to 15th, and participants may join for all or part of the trip. Additional details will be forthcoming in the Summer issue of The Land Steward.

—George Dillmann

Frotected Lands...



A volunteer work party of Cornell students doing winter trail maintenance at Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve



A birds's eye view of Carpenter's Falls



(left to right) Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp and Preserve Management Committee member Peter Marks discuss wetland restoration issues with Upper Susquehanna Watershed Coordinator Jim Curatolo and Watershed Biologist Jeremy Waddell at the Goetchius Wetland Preserve in Tompkins County



Director of Preserve Stewardship Betsy Darlington checking on things at High Vista Nature Preserve in Cortland County



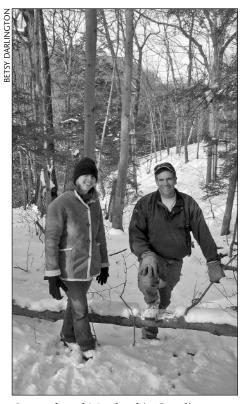
In February the Land Trust acquired the Perlman property, a 16-acre parcel at the south end of Canandaigua Lake bordering the Hi Tor Wildlife Management Area (see article on page 1)

"It is extremely good to see this place just as I left it so long ago. Thanks to all who tread lightly and respect the Earth."

 Comments from the Visitors Log at the Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook



Scenic vista overlooking Canandaigua Lake from Carolabarb Park – land donated to the Town of South Bristol by Odell Scott, with a conservation easement held by the Land Trust



Outreach and Membership Coordinator Emily Eisman with Board Member Scott Winkelman at Carpenter's Falls

THANK YOU!

The Land Trust's work is made possible through the efforts of over 1600 members and supporters. Your commitment to this region and the natural world has enabled us to conserve more than 8,800 acres of rolling hills, pristine forests, deep ravines, and productive farmland in the Finger Lakes region.

Thank you to all of our members and supporters and, in particular, those who gave leadership gifts in 2006.

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The Aldo Leopold Society

The Land Trust is pleased to introduce the Aldo Leopold Society. The ■ Society was created to recognize those individuals and families who make an unrestricted annual contribution of \$1,000 or more in support of the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Contributions to the Leopold Society allow the Land Trust to take advantage of conservation opportunities as they arise and to build a strong foundation for future stewardship of our lands.

Thank you to the members of the Society in 2006

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Professor John Halfman to Talk About Land Use and Water Quality in the Finger Lakes at this Year's Annual Meeting

We are pleased to announce that John Halfman will be the guest speaker at this year's Annual Meeting at Wells College in Aurora. John is Professor of Geoscience at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva. He is also founder and Science Coordinator of the Finger Lakes Institute located at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and dedicated to the promotion of environmental research and education about the Finger Lakes and surrounding environments.

A frequent presenter at the Geological Society of America, the New York State Geological Society and the American Geophysical Union, Halfman's research is highly regarded. His current projects focus on regionwide water quality monitoring efforts, as well as investigations into the effects of land use activities on water quality and the impact of non-native zebra mussels.

At this year's Annual Meeting, Professor Halfman will talk about the relative health of our Finger Lakes and the relationship between water quality, development, and various uses of the land.

To register, please see the insert in the centerfold of this edition of *The Land Steward*.

Thank You! continued from page 9

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Dick Ruswick
Mary Schubert and the law
firm of True & Walsh,
LLP

Join us for the first Finger Lakes Land Trust SPRING BIRD QUEST

By late May, as the great northward tide of migration finally subsides, birds will be busy throughout our region with courtship, building nests, and rearing young — the beginning of the cycle of life for a new generation. If you cherish birds, there may be no more thrilling time of year — and there is surely no better place to watch them than at the Land Trust's 24 preserves. We are delighted, therefore, to announce the inaugural Finger Lakes Land Trust Spring Bird Quest, to be held over Memorial Day weekend 2007.



WHY participate?

- To raise awareness of the diversity of local birds, and the Land Trust's role in protecting them
- To raise funds to sustain the Land Trust's continued efforts to preserve vital bird habitat.

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Vocalizing Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve

HOW to participate

Registration. A \$25 donation (\$15 for Land Trust members and students) is requested upon registration. Register by May 18. See below for contact information.

Pledges. In addition to the registration sum, we urge registrants to seek pledges from friends, family members, employers, and other local businesses to support your participation in the event. Pledges may be flat sums or amounts per bird species recorded. All funds raised will support the Finger Lakes Land Trust's efforts to protect important bird habitat in our region.

Counting birds. During the big weekend, participants will watch and listen for birds at Land Trust preserves. Any bird species definitively identified on Land Trust preserves can be recorded for tallying pledge amounts later.

Walks for new birders. The Spring Bird Quest will include three free guided walks for new birders, one on May 26 at 8:30 AM at the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary (Summerhill, Cayuga Co.), another on May 26 at 7:30 AM at the Great Hill Nature Preserve (Middlesex, Yates Co.) and one on May 27 at 8:30 AM at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve (West Danby, Tompkins Co.). Walks last about 2 hours.

Wrap-up celebration. On Monday, May 28 from 4:00 to 6:00 PM, there will be an informal gathering at the Land Trust's Ithaca office where participants can share their findings and experiences, and celebrate the close of the event.

To register or for more information, contact Emily Eisman at emily@fllt.org, or at (607) 275-9487

A CLOSER LOOK

Of Spring Wildflowers and Myrmecochory

 ${f B}$ y a process known as myrmecochory, ants act as the seed-dispersers of a number of our familiar forest spring wildflowers. White and red trilliums, wild ginger, bloodroot, Dutchman's breeches, trout lily, trailing arbutus and various species of hepatica and violet all depend on ant colonies to spread their progeny across the forest floor.

Myrmecochory is a mutualism — that is, a relationship benefiting both participants. The seeds of myrmecochorous plants have an oily, nutritious attachment called an elaisome. Woodland ants take the seeds back to their nests, eat the elaisomes, and discard the seeds underground. The plant receives several benefits in return for the small amount of energy it takes to make this "ant bait." Its seeds are neatly planted (rather than merely dropped on the ground) in soil that has been enriched by waste from the ant colony; they are protected from such predators as mice; and, since the seeds have been moved some distance away from the parent plant, seedlings are less likely to be in competition with others of its own species.

However, there is no getting around the fact that myrmecochory is a very inefficient way to spread seeds afar. Plants with seeds that are dispersed only in this fashion will typically spread extremely slowly. Ants cannot cross

barriers such as roads or streams, they will not cross from one habitat into another, and they rarely move seeds more than a few meters in any case. In theory, it should be impossible for myrmecochorous plants to recolonize abandoned farm fields, because only woodland ants feed on seed elaisomes; farm field ants feed on a substance excreted by aphids called honeydew.

In fact, the inefficiency of myrmecochory creates an apparent paradox that has long puzzled scientists: how is it possible for myrmecochorous forest herbs, whose seeds have no known mechanisms for long-distance dispersal, to have migrated to their current ranges in the period of time since the last ice age? To take one well-studied example, the northern edge of wild ginger's current range is in Quebec and New Brunswick. Pollen records suggest that at the time of maximum glaciation 18,000 years ago, the northern edge of its range might have been at the latitude of

Georgia, 800 or so miles to the south. If ants had been the sole means of wild ginger seed dispersal, researchers suggest the plant's range would probably have drifted northward only a little over six miles in that time.

There are, of course, other ways that seeds can be dispersed,

but none of them provide very good explanations for this phenomenon. Seed-eating birds do not usually feed in the forest understory. Seedeating rodents sometimes cache seeds (that is, hide them for later consumption), but rodents do not travel long distances. Nor is transport by water a satisfying answer: as the glaciers retreated north, most rivers left behind flowed from north to south — in other words, against the direction of plant migration. Scientists have posited that unusual events must be the answer. Perhaps seeds are scooped up by tornadoes or hurricanes and deposited elsewhere, or they are embedded in mud clinging to the feet of traveling animals, or they are ingested and later excreted by birds flying very long distances.

In fact, the answer may be much more mundane, and as close as your own backyard. Scientists at Cornell have found that whitetailed deer may account for many previously unexplained plant migrations. Deer, which tend to browse on nutritious plant tops, often

unwittingly eat the seeds, as well; some seeds will be damaged or digested, but others will safely travel through the deer's digestive tract. A deer can easily move a seed two or more miles in a matter of hours, a feat that would probably take even the most assiduous ants thousands of years to accomplish.

Ultimately, seed dispersal by deer is a mixed, and indiscriminate, blessing. On the one hand, it probably helps native wildflowers recolonize second-growth forests; on the other hand, it undoubtedly also helps spread troublesome invasives such as purple loosestrife. Furthermore, there are no guarantees: a browsing deer may damage or destroy a plant and then deposit its seeds in a place inhospitable to germination. It remains to be seen whether seed dispersal by deer — which surely increases every year as deer populations grow — will be beneficial or harmful in the long run. —Jacqueline Stuhmiller



Several familiar spring wildflowers, such as white trillium, depend on ants to disperse their seeds

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Newsletter Layout:

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Advisors:

Legal Counsel: Elizabeth Bixler; Dan Hoffman; Randy Marcus; Miller Mayer, LLP; Peter Miller; Richard Ruswick; True & Walsh, LLP Forestry Consultant: Michael DeMunn Founding President: A. Carl Leopold

Western Lakes Chapter:

Jim Kersting, Chair 585-367-2301

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Debbie Koop, Contact 315-595-2523

Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 E. Court Street Ithaca, New York 14850 Ph: 607-275-9487 • Fax: 607-275-0037 email: info@fllt.org • www.fllt.org

Western Lakes Office

P.O. Box 620 Canandaigua, NY 14424 Ph: 585-880-9934

Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 E. Court Street Ithaca, New York 14850



SPRING 2007 CALENDAR

Saturday, April 28, 11:30 am: *Annual Meeting at Wells College in Aurora*. Please join us for the Land Trust's 17th Annual Meeting at Wells College in Aurora. See insert and article on page 10 for more details.

Sunday, May 6, 1:30 pm: Garlic Mustard Pull at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve with the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society. See insert for details.

Saturday, May 12, 10:00 am: Garlic Mustard Pull at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve with the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society. See insert for details.

Saturday, May 12, 10:00 am: Garlic Mustard & Asiatic Bittersweet Pull at the Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook with the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society. See insert for details.

Sunday, May 20, 1:30 pm: ANOTHER Garlic Mustard Pull at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve. See insert for details.

May 26-28: Finger Lakes Land Trust Spring Bird Quest. See article on page 10 for details.

PLEASE SEE ENCLOSED INSERT FOR OUR 2007 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.