



THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 21, No. 3

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Summer 2009

Land Trust Moves to Protect Key Parcels within the Canandaigua Lake Watershed

During the past few months, the Land Trust has moved quickly to protect two parcels of land within the Canandaigua Lake Watershed. The two adjacent tracts encompass 144 acres of rugged woodlands that border High Tor Wildlife Management Area and feature half of Conklin Gully, a scenic gorge that is a popular spot for outdoor recreation. The parcels are also noteworthy in that, once acquired, they will serve as the sole link between thousands of acres of public open space.

The two parcels are located just east of Naples in Ontario County and together feature 10,000 feet of frontage on Parish Hill Road and State Route 245. The land slopes steeply upward from the Naples Valley and features mixed hardwood forests with occasional pines and hemlocks and winter views of Canandaigua Lake. Conklin Gully is by far the most prominent feature here, with its sheer walls dropping hundreds of feet to the creek below.

Late last year the Land Trust became aware that one of the two parcels (the Murray Estate tract) was being listed for sale. A purchase offer was made when it became clear the land was being considered for development. Using funds made available through a bequest from the Estate of Dr. Al Craig, the Land Trust proceeded with the acquisition and completed the transaction in April.

The Murray Estate tract may not be known to many residents by that name, but the informal trail hugging the northern rim of Conklin Gully is located on the property and

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RYAN LOY, LOYPHOTO.COM

Conklin Gully features numerous waterfalls which eventually feed Canandaigua Lake.

Conservation Easement Brings Protection Efforts Full Circle for Landowner

Steve Keast is a modest man with a deep connection to the land he owns along Hurd Road in the Town of Dryden, just east of Ithaca. Both qualities are evident in the humble way he talks about the 65 acres he has just so generously protected with a conservation easement. "I feel like a huge weight has been lifted off my back now that I know the property will be protected into the future," Steve said. "Protecting this stretch of Hurd Road is important; it still has that secluded feel that used to be so common along these small rural roads around Ithaca."

Having grown up on property adjacent to the land he now owns, Steve has seen development slowly grow around him, including on the land his parents owned and eventually sold decades earlier. What used to be fields or forest blocks back in his childhood have now been converted to house lots and small developments as people looking for country charm and an easy commute pushed out of Ithaca.

"Steve has made a wonderful gift," said Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp. "This property is truly special, and his easement adds to a growing assemblage of protected lands within the watershed of Cascadilla Creek."

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EMILY EISMAN



Director of Land Protection, Rocci Aguirre (left) and conservation easement donor Steve Keast, on Steve's recently protected property in the Town of Dryden, Tompkins County.



PERSPECTIVES

Twenty years pass by in a blink. At least it felt that way at the Land Trust's recent annual meeting, where I sat sharing reminiscences with founding President Carl Leopold, Bob Beck, the Land Trust's first executive director, volunteers Jim and Sara Kersting, and the Land Trust's longtime Director of Land Protection, Betsy Darlington.

It seems like only yesterday that we got together in Cornell's Fernow Hall simply to talk about land trusts and conservation easements. At that time, none of us had an inkling that 13 separate land transactions would lead to the establishment of our Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve, nor that the Land Trust would ultimately partner with local governments to purchase agricultural conservation easements worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Despite the fact that we've come a long way, I'm struck by how fortunate we are in that the changes we've experienced over the past 20 years have been fairly modest—aside from the condition of my knees! Our region has indeed seen a degree of growth and development, but nothing like other parts of the country, such as northern Virginia or parts of the Hudson Valley. Sprawling development has forever altered those regions, leaving behind a scene of choking traffic and homogeneous landscapes.

We still have time to embrace the positive aspects of growth while implementing the win-win conservation strategies that can permanently protect the lands that define the character of our region. By working together with local municipalities we can ensure that our scenic vistas stay scenic, and that our rural landscapes stay rural, while at the same time revitalizing

our somewhat tired cities and villages.

Will it be easy? Absolutely not. Is it worth the effort? One need only look out over one of our precious lakes at sunset to know the answer to that question.

Please join me in celebrating the Land Trust's 20 years of accomplishment this summer. Go out and experience one of the places we've protected. Join us in Canandaigua or Ithaca for one of our two upcoming birthday celebrations. And please also continue your generous support of the Land Trust so that we can build upon our achievements to create a future that retains the best of our past while taking advantage of new opportunities and improvements.

—Andy Zepp



(left to right) New York's Commissioner of Agriculture & Markets Pat Hooker congratulates Karen & Dale Hallings and their children Kerry and Ryan for the recent completion of a conservation easement on their Yates County Farm. Additional grants from the state will fund the protection of ten more farms in the Finger Lakes region.

State Grants Fuel Finger Lakes Farmland Protection

In May, Governor David Paterson announced the commitment of \$23.1 million from the state's Environmental Protection Fund to permanently protect 8,940 acres of farmland throughout the state. Three of these grants will directly benefit projects undertaken by the Land Trust. In addition, seven other Finger Lakes farms will benefit from this program.

The recent grants include the first ever for farmland protection in Schuyler County. The Land Trust will work together with the county to permanently protect Argetsinger Farm, a 70-acre vineyard founded in 1883. In addition to its agricultural acreage, the farm also includes wooded frontage on Tug Hollow Creek.

In Yates County, the Land Trust worked with the county and local landowners to secure two more grants, for a total of four to date. One grant will ensure the future of Gillette Farm, a 233-acre mixed crop farm with one-of-a-kind views of Keuka, Seneca and Cayuga Lakes. The second grant will be used to secure Wilson Farms, a 159-acre organic operation with sweeping views of Seneca Lake.

Elsewhere in the region, grants were allocated to the protection of farms in Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca and Tompkins County. Farms to be protected range from Hourigan Farms, a 1,258-acre dairy operation in southern Onondaga County to Indian Creek Farm, a 42-acre fruit farm located in Tompkins County.

Additional information on the state's farmland protection program may be found at <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us>

PLEASE JOIN US THIS FALL TO CELEBRATE THE LAND TRUST'S 20TH BIRTHDAY!

Sunday, September 13, 2:00 til 5:00 PM at Ithaca's Cass Park Pavilion

Saturday, September 26, 3:00 til 6:00 PM at the South Bristol Cultural Center

Please see calendar listing on page 12 for details.

Land Trust Moves to Protect...

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has been enjoyed by generations of visitors and residents alike.

On the heels of this acquisition, the Land Trust acted again when it learned that an adjacent 72 acres was also available for sale. The 72-acre Parish tract is of particular interest due to its extensive road frontage and the fact that it will serve as the key linkage between existing open space lands. Fundraising efforts are now underway to raise the \$100,000 needed to cover the cost of this acquisition along with associated expenses.

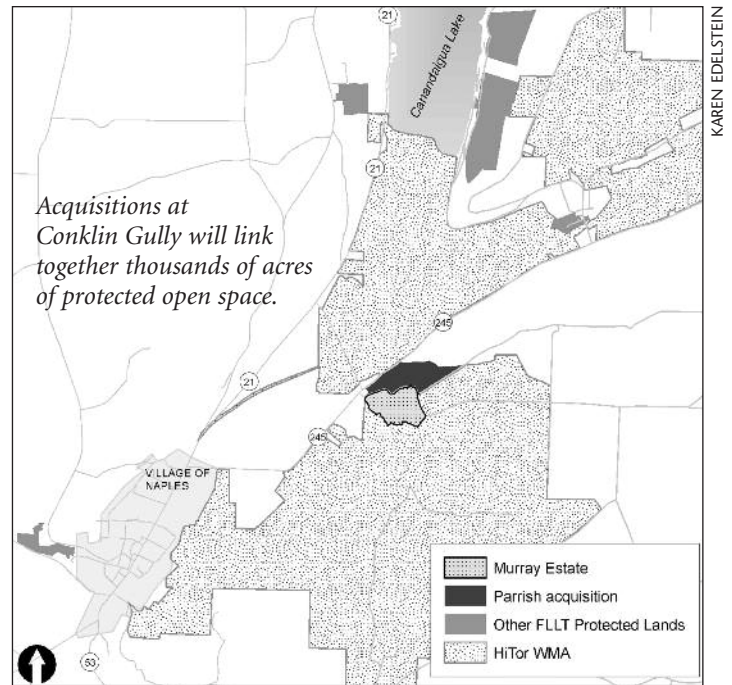
The Land Trust intends to convey both properties to New York state as additions to High Tor Wildlife Management Area at some point in the future. Any funds raised for the purchases will then be used to support other acquisition projects within the western Finger Lakes.

"These lands are important for so many reasons," said

BILL HECHT



An aerial view of Conklin Gully. The land on the left side of the picture is the former Murray Estate now owned by the Land Trust.



KAREN EDELSTEIN

Executive Director Andy Zepp. "Whether you're a birder or a hiker, or simply like to enjoy the waters of Canandaigua Lake, this project has something for you. We're particularly grateful to the late Dr. Al Craig and his family, whose generous support allowed us to pursue the conservation of these lands."

If you would like to make a contribution in support of this project, or would like to learn more, please contact Jan Hesbon at the Ithaca office or by e-mail at janhesbon@flt.org.

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney John A. Polimeni of Canandaigua, New York for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.

Conservation Easement Brings Protection Efforts... *continued from cover*

The woods making up the Keast property do have a singular feel to them. Almost half of the property lies within the Hurd Woods Unique Natural Area (UNA), a Tompkins County designation that signifies an environmentally sensitive area. Known locally for having one of the earliest abandoned agricultural sites in the area, dating back to the late 1800's, the forest within the Hurd Woods UNA has a unique species composition, with more oaks and hickory trees than is typical in our area. Some of these oak trees date back generations and are exceptional examples of what "old-growth" trees can look like.

With over 3000 feet of road frontage and a park-like quality to the forest, the land would have been a prize for developers one day—indeed, home lots fragment the unique oak and hickory forest just a mile or so away on Ellis Hollow Road. "With all the changes to the area over the years," Steve said, "I like that people will be able to enjoy the quiet nature of the woods here, even if it's just someone driving by on their way to work or out for a jog or evening walk."

It is also the type of project that brings together diverse partners. Funding from an anonymous donor and a portion of a Natural Areas Acquisition Grant from Cornell University helped cover transactional and stewardship costs associated with the easement donation.

"There are a lot of people to thank," Steve noted when asked how he felt about the project finally being completed. "The Land Trust, Cornell, the Seeleys (neighbors who originally bought adjoining acreage when Steve purchased his parcel), everyone who was involved in one way or another deserves a big pat on the back for the work that went into making this happen."

In working with the Land Trust to place an easement on his property, Steve looked at his own history with the landscape around him and worked hard to craft a legacy honoring this personal connection to the land. In doing so he also worked to leave open the ability of a future landowner to have the flexibility and freedom to use the land in a manner that would allow them to create their own unique bond with the place.

"Gussie Gaskill, an earlier owner of the property, had originally intended to keep it 'forever wild,'" Steve said. "I think in some ways this easement helps honor the good intentions of people like her and my parents, who supported nature preservation and had a great deal of knowledge of the history of the area, and didn't realize how dramatic the impact of development would be until it was almost too late. I guess this easement helps bring it all full circle for me."

—Rocci Aguirre

20TH ANNIVERSARY SERIES

Land Protection and Tools of the Trade: *Conservation Easements*

The world of land trusts was a much different place twenty years ago. At that time, not only were there were many fewer land trusts than there are today, but they primarily protected lands through acquisition. Especially in critical areas where land was expensive, trusts found themselves unable to keep up with development pressures.

However, since the late 19th century, a few creative people had been quietly developing an innovative conservation tool, the conservation easement. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a public or private organization to protect the property in perpetuity, in accordance with the owner's wishes; it may be either purchased or donated. The agreement "runs with the land" and all future owners must abide by its regulations. The property is inspected on a regular basis by the organization in order to ensure that the terms of the agreement are being upheld.

Easements are wonderful tools, at least in theory, but they were rarely used before landowners had any economic incentive to do so. In 1986, Congress tied easements to tax benefits. Once there was a financial inducement to use easements, the number of land trusts, and the amount of land they were able to protect, increased exponentially. As of 2003, state and local land trusts had protected twice as many acres through conservation easements as they had through outright ownership of land. In 2005, there were 191,095 acres protected by easements held by local and state land trusts in New York; the Finger Lakes Land Trust currently manages approximately 5,000 acres spread among 65 easements. Recently, the Land Trust purchased its first agricultural easement through a grant from New York State.

The landscape of the Finger Lakes is a patchwork of farmland and forests, hills and river bottoms. It is fitting, therefore,



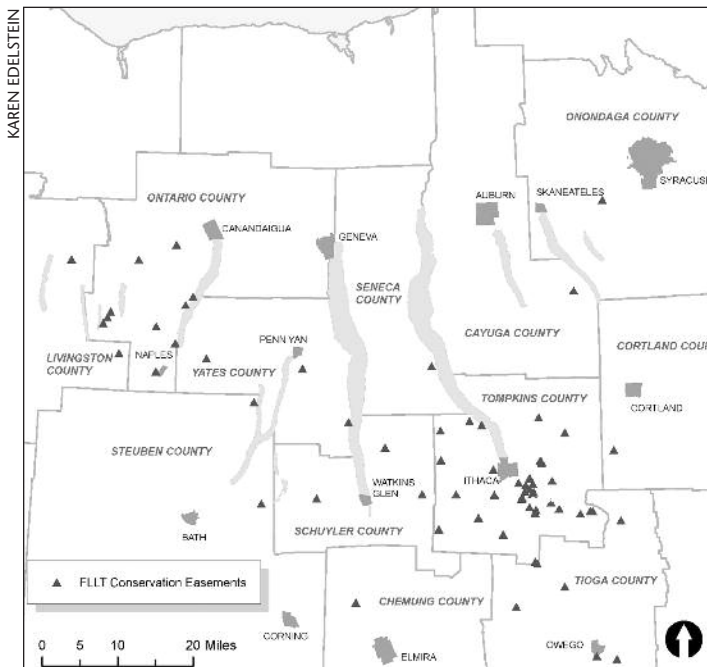
JESSICA EVETT-MILLER

Betsy and Dick Darlington on their property, which was the first conservation easement acquired by the Land Trust.

that the best way to protect the land is through a mixture of conservation tools. For example, large portions of Lick Brook Gorge, just a mile outside of Ithaca, are safeguarded through a combination of Land Trust preserves, a Cornell natural area, state park lands and a conservation easement.

The Thayer easement, which comprises a portion of the Thayer property, is a strip of land that runs along Lick Brook for a half-mile. The easement is designed to both safeguard the undisturbed beauty of the gorge and provide habitat for wildlife. Consequently, active use of the property is limited. In contrast, the agricultural easement of the McConkey property, a Tompkins County Farm, is far more permissive. This easement provides for sound forest management along with stream and wetland protection, while also ensuring that the fields will remain in productive use and the landscape will remain unspoiled. To accomplish these goals, the property is divided into three land use zones, each of which has its own allowances and restrictions: the residential zone, the agricultural use zone and the forest zone.

The Land Trust embarked on its maiden voyage into the world of conservation easements immediately after its incorporation in 1989. Its first easement was on a 225-acre parcel of land owned by Betsy and Dick Darlington. As Betsy was also a founding member of the Land Trust, the organization had the unique opportunity to experience the process of drafting an easement from both sides of the table. During the process, the Darlings found themselves having to make some unexpectedly difficult decisions. After some debate, they decided to allow a year-round house to be built on their property, lest their children find it difficult to sell the land otherwise. (The children themselves objected to the clause.) Furthermore, they opted to allow logging, subject to Land Trust oversight, because, as Betsy explains, "I'd rather have people be able to log our land responsibly here than irresponsibly elsewhere." The process of drafting the easement took over a year. By the end, Betsy (who was subsequently to be involved in easement management for the next nineteen years)



KAREN EDELSTEIN

Conservation easements held by the Land Trust.

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Conservationists of the Year: Adelaide Gomer & Dorothy Park

“We never own the land. We can only hold it in trust for succeeding generations,” said Ithaca native Adelaide Gomer. “The greatest legacy we can leave behind is to ensure that future generations can thrive in an environment as healthy, or healthier than the one we inherited.”

Her words are backed by powerful commitment. This year the Land Trust recognizes Adelaide Gomer together with her mother, Dorothy Park, for their generous contributions to conservation and stewardship in the Finger Lakes region.

Adelaide’s awareness of the urgency of protecting local forests and wetlands was awakened in a birding course at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology taught by Steve Kress. When her mother asked her how they could make a difference locally, Adelaide pointed to the Land Trust. In working to preserve the pristine beauty and unique character of the region, she told her mother, the Land Trust helps counter pressures from over-population and development.

In 2007, in honor of Adelaide’s father and Dorothy’s late husband, Roy Park, Adelaide set up the Roy H. Park Legacy Fund at the Land Trust to which Dorothy has also contributed. The fund enables the Land Trust to buy key parcels within the Cayuga Lake watershed as well as provide for their long-term stewardship. Later, her mother donated additional funds to this project.

A few years earlier, the Land Trust purchased the 800-acre Steege Hill Preserve, and more recently, the Roy H. Park Preserve, with a significant donation from Adelaide. “It was an extraordinary gift and a wonderful legacy,” said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp.

“Together [Adelaide and Dorothy] have had a tremendous positive impact on the future of the region through the Land Trust and also through their philanthropy to other non-profits,” Zepp said.

In addition to her personal generosity to the Land Trust, the family’s Park Foundation has contributed to several important international projects, including protecting 10,000 acres of land in Belize through the Program for Belize, and helping to lease additional acreage in Peru, through the Amazon Conservation Association. The Peruvian land is now protected from clear-cutting, mining and development and is reserved for use by indigenous peoples. The Park Foundation has also protected land in Costa Rica through Carl Leopold’s project as well as land in the Adirondacks, through the Open Space Institute. The Foundation has saved other parcels of land as well, through the Audubon Society.

There are family roots in Adelaide’s passion and dedication. To her father’s indefatigable energy in building a large media business and her mother’s ardent love for animals (“rescuing baby rabbits, baby birds, and owning a million dogs”), Adelaide has added her own vision:

a vision where our planet would embrace sustainability, with plentiful healthy food, clean water and air for everyone and, “where people would live in harmony with each other, with the land and with wildlife,” she said.

The Land Trust is very pleased to name Adelaide Gomer and Dorothy Park Conservationists of the Year—the year of the Roy H. Park Preserve.

—Margot Brinn



Dorothy Park and her daughter, Adelaide Gomer, the Land Trust’s 2009 Conservationists of the Year.

Volunteer of the Year: Eben McLane

Eben McLane’s first contribution to *The Land Steward* appeared in the Spring of 2004. A 700-word piece profiling the Land Trust’s Parker Nature Preserve, Eben’s descriptive prose would tempt any reader never having been there with a tantalizing taste of its natural beauty. His choice use of language and style paints a picture so full of breadth and color that the reader might wonder what the author enjoys more, spending time in nature or writing about it. Clearly, Eben loves both.

In the five years since, Eben has written dozens of articles for *The Land Steward*: some you may recognize from our *Reflections on Conservation* series, others from our many nature preserve profiles and our *A Closer Look* column—and, of course, always the news!

In the Fall of 2004, *The Land Steward* was placed under the very capable stewardship of co-editors Eben McLane and Krishna Ramanujan. As co-editor, Eben works closely with the newsletter’s pool of volunteer writers and Land Trust staff to assign articles, chair and record editorial board meetings, edit copy and maintain a consistent style, as well as assist with the final proof. “Working with Eben is a total joy,” commented Land Trust Office Manager Abbey Chernela. “His attention to grammatical as well as stylistic detail and consistency never ceases to amaze me. It’s what really gives *The Land Steward* its personality and voice.”

A freelance writer and editor, Eben has worked for the Discovery Channel’s on-line news service, as well as several magazines and newspapers. He has a bachelor’s degree in Chinese literature from Harvard University, a master’s in English from the University of California, as well as a master’s in journalism from Syracuse University.

Eben traces his love and respect for the natural world to having grown up amidst the wide open spaces of New England. “My siblings and I own an island off the coast of Maine that the National Park Service holds an easement on. I have always had a special interest in the issues of land stewardship and land protection.”

Eben’s commitment to and enthusiasm for the work that we do is immeasurable. We simply could not accomplish all that we do without such extraordinary and talented volunteers. The staff and board of the Land Trust extend our utmost gratitude and appreciation to Eben for conducting our chorus of writers into one great big beautiful voice.

—Abbey Chernela



Eben McLane, the Land Trust’s 2009 Volunteer of the Year and co-editor of this publication, receiving his award at the Land Trust’s 20th annual meeting.

BILL HECHT

Scenes' from Around Our Region...



EMILY EISMAN

Participants on this year's Spring Bird Quest at the Park Nature Preserve look and listen as Mark Chao (center) identifies a bird.



JULIET CARROLL

Cynthia Becker (left) and Christina Bromka attending a work day at the Whitlock Nature Preserve on Cayuga Lake



BILL HECHT

Jim Kersting (left), former board president and long time volunteer, listens as Bob Beck, the Land Trust's first executive director remembers the early days of the Land Trust at this year's 20th annual meeting.

Carl Schwartz of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service talks to the Land Trust's Preserve Management Committee about wetland restoration efforts in the Owasco Flats.



ROGER HOPKINS

every raindrop a river and ocean in disguise

— Becca Harber



(left to right) Director of Land Protection Rocci Aguirre with Kerry, Dale, Karen, and Ryan Hallings, Peter Landre, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County, and Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp, celebrate the Hallpine Farms easement dedication.



Participants looking for insects at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve on a "trek" in the spring Talks and Treks Series



Volunteers from John G. Ullman & Associates and Corning, Inc. help remove invasive species at the Plymouth Woods Preserve during United Way's Day of Caring.



(left to right) Director of Stewardship Chris Olney with volunteers Dave Schurman and Roger Hopkins on a construction break at the Park Preserve's new kiosk.

Hike for the Highlands Builds Awareness and Raises Funds

Over the course of three Saturdays and 50 miles of trail, intrepid hikers joined Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp for a tour of the region's wooded landscapes this spring. The hike series traversed the Skaneateles Highlands and Bristol Hills before concluding at the Finger Lakes National Forest, where educational programs informed attendees on the habits of birds of prey, forest ecology and the history of prior residents of the National Forest.

"We are very pleased with the extent to which the hikes built awareness about our woodland resources," said Andy Zepp. "They also turned out to be a lot of fun!"

Thanks to the sponsorship of HSBC Bank and generous contributions from a number of Land Trust members, the Land Trust exceeded its goal of raising \$15,000 through the event. Special thanks go to Tom and Maria Eisner for their \$5,000 challenge grant. Funds raised through the series will support the Land Trust's protection efforts within the three landscapes traversed by the hikes.

Land Protection and the Tools of the Trade: *Conservation Easements* continued from page 3



JESSICA EVETT-MILLER

Ree Thayer (center) with her daughter and grandchildren on her conservation easement property which protects a portion of the Lick Brook gorge near Ithaca.

had gained an intimate understanding of the process, as well as the moral authority to encourage others to follow in her footsteps.

Easements are, in many ways, ideal conservation tools. Even a purchased easement is less expensive than buying the land outright, and easements are easier to obtain than donated land; donated easements provide tax benefits to landowners; and easements ensure that farmers will not be pressured to sell their land to developers. Conservationists believe that the next twenty years will be a crucial time for protecting land and, for the moment, easements are the most cost-effective way of doing so. However, easements have their disadvantages, too: long-term stewardship is a significant expense for a land trust and violations are potentially extremely costly in terms of money, time and public relations. Most violations can be resolved without litigation, but it may be necessary to take landowners or third-party violators to court. No land trust can afford to turn a blind eye to violations, as case law for conservation easements is still being developed and a single unfavorable decision could set a precedent that would jeopardize many other easements.

Land trusts do their best to avoid easement violations by maintaining good relationships with landowners and carefully monitoring the properties within their jurisdictions. Not surprisingly, owners of easement-protected land tend to be a self-selecting group of people who can be more sensitive to environmental issues than many members of the general public. As a result, most

people fail to comply with easements out of ignorance or miscommunication, rather than malice.

Still, it is inevitable that as property values rise (giving landowners greater incentives to disregard or challenge easements) and increasing numbers of easement-restricted properties are sold or bequeathed to new owners, the number of violations will also rise. Thankfully, such infringements are still relatively rare, though they are becoming more frequent. A 1999 study by the Land Trust Alliance revealed that less than seven percent of easements in the U.S. have experienced violations, and less than one percent have experienced major violations.

The Land Trust Alliance is working toward developing a nationwide easement defense insurance program, but at the present each land trust must keep its own legal-defense fund. This is costly: money sequestered in such funds could be better used to save land, and a single nasty lawsuit could have a significant adverse impact on the finances of an individual land trust.

The Land Trust has been lucky insofar as it only has experienced a few minor easement violations, all of which have been settled without litigation. Still, the laws of probability predict that, sooner or later, the Land Trust will have to defend an easement in court. Against such an inevitability, the trust maintains a substantial defense fund. Before it will accept an easement, it seeks to raise at least ten thousand dollars for the purposes of long-term monitoring of the property and enforcement of the agreement, an amount to which the landowner is encouraged to contribute as much as possible.

Over the years, land trusts have continued to refine the art of drafting easements, so that documents are increasingly more precise. At the same time, the incentives for protecting land through the use of easements are becoming more numerous. A recent temporary expansion of the federal tax incentive associated with an easement donation allows donors to maximize the tax benefits associated with their gift. Furthermore, a recently enacted New York state tax credit allows the owners of land that is subject to a donated easement to receive a sizable annual rebate for certain property taxes. Finally, funding for the purchase of conservation easements on prime farmland has increased in recent years, creating new opportunities for land protection.

The pace at which the Land Trust is acquiring easements is accelerating and it is today close to finalizing agreements in the Emerald Necklace, and the watersheds of Canandaigua, Keuka, Seneca and Skaneateles Lake. "It turned out to be a much bigger undertaking than any of us had thought it would be when we started," Betsy muses. "But isn't that true of a lot of things?"

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller

State of the Land: *A Report from the Director of Stewardship*

For the past ten months, as I have settled into my role as the new Director of Stewardship at the Finger Lakes Land Trust, one of the most rewarding parts of the job has been getting to know the many people who volunteer their precious time for the Land Trust. The dedication to community service and commitment to furthering the mission and operation of the Land Trust by our volunteers is exceptional, and it is an amazing resource that we are truly grateful for.

Volunteers for the Land Trust take many forms, including dedicated stewards of our nature preserves and conservation easement properties, individuals and groups who volunteer to help with any number of specific projects both in the field and at the office, and student interns from area colleges. Many of our volunteers and stewards have served the Land Trust for many years, and others have just discovered us. All of you, together, have had such a positive impact and significantly increased what we can accomplish as an organization devoted to land protection. THANK YOU volunteers, for all that you do to help the Finger Lakes Land Trust!

Some recent accomplishments of our volunteers:

- Constructing a beautiful new kiosk at the Park Preserve;
- Rebuilding log steps and conducting a general clean-up at the Whitlock Preserve;
- Installing a new sign board at the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary;
- Planting tree and shrub seedlings at the Land Trust's Owasco Flats wetland restoration site;
- Flagging a new trail route at the new Kingsbury Woods Conservation Area;
- Extending the trail between the ponds at the Lower Preserve;
- Mapping trails at Carpenter's Falls and the Bahar Preserve;
- Spreading wood chips and gravel at the Park and Sweedler Preserves;

- Pulling invasive plants at the Plymouth Woods, Steege Hill, King, and Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserves;
- Making engraved wooden signs for use along trails; and,
- Routine trail maintenance and inspections at many preserves.

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS:

Saturday, August 22nd – Non-native invasive plant removal at the Sweedler Preserve.

Wednesday, August 26th – Install a sign board and blaze a new loop trail at the Stevenson Forest Preserve.

Friday, September 18th – Clear and pile pine and spruce trees that will be cut down at the Park Preserve to maintain the meadow. Some heavy lifting.

Saturday, September 19th – More tree clearing at Park Preserve (see above). We may also install drain pipe and gravel along a wet section of trail.

Please RSVP ahead of time if you can join us. All work days are from 9:00am-3:00pm. Bring your own lunch and water. The Land Trust will supply work gloves and tools.

NEW STEWARDS NEEDED:

The Land Trust has acquired several new conservation easements that need long-term Stewards to assist us in conducting annual property inspections. In particular, we could use new Stewards in South Bristol (Ontario County), Ovid (Seneca County), Niles (Cayuga County), Onondaga (Onondaga County), and in Danby, Newfield, and Ulysses (Tompkins County). Please contact Chris Olney for more information on becoming a volunteer Conservation Easement Steward.

—Chris Olney

The Roy H. Park Nature Preserve Welcomes Visitors

The Land Trust welcomes visitors to the Roy H. Park Nature Preserve, its 25th and newest preserve.

The Park Preserve comprises 140 acres of notable biological diversity and scenic value. Trails wind through the Baldwin Tract of the preserve, which includes a regenerating field with sections of spruces and pines, bordered by the deeply wooded ravines of Six Mile Creek and one of its tributaries.

At trail's end in the hemlock woods above Six Mile Creek lies a lean-to shelter built by the Baldwin family, eponymous former owners of this part of the preserve. Perpetually in shade, this site is wonderfully cool even in the hottest days of summer—a perfect destination for a moderate hike. Don't miss the stunning views of the streambed below the shelter.

The preserve is surely worth visiting at any time of year. In spring and summer, it hosts an impressive variety of breeding birds, including a dozen warbler species, and butterflies, including the locally-uncommon Baltimore Checkerspot. In winter, the preserve offers fine cross-country skiing and hiking through splendid scenery, from snow-covered conifers to dazzling ice formations on the ravine walls.

The Park Preserve is located on Irish Settlement Road, between Midline and Goodband Roads, just 20 minutes from downtown Ithaca. For directions please see www.flit.org.



The new entry sign and parking area welcome visitors to the Park Preserve.

—Mark Chao

Members and the public are invited to join the Land Trust's Stewardship Advisor Betsy Darlington for a tour of the Park Nature Preserve on Saturday, September 12th at 10:00 am.

2009 Spring Bird Quest—Close Encounters of the Feathery Kind

The Finger Lakes Land Trust Spring Bird Quest (FLLT SBQ) delivered again in 2009. We had close encounters with very likable species, stunning surprises, big numbers, and lots of fine human companionship, all with the added adrenalin-boosting motivation of counting birds and raising funds to support the Land Trust.

As always, the event has left us with indelible shared memories—a pair of exquisitely slim Black-billed Cuckoos crossing a wetland with characteristic flowing wingbeats; a Hairy Woodpecker tending a nest of quivering nestlings; a most unexpected Cliff Swallow appearing, flashing distinctive field marks, and then vanishing before I could even exhale; a Louisiana Waterthrush foraging alone before a coruscating waterfall; Indigo Buntings flashing their outlandish blue breeding plumage, in fine scope views for many; a pair of Cedar Waxwings perched shoulder to shoulder, tenderly turning and touching their bills together again and again, looking very much in love; and much more.

Despite missing Turkey Vulture and a few other common birds, I ended up with 106 species for the weekend, surpassing my previous record by one. I expect that once again, the event will end up raising several thousand dollars to support the Land Trust's efforts to conserve vital habitats in our region. Thanks to the dozens of people who made pledges or joined me for bird walks. I am especially grateful to Wild Birds Unlimited of Ithaca



Spring Bird Quest participants at the Park Nature Preserve

for its continued generous support.

Like birding in general, the SBQ is just plain fun. It also offers deeper meaning, by strengthening our bonds with our lands and with each other. I could talk to you about it all day, but really, birding and the SBQ speak for themselves. If you've experienced their rewards, or if you try in the future, who knows? You may well end up hooked like me.

—Mark Chao



**Do You Own an IRA?
Are YOU Older than 70½?**
(Before December 31, 2009)

If you answer YES to all,
then YOU own an asset that can make a
wonderful gift to the Land Trust.

IRS regulations permit a gift up to \$100,000
from your IRA to the Land Trust.

If YOU are age 70½ and IF YOU act
before December 31, 2009,
you will not be taxed on this
Qualified Charitable Distribution.
But you must ACT soon!

Contact Jan Hesbon,
FLLT Director of Development
607-275-9487 • janhesbon@fllt.org

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FROM
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Edward Swayze
FROM
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In the Spring 2009 newsletter, we incorrectly listed three donations. The correct acknowledgment for these donations is:
Community Foundation's Browning Fund
Community Foundation's Carman and Sandra Brink Hill Fund
Helen Thomas Howland Foundation as administered by the Community Foundation of Tompkins County
We apologize for these errors and thank the donors for their generosity.

A CLOSER LOOK

BEWARE the Woolly Adelgid

As a child in New England I was not a fan of the eastern hemlock tree. When I walked in the woods I generally avoided the tall, dark hemlock stands, preferring the airier sugarbush.

My appreciation of hemlocks has grown with age. Here in the Finger Lakes it is an important tree, with special significance in our gullies and gorges, where it shades streams and provides a cool habitat for fish and many other species of wildlife along our lake tributaries. And some midsummer walks have been memorable in part because of the cool shade provided by a hemlock stand out of the sun.

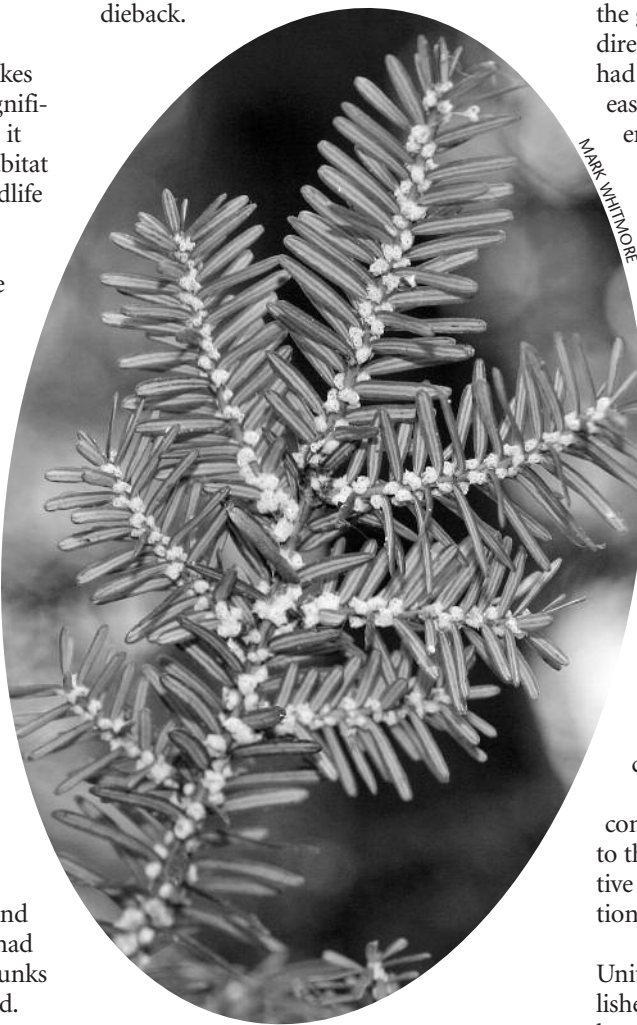
My childhood views have changed. The rooted hemlocks have not, at least not until now. Now they face a potentially serious threat from the hemlock wooly adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*), a tiny, aphidlike insect introduced from China and Japan. The rapidly reproducing insect has ravaged southern Appalachian Carolina hemlock trees since the 1950s. Over time, it has steadily advanced northward into eastern hemlock territory. Recent reports of infestation in Seneca, Tompkins, Yates and Schuyler Counties have fueled local interest in the insect.

On a visit last fall to the Hudson Valley, I walked through a ten-acre stand of hemlocks that looked as though it had been burned by forest fire. The tree trunks stood starkly, with no canopy overhead. Large slabs of bark hung awkwardly from the dead wood. But oddly the rest of the forest—the understory, the non-hemlock—was untouched.

The hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA) gets its name from both the tree species it feeds upon and the tell-tale white “wool” covering that the insect uses to protect itself from predators and the elements. Heavy infestation appears as tiny cotton balls at the base of hemlock needles, most noticeable on the underside of branches in winter months. Throughout its life, the HWA feeds on starch reserves stored at the base of the needles, gradually defoliating the tree and depriving it of nutrients critical to survival.

Early signs of damage to the tree

include a change in the color of the needles from deep green to grayish-green, preceding defoliation and twig dieback.



Hemlock Wooly Adelgid's characteristic white wool is easily identifiable on infected hemlock trees.

Cornell University entomologist Mark Whitmore, who has been studying the HWA, spearheads the local effort to identify and report infestations of the insect. “It’s important to know where the HWA is, but equally important to know where it’s not,” he said. “Once we know more about distribution, we have an opportunity to tease out some of the things going on biologically.”

Whitmore cautions local landowners not to overreact to the HWA threat by rushing to use insecticides without think-

ing about the environmental harm such use might cause. Applications of insecticide in the southern Appalachians—either by spraying hemlock needles or by soaking the ground around individual trees or by direct injection into the tree stem—have had some success, but they are limited to easily accessible, individual trees in non-environmentally sensitive areas, and applications need to be repeated after a few years.

Whitmore calls the widespread use of insecticides “impractical.” “People should be aware. This thing can kill dramatically,” he said. “However there is no indication of tree mortality here yet. The jury’s out as to what happens with this adelgid (in the north).” Southern hemlocks have clearly shown greater susceptibility to mortality once infested, while northern hemlocks so far display greater resistance. The big questions to be answered by research, Whitmore suggested, are what causes the difference? Is it a change in the insects as they migrate north? Is it a change in tree resistance in colder climes? Is it a combination?

One thing seems certain: biological control in the form of natural predators to the HWA is far more likely to be effective in controlling the spread of infestation.

Whitmore pointed to the western United States, where the HWA is established and yet causes little problem in hemlock trees, even transplanted eastern hemlocks. In those areas there is an equally established complex of predators helping to keep the HWA population in check. One cold-hearty bug native to Idaho, *Laricobius nigrinus*, shows promise as a biological control factor for the HWA and has already been introduced in the Finger Lakes on a limited basis.

“I have hope,” Whitmore said, “that a combination of predators and resistance by the trees themselves will keep the HWA population down.”

—Eben McLane

For more information on HWA, visit <http://nyisri.org/HWA.aspx>

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SUMMER 2009 CALENDAR

JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE LAND TRUST'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY!

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2:00 – 5:00 PM at the Cass Park pavilion near the Children's Garden in Ithaca. Join us for an afternoon of activities with some of Tompkins County's Discovery Trail Partners and others. Stay for birthday cake and ice cream!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 3:00 – 6:00 PM at the South Bristol Cultural Center on Seneca Point Rd. south of Canandaigua. This setting is the perfect place to showcase the Land Trust's work in the Canandaigua Lake watershed. Join us for wine, hors d'oeuvres, and art as we celebrate 20 years on the land.

If you plan on attending one or both of these events, please call 607-275-9487 to register. Look for more information at www.fltl.org. Hope to see you there!

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 7:00 – 8:00 PM: *A Vision for the Emerald Necklace*, in the Borg Warner Room, Tompkins County Public Library, 101 E. Green St., Ithaca, NY. Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp and consultant Mark Whitmore will share findings from a yearlong assessment of conservation opportunities within the Emerald Necklace Greenbelt and present a plan to insure their long-term protection.

PLEASE SEE ENCLOSED INSERT FOR OUR 2009 SUMMER 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.