



# THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 13, No. 3

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Summer 2001

## Office Manager Susan Hurwitz Retires

Susan Hurwitz, our office manager at the Leopold Center for the past seven years, has left us, and sad we are to see her go. Susan has worn many hats and worn them well. Often hers was the first face you saw when you walked in the door, the first voice you heard when you called on the phone.

Perhaps Susan's most important job has been processing contributions from our 1250 members, grants from foundations, special contributions, and income from special events and the Annual Appeal. She also served on the Finance Committee, helping invest Land Trust monies, and on the Building Committee, helping to manage the Leopold Center. But Susan was probably best known as chair of the Special Events Committee—the person who put on those gala social events. She planned and carried out the annual celebration, holiday party, garden party, fall picnic, lake and canal cruises, dedications of our nature preserves, chamber music concerts and—anything else?—oh yes, the Voices of the Earth readings, co-sponsored by the Bookery. Some of these events are fundraisers, some are just get-togethers, but all were done with a flair that is Susan's own. More prosaic but no less important, she supervised student volunteers and interns—eleven at one point!—and lined up jobs for office volunteers.

Susan grew up in the heart of the Catskill Mountains on 350 acres (little wonder working with the Land Trust appealed to her). She came to Ithaca when she entered the Masters

Degree program in music education at Ithaca College. An accomplished clarinet player, she gives private lessons and plays in the Ithaca Concert Band. Always learning, she currently studies with Professor Richard Faria at Ithaca College.

At the same time that Susan began working with us part-time, she was also opening her own Bed and Breakfast, Sweet Dreams. Two part-time jobs seemed just right, but over the years both became full-time jobs. And so we bid her farewell, sadly. But happily, Susan remains as a volunteer on the Special Events and Finance Committees. Susan has enjoyed organizing our many events, but even more, meeting and working with Land Trust members, volunteers, and staff.

Thank you, thank you, Susan!  
You've made a significant contribution to the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

— Merry Jo Bauer



PHOTO BY: GRAY MICKELSON

*Although Susan has retired as a staff member, she'll continue to serve the Land Trust as a volunteer on the Finance and Events Committees.*

## The Southern Rivers Watershed

Ask people to describe the most prominent features of the Finger Lakes region, and what will you hear? "The LAKES, and surrounding rolling hills," more likely than not. But the Finger Lakes Land Trust's area of interest and activity extends all the way to the northern boundary of Pennsylvania, more than 25 miles south of the inlets of the Finger Lakes themselves.

The landscape of this Southern Rivers region is also rich in rolling hills and beautiful vistas. Yet its surface geog-

raphy differs from the "Lake Country," a testament to the powerful glacial forces that sculpted this land over the past million-and-half years. As the glaciers pushed their way south through central New York, they excavated the deep valleys that later filled with meltwater and became the Finger Lakes. Like gigantic plows, these glaciers propelled vast quantities of rocks and rubble at their leading edge.

There's a fascinating geological story that we can read from the landscape

just south of the Finger Lakes themselves. The most recent glaciation—which ended about ten thousand years ago—reached almost 40 miles across the current Pennsylvania border. As the climate warmed, the glaciers shrank back toward the north, and enormous volumes of meltwater, silt, and gravel flowed from beneath the receding ice.

Just south of the Finger Lakes, however, the retreating glaciers stalled for hundreds of years, with ice accumulating as fast as it melted. Yet stones, gravel,

*continued on page 2*

**SEE INSERTS FOR SUMMER TALKS & TREKS SCHEDULES!**



## SIGN OF THE LONE PINE

our local landscapes.

The Land Trust Alliance-Northeast (LTA-NE) staff and our New York advisory council (I've been a council member for several years) began working on this incentive program last year. We've gained the backing of Governor Pataki, several instrumental assembly representatives, and a number of key senators; we've united New York land trusts and rallied support from New York residents; a professional political consultant is guiding our efforts. Several of us have gone to lobby days in Albany. If the PLCIP passes, here's how it will benefit conservation in New York:

**Conservation Donor Tax Credit:** landowners who donate land or a conservation easement on their property, or sell their property at below fair-market value, would be eligible for a one-time state income tax credit capped at \$250,000 per project and equal to 50% of the fair market value of the gift. We are also asking that landowners have a ten-year carry-forward to use their credit. This would provide lower-income landowners in the Finger Lakes region and across the state with more time to use the credit.

## The Southern Rivers Watershed

*continued from page 1*

and silt still flowed out from the glacier's base, building up what geologists call the Valley Heads Moraine. This divide splits the flow of water between the streams and lakes that flow north to Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, and those that flow east and south. South of this watershed divide, the landscape changes; wide rivers—the Chemung and the Tioga—course eastward through broad valleys. Their waters join the Susquehanna and continue as one great river toward the Chesapeake Bay. The soils in this region, formed over millennia from flood cycles of these great rivers, are deep and rich.

For about ten thousand years, Native Americans—first the Algonkians, later the Seneca Iroquois—lived, hunted, farmed, and fished in the fertile valleys of the Southern Rivers. Caught in the political strife between the warring British and American colonists, the Iroquois were massacred or driven out by General John Sullivan's troops in 1779.

European settlement of the region began in the mid-1700s. Not long after the American Revolution, the population in the Chemung Valley began to grow. Highly successful farms and industries such as knitting mills, bridge works, and glass manufacturers flourished throughout the area.

By the mid-1830s, Elmira had become a hub of commerce and transportation in the Southern Tier with canals, railroads, and turnpikes converging to transport local commodities to distant markets. Today the Southern Tier, with population centers in Corning, Elmira, and Binghamton, is a vibrant part of the state, rich in both natural and cultural history.

Since 1996, we've hosted a series of natural and cultural history lectures and hikes that have focused on several watersheds—the Cayuga, the Canandaigua, the Skaneateles, the "Little Lakes" (Honeoye, Hemlock, and Canadice)—throughout the Finger Lakes Region. This

### **Increased Funding for Open Space and Farmland**

**Protection:** New York needs an estimated \$100 million for the acquisition of farmland conservation easements and local open space in the coming year. The funding for open space protection from the 1996 Environmental Bond Act has been used up already—much of it in the eastern part of the state. We need to convince the legislature to replenish this source of funding to preserve our rural heritage and remaining wild spaces.

**Land Trust Capacity Enhancement Program:** \$500,000 would be allocated for LTA technical assistance, training, and grants to strengthen New York's land trusts, giving us and all New York land trusts access to resources and tools that will help protect more land. This funding will help keep our LTA-NY staff in place, building a legislative agenda for coming sessions and providing a re-grant program to support quality improvements in land trusts.

If these initiatives get passed, I believe you'll see the New York land trust community's role in land use policy grow. And we'll have the great LTA staff in Saratoga Springs—Ezra Milchman, Tony Pendas, and Tammara VanRyn—to thank for it. Without their willingness to invest LTA's financial and human resources in this effort, the rest of us would not have even dreamed of attempting anything this significant in Albany. We owe them a great deal and I hope you will join me in supporting their work here in New York State.

— Gay Nicholson, Executive Director

summer, with the help of a grant from the Community Foundation of the Elmira-Corning Area, we'll dedicate one of our annual Talks & Treks series to the Chemung River basin. You'll have a chance to learn about the native populations of timber rattlesnakes in the area, trek through the transition zone between the northern and southern forests of the region, experience the living history of the area through the eyes of the Chemung County historian, thrill to a tale of the discovery of one of the latest, greatest finds in the area—the Pine Valley mastodon—and more!

This summer's Talks & Treks series is just the tip of the proverbial post-glacial iceberg for our activities in this part of the state. Remember to check the fall edition of the Land Steward for big news about an exciting land acquisition project along the Chemung River that we hope to have completed by late summer.

— Karen Edelstein

# The Land Trust Alliance: Leading and Uniting Land Trusts in New York and Across the Country

*Wherein, gentle reader, you'll learn all about the LTA—the national organization of land trusts—and its New York chapter. Thanks to Ezra Milchman, new director of the Northeast program, for this article.*

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) is the membership organization for land trusts. We provide the leadership, training, and resources that help land trusts do their work. Indeed, since we began in 1982 the number of land trusts has nearly tripled—from 450 to 1,200. In ever-greater numbers, land trusts look to LTA for the leadership, training and resources they need to conserve open space. Just in the past year, we've helped over 5,000 people across the country learn about the how's, why's, and wherefore's of land conservation.

Land conservation is a highly technical business, necessarily couched in the daunting language of legalese. That's one reason conservation lawyer Kingsbury Browne traveled the country in 1981 visiting land trusts to learn more about their needs. He was impressed with their successes, yet saw how often isolated land trusts had to reinvent the wheel to accomplish similar aims.

Heeding his advice, several leading groups came together and soon the LTA was born: an organization that shares information, skills, and experience, advocates for land trusts on national legislation, and helps them look to the future. Today, more than two-thirds of the nation's land trusts are dues-paying members of LTA. Here's how we help:

- Our annual Land Trust Rally draws the largest gathering of land conservationists in the world, offering training courses that teach skills for building lasting organizations. The 2001 Land Trust Rally, scheduled for September 29 through October 2 in Baltimore, Maryland, will be the largest yet, with more than 1,500 participants expected. The New York Regional Conference, held May 18 and 19 in Rochester, was another successful event that trained over 100 conservationists from across the state.
- Our national media outreach brings land trusts and voluntary land conser-

vation to ever-broadening audiences, especially landowners, lawyers, state and local decision-makers, estate planners, and potential funders and donors. In 2000, we gained press coverage from *CNN Finance*, *NBC Nightly News*, and *The Washington Post*. We publish *Exchange*, the only professional journal for land trust practitioners, and provide an unrivaled repository of land trust information.

- We promote federal laws and policies that help landowners benefit by protecting their land. In 2000, our efforts helped double federal funding to \$60 million for conservation easements on private forestlands, and more than doubled funding to \$40 million for wetland conservation grants. We also advanced new tax incentives for land conservation to the House and Senate, setting the stage for the enactment of several hundred million dollars of such incentives in 2001.
- The Land Trust Quality Initiative is our new effort to provide every land trust with the tools it needs. The Finger Lakes Land Trust is at the forefront of this effort, having already adopted LTA's *Standards and Practices* and strengthened its stewardship programs.

Since our New York program began in 1993, the Finger Lakes Land Trust has sent representatives to all our state conferences (and co-hosted the 1998 conference in Ithaca), accessed the most up-to-date regional information through the LTA's Saratoga Springs office, and received nearly \$9,000 in grants to support their work in the Cayuga Lake watershed, the Honeoye Inlet Valley, and the Hemlock and Canadice Lakes area. Now we're building on the strengths of our New York work to serve the New England states as part of an expanded Northeast Program.

In New York, the Land Trust Alliance has undertaken a new effort in the state legislature to promote tax incentives and funding for land trusts, an effort that could dramatically increase the nearly 220,000 acres of land that the state's 80 land trusts have already protected. (See Sign of the Lone Pine, page 2.) (Nationwide, regional and local land



Graphic courtesy of the Land Trust Alliance

trusts have protected 4.7 million acres, according to LTA's National Land Trust Census.)

I've been the director of LTA-NE for just eight months, and am thrilled to have the opportunity to work with such dedicated conservationists as Gay Nicholson. Her tireless efforts on LTA's state advisory council for New York, her new responsibility as chair of the advisory council's fundraising sub-committee, and her devotion to both the Finger Lakes Land Trust and LTA are vital to all our efforts.

As a Finger Lakes Land Trust member, you've already helped save more than 5,000 acres of beautiful land. And you share a vision and spirit with nearly one million other people across the country who also belong to local and regional land trusts. Together, we're all part of a national movement that's already provided permanent protection—forever—to millions of acres of land while developing new approaches to land conservation. The Land Trust Alliance shares your investment in the Finger Lakes Land Trust. It's in our partnerships with land trusts that we ensure that communities like yours can protect the open spaces vital to their heritage.

—Ezra Milchman,  
Director, LTA Northeast Program

*In addition to the land trust membership dues (less than 10% of our total budget), LTA is supported by gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations. For more information about LTA or the PLCIP call or write:*

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# THE ETHICS OF CONSERVATION

## A Lesson from the Misplaced: Find a Sense of Place

I found it crawling up the bed-clothes, its striped antennae and spotted wing cases looking a bit more muted than those of the cadavers I'd viewed in a specimen case several months before; still, the resemblance was spooky enough that I flew to the kitchen for a glass jar, scooped it up, and screwed the lid down. Tight. I'm no entomologist (my knowledge exceeds the norm this much: I can tell honeybees and yellow jackets apart), but I'd just written an article about Asian longhorned beetles, and the last place I wanted to find one was between my sheets.

That evening I showed the beetle to my friends and neighbors. The next morning I passed it around during the bus ride into Ithaca from Danby. As soon as I got to work I pulled the jar out of my bag yet again. With each show, a brief retelling—how already over 7,000 trees had been cut and shredded in Chicago and New York City in a swift and desperate effort to stem the tide; how USDA inspectors had intercepted the beetles in crated trade goods in 26 warehouses from coast to coast (yet at most 10% of imports are inspected); how over the past two decades in China, where you'd think this beetle's natural enemies should've

value in stormwater management, air quality, water quality, energy conservation, and wildlife habitat. In stormwater management alone, studies by American Forests, the nation's oldest citizen conservation organization, show that our urban trees provide estimated services with a value of more than \$400 billion each year. Should the Asian longhorn beetle make it into our forests the losses would be staggering indeed.



North America has been a melting pot for pests since 1492, having imported roughly 10 invasives for each one it has exported. But now it seems that the North American experience is just the trial run for a world-class free-for-all. Name a way that any item can cross any border, and you've got a potential point of entry.

*Place is more than forest and meadow, valley and stream;  
it's our collective memory of what the land and its history  
have meant to us over years and centuries, and  
all that it means to us now.*

kept it at bay, populations had exploded a staggering—believe it—650,000 percent.

Yes, forest entomologists are freaked about the Asian longhorned beetle. Its potential to decimate North American forests vastly exceeds the gypsy moths', for it doesn't move on to the next tree 'til the first is dead.

Cities that lose a majority of their tree canopy lose much more than cooling shade and aesthetic delight, and would be hard-pressed to provide an equivalent

Indeed, the main agent of invasion is global trade—up just this past decade by 50%. Every day millions of tons of goods are crated over the seven seas, and pests go along for the ride. Not that these goods are often contaminated; it's largely the packing material and the ships' ballast water that carry the invaders.

Behind the trade, driving it all, the simplest of desires—for stuff and for contact. Stuff is what's crated over the seven seas; contact awaits us in stores and

shops, restaurants and malls. When we walk back out with our packages in tow, we've had contact and we've got stuff, yet together they represent so much more. Status, novelty, solace, allure—we find them all in shopping.

Indeed, for millennia our acquisitiveness has been a biological and cultural imperative, painting us as worthy providers—of food and security both—for family and tribe, and bringing us the praise and honor we needed to make it all worthwhile. Yet today, providing for a secure and abundant tomorrow requires that we do something unaccustomed and new—throttle that primal acquisitiveness, and fast. Between the threats of global warming and a pest-based ecology that, along with habitat loss, promises ever-increasing extinction rates, we must. But can we?

Perhaps. For we are also attached to—and moved by—a sense of place. Place is more than forest and meadow, valley and stream; it's our collective memory of what the land and its history have meant to us over years and centuries, and all that it means to us now. As avidly as we may have perused garden or field guides; as carefully as we may have appraised outdoor tools or camping gear, now we need to examine how to live—not necessarily with less or more—but differently. Checking this unbridled economic growth could prove an advantage, bringing not only balance but a lot more joy into all our interactions, whether cultural or commercial.

As for the beetle on my bed—no, it wasn't an Asian longhorned beetle. It was the white-spotted sawyer and has lived here since forever, chowing on diseased or stressed conifers. It is part of a natural community with all the checks and balances that naturally evolved ecological communities include. It has a place.

— Mary Woodsen

Photo Credit (Above): USDAAPHIS (United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service)

# 2001 AWARD-WINNING MEMBERS

## 2001 Conservationist of the Year: Barbara Keeton

The natural world has been Barbara (“Bobby” to her friends) Orcutt Keeton’s passion her entire life. After all, her childhood backyard—she grew up in Blacksburg, Virginia—was the Blue Ridge Mountains. Her love of natural history came from rambling in the mountains, but also from jaunts to national parks with her family and a year of high school in then-unsullied Hawaii.

Bobby attended Virginia Polytechnic University for two years, where she met her future husband, Bill Keeton, then transferred to Cornell, where she earned her B.S. in biology. Although the demands of raising three children prevented her from completing a Masters in animal behavior, she has studied creatures ranging from lovebirds to weevils, salamanders to millipedes, in places as far-flung as Peru, the Pacific Northwest, and Micronesia.

It was in the 1980s, though, that Bobby’s conservation work took off. She began working actively with The Nature Conservancy (she was treasurer of the Central and Western New York Chapter for 11 years), the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Defense Fund, Zero Population Growth, and The Wilderness Society—among others. Adonation of ecologically significant land in Florida to The Nature Conservancy earned her an honorary lifetime membership. Many an Earth Day or other celebration around town during the last 15 years has seen Bobby creating and staffing information booths for one—or more!—of these organizations.

It was natural, then, that Bobby joined the Finger Lakes Land Trust right at the start. In the early 90s she donated 66 acres of land on Mt. Pleasant as a “trade land”—land sold with a conservation easement, with the proceeds plowed back into conservation work. So her recent donation of 111 lovely acres, the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve (see the Winter 2000-01 *Land Steward* issue), is hardly without precedent, yet for us it surpasses all the rest. Thank you, Bobby Keeton, 2001 Conservationist of the Year!



Photo by: Betsy Larrington

*Bobby Keeton, winner of the 2001 Conservationist of the Year Award, with her family at the dedication of the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve. From left to right, Assistant Director Kat Lieberknecht, daughter Nancy Keeton, daughter Lynn Keeton-Gamwell, Bobby Keeton, and son Bill Keeton.*

## 2001 Volunteer of the Year: Dan Hoffman

Leading nature walks, maintaining and protecting our 20 nature preserves and 36 conservation easements, serving on committees, writing for the newsletter, providing refreshments for social events, keeping our computers humming along—our volunteers do a lot. But not many of our 1250-plus members can do what Dan Hoffman does, and in recognition of his many years of legal service to the Land Trust, Dan is our 2001 Volunteer of the Year.

Dan has been a Land Trust member from its earliest days and a board member since 1996. He’s helped with land purchases, acquisitions, and trades, arranged watershed conservation and scenic vista contracts with the City of Syracuse and with Yates County, and orchestrated our purchase of the Leopold Center. He calls that work “very gratifying,” seeing this lovely building put to such good use.

An Ithacan for 32 years, Dan came to Cornell as an undergraduate (from Wildwood, New Jersey) and stayed. Later he graduated from Cornell Law School and is now an attorney in Ithaca. Through these many years he has been a prominent public figure, serving on Common Council for 12 years and running for mayor twice. He was an early member of the GreenStar Cooperative Market, was its board president for four years, and is currently on its Board of Directors. A well-known environmental activist, Dan is the co-chair of the Citizens’ Planning Alliance as well as the chair of the City of Ithaca’s Natural Areas Commission and a member of the City’s Conservation Advisory Council. He was also part of the original Recycling Task Force in Ithaca and a member of the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council.

Dan has two grown children and four grandchildren. Somehow he still finds time to enjoy wandering in the Six Mile Creek Natural Area near his home, and to bicycle and canoe. All of us in Tompkins County and all of us in the Finger Lakes Land Trust have been the beneficiaries of this committed environmentalist who matches his energy with his ideals.

—Merry Jo Bauer



Photo by: Betsy Larrington

*Dan Hoffman, winner of the 2001 Volunteer of the Year Award.*

# CELEBRATIONS AND DEDICATIONS



Photo by: Betsy Darlington

*Leslie Henderson, Steve Ceracche, Laurie Lantagne, Suzanne Henderson at the sign marking the beginning of the nature trail at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve.*



Photo by: Sarah Paquia

*Rob Young, keynote speaker at the Land Trust's 12th Annual Celebration on April 29th. Excerpts from Rob's speech will be featured in the Fall 2001 Land Steward.*



Photo by: Betsy Darlington

*Volunteer Ben Farr building the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve kiosk, his Eagle Scout project. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, over 60 Land Trust members gathered around the kiosk at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve dedication.*



Photo by: Jon Heiss

*Intern P.J. Rusello, winner of a "Star Performer" award at Cornell University for his work with the Land Trust, with Betsy Darlington.*

## What's a Landowner to Do? : A *Land Steward* Exclusive Interview with Ms. L'Ann Donerr

*Interviewer's note: My assignment was to interview L'Ann Donerr about her starring role in a new Hollywood film. Yet our discussion quickly turned to land protection options for landowners. Naturally, I couldn't help but share this conversation with **Land Steward** readers.*

**KL:** So, L'Ann, audiences are responding enthusiastically to the previews of your latest movie. How do you feel about the film?

**LD:** (*wearing jeans and a black t-shirt, sipping a seltzer*) The film was fun, but hey, it's history now. And Kat, what's *really* on my mind is my 200-acre parcel of family land. I'd like it to remain as forest and field— forever. And I'd like to work with the Finger Lakes Land Trust. (*Sighing*) But I'm not sure where to start.

**KL:** Well, if you plan to pass your property on to your kids, how about a conservation easement? Conservation easements are legal agreements that allow you to place permanent restrictions on your property while continuing to own the land privately. The Land Trust holds the easement—meaning it undertakes the responsibility to uphold the land use restrictions, even after you're gone. And since you retain ownership of the property, you can sell or give the land to a family member, or someone else. Of course, the next landowner is obligated to follow the land use restrictions—that's the beauty of a conservation easement.

**LD:** All my kids live out of state. I don't think that they're interested in owning the property.

**KL:** Do you want to continue living on the land?

**LD:** I think so...

**KL:** Conservation easements are just one option. Donating the entire property

to the Land Trust in your will, or through a reserved life estate, also allows you to continue living on the land while giving it permanent protection.

**LD:** What if I decide that I don't want to own the land, after all?

**KL:** How about simply donating your land to the Land Trust today? Depending on the characteristics of the property, the Land Trust could own and maintain it as a nature preserve. Or perhaps we could place a conservation easement on it, then sell it to a conservation-minded buyer. The proceeds from the sale would help us pursue other land protection projects.

**LD:** That sounds like a possible solution. The land would remain forever wild, the Land Trust would receive some much-needed funding, and I bet I'd get a tax break!

**KL:** Donations of land to the Land Trust can be structured in many ways, each with different tax consequences. That's why we recommend that landowners consult with their legal and financial advisors from the beginning.

**LD:** Kat, could you recommend a book about all these options? I'd like something to refer to as I mull this over.

**KL:** Hmmm... *Conservation Options: A Landowner's Guide*, published by the Land Trust Alliance, is a comprehensive and easy to read pamphlet. *Preserving Family Lands: Book I and Preserving Family Lands: Book II*, both by Stephen Small, are focused on the tax benefits of land protection. For farmland protection, Jeremiah P. Cosgrove's *Your Land is Your Legacy* is a good place to start. All of these books can be ordered through the Land Trust Alliance (202-638-4725 or [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org))

**LD:** How about *The Landowner's Guide to Conservation Easements* by Steven Bick and Harry Haney, Jr.?

**KL:** This book is focused on owners of working lands—such as lands with active forestry or agriculture—who are considering conservation easements. However, the authors' extra-cautious tone doesn't reflect how landowners I've spoken with feel. The book also doesn't represent the breadth of the land trust community, painting land trusts as only interested in wilderness protection—yet many trusts actively protect farms and working forests. Still, it does have some useful background information. You can order the book through Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company at 1-800-228-0810.

I'm afraid that we're out of time. L'Ann, I hope that I've answered some of your questions. **Oh, and the new "How We Can Help You" section on the Finger Lakes Land Trust web page ([www.fllt.org](http://www.fllt.org)) is a great new resource about land protection options.**

Good luck with your decision!

—Kat Lieberknecht

*Our heartfelt thanks for generous contributions:*

*In honor of the marriage of  
Monica Bosworth and  
Paul Viscuso,  
From Margaret Barker*

*In honor of the marriage of  
Steven G. Hall and  
Rebecca Van Ee,  
From Lawrence Jones  
(of Rochester)*

# CHAPTER REPORTS

## Western Lakes Chapter

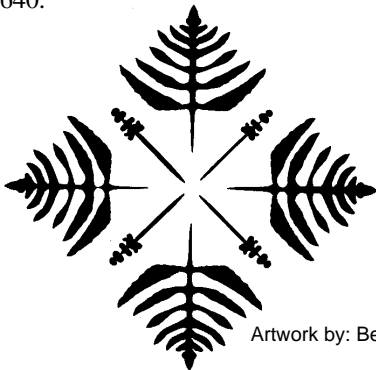
Summer is upon us. For us in the Western Lakes Chapter, this means the start of another great season of Talks & Treks in the Canandaigua, Hemlock, and Canadice watersheds. If the old adage that variety is the spice of life holds true, this season's schedule possesses a dynamic spirit. See the newsletter insert for a schedule of this summer's Talks & Treks events.

We've posted the boundaries of Great Hill and the additions to Wesley Hill, and both preserves are almost ready for dedication. We need volunteers for trail maintenance and other fun prep work—can you join us?

New this summer: we're working with the City of Canandaigua to sponsor a downtown farmers' market, open each Saturday 'till November 3rd. Come out and help support our local family farmers and share in some great community spirit!

Our brand new chapter office is inhabitable now, after several months of drywalling, painting, and cleaning. Thanks so much to the volunteers for this laborious process. With our home base intact, we're looking forward to a lively and enlightening summer and beyond. Stop by or give us a call—we're at 90 S. Main Street, Canandaigua, New York, 14424, Phone 716-393-1640.

— Mark House, Chair,  
Western Lakes Chapter



Artwork by: Becca Harber

## Keuka Chapter

On May 9th, in celebration of Water Week, the Keuka Chapter co-hosted a wetlands tour on Jud & Sally Peck's Branchport farm. The Peck's wetlands are newly created through the Wetlands Reserve Program. There was a large and diverse turnout, including a family of Mennonite farmers. Peter Landre, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County and Finger Lakes Land Trust volunteer, gave the introduction. Al McGuffie, of the USDA-NRCS talked about wetland values, the history of wetland destruction and the Wetland Reserve Program. He showed an aerial photo exhibit of the Peck's wetlands project, donated by Finger Lakes Land Trust volunteer Eric Havill. Debbie Koop talked about the Finger Lakes Land Trust and explained conservation easements and methods of land protection. Jud Peck, a retired NYSDEC conservation officer, gave a colorful talk about his land and the benefits of the wetlands. Then everyone tromped through the wetlands on a tour given by Al McGuffie and Jud Peck. The kids had a chance to install wood duck boxes and mallard nest tubes, as well as seed the marsh embankment. A good time was had by all.

On July 15 the Finger Lakes Land Trust will host a Keuka Lake cruise on the boat, The Viking Spirit. See the calendar on the back of this newsletter for more information.

—Debbie Koop, Keuka Chapter Chair

**Wish Item...** Hand Drill and bits

*A warm welcome to...*

*Abbey Chernela,*

*the Finger Lakes Land Trust's  
new office manager!*

*Make sure to read more  
about Abbey in the next edition  
of the Land Steward.*

**Bombs-to-Bluebirds**

We still have a good supply of those wonderful sturdy **nest boxes**, made by volunteers from surplus ammo boxes from the Seneca Army Depot. The holes are sized for bluebirds, as well as smaller birds. We request a \$5 donation for each box—but will happily take more!

*Make great gifts—for humans or birds!*



# NATURE PRESERVE UPDATE

## Fire at Wesley Hill

Wesley Hill Nature Preserve lost the “Snorer’s Cabin” to a small ground fire sometime during the afternoon of May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Hikers will find a half-acre of scorched earth, blackened trees and the remains of the cabin— molten glass from the windows, metal bed frames, a few cinder blocks, and ashes. The small cabin hosted Jack and Jean Wenrich on their honeymoon night in 1942. It was tagged the “Snorer’s Cabin” at some point and kept that heritage for decades by sheltering the snoring male visitors to the Wenrich camp.

The fire stopped 50 feet short of the main cabin. Was it a shift in wind? Or perhaps the late evening rains on May 2<sup>nd</sup>? With so much dry fuel on the ground, the fire could have burned the main cabin and then traveled to the adjacent grove of red pines. And after that...? Did lightning start the fire and the rain put it out? That is the most likely scenario and the one that Jack and Jean Wenrich came to after visiting the remains of the cabin.

A visitor noticed the smoldering fire on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and neighboring Land Trust naturalist Chris White called the Richmond Fire Dept. Both Richmond and South Bristol responded to the call and though it took less than three hours to safely contain the hot spots, it was a long 3/4-mile and a very hot 80° walk for the 25 volunteers. Preserve Steward Eric Cosman led the firefighters to the cabin area and was on the fire line the entire time.

A thought for all summer 2001 hikers.... the forest floor is a fuel box waiting for a spark. Don’t be the one to provide it.

— Christopher White



PHOTO BY: MEG EWING

*The “Snorer’s Cabin” at the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve, before it was destroyed by fire in early May.*

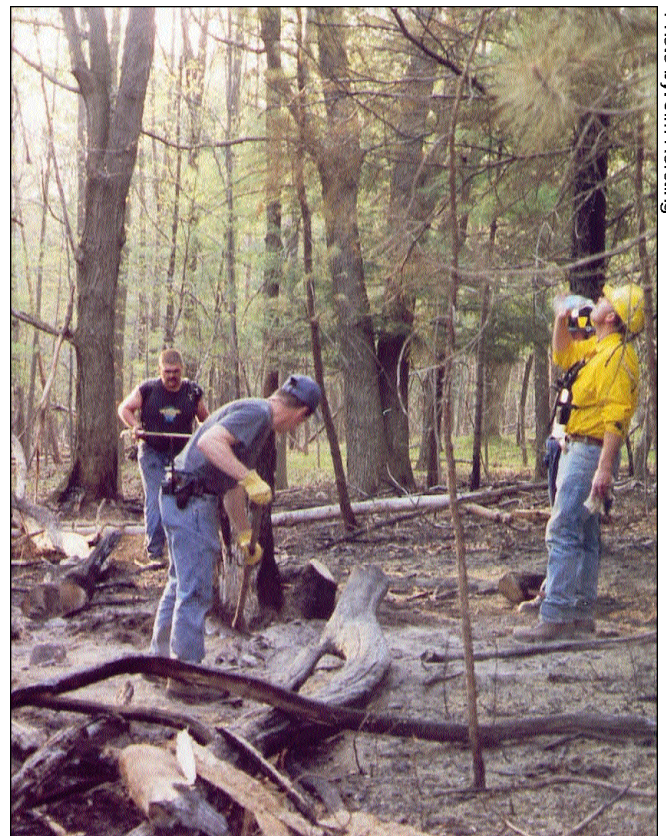


PHOTO BY: JIM KERSING

*Volunteers from the Richmond and South Bristol fire departments contain the smoldering remains of the cabin.*

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# BUSINESS PARTNER PROFILE

## Muddy Paws Pottery

Clouseau, a friendly black Lab mix and the inspiration for the name “Muddy Paws Pottery,” met me in front of Eric Serritella’s place in Newfield. Eric’s home, half given to his pottery studio, reflects his life: a balance between several career paths, support of the arts, and environmental advocacy.

From toothbrush holders to fountains to art pieces, Eric’s striking pottery bears glazes he designed and named for natural phenomena—his Carbon River Red, for example, is named for a river, milky with glacial flour and dotted with red and black volcanic rocks, that flows off Mt. Rainier. The profits go wholly to causes he believes in: saving whales and wolves, the arts, land preservation—including the work of the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

“Making pottery is a very centering experience,” says Eric. “The spiritual aspect of putting earth and fire together appeals to me.” He’s been a potter for six years now and sells through art shows, but soon Spirit and Kitsch, a new store in downtown Ithaca, will carry his work.

So how does Eric make a living? After studying Speech Communication at Ithaca College and a brief career in communications training, Eric moved into marketing because his supervisor said he had a “sales personality.” Lucky for us! He is currently vice president of Howell Liberatore & Associates, Inc. in Elmira—the firm that ran the fund-raising campaign for the new Tompkins County Library—and he does pro bono work for the Land Trust, too. He was a board member of Tanglewood Nature Center in Elmira for six years and teaches marketing at the Park School at Ithaca College.

This summer, the Muddy Paws studio will be listed on the Greater Ithaca Arts Trail. Take the opportunity to meet and talk with Eric Serritella on one of the art trail’s open studio weekends. And don’t forget—Eric gives a 10% discount on all wheel-thrown pottery to Finger Lakes Land Trust members!

— Gail Blake



Photo by: Gail Blake

*Eric Serritella throwing a pot at the Muddy Paws Pottery Studio in Newfield.*

## In Memorium

Our deepest thanks for generous contributions

In memory of Agnes Cole  
*From Vicki and Tom Finnefrock,  
Jeanne Kendig,  
Julie Overbeck,  
Seymour and Myrna Weinstein  
The friends and co-workers of Carole Teegarden  
at Highland Hospital Laboratory*

In memory of Ted Brown  
*From his son, David Brown,  
David Takacs and Lawrence Carbone*

In memory of Bernard and Ophelia Seward,  
and Susan Seward Vick  
*From their granddaughter/daughter, Betsy Vick*

In memory of Doris (Mrs. Donald) Pulver  
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In memory of Bonnie Glickman  
*From Ronald Pappert, Sr.*

*The Finger Lakes Land Trust has over  
40 business partners across the region.  
We feature one of our business partners  
in each Land Steward edition.  
Our web page ([www.fllt.org](http://www.fllt.org)) has a full  
listing of business members and businesses  
that offer a discount or benefit to  
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# A CLOSER LOOK

## River Otters

Otters are among the few wild animals that seem to love to play as adults. When not catching fish, frogs, crayfish or mice, river otters are famous for repeatedly sliding down muddy or snowy riverbanks for the apparent sheer joy of it. Otter researcher Pat Foster-Turley has been hesitant to describe such behavior as fun. "Yet when I see one balancing a pinecone on its nose, then pulling it underwater and letting it bob to the surface, *then* shooting up and jumping on it, there's nothing else to call it," she says.

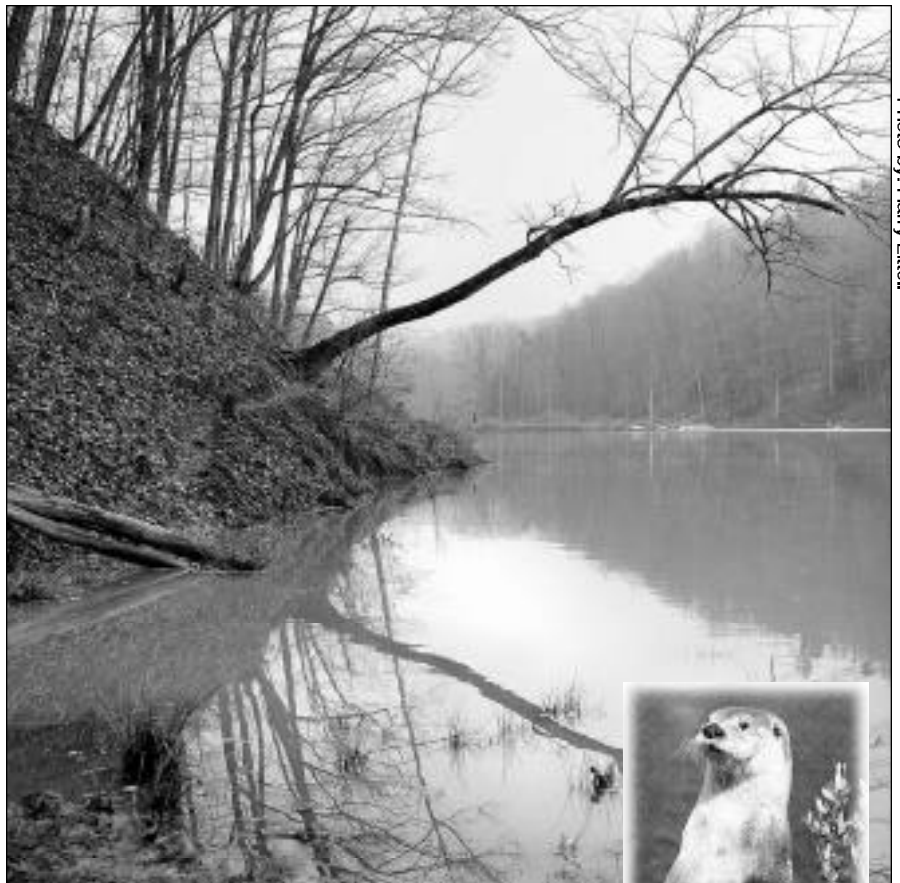
River otters are semi-aquatic, living on land and in water. They inhabit linear territories along rivers, the edges of lakes, marshes, swamps, and even seacoasts, and can move considerable distances throughout a watershed.

Otters swim seven miles per hour and can stay submerged for minutes. They close their ears and nostrils, and propel themselves with their webbed rear feet as they relax their forelegs along their sleek, undulating bodies. Otter near-sightedness is an adaptation for seeing underwater. They rely heavily on their sense of touch and sensations they receive with their long, sensitive whiskers. Adult river otters vary from about three to four-and one-half feet in length, at least a third of which is in their tails. They vary in weight from ten to 28 pounds.

The rich, lustrous fur of otters is denser than any other mammal, about 150,000 hairs to the square inch, while we have only about 100,000 hairs on our entire heads. In water, they trap insulating air bubbles between thick, waterproof underfur and stiff outer guard hairs. This combines with a subcutaneous layer of fat to keep otters quite warm while wet, even in winter, so long as they keep their fur clean and well-preened. The valuable fur that protects the otter's life in the water, however, may cause it to lose its life in the hands of a trapper.

Habitat destruction and over-trapping eliminated or reduced river otters in much of their original range in the United States. In New York, otters virtually disappeared from central and western portions of the state, while they are still relatively abundant in the Adirondacks and Catskills. The cutting of forests and creation of farms in the 19th century damaged otter habitat here too much for otters to survive. Now that much of our land has reverted to forest, otter habitat is much improved. Over time, otters would naturally re-occupy the Finger Lakes region, moving in slowly from the east. But people are impatient and we are speeding up the process.

I saw river otters in the Finger Lakes region last November. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was releasing four wild otters captured two weeks earlier in the Adirondacks into Jennings Pond, the headwaters of Buttermilk Creek in Buttermilk Falls State Park, south of Ithaca.



"Lower Reservoir, April 2001"

Photo by: Harry Littlell



River Otter

Photo by: Chris Della Fave

Twenty or so park staff, DEC personnel, trappers and others watched a line of bubbles as an otter swam underwater into the pond. The long, sleek animal turned and lifted its head and looked back at us for a moment, apparently glad to be back in its element. Then it popped back underwater and disappeared. It and its three companions had several watersheds to choose from for their new homes.

A few days later, seven more otters were released into Honeoye Lake, and were the last of 270 otters released since 1995 at nine locations in central and western New York as part of the New York State River Otter Project. These releases should accelerate the return of these energetic fish eaters to our waters by several decades.

— Tony Ingraham

*Editor's note: There is evidence that several of the released otters from the Honeoye Lake wetlands traveled up Briggs Gully to the headwaters of Briggs Gully creek. Part of this vital corridor is protected by the Finger Lakes Land Trust as the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve.*



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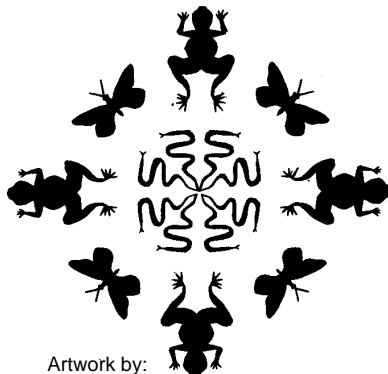
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Artwork by:  
Becca Harber

## SPRING 2001 CALENDAR:

**JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST: TALKS & TREKS** in the Southern Rivers Watershed, the Little Lakes Watersheds (Honeoye, Canadice, and Hemlock) and the Canandaigua Watershed. Join your neighbors for a series of exciting events about the natural and cultural history of your home watershed. Please see inserts for more information.

**JULY 15, SUN., 2:00 PM: KEUKA LAKE CRUISE.** Join us for a 2-hour cruise on Keuka Lake. Space is limited. \$25 per person. Please call Abbey at 607-275-9487 for reservations and directions.

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