



THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 14, No. 3

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Summer 2002

Western Lakes Hillside Protected by New Conservation Easement

Bill Houghton knows a lot about the value of time. He lives in a house built around 1815, filled with antiques he has collected over the years, on land that has been continuously farmed for over 175 years. He can show you the ancient oxen bones in his woodlands, left like old tractor parts, and he has restored and maintains the family cemetery that dates back to the origins of the house. Before Bill bought what was the old Wheeler estate in 1948, he had already bought, restored, and re-sold over twelve historic homes. But something about this old Greek Revival, with its sweep of fields and crown of woods, caused Bill to put down roots. Now, over fifty years later, Bill has decided to place a conservation easement on this land. It's another step in his life-long habit of preservation, not just of land, but of history.

Bill's place, located on a hillside between Honeoye Lake and Canandaigua Lake, includes approximately 40 to 50 acres of open farmland (leased to neighboring farmers) and 60 to 70

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Photo by Sara Kersting

Bill Houghton's conservation easement protects a diverse mix of farmland and forest on the north-facing slope of Fisher Hill in Ontario County.

Getting to Know the Finger Lakes Through Talks & Treks



How can the Land Trust introduce itself to a community, alert members and friends to new projects, educate stakeholders about land conservation issues, create a sense of ownership in a watershed, and keep the networking going?

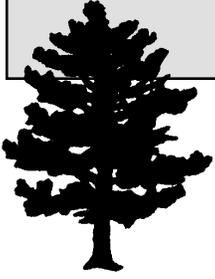
The Talks & Treks series has done all this and more. At Gay Nicholson's suggestion, Sara Kersting and Meg Ewing of the Western Lakes Chapter came up with the idea six years ago. They were brainstorming ways to reach out to the landowners in

the Hemlock and Canadice watershed, where we (along with the City of Rochester and The Nature Conservancy) had started the Hemlock and Canadice Watershed Project in 1995. We had very little presence in the area back then. Their remedy: begin a season-long, something-for-everyone program to connect with people, get the word out about the Land Trust, and promote a sense of community within the towns of the watersheds. The series was wildly successful. It began in a classroom in the old

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Please join us for our Summer Talks & Treks. See insert for details.

SIGN OF THE LONE PINE



I met Kat Lieberknecht on her birthday, a beautiful April day in 1998, when she had come from Yale University for a job interview with the Land Trust. We spent the day roaming the Skaneateles Lake watershed and talking about the challenges of creating a land protection program in that area in a partnership with the City of Syracuse. She was just finishing up her masters' degree at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and hoped to settle in the Ithaca area.

Kat has been an exemplary employee and dedicated supporter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

She was an impressive candidate—full of enthusiastic grace and quick intelligence. Yes, very new to the field of land protection, but possessing the character and viewpoint needed to build our new field program. I hired her and now, four accomplishment-filled years later, with mixed feelings akin to those of a proud parent, I am watching her leave for graduate school—this time a doctoral program at Cornell University.

Thankfully, we are not saying goodbye to her. After two years as the full-time Skaneateles Program Coordinator, and two years as our Assistant Director, Kat will start working for us one day a week this fall as a Land Protection Specialist on our conservation easement program. We are grateful and glad that we will still have her expertise, insightful leadership, and empathetic perspective applied to the Land Trust mission.

Our collective debt to Kat is considerable. She has helped immeasurably in bringing professional standards to the Land Trust's work. In her role as Assistant Director, she has brought

efficiency and high-tech tools to our outreach and fundraising efforts. Our newsletter, website, and brochures compel the readers' interest with fresh updates and images from our land protection work. Membership growth has been significant, and our fundraising efforts improved by sophisticated use of our database. These achievements are wonderful by any standard, but Kat has also been a significant force in improving the professionalism of our land protection programs, especially through her work on conservation easements.

We often celebrate the contributions of our volunteers in the pages of this newsletter because they are so important to our mission. But we should also remember to acknowledge the guidance and dedication of our staff as they work to coordinate and lead the efforts of so many members stretched across the six thousand square miles of the Finger Lakes Region. Kat has been an exemplary employee and dedicated supporter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust. She has been my trusted colleague and friend throughout both the highs of cinching our land protection projects and the stresses of helping the organization mature into a sustainable and professional conservation leader.

...never doubt the ability of just a few people to change the world because that is the only way change has ever occurred.

There is a quote by Margaret Mead that most of us have seen before, the one about never doubting the ability of just a few people to change the world because that is the only way change has ever occurred. It's a fitting sentiment for us. Kat has changed the Land Trust's world, and all for the better.

—Gay Nicholson

In Memoriam

Our deepest thanks for generous donations in memory of

William Wallace Daniel,
who found peace in the outdoors,

From:
Lois Darlington

Jonathan Hart

From:
*Barry and Molly Adams,
Donna Fleming*

Our sincere thanks

for a generous contribution, in honor of

Barbara Goldstein

From
Ira Goldstein and Tessa Flores

CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Percy Browning

I met Percy Browning back when her son Pete and I were both juniors at Cornell University in Ithaca. Percy had just returned from an African safari and provided an animated account of her adventures, punctuated by a chair full of show and tell items. Some years later, she gave me a copy of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, along with an earful on the ways that big business is exploiting the earth. Her unspoken message: You can actually do something about this, Rich.

Percy tells me that her awakening from ignorance and complacency traces back to her landlocked Kentucky days, where a diet of meat and potatoes laced with sour cream led to a cholesterol problem. "And you really should quit smoking cigarettes, too," her doctor added when she went for help. Percy just hit the ten-year mark since she quit smoking and used the time to learn volumes about the ways our planet is in trouble, most recently taking a 24-day World Wildlife Fund tour of threatened habitats around the world.

When Percy moved to Ithaca in 1995, she began looking for ways to make a lasting contribution to the area. Early on she became involved with the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, where she served as board president. This is where Percy met, in her own words, a "real sparkplug," Betsy Darlington. Percy quickly came to see the Finger Lakes Land Trust as a great outlet for her phil-

anthropic interests. Right off, she purchased an 18-acre parcel that abutted the Stevenson Preserve. This land was immediately vulnerable to development and indeed was saved by Percy's efforts.

This year, Percy got even more ambitious, helping us secure a coveted 47.5-acre parcel. Her donation extends the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve to the north and east, providing a corridor across glacially oversteepened slopes to Thatcher's Pinnacles. If you hanker for arduous hikes with breathtaking views, put this one at the top of your list. You can play armchair geologist from this vantage, summoning a massive glacier to dance across the valley.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Percy's philanthropy is her disarming way of playing the evangelist for change. Sure, her donations make a real impact. But no single person can do it all. She rarely misses the opportunity to observe something weighty, casually voiced in ordinary conversation. You walk away thinking, "Now, what can I do to help?"

—Rich Sheiman



Photo by Rich Sheiman

Percy Browning, 2002 Conservationist of the Year.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Geo Kloppel

Still waters run deep, the saying goes. For a living definition of what that means, meet our Volunteer of the Year. Geo Kloppel is a quiet man who has done an astonishing amount for the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Over the years, he has lent a subtle mix of muscle, mind, and inspiration to stewarding and managing our preserves, and to the success of this newsletter, *The Land Steward*.

I've known Geo for many years as a skilled musician and violin bow maker. Since we live near each other in the town of Danby, it was natural for me to ask Geo to show me around the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve as a way to learn more about the Land Trust. I tagged along for a couple of hours one damp day in early April, when he was going out to clear the dam flow after a week of rain. It didn't take long to see that Geo has an intimate relationship with this land.

Geo is an avid birder who has walked those hills for decades. He lives along part of the preserve boundary and in 1996 volunteered to help mow trails. Since then he's laid out trails, cleared out tons of debris, and guided others to an appreciation of this lovely place. The care and attention of his stewardship comes from quiet observation and contemplation.

Geo has gotten involved with other preserves as well. "He's always ready and willing," said Betsy Darlington. Whether it's

cutting up junk cars at the Ellis Hollow preserve or spending days walking preserve boundaries, he's a real doer who wants to get the job done.

Betsy Darlington and Gay Nicholson both have glowing things to say about Geo's thoughtful, considered input in the Preserve Management Committee. "Geo always weighs in with carefully reasoned and researched perspectives," says Gay. Betsy agrees. "When Geo says something, people pay attention and listen. His views are well thought out, balanced and helpful."

Geo's speech can be sparse but his thoughts shine through in his writing, and his elegantly crafted articles grace *The Land Steward* from time to time. "He writes evocative pieces of the highest quality," says *The Land Steward* editor Mary Woodsen, long an admirer of Geo's work. "Geo is a stunning writer with a distinctive voice."

Thank you, Geo Kloppel, for your help, your care, your generous spirit over all these years.

—Pam Goddard



Photo by Betsy Darlington

Geo Kloppel, 2002 Volunteer of the Year.



Photo by Sara Kersting

Bill Houghton recently donated a conservation easement to the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

Western Lakes Hillside Protected...

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acres of brush and woodlands. Its location on the north-facing slope of Fisher Hill (elevation of 1200 ft.) commands panoramic views of the surrounding countryside to the north and the west. The south end of the property is covered by an old woods of oak, hickory, and sugar maple, locally known as Grimble Woods. This woods dates back to the origins of the farm. Although it has been periodically harvested through the years, it remains a healthy stand replete with large sugar maples. Since he purchased the woods in 1948, Bill has restricted timber harvesting to thinning and clean up work, most recently after the 1991 ice storm. A recent informal inventory by Land Trust member and naturalist Chris White confirmed the health of this forest and the age of the older trees (70 to 100 years).

Intriguingly, nearly all the current property lines are identical with those drawn up on the original deed in the 1790s. The eastern boundary, now a densely overgrown hedgerow of thorn apple, maple and hickory, was once an old town line road; traces of the old ruts still remain. Parts of the southern boundary of this property are the East Bloomfield-Bristol town line, marked by a row of ancient shagbark hickories with old wires swallowed up in their huge trunks.

Bill has been a member and staunch supporter of the Land Trust for the past nine years. His daughter Charlotte, an art history professor at Penn State, shares his desire to protect this land they love. The "Old Place," they call it; the name is painted on the mailbox.

"First, to provide an open space for a wildlife sanctuary in an area which would probably, over time, become subdivided. And second, to protect it from being exploited for quick profit which would destroy the beauty of the tract." That's the statement Bill wrote as he prepared to place the easement. He wants to protect quality agricultural land, healthy forestland, plant and animal habitat, and the views across his fields and forest. Indeed, agriculture is the only commercial activity allowed, with timber harvesting allowed as needed to maintain the forest's health.

Thank you, Bill Houghton, for caring, and for sharing the beauty of this place for generations to come.

—Sara Kersting

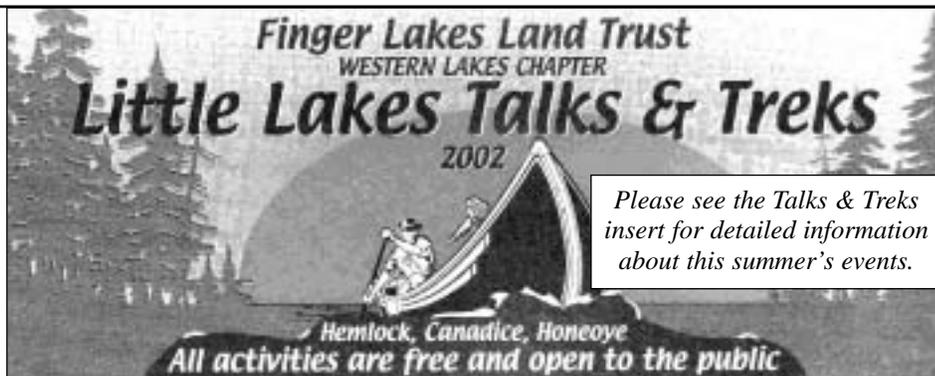
Talks & Treks

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Hemlock High School, and before the first three indoor events were complete, they had to find a bigger space. Meg and Sarah moved it to the Hemlock Fire Hall where they regularly had standing-room-only crowds.

Since then we've had Talks & Treks series in the watersheds of Hemlock and Canadice (with Honeoye added in later years), Skaneateles, Cayuga, Honeoye, Canandaigua, and the Chemung River. Many have been associated with the start of new projects or the acquisition of new preserves. All have resulted in increased community participation in the Land Trust, including the growth of our all-important corps of volunteers.

What can you expect from a Talks & Treks series? Much depends on the features (natural and anthropogenic) of the watershed and on the interests and



talents of program leaders. Past series have included indoor events such as presentations and discussions on Native American folklore, hydropower, mapping, bats, organic farming, bluebirds, drawing, and settlement patterns; outdoor events have ranged from owl walks to field trips focusing on wildflowers, fish, and amphibians and have even included hayrides, star gazing, and bike and cemetery tours—really, something for everyone.

This summer there will be Talks & Treks in the Canandaigua Lake watershed, and the Hemlock, Canadice, and Honeoye Lakes watersheds (see inserts for details and contact information). Come on out, meet your watershed neighbors, get involved, and deepen your appreciation of the beautiful place where you live.

—Gail Blake

Oil and Gas Leases and Conservation

Mineral rights. Groundwater depletion. Drought.

Until a few years ago, these land use issues seemed more at home with cacti and cowboys than forests and Finger Lakes. But considering the recent natural gas exploration in our area and this summer's predicted drought, it seems that these subjects are just as pertinent to upstate New York as to the American West.

Take mineral rights. Oil and gas leases have become a frequent focus of conversation in town halls and church kitchens across the Finger Lakes Region. Increases in demand and technology have transformed the Trenton and Black River formation from a subterranean geological feature into a marketable energy resource. And landowners have been signing leases with door-to-door oil and gas company representatives.

For some landowners, future conservation plans may take second place to dreams of striking it rich. But if you've ever thought about placing a conservation easement on your property, consider the following:

Hoping to juxtapose oil and gas development and conservation easements guarantees some thorny conflicts. That's because oil and gas development impacts a suite of conservation values—particularly the natural features that conservation easements are designed to protect. Here are a few examples. Drilling rigs and wells may spoil scenic views. Brine, a waste product of the drilling, may destroy water quality while drilling may reduce water quantity. Installing rigs and drills may compact the soil and destroy the land surface, with trees perhaps removed to build access roads and drilling platforms. Depending on how a lease is written, some of these problems can be avoided or mitigated. But it's likely that oil and gas development will have negative conservation impacts.

If you already have an oil and gas lease, donating a conservation easement will be tricky. The land trust may not have the legal right to protect conservation values—such as scenic views,

water quality, and the natural surface of the land—that could be destroyed by oil and gas development. Unless the oil and gas company is willing to subordinate their interest to the land trust, or unless the landowner or the land trust buys out the oil and gas lease, many land trusts won't want to accept conservation easement donations with existing leases.

The flip side is that it can be difficult, or impossible, to sell an oil and gas lease if you've already donated a conservation easement. If you'd like to retain the right to sell an oil and gas lease, make sure that language in your conservation easement allows for this. But be aware that most land trusts will want to restrict, or altogether prohibit, oil and gas development.

Keep in mind that an oil and gas lease may reduce or eliminate the federal income tax deduction that you could receive for the donation of your conservation easement. As always, consult a tax attorney for advice.

A look westward shows one way the mineral rights and conservation debate has been resolved. Oil wells are a common sight throughout the Northern Front Range of Colorado, with its wide sweep of highly valued agricultural land now beset by heavy residential development pressure. Colorado Open Lands, a statewide land trust that works in the area, has come to terms with the fact that most conservation easement properties will have oil and gas leases and drilling. Without much of a choice, they've decided to take refuge in the long-view of conservation. "The duration of an oil well, and most leases, is a short amount of time—ten or fifteen years," says Dieter Erdmann, a land protection fellow at Colorado Open Lands. "Conservation easements are perpetual."

Will tackling these issues today leave us more choices for the future of the Finger Lakes? We hope so.

—Kat Lieberknecht

Our Hiking Cap Is Back!

Our custom made, forest green baseball cap with the embroidered Land Trust "White Pine" is once again available. It's your best friend on a long summer hike and a great way to help support your favorite organization.

To order yours, please call Abbey at the Land Trust office at 607-275-9487.

Wish List

A floor lamp
Folding card tables
A picnic table and benches
Allen wrench set
Hand or power drill and bits
Hand truck/luggage cart

Land Protection in Action



Photo by Jim Kersting

Above: Who is the unknown carpenter/admirer of the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve (Ontario County)? This sign mysteriously appeared in the fall, after the original sign built by Nannie Nehring-Bliss disappeared. To our mystery donor—a big thank you from the Western Lakes Chapter.



Photo by Betsy Darlington

Above: Matt Young and Julie Siler, peeking out of a cinnamon fern jungle at the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary (Cayuga County).



Photo by Betsy Darlington

Left: Student intern Ben Wolfe examines a wetland plant at the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary.



Photo by Betsy Darlington

Above: Members of the Preserve Management Committee on a site visit to the Steege Hill Nature Preserve in Chemung County.

Right: Betsy Darlington presents a certificate to appreciation to Beverly and John Fridie, recent donors of a conservation easement, at the Annual Celebration.



Photo by Kat Lieberknecht

We're online!

Land Trust giving goes online!
At the request of our membership,
you can now donate through our web page at

www.flt.org

It's fast, easy and secure.

furry black flowing
through the forest foraging
mama bear and cubs
—By Becca Harber

earth's green arms outstretched
descending into hollows,
cascading water
—By Becca Harber

THE ETHICS OF CONSERVATION

Simplicity

Reprinted from *Orion* magazine, with permission.

Among do-gooders, it's bad form to be a pessimist, but I can't seem to get that extinction crisis out of my mind. Or that population explosion. Or global climate change. Can't get those billionaires; those landless, homeless, jobless billions; those new diseases; the corporate capture of the media; those aging nuclear reactors; those crowded prisons out of my mind.

These days, most of us know at some level that consumerism is complicity in all of the above. Even ordinary lives in our society, let alone the lifestyles of the rich and famous, exploit and undermine cultures and bioregions near and far. However suppressed or attenuated, an awareness of doing harm must taint whatever pleasure might be had from material convenience or luxury.

Given the degree to which even low-on-the-food-chain types like me are implicated in the wholesale wastage of the earth, the structural aspect of the answer to "How are we to live?" must be "More locally." The epitome of the good here would be to grow or make my own basic necessities. Next best would be to

barter for necessities or purchase them from a neighbor whose practices I know and respect. Next to that would be buying from a reputable, socially and ecologically conscientious purveyor; the nadir, a fast-food burger from a global chain.

By paying attention to the small things—the wholesomeness of the daily bread, the source and state of the water, the seamliness of one's shelter, and the well-being of all the human and more-than-human lives around us—we may be led to practice simplicity and harmlessness in tangible ways, to "be the change one wishes in the world," as Gandhi taught. This is not to premise a life on renunciation, abstinence, and deprivation, but to enjoy, as did Epicurus and his followers, the freedom in simplicity.

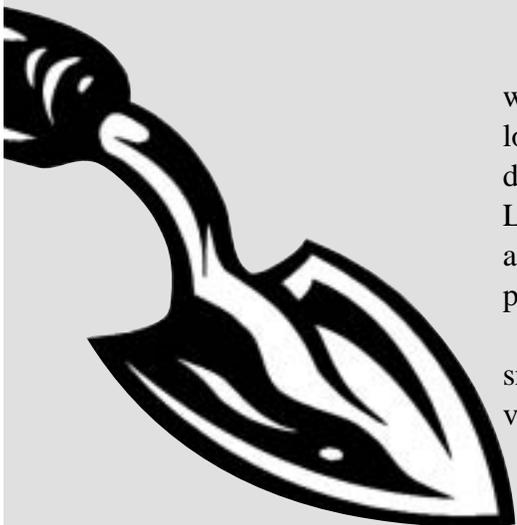
After spending the first half of my adult life trying to do my bit for the macrocosm, I find myself now addressing the microcosm of my own home and the life within. Just for now, I want to sit in the garden, savor my life and my solitude, do my work, and be a good friend. One afternoon as I was sweeping my house, it occurred to me that having a

philosophy really can be a help. As I rhythmically swept the sand and ash and hair and lint and leaf-legged wood bug carcasses into neat little accumulations for the dustpan, it also occurred to me that my willingness to be behind the times has been both a cause and an effect of philosophy. A keystone of mine is that life forms and life places have moral standing on par with that of any human being. The deep questioning fundamental to such a philosophy helps one to distinguish between needs and wants and to minimize those that entail getting and spending.

Having a sweeping philosophy, being able to spend an hour tidying with a broom, a technology that hasn't changed much in several thousand years, and doing so in a handmade home, which I can see no reason to leave until the day I go feet-first, feel like such blessings! And enjoying the least things—a chill glass of water, a moment of play with the cat, the sight of sunlight caught in the frost spangling locust twigs—is a form of prayer.

—Stephanie Mills

Put Your Green Thumb to Work!



Last summer the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, most of whose members are also Land Trust members, gave the Land Trust a lovely selection of native plants in the hopes that we would put in a demonstration garden solely of native plants at the Leopold Center. Located on a busy corner the garden could be both educational and aesthetic, as passers-by could see the beauty of gardening with native plants.

We put in one large plot on part of the lawn on Court Street, a small plot near the Tioga Street entrance, and also a small plot in the very shady back yard.

STAFF PROFILE

Liz Brown

“Longer than you’ve been *alive*,” Liz Brown said with a laugh when I asked her how long she’s been working in public relations and development. While I appreciated the compliment, I am old enough to remember the era. Liz was a major player in organizing the first Earth Day in the Rochester region. Since February, she’s been director of outreach and development for the Western Lakes Chapter of the Land Trust, a new, part-time position.

Back in the early 70s, Liz was a public information person for the newly formed New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. It was in that role, actually, that she became involved with Earth Day. Since then she’s worked with the Rochester city schools, the Catholic Diocese, the University of Rochester, and now as a private consultant who specializes in marketing, public relations, and development.

In some ways her new job working with land preservation issues is a return

to her roots. Still, it takes some adjustment. “It’s a whole new area,” she says. “There’s so much to learn.”

In the short time Liz has been with us she’s already had considerable impact. “I’m impressed with how she’s gotten to work right away on very necessary fund raising,” says Gay Nicholson. Marshalling the expertise and energy of Land Trust volunteers, both longtime and new, Liz has begun laying the groundwork for a fundraising campaign this summer. Indeed, Liz says, the job would be impossible without them. “We have wonderful volunteers in the Western Lakes Chapter who have done really good work over the last ten years. It’s amazing what they’ve accomplished through their knowledge and dedication.”

An anonymous gift has made it possible to support Liz’s position part time for one year. The upcoming campaign will ensure the long term stewardship of the Wesley Hill and Great Hill preserves, as well as provide a solid base for chap-



Photo by Kat Lieberknecht

Liz Brown, our director of outreach and development for the Western Lakes Chapter.

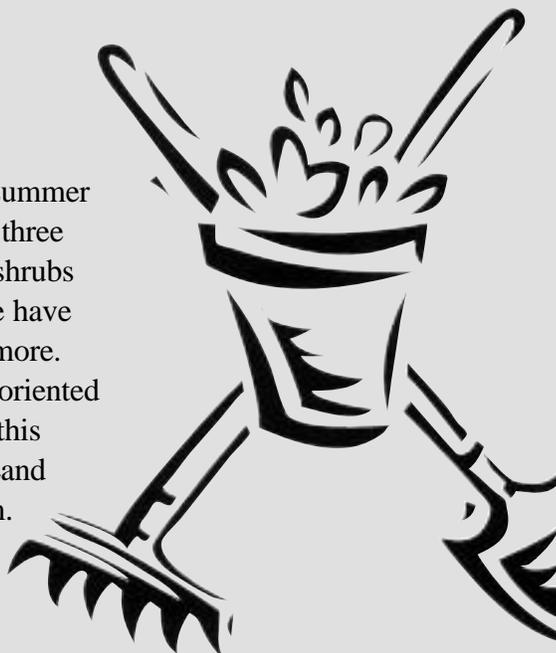
ter operations. “Liz has been providing good, solid leadership,” says Gay. “She knows her business.”

—Pam Goddard



This was done mid-summer and so the first plants were mid-summer and fall plants. This year we are working on spring plants for all three plots and have plans to put native ferns and small native trees or shrubs in the back yard. Of course all of this takes time—and work. We have a small crew of volunteers who like to garden, but we could use more. Volunteers can set their own schedules and their own tasks, once oriented to the garden. Regular watering is the main priority, especially if this proves to be a dry summer. If you’d like to help please call the Land Trust office (607-275-9487) or e-mail me, mjb921@lightlink.com.

—Merry Jo Bauer



BUSINESS PARTNER PROFILE



Photo by Betsy Darlington

Volunteer and member John Smith maneuvers a load of soggy carpet into the dumpster donated by Superior Disposal. Superior Disposal donated ten dumpsters and lots of technical advice to the clean-up of the recent addition to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve.

Superior Disposal

The garbage business. It's a civic necessity, but who among us considers it a civic asset? Yet Superior Disposal Service stands out in our region as a model corporate citizen, leveraging its own resources to do good things for others.

John Gale, Superior Disposal's general manager, uses the company's fleet to help the community. For example, Superior recently painted one of its trucks to become a mobile Public Service Announcement for D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). Just as notable, Superior has become a great friend to the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

The first time that Superior helped us, the scale was modest. The company donated a dumpster to remove trash from the Thurber Nature Preserve. The second time that they got involved, the scale was epic. Gale's crew donated the use and hauling of at least ten dumpsters for 300-plus cubic yards of scrap metal and refuse from the new addition to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve. That's about 35 tons of lawnmowers, car parts, appliances, you name it. To minimize tip fees, Superior guided us in separating landfill waste from items with metal salvage value. Crews took extra care to carefully place and remove the dumpsters to minimize damaging the land with their heavy equipment.

Superior was established in 1980 and has steadily grown to 60 employees. The company provides both trash hauling and recycling services to residential, industrial, and commercial customers. Superior is a division of Casella Waste Systems, a Rutland, Vermont-based regional waste management company that has been in business for over 25 years.

—Rich Sheiman

A CLOSER LOOK

Porcupines

Dogs never learn to leave them alone. They'll chew through boots, saddles, axe handles, and plywood out-houses. They're about the only animals that move so slowly, you could kill one with a club or a stone if you were starving in the woods (and they taste okay, unless they have eaten pine trees). No, they can't throw their quills. And how do they mate?

There's probably more folklore about the North American porcupine, *Erethizon dorsatum*, than about any other rodent. We are fascinated by their combination of cute and dangerous.

Porcupines den in hollow trees; indeed, that's where they spend most of their lives. They prefer conifers (especially hemlock in the east) but appreciate the tasty buds of aspen, willows, and cottonwoods along streams. Strict vegetarians, porcupines eat leaves and twigs and such during the growing season. In the winter, they chew through the outer bark of trees to eat the inner bark. Their range extends through much of Northeastern and North Central North America.

Yes, porcupines are slow moving, and short sighted as well. But they make up for that vulnerability with an arsenal of spines—quills—which are longest and thickest on the tail and back. Normally the quills lie flat and are hidden by long guard hairs, but when the porcupine is aroused, it raises its quills and turns its back end toward the source of danger. Hassle it, and it will lash its tail back and forth, driving quills into any predator foolish enough to get too close. The hollow quills detach easily from the porcupine, but not from the predator. Soft barbs on the business end of the quill swell when the quill gets moist (as it does when embedded in flesh) and serve to pull the quill in deeper. Anyone who has ever had to yank quills out of a dog's muzzle can tell you that the longer you wait the worse it gets. Predators can die of starvation if the quills prevent them from feeding; given enough time, quills can even penetrate internal organs.



We have found evidence of porcupines in two Finger Lakes Land Trust preserves.

Photo Provided by California Department of Fish and Game

Porcupine

Successful predators kill porcupines by attacking the head, where quills are shorter and less dense, or by flipping the porcupine over to attack the belly, which has no quills at all.

Fishers are the major predators of porcupines, along with bobcats, mountain lions, and coyotes. Early European settlers in the northeast decimated the fisher population by trapping them for fur and deforesting the southern part of their habitat. The porcupine population boom that followed, coupled with the fact that porcupines damage and even kill some trees, gave porcupines the reputation of being pests. This reputation is compounded by the fact that porcupines like to chew on tools, clothing, and buildings. Porcupines chew nonfood items because, like many rodents, their front teeth continue to grow throughout life and they need to wear them down constantly. They also chew our stuff because they like the salt on it from our skin. Some speculate that they even like the taste of the glue used to laminate plywood. They are scarce enough in the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier to not be much of a pest

problem, but the Cooperative Extension Wildlife Damage Management Program at Cornell gets several calls a year about porcupines from more northern parts of the state—the most common complaint is about chewing decks that have been treated with a wood preservative containing salt.

We have found evidence of porcupines in two Finger Lakes Land Trust preserves. In the Parker Preserve (town of Bath), Betsy Darlington and others have found a gnawed tree with a large amount of porcupine scat under it. There may be a den tree nearby. At Steege Hill (town of Big Flats), Betsy found a porcupine skeleton and quills. Bob Corneau, the Steege Hill steward, found three den trees, with large, worn holes and huge piles of scat and quills underneath; and he often sees porcupines lounging on high branches on sunny days.

Oh, by the way, they mate in the most common mammal fashion. Luckily, that's not the kind of arousal that makes the quills stick up.

—Gail Blake

FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

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Finger Lakes Land Trust

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SUMMER 2002 CALENDAR:

Please join us for our Summer Talks & Treks—see insert.

July 20, Sat., 4 PM: TIPTOE WITH TADPOLES at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby. Find out how to identify tadpoles and other pond life, with Jackie Grant. If possible, bring a small aquarium net or sieve, and wear wet-able footwear. From Ithaca, go south on route 13, then south on route 34/96. Park in parking lot on left, at top of second hill beyond Sylvan lane and W. Danby Fire Station, across from house #2500.

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.