



THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 16, No. 3

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Summer 2004

New Easements Add to Protected Lands

What do a 40-mile view up Cayuga Lake and a 180-acre vision quest retreat have in common? They are both new additions to the Land Trust's list of protected sites.

The first parcel offers about the longest view up the lake that you can enjoy with your feet on the ground. Bob McGuire and Judy Keil own 95 acres atop Snyder Hill, just a few miles east of Ithaca. The view is so splendid that on a clear day you could conjure a glacier receding north to the Canadian border.

This land abuts a Tompkins County-designated Unique Natural Area and is home to a great diversity of birds that Bob and Judy work hard to attract and accommodate. A large portion of their property is mowed every 3 years, creating an ideal nesting environment for eastern meadowlarks, bobolinks, and the occasional Henslow's sparrow.

I asked Bob and Judy what

motivated them to establish a conservation easement on their land. The most compelling reason, they responded, was the threat of development to the land. Such a large, gently sloping tract of land, so close to Ithaca, with its epic view of Cayuga Lake, would otherwise almost certainly be covered with houses eventually. They also view the easement as a personal statement. "It will take decades to unravel the damage that has been inflicted on the environment. This easement is a way for Judy and me to establish something positive and permanent as a counterbalance."

The second easement is about 20 miles south of Cayuga Lake: in Spencer, a Tioga County township. This sprawling mix of wetland, ravine, forest and meadow straddles the South Branch of Catatonk Creek, which empties into the Susquehanna and thus the Chesapeake Bay.

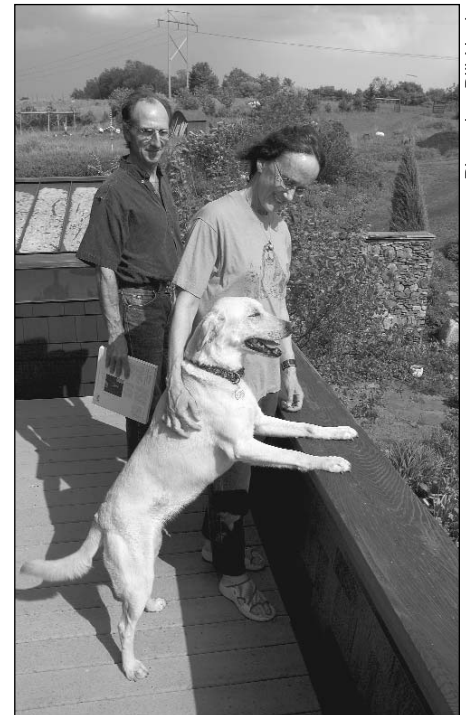


Photo by: Bill Hecht

Easement donors Bob McGuire and Judy Keil with their dog, Tella

Paul and Diane Gibbons purchased this 180-acre property in 1986 to establish Rune Hill Retreat Center, a place for people to connect with the earth and more deeply experience their spirituality. Both Paul and Diane are ordained ministers who apply their approach to spiritual guidance by integrating the land itself into their programs. From the day they purchased the land, the Gibbons knew that they wanted to protect it in perpetuity. That objective remained on the backburner until they decided to move on to New Hampshire. The solution: a Land Trust conservation easement, which reinforces and augments a preexisting development easement on a portion of the property through the Federal Wetland



Photo by: Betsy Darlington

Paul Gibbons at the Rune Hill Retreat Center

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PERSPECTIVES

Where, exactly, does this property line run? When is the best time to monitor that conservation

easement? Should the hiking trail follow this old logging road, or meander down along the creek? What's the best way to deal with the garlic mustard that's taking over the woods?

These questions, and many more, arise each spring as we—the staff and volunteers of the Land Trust—embrace the task of caring for our lands and natural resources. And while our attention is frequently focused on the dramatic successes of the lands we save, it is the work of our land stewards that ensures that this land is truly conserved.

We now hold 24 nature preserves and 44 conservation easements. These

numbers are growing. Our stewardship program seeks to ensure the ecological health of these sites and provide for public access even while we fulfill our legal responsibilities as a landowner or easement holder.

As our holdings continue to grow, we will naturally be required to devote more resources to stewardship. This trend is amplified by two trends. As the rural lands abutting our preserves are developed, our preserves need more care and attention. And with each passing year, invasive, non-native plants push harder on our native plants and animals.

How should we deal with all these issues? We're making improvements—right now—to preserves near Elmira, Ithaca, and Skaneateles. We'll be strengthening our stewardship program this coming year, devoting more volunteer and staff time to the task and

providing greater support to our volunteer land stewards. And we're looking at the latest science on managing invasive species. We'll report on our progress on all these fronts in upcoming issues of *The Land Steward*.

As you might imagine, we can never have too many good stewards. If you'd like to help, please call the Ithaca office to find out how you can get involved as a volunteer. And remember that contributions to our stewardship fund help ensure that our financial resources continue to grow along with our responsibilities.

—Andrew E. Zepp
Executive Director

Grants Fuel Watershed Protection Efforts

Recent grants from the Land Trust Alliance and Nucor Steel Auburn will support the Land Trust's *Cayuga Watershed Critical Areas Project*, an effort to identify and protect beautiful, ecologically important lands within this 500,000-acre watershed. This project is already well underway. By the time it's complete, we'll have a comprehensive land-protection plan for this area.

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) grant was made through its New York State Conservation Partnership Program, a joint effort of the state and LTA. "This grant program provides a wonderful opportunity for the state to empower land trusts to work with landowners and local communities to implement the New York State Open Space Plan," says Ezra Milchman, director of LTA's Northeast Program.

Nucor Steel Auburn is the largest recycler in New York State. All of their steel is made from recycled scrap metal. In fact, they recycle 2,500 tires each day for their carbon content, used in the steel-making process. Steel and energy within the tires are also used. "We're pleased to support the work the Land Trust is doing to support conservation in the community," says Nucor environmental manager Steve Greene.

"These two grants will allow us to educate local communities about important resources within the watershed as well as options for conserving them," says Executive Director Andy Zepp. "We're very grateful for their support."

New Easements Add to Protected Lands

continued from cover

Reserve Program.

Fittingly, the new owners of the property, Lauren Chambliss and Tim Roach, have at least one common denominator with the Gibbons: they both integrate the land into their programs. Lauren is a nationally renowned leader of vision quests. Over the course of 7 to 10 days, she assists people in beginning a new dialogue with Mother Nature. "It's only over the past 100 years that people have forgotten how to be in communication with nature. It's in our genes," says Lauren. She adds that her approach is decidedly non-denominational, noting that every great spiritual leader, from Moses, to Jesus, to Mohammed, to Ghandi, has communed with nature to channel their teachings. The new Rune Hill will invite people from all over the East Coast to spend time alone in nature to contemplate life's perplexing questions. In addition, Tim will run summer camps for disadvantaged kids where the power of the land will be a focal point of the experience. Lauren and Tim are excited about the Land Trust's involvement at Rune Hill, and they encourage visitors. For more information, call 607-589-6392.

—Rich Sheiman

PRESERVE PROFILE

A Walk Through Nundawao: The Great Hill Preserve

Seneca lore tells of a hilltop village terrorized by a monstrous serpent that coiled itself around the village walls and devoured the people as they fled the front gate. All perished except a young warrior and his sister, who remained inside the village. In accordance with a dream he had, the boy adorned his arrows with his sister's hair and shot them into the serpent's heart. Mortally wounded, the serpent rolled down the hill, vomiting the heads of those it had eaten. At the bottom of the hill lay a great lake upon which the serpent thrashed in agony before finally sinking into the depths.

The lake is Canandaigua, and the fort was atop Great Hill, or Nundawao, the birthplace of the Senecas.

The Land Trust has had a hand recently in protecting Nundawao, and thus a portion of the Canandaigua Lake watershed, from development or logging. Located at the southeast end of Canandaigua Lake, the Land Trust's Great Hill Nature Preserve consists of 226 forested acres—a 221-acre gift in 2001 from Thomas and Sandra Hansen (including 400 feet of Canandaigua Lake shore), with an additional 5-acre inholding to the north acquired from James and Ellen Fralick.

In all, the preserve extends more than 1 1/2 miles across the rugged slope of Great Hill, with occasional views west over the end of the lake. Easiest access to the preserve's unbroken expanse of mature woods is along a level road bed traversing the length of

the preserved lands.

According to Finger Lakes Community College naturalist Bruce Gilman, this shelf-like path was likely an ancient beach formed at the end of the last ice age, some 10,000 years ago, when Canandaigua Lake was much

for those who wish to venture off the beaten path. Jim Kersting, chair of the Land Trust's Western Lakes Chapter and acting steward of the preserve, has kept these trails marked and clear. The arduous climb to the top of the preserve pays off in a panoramic view of the lake

below and the hills rolling away to the west.

Heavily logged for its sturdy hardwoods in the 19th century, the forest has rebounded nicely, even in poor soil conditions. Tall oaks, hickories, maple and ash provide a high canopy for birds of many species, keeping the forest floor cool and moist for an impressive variety of wildlife, including coyotes, deer, rabbits and foxes.

Winter animal tracking may be especially reward-

ing: signs of deer and wild turkey scraping away the deep snow cover to get at acorns and hickory nuts overlooked in fall; a profusion of mouse tracks with accompanying signs of an interested fox; even an otter slide down a snow bank.

Although there are indications everywhere of old logging operations, and some more recent signs of planned development, it is easy to imagine oneself in the same magnificent forest of Nundawao once roamed by the early Senecas as they went about their daily lives. "I think an awareness of the area's history while hiking along heightens the spiritual sense of the walk," says Jim Kersting. "Hikers are likely to have only solitude as a companion."



Photo by: Bill Davis

Great Hill presiding over the surrounding meadows.

larger and deeper, filled with newly melted glacial water. The present lake level is some 500 feet below and can be seen through the trees in winter.

More evidence of glacial action can be seen in the presence of boulders scattered here and there across the slope. Different in composition from the local bedrock, these so-called "glacial erratics" were dragged from the north by the advancing glacier and left to rest in foreign territory, as it were, when the ice melted. Or are these the petrified heads of those hapless Seneca warriors eaten by the serpent?

The steepness of the slope both down to the lake and up to the hill's crest makes off-road walking or snowshoeing difficult but not impossible. Donor Jim Fralick thoughtfully created several trails

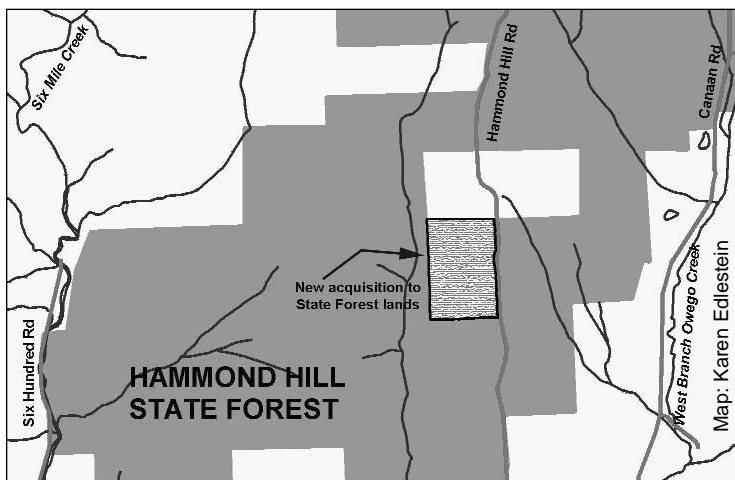
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State Adds to Forest Holdings Near Ithaca

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) recently added a key parcel to Hammond Hill State Forest, located just outside of Ithaca. Though relatively small, the 30-acre tract was surrounded by existing state land. State officials acquired it after the Land Trust let them know that it was on the market. Funds from the state's Environmental Protection Fund were used for the purchase.

"The acquisition reduces the state's administrative costs while also allowing the department to pursue ecosystem management goals by ensuring unfragmented forest," says Dave Forness, NYSDEC supervising forester. Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp adds, "The fact that this parcel had road frontage put it at risk for development as a rural home site."

To conserve other parcels like this, the Land Trust is working with state officials to reach out to landowners who might be interested in selling their land or conveying a conservation easement.



Internship Profiles Community-Based Land Conservation

In recent years, a number of New York towns and villages have purchased parkland and conservation easements, often committing substantial funds to do so. Our conversations with municipal officials around the region show that many more would like to learn how to create programs that will help them do the same. Unfortunately, information on these programs is not always easy to come by.



Photo by: Betsy Darlington

Land Trust Intern John Commiskey

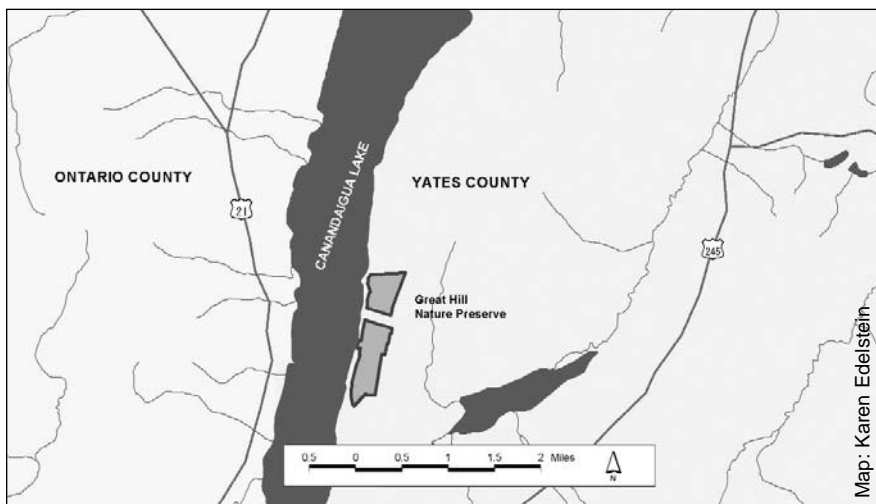
We've recently taken the first step in providing it. Our intern, Vermont Law School graduate student John Commiskey, interviewed local officials and activists involved with successful funding initiatives in the towns of Clarence and Pittsford, as well as the city of Saratoga Springs. The result: a series of three fact sheets, each highlighting different aspects of these programs and how they've been successful.

Creating an essential product wasn't the only good that came of this, of course. "I learned a tremendous amount—not just about local land conservation programs, but also the broader issues that are prominent in the field," says Commiskey. He adds that the internship confirmed that land conservation is what he intends to pursue as a career.

The three fact sheets are available on the Land Trust's web site at www.flit.org.

A Walk Through Nundawao: The Great Hill Preserve

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Preserving just this sense of peaceful connectedness with the ancient land was a high priority in the Land Trust's desire to establish its presence at the south end of Canandaigua Lake.

Hi-Tor Wildlife Management Area protects other forested land nearby, on the other side of Great Hill and on Parish Hill to the south. In addition to Hi-Tor, the Land Trust can do much to protect the fragile watershed by drawing even more Canandaigua Lake landowners into conservation partnerships so that the spirit of Nundawao endures and flourishes.

—Eben McLane

Directions to Nundawao are on page 5

LEGISLATIVE NEWS — SUMMER 2004

IN ALBANY

For months we've been telling you that the U.S. Congress is contemplating a tax incentive or reward for people who donate land or conservation easements to a land trust or other qualified organization. The proposal has gone nowhere. But now in Albany two bills have been proposed that, if passed, would give tax credits to New York landowners based on the value of the conservation easement donation. These are the New York State Conservation Easement Tax Credit for Land Conservation (A.7904/S.3520) and the New York State Conservation Donor Tax Credit Bill (A.4208/S.1836).

The very good news is that neither bill would cause a revenue loss to the local municipality or school district. Landowners would continue to pay all local property taxes while receiving credit on their state income tax return. The Conservation Easement Tax Credit, similarly to the State's School Tax Relief (STAR) and Farmer's School Tax Credit, recognizes the public benefits provided by privately owned land that is permanently protected by a conservation easement. The annual state income tax credit would be equal to 25 percent of the combined town, county, and school taxes paid on the land during the previous tax year. It is capped at \$5,000 per year.

The Conservation Donor Tax Credit would benefit landowners who donate land or conservation easements on their property. They would be eligible for a one-time state income tax credit, valued at 50 percent of the fair market value of the gift, up to a maximum of \$250,000; the credit may be carried forward up to ten years.

Both bills are currently being reviewed by committees in the Assembly and the Senate. If you think these two bills are worth supporting, contact your state senator and assemblyperson.

A third bill that would help local communities save open space is the "Home Rule Community Preservation Act". This bill, a type of "enabling" legislation, would give the authority to local governments across New York to enact a 2% real estate transfer fee, "dedicated" to, or for the purpose of, establishing local funds for farmland and open space conservation. No town would be required to do this, but instead, would be an option they could use. This has been done successfully in 5 towns in Suffolk County. The bill has sponsors in both the Senate (Senator Marcellino) and the Assembly (Assemblyman DiNapoli). At present, the bill is still in committee in both chambers.

IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Two extremely important environmental issues are on the docket. The current administration is trying to alter the Clean Air Act,

which among other things, currently compels polluters who emit pollutants to install cleaning and pollution-reducing mechanisms when they renovate or build new facilities.

Actually, this was a compromise when the original Clean Air Act was passed. Many factories and power plants DID spend the money and install such equipment.

But in order to get the bill passed, the compromise allowed others to WAIT and only upgrade their emission controls when they upgraded their plants. Now, years later, one of the proposed changes would continue to exempt power plants and factories from doing so. So far there have been court challenges which at least have delayed any further action. Mercury pollution from power plants rains down on our rivers and lakes, accumulating in the food chain. Mercury is a dangerous element and ingestion of it (via eating contaminated fish) can result in terrible birth defects in humans. 38 lakes in New York State have public health advisories against fish consumption due to mercury pollution, as do 12 million acres of lakes and 400,000 miles of rivers across the United States.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed a new rule that would delay significant mercury cleanup until 2018, and even then would only require power plants to reduce their mercury emissions by a fraction of what the present Clean Air Act would require in just a few years. In addition, the EPA also plans to allow unregulated "pollution trading," another compromise practice which some folks think is just fine, but which in this case would delay expected emission reductions for many years beyond 2018. Current law does not allow pollution credit trading for mercury.

The other important issue is, again, the passage of an "energy bill," S.2095. The bill put forth in the Senate this year is the same as last year's, which did not achieve passage. The bill does not address fuel efficiency standards, does not support renewable energy research and implementation, promotes oil and gas drilling on public lands, includes the same expensive subsidies to energy producers and includes the words "jobs creation" although it is not exactly clear just how this ties in. Some Senators have offered bills that address specific energy issues: the Northeast electricity grid, for example, and global warming due to certain types of pollution. Senators McCain and Lieberman introduced a bi-partisan bill on Climate Control, but it was defeated in the Senate. The Administration does not want energy legislation to be done piecemeal, even though at least some agreement could be reached on some of these issues. The bill will not go to the House until the Senate acts on it. Your two Senators need to hear from you.

— Merry Jo Bauer

Directions to Nundawao:

From Rte. 5&20, east of Canandaigua Lake, turn left on Rte. 364 South. Continue on Rte. 364 to Middlesex N.Y. At the town center of Middlesex, turn right on Rte. 245 South. Continue 4.8 miles and turn right onto Sunnyside Rd. Proceed over the West River for 0.4

miles and bear left at fork in the road. Go 0.4 miles to the next fork and bear right onto South Hill Rd. Go 0.7 miles up the hill to the entrance to the Great Hill Preserve, on left side of road.

From Naples, go north on Rte. 21 to Rte. 245 North which is opposite Bob and Ruth's Restaurant. Turn Right on Rte. 245 North and go 4.0 miles and turn left onto Sunnyside Road. Go over the West River for 0.4 miles and proceed as above.

Scenes' *from our Nature Preserves...*

Photo by: Joanna Garrard



Donors and local officials join Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp for the ribbon cutting ceremony at Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve.

Photo by: Joanna Garrard



Volunteer Mary Woodsen and friends, enjoying the Cornell Raptor Program's presentation at Biodiversity Field Days.

Photo by: Joanna Garrard



Unveiling the new interpretive kiosk at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve.

Photo by: Bill Davis



Visitors enjoying the scenic vista from Great Hill during the recent dedication

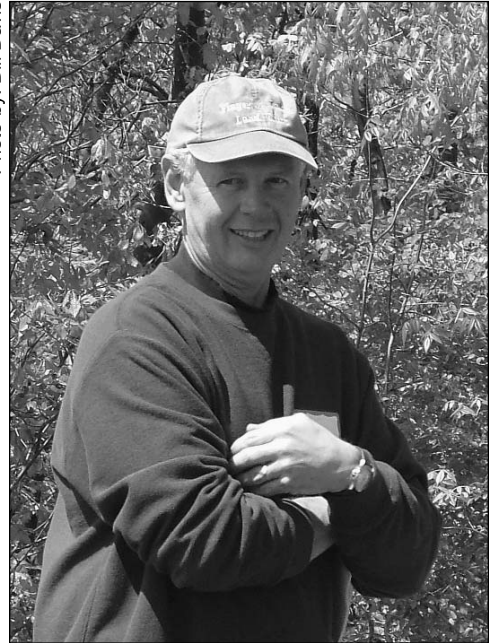
Celebrating nature and community across the Finger Lakes, the Land Trust commemorates its Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby and Nundawao: The Great Hill Preserve, overlooking Canandaigua Lake.

Photo by: Bill Davis



Nundawao: Great Hill Preserve dedication ceremony on Canandaigua Lake

Photo by: Bill Davis



Board Member Jim Kersting at the Great Hill Dedication

Photo by: Joanna Garrard



Biodiversity Field Days events included a poster contest at Spencer-Van Etten and Newfield Elementary Schools using the theme, "What does biodiversity mean to me?" Pictured, is Diane Campbell (left) and her Spencer-Van Etten 4th graders with Land Trust Outreach and Membership Coordinator, Emily Eisman (right).

Photo by: Joanna Garrard



In appreciation for participating, both classrooms received stereomicroscopes donated by Cornell Professors Tom Eisner and Jerry Meinwald. Pictured above, are students from Spencer-Van Etten, about to explore a new world.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR — NICK GAVRIELIDES

His silvering hair drawn back in a short pony tail, Nick Gavrielides appeared both pleased and abashed as he came forward at the Land Trust's Annual Celebration to receive the 2004 Volunteer of the Year Award.

A man of many talents and facets, Nick has traveled widely in the world, from his youth in Palestine to his work as an anthropologist in Greece and elsewhere, but having retired, he is now content—paraphrasing Thoreau—to travel a good deal in the McIlroy Preserve.

In other words, Nick does a lot of trail maintenance. But as the tract's co-steward, his travels may call for far more. The recently acquired preserve continues to give up its secret troves of trash, and Nick persuaded Betsy Darlington that a newly discovered old Oldsmobile and part of a truck should not be left to nature's slow processes. He contacted a welder to dismember the rusting hulks, and together with Land Trust volunteer John Smith and neighbor Barry Parker, loaded the chunks of auto corpse into Nick's and John's trucks and hauled them away.

Nick's physical strength, his skills in carpentry, and—as an erstwhile teacher—his capacity for marshalling and animating young people were instrumental in readying the preserve for its dedication last fall. He took charge of building boardwalks, viewing platforms, and the entry kiosk. He paved the ground around the kiosk with small flagstones, arranged for the construction of

the parking lot, and had large rocks brought in from a nearby quarry both to block off an area along Lake Como Road to discourage dumpers and to mark the start of the trails.

Betsy reports an ongoing emergence of Herculean tasks that Nick takes on with a will and a way: "It's hard to think of them all. He oversaw a really big job of dismantling some old rabbit cages that were entangled in the brush. One Sunday, three of us cleaned up junk from behind the houses along the road—and Nick and another man spent most of their time moving maybe thirty tires to a pile for collection.

"What strikes me most about Nick," says Betsy, "is his versatility and his good sense in dealing with people." He has a genius for infecting others with his passion for the preserve, recruiting neighbors, students, and others to volunteer. "When we took on this project, I couldn't see how we'd ever get it done. Nick reassured me and took a lot of the load off my shoulders."

The work isn't done yet, but Nick appears to thrive on it. In the process, the McIlroy Preserve, whose value lies in a diversity of habitats including an extraordinary collection of rich shrub fens that grade into peat swamp and boreal swamp forest, is being not only preserved but made accessible to those who cherish the natural landscape. With volunteers like Nick Gavrielides, the work of the Land Trust will continue to flourish, and then some.

— Caissa Willmer



Nick Gavrielides (left) receiving his award from Land Trust President, John Rogers and Director of Land Protection, Betsy Darlington

Photo by: Bill Hecht

BUSINESS PARTNER PROFILE — TRUE, WALSH & MILLER

There's a remarkable amount of work that goes on behind the scenes whenever the Land Trust makes a commitment to protect land. In some cases, there are daunting financial, environmental and legal hurdles to overcome, and an audible sigh of relief can be heard at the closing when the deal is actually finalized. For many of our recent successes, the Land Trust has been very fortunate to have first class legal representation through True, Walsh & Miller, L.L.P.

True, Walsh & Miller's involvement with the Land Trust began in 1995 when Jim Miller provided pro bono legal services in support of the Goetchius Preserve. Since that time, Elena Salerno Flash, Jim Miller, George Pfann and David Tyler have all participated in Land Trust acquisitions, often providing reduced rate or free legal services for many of our recent acqui-

sitions and easements. Most recently, Joanna Garrard has worked pro bono on six additions to the Summerhill Fen Complex and McIlroy Bird Sanctuary and on one addition to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve.

The firm has also helped the Land Trust with other legal needs, including the development of its personnel policy, planned giving options, and general corporate work. "True, Walsh & Miller's dedication to local organizations, including the Land Trust," says associate Joanna Garrard, "is a reflection of the community-oriented nature of the attorneys working here." The firm currently has ten partners and four associates, practicing in many areas, including real estate, trusts and estates, corporate, immigration, health care, employment and labor law, and litigation.

— Rich Sheiman

CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Prospecting for Preservation

Thomas and Maria Eisner—our 2004 Conservationists of the Year—have added a vital new dimension to the work of the Land Trust: prospecting for nature's chemicals. The couple has a passion for insect life, the focus of their mutual research at Cornell University and one focus of their mutual concern to conserve the landscapes in which insects, as well as every other life form, thrive.

The Eisners came to the Land Trust in 1995, Betsy Darlington recalls, “proposing that we establish a preserve for research in chemical ecology.” (Chemical ecology looks at the chemical interactions of organisms in nature.) They were looking for as naturally diverse a place as could be found near the university. The Land Trust's board found it a terrific idea, and volunteers started searching right away.

When they came across what is now the “Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve,” Land Trust volunteers took the Eisners to see it. “I will never forget our first walk there,” recalls Betsy. “Tom came across an uncommon millipede found only in fairly undisturbed forest. He was delighted. A little later, he found *another*. Despite the preserve's general diversity, I think those little leggy creatures clinched it for him. The goldenrod fields intrigued him, too. He and Maria detected so many interesting insects feeding there—eating the leaves or nectar or pollen, or eating each other! A walk with the Eisners when the goldenrod is in bloom goes on at about a



Tom and Maria Eisner

yard an hour—every inch of the way, they have something fascinating to point out.”

Once the Eisners agreed that the parcel of land was just what they had been hoping for, they actively recruited donors to help purchase it. Thomas Eisner's entire adult life has been dedicated to conservation and finding ways to protect the planet. He was instrumental with others in bringing about the preservation of Holywood lignum-vitae, prized for its hard wood and once common on the lower Florida Keys and Key West, but now found almost

exclusively at Lignum-vitae Key State Botanical Site on Islamorada. He was also instrumental in acquiring the funds that allowed The Nature Conservancy to buy 90,000 acres of vital habitat in Texas known as the Big Thicket.

He has been awarded the country's highest scientific order—the National Medal of Science—for his “seminal contribution in the field of insect behavior and chemical ecology and for his international efforts on biodiversity.” He has also been cited for his activities on behalf of human rights.

His concept of chemical prospecting involves the conviction that “the revenues derived from the exploration of nature have to be shared worldwide.” He has applied this principle in places such as Costa Rica, where he has persuaded pharmaceutical companies to donate portions of the profits derived from the forests there to conservation of those habitats.

The Eisners introduced that idea locally, resulting in a contract for fungal research between the Land Trust, Schering-Plough, and Cornell. The company tendered an initial flat payment, and if it ever develops a drug from the studies done at the Biodiversity Preserve, the Land Trust will get a share of the royalties.

The Eisners' activism on behalf of conservation extends exceedingly far and, as the Land Trust's 2004 Conservationists of the Year, they bring an extra depth and breadth to our work.

—Caissa Willmer

Betsy Darlington Receives Conservation Award

Betsy Darlington, the organization's Director of Land Protection, was recently honored with the first Richard B. Fischer Environmental Conservation Award. Presented by the Town of Ithaca for her dedication to land conservation and for working to share her vision and experience with

young people, the award is named for a retired Cornell University Professor – and Betsy's former teacher! – who specialized in environmental education.

Congratulations, Betsy!

BOARD UPDATE

Board members Thomas Bjorkman, Michael Culotta, Betsy Darlington and Ted Hullar, have completed their three-year terms and are stepping down from their respective positions on the Board of Directors. We are delighted to report that the Land Trust will continue to receive Ted's expert guidance in his new capacity as an Advisory Council member. Thomas, Michael and Betsy will also remain active: Thomas on the Land Committee, Michael on the Development Committee and Betsy as the Director of Land Protection.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome incoming Board members Bob Growe, Albert Joerger, Trish Ottley and Don Rakow. Mr. Growe, an owner of a computer software consulting business in Mendon, Monroe County, has been an active volunteer with the Western Lakes Chapter for many years. Mr. Joerger was formerly the Assistant State Director of the New Jersey office of The Nature Conservancy, and is currently Executive Director of the Sarasota Conservation Foundation in Sarasota, Florida where he resides with his family,

in addition to their home in Hector, New York. Ms. Ottley is a Cayuga County staff planner and is chair of the Union Springs Planning Board. In addition, Ms. Ottley serves on the New York State Region 7 Open Space Committee, the Cayuga County Tourism Board, and Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway. Mr. Rakow is an Associate Professor of Horticulture at Cornell University and the Elizabeth Newman Wilds Director of the Cornell Plantations.

Welcome!!

Wish List

Estwing hammers—
for example, 16-oz. rip
and 22-oz. rip

...

"Cat's-claws"

(e.g. "Roughneck Gorilla bar—
Junior", Vaughan "Superbar,"
Stanley "Wonder bar")

...

Smaller size work gloves—
to fit young teens and others
with small hands

*We are deeply
grateful for donations
in memory of:*

Avery J. Beer
from

Ray and Martha Bright
Lawrence and G. Yvonne Chavez
Sarah and Ralph Miozzi

...

Arthur Hamlin
from

Hiram Tindall
...

Susan Marash
from

Kenn Marash
...

Lee A. Melen
from

Nava and Stanley Scharf

*Our sincere thanks
for gifts in honor of:*

Jim Kersting and Jim Fralick
from

Peggy and Peter Kane
...

Jennifer Jab's birthday
from

Elizabeth Confrey
...

Miriam Rothenberg's Bat Mitzvah
from

Rita and Joe Calvo
...

Betsy Darlington's birthday
from

Jean Darlington
Lois Darlington
Dick Darlington

Thank You!

Thank you to all our hardworking volunteers—at our nature preserves and conservation easement properties, on committees, in our Ithaca and Canandaigua offices, help with our talks and walks and other public events, and for many hours of legal services! It is you who make the Land Trust what it is, and ensure that our lands really are protected forever.

A special thanks to Jack Simrell and his S&S Tree Service for donating huge loads of woodchips for our trails!

A CLOSER LOOK

Enigma of the Gray Treefrog

A SMALL UNFORMED MOON BROKE THROUGH THE THIN VEIL OF CLOUDS. IT WAS MAY 1, THE DAY OF MAY-POLE DANCES. NOW, NOT YET MIDNIGHT, I CROUCHED LOW BY THE POND NEAR MY HOUSE, A METAL FLASHLIGHT IN MY HAND. SIGNS OF SPRING HAD REVEALED THEMSELVES IN APRIL. THE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS, THE GEESE, THE CACOPHONY OF TOADS AND FROGS, STEADY REMINDERS OF LIFE BUILDING TOWARDS SUMMER'S CRESCENDO.

On this night, I hoped to demystify an enigma and see a gray treefrog for the first time. I could imagine a small frog clinging to bark by the disks of skin that pad its feet. But it was hard to believe such a creature lived here, near me.

I was told the gray treefrog would come to the pond to mate. I would recognize it by bright yellow or orange coloring beneath its rear legs and underside. When attacked it supposedly shoots its back legs out and exposes this striking patch of skin: a flash mark, it's called.

Scientists explain the mark in two ways. Some think the bright color distracts a predator. When the frog jumps, the attacker focuses on the rich flash. But when the frog lands and its legs fold under, the unusual hue is hidden. The predator, seduced by a treasure, searches in vain for a glimpse of yellow or orange among the grass.

Others think that the bright color serves as a warning, a reminder of defensive chemical secretions in the frog's skin that make it a bitter meal.

Masters of cryogenics, the gray treefrog awakens from winter's deep freeze in early May. Its veins fill in the fall with high concentrations of glucose. The sugar keeps ice crystals from forming as the frog's entire body freezes among the leaf litter over winter. The glucose keeps its cells from exploding.

I was told to listen for the gray treefrog's short echoing trill, but the sounds that rose and fell with the rhythms of breaths were the high-fluting peeps of spring peepers and the long rattle of the American toads that clung to each other in desperate, passionate embraces along the shallows.

The treefrog's quick trill was nowhere to be heard. I could only hope to glimpse the gray treefrog's distant cousin, the spring peeper. The peeper is a similar type of frog with rounded toe pads that

pulled aside green and brown grass to find a small frog. It seemed oblivious to my flashlight's beam. Translucent like a fingertip in the light and about that size, a spring peeper sat on the moist bank. Its eyes were black in the light, its body infant-like, moist and glistening, brown and delicate with a memory of yellow. From the eyes its nose was triangular. I watched it turn its head to one side. I felt myself a giant living on a different scale of time and space.

As I walked back to my house, my step bounced with a living hope to see a gray treefrog before spring hugged close



Photo by: Jacqueline Grant©

The Gray Treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*)

help it climb. But scientifically it's not in the same family as the gray treefrog. I tried to follow the peeper's cries. The sharp sounds bounced off the landscape, confusing me. I crept up to the shore, stopping often for the peeps to ring the night; with each call I moved closer.

Squatting over the piercing sound, I

to summer. My heart was filled by this small communion with the spring peeper. I had connected a familiar call to its caller. I had brought myself nearer to nature, both within me and around me.

— Krishna Ramanujan

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SUMMER 2004 CALENDAR

Summer 2004 Talks and Treks Series

(please see the enclosed insert for details)

- **Saturday, July 10 • 9am**
Hi Tor Paddle Adventure on Canandaigua Lake's West River
- **Saturday, July 17 • 10 am**
The Movers and Shakers: Exploring the geology of Lick Brook
- **Saturday, July 17 • 10 am**
Conservation Easement Walk above Canadice Lake
- **Saturday, July 31 • 11 am**
From Vines to Wine at Lamoreaux Landing Wine Cellars on Seneca Lake
- **Sunday, August 8 • 1 pm**
Forest Ecology Walk at the Stevenson Forest Preserve in Enfield
- **Friday, August 27 • 7 pm**
Riveting Rattlers: Biology of the Endangered Timber Rattlesnake
- **Saturday, August 28 • 10 am**
Riveting Rattlers Field Trip: Timber Rattlesnakes in their Habitat
- **Saturday, August 28 • 8 pm**
WHOOO HOOO Goes There? At the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve

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
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