



THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 17, No. 3

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Summer 2005

Conservation Easement Secures Land Along Finger Lakes Trail

High in the hills west of Watkins Glen, and nearly surrounded by Sugar Hill State Forest, lies the Land Trust's newest conservation easement property — its first in Schuyler County. The Finger Lakes Trail/North Country Scenic Trail traverses the southwestern part of the property, passing through majestic forest land. Stephen and Kathryn Trechter donated the easement this spring to permanently protect the land they have treasured for over 20 years. The 57-acre tract encompasses a diversity of habitats, ranging from old farm fields, shrub land, young forest, and wetlands to magnificent, mature woods.

Kathy and Steve run Sugarhill Farm on the property, an organic farm with maple syrup, homemade soap, and other products supplementing the herbs which are their specialty. (Look for their stalls at farmers' markets around the region.) Their mid-nineteenth-century house, sheds and herb garden are on a two-acre lot excluded from the easement. The conservation easement permits one occasional-use cabin and agricultural structures, but no other buildings.

The land, which straddles County Road 21 in the Town of Orange, slopes gently uphill from east to west. The mature forest at the western end of the property comes as something of a surprise. Here, there is very little evidence of human use or disturbance. The previous owners mistakenly believed that this section of the property was part of the state forest. Hence, it



BETSY DARLINGTON

Kathy and Steve Trechter with "Sebastian"

remained unlogged. The straight, mature hemlock, white pine, oaks, basswood, maples, yellow birch, and even cucumber magnolia that tower overhead, and the pits and mounds of the forest floor, give an almost primeval feel to the forest — a feeling

continued on page 5

Land Trust Helps Protect Areas Identified as Vital for Birds

The Finger Lakes Land Trust has a long tradition of working with other conservation-minded groups to identify and protect lands for the benefit of wildlife. One such group is Audubon New York, the state program of the National Audubon Society, which uses science to identify lands that offer the right type of natural landscape for birds that either live or migrate through the area. Once determined, these places are classified as Important Bird Areas (IBA). The Land Trust proudly coordinates its conservation efforts with Audubon's goal of preserving these lands from further development.

On May 16th, Audubon New York released its second edition of *Important Bird Areas of New York*, which has an updated list of 136 such areas in the state.



LANC ELLIOTT

The rare Cerulean Warbler nests within the mature forests of the Land Trust's High Vista and Salmon Creek Nature Preserves

Two new IBAs are on lands that include or touch on Land Trust preserves and easements. One includes 9500 acres of forest at the southern end of Skaneateles Lake, and the other lies within the greater Summerhill area, covering 29,000 acres in the southern Cayuga county towns of Summerhill, Locke and Moravia.

The southern Skaneateles Lake forest includes the Land Trust's High Vista Preserve and the Bear Swamp State Forest, where the Land Trust hopes to secure protection of adjacent private lands. The new IBA contains part of the lake itself, steep valley walls, and flat top ridges. Where people had once cleared the area for farms, now pine, spruce, hemlock and hardwood forests reign. The area has

continued on page 4

PERSPECTIVES



“Working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region.”

As you will read in this issue of *The Land*

Steward, pursuing the mission of the Land Trust can sometimes be even more challenging after the land has been secured from future development.

How can this be? While the direct loss of habitat to development continues to be a grave threat to our remaining natural areas, isolated natural habitats are also increasingly affected by record-high deer populations and the proliferation of non-native, invasive plants. Together, these trends are resulting in the elimination of native wildflower species from our forests and a reduction in available habitat for some songbirds.

On page 10 in this issue of *The Land Steward*, the Land Trust’s founding president Carl Leopold describes his own

experience assessing the impact of increasing white-tailed deer populations and the spread of invasive plants, over the course of 20 years in his Tompkins County woodlot.

Carl’s observations are echoed by a growing number of studies that document how these two trends are re-shaping our eastern forests. To some extent, residential sprawl feeds this process by creating optimal habitat for white-tailed deer while further fragmenting native habitats, making them more susceptible to invasion by non-native species.

Clearly, there are no simple answers to the challenges posed here. The only certainty is that inaction will lead to further degradation of our natural habitats. Reasonable management solutions will likely be found only when those with differing viewpoints are brought to the table to forge a common purpose in sustaining the health of our native plants and animals.

The Land Trust is committed to working with all stakeholders to determine how we can best ensure the natural integrity of our region. We certainly don’t have all the answers, but we’re committed to sound stewardship of our natural resources. Stewardship is the key. We’re already reaching out to partners such as the National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy and Cornell Plantations to learn more about their land management programs. Please stay tuned to future issues of *The Land Steward*.

In the meantime, please let me know what you think by dropping a note or e-mailing me at andrewzepp@fltl.org.

— Andrew E. Zepp,
Executive Director

Land Trust Adds Four Key Acres to High Vista Preserve

The Finger Lakes Land Trust recently added slightly less than four acres of land to its High Vista Nature Preserve in the Cortland County town of Scott.

Although not a significant addition to the overall size of the preserve, the rectangular parcel is important because of its location relative to wetland habitat in the eastern

part of the preserve. The new acquisition, in the northeast corner of the preserve, allows a loop trail to follow its natural corridor and avoid impinging on the spring-fed wetland.

The Land Trust bought the new tract from the Lime Hollow Nature Center, the same organization that gave the Land Trust the original acres of the High Vista Preserve. The new terrain had once been field but has slowly reverted to a young forest over the last 30 years. Brush in the forest understory still exists as a reminder of this transition.

Likely, if the Land Trust had not secured the land, a house would have been built on the site, fragmenting the forest habitat and introducing a high level of disturbance into the preserve. This is especially important since the Audubon Society recently classified the forested terrain at the south end of Skaneateles Lake (which includes High Vista Preserve) as an Important Bird Area containing critical habitat for birds. At-risk cerulean warblers nest in the area around High Vista Preserve.

—Krishna Ramanujan



ANDREW ZEPP

High Vista’s forested terrain is now included in the Audubon Society’s list of Important Bird Areas (see article on page 1)

PRESERVE PROFILE

Wesley Hill Nature Preserve: Jewel of the Western Lakes

Springtime in the Land Trust's Wesley Hill Nature Preserve has a sublime feel. The open hardwood forest lets you see through for a hundred yards or more - for a glimpse of a pair of scruffy coyotes, a lone red fox or even a bear leaving her cubs to scrounge for ant larvae. They leave their footprints in the muddy trails. The air roars with the sounds of rushing water, as snowmelt from the high terrain courses downhill through ravines transecting the preserve's terrain. And then, as Huck Finn said so eloquently, the song birds are just a-goin' it!

Located in the town of South Bristol on the east side of Honeoye Lake, this high-terrain preserve is one of the most popular among visitors in the western lakes region. In 1999 the Land Trust bought a roughly 90-acre parcel owned by children of Rochester-area artists who had fallen in love with the land and had made it their retreat for peace, quiet and contemplation. The children wanted the land protected for future generations just as their family had during their stewardship. In 2001, adjacent tracts were added through a combination of purchases and gifts, bringing the total size of the property to its present 359 acres.

The preserve's popularity is easy to see. Quite a few notable plants are at home there. Witch hazel (fall flowering) and flowering dogwood (spring) thrive in the cool understory of the forest. Though not usually found in terrain this high, spicebush [see "A Closer Look" in this issue] grows in abundance along one stream in the far western end of the preserve. Spring wildflowers include

round-lobed hepatica, trailing arbutus, fringed polygala, star flower and the relatively rare wild licorice. A field guide comes in handy for hikers.

Visitors will find just about every shade of local habitat in one corner or another of the land - old-growth forest, field, wetland, stream, pond and deep gorge. Where farmland once dominated in the northern and eastern portions, healthy young hardwoods have transformed field into forest. One or two open fields and clearings still exist. A



Glacial erratic in Briggs Gully at Wesley Hill

field near the Gulick Road entrance even boasts a beautiful reed-lined pond in the middle - perfect for sunny picnic days in summer where visitors can take pleasure in the sights and sounds of red-tailed hawks and song sparrows that frequent this spot.

Hikers in the western side of the preserve will undoubtedly stumble upon the old Wenrich cabin. The cabin and nearby privy were built in the 1920s for Rochester artist John Wenrich and his family as a rustic retreat from the big city. Four years ago, one visitor left a logbook on the cabin porch, and people since then have been recording their thoughts and impressions, leaving us with a wonderful piece of the preserve's recent history.



Looking southwest from a scenic overlook at Wesley Hill

The older forest growth consists of a rich mix of large white pine and hemlock, oak, hickory and maple. Massive white pines and stout white oaks along the Gully Trail belong to another age. The forest along that steep trail down into Briggs Gully on the south side of the preserve might never have been logged, accounting for its almost primeval feel. Here, one expects to find the bear's den and the great horned owl's roost.

Deeply wooded Briggs Gully, one of the Finger Lakes' largest, is a fine example of local geological history following the last ice age. Melting glacial waters cascading downward to fill the Honeoye Lake valley carved an enormous gorge through soft sedimentary rock, leaving a breathtaking sight for hikers today. At various points, the preserve's Rim Trail offers overlooks, from which hikers can gaze south across the broad expanse of the ravine to the undisturbed woods on the other side. To the west lie the Honeoye Lake inlet valley and, beyond, the forests of Harriet Hollister State Recreation Area.

Four important tracts of protected land are already secure around the southern end of Honeoye Lake: the Cumming Nature Center at the head of Briggs Gully, operated by the Rochester Museum and Science Center; the Land Trust's Wesley Hill Nature Preserve; the wetlands of the Honeoye inlet, managed by the New York DEC and the Nature Conservancy; and the Harriet Hollister State Recreation Area. It should be inspiring for land protection advocates to think that someday adjacent properties might be added to provide a wilderness corridor around the southern end of Honeoye Lake for all to enjoy.

—Eben McLane

Directions to Wesley Hill:

From Canandaigua, go west on Rte. 5 & 20, then south on Rt. 20A & Rt. 64, then stay on Rt. 20A going west. Just before the Village of Honeoye, go south on E. Lake Rd., then take a left on Pine Hill Rd. and then a right, following signs to the Cumming Nature Center. This road becomes Gulick Rd. For Wesley Rd. entrance, turn right on Wesley Hill Rd. Watch for the preserve parking area, on your right, one mile down the hill. For Gulick Rd. entrance, continue south on Gulick Rd. 0.9 mi. past Wesley Rd. Parking area is on your right.

Land Trust Helps Protect Areas Identified as Vital for Birds

continued from cover

become home to seven breeding pairs of threatened cerulean warblers, as well as at least one pair each of northern harriers, Cooper's hawks, northern goshawks, and many other birds.

The Land Trust has contributed to a bird haven in the greater Summerhill area as well. The site extends from Summerhill State Forest north to the wetlands on the southern end of Owasco Lake. Forest, shrublands and wetlands can all be found here. The Land Trust's Dorothy McLroy Bird Sanctuary is part of this IBA that joins state-owned Summerhill State Forest and Fillmore Glen State Park with private lands. In this diverse range of landscapes, 22 species of warblers nest, including cerulean warblers and high densities of Canada warblers. The site also supports at-risk species, like American black ducks, wood thrushes and American woodcock.

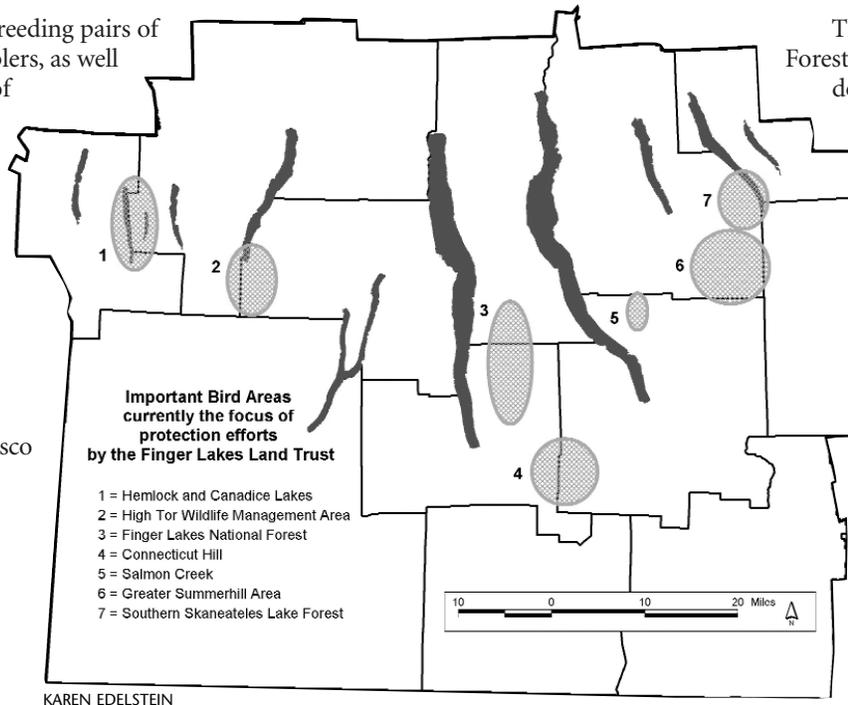
Identification of IBAs like these is needed now more than ever, as one quarter of America's birds are in population decline, largely due to loss of habitat.

"Habitat is the key to conservation," said Dr. Michael Burger, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon New York. "To thrive, birds need adequate and appropriate places to nest, forage, stopover during migration, and over-winter."

IBAs began in Europe, where at last count 51 countries contained sites accounting for a total acreage equal to seven percent of the continent's land. In the US, there are now more than 1200 IBAs in over 40 states. The Audubon Society set up the first statewide IBA program in 1995 in Pennsylvania, and followed up the next year with a program in New York State.

To designate a site as an IBA, a technical committee of bird experts uses scientific data to make its decision once a site is nominated. The committee looks for a number of special criteria, like sites where birds concentrate in significant numbers when breeding, in winter, or during migration. For example, 20 percent of the entire population of Bonaparte's gulls overwinter near Niagara Falls, making it an IBA of global significance. Other criteria include sites for endangered or threatened species and the most important sites for assemblages of species of regional conservation responsibility.

The Land Trust has worked to bolster IBAs by conserving lands near or adjacent to some of the areas. Near Hemlock and Canadice lakes, the Land Trust holds three conservation easements, with ongoing projects in the works. Not only do Hemlock and Canadice lakes provide 80 percent of the water to the Rochester area, but the forested lands around the lakes are home to a breeding pair of endangered bald eagles and serve as nesting sites for threatened species like northern harriers and upland sandpipers.



The Finger Lakes National Forest, located on a ridge of abandoned farmland between Seneca and Cayuga lakes, includes woods and grasslands that are especially important for ground birds. Here, the Land Trust is working to secure a conservation easement, the first of what the Land Trust hopes will be a series of easement acquisitions bordering this area.

The Land Trust has also worked to protect part of a 500-acre IBA of deciduous forest bordering Salmon Creek in the Tompkins County town of Lansing. The 33-acre preserve is a key piece that has been known to support numerous pairs of cerulean warblers.

Similarly, the 6100-acre High Tor Wildlife Management Area in western Yates County provides crucial habitat for two threatened species: the pied-billed grebe and the least bittern. Seventeen hundred acres of marsh, cattails and wooded swamp support many wetland birds. Here, the Land Trust has enhanced the IBA by acquiring Great Hill Preserve and, very recently, the Odell Scott easement in the town of South Bristol.

Finally, the Land Trust holds one easement and looks to protect additional lands along another local IBA, the Greater Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Area. The 11,000-acre management area south and west of Ithaca contains one of the largest high elevation forests in the region. Ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, and numerous hawk and warbler species rely on these protected lands.

The Land Trust has worked closely with Audubon New York to add to both old and new IBAs identified for their significant and unique value to birds. With critical habitats declining and more bird species at risk, the Land Trust's focus on conserving carefully chosen lands must continue with more vigor than ever.

—*Krishna Ramanujan*

Our sincere thanks for gifts in honor of

Bill Feinstein
From
Susan Black

Sue Strunk
From
Judith Dehn Oplinger

John Semmler
From
Kathleen Hunt

Ree Thayer
From
Betsy Darlington

LEGISLATIVE NEWS – SUMMER 2005

IN ALBANY: Thanks to a concerted effort on the part of the conservation community and broad based support from across the state, the Legislature and Governor Pataki worked together to increase support of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) from \$125 million to \$150 million.

This fund is the primary source of funding for the state's purchase of conservation lands as well as farmland protection, parks, and recycling. The Land Trust is working with the state on several conservation projects that are likely to benefit from EPF funding. In addition, the Land Trust is also receiving a grant from the New York State Conservation Partnership, a collaboration between the state and the Land Trust Alliance (LTA)

that relies upon \$500,000 in EPF funding.

At press time, the legislature was still working on the Community Preservation Act, which would allow towns to enact a 2% real estate transfer tax to fund local efforts to protect farmland and open space. Through the Land Trust Alliance, efforts are also underway to advance two proposed tax credits that would benefit conservation easement donors.

IN WASHINGTON, DC: All attention has been focused on the Senate Finance Committee, which recently held hearings on tax incentives for land conservation and suspected abuses. Among those testifying were LTA President Rand Wentworth and Nature Conservancy president Steve McCormick.

The inquiry is focusing on a number of issues, including easement appraisals and conservation values associated with easements on golf courses, and relatively small parcels of land. Most land trusts recognize the need to tighten requirements, particularly in relation to appraisals, to ensure sound transactions and equitable tax treatment. The concern remains, however, that proposals to reduce tax benefits associated with conservation, as well as some proposed procedural remedies, could harm conservation efforts across the country.

Additional information on these issues may be found at the Land Trust Alliance's web site (www.lta.org).

—Merry Jo Bauer

Odell Scott and Town of South Bristol Recognized as “Conservationists of the Year”

Land donor Odell Scott and the Town of South Bristol received this year's “Conservationist of the Year” award at the Land Trust's Annual Meeting held earlier this spring at Steamboat Landing in Canandaigua.

Scott and the Town of South Bristol were selected in recognition of their successful partnership with the Land Trust to establish “Carolabarb Park,” a scenic hillside above the western shore of Canandaigua Lake. Scott donated the land to the town after first conveying a conservation easement to the Land Trust.

On making the gift, Scott commented on his desire to share his remarkable land: “I want to make sure that the public has the opportunity to enjoy the same view that I've enjoyed over the years.” The new park features a mix of field and forest, with several ravines leading toward Canandaigua Lake.

Accepting the award for the Town of South Bristol was Town Supervisor, Dan Marshall. Marshall worked closely with Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp to develop a partnership that Zepp hopes will serve as a model for other communities in the region.



Executive Director Andy Zepp (center) presenting Town of South Bristol Town Supervisor Dan Marshall (left) and land donor Odell Scott (right) with this year's “Conservationist of the Year” award

Conservation Easement Secures Land...

continued from cover



Mature forest at Sugarhill Farm

enhanced by the wild calls of pileated woodpeckers and the ethereal fluting of hermit thrushes.

Seasonal streams, two manmade ponds, and small wetlands add a final element of variety to the property. Birds of field, brush, forest and water find a safe haven here, as do black bear, red fox, coyote, smooth green snake, ring-necked snake, various salamanders and many other creatures.

“The Trechter property is particularly significant due to its location along the Finger Lakes Trail/North Country Scenic Trail, and the fact that it borders state land,” says Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp. “We're delighted that Steve and Kathy decided to continue their tradition of stewardship by donating a conservation easement.”

The Land Trust is deeply grateful for their gift to present and future generations of both humans and wildlife.

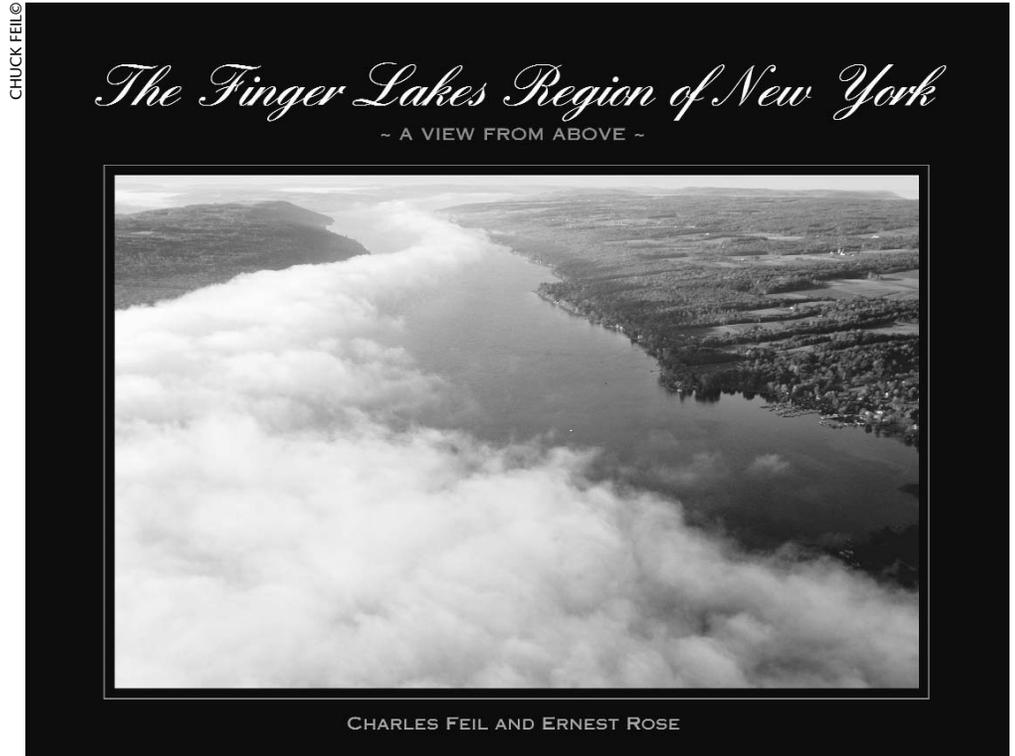
—Betsy Darlington

Scenes' from "The Finger Lakes Region of New York – A View From Above"

Have you ever wondered what a bird's-eye view of the Finger Lakes Region was *really* like? Just ask Chuck Feil, photographer, pilot, adventurer, and co-author of *The Finger Lakes Region of New York – A View From Above*. As Chuck describes it, "The sensation of floating above the land, seeing eye to eye with seagulls, ravens and eagles, is both exhilarating and peaceful. Wisps of clouds, rising and drawing you into the distance, speak to the elements that have created this wondrous region." In this 160 page, 11 x 8½ hardcover collection of amazing aerial photography, Chuck has succeeded in capturing the landscape patterns and unique scenic vistas so characteristic of the Finger Lakes Region.

We are delighted to inform our members that for this limited First Edition, Chuck Feil and Views From Above (VFA) Publishing, have generously agreed to donate to the Land Trust, \$10.00 for every \$35.00 book purchased by a Land Trust member. In Chuck's view, "There is no better way to give back to a community than to use my talents to interpret a viewpoint from my unique perspective." So, help support the Land Trust and treat yourself to a bird's-eye view of our remarkable region.

Purchases may be made on-line by visiting the publisher's website at: www.viewsfromabove.com. Members, please be sure to put "FLLT Member" in the *special instructions* box, directly beneath the *add to cart* button. Copies may also be obtained through the Land Trust office at 607-275-9487.



Book cover for The Finger Lakes Region of New York – A View from Above



Keuka Lake vineyard

CHUCK FEIL ©



Church Steeples, Village of Trumansburg



Chuck shooting from the air



Chuck's gyrocopter "Rooty"

CHUCK FEIL ©



West River north of High Tor Wildlife Management Area

CHUCK FEIL ©



Farmland in Geneva at the northern end of Seneca Lake

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Land Trust Volunteer of the Year: Bob Corneau

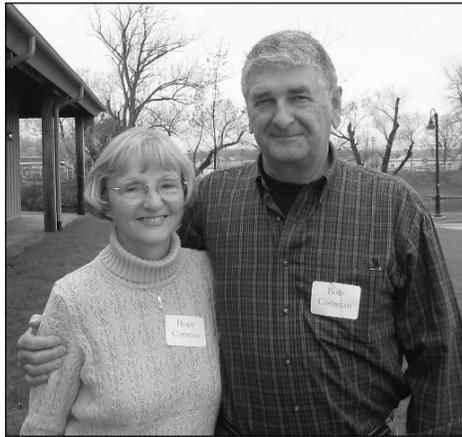
Timber rattlesnakes and Allegheny mound ants are significant inhabitants of the Steege Hill Preserve, and Bob Corneau, steward of the Land Trust's largest preserve, maintains a watchful eye out for their well-being and the viability of their habitat. Never content with the routine requirements of stewardship, Bob is always finding new ways to promote the health and vitality of the flora and fauna and to alert and instruct visitors to the splendid diversity of the preserve. His many activities and accomplishments have earned him the designation of 2005 Volunteer of the Year.

At the entrance to the preserve, which rises like a bulwark above a sharp north- and east-facing bend in the Chemung River, Bob built and erected a kiosk and a display box that includes a trail register for hikers to record their thoughts. He oversaw construction of the parking lot and, skillful carpenter that he is, he installed a handsome and sturdy gate to keep visitors from driving into the preserve itself.

Bob is also guardian of the Allegheny mound ants on the preserve, erecting an arresting sign near one of their many large mounds. Within a bold red frame is a description of the ant's ecology writ large, plus a warning to hikers not to disturb these fascinating denizens of the landscape. Every spring Bob puts up additional warning signs where grasses grow tall along the trails, advising visitors of the possible presence of loafing rattle snakes.

He is a tireless worker, ensuring that the miles of trails throughout the 800 acres are clearly blazed, keeping those trails free of fallen trees and branches, mowing them where the grass might conceal a rattler, cleaning up rubbish that people leave behind — especially in the parking lot — and tracking down unwelcome visitors riding snowmobiles in the winter or ATVs in the summer.

As part of an ongoing research project conducted by Cornell scientist Rulon Clark, Bob tracks and records the movements of



Hope and Bob Corneau

the preserve's timber rattlesnakes. Some have had radio transmitters inserted under their skin, while others bear identifying marks. The research seeks to determine how these reptiles find their prey.

The Steege Hill Preserve is, in effect, a part of Bob and Hope Corneau's backyard. They have lived on adjacent land for the past 40 years — almost as long as they have been married. Bob is retired from a position as mason with Corning, Inc. and has hiked the area since he was sixteen.

An "old deer hunter and fisherman," as he calls himself, Bob has long been active in environmental work as a member of Ducks Unlimited and Trout Unlimited. He has helped to stock fishing streams and was

involved in efforts to restore New York State's wild turkey and snowshoe hare populations. He doesn't hunt in the preserve, of course, and he's spent time and energy removing hunting stands and patrolling the woods during hunting season.

"Bob Corneau really loves that preserve," says Tom Reimers, the Land Trust's vice president for land conservation. And he loves all the creatures that find sustenance (material and otherwise) there — bears and rattlesnakes, grouse and turkeys, porcupines and mound ants, and the hikers.

Recently Bob deepened his commitment to the Land Trust by contributing to the new and nearby Plymouth Woods Preserve. Most recently, he made and installed a beautiful brochure box and kiosk, like the ones at Steege Hill. In addition, he fashioned and raised a wood duck box in the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary.

He regularly attends Land Trust special events, annual meetings, and preserve dedications, and, says Director of Land Protection Betsy Darlington, "Not only is he such a fine skilled carpenter, he is always willing to pitch in and help, in whatever way is needed. We could use some clones of him!"

—Caissa Willmer

On Saturday, June 4th, Land Trust members, officers, and staff, joined Senator George Winner, local town officials and community representatives to honor land donors Dr. and Mrs. Edward Grandt and dedicate their generous gift of 90 acres, known as Plymouth Woods, the Land Trust's newest nature preserve.



Land Trust President Jim Kersting and Executive Director Andy Zepp join Dr. Edward Grandt, Senator George Winner and former Big Flats Town Supervisor Merrill Lynn at the ribbon cutting for Plymouth Woods



Plymouth Woods donors, Irene and Edward Grandt in front of the preserve's new kiosk

Land Trust Receives Grant to Expand Protection Efforts

The Land Trust has received a \$38,000 staffing grant through the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP). The grant will allow the Land Trust to add a full time staff position that will in turn lead to expanded protection efforts in the Canandaigua, Cayuga, and Skaneateles Lake watersheds. The award will be matched by more than \$38,000 in private funds.

A full-time Land Protection Specialist will be added to the Land Trust's staff later this summer. The specialist will be responsible for the overall coordination of the organization's conservation easement program, which will include working with landowners across the region, but especially in the Canandaigua, Cayuga, and Skaneateles Lake watersheds. The position will be based out of the Land Trust's Ithaca office.

"We're delighted by this commitment of support from the New York State Conservation Partnership," says Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "This grant will enable the Land Trust to work with more private landowners across the region to plan for the future of their land."

The Land Trust is receiving funds through the third round of grants provided by NYSCPP, a pioneering public-private partnership designed to enhance local open space conservation programs across New York State. The program, funded by the State's Environmental Protection Fund and implemented in partnership with the Land Trust Alliance, cost-effectively protects open space by leveraging private funding for conservation purposes.

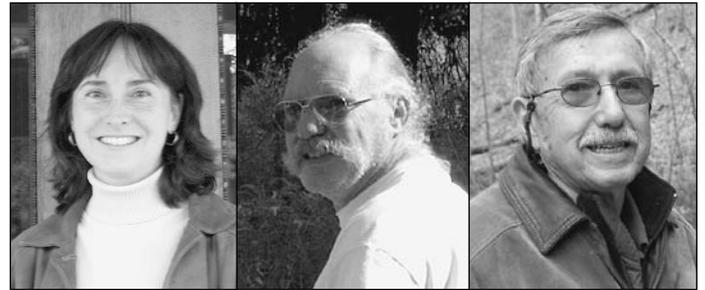
In its first three years, the Conservation Partnership Program has funded 87 different grant projects, helping to protect 3,400 acres of land prioritized in New York State's Open Space Plan. Grants have also led to the creation of strategic protection and stewardship plans at 26 different land trusts and built the professional capacity needed to preserve farmland, local watersheds, and important natural areas across the state.

Board Developments

Congratulations and welcome to incoming Board Members Katherine Borgella, Nick Gavrielides, and Don Raines. A member of the Land Trust for the past 11 years, Katherine Borgella is the Principal Planner for the Tompkins County Planning Department. Nick Gavrielides is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at SUNY Cortland. In addition to being the preserve steward of the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary, Nick also serves on the Land Trust's Preserve Management and Land Committees. Don Raines is a retired physician, avid birder and hiker, now living on Canandaigua Lake with his wife Skippy.

At the same time, we bid adieu to Board Members Greg Garvan, Dick Ruswick, and Board Secretary Eileen Maxwell. Thank you for all of your dedication and hard work. We hope to continue to enjoy your guiding wisdom in your new "civilian" roles.

In other Board developments, John Rogers will be stepping down as President, but will continue to serve on the Board. Vice President Jim Kersting will be the new President, Brad Edmondson, the new Vice President, and Ann Weiland, the new Board Secretary



Incoming Board Members Katherine Borgella, Nick Gavrielides and Don Raines

Our deepest appreciation

for a gift in honor of the wedding of:

Rachel Byard and Simon Garcia
From
Jim and Trish Byard

Our sincere thanks for gifts in celebration of the birthday of:

Betsy Darlington
From
Jean Darlington and Ed Marchena

Amy Nye
From
Nancy Russell

Aaron Lipp
From
Judy Bennett

We are deeply grateful for donations in memory of:

Bill Albern
From
**Betsy Darlington
Barbara Hall and
Barbara Rowan
John and Louise Kingsbury
C. Arthur Bratton**
From
Douglas F. Beech

Gladys M. DeGeorge
From
**The staff at the City of
Rochester's Hemlock
Water Plant
John Ferger**
From
**Gerald Morsello and
Elaine Rees**

John Gilbert Prentiss
From
**Bard Prentiss and Family
Maria Ranti**
From
**Sally Perreten
Laura Lee Weisbrodt Smith
and Ora Smith**
From
James and Janis Smith

Mrs. Spier
From
**The staff at the Newark
Education Center and the
Sunshine Club
Carl Strickland**
From
Sarah Strickland

REFLECTIONS ON CONSERVATION

The Beast in My Forest

In 1982, my wife Lynn and I purchased a ten-acre woodlot overlooking Cayuga Lake. It was a lovely woods, dominated by oak, maple, hickory and cherry trees, and punctuated by splendid old white pines. The forest floor was covered by a delightful mixture of native flowers and shrubs — anemones, trillium, fragrant sumac and blueberry. To walk through the woods, we had to pick our way through thick underbrush. Occasionally we had a glimpse of a lovely, shy deer.

Those were fine days. Today, the deer have more or less stripped the forest floor bare, leaving mostly exotic weeds, such as garlic mustard and black swallow-wort. There are few remaining native shrubs or young tree seedlings. Herds of deer (I counted 25 of them in my woods yesterday) have pommelled the ground until it looks like a paved terrace.

Are Lynn and I poor caretakers of this once-lovely piece of land? Are we alone in losing the natural complexity of our little forest? Unfortunately no. We see the same symptoms of destruction of native flowers and shrubs in forests all around us, including the Cornell Plantations, the Cayuga Nature Center, and several of the nature preserves of the Finger Lakes Land Trust. The deer damage to our forests is a major regional problem and is widespread throughout the northeast.

For the past 20 years of living in our woodlot, Lynn has kept a phenological record of our forest plants — the dates of first bloom of the flowers and shrubs. In the first five years we recorded an average of 40 species of wildflowers. In the last five years, we have seen an average of only 27 wildflower species. So we have lost one third of our flowering native species, a devastating number.

In the meantime, deer population density in our Lansing community has

risen from 15 to 20 deer per square mile to a scary 80 to 90 deer per square mile in 2002, according to estimates by the Cayuga Heights Deer Project. And the numbers continue to climb. Except for invasive plants, almost all vegetation from the ground to about six feet above ground (the limit of reach for a deer) has been eaten. As the ground cover disappears, we see the forest floor scarred by sheet erosion where none had been visible before.

Ordinarily we expect animal or plant pests to arise from exotic species. Think of the Norway rat, the Australian brown tree snake, European dandelions and purple loosestrife. But ecologists know that native species, too, can become pests. Most often this occurs when predators have been extirpated, or there are major changes in the habitat or environment. The edge habitat created by suburban sprawl attracts deer to a smorgasbord of ornamental plants. Also, mild winters during the past 20 years have increased fawn survivorship. In northeastern United States, where large predatory animals like the gray wolf have been removed and deer-friendly habitat has been enhanced, deer populations have soared. Nationwide deer population was estimated to be about 500,000 in the early 1900s. Now there are about 25-30 million. The white-tailed deer has been transformed from a beautiful forest sprite to an ecological concern.

In our area, the only limiting factor for the deer herd seems to be collisions with cars, estimated by the Cayuga Heights study to kill about 20 percent of the deer population per year. Bloody doe carcasses along the roadside remind us of the dangers of overcrowding that we face daily and nightly. Gardeners and farmers also hate the damage deer can do to vegetable gardens, flowers and shrubs, and fields of corn and beans. Whatever the

damage, deer herds have diminished the quality of our local natural communities, whether in the city, the suburbs, the open countryside or the forests.

We are privileged to live in a world composed of many complex and beautiful biological inhabitants, species that have evolved over millions of years. The white-tailed deer is one of these, as are the anemones and the trillium that they destroy. We carry an ethical responsibility to act as stewards of this natural biological system. Our inability to find a reasonable way to hold the deer to its appropriate status is a stain on our stewardship of the land.

As things now stand, populations of the once-cherished deer expand ever more as they ravish our gardens and our natural ecosystems, eliminating many of the beautiful living components of our habitat, while we debate futilely over this tough problem. Managing deer on any scale — backyard to forest — is complex. Management solutions must be both ecologically and socially acceptable and at a cost to both humans and deer that is sustainable. There are no simple solutions to this dilemma, but if we fail to act, our forest lands and their marvelous native plants may be impaired for generations.

—Carl Leopold

Carl Leopold is the Founding President of the Finger Lakes Land Trust and is the W. H. Crocker Scientist Emeritus at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research.

[In this issue's Perspectives column on page 2, Executive Director Andy Zepp discusses the challenge of providing sound and responsible stewardship for our remaining natural areas in the face of increasing deer populations and the proliferation of non-native, invasive plants.]

Our deepest appreciation

*for an anonymous gift
in memory of
Avery Beer*

Our sincere thanks

*for gifts in honor of the
25th wedding anniversary of:
Jeff and Jane Doyle
From
Susan and Joel Brock*

Our sincere thanks

*for a donation
in memory of
John and Erika Berggren*

A CLOSER LOOK

Spicebush, the Forsythia of the Wild

On a mid-April ramble through wet woods, many plant admirers spend their time looking for the first signs of life emerging from the forest floor.

Their downcast eyes note the first unfurling of skunk cabbage and other plants from the Arum or Lily families. There is rarely reason to look up: the gray hardwoods are still leafless and, with a few exceptions, flowerless.

The sudden notice of a delicate shrub at shoulder-level whose twigs are decorated with tiny, pale gold blooms comes as a surprise, like finding forsythia in the midst of wild woods. This is the spicebush



ROB AND ANN SIMPSON

Shiny red berries mature in September and hang on the bush sometimes throughout the winter

(*Lindera benzoin*), variously known as “Benjamin bush” (origin unknown), “wild allspice” and, not surprisingly, “forsythia of the wild.” A six to twelve foot tall shrub with multiple trunks, the spicebush is a member of the Laurel family. While it is near its northernmost range here in the Finger Lakes, the spicebush is a fairly common understory plant, favoring damp, shady woodlands on the floodplains of streams. It can be found in many places where conditions are right: the Fuertes Bird Sanctuary next to Stewart Park in Ithaca, Excelsior Glen near Watkins Glen, Salmon Creek near Ludlowville, and by a

small upland stream in the Wesley Hill Preserve above Honeoye Lake, to name just a few spots.

Like the showier forsythia that grows as an ornamental in many local yards, the spicebush is one of the earliest shrubs to bloom each spring. Its flowers appear in clusters lining the twigs before the shrub leafs out a few weeks later. Summer leaves are alternate, simple, pinnately veined and about three to five inches long, sometimes turning yellow in the fall. A show of a different kind, and color, appears each autumn, in the form of shiny red berry clumps which mature in September and hang on the bush sometimes throughout much of the winter.

The common name spicebush comes from the pleasant, spicy scent given off by all parts of the plant when crushed — blossoms, leaves, twigs and berries.

It is an important plant for a variety of wildlife in our area, particularly for migrating birds. Its berries are rich in fat, or oil, which burns off more slowly than the sugars available from many other kinds of wild fruit, making them ideal for the arduous journey south. Robins, thrushes, flycatchers and catbirds, among others, take full advantage of the oily berries wherever they can find them. Raccoons, too, are known to feast on them. Although some reports indicate that the leaves are browsed by white-tailed deer, this does not appear to be much of a problem in the Finger Lakes, possibly because of the availability of more-preferred plants. [see Carl Leopold’s “Reflections on Conservation” in this issue.]

Spicebush leaves provide larval food for both the spicebush swallowtail and



J. G. STRAUCH, JR. ©

The pale gold, spicy scented blooms of the spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)

tiger swallowtail butterflies. The caterpillars cocoon themselves in curled leaves while they metamorphose into the gorgeous adults they turn out to be. Both the spicebush swallowtail and caterpillar are said to have a concentrated, peppery scent derived from the bush, which may help them to thwart predators.

Many humans have found uses for the spicebush. Native Americans concocted a variety of teas from the berries and bark to treat afflictions such as coughs, fevers, menstrual cramps and rheumatism. Crushed berries were rubbed on bruises and joints for relief from painful swelling. European settlers are known to have used oils extracted from the leaves and twigs for home remedies, a practice still followed by many interested in alternative medicine. They also used it in cooking as a substitute for coveted allspice. During the Civil War, soldiers are said to have brewed a fragrant tea from leaves and twigs of the “Benjamin bush.”

What’s in a name? “Benjamin bush,” “wild allspice” or “forsythia of the wild” — spicebush is all of these. But unlike the ornamental forsythia, spicebush is not well known, not seen often enough by residents of the Finger Lakes. Unless, that is, you take time to prowl the forest in search of their golden spring beauty.

—Eben McLane

Thank You 2005 Talks and Treks Sponsors!

The Land Trust would like to thank the following local businesses for supporting the 2005 Talks and Treks series.

Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research—
Ithaca, NY
CFCU Community Credit Union—Ithaca, NY
Monica’s Pies—Naples, NY
Ontario National Bank—Clifton Springs, NY
Randall Farnsworth Auto Group—Canandaigua, NY

Sciarabba, Walker, & Co., LLP—Ithaca, NY
The Shopping Bag/ADVERTISER—Rochester, NY
Tiohero Tours—Ithaca, NY
Tompkins Trust Company—Ithaca, NY
Tops Markets—Canandaigua, NY

Finger Lakes Land Trust

Officers:

Jim Kersting, *President*
Brad Edmondson, *Vice President*
Ann Weiland, *Secretary*
Nancy Robbins, *Treasurer*
Tom Reimers, *VP Land Conservation*
Albert Joerger, *VP for Development*

Board Members:

Katherine Borgella Don Raines
Nick Gavrielides Don Rakow
Bob Growe Scott Winkelman

Advisory Council:

James Byrnes Howard Hartnett
Thomas Eisner Ted Hullar
John Fitzpatrick Robert Mrazek
Barbara Hamlin

Staff:

Andrew Zepp, *Executive Director*
Abbey Chernela, *Office Manager*
Betsy Darlington, *Director of Land Protection*
Karen Edelstein, *CE Stewardship Coordinator, and GIS Specialist*
Emily Eisman, *Outreach and Membership Coordinator*
Betsy Landre, *Senior Field Representative*

Newsletter Editors:

Eben McLane
Krishna Ramanujan

Newsletter Layout:

West Hill Graphics, Inc.

Advisors:

Legal Counsel: Susan Brock, Dan Hoffman, Randy Marcus, Peter Miller, Richard Ruswick, True, Walsh & Miller,
Forestry Consultant: Michael DeMunn,
Founding President: A. Carl Leopold

Western Lakes Chapter:

Jim Kersting, *Chair* 585-367-2301

Eastern Lakes Chapter:

Kris Scholl, *Chair* 315-497-3066

Keuka Chapter:

Debbie Koop, *Contact* 315-595-2523

Finger Lakes Land Trust

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

Western Lakes Office

120 North Main Street, Suite 40
Canandaigua, NY 14424
Ph: 585-394-4189

Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 E. Court Street
Ithaca, New York 14850



SUMMER 2005 CALENDAR

SUMMER 2005 TALKS & TREKS SERIES

Explore fascinating and beautiful places this summer!

Saturday, July 16, 8:00 am, "Honeoye Lake Inlet Paddle"

Saturday, July 16, 10:00 am, "Martin's Mysteries" at the Martin Nature Preserve

Saturday, July 30, 10:00 am, "Butterfly Walk at the Wesley Hill Preserve"

Saturday, July 30, 10:00 am, "Steege's Snakes" at the Steege Hill Nature Preserve

Saturday, August 13, 9:00 am, "What Lives in a Stream? Stream Discovery at Grimes Glen"

Saturday, August 20, 10:00 am, "Return to the Wild: Trek to Fair Haven Brook"

Saturday August 27, 9:00 am, "Canandaigua Lake Watershed: An Interactive Trek and Talk"

Saturday, September 17, 10:00 am, "Managing for Biodiversity" at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve

See insert for program details

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 OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: WWW.FLLT.ORG