



THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 13, No. 1

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Winter 2000-2001

Another Addition to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve

In November, the Land Trust used part of an anonymous grant to purchase a small but critical addition to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby (Tompkins County). Currently a lovely grassy meadow, the 11-acre parcel is at the intersection of Walding Lane and NYS Route 34/96. It had been on the market for several years, and the Land Trust had a “right-of-first-refusal” to buy it, should the sellers receive a bona fide purchase offer. This RFR had to be exercised within 10 business days, however, so, when we learned that the sellers had received such an offer, we scrambled to get everything pulled together in time for the deadline.

Why did the Land Trust want this property? First of all, it drains directly into Coleman Lake, just to its north. One or more homes (several would have been permitted) could have had a severe impact on the water quality of the lake

continued on page 4



Photo by: Betsy Darlington

View of Coleman Lake from the newest addition to the Finger Lakes Land Trust's Lindsay-Parson Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby (Tompkins County).

THE ETHICS OF CONSERVATION



Artwork by: Fred Bertram

Invasive, Non-native Plants

“The blending of the natural world into one great monoculture of the most aggressive species is... a blow to the spirit and beauty of the natural world.” — Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior

I'll tell you right off what our tally was. Of white pine, red oak, and slippery elm, one each. Two each of basswood, big tooth aspen, hop hornbeam, beech, and sugar maple. Four, five, and six respectively of witch hazel, hemlock, and black cherry. Eight black walnuts. Ten white ash. Fourteen chestnut oaks.

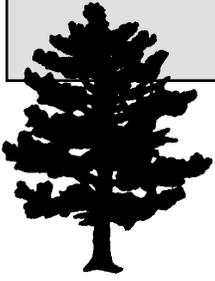
Those 14 tree species were the natives, and together they stood 60 strong.

Now for the other three—the invaders. Crowding the sunny verge along the walk, a couple of dozen buckthorns. In one section of woods at least 50 seedling ailanthus, commonly known as tree of heaven.

And scattered throughout, 238 Norway maples.

What's the context? I had asked Robert Wesley, botanist and Natural Areas Manager at Cornell Plantations, to walk with me through Fall Creek Gorge in the City of Ithaca, checking for invasive non-native tree species. We met at a suspension bridge

continued on page 4



AT THE SIGN OF THE LONE PINE

I wasn't the only one who was startled, at first, by Peter Forbes' presentation at the Land Trust Alliance Rally in Portland, Oregon. He was telling us that there are things more important than number of acres

protected or dollars raised for conservation—and those are fightin' words at a conference where fourteen hundred die-hard land preservationists have gathered together to share the movement's knowledge on how to protect land and solicit conservation gifts.

But Peter is Vice President and Fellow of the Trust for Public Land (TPL), so the audience relaxed. We knew we could trust this gentle, sincere man not to belittle our mission. Besides, his slide show was gorgeous.

Peter is the Trust's staff philosopher, you might say, and with that mantle on his shoulders he has been crisscrossing the nation hearing the stories behind land protection projects and the people enmeshed in these works. Peter's goal was to learn from these stories how we can harness the power inherent in people's relationships with places to do more than just land conservation. Instead, he hopes to amplify our work so that it strengthens our cultural landscape by nurturing community values.

This work is part of the emerging discipline of conservation sociology—the attempt to discern a philosophical and practical basis for saving both ways of life and particular, cherished places. It explores the many ways that we love the land— an

exploration hindered by our limited vocabulary and uncertain understanding of the human relationship to Land.

Peter reviewed the symptoms of the slow collapse of both our natural and cultural systems, then pointed to data showing that we can never hope to compete in the race against sprawl. He suggests that rather than falter in our faith about the meaning of our conservation work that we see our efforts in a new light— land conservation as a social force and a social promise engaged in helping to change our culture and make our lives more lumi-

nous with meaning. If we shift our focus from how many acres saved to how many lives touched, what impact will we have upon local conceptions of citizenship and community? What will be gained from exploring the nuances of how a farmer loves his land? Does land conservation have something to teach us about reverence, service, and generational equality?

Food for thought on these winter nights.

I believe we are naturally practicing much of this sociological approach to land conservation, albeit unconsciously at times. Certainly, it makes us pause when a rancher says "our love for this land has us by the throat" or a small boy declares he has learned nothing in school "as important as the old trees in this forest. Nothing as important as the waterfall in the gully." We tend to share these stories as did tribes of old, and their emotional and spiritual contents fuel our continued efforts. It's about a lot more than number of acres saved.

— Gay Nicholson

*If we shift our focus from
how many acres saved
to how many lives touched,
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LEGISLATIVE NEWS

The New York State Legislature in the year 2000 passed all 13 bills with "positive environmental ratings" and these were all signed by Governor Pataki. These bills range from jet-ski regulation to acid rain reductions to how to deal with all those old tires we throw out. Contrast this with 1999 when only two bills rated "good for the environment" were passed and the Governor vetoed one of them!

One of those newly enacted laws is being challenged in the U.S. District Court in Albany by the "Clean Air Markets Group," which refuses to divulge its membership. This group says that the "Acid Rain" bill, which prohibits selling pollution trading credits to certain states upwind of New York State, violates the supremacy and commerce clauses of

the U.S. Constitution. New York State reasons that it doesn't make sense to sell those credits to states whose emissions just blow into New York and drop acid rain on our lakes and trees.

At the federal level, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) launched an all-out campaign to persuade President Clinton to move on three initiatives before leaving office in January. These initiatives are:

- designating the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife refuge (ANWR) as a national monument. The coast doesn't enjoy the same protected status that the rest of the refuge does, and it's targeted by some legislators for immediate oil exploration;
- rejecting plans for a new major airport outside Miami between the

Everglades and Biscayne National Park; building the airport would undermine Everglades restoration projects;

- completing plans (announced months ago) for permanently protecting nearly one-third of America's national forest lands with a "roadless and wild" designation. To omit these crucial steps would open 2.5 million acres in the Tongass National Forest in Alaska for immediate development; another six million acres could follow.

If you'd like to support the NRDC's campaign, just call the White House Comment Line between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. at 202-456-1111 and give your opinion. Or use your email: president@whitehouse.gov.

continued on page 5

Stewardship: The Care, Feeding, and Shelter of Conservation Lands

Success is often defined by numbers, and in the land trust community that means the number of acres protected, the number of easements or preserves acquired. It's a language that translates easily in our world of stock prices and interest rates, percentage points, and numerical rankings. But after the excitement of a new preserve acquisition fades away, we remember that—ah, yes—*stewardship* is the authentic measure of land protection.

Permanent protection is what we promise to landowners, communities, and our members. No matter how many acres we list, permanent protection is defined by stewardship—the long-term care of the land. “When we see land as a community to which we belong,” writes Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac*, “we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

When the Land Trust creates a nature preserve or accepts a conservation

easement, we promise to maintain, monitor, and defend these lands—forever—within a patchwork of other land uses. We maintain them by establishing signs, trails, parking areas, and the like. We monitor them through timely communication and involvement with neighbors, communities, and local governments—and through our volunteer stewards, who inspect the properties at least once a year. Archives of all monitoring documents are

continued on page 5

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Bill Albern

The Land Trust's latest acquisition, the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve, might not have gone as smoothly as it did without Bill Albern's tireless help. Each preserve requires its own stewardship fund, without which we can't begin to guarantee its long-term (we're talking centuries) protection. But raising money for these funds can be a time-consuming task.

Bill has lived close to the 111-acre preserve for some years; it's a place he always loved to hike in. He was excited when he found it was being given to the Land Trust, and offered to chair the committee in charge of raising the stewardship funds. “He took a very personal interest in the Preserve,” says President Tom Reimers, “and inspired other local residents to do likewise.”

How did Bill, a retired engineer, get from Brooklyn, where he was born, to Ellis Hollow? As a boy he lived first in Queens and then in Lynbrook, Long Island. After graduating from Lynbrook High, he went on to Clarkson University, where he received his Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering degree in 1951. After Army service in Korea he held a series of engineering positions, specializing in heating, refrigeration and air-conditioning.

Eventually Bill ended up at Cornell University, where he worked for 15 years and was responsible for promoting energy conservation. He has written many technical articles and papers and one book.

Bill's association with the Land Trust goes back to 1992 when he and his wife, Joan, bought 40 acres of donated Land Trust acreage on Mt. Pleasant Road, then gave us a conservation easement on the parcel. It was our eleventh conservation easement and the Alberns were made honorary Land Trust members. They had intended to build on Mt. Pleasant, but changed their minds and remained instead at their home on an Ellis Hollow hillside.

Bill is retired now, but he still does engineering consulting work. He is very active in the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, of which he is a life member. Over the years he has been cubmaster, scoutmaster, and Little League coach. He's also on the board of directors of Alpha House, a drug rehabilitation center, and serves as newsletter editor of the Nature Photo Club. In fact, Bill is a serious photographer with two covers on the *New York State*

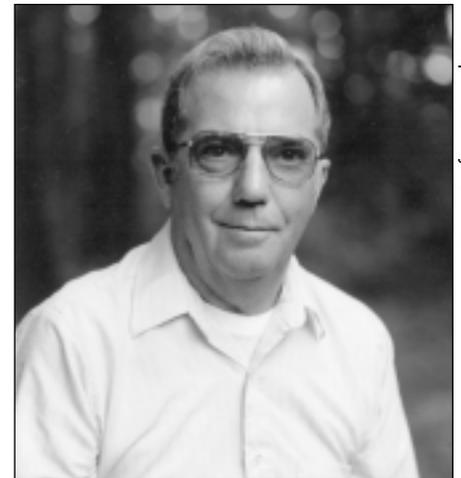


Photo provided by: Bill Albern

Conservationist as well as many images in calendars published by the Center for Nature Education.

Bill seems to think that what he did for the Land Trust wasn't all that big a deal, but we do. “It's been the most successful fundraising campaign among neighbors of a preserve,” says Assistant Director Kat Lieberknecht. “It was a genuine community effort.” Indeed, by late fall the \$30,000 goal was 90% pledged. Not only that, the Land Trust has acquired 30 new members in the process.

Thank you, Bill. We *all* think you did more than you think you did!

— Ed Ormondroyd

Another Addition

continued from page 1

and Cayuga Inlet into which it drains. In addition, views both of the preserve and from various points on the preserve, would have suffered greatly from development of this piece of land. Several West Danby residents (and others) had expressed concern to us over the prospect of this parcel being developed. The piece rounds out the southern border of the preserve very neatly.

Several years ago, the Land Trust purchased the 26 acres to the east of this parcel from the same sellers—Carol Osadchey and her brothers, Wayne Wallding and Ronald Wallding. They grew up in the old farmhouse across Wallding Lane from the new parcel. We are delighted finally to secure the property, and feel especially grateful for having such agreeable people to deal with. Our thanks to the anonymous donor and the Wallding siblings!

—Betsy Darlington

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers to answer the phones for a few hours each week.

Please call (607) 275-9487 for more information.

Wish List

Post-hole digger,
digging bar, good flashlight;
Audubon *Guide to Mushrooms*; lopping shears,
hedge clippers, pruners

Correction to Summer Newsletter:

Thank you for the generous donation in honor of Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Stanley Sears from Robert and Mary King

The Ethics of Conversation

continued from page 1

that spans the gorge, where a casual look a few months before had inclined me to think that, green and inviting as the gorge seemed, something might be amiss.

True, our count was informal. Most of the Norways were saplings; many won't make it to adulthood. But still: six to one is not your usual ratio of "invasive aliens" (as these invasives are often called) to native species. After all, this was no vacant town lot, where you'd expect urban trees to seed in. And while the slope near the top may once have been open pasture, Wesley thinks it's unlikely that the gorge itself was ever logged, thus creating openings for opportunistic tree species. "It's just too steep for logging," he says. "Most likely these exotics—especially the Norway maples—came to dominate here because their canopies are so dense that they shade out the young of every other tree in the forest." Those 14 gorgeous chestnut oaks, for example—big mothers all—represent the last of their kind in that place. We didn't see a single seedling.

After habitat loss, invasive species are the greatest threat to biodiversity in North America. Biological pollution grows daily by literal leaps and bounds. For in addition to whatever particular biological advantage each invasive species enjoys by nature, collectively they benefit from one added advantage: most of the predatory organisms that kept them in check in their home ecosystems—in Europe, say, or Asia—didn't come over with them. *Every day* another thousand acres (or so) of open land succumbs to noxious, non-native weeds. In addition, hosts of new insect pests, new pathogens, new fish and mussels and crabs and worms and reptiles, even new mammals continue to arrive... the stats are staggering. Thirty thousand alien species now reside in the U.S., costing roughly \$130 billion per year in control, and in lost agricultural, forest, and fisheries productivity—and eclipsing by far the total damage from tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods.

How has this happened?

Well, take me, for example. In less than 10 years of intensive gardening—I'm talking a 1,000-plant-plus backyard

Eden—I inadvertently introduced at least 10 lovely but invasive plants to my property. Most I eradicated as soon as I knew my error, but one may prove beyond diligence. A couple more continue to push the bounds. Come a year when I get tired, I can easily imagine the garden as the epicenter of an altered local ecosystem.

Indeed, plant collecting—that delightful Victorian occupation—is hardly passé. Every year dozens of professional and amateur enthusiasts scour still-remote regions of the planet, searching out the rarest, the most stunning, and the truly bizarre for a burgeoning domestic market newly keyed in to novelty. As I was, not that long ago.

Of course, big as it is, the nursery industry accounts for but a fraction of the potential for loss from biological invasions. Still, our gardening and landscaping habits provide a great jumping-off point for a conservation ethic that weds theory and practice. "Informing ourselves is key," says Robert Wesley. "We shouldn't fall prey to every enticing ad we see. If we've got nuisance plants in our gardens, we should dig them out, but we shouldn't then dump them in the woods or along the roadside. And if we dig up pretty flowers from the roadside, we'd best know what they are first, and ask did they get where they are because they're invasive? I don't think anyone should plant a Norway maple—but if they do, they should place it far from hedges or woodlots where it could easily seed in. In the middle of a wide lawn that will be carefully mowed for the next three hundred years or so would be ideal."

Sounds like another challenge for stewardship, no? But imagine anyone setting up a stewardship trust to mow around their Norway maple trees for the next three centuries. Yet with each new landscape plant we acquire we might ask ourselves what the cost could be to future generations. However we do it—by reading, through web searches, by questions to Cooperative Extension educators or nursery salespeople—informing ourselves is key.

—Mary Woodsen

Stewardship: The Care, Feeding, and Shelter of Conservation Lands

continued from page 3

maintained by the Land Trust headquarters staff.

And of course the work invested in acquiring and caring for the land is pointless if the property lies undefended against possible encroachment and misuse. A serious violation could incur substantial legal costs. The French and Pickering Creek Land Conservancy in Pennsylvania racked up a bill of almost \$100,000 to prevent the construction of a second home on land whose conservation easement allowed only farm accessory structures. In the mid-1990s, the Napa County Land Trust in California incurred legal fees of \$40,000 to prevent a violation of one of their easements.

One thing is certain: perpetual stewardship can be costly. You could almost call it the reverse Midas touch syndrome: property or property rights worth gold to an individual landowner are a major expense once they touch the hands of a land trust organization. While conservation lands provide priceless ecological, economic, and spiritual values to the public, they present a permanent financial liability to the Land Trust—but one we gladly accept. Yes, it sounds daunting—but the precedent set in Pennsylvania and California (along with careful record-keeping, of course) lessens the likelihood and potential severity of future violations for the thousand-plus land trusts around the country.

How do we figure our stewardship costs? We use a formula developed by

Photo by: Betsy Darlington



Stewardship in action: student interns Charlotte Nunes and P.J. Rusello take a breather from helping Betsy Darlington install a locust post barrier designed to keep motorized vehicles off the trails at the Thurber Nature Preserve.

the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts, modified to reflect our land trust's context. We try to calculate stewardship costs on an average annual basis by incorporating property-specific information—the number of neighboring parcels, the complexity of the easement, the size of the property—into a framework that estimates the ease of monitoring and the frequency of potential violations. Then we commit to raising a sum that's projected to generate investment interest sufficient to cover the average annual stewardship cost, forever. Currently our estimates range from \$10,000 to \$30,000 per easement or preserve. Of this, \$5,000 or more goes into a legal defense fund that provides a pooled financial reserve to cover enforcement costs.

Stewardship funds can be difficult to raise. But as we've learned more

about stewardship, our members have become more willing to make a financial commitment to it. Over the past summer, member Bill Albern led a group of his neighbors in a fundraising drive for the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve. Their efforts were a tremendous success; the Land Trust received over \$28,000 in pledges from residents of the Ellis Hollow area. And when members Bill and Ann Silsbee provided a conservation easement last winter, they donated the entire stewardship amount.

Stewardship. Even as it translates into numbers it transcends them—a measure of land protection as visionary as it is practical.

— Kat Lieberknecht

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

continued from page 2

O CARA MIA- what has become of this landmark and almost exemplary piece of conservation legislation? As reported to you earlier the House of Representatives passed the version of the Conservation Reinvestment Act (CARA) on May 11, 2000 with much bi-partisan support, 315-102. But in the Senate it fell prey to a variety of mishaps—Senators who tried to make it better, Senators who

are against Federal land acquisitions, Senators who wanted to adjourn. Part of the bill was passed, and so instead of \$45 billion (provided by royalties from offshore drilling) over 15 years for land acquisition, protection and restoration we will have \$12 billion over six years. The states' share of that would have been \$450 million annually, but now it is only \$90 million. CARA would have funded

the Farmland Protection Program to purchase easements on farmland, but in the final version there was no funding at all. Well, it is said that politics is the art of the possible AND the art of compromise and this sad story is a classic example of both. We shall see what the 107th Congress holds for the environment.

— Merry Jo Bauer

NEED THE PERFECT GIFT

for your land-loving friends?

Check out our “tree-free” kenaf paper note cards or our wonderfully comfortable Leopold benches! Gift memberships or donations to the Land Trust make the perfect gift for those who crave nothing but more protected land!

LAND FOR SALE:

HEMLOCK LAKE: conservation-minded buyer wanted. 40+ acres, spectacular views overlooking Hemlock Lake, abundant wildlife; adjoins 100 acres that will be protected by conservation easement. Terms available. Call (716) 346-0582.

ABUTTING FINGER LAKES NATIONAL FOREST: 34-acre parcel on Chicken Coop Hill Rd., with conservation easement. 15-acre woodlot, sweeping views, gently sloping fields. Trumansburg School District. Call (607) 387-8080.

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Judith Kurlander,
from Dick and Betsy Darlington

• • •

GENEROUS GIFT IN HONOR OF...
Robin Schmidt,
from Oskar and Ellen Schmidt

FACES OF THE LAND TRUST



Photo by: Susan Hurwitz

Hank Krauss, framed by the window of the pavilion at Stewart Park, enjoys another cup of coffee at the Fall Picnic.

Photo by: Betsy Darlington



Fran Dunbar recounts how he led a community effort to protect Hiawatha Island, the “jewel of the Susquehanna River.” Fran and other members of the Waterman Conservation Education Center hosted a retreat for Land Trust nature preserve stewards and members of the Preserve Management Committee.

Photo by: John Semmler



Kat Lieberknecht and Susan Hurwitz enjoying the music provided by the band, Our Friends and Neighbors, at the Fall Picnic.

Photo by: Susan Hurwitz



Dr. John Parks of the Cornell Raptor Program displays one of our feathered friends at the Land Trust’s Fall Picnic.

A CLOSER LOOK

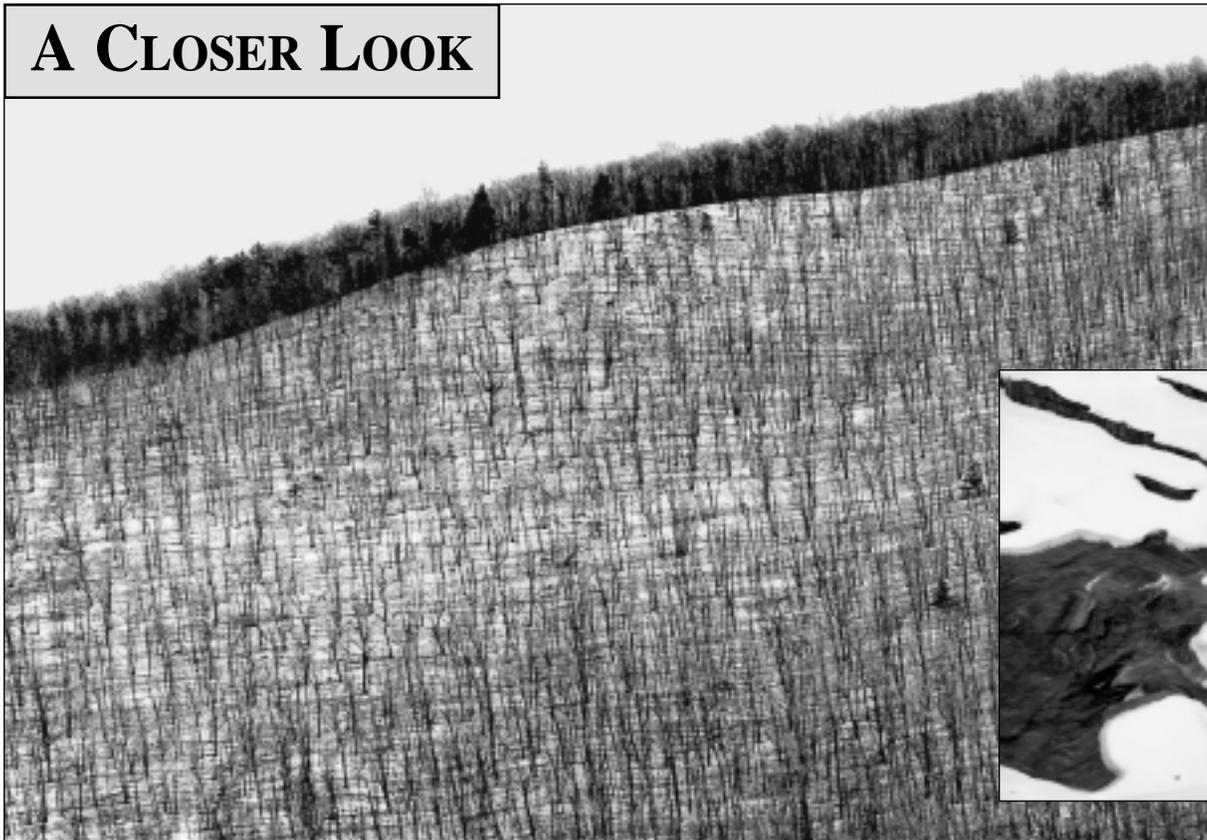


Photo by: Harry Littell

Winter Creek,
February 13, 2000

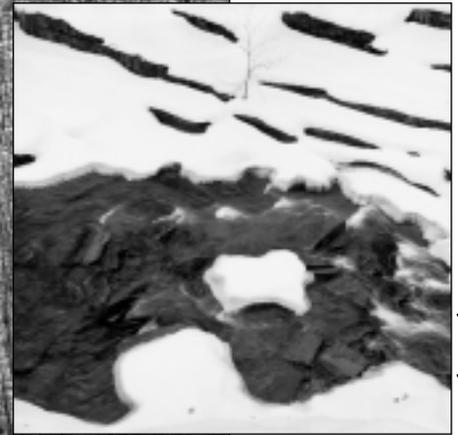


Photo by: Harry Littell

Pinnacles, January 30, 2000

ICE

To linger in the Finger Lakes for more than a few months is to feel the approach of winter. We marshal resources for the trial, prepare the traditional crisis rituals, and summon our fortitude. We know that summer is but a respite, for winter comes again and ever again. Cold is a sovereign power to our north, and our region falls under periodic contention. Yet beyond winter ardors and grief, a wealth of keen insights and aesthetic experiences tempts us. Winter phenomena repay endurance with uncommon intimacies and heart-piercing beauties. Our frozen lakes and waterfalls, our forests encased in glittering ice—how inadequate the images of greeting card scenery, once we venture forth.

Both the beauty and the power of ice derive from a peculiar property of water. Unlike most substances, water expands as it freezes. This rock-disintegrating force makes subterranean water a potent agent for landscape alteration. We can see the slow disruption and removal of bedrock by ice in most any outcrop, but the process reaches greatly magnified development in the titanic quarrying that

occurs out of sight at the immensely pressurized undersurface of glaciers. The bottom ice wedges, pries, and plucks phenomenal volumes of stone blocks and fragments as it passes, forever altering the face of the underlying terrain.

The Finger Lakes Region owes its most spectacular landforms to a history of recurring glaciations of continental magnitude. The last passage of the ice left a world-class showcase of drumlins, eskers, kettles, and kames; of hanging valleys, deeply excavated troughs, and steep gorge-cutting streams. Today the glacial origin of these features seems as remote as Greenland's persistent ice cap. Yet the most recent cycle, the Wisconsin Glaciation, occurred only last night in geological history, when ice scraped the entire region utterly clean of its native biota and left behind a lifeless barrens. During the 14 millennia since the Wisconsin backed off of New York State, native earthworms have wriggled just 100 miles northward into the regions from which they were eradicated.

Most fauna and flora rebounded far more aggressively. Recolonization from

the south proceeded in the manner of a great pioneering land-rush, with devastating casualties along the way. A wave of extinctions accompanied the rapid translations northward, even as invaders from Eurasia were spreading across the newly opened lands. Within a few thousand years, the current warm interregnum was established and the newly-native species developed relatively stable biotic communities, but these communities do not preserve the image of earlier interglacial periods.

In our most ancient traditions the season of darkness and cold is a season of hope. Contemporary stewardship focuses on preservation, but we should not forget that arrest and destruction play crucial formative roles in nature. On an ice age time scale the frontier of living lands has migrated back and forth across New York State an unknown number of times. Catastrophic change, extinction, and opportunistic invasion are part of deep history here. What emerges to inform the hopes of conservationists is the great resilience of life.

— Geo Kloppel

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Advisors:

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Seneca Chapter:

Irene Brown, *Chair* (607) 387-6507
Box 87, Montour Falls, NY 14865

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Box 91, Skaneateles, NY 13152

Keuka Chapter:

Debbie Koop, *Chair* (315) 595-2523
Brookside, Corwin Rd.
Branchport, NY 14418

Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 E. Court Street
Ithaca, New York 14850
(607) 275-9487
Fax: (607) 275-0037
email: flt@cornell.edu
www.fllt.org

Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 E. Court Street
Ithaca, New York 14850



WINTER 2000-2001 CALENDAR:

Feb. 11, Sun. 2 PM: Trees & Tracks at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve, Town of Dryden. Directions to the preserve: take E. State St. (Rt. 79 East) from Ithaca. Turn left on Rt. 366, then leave it where it bears left, and continue straight on Mitchell St./Ellis Hollow Rd. After about 2.5 miles, turn left on Genung Rd., then right on Ellis Hollow Creek Rd. Very soon — right after a small creek — park off to the side of the road. The preserve entrance is just east of the stream, on the north side of the road.

March 11, Sun. 2 PM: Winter Wonders at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve, West Danby. Directions to the preserve: take Rt. 13 south from Ithaca, then take Rt. 34/96 south to West Danby. Meet at the preserve parking lot, on the east side of Rt. 34/96 and about 1/2 mile south of Sylvan Drive. Entrance to the parking lot is at the top of a hill, opposite a house and barn.

April 29th, Sun.: ANNUAL MEETING, Ithaca. Watch for more information in the Spring Land Steward.

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.

Check out our web page for maps and photos of our preserves! www.fllt.org