

TRIBUTARIES

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE OLD LYME LAND TRUST

Incorporated 1966

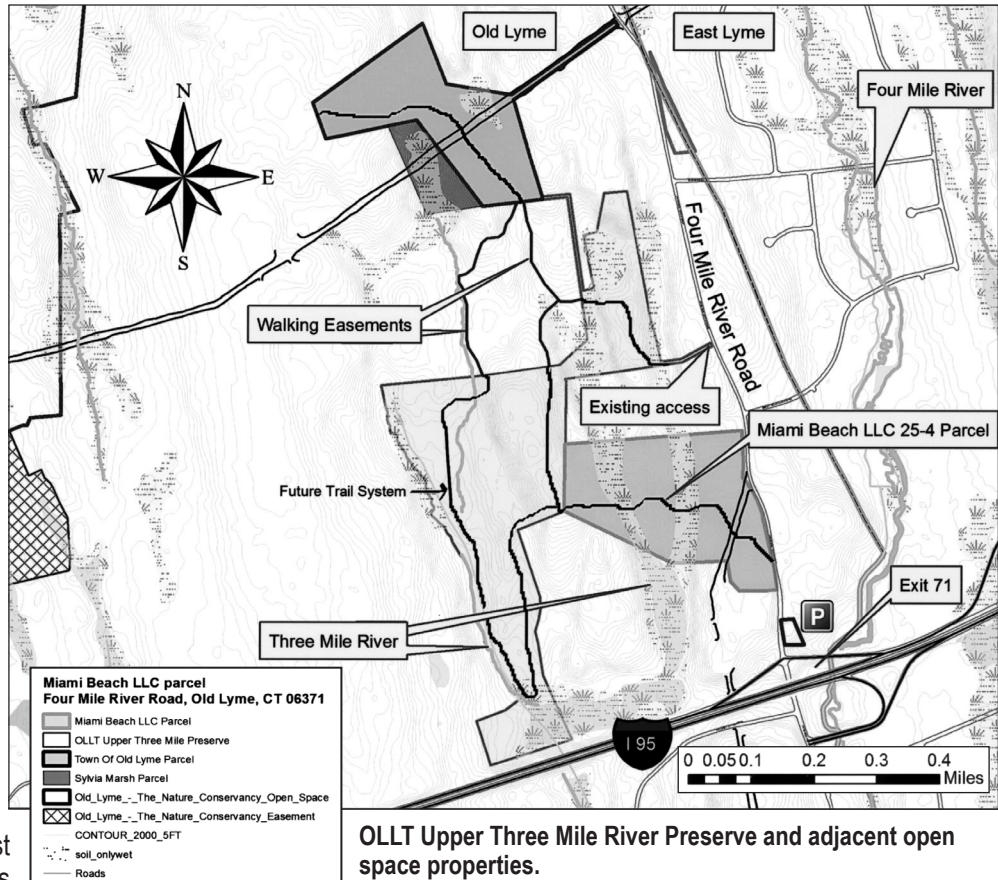
www.oldlymelandtrust.org

August 2014

The Grand Canyon of Old Lyme

The Old Lyme Land Trust purchased about 40 acres of forested, undeveloped land at 106 Four Mile River Road from Robert Speirs of Miami Beach, LLC. From an environmental standpoint, this parcel is important, as it is traversed by two important wetland tributaries of the upper Three Mile River, thus harboring the eastern half of the Three Mile River headwaters. This acquisition expands by almost one third an aggregation of protected, undisturbed open space along the eastern boundary of town. That expanse of land is now 160 acres, 120 of which are contiguous and owned by the Trust. Another 29 acres, owned by the Town of Old Lyme, as well as an 8.5 acre parcel recently donated to OLLT by Sylvia Marsh (see page 3), will be accessible by foot from the Trust holdings by walking easements over property owned by Jen Hillhouse. Mrs. Hillhouse generously granted the easements to OLLT several years ago.

Particularly exciting for the Trust is the fact that the new parcel has considerable frontage along Four Mile River Road, and will thus provide good direct access for the first time. At the moment, the two points of access are challenging. One route is from Four Mile River Road through the OLLT parcel at 132 Four Mile River Road. Thanks to the efforts of TJ Lynch



OLLT Upper Three Mile River Preserve and adjacent open space properties.

and the Lyme/Old Lyme Boy Scout troop last spring (a project for which TJ was awarded the Eagle Scout award), a trail was blazed along a narrow entry corridor there and a stairway was built down a very steep slope. Unfortunately, there is no parking there, but there is parking at the commuter parking lot. The other access, through a Connecticut Light & Power right-of-way from the road through the Town land at 174-3 Four

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Watch Rock Preserve Habitat Restoration

Recent visitors to the Elizabeth B. Karter Watch Rock Preserve have seen some significant changes. Where there once was an impenetrable wall of invasive shrubs, there are now open views through the woods. The Old Lyme Land Trust received a \$24,000 grant from the National Resources Conservation Service in 2013 to remove these harmful plants from 16 acres at Watch Rock, and the results so far have been spectacular.

In 2011, OLLT adopted a land management plan for Watch Rock, written by Connecticut Sea Grant and the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District. It named eliminating

invasive plants as a top priority. Watch Rock was noted as an "ecological gem" because of the variety of habitats found there, and these plants pose a serious threat to those habitats. The removal of the above-ground parts of the invasive plants is just the beginning of what will be a multi-year project aimed at rehabilitating the damaged ecosystems and controlling re-invasion.

The 16 acres cleared at Watch Rock were close to being an ecological desert (see Nature Note on page 2). But seeds of some native species survived, and OLLT is working hard

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While lush and green, this stand of invasive plant species is an ecological dead zone.

Watch Rock *(Continued from page 1)*

to encourage them, and will also be planting native shrubs and trees. The field habitat is being expanded and restored. Work began there in June by Colonial Seed Company, widely acknowledged experts on the establishment of native grass meadows. In late summer, we will begin eliminating the root



An area of the Watch Rock Preserve where masses of invasive plants have been removed, resulting in open areas studded with brush piles which create habitat for wildlife.

systems of invasive shrubs that resurged after cutting. Work in building large brush piles, created to encourage wildlife, continues. The entire project will take several years, and monitoring for invasion will be ongoing. Anyone who would like to help will be most welcome; please just let us know.

Nature Note: Invasive Species

Many people wonder what's so bad about invasive plants. Most are very attractive – Japanese honeysuckle smells wonderful in the spring and the brilliant red foliage of burning bush is lovely in autumn. The trouble is that these very aggressive, non-native plants out-compete our natives and take over whole ecosystems, causing them to stop functioning.

Heavily invaded ecosystems suffer huge losses in biodiversity. Our native wildlife evolved using native plants for food and shelter, and has difficulty surviving without them. Insects that feed on native plants and provided food for native wildlife are not adapted to the invasive plants. About 98% of our local songbirds feed their young at least in part on insects, and the loss of habitat to invasive plants is a major cause of serious declines in songbird populations. Invasive species are at least partially to blame for the listing of nearly half (42%) of all species on the Federal Endangered Species List, and the sole reason for 18%.

In 2000, a study at Cornell University estimated that invasive species cost the U.S. \$137 billion per year. This figure includes costs related to the control, management, and remediation of invasive species, as well as costs from losses of crops, livestock, and forest products. The problems caused by invasive species have increased exponentially since then,

and last year the Nature Conservancy estimated the worldwide price at \$1.4 trillion, about 5% of the world economy.

You can help in the fight against invasive species by starting in your own backyard! If we all could just get rid of the invasives in our own yards, we could make a significant difference by eliminating seed sources. Nearly all our invasive plants once escaped from someone's yard. Contact the following organizations for help getting started: the U.S. Department of Agriculture (www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov) or the Connecticut Invasive Plants Working Group (cipwg.uconn.edu).

Mike Wells, Attorney at Law

Organizations such as the Old Lyme Land Trust rely on goodwill and friends. Perhaps there is no better example of this than Mike Wells, who has served as an informal general counsel to OLLT for the past several years.

A summa cum laude graduate of Hofstra University's law school and a member of its law review, Mike has practiced law for 33 years, including 31 for a firm bearing his name (among others) in Essex. Engaged in real estate, probate, municipal and planning and zoning law, Mike brings to OLLT a broad range of experience.

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World Fish Migration Day 2014

The Mary Steube Fishway at Old Lyme Land Trust's George & Woodward Griswold Preserve was the first stop on a tour of five Eastern Connecticut fishways in celebration of World Fish Migration Day 2014 on May 24. The aim of World Fish Migration Day 2014, a global initiative with local events worldwide, was to create public awareness of the importance of open rivers and free routes for fish migration.

The local tours were led by Steve Gephard, a fish biologist with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) who supervises the state inland fisheries diadromous fish program, and Sally Harold, Director of Migratory Fish Projects with The Nature Conservancy. Diadromous fish are species that migrate between the sea and fresh water. Fishways are structures that allow fish to get around dams that would otherwise block their upstream migration. According to Gephard, while there once were 14 species of native migratory fish in Connecticut, some species may have disappeared, for instance, the Atlantic sturgeon, smelt, and sea-run brook trout. These fish have suffered from river pollution as well as from dams and other obstructions.

The Grand Canyon

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Mile River Road, is extremely challenging due to the terrain.

The Trust's holdings will be named the Upper Three Mile River Preserve and will be stewarded by Mike Kiernan. Mike was instrumental in effecting the earlier purchases of contiguous land, and it is his vision of the area being the "Grand Canyon of Old Lyme" that has propelled the Trust's activities. We have applied for a grant to cover part of the acquisition cost under the 2014 Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program.

The Preserve is not yet open to the public. Serious trail-blazing efforts, as well as building boardwalks to carry hikers over wetlands, are expected to take place this fall. Please let us know if you would like to help!



Steve Gephard explains the workings of the fish ladder at the George and Woodward Griswold Preserve on Route 1.

OLLT's Mary Steube Fishway next to the dam on the Lower Mill Pond consists of a ladder for diadromous fish (primarily alewives and blueback herring, or "buckies") and an eel ladder. The fish ladder has a window for watching fish jump from one step to another as they go up the ladder and into the pond, and a fish counter. The operation is monitored by the DEEP, which issues weekly fish count reports during the fish run season. See the Connecticut River Salmon Association's web site (www.crriversalmon.org) for a list of reports.

A Very Special Donation

The Old Lyme Land Trust is very grateful to Sylvia Marsh, who donated to OLLT an 8.5 acre woodlot on Four Mile River Road in her will. The parcel abuts 29 acres of open space owned by the Town of Old Lyme and will be connected to the Upper Three Mile River Preserve through walking easements over the property of Jen Hillhouse. The public's use of the entire area will be enhanced by Mrs. Marsh's very thoughtful and generous donation.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Complete form and return to: **Old Lyme Land Trust**, Post Office Box 163, Old Lyme, CT 06371

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

☐ YES, I would like to volunteer. Please call/email me.

My employer has a matching Gift Program: ☐ Form Enclosed Company _____

Please consider Old Lyme Land Trust in your estate planning. ☐ Check here if you would like more information.

Enclosed is my contribution: ☐ \$35 ☐ \$75 Dogwood ☐ \$150 Maple ☐ \$500 Beech ☐ \$1500 Oak ☐ Other \$ _____

Please make check payable to: **Old Lyme Land Trust**. Your gift is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. *Thank You.*

Donors at the Maple, Beech, and Oak levels are entitled to a cap, T-shirt, or book, respectively.

☐ Check here if you would like to receive a gift. For the T-shirt, please indicate: ☐ small ☐ medium ☐ large ☐ extra large



OLLT Board Member Fred Fenton explains points of interest at the opening of the Mile Creek Educational Trail.

Inaugural Hike Held at the Mile Creek Educational Trail

In honor of Earth Day 2014, the Old Lyme Land Trust sponsored a short walk on the newly created Educational Nature Trail across from Mile Creek School on April 27. This trail has a dozen points of interest marked by wooden posts which were decorated by students from Mile Creek School. A colorful brochure, which can be downloaded from the OLLT

website, gives interesting facts about different aspects of the forest. Pam Hine, a Botany Professor at Connecticut College and OLLT Board Member, led the walk. The weather was cooperative, participants ranged from almost 9 months to 90 years of age, and a good time was had by all. We look forward to seeing you next Earth Day!

Isabel Ritrovato is Winner of Twining Scholarship

Isabel Ritrovato, a 2014 graduate of Lyme-Old Lyme High School, is the winner of the Old Lyme Land Trust's 2014 Kinsley Twining Memorial Scholarship. The \$1000 scholarship is awarded to a LOLHS graduate who is pursuing a college degree in environmental science or a related field.

Isabel's experiences reflect her interest in the outdoors and environment. She served as the president of the LOLHS Environmental Club for the past three years, during which time she participated in various activities including trail clearing for OLLT. She monitored piping plover for the Fish and Wildlife Service, conducted a study on invasive crayfish species at the Rogers Lake Watershed, and is currently a docent at the Mystic Aquarium where she has volunteered for the past four years.

Isabel will be attending the College of William and Mary located in Williamsburg, VA and intends to pursue a course of study which will equip her for a career dedicated to conservation biology and research "to

protect the animal population and habitats of Earth".

Applications for the 2015 Scholarship are due by March 15, 2015. More information including an application can be found at www.oldlymelandtrust.org.

Mike Wells

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Much of the Trust's legal work is straightforward real estate acquisition work. For example, in the last two years, Mike assisted with OLLT's purchase of two large properties, 29-1 Hachetts Hill Road and 106 Four Mile River Road. But sometimes the process gets complicated. OLLT's receipt of the very kind donation from the John Lohmann Estate of a property on the Connecticut River took nearly six years from notification of the original bequest to closing. Mike will point out that there were many moving parts including the interests of the family, working with the Estate attorney and coordinating with the Nature Conservancy, which holds a conservation easement on the property. Mike's good nature, patience, and diplomacy, as well as lawyerly skill, helped make the transaction a great success.

Upcoming Events



Old Lyme Kayak Regatta

On Sunday, September 21, certified kayak instructor Barry Gorfain will lead a kayak excursion suitable for families with children as well as experienced paddlers. The event will take place from 11 am – 1 pm and will depart from the Black Hall Marina located at 132 Shore Road. You may bring your own

kayak or rent from Black Hall Outfitters at the marina. Snacks and drinks will be provided. A donation of \$10 per kayak or \$25 per family to the Old Lyme Land Trust is requested. Contact Christina Clayton at 860 434-6294 or Fred Fenton at fentonland@sbcglobal.net for more information or to sign up.

Swallows Cruise on Saturday, September 27

Join us for a fabulous natural spectacle on the Connecticut River. In the late afternoon during the fall migration, hundreds of thousands of tree swallows gather on the river from 30 miles around and create beautiful sweeping formations in the sky. Just as the sun sets they converge into a huge funnel over Goose Island and disappear into the reeds to roost for the night. Roger Tory Peterson, the noted ornithologist, was introduced to this phenomenon by Hank Golet, an OLLT steward. Peterson later wrote: "For sheer drama, the tornadoes of tree swallows eclipsed any other avian spectacle I have seen".

OLLT will host a cruise on the Connecticut River to view the swallows in action on Saturday, September 27 from 5-8 pm. Tickets are \$40 each. Wine, beer, and soft drinks will be provided. You may bring a picnic supper.

Contact Ted Mundy (860-434-5674) for more information or to purchase tickets.



Tree Swallow

Volunteer of the Year



LOLHS Environmental Club members Isabel Ritrovato, Hugh Cipparone, Madalyn Gibson-Williams, Philip Hallwood and club advisor Heather Fried received the 2014 Volunteer of the Year Award.

The 2014 Volunteer of the Year award was presented to the Lyme-Old Lyme High School Environmental Club for its sustained efforts maintaining trails at the Goberis-Chadwick Preserve on Route 156 and for its work blazing a new trail at the Heller Preserve on Town Woods Road.

Ably led by Heather Fried, the club's advisor, these hardworking and enthusiastic young environmentalists tackled their projects

with great zeal and continue to support the Old Lyme Land Trust in our efforts to afford the public the opportunity to enjoy our natural, scenic, and historic open spaces.



At the annual Old Lyme Midsummer Festival on July 26, the Old Lyme Land Trust hosted a booth for making a nature-inspired craft: wind chimes constructed from bamboo and sea shells. As always, the event was very popular with young people who were proud of their creations.