



# Old Lyme Land Trust

## Our Annual Newsletter: *Tributaries*

Incorporated 1966

[www.oldlymelandtrust.org](http://www.oldlymelandtrust.org)

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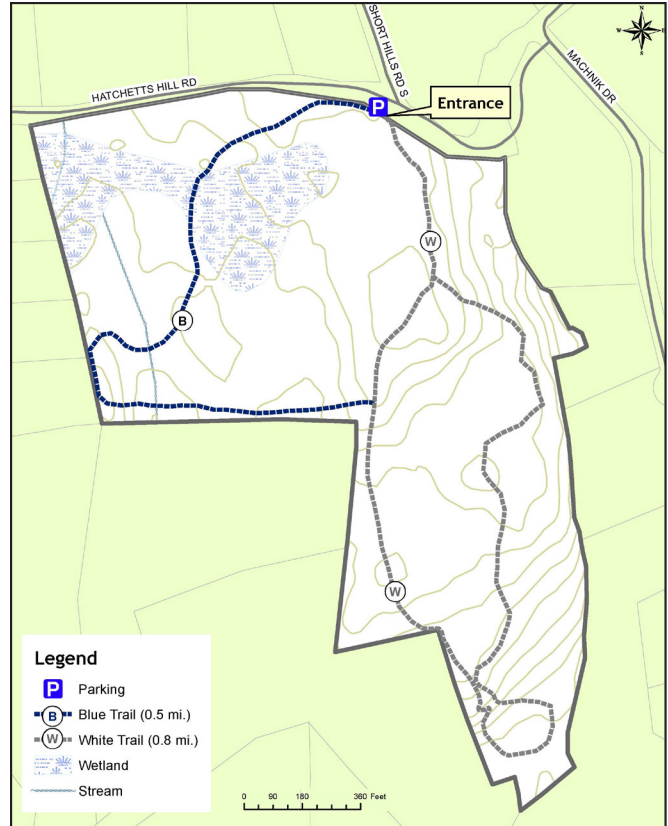
## Hatchetts Hill Preserve is a Hidden Gem

OLLT opened the Hatchetts Hill Preserve in 2014. Purchased from Elyandco, Inc., this 44-acre preserve is located in the eastern part of town just south of I-95.

The land is flat, providing for easy walking through lovely woods of oak, beech, maple and beds of fern. Two walking trails have been blazed so far. One, the blue trail, crosses wetlands where, in season, wood frogs, spotted salamanders, spring peepers and perhaps other amphibians can be seen and heard. In fact, if you are lucky enough to be near Hatchetts Hill Road on "Big Night"—the first rainy night in early spring when certain kinds of amphibians leave the woods and migrate across local roads to the vernal pools in which they breed—you may see large numbers of them.

The land has significant conservation value. The wetlands located in the northwestern corner of the preserve are the primary source of Armstrong Brook, a waterway that flows from Hatchetts Hill south to just west of Hatchetts Point, where it enters Long Island Sound. Armstrong Brook is one of seven rivers and streams identified as important natural resources in the 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development of Old Lyme. In addition, when added to the existing open space held by the neighboring homeowners associations (Chestnut Hill, Stonewood and Peppermint Ridge) and the OLLT-owned Founders Way parcel, a conglomeration of over 200 acres of protected land has been created. While most of these lands

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Map of the Hatchetts Hill Preserve.

## The Vision of a Land Saver

A tradition of the Old Lyme Land Trust is to recognize a community member who contributes significantly to land conservation and stewardship in Old Lyme. The recipient of the 2015 Land Saver award is the McCulloch family. Known as McCulloch Farm on Whippoorwill Road, the family's 434 acres were protected by a conservation easement that the family created and donated to The Nature Conservancy in 2000. By definition, such easements prohibit development which, in this case, resulted in preservation of the Black Hall River Watershed land, ecology and wildlife. The town's character is enhanced by the preservation of undisturbed land while the family retains ownership.

As David McCulloch stated, "It is too complicated to put into words what the land has meant for my family, but it did, in part, determine what we did with our lives. We were inspired by the stewardship of our mother, "Rook" Metzger McCulloch, and donated the land in 2000." The McCulloch children pursued varied career paths: Catherine Taffy Holland was a research biologist; Mary Jean Vasiloff bred nationally known

Morgan horses on the farm; David became a geologist; and George became an engineer.

In accepting the award on behalf of his family, David offered a geological history lesson: Viewed in a single lifetime,  
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The entrance to the McCulloch Farm on Whippoorwill Road



A newly planted rhododendron bush in bloom at the Watch Rock Preserve.

## Watch Rock Preserve Habitat Restoration Continues

Since 2013, when OLLT received a \$24,000 grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, work has been ongoing to improve the health of the Watch Rock Preserve. Watch Rock Preserve has been described as an “ecological gem” because of the variety of habitats found there. Invasive plants pose a serious threat to those habitats. To date, OLLT has cleared, expanded, and seeded the meadow, created brush piles and snags (standing dead trees which provide habitat for animals such as woodpeckers), and removed invasive plants from the forest understory.

In May, an OLLT work party began the work of planting native shrubs and trees in the cleared areas. Future work will include removing invasive plants which re-sprout, removing diseased trees, and reseeding the meadow to promote the growth of native grasses which can provide habitat for nesting birds, butterflies, and other creatures. The entire project will take several years. Another effort to protect the Watch Rock Preserve ecosystem is the enforcement of preserve rules which include no picnicking, fires, or littering. Anyone who would like to help at this special preserve will be most welcome.

## The Vision of a Land Saver

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our landscape appears to be relatively stable, but a longer term view shows how dynamic it has been. Around 30,000 years ago you would have been standing on the southern edge of an immense glacier. Approximately 10,000 years later, climatic warming defeated the moving ice, melting it in places but leaving large isolated ice blocks on the valley floors. Fast flowing rivers and streams fed by glacial melt water deposited millions of cubic yards of sand and gravel on the lowlands. This built our present valley floors and partially buried the isolated ice blocks. Final melting of the ice blocks left topographic depressions (“kettle holes”) that hold our lakes and ponds.

The identification of pollen from radio-carbon dated sediment cores collected from late glacial ponds (including Rogers Lake) reveals a history of the change of vegetation that accompanied the warming climate. First came the subarctic vegetation of treeless tundra; followed by Northern boreal forests of spruce, pine, fir, alder and birch; and then 8000 years ago, temperate forests with deciduous trees such as oak, chestnut and white pine appeared.

David concluded with a thoughtful look: “There is a severe extinction occurring today and people just don’t realize it. The current landscape will be very changed the next time around.” The ability to think long-term and consider the bigger picture, as exemplified by Old Lyme’s McCulloch family, has resulted in the preservation of a significant piece of land for future generations.

## Hatchetts Hill Preserve

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are not open to the public for hiking, they protect important wetland habitat and provide greenway linkages for wildlife migration.

The acquisition was enabled by a generous grant from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection’s (DEEP) Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) program. The OSWA program is a vital source of funds for land trusts.

### New Preserve Maps

If you visit the OLLT website, you will find that the preserve pages have been enhanced by the inclusion of maps of each property.

The maps were created by Lisa Niccolai, and illustrate key features of the preserves such as: color-coded trails, natural features (streams, wetlands, etc), parking areas, scenic points, boundaries, and nearby roads. The maps are an excellent resource to use when exploring OLLT preserves, and can be printed from the OLLT website ([www.oldlymelandtrust.org](http://www.oldlymelandtrust.org)).





Members of the Lyme-Old Lyme High School Community Service Club after a rewarding work party at which they performed trail maintenance at the Goberis-Chadwick Preserve.

## Be A Volunteer Steward

What does it take to be a preserve steward? Mostly it requires an enjoyment of being in the woods, which is where the stewards who serve as eyes and ears of OLLT do their work. The task of a steward is to periodically monitor the condition of a particular preserve and report to the Stewardship Committee if any work is needed or, if the steward is willing and able, perform the work (such as clearing downed trees or branches from a trail) him- or herself.

For frequent visitors to an OLLT preserve, serving as a steward involves little additional time commitment. That is what led Hank Golet to start stewarding the Lohmann-Buck-Twining Preserve. "I got involved because I was walking the property. It gives you a good feeling to do something when you see an issue with one of the trails," said Hank.

When he started, walks in the preserve were a part of his morning routine. He makes sure to visit the preserve after a major storm. Hank

has been a steward for over 10 years and has compiled a list of some 80 birds he has observed at the Lohmann-Buck-Twining Preserve. Both groups and individuals can serve as stewards. For example, the Lyme-Old Lyme High School Community Service Club stewards the Goberis-Chadwick Preserve on Route 156 near the border between Old Lyme and South Lyme.

Other opportunities to volunteer include participating in monthly work parties, serving as OLLT Board Members, taking photographs for OLLT archives and publications, and fundraising. Please contact Christina Clayton at 860 434-6294 if you are interested in any of these activities or have other skills to offer.

***Become an  
Old Lyme Land  
Trust Member  
Today!***

## Leaving a Legacy:

## How Bequests Can Help Preserve Land Forever

What is a charitable bequest? A charitable bequest is simply a distribution from your estate to a charitable organization through your last will and testament. Your estate is the sum of your assets, including property you own, insurance policies, retirement accounts, cash on hand, etc. Wealthy people may have very large estates, but even people who aren't wealthy often have the resources to make a charitable bequest.

General bequests are legacies left to certain people or causes that come from the general value of the estate, and are made by designating a specific dollar amount, a particular asset, or a fixed percentage of your estate to the cause of your choice. Example general bequest language:

*"I give to NAME OF CHARITY/LOCATION, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or a description of the specific asset), for the benefit of NAME OF CHARITY and its general purposes."*

There are also other types of bequests, including residuary bequests (the residue portion of your assets is given after other terms of your will have been satisfied), and contingency bequests (a portion of your estate is given to a particular charity if your named beneficiary does not survive you).

Planned giving is a simple way to combine philanthropy and financial planning. Depending on the current tax laws, leaving a gift to charity in your will may reduce the estate tax burden on your heirs significantly. If a charitable bequest is of interest to you, set up an appointment with your financial analyst or attorney. These professionals will help guide you through the process and explain how giving may actually benefit your family after you're gone.

By remembering OLLT in your will, you will honor your commitment to land conservation in Old Lyme. Your bequest—of any size—will help provide vital funds for maintaining and adding to OLLT's almost 900 acres of preserved land in Old Lyme.

# We gratefully acknowledge those who have generously donated to OLLT (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015)

Patricia Abraham  
ADS Financial  
Judith Archer  
Diana Atwood-Johnson  
William & Marsha Bansavage  
David Barclay  
Elizabeth Bassett  
Charles & Barbara Beal  
Thomas Beers  
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Hans & Lilo Hess  
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Jan Hine  
Pamela Hine  
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Lois Hoops  
Loisann Huntley  
Roger Hurley  
Ellen Jacobs  
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Ben Van Gool  
Theodore Vanitalle  
Christopher & Mary Voegeli  
Sidney Whelan, Jr.  
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Jill Whitney  
Adele & Lucius Wilmerding  
Ed & Lyn Wolcott  
David Woolley  
Lorraine Yurkewicz

*Thank you!*

*The Trust would also like to acknowledge and thank Mike Wells for his pro bono work as attorney to OLLT.*

*OLLT thanks Pfizer, Inc. for matching the contributions of its employees and for providing financial support in recognition of employees who volunteer significant time to OLLT.*



Decorating rocks for the Fairy Grove at the Belton Copp on Smiths Neck Road at the Old Lyme Midsummer Festival. This is one of the activities – with the aim of connecting young people to nature – that your donations support.



# Whose Woods Are These?



A white-breasted nuthatch, one of the birds identified by Patrick Comins.

What birds are nesting in OLLT's Hoffman-Mathiessen-DeGerenday and George & Woodward Griswold Preserves? And, what birds might nest there in the future with a little diversification and improvement of the natural habitat? These were some of the questions that were being discussed and answered by Patrick Comins, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon CT and Eric Hansen, a partner with the forestry consulting firm of Ferrucci & Walicki in Middlefield as they hiked through the two preserves with Christina Clayton, OLLT President, on a hot afternoon in July. A report that contains a snapshot bird survey—a list of birds present at the preserves on that day as identified by Comins, primarily on the basis of their songs—and recommendations for habitat improvement will be presented to OLLT at the end of the year.

This is an example of the Audubon Connecticut Forest Bird Initiative at work. The need for it is compelling. Most of the remaining forest land in Connecticut is in private hands, and much of that forest has become uniform – “middle-aged”, in Comins' words. The Initiative seeks to educate private landowners about how important their forest lands are for bird habitat, and how they might manage portions of their lands to improve the habitat and diversify it to attract more bird species.

Even if the forests are fragmented and the parcels too small to support breeding birds, the trees, shrubs and understory can provide essential food and cover for birds that migrate through the state in spring and fall if managed properly and creatively. Creating gaps in the canopy to allow light into the understory and removing invasive plants are only some of the measures that can be taken.

Some measures are modest and others, such as creating early successional habitat, can be radical.

The Forest Bird initiative is funded by grants from the North East State Foresters Association and the U.S. Forest Service, and its services are free to the landowner, in this case, OLLT. The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and DEEP are assisting Audubon Connecticut in doing assessments. “Our preserves are for both people and wildlife”, said Clayton. “And they go together. The more varied the wildlife, the more interesting the preserves are to people. As much as we would like to do it, we do not have the resources to hire an Eric Hansen or an ornithologist of the caliber of Patrick Comins. We are thrilled to participate in the program.”

The Initiative has one more year to run. Contact Audubon CT to see if you qualify for an assessment under the program.

## Isabel Ritrovato is Winner of Kinsley Twining Memorial Scholarship

Isabel Ritrovato, a 2014 graduate of Lyme-Old Lyme High School, is the winner of the Old Lyme Land Trust's 2015 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, including membership in the William and Mary Bird Club, reflect her interest in the outdoors and environment. Isabel will be entering her sophomore year at the College of William and Mary. She is pursuing a course of study, including research in the Applied Conservation and Ecological Research Laboratory, which will lead to a career dedicated to conservation biology.

Applications for the 2016 Scholarship are due by March 15, 2016. More information including an application can be found at [www.oldlymelandtrust.org](http://www.oldlymelandtrust.org).



Jesper Silberber's "For Grandma", which won the John G. Mitchell Award at the 9th Annual Amateur Photo Contest sponsored by the land trusts of Old Lyme, Lyme, Salem, East Had-dam and Essex

## 2nd Annual OLLT Kayak Regatta on Sunday, September 20



Paddlers of all ages enjoyed the 2014 OLLT Kayak Regatta.

Given the success of last year's event, OLLT will again host a 2-hour kayak paddle along the Black Hall River or nearby Roger Tory Peterson Great Island Preserve and Long Island Sound. We will look for wildlife while enjoying the beautiful scenery.

The event will be led by Barry Gorfain, a certified kayak instructor. Bring your own kayak or rent one from the Black Hall Marina. Personal Floatation Devices (life vests) are required. The

paddle is suitable for families with children. Donations to support OLLT are requested. Please arrive at the Black Hall Marina at 132 Shore Road in Old Lyme by 1 p.m. To register, contact Fred Fenton at [fentonland@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fentonland@sbcglobal.net) or (860) 434-2468. We hope to see you there.

### Swallows Cruise on Saturday, September 26

Join us to view an event like no other! See hundreds of thousands of tree swallows gather on the Connecticut River from 30 miles around and create beautiful sweeping formations in the sky. For the grand finale, just as the sun sets they converge into a huge funnel over Goose Island and disappear into the reeds to roost for the night.

OLLT will host a cruise on the Connecticut River to view the swallows in action on Saturday, September 26 from 5-8 pm. Tickets are \$40 each. Wine, beer, and soft drinks will be provided. Feel free to bring a picnic supper. Contact Ted Mundy (860-434-5674) for more information or to purchase tickets.