

TRIBUTARIES

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE OLD LYME LAND TRUST

Incorporated 1966

www.oldlymelandtrust.org

August 2013

DEEP Grant Helps Fund Purchase of 45 Acres on Hatchetts Hill Road

Old Lyme Land Trust is pleased to announce the new Hatchetts Hill Preserve as its latest acquisition, the first in several years. Thanks to a grant from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Open Space Program, which covered half of the cost, OLLT was able to purchase 45 acres of woodland at the intersection of Hatchetts Hill and Short Hill Roads. Combined with an adjacent 16 acres already owned by the Trust, this new 61-acre preserve protects valuable wetlands and upland forest that, several years ago, were targeted for development. The preserve also

helps to protect the headwaters of Armstrong Brook, which flows south through several neighborhoods before emptying into Long Island Sound.

Though not open to the public, two (2) neighboring open space set-asides abut the parcel, making for an even larger protected area for birds and other wildlife. In the fall, OLLT will blaze a system of trails and establish a parking area, after which the 61-acre preserve will be opened to the public. Keep an eye on our website for more news on this and other OLLT preserves.

A Dream Coming True

For many years now, the Old Lyme Land Trust's Three Mile River Preserve has been difficult to access and essentially closed, due to a precipitous drop-off not far from the trailhead. Not only that -- there wasn't even a trail. That has changed now, thanks to the hard work of TJ Lynch of Lyme, and Boy Scout Troop 26 of Lyme/Old Lyme. In partial fulfillment of his Eagle Scout requirements, TJ took on the job of building a Wilderness Ladder on the preserve, one which will allow hikers to safely descend the slope on their way into the preserve. As part of the project, TJ has also blazed a trail that leads from the trailhead to the Ladder. These are the first and most important steps in the process of opening the preserve to the public. In the near future, OLLT plans to build a short boardwalk that will cross a wetland, and beyond that, a trail of at least one mile will be blazed around the preserve. TJ's project took place on a weekend in mid-July. At one point, up to 20 scouts, parents and others were working under his

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In Recognition

Jerry Silberberg was recognized as the 2013 Old Lyme Land Trust Volunteer of the Year for his years of work preparing and installing signs at the trailheads at OLLT Preserves and his dedication to the seemingly endless job of preserve maintenance.

The OLLT expresses thanks to retiring Trustees **Agnes O'Connor** and **Kathi Green** for their contributions to OLLT over the past years.

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

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



TJ Lynch (on bottom step) with a few of his Wilderness Ladder collaborators.



The magical fairy garden at the Belton Copp Preserve takes visitors away to another world.

No Child Left Inside

One of the Old Lyme Land Trust's goals is to get kids into the woods. Our aim is not only to get them off the couch and into the sunshine, but also to help acquaint them with the wonders of nature. This can lead to a lifetime of enjoyment via hiking, camping, birding, photography, hunting, or fishing, and may also encourage an appreciation for the environment and hopefully a desire to learn about it and preserve it.

The OLLT currently has two (2) projects underway especially for children (although children of all ages are encouraged to explore them). The first is the Whimsy Walk and Fairy Garden located in the Belton Copp Preserve on Smith Neck Road. This delightful grove is filled with artistic, magical, and whimsical creations made by children of Old Lyme. Visitors are encouraged to bring some small creation, perhaps suitable for a fairy to live in, and leave it in this special place. This colorful garden was originally located in the Elizabeth B. Karter Watch Rock Preserve, however Hurricane Sandy destroyed that area.

The second project is the Mile Creek Educational Nature Trail located within the school zone of the Mile Creek Elementary School. The trail, which is currently under construction, will have about a dozen points of interest at which children (or adults) can learn amazing things while walking the loop trail. The 2nd graders of Mile Creek Elementary School are decorating the trail markers. We anticipate that teachers at the school will take their students to the trail at times when it is relevant to the curriculum. Since plans are underway for the Mile Creek Elementary School to house students from pre-school through 5th grade, we hope the students will visit the trail many times while enrolled there.

What's New at the Watch Rock Preserve

There is exciting news for lovers of the Elizabeth B. Karter Watch Rock Preserve. The Old Lyme Land Trust has received a grant of \$24,000 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to carry out a conservation plan for restoration of the Watch Rock Preserve. The conservation plan reflects earlier management plans for the Watch Rock Preserve developed by the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District (CRCCD) and Tom Degnan, a certified forester. The NRCS grant, coupled with monies from a very generous anonymous donation made to the Trust through the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, will enable us to complete a project that has been contemplated for many years. The work, to be performed by a team of professionals with assistance from volunteers, will commence later in the year.

Watch Rock Preserve, well-known to residents for its panoramic views, is a magnet for wildlife as well as people. Indeed, it is an ecological gem, recognized by the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District (CRCCD) as an important and unique site because of the several distinct habitats within its small area. It hosts a variety of flora and fauna and could host a wider variety still.

Unfortunately, over many years, invasive plants (winged euonymus, non-native honeysuckles and privet, multiflora rose, and asian bittersweet, in particular) have driven out the native understory. In addition, portions of the forest stand have become overcrowded with mature trees, jeopardizing the health of some excellent specimens and the forest as a whole. The plan includes removal of the invasive understory, thinning of trees, and expansion of the open field. Prepare for a healthier and more inviting Watch Rock Preserve!

In a related effort, the Trust has instituted new rules that prohibit barbecuing, cooking, and picnicking within the preserve. Heavy use over the past few summers has seriously compromised the fragile ecosystem along the shoreline. Fishing and crabbing are still permitted in these areas, but we ask people to please take out with them all fishing line and bait that they bring into the preserve.

Georgia Male is Winner of Twining Scholarship

Georgia Male, a 2013 graduate of Lyme-Old Lyme High School, is the winner of Old Lyme Land Trust's 2013 Kinsley Twining Memorial Scholarship. The \$1000 scholarship is awarded to a graduate of LOLHS who is pursuing a college degree in environmental science or a related field. Georgia credits her time volunteering at Great Gull Island finding, counting, and banding tern chicks as an inspiration for her to seek a career in an animal-based environmental field. We wish Georgia the best of luck at Unity College!

Applications for the 2014 Scholarship are due by March 15, 2014. More information including an application can be found at www.oldlymelandtrust.org.

Volunteers Needed!

Are you looking for an opportunity to volunteer? There are many ways volunteers can help OLLT. How about:

- Being a land steward for one of our preserves?
- Writing articles for our newsletter *Tributaries*?
- Assisting with publicity for our events?
- Taking photographs of our preserves?
- Keeping our website up to date?
- Helping at our Old Lyme Midsummer Festival booth?
- Leading hike(s) or organizing programs (tree ID, photography) in our preserves?
- Leading kayak trips to our preserves?
- Organizing nature programs for children in our preserves?
- Organizing lectures to educate the public about the natural world?
- Participating in work parties to maintain our trails?
- Building kiosks for our trailheads?
- Assisting with fund-raising?

You may have other ideas related to your skills or interests as well. Please contact Christina Clayton (860-434-6294) or Bobbie Padgett (860-434-5475) if you would like to get involved with OLLT.

Swallows Cruise on Saturday, Sept. 28

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 Old Lyme Land Trust 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 28th 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.

Nature Note: Bluebirds



An Eastern Bluebird.

One of the pleasures of living in Old Lyme and its environs is the year-round presence of the Eastern Bluebird, *Sialia sialis*, a member of the Thrush family. This bluebird enthalls young and old, bird watcher and non-bird watcher alike. Its coloring makes it easy to identify: the male with its beautiful blue upper body, warm reddish-brown breast and white belly and the female with the same colors, only duller. Easily identifiable, too, are its behavior patterns. Because it is an insectivore, the bluebird engages in what is called "ground sallying" in pursuit of insects: it flies from a perch (often a fence or wire) in pursuit of its prey, settles briefly on the ground and then returns to its perch. It is known to fly as fast as 17 mph in these sallies. The bluebird also eats berries, particularly in winter. Its song is a pleasing, soft phrase of mellow whistles. The Eastern Bluebird nests in tree cavities, often using old woodpecker holes. The trees must be in proximity to open areas where the bird can forage for insects -- meadows, orchards, or farmland. In the last century, as farmland and other open land gave way to suburbia and other development, the Eastern Bluebird was in serious decline. But aggressive conservation efforts to erect nest boxes appear to have reversed that trend.

The John Lohmann CT River Preserve is a popular location for Eastern Bluebirds. Last spring, Hank Golet installed five (5) bluebird boxes there, and it appears that at least one pair may have nested. Their nests are small and cup-like, lined with grass, feathers, stems and hair, and easily distinguished from the nests of Tree Swallows, English Sparrows and European Starlings who compete with them for housing. Hank has installed many boxes in Old Lyme and Lyme over the years.

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

Local Youth Work to Open the Bob & Esther Heller Preserve to the Public



LOLHS Environmental Club members relax after a morning of hard but rewarding work at the Heller Preserve. From left to right: Advisor Heather Fried, Maddy Gibson-Williams, Leah Migliaccio, Chris Espinal, Isabel Ritrovato, Abigail Cipparone, Morgan Merrick, Philip Hallwood, Madelyne Grabowski, Christian Valli, Andrew Tyrol, and Vince Angeli.

Old Lyme Land Trust is indebted to David Muckle of Old Lyme, who chose to work on the Heller Preserve for his Eagle Scout project. If you drive by 80 Town Woods Road, you will see that there is

now an asphalt apron leading to a parking area for visitors to the preserve. David planned the site work in compliance with Town of Old Lyme standards and led a group of volunteers affiliated with Lyme-Old Lyme Boy Scout Troup #26 who executed it. In addition, David is responsible for blazing a trail from the parking area to the natural amphitheatre which was previously used by Native Americans. Thank you, David!

In addition, the Lyme-Old Lyme High School Environmental Club contributed time and energy to mark the trail and extend it. Thanks to their work, there is now a loop trail around the property which makes for a very enjoyable hike in the woods.

Through the ongoing partnership between OLLT and the LOLHS Environmental Club (led by biology teacher and advisor Heather Fried), the club has also done preserve maintenance work at the Goberis-Chadwick Preserve on Route 156. Their efforts are much appreciated!

A Dream Coming True

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guidance under difficult conditions, in a true show of support and solidarity. The final product is more than just a ladder and an engineering feat -- it's also a work of art! OLLT would like to thank TJ of Troop 26, and those who helped him, for taking us closer to the opening of this very unique and wild preserve. The benefits of this project will be appreciated by many for years to come. Thank you TJ!