

# Pleasant Valley Preserve - Inspiring New Generations by Rich Melchreit



## Why The Nature Conservancy Selected the Pleasant Valley

The protection of this land provides many environmental benefits, including protection of water quality of the Eight-mile River, which in turn protects the habitat of several rare species.

The Eightmile River feeds into the Connecticut River by way of Hamburg Cove. Protecting this property as open space protects a part of the Connecticut River's watershed, as well as a considerable segment of one of its tributaries. Moreover, some species of fish swim up the Eight-mile River to spawn.

Because Pleasant Valley is "preserved" open space, it continues to be a vital part of our community's recreation and our inspiration.

In April each year, Lyme Consolidated School fifth-graders troop down to the Eightmile River where it winds between the school and the Pleasant Valley Preserve. Each carries a cup of cold water filled with Atlantic salmon fry.

In a brief, solemn ceremony foreshadowing their own graduation to middle school, the young zoologists kneel, tip the cups, and release the young salmon fry they have helped grow.

This natural wonderland is behind their school and preserved forever as open space because starting in 1991 the land was donated to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) by Catherine and Elizabeth Fehrer, daughters of the Lyme School artist Oscar Fehrer. (The Preserve is now managed by the Lyme Land Conservation Trust under an agreement with TNC).

The beauty of Pleasant Valley attracted Freher and other Lyme School artists, Eugene Higgins and Robert Vonnoh, to settle and paint there in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paintings of Pleasant Valley hang on the walls at the Lyme Library, which is in the Pleasant Valley, and in Robert Von-

noh's painting at the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme.

Historical photographs of the artists and the land, and other Pleasant Valley memorabilia in the Lyme town archives in the Public Hall show the area was heavily farmed at that time, affording the artists the wide vistas that can be seen in their paintings.

The "grown in" land of today continues to inspire artists and photographers. Several of the winners of the annual Land Trust Photography contest were taken at the Preserve, and anyone passing through Lyme in fine weather has seen talented *plein air* artists painting the 21<sup>st</sup> century landscape. The Preserve is not just for the young or the famously talented; it can inspire the rest of us to photograph,

or paint and draw, or write about the land.

The Pleasant Valley Preserve contains a network of well-maintained trails, which connect to trails on the adjoining Jewett Preserve, Mt. Archer Wood, Eno Preserve and Pickwick's Preserve, creating the "River to Ridgetop" network of trails running from Joshuatown Road to the Eight-mile River.

**Painting of Pleasant Valley  
looking north,  
by Robert Vonnoh,  
Florence Griswold Museum**



## How to Get There...and More!



From Route 156 turn onto MacIntosh Road just south of the Town Hall, Library, Lyme School complex, and cross the bridge spanning Eightmile River. The gate is on the right about 75 yards from the bridge at the first sharp bend in road. Park at the dirt road on right.

The trails begin at the gate. Follow the woodland road, bear right to cross the stream at the preserve sign (about a quarter mile). Trail maps are available at the trailhead or at Reynolds' (Jane's) store in Hamburg.

### What to See on a Hike of Pleasant Valley

#### Plants

The trails pass through old fields now full of 20- to 30-foot cedars and dry oak woods. The preserve includes a ridgetop covered with large conifers and old white oaks, as well as rolling wooded hills, covered mostly with oak, hickory, beech and hemlock.

The northwestern section of the property consists of a maple ash seepage forest. Among the important species found on the Preserve is Virginia snakeroot, a plant generally found along rich slopes and a threatened species in Connecticut.

#### Animals

In addition to watching for woodland birds, be sure to visit the banks of the Eightmile River, keeping an eye out for fish (trout, alewives, bass, perch and suckers in season), reptiles and invertebrates.

### Other Adventures at the Preserve

Besides hiking the Pleasant Valley Preserve, here are some other ways to enjoy and be inspired by Pleasant Valley:

**Attend the release of the fish** at the Lyme School in April, (or help the DEP with release of salmon fry along several miles of the Eightmile River: call Bruce Williams at 860- 447-4317)

**See a landscape painting of Pleasant Valley at the Florence Griswold Museum** (phone (860) 434-5542; on the web at [www.florgris.org](http://www.florgris.org)), Lyme Art Association (phone (860) 434-7802; on the web at [lymeartassociation.org](http://lymeartassociation.org)), or a local art gallery

**See the photo contest display at the Lyme Land Trust annual meeting** on May 28 at 7 PM at the Lyme Public Hall in Hamburg, and later in the Lyme Library

**Visit the Lyme Archives at the Lyme Public Hall** (phone (860) 434-6115; email [lymepublichall@att.net](mailto:lymepublichall@att.net); web <http://lymepublichall.blogspot.com>)

**Bring your art supplies to the Preserve and draw, paint, watercolor, or photograph**

**(Try) to catch fish**, or hunt, (see the state Department of Environmental Protection website at [www.ct.gov/dep](http://www.ct.gov/dep), and trail map for more information).