



The Lyme Land Conservation Trust

2016 Winter Newsletter

Coverts Project Teaches Woodlands Owners How To Enhance Wildlife Habitat

By Wendolyn Hill

*Lyme Land Trust Director and
Lyme Open Space Coordinator*

A **COVERT** is a thicket providing sheltering cover for wildlife. It is also the name of an educational program offered by the UConn Cooperative



Photo by Wendolyn Hill

Connecticut State Forester Larry Rousseau speaking at the Coverts Project seminar last September. He stands inside an open patch of recently harvested lumber which also provides enhanced habitat for wildlife.

Extension System. Since 1983, the **Coverts Project** has been teaching woodland owners about woodland management practices that can improve forest health and enhance wildlife habitat.

For three days in September, I took part in a training seminar at the Great Mountain Forest in Norfolk CT to learn about forests, different wildlife habitats, how to manage open space, and the natural resource professionals

who are available to help.

We can be very proud that the Lyme Land Trust and the Open Space Committee of the Town of Lyme are working together to promote and manage the preservation of our beautiful forestland to create the most benefit for wildlife. More than 50% of the land in Lyme is protected from development, and connectivity between protected areas is prioritized. In order to nurture a diverse wildlife population on our protected open space, active management of the forests is recommended to provide a variety of habitats.

Private landowners can manage their own land depending upon their natural resources and which species of wildlife they wish to attract. Even a small parcel can have an impact on wildlife populations. A fragmented landscape broken up by cleared lots with houses and lawns is less hospitable to many wildlife species. Landowners can minimize the effect of fragmentation by considering the open spaces around them and keeping their cleared lawn area to a minimum. Adjacent landowners can work together to combine management of their properties to enhance various habitats that promote wildlife diversity. If an open space is desired, mowing just once a year to maintain a meadow creates valuable habitat for many species. Leaving wetlands undisturbed and

limiting the use of fertilizers helps maintain healthy watersheds. Preventing the spread of invasive plant species such as Japanese barberry, Russian olive, and multiflora rose, which compete with native species, is also important.

I was surprised to learn that the harvest of timber in mature woodlands is not only economically beneficial for the landowner, but is also beneficial for wildlife. A certified forester can advise homeowners about which trees to harvest for the most benefit. As Connecticut forests have matured and developed dense upper canopies, the understory of smaller trees and shrubs



This photo of Pickwick's Preserve, a Lyme Land Trust easement off Joshuatown Road illustrates habitat management. Invasives have been controlled and the forest canopy kept open.

have been shaded out. Protective cover and food for some wildlife has become scarce and many species that were once abundant in Connecticut have declined

Continued on page 6

How Do Birds and Animals Survive the Winter?

By Mary Guitar

When I was a kid, I knew all about what animals did in the winter. It was actually pretty simple: some (like bears) hibernated, others (like geese

migrated, and a few (like chickadees) showed up at the bird feeder all winter long and seemed to actually enjoy the cold. Little did I know that

when I grew up, I'd be scratching my head over the exact definitions of words like hibernation, dormancy, torpor, and diapause. It turns out that what animals in our part of the world do in the winter is complicated: it depends on the animal, the air temperature, the depth of the snow, and the availability of food and shelter.

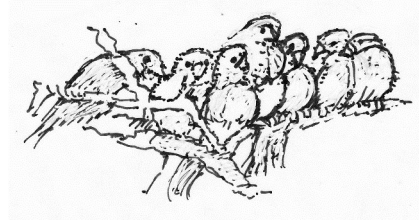
First some simple definitions: Hibernation usually involves lowered body temperature for days, weeks, or months. In torpor, body temperature and activity can fluctuate hourly or daily. Small birds and mammals, like titmice, some finches, bats and chipmunks, can cool down rapidly and heat up quickly when temperatures rise a bit. Chipmunks may suddenly materialize under the bird feeder on sunny winter days. On colder days, they are in their burrows three feet underground eating stored mast and seeds, or, if food is scarce, their body temperature drops and their metabolism slows, cutting down on the need for food.

Non-migratory birds in New England have adapted to survive the cold months. Many birds, like chickadees, lower their body temperature at night, and sleep in dense brush. Fat reserves get them through the night, but if there's a heavy snow, small birds may have difficulty surviving for more than another 24 hours without warmth or food. Some birds, including crows, roost communally for warmth and protection from predators, others flock together in the day time as well. Chickadees, nuthatches, crows and jays store food; ruffed grouse dig snow

caves, where the temperature stays close to 32 degrees F.

Bird feeders not only entertain us in the dark months, but raise bird survival rates in harsh winters. Birds also depend on trees, shrubs and vines with fruit that ripens in late summer and fall, and retain seeds during the winter, such as wild grapes, viburnum, staghorn sumac, juniper, crabapples, and poison ivy. Migrating robins eat winterberries in the fall; cedar waxwings eat high bush cranberries, and when migrating birds like thrushes and catbirds return in early spring, they rely on shrubs with long-lasting fruit, like staghorn sumac.

Winter-active mammals include voles, moles, mice, rabbits, beavers, muskrats, grey squirrels, groundhogs, opossums, raccoons, skunks, and deer. These animals may nest communally, store food, or insulate their nests with shredded plant material (and borrowed bits from our attics). They grow denser fur, increase their metabolic rate by

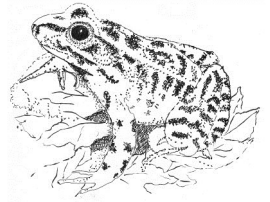


shivering, and accumulate fat in the fall. While carnivores don't hibernate, they may become lethargic and sleep for extended periods.

For centuries, it was thought that birds hibernated underwater. Maybe this idea came from observing birds like swallows congregate in giant flocks, as they do on the Connecticut River, sinking into the grass and marshland in the evening. Although that idea turned out to be wrong, the underwater hibernation of some amphibians is almost as amazing.

Turtles simply burrow into mud and their metabolism, body temperature and need for oxygen drops. Some, like the painted turtle, cease breathing, movement and most heart activity. Toads dig into the ground below the

frost line and keep their body temperature at only a few degrees above freezing. Wood frogs, gray treefrogs, spring peepers and chorus frogs actually freeze, with a large percentage of their body turning to ice. The trick? Enzymes create alcohol and sugars in the blood that prevent cells from freezing, while the frog's metabolism completely shuts down.



It never occurred to me when I was a kid to ask where insects went in the winter. But where did they come from when the weather warmed up again? Most male ants, bees, and wasps don't survive winter, but die in the fall. Female insects hibernate under tree stumps or under moss or grasses. Many insects rely on egg, larva, or pupa stages to survive harsh conditions. When conditions change, they are ready to develop and repopulate the species.

Animals depend not only on adaptations to survive cold and hunger, but also on a variety of environmental elements. Tree cavities, brush piles, and large logs provide shelter and safety for small mammals and birds; mast- and seed-producing trees, shrubs and vines provide food; forested land and fields provide larger animals with food and shelter; streams, ponds, and wetlands shelter amphibians and reptiles. As homeowners, we should remember when cleaning up in the fall and winter that what looks messy to us may mean the difference between life and death to animals. The Lyme Land Trust takes the needs of animals into account when stewarding undeveloped land, and works to maintain landscapes that can foster survival.

For further information, see: Bernd Heinrich, *Winter World* (2003, Harper Collins, NY). Geoffrey Hammerson, *Connecticut Wildlife*, (2004, University Press of New England).

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust Newsletter

Published by The Lyme Land Conservation Trust, Inc., PO Box 1002, Lyme, CT 06371 info@lymelandtrust.org Tel: 860-434-4639



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Members Matter

By John Pritchard
Lyme Land Trust President

'Tis the Land Trust membership Season! For the nearly 50 years of the Land Trust's existence, membership has been very important to each successive Board of Directors. Take for example the remarks made by the first president of the Lyme Land Trust, F.B. Stephenson, on the occasion of the first members' meeting on May 26, 1967.

He said: "A person who sends in his membership fee to the Land Trust is *not* making a contribution to charity—he is joining a group of his neigh-

bors to *work* for the preservation of his town."

Mr. Stephenson's sentiment is equally applicable today. Indeed, your Land Trust is a stand out in its field with more than half of Lyme's 800 households being members. This demonstration of community support commands the attention of Foundations and those deciding on State land preservation grants—in fact few towns anywhere can match it!

It is also the money. Your annual membership dues and donations help us to steward the almost 3,000 acres under our protection—a number which I am sure would have astound-

ed even the most optimistic of the Land Trust's founders.

The average donation has steadily increased over the years as members have seen first hand the results of our efforts and have understood that their support has made it possible.

So, if you are not a member, why not join your friends and neighbors and support the preservation of Lyme, the town we all know and love?

By now you have received a membership renewal envelope in the mail. You can also use the one bound into the newsletter or go to www.lymelandtrust.org to join online.

Accreditation Final After Years of Hard Work

In October, Lisa Niccolai (right), LLCT Environmental Director, joined by fellow land trusts from across the country, accepted the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Certificate for the Lyme Land Trust.

This is the culmination of years of hard work by the Land Trust to ensure that the LLCT meets the highest standards and demonstrates its continued commitment to excellence in land conservation.



DJ Glisson, IL/Firefly Imageworks

Want to Take Better Photos of Snow Scenes?

Try These Tips from a Professional

By Joe Standart
*Lyme Land Trust Director
and professional photographer*

The kid in me comes out when we get a good covering of snow. I can't wait to head out and put my camera through its paces. But often in my rush out into the pristine glitter of the newly fallen snow, I ignore some of the basics and then bliss turns into frustration. My viewfinder fogs up, my fingers freeze on the cold camera and tripod, or my feet get wet and cold. To prevent the same things from happening to you, here are some tips to help you on your way to exciting winter-time pictures. Whether you have a simple point-and-shoot or an advanced dSLR, there is something for everyone here.

Dress for the weather

Wear warm boots. Warm, dry feet are critical to safety and fun.

Dress in Layers. Then you can add and subtract clothes to moderate your body temperature.

Protect your hands. Keep them warm and also nimble enough to operate the camera. One option, "Shooter's Gloves" allow you to pull one finger out to hit the shutter release. Or wear a thin pair of rubber-tipped gloves under mittens that you can take off to use the camera.

Bring Sunglasses. Sun reflecting off snow can be glaring.

Keep your camera cold and your batteries warm. Ever notice your eyeglasses fog up when you step out in the cold? Camera lenses do the same thing. Acclimate your camera by keeping it at the temperature you will be photographing in so the lens

doesn't fog up when you pull it out for that great photo. Your batteries are likely to drain faster in the cold, so bring along extras and keep them warm under your jacket.

Carry your camera gear in a water-

this example, set your camera mode on Aperture Priority and a setting of f/16 to get maximum depth of field.

Meter from a Mid-tone: Using your camera's spot metering mode, find a mid-tone in your snow scene.

Depress your shutter release half way or depress the exposure lock button to take a reading, reframe your picture, then make the exposure. Setting your exposure on a mid-tone such as trees, or a face, will allow the lighter tones of the snow to fall into their proper exposure zone.

Exposing for Snow:

Repeat the above exercise, and look in the viewfinder. The exposure scale will indicate that you are "over-exposing" your shot by one to two stops. You

can use your camera's exposure compensation dial to set the camera's exposure at +1 or 2 stops to render a snow scene's proper exposures.

Breathe Life Into Your Photos

The intensely white landscape, coupled with overcast skies and atmospheric haze, can result in a lack of color depth and general fuzziness in the photo. A simple fix for this, at least in the applications Lightroom and Aperture, is to **increase the black and shadow intensity** in the image and increase the exposure and highlights. This will add some snap to the whites, depth and detail to the darker tones, increase the saturation and help bring out some of the detail that may have been lost, increase the image saturation, and help eliminate that annoying haze.

For more information see:

Digital Camera World:
www.digitalcameraworld.com/2013/01/07/photographing-snow-the-simple-way-to-nail-exposure/



Photo © Joe Standart, 2015

proof bag or pouch that allows easy access, even with bulky gloves.

Techniques: Shoot In RAW

If your camera has the capacity, use the RAW format. Since the light meter averages every exposure to a middle grey value, capturing snow scenes is a bit tricky. RAW will give you the greatest flexibility in post-production, something that is much harder to do with JPEG. Since your file sizes will be larger, bring a backup memory card.

Understanding the Light Meter

Modern cameras have metering systems designed to give balanced exposures under "normal" conditions, but snow scenes are definitely not normal. The nearly all-white scenes cause problems because the camera's meter tries to average the exposure to a middle grey, resulting in a muddy snow-shot.

Here are some tricks you can try to bring things back into balance. For

New Corner Trails Unite Three Preserves: Brochure and Map Now Available

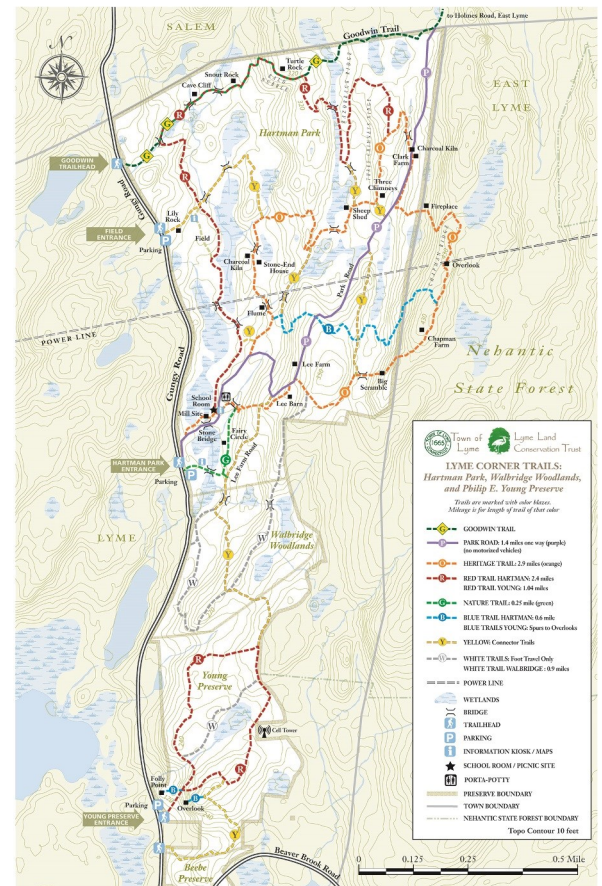
By Wendolyn Hill

A new color brochure and map is available for the trails that traverse three contiguous preserves on Gungy Road: Hartman Park, Walbridge Woodlands, and Young Preserve. The 430-acre area has been named the “Lyme Corner Trails” because it’s nestled in the northeast corner of Lyme. More than twelve miles of trails provide opportunities for wildlife viewing, hiking, non-motorized biking, cross-country skiing, and horseback riding through areas of diverse natural habitat. This preserve also creates a valuable wildlife corridor in combination with surrounding protected land: Nehantic State Forest in East Lyme to the east, the Beebe Preserve to the south, and to the west hundreds of acres of privately-owned woodlands protected by deeded conservation easements.

Updates and improvements have been made to the existing Hartman Park trail system, which is based on the trail map created by Marianne Pfeiffer and Jeanne Thompson in the late 1980s. Lisa Niccolai, the environmental director of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust, plotted the trails to create the unified trail system. Wendolyn Hill updated the brochure based upon the original town-wide brochure design created by Lisa Reneson.

The overall trail system has been simplified and signage is planned to aid in navigating the trails. Improvements include:

- 1.) Trails have been overlaid on a topographical map with a 10-foot contour.
- 2.) Overlapping colors of trail markers in Hartman Park have been eliminated as much as possible.
- 3.) Labeling has been simplified.
- 4.) A few trails have been abandoned to simplify maintenance and navigation, including the pink trail, which is perpetually flooded by beaver activity.
- 5.) The Park Trail now has purple blazes. Signs have been placed at intersections directing people to the Hartman Park entrance.



- 6.) The Lyme portion of the Richard H. Goodwin Trail has been added to the map. Overseen by the Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Coordinating Committee, this extended trail system crosses East Haddam, Salem, Lyme and East Lyme. A future goal is to connect it to other existing trail systems in surrounding towns.

New England Cottontail Update

With lots of help from local land trusts, conservation groups, private landowners, and conservation agencies throughout the region, the population of the threatened New England cottontail rabbit is starting to recover.



LLCT is taking part in this recovery effort by partnering with private landowners as well as State and Federal Agencies. Together we identified suitable habitat creation areas near a known population of New England Cottontails. The group agreed to conduct three harvests of mature trees to

create early succession habitat over a 6 to 10 year time period. The first harvest on private land was completed in the winter of 2014-15. After receiving funding from the federal NRCS EQIP program, the Land Trust is now ready to begin preparations to create suitable habitat on its Slawson Preserve over the winter of 2016-17. The State Forest will conduct a tree harvest a few years after that. Staggering the treatments will ensure that desirable young brushy habitat is available over a longer period of time.

The creation of early succession habitat is also beneficial to other species such as the prairie warbler, ruffed grouse, indigo bunting, American woodcock, wood turtle, and blue spotted salamander. Interested residents can find more information at <http://newenglandcottontail.org>.

Volunteer Profile: Henry Graulty



A self-confessed former “couch potato,” who used to watch TV and not move for hours, Henry Graulty’s volunteer career began when he responded to a call by Arthur Carlson for helpers to clear the Goodwin Trail in East Lyme.

Arthur gave him a roll of white tape and Henry started out at the Holmes Road parking lot in Nehantic State Forest in East Lyme. Although he didn’t have a lot of stamina at first, Henry says, “The more I walked, the better I felt.”

Work projects in Hartman Park

and the Corners Trails soon followed, and soon he was volunteering for every work party organized by the Lyme Open Space Coordinator, Wendolyn Hill. When Henry hikes on his own now, he carries clippers and trims branches as he goes. Now an official State Park volunteer, he’s lost 30 pounds and has a lot more energy. Go Henry!

If you would like to join volunteer work parties at Lyme Preserves, send a request to be put on the email notification list: info@townlyme.org or open-space@townlyme.org

Up Close Look at a Bobcat

Lee and John Pritchard were treated to an extraordinary sighting in a field about fifty yards from their house last August.

For a quarter of an hour, they watched a very large bobcat (about the size of a medium-sized dog), toss and pounce on a small animal, like a housecat with a mouse. When it escaped, the bobcat stalked slowly across the field and down a hill towards the marsh.

According to CT DEEP, this was

most likely a female animal looking for food for its young, since most bobcats hunt at night. It definitely looks like it is at the top of its weight and size range for a female (28-32 inches long, 15-30 pounds).

Bobcats are notoriously elusive and shy, but their numbers have been growing in Connecticut, and several research projects concerning the animal are ongoing in the state.



Photo by Lee Pritchard

Coverts Project , *continued from page 1*

in population. Implementing sustainable forest management practices creates mature trees that are healthier, and opens up the canopy so that the lower story can get sunlight. Scarlet tanagers are often seen where there is a break in the canopy.

Opening up larger patches in the forest is good for many small animals that depend upon young successional growth. The wood thrush, the American woodcock, and the New England cottontail depend upon large open meadows and earlier successional forest to thrive.

Sometimes it is better to be untidy.

Felled tree crowns and discarded branches create good covert protection for small animals if left on the ground. Standing dead trees, called snags, provide nesting areas for woodpeckers and other animals.

A tour of a private landowner’s property in Lyme will be offered in Spring 2016 to illustrate land management techniques that have been implemented to enhance wildlife habitat.

There are many natural resource professionals and organizations available to help landowners with habitat enhancement.

The Coverts Project is sponsored

by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System, the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

For more information about private woodland management options and the Coverts Project, please contact Nancy Marek at (203) 745-9771, email: nancy.marek@uconn.edu, or Tom Worthley (860) 345-5232, email: thomasworthley@uconn.edu.

Both Nancy and Tom work with the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service.

There's Still Time!

Land Trusts Photo Contest Deadline is January 31, 2016

The deadline for the 10th Annual Land Trusts Amateur Photo Contest is January 31, 2016. You can find contest rules at <http://www.lymelandtrust.org/news/photo-contest>. Entry forms are available by request at photocontest@lymelandtrust.org.

Children age 14 and under are especially encouraged to submit photos in the Youth category. Participants, no matter their town of residence, may submit photos that focus on the celebrated and scenic countryside of Lyme, Old Lyme, Essex, Salem, and East Haddam. The land trusts in these towns sponsor this photo contest.

Contest awards are being funded with the generous support of *RiverQuest*/Connecticut River Expeditions, Ballek's Garden Center, Essex Savings Bank, ChelseaGroton Bank, Evan Griswold at Coldwell Banker, Lorensen Auto Group, the Oakley Wing Group at Morgan Stanley, and Alison Mitchell in honor of her late husband John G. Mitchell, who was a life-long environmentalist and former photo contest judge.

A panel of three judges will award \$100, \$75, \$50 and \$25 cash prizes in each of **five** categories. The categories are **Landscape/Waterscape, Plants, Wildlife, and Cultural/Historic** (human interaction with nature, including domestic animals and buildings), for participants 15 years of age or older. Photographers 14 years old or younger may enter photos on any of these subjects in the **Youth Category**.

The Photo Contest will be judged by William Burt, a naturalist and wildlife photographer acclaimed for his beautiful books; Amy Kurtz Lansing, an accomplished art historian and curator at the Florence Griswold Museum; and Skip Broom, a respected, award-winning local photographer and antique house restoration housewright.



Michael Cathcart: Photo Contest Honorable Mention, Cultural Category

All entered photographs, plus all winning photos, will be displayed and celebrated at a public reception at the Lymes Senior Center on Friday, March 11, 2016, 6:00 PM.

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust, Essex Land Trust, the Old Lyme Land Trust, Salem Land Trust, and East Haddam Land Trust encourage amateur photographers to join the fun and share wonderful photos from these southern Connecticut towns.

Previous Land Trusts Photo Contest winning photos, viewable at <https://landtrustsphotos.shutterfly.com>, highlight the beauty of these towns and the pressing need to preserve the environments within them.



Braiden Sunshine and his mother Elizabeth getting set up

Awesome Achievement, Braiden!

On May 18, 2014, Braiden Sunshine played while hundreds of Tour de Lyme riders checked in and waited for the start of the first ride. He entertained them, displaying a talent and level of confidence surprising for someone who was fourteen at the time. His repertoire evoked memories of some of our favorite singers from the '60s: Simon & Garfunkel, James Taylor etc.

Braiden's much followed appearances on **NBC's The Voice** ended before reaching the finals. Having made it as far as he did was an awesome achievement. He displayed a wide range of talent, confidence and maturity. He is a really good kid in our book. The Lyme Land Trust is proud to know him.

One thing is for sure, he has a bright future ahead!



Lyme Land Conservation Trust, Inc.

PO Box 1002, Lyme, CT 06371

Lyme Land Conservation Trust Calendar of Events

All events subject to change. Dates and times will be announced by press release & email, and will be posted on the Land Trust website and Facebook page. Consult the Upcoming Events page at www.lymelandtrust.org/news/events/ for the latest information. To reduce costs & paper, the Land Trust no longer mails postcard notification of all events. To receive email notifications, send an email to: info@lymelandtrust.org with a request to be added to the events email list.

Talk and Walk On Maple Syrup Production

When – Sat., January 23, 1:30 PM
(Raindate, Sun., January 24)

What – Bill and Liz Farrell of Fat Stone Farm, Lyme, will lead a guided walk to see some of the oldest trees on Mount Archer, the sugar maples, and discuss why and how they are using these and others to make maple syrup.

Where – Mount Archer Woods Preserve parking lot, on Mount Archer Road.

Talk on Natural History and Habits of Coyotes

When – Sun., March 20, 2:00-3:00 PM

What – Frank Vincente of the Wild Dog Foundation will present a talk about the misconceptions about coyotes, the reasons to appreciate this intelligent animal, and the best strategies for co-existence. The Wild Dog Foundation helps document the possible presence of the coyote as it expands its range.

Where – Lyme Public Hall,
249 Hamburg Road, (Rte. 156).

Lyme Land Trust Annual Meeting

When – Fri., April 15, 6:00-7:30 PM

What – Guest speaker William Burt, known for his photographs of rare and elusive birds, will talk and show slides from his new book, *Water Babies: The Hidden Life of Baby Wetland Birds*. The program will be preceded by refreshments and a brief business meeting.

Where – Lyme Public Hall,
249 Hamburg Road, (Rte. 156).

For most current information on Lyme Land Conservation Trust events: www.lymelandtrust.org