



The Lyme Land Conservation Trust

2015 Summer Newsletter

Ocean Alewives Return to Rogers Lake

By Mary Guitar

"It takes a man of genius to travel in his own country, in his native village; to make any progress between his door and his gate." Henry David Thoreau, from his 1851 journal.

Writer and journalist Richard Conniff introduced the panel discussion at the Lyme Land Trust's annual meeting in June with this quote. He explained that the speakers were going to focus on the study of a local place—Rogers Lake, and a local fish—the alewife, a type of river herring, but they would also speak of much wider concerns: the decline of ocean fish populations, the historical and economic reasons for changes in the coastal ecosystem, and the process of restoration of a spawning run that had been effectively blocked in 1675 by mills and dams.

Fisheries expert Steve Gephard of the



Photo courtesy of David Post & Steve Gephard

Researchers taking a tissue sample from an alewife for DNA analysis

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection spoke of the importance of the genus *Alosa*, the river herring, calling them "the field mice of the ocean and fresh water" because so many other fish, as well as seabirds and cetaceans,



Photo by Bob McDonnell. See his portfolio at www.bobmacdonell.zenfolio.com

Alewives backed up below a fishway in East Lyme during a spring spawning run

depend on them for food. They are essential to the entire aquatic ecosystem that extends along the East Coast and into the oceans. The population of these fish is now in serious decline, and while commercial fishing practices are the major cause, mills and dams built by colonial settlers continue to block spawning grounds, contributing to the problem. In Connecticut alone, 4000 dams were built to power mills, and there was no watershed in the state that was not changed by industrial uses.

Over the past few decades, fish ladders have been built for the dams on the Lower Mill Pond and the Upper Mill Pond in Old Lyme, and alewives coming up Mill Brook now number in the thousands. This gradual ecosystem restoration has also led to population gains for other species, including otters, eagles, ospreys, and striped bass. However, the large dam where Mill Brook exits Rogers Lake had remained a final barrier to restoration of alewives to the lake. Construction of a fish ladder in 2014 removed this barrier. After 340 years, alewives coming up the Connecticut River to spawn in fresh water could again navigate the length of Mill Brook to enter Rog-

ers Lake.

A fitting end to the story would be that the migrating alewives found the new entrance to Rogers Lake and met up with their long-lost tribe. However, Gephard cautioned, it was not that simple. Because the population of alewives in the ocean has plummeted, salt-water alewives have not yet been spotted coming up the fish ladder. Instead, ocean alewives have been moved by tank to Rogers Lake and released into the long land-locked population.

Yale ecologist David Post has been studying the differences between the two groups of alewives. The landlocked group is about a third the size of their seagoing counterparts, four inches versus twelve. They also spawn at one or two years old, instead of the four to five years of the anadromous group. Post will be studying the interactions of the two groups, whether interbreeding is a possibility, and the ecological impacts of the larger fish.

Post's team sampled the DNA of young-of-the-year (YOY) fish in August and will likely continue to sample Rogers Lake for YOY through October. While he doesn't expect that he will have published results for a couple years, he will likely be able to informally share preliminary results.

Eastern Chipmunk: Cute Omnivore Burrower; Prey for Raptors, Snakes & Other Predators

By Doug Nielson

Lyme resident, amateur naturalist

Among the many mammals found in this area, chipmunks are one of my favorites. No, they're not as exciting as bobcats or coyotes, but they're also less boring than squirrels. Plus, I'll admit it, they're cute, and once they appear every spring, I know that the good weather is here to stay.

Like many other rodents, the Eastern Chipmunk (the only chipmunk species found in Connecticut) is an omnivore, eating not only grass, shoots, seeds, nuts, fungi, and fruits, but also insects, small frogs, worms, carrion, bird eggs, and even nestlings. While originally a forest or shrubland animal, it has adapted readily to suburban and urban environments.

Males and females are identical, roughly 8 to 10 inches long (including tail), and display distinctive black and white stripes on reddish brown coats. They have white bellies, and white stripes immediately above and below their eyes that make the eyes seem particularly large. Their expandable cheek pouches are not an optical illusion, however, allowing them to carry vast quantities of seed to their burrows in preparation for winter.

Large food reserves are necessary because chipmunks are not true hibernators. They sleep for long periods, but rise occasionally to eat or briefly forage outside the burrow.

Chipmunk burrows are often quite expansive, up to thirty feet long. They are neatly segregated into separate areas for living, food storage, and waste. There are several entrances, usually hidden by carefully placed leaves, stones, and sticks.

They have two litters a year, the first in late winter-early spring, the second early to mid-summer. Each litter has two to six pups, born hairless, blind, and about the size of bumblebees. The females raise them alone, and they emerge

from the burrow after about 6 weeks. After another two to four weeks, they leave to forage on their own.

For the most part, chipmunks live alone. They do, however, maintain something like a community in a different way. They actually have several different calls



Photo by Bob McDonnell.
See his portfolio at www.bobmacdonell.zenfolio.com

Eastern Chipmunk trying to look especially lovable

which are understood by other chipmunks, and, as we will see, other species, too.

Naturalist and wildlife photographer Lang Elliot has described these sounds and their uses. There is the “high-pitched chip,” which warns chipmunks encroaching on another’s territory. If they ignore the call, a fight may ensue. Chipmunks are fiercely territorial.

There is also the “chip-trill”—a breathless “Oh-my-god it’s chasing me” sound, called as it runs towards its own burrow, telling others to seek shelter fast.

The last is the most curious and is described as a “cluck”, or hollow wood sort of “tock, tock” sound at regular intervals. This is the warning for aerial threats, when a red-tailed hawk or something similar is scouting in the vicinity.

Other studies have shown that chipmunks and woodchucks pay attention to each other’s warning calls. This was tested in a controlled experiment, and reported by Lisa Aschmeier and Christine Maher in the *Journal of Mammalogy* (Volume 92:3, 2011). Being somewhat larger than chipmunks, woodchucks didn’t always respond readily to chipmunk’s warning calls. The chipmunks, however, responded quickly to woodchuck alarms. It’s interesting to note that neither species responded to chickadee or crow warning calls, but I have tried making the “tock-tock” sound myself and noted that squirrels in the vicinity will immediately stop and look up.

Like most natural members of the ecosystem, chipmunks have both positive and negative effects. As collectors and consumers of various seeds and fungi, they help establish tree seedlings, and disperse beneficial mycorrhizal spores that play an important role in symbiotic relationships between plant and fungal species. On the negative side, they harbor Lyme ticks.

Their burrowing helps aerate the soil, but house-owners might find this activity destructive when it ventures too close to patios and foundations. They might also harm landscaping or garden plants. Use of deer repellent or other strong smelling spray is often enough to keep them in check.

Chipmunks eat smaller animals and eggs, and are in turn prey for other animals—hawks, owls, snakes, bobcats, foxes, raccoons, coyotes and, of course, house cats.

Chipmunks live only about three years, have many predators, and rely on food sources that vary wildly from year to year, so they rarely become an overpopulating nuisance. Conversely, they are creative in finding food and have two large litters a year, so they aren’t likely to become endangered.

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust Newsletter

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Two New Members Join the Land Trust Board



Joe Standart is an internationally renowned photographer, whose successful and distinguished campaigns for many of the world's leading organizations have won him many awards from *The Andes*, *The One Show*, and many others. Joe created a series of monumental public art exhibition/events under the name of *Portrait of America*. They have been featured in *The*

New York Times, *The Boston Globe* AP, ABC, and many others. Joe is a founding director of Photographers and Friends United against AIDS, which in 1987 gathered 100 of the world's leading photographers and inspired them to respond to the theme "the indomitable spirit." A constant in Joe's work has been his love and depiction of the natural world. From a series about the Alaskan frontier in 1978 to his recent Connecticut River *Tidelands* series, Joe always returns to his love of photographing nature.

New to Lyme as a resident, **Susan Henderson** has visited her family here for 30 years. She has been involved with many local community boards and organizations over the years in various capaci-



ties; volunteerism has been a passion throughout her life. After raising three children, she managed and worked in several home decorating and gift boutiques in northern New Jersey.

Susan has a true appreciation for nature. She and her husband Dan currently care for her father in Lyme and enjoy the majestic beauty of the area, hoping to help preserve it for future generations.

New Map of Lyme's Preserved Farmland, Woodlots and Pastureland

By Tony Irving

Lyme Land Trust Director

The new figures are in and Lyme is the front runner. The Eightmile Wild and Scenic Coordinating Committee has just completed an in-depth compilation of open space acreage in Lyme and neighboring towns. Lyme is 22,000 acres (33 square miles) in size, of which 11,250 acres are protected from further development. Of this total, more than 5,500 acres are under state protection, a little over 700 acres are owned by the town and 2,120 acres are protected by the Connecticut chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

The Lyme Land Trust oversees 104 properties totaling nearly 2,850 acres, of which easements account for 2,105 acres and the balance of 729 acres are owned outright. All of these numbers are quite impressive, especially when you realize that half of Lyme is in protected open space. Our neighboring towns also have impressive totals, but Lyme leads the way.

But it's the land trust numbers that really tell the story of Lyme's commitment to open space protection. Here's why. The easement total in town of 2105 acres consists of 67 individual easements. A very few were part of town subdivision approvals that required a certain amount of property be set aside for conservation, and another couple were purchased by the trust to ensure protection of important habitats.

The vast majority, however, were donated. These Lyme landowners put the value of land conservation above all other considerations. True, there are tax benefits that sometimes accrue from these charitable contributions, but it was the love of the land and its protection in perpetuity that really drove these decisions.

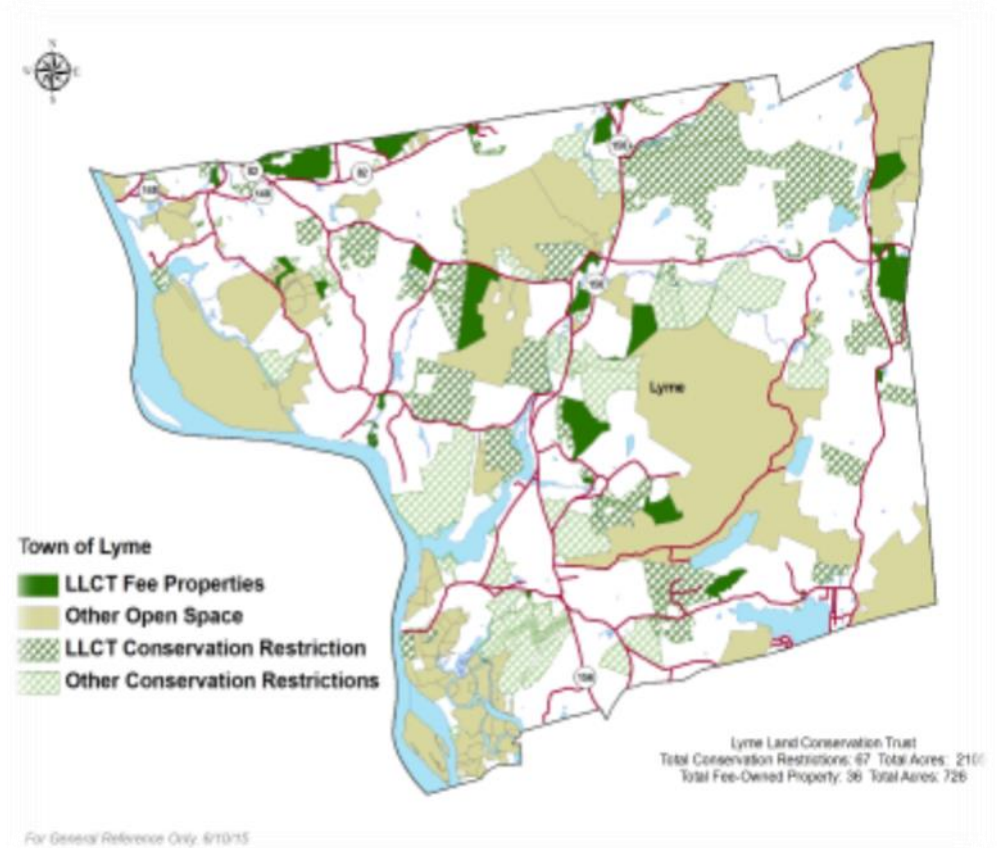
A perfect example of this is the Scheel property on Grassy Hill Road. In 2013 the family donated a Conservation Easement on nearly 40 acres of their land. On the easement portion of their property there

will be no further development. However, they will continue their ownership and usage of the land for recreational, forestry and agricultural activities.

Anne Scheel described their decision this way: "We, as stewards of this property, continue to be inspired by its natural beauty and wanted the core of the property to remain unchanged. The historical architec-

and 2012 the population increased by 17%. This is important to keep in mind because as population and building intensify, remaining swaths of land may become fragmented.

The Land Trust's goal is to promote conservation, continue building linkages between important habitat types, protect our watersheds and maintain the scenic



tural homes that dot this rural country road are a testament to the rich history of the families that settled this part of Lyme. The Lyme Land Trust certainly shares the same vision of preserving this precious resource."

Although the numbers are impressive, it is important that the Land Trust continues its work. With this record of accomplishment by Lyme's landowners, have our objectives been met? We have all benefited greatly by the contributions of so many, but our town is still growing: between 2000

and cultural values that so define Lyme. The Land Trust is simply a vehicle for these conservation efforts and ongoing success requires the continued support of the Lyme community and landowners who are committed to the land.

Lyme is an outpost, offering habitats of international importance that provide a safe haven for myriad species of plants and animals. So although we have much to celebrate with 50% open space we must work towards the future for continued success.

How Do You Successfully Manage A Cycling Event with Over 730 Riders? With Great Volunteers!

By George Moore

Event Organizer

This year's Tour de Lyme charity cycling event on May 17th drew over 730 riders to Ashlawn Farm. Although they came from 13 states and two-thirds of the towns in Connecticut, it was still a regional

Some volunteer teams started the day before the event, placing adhesive colored direction arrows (bio-degradable) on the roads of Lyme, East Haddam, Salem, East Lyme, and Old Lyme along with signs with more direction arrows. Other teams walked miles of trails placing colored flags to guide the mountain bikers. (And yes, all

Fire Police capably handled crowd control and the Lyme Ambulance was ready to respond if needed. Area residents deserve credit also for accepting in good spirit the hundreds of cyclists taking over the roads for the morning. I continue to be impressed with the courtesy shown by motorists.



event; 612 of the riders were from Connecticut, most from the southeastern section of the state. The riders started to arrive before the early morning mist lifted and rode off into one of Lyme's beautiful spring days.

Every aspect of organizing and hosting an event this size is a challenge—from enlisting the sponsors and planning the routes to parking hundreds of vehicles and making sure all tired, hungry riders get fed when they return. It would be chaotic if not done in an orderly manner, and luckily we have many volunteers with the expertise to make it happen smoothly.

those signs and flags were promptly removed after the event by these same volunteers.)

Volunteers loaded up four pickup trucks with supplies for the four rest stops and delivered them on the morning of the event. Other volunteers staffed the rest stops to dispense drinks, fruit and snacks along with encouragement and good cheer to the many riders.

A team of volunteers handled rider check-in with efficiency gained through experience, heading off long lines. Representatives from three area cycle shops offered on-the-spot repairs. The Lyme

The high point for me was watching the Family Ride participants come down Bill Hill, cross Route 156 and turn onto Elys Ferry Road, big and little legs pumping away. It is so important to get children outdoors enjoying what nature offers, what we have helped to preserve.

The names of the volunteers are far too numerous to mention in this article and trying to do so would risk leaving someone out. **You know who you are—we know who you are—to all of you: a really big THANK YOU.**

Beaver Brook Farm Preserved for Agricultural Production

Lyme's Beaver Brook Farm is the most recent property to be permanently dedicated for agricultural production under the CT Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program. According to Agriculture Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky, the preservation of this 163-acre farm "Preserving (this 163-acre farm) . . . ensures that it will be available to continue producing a diverse array of high-quality Connecticut Grown food and fiber products and contribute to our agricultural economy."

More than 300 farms totaling over 40,000 acres have been protected under the Farmland Preservation Program, with several more expected to be finalized this year.

Beaver Brook Farm, owned by Stan-



Photo by Humphrey Tyler

ley and Suzanne Sankow, contains approximately 72 acres of land designated as

Farmland of Statewide importance because of its high quality soils and high yields. It has been in agricultural production since 1917, when it was bought by Stanley Sankow's grandfather. Stanley and Suzanne Sankow took over the operation in 1984 and converted it to a sheep farm, producing dairy and meat as well as wool products.

The farm is one of 24 licensed cheese manufacturers in Connecticut, and has won awards at the New England Regional Cheese Competition.

The Sankows supply cheese to restaurants and grocery stores throughout Connecticut. They also sell directly from an on-site farm store and at a variety of farm markets throughout southern Connecticut.

Local Celebrations Get Us Out in the Field

Earth Day Celebrated at Lyme Consolidated School

On April 22, the Lyme Land Trust and the Lyme Consolidated School celebrated the 45th annual Earth Day. The youngest students (kindergarten and first grade) hiked to the Pleasant Valley Preserve to learn about vernal pools and amphibians with Land Trust Director Anthony Irving and Marta Cone, intrepid

look at why the rocks and geology make Lyme so unique and how that shapes the habitats that are found here. The fourth and fifth grade discussed the importance of watersheds and clean water before being treated to a surprise from Steve Gephart, CT Department of Energy and Environment, who brought along some huge trout for the kids to look at and touch before tossing them into the Eightmile River. At the end of the day each of the children were given a white pine seedling to take home and plant.

A special thanks to the Lyme Parent Teacher Organization and all of the volunteers who generously gave their time to help get students outside to celebrate the beauty of Lyme for Earth Day.



Photo by Joe Standart

Fourth and fifth graders watching trout release on the Eightmile River

volunteer. The highlight for the students was certainly taking a close look at some slimy egg masses. The second and third graders joined retired State Geologist Ralph Lewis for a fascinating

Trails Day Celebrated at Lord Creek Farm

Connecticut Trails Day on June 6 was a great success. 32 people joined Land Trust Environmental Director Lisa Niccolai and Events Coordinator Angie Falstrom for a special two-hour hike around Lord Creek Farm, at the invitation of the Lyme Trail Association. LTA is a membership organization, with trails open to equestrians, hikers, and cross-country skiers who pay yearly dues. They were joined by Janie Davison, who shared some of her stories about the property. During one of the scenic overlook breaks, Paul Spitzer spoke about his osprey research. As the day warmed up, the ice cold water and fresh strawberries back at the cars was a welcome sight! (Enjoy a slide show of the walk at the LTA website: <http://www.lymetrailassociation.org/>)

Land Trusts Photo Contest Celebrates Tenth Anniversary

Deadline January 31, 2016

Five local land trusts seek amateur photographers of all ages to help celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Land Trusts Photo Contest. Everyone is invited to share their love of the natural world by entering their favorite photographs. Children are especially encouraged to submit photos. 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. Land Trusts in these towns sponsor this photo contest.

Cash prizes will be awarded in each of **five** categories. The categories are **Land-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**. In addition, the **John G. Mitchell Memorial Award** will go to

the photograph determined to best promote and support biodiversity and the environment. John G. Mitchell was an environmentalist and former contest judge.



Youth Category: First Place 2014
Rebecca Johnson

Winning photos will be selected by a panel of judges. All entered photographs, including all the winners, will be displayed at a public reception in Spring 2016. Submissions will be accepted from January 1 until January 31, 2016.

Updated contest rules and entry forms will be available closer to the date. For more information, see <http://www.lymelandtrust.org/news/photo-contest/> or email photocontest@lymelandtrust.org.

Contest awards are being funded with the generous support of our commercial sponsors. On board to-date are Lorensen Toyota, Evan Griswold at Coldwell Banker, Essex Savings Bank, Wing-Oakley Group at Morgan Stanley and Alison Mitchell, in honor of her late husband, John G. Mitchell.

State Forest, Local Birds Get Extra Attention

Nehantic State Forest 10-Year Resource Management Plan

Connecticut DEEP is developing a 10-year Forest Resource Management Plan for Nehantic State Forest in cooperation with the local community, taking into consideration adjoining private, municipal, and land trust forest land. The 4,429-acre State Forest in SW New London County, with 110 acres in Wildlife Management status, is a combination of dammed marshes, early successional forests under transmission lines and in wildlife maintained openings, beaver ponds, and ponds.

Most of Nehantic's individual forest stands are crowded but healthy. However, habitats within these stands are becoming less diverse.

Several disturbance-dependent ecosystems and individual species such as pitch pine, oak, aspen, Cerulean Warbler, and New England Cottontail aren't currently sustaining themselves. In addition, some aquatic environments are being harmed by sediment from forest roads, and invasive

plants and insects are expanding their areas due to climate change.

DEEP is proposing a number of steps to maintain and improve the quality of the forest ecosystems. Harvest and prescribed burns on a small area of forest will promote underrepresented upland ecosystems and fauna populations; upgrade forest roads, and introduce more bridges at stream crossings; plant oak, hickory and pitch-pine in harvested and burned areas; control and, in places, eradicate invasive plant species such as barberry, multiflora rose, autumn olive and bittersweet.

In order to maintain a healthy forest, DEEP will maintain two to four legacy, den, or rotten trees per acre, as well as retain snags, and other coarse woody material to provide a heterogeneous environment. They will aim to maintain 20% of land as old-growth forest and thin 50% of crowded forest stands to increase overstory tree size.

Public comment is invited. For more information see: http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/forestry/management_plans/nehantic_sf_mgt_pln_draft.pdf.

New Audubon Board for Lower CT River Valley

Connecticut Audubon Society has recently formed a regional board of directors, including Emily Bjornberg of Lyme, Herman Blanke, Elsie Childs, Patsy McCook, Eleanor Robinson, Claudia Weicker and Ted VanItallie of Old Lyme, Jim Denham of Essex, and Margarita Emerson of Niantic.

As Land Trust properties are managed to help to sustain both native and migratory bird populations, we applaud this effort to raise awareness and create more opportunities for conservation within the region. Birders have always been a key part of tracking the diversity of bird populations in the Connecticut River and its estuaries and helping to focus attention on the ecological importance of these areas.

The Board hopes to expand the Audubon's educational programs to more schools in the region to complement schools' curriculum and enrich students' learning by offering hands-on exposure to science in the field.



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.

Pleasant Valley Preserve Ecology Talk and Walk

When – Sat., Sept. 19, 9:30-11:30 AM
(Raindate, Sun., Sept. 20)

What—Anthony Irving, Lyme Land Trust board member, Chairman of the Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Committee, and well-known ecologist, will lead a talk and walk about the ecology of **Pleasant Valley Preserve**.

Where— Meet at Pleasant Valley Preserve parking lot.

Red Trail Walk Jewett Preserve

When – Sat., Oct. 3, 1:30-3:30-ish PM
(Raindate: Sun., Oct 4)

What—Wendolyn Hill, Lyme Land Trust Board member and Lyme Open Space Coordinator, will lead a moderate trail walk of the less-traveled red trail in Jewett Preserve and return via connecting trails. Roundtrip is about 4 miles. Bring a snack.

Where— Meet at the cemetery entrance to Jewett Preserve.

Mt. Archer Woods Natural and Cultural History Talk and Walk

When – Sat., Oct. 24, 10-12 AM
(Raindate: Sun., Oct. 25)

What— Brantley Buerger, Lyme Land Trust board member and steward of Mt. Archer Woods will lead a walk and talk about the flora, fauna and history of Mt. Archer Woods.

Where— Meet at the Mt. Archer parking lot on Mt Archer Road.

Annual Tree Swallow Cruise on the River

When – Fri., Sept. 25, 5-8 PM

What—"Tree Swallow Spectacular" cruise on the *RiverQuest* excursion boat. Preregistration and prepayment required at lymelandtrust.org. For more info: email: info@lymelandtrust.org

Where— Excursion boat leaves from Eagle Landing State Park, Haddam, at 5 PM sharp

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