

LYME LAND TRUST BULLETIN

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust

April 1998

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

There are many reasons to preserve open space. In Lyme, the retention of rural character is at the top of most people's lists. Rural character, however, is more than just how something looks, it's also how the land functions in relation to its natural resources. Having pieces of protected land, although pleasing to the eye, may not go very far towards maintaining and preserving all the functions that open space provides. One of these is habitat.

Different animals have different habitat requirements. These are not determined simply by size or hydrogeologic considerations such as wetland versus upland, but also by the various vegetative types and their stages of succession. Lands in Lyme are represented by a diversity of habitats such as open field; pole stand to mature woodland; unique estuarine, riverine and inland wetlands along with a variety of topographic and physical features. When viewed as a whole, Lyme with its many contiguous, undeveloped parcels is one of the last truly rural enclaves along the northeast coastline.

One of the goals of the Land Trust is to not only preserve habitat, but to ensure that these individual parcels retain their connections with other protected ones. Why is this important? Because the ability for free movement between various habitats is essential to the survival of many species. Studies show that rare species have declined as continuous areas of forest and meadow become increasingly smaller and fragmented with increased development. In general: the greater the number and kind of contiguous habitat types, the wider the spectrum of species present. In other words, the greater the diversity of connected habitats the greater the diversity and populations of plant and wildlife species.

We have recently received easements and a gift of land that ensures the future connectivity between other preserved

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Digging to install fish ladder.

FISH LADDER A MAJOR CONSERVATION PROJECT

It was a long time aborning, but Lyme now has a fish ladder that will connect the lower Eightmile River to the upper reaches of Devils Hopyard State Park by traversing the nine foot high Rathbun Dam at the Mt. Archer Road bridge. Many migratory species can now swim up the Eightmile River to spawn for the first time since the 18th century, when the dam was first put in.

History

The project began in 1991, and has involved many players. In that year interested neighbors approached the Department of Marine Fisheries of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and Stephen Gephard, Senior Fisheries Biologist of that department to look into the feasibility of a fish passage around the dam.

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust, as owner of Moulson Pond, was one of a number of abutting landowners who formed a study committee to work with Gephard as he undertook feasibility studies. This involved considering alternative plans for the ladder, possible effect on the flowage of the river, visual impact, questions of ownership and liability.

After considering various alternatives, the chosen route involved making use of the existing spillway from the dam.

Downstream, on private property, a new fishway has been created that joins with another spillway near the river. The actual ladder will give the fish access from the lower river level to the upper spillway, a rise of about ten feet.

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View of Brown Hill from Rosseau property.

FIRST GRASSY HILL EASEMENT

Richard and Shirley Rosseau have made the first donation of a conservation easement on Grassy Hill Road. The Rosseaus live on the very top of Grassy Hill next to the church, with wide views in winter across to Brown and Nickerson hills to the west and the mouth of the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound to the south.

The house was originally the parsonage for the church, and the 47 acre parcel

was the farm for the parsonage. Two fields next to the house create 353 feet of road frontage that will remain rural. Woodland stretches behind the house. The easternmost section, 18 acres, lies in the town of East Lyme, and it abuts the huge open space of Yale's Sheffield Scientific School, creating an extensive wildlife preserve.

The Rosseaus have requested that the Land Trust accept the easement on the whole parcel, including the East Lyme sec-

tion, both for sentimental reasons and for convenience. This request will prompt a change in the by-laws of the Land Trust, which will be proposed for a vote at the Annual Meeting.

The woodland includes oaks, hickory, beech and other species. Dead and dying red cedar are found in the understory, a remnant sign of old pastureland. The property sits atop a watershed divide, with wetlands snaking through the woods, and draining in several directions. The southwestern side is part of the headwaters for Grassy Hill Brook, which flows into Rogers Lake. On the north, waters drain through a sometime-pond down to Beaver Brook and the Eightmile River. To the east, a small stream drains through bedrock outcrops before running into the Four Mile River.

Dick Rosseau has deep roots in the town of Lyme. His grandfather, Percival Rosseau, was one of the early generation of Lyme artists and lived at the bottom of Grassy Hill, near Blood Street. Rosseau's parents bought the present house in the 1930s. When they bought the property, his mother commented that, "This land once belonged to the Indians; then to the church; now we own it." In future Lyme residents can know the area will remain open space.

Shirley Rosseau shares her husband's interest in conservation issues, and as she said, "We didn't want the children (who all live far away) fighting over what to do with the property".

POTENTIAL NEW TRAIL

At the turn of the century the 125 acre Judge Woods estate was purchased by Hadyn Lathrop. Over the years it was broken up into smaller parcels with Ron Phillips buying over 40 acres beginning in 1971. As part of his recent five lot subdivision, Mr. Phillips felt it was important to preserve the more sensitive land including an upland wetlands corridor. A hundred years ago much of this property was in pasture as evidenced by the number of stone walls crisscrossing the land. Today mature hardwoods and hemlock dominate with an understory of mountain laurel, dogwood and wetland shrubs. The beauty of the property is not only the vegetation, but the microtopography of steep slopes, rounded uplands and rock outcrops surrounding wetlands and a stream corridor.

The 9.35 acre Phillips parcel, a gift to the Land Trust, backs onto the Nature Conservancy-owned Coudert Property which also abuts other property owned by

the Land Trust. As part of the gift Mr. Phillips included an access from Mitchell Hill Road. Preliminary discussions with the Nature Conservancy have opened the possibility for a trail running from Mitchell Hill Road across Joshuatown

Road and down to Selden Creek. If these connections can be made with other properties, Lyme could one day have a beautiful network of walking trails. Ron Phillips gift is a primary link towards this goal.



Ron Phillips' donation to the Land Trust.

RIDGE LINE PRESERVED

There are an estimated 170 acres in the property on which the Land Trust has recently received an easement. It is one of the most untouched pieces of land in the town, and creates important links with other open spaces. What and where is it?

It consists of open fields, steep rock ledges, vernal pools, small streams, and deep woodland. It lies behind Cedar Lake off Beaverbrook Road, and from the top of the ridges, provides views of the lake, Grassy Hill and eastward into East Lyme. It is accessible only by a narrow, old cart track off Beaver Brook Road, near the entry to Keeney Road.

An old farm of early but unknown date, the property in this century has been home to two Lyme artists; Eugene Higgins, and later Alpheus Cole. Some years ago, the old farm house burned under suspicious circumstances, but the old barn still remains.

Six years ago, David Tiffany bought the land with the idea of building a house, but the plan did not work out and he recently sold it, after placing a conservation easement on the land, to Gifford and Cynthia Fogle. Tiffany felt that this easement, which would prevent most future development, while allowing all other enjoyments of the property, was an appropriate conservation tool for this historic home site.



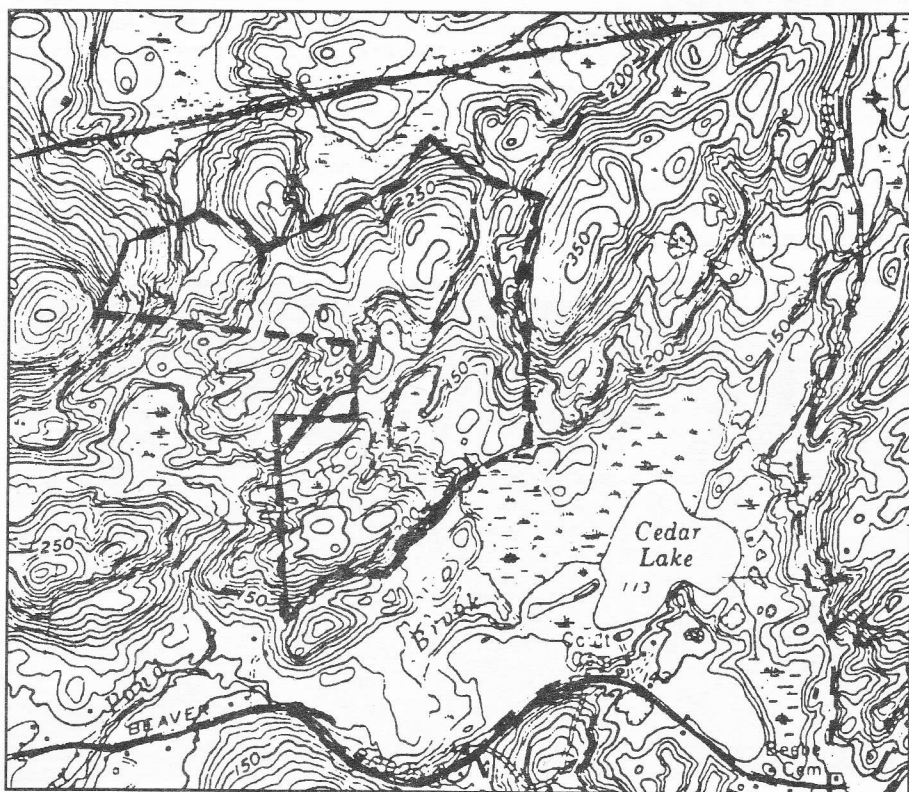
Ledge on the Fogle property. From left: David Tiffany, Betsy Dill, Cynthia Fogle, Gifford Fogle and their son. Anthony Irving, Land Trust president, is at right.

The Fogles, who currently live on Cove Road, are excited about the property and will build when they decide exactly where to locate the house among the many tempting sites. The easement permits the building of only two houses. Current zoning, in fact, permits only one,

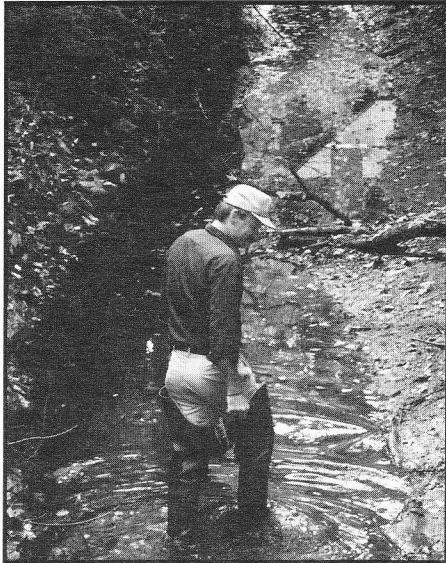
but Tiffany's easement provides a precaution against a day when the town might change the zoning regulations under development pressures.

The Fogle's property stretches northward and westward, where it touches the 350 acre property of Frederick B. Gahagan and Sally Bill, whose easement donation was celebrated a year ago. Together, the two properties extend eastward from Route 156 for nearly a mile and three quarters along the ridge tops which provide such nice views from Beaverbrook Road. There is then a 3,100 foot stretch of as yet undeveloped land between these lands and Hartman Park. To the north there is still more as yet undeveloped land.

The wildness of the area is attested by trout in the streams, deer and turkey in the woods, and David Tiffany is sure he has seen bob cats among the rock ridges. There are also remains of old farmsteads in the woods. Even though the property will not be open to the public, it is nice to know that it is there forever.



Map of the Tiffany-Fogle property in dotted line. Line at the top is the power line. Line at the bottom is Beaverbrook Road.



Stephen Gephard checks no fish are left stranded.

FISH continued from page 1

The state's interest in the Rathbun Dam ladder is part of its larger interest in opening Connecticut's rivers to migrating fish in conjunction with the federal Fish and Wildlife Service. The *New York Times* reported last August on the release of salmon in the Farmington River, and there has been activity in some of the state's western rivers. The Eightmile River is particularly significant due to its proximity to the lower Connecticut River and Long Island Sound, and because of the river's uniquely pristine condition.

Funding

The Land Trust took on the task of project coordination, and as a non-profit organization, of fundraising. The permitting process, engineering field work and design, fundraising \$65,000 for construction, and the inevitable delays of bringing all the parties together, took six years. The number of groups and individuals essential to the process included: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the Silvio Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge, the Connecticut River Watershed Council, the Coastal Conservation Association of Connecticut, David Bingham of Salem, and Sue Hessel and Karen Dahle of Lyme.

Once everything was in place, the actual construction took less than two months. Lyme contractor K.C. Mazer completed the "big dig" by Thanksgiving, 1997.

Fish and Wildlife

Gephard is very optimistic about the effectiveness of the new ladder. Already many spawning fish swim up the Eightmile River, only to be turned back by

the high dam. Targeted species include alewife, blueback herring (buckies), sea-run brown trout, and Atlantic salmon. So far shad, salmon and trout fingerlings have been introduced upriver and have thrived in the clean water of the River.

As these fish increase in number, they in turn will support species that feed on fish, such as ospreys, heron, kingfishers and other fish, as well as otters (already found on the river) and mink.

But don't rush out to buy new fishing rods just yet. Gephard points out that when the mature fish spawn, they die, and the young go out to sea. It is hoped they will return after four or five years to spawn in turn.

PRESIDENTS LETTER

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parcels. David Tiffany's 170 acre conservation easement off Beaverbrook Road connects to the west with the 300 acre easement that Sally Bill donated last year that in turn abuts a previous 140 acre easement from Fritz and Alva Gahagan to the Nature Conservancy that borders on the 250 acre Pleasant Valley Preserve. To the east there is about a half mile of unprotected lands before Hartman Park and its border to the east with the Nehantic State Forest. If the remaining gaps in this corridor can be added, the combination of the individual pieces begin to represent substantial protection for part of the Eightmile River watershed.

A 7.3 acre conservation easement donated this fall by Bradford and Ellen Purcell on Tantomoranturn Road is contiguous with another 19 acre easement on their property which in turn connects with a 25 acre parcel given to the Land Trust a number of years ago by Peggy Clucas. Their new easement completes a

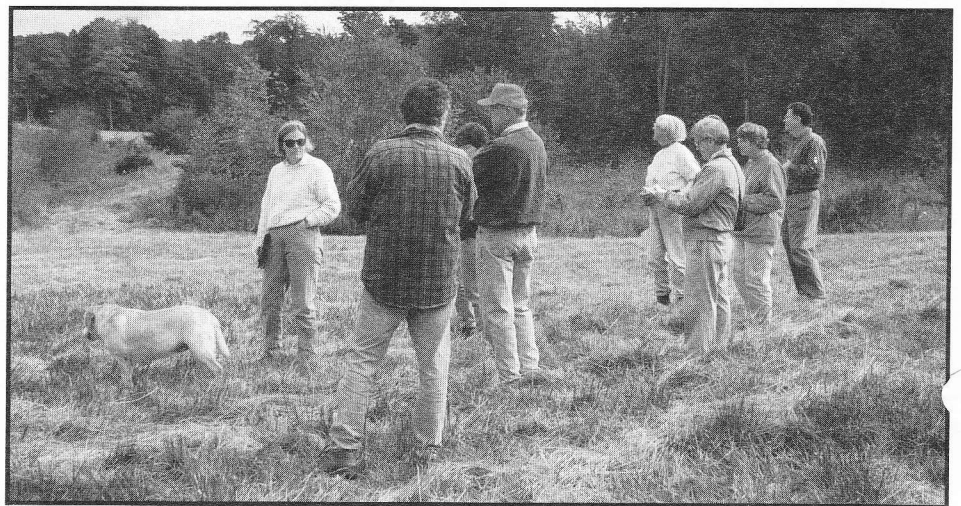
corridor over their property that could one day be the link with preserved lands of adjacent property owners.

And on Mitchell Hill Road, a recent gift of nearly ten acres from Ron Phillips not only links open space parcels, but gives us the opportunity to install a trail. This would connect Mitchell Hill with a town conservation easement, land belonging to the Nature Conservancy and the Lyme Land Trust, and cross Joshuatown Road to Nature Conservancy trails leading to Selden Creek. Not only are connections being preserved, but the exciting topography and diversity of habitats will provide a unique walking experience.

Finally there is one other connection we have made. The fish ladder linking the upper and lower Eightmile River at Moulson Pond was completed this fall. After 200 years annual spawning runs for anadromous fish will hopefully return to this stretch that goes as far as the falls at Devil's Hopyard on the West branch and up to the dam where Salem Road crosses the East branch. Blueback herring, alewife, lamprey, sea-run brown trout and maybe one day salmon can now reinhabit these prime waters.

All of these connections add up to positive progress. Although protecting our habitat resources is not the only mission of the Land Trust, these are the ingredients that make our open spaces what they are. Linking bottomlands to uplands, ridgetops with rivers: fields to forests bring these variety of habitat types together continuing the dynamic interactions and exchanges that are necessary for species survival. Any time we can join areas of open space the land is buffered from the impacts of fragmentation and its effect on habitat health.

Anthony Irving
President



Board training session on the Purcell property.

SAVE THE DATE

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 2 at 7:30 in the Lyme Public Hall in Hamburg. The speaker will be James Murphy, Planning Analyst with the Office of Resource Management of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. The title of his talk will be announced later.

The Annual Meeting is also the occasion for reports to the members and awards to special citizens. In addition, this year there are proposed changes to the by-laws which must be approved by the membership.

BY-LAW CHANGES

At the Annual Meeting on June 2, Land Trust members will be asked to vote on several changes to the Certificate of Incorporation and the By Laws. These are basically housekeeping measures, but the Board feels they clarify the mission and functions of the Trust.

The changes to the Certificate of Incorporation are: permission to acquire or accept land beyond the borders of Lyme under specific conditions, and to join with or contribute to other conservation organizations to achieve the goals of the Land Trust. These powers are implied in the existing document but are not spelled out.

By-Law Changes are: redefinition of the duties of the Treasurer; creation of standing committees; and authority to create ad hoc committees.

The specific wording of these changes will be sent to members in May with the notice of the Annual Meeting.

WHAT A NICE IDEA!

On two Sundays this past summer, Ruth Perry opened her garden on Hamburg Road to the public through the auspices of the Garden Conservancy. Ms. Perry has donated her half of the proceeds to the Lyme Land Conservation Trust. She has just retired after ten years on the board as secretary of the Trust.

Ruth Perry is a hands-on gardener, having herself carved an unusual garden out of a jungle of vines and brambles over a twelve year period. Now a front cottage garden winds down to a shaded bog garden, which then rises at the rear of the house to a rose garden, a kitchen garden and a developing formal garden.

The Garden Conservancy was formed in 1989 to preserve fine gardens



Last Fall's walk in Pleasant Valley Preserve.

JOIN US FOR THE SPRING WALK

The Land Trust will hold its spring walk in the Selden Preserve Saturday, April 25, from 10 a.m. to noon. Two board members, Anthony Irving, ecologist, and Ralph Lewis, geologist, will take advantage of the diversity of this preserve to talk about the rock formations, the hemlock and hardwood forests, the vernal pools and marsh lands, all of which pro-

vide a variety of habitats. The preserve also offers striking views of Selden Creek and the Connecticut River.

The Selden Preserve is the property of The Nature Conservancy, and is on Joshuatown Road, 1.4 miles north of the Joshuatown-Mitchell Hill intersection.

Rain date is Sunday, April 26, at 10 a.m.

by fostering their transition to independent, non-profit ownership, providing public access and fostering educational programs.

The Land Trust is grateful to Ruth for her generosity and imagination.

EASEMENT GIVEN ON TANTOMARANTUM ROAD

Bradford and Ellen Purcell donated a 7.3 acre conservation easement on their property on Tantommarantum Road. The Purcells recently purchased the 82 acre parcel which already had a 19 acre conservation easement donated by the previous owner. The two easements together protect open fields, woodlands and wetlands from any future development. In addition, the easements create a continuous corridor across the property which joins with land donated to the Land Trust a few years ago by Peggy Clucas. "Not only is the preservation of habitat blocks important, but creating corridors linking them together is necessary to preserve the ecological integrity of these habitat pieces.

The Purcell easement opens the possibility to make other linkages with neighboring land owners in the future" commented Anthony Irving, Land Trust president.

THANK YOU, LYME

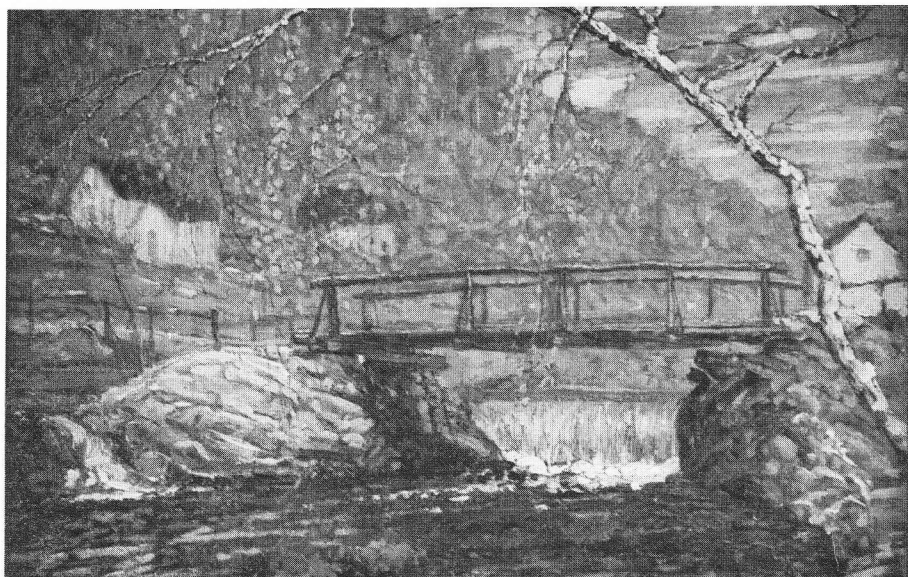
In 1997, membership in the Land Trust reached a record high of 423, thus continuing the upward trend of the past four years as shown below:

1996 - 392	1994 - 322
1995 - 366	1993 - 283

The current level of membership represents about one-third of Lyme's property owners, one of the highest rates among Connecticut's 119 Land Trusts.

According to Robert Barney, treasurer, while there are certainly many reasons for this gratifying demonstration of public support, probably the two most significant are: growing public awareness of the Land Trust; and support for its role in preserving the rural character of Lyme.

If you are not a member and would like to join, see the form on page 6.



*"Footbridge at Hamburg Cove, Ct.," an early painting of the Rathbun Dam.
We have not been able to identify the artist and welcome help.*

JOIN NOW

If you are not already a member of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust, won't you consider joining. Send tax deductible contributions to Box 1002, Lyme Ct. 06371. Be sure to include name and address.

Senior	\$5.00
Family	20.00
Contributing	50.00
Individual	10.00
Subscribing	25
Sustaining	100.00

Contributions to the Stewardship/Acquisition Fund also welcome. Consider including the Land Trust in your will.

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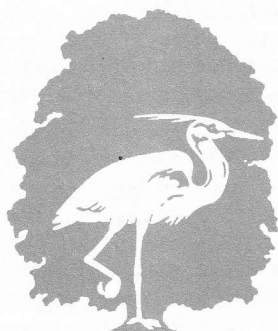
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