



2017 Spring Newsletter

Eradicating Phragmites in Lord Cove

By John Pritchard
Lyme Land Trust President

Lyme's Lord Cove is a 400-acre brackish marsh system and the jewel in the crown of the Connecticut River Estuary and Tidal Wetlands Complex, a 40-mile stretch of the lower Connecticut River from Old Saybrook to Portland. In 1994, the United Nations Ramsar Wetlands Convention, one of the oldest intergovernmental environmental agreements, included this complex in its list of "Wetlands of International Importance." The Nature Conservancy has characterized the estuary area as one of the "Last Great Places" on earth.

As the largest marsh system in the estuary, Lord Cove is an important habitat for ducks and other waterfowl, bald eagles, ospreys and hawks, several species of herons and bitterns, and numerous marsh birds and small mammals such as otters and muskrats. It also supports ten species of endangered native plants; the most rare and globally significant plant at Lord's Cove is Eaton Beggartick, *Bidens eatonii*. Lord Cove is now threatened by the uncontrolled spread of phragmites (or common reed), an exotic invasive that out-competes virtually all of the native grasses and other vegetation in the wetland areas it infests. It has almost no food or habitat value for birds

or other wildlife. To the contrary, it destroys native plants that provide supportive habitats and food sources.

Most likely European in origin, phragmites appeared in coastal ports in the eastern United States in the early 19th century. Dense colonies of phrag-



Richard Snarski and his wife, Laurie, with the Marsh Master.

mites spread rapidly up and down the east coast and, over the course of the 20th century, throughout the continent.

The southern portion of the Lord Cove marsh system is now largely a densely packed, monotypic stand of phragmites. In the northern half of the system, the phragmites exist in smaller disbursed clonal patches whose locations have been identified and mapped.

Richard Snarski, a Lyme wetlands scientist who owns property on Lord Cove (pictured here with his wife, Laurie), has put together a coalition with the goal sustainably managing the phragmites infestation in Lord Cove.

The coalition consists of the Connecticut Nature Conservancy, the Connecticut River Gateway Commission, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), and private landowners whose properties

border Lord Cove. This coalition has embarked upon a three-year project to rid Lord Cove of phragmites.

The Nature Conservancy has committed to provide \$16,000 towards eradicating the clonal phragmites patches in the northern half of the Cove, and the Connecticut River Gateway Commission has committed to provide \$30,000 in matching funds for that purpose.

Funds to match the Gateway grant are currently being raised from private

parties and foundations, and the Land Trust has joined this effort by establishing an account for those wishing to contribute. The money will be used to hire All Habitat Services, which specializes in managing exotic invasive species such as phragmites, to perform the necessary eradication work in the northern half of the Cove.

The project entails applying herbicide to the phragmites during June and August of this year. During the next two years, any remaining phragmites will be eradicated. The herbicide being

Continued on page 7

Trails Day Walk in Rabbit Restoration Project

On Connecticut Trails Day, Saturday, June 3, the Lyme Land Trust will sponsor a walk in Slawson Preserve with three wildlife conservationists: Lisa Wahle, Mark LaCasse and Emery Gluck. Wahle, a biologist specializing in young forest habitat restoration, is currently a contractor with the Wildlife Management Institute at CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Wildlife Division, working on New England cottontail rabbit conservation in Connecticut. LaCasse is a Master Wildlife Conservationist and professional land manager of one of the private lands abutting Slawson Preserve. Gluck manages habitat restoration at Nehantic State Forest as part of CT DEEP Division of Forestry.

These conservationists will talk about the ongoing process of improving this piece of land for the benefit of the threatened New England cot-

tontail and other young forest species. Private landowners, the Lyme Land Trust and the state have agreed to harvest mature trees over a 6 to 10-year period to create an environment that is suitable for young forest species. The first harvest, on private land that LaCasse manages, was completed in the winter of 2014-15. The Land Trust harvest will happen in about a year. The Nehantic State Forest will have a tree harvest overseen by Gluck a few years after the Land Trust harvest.

The New England cottontail is the poster child for creating and preserving young forest habitat. As Connecticut has experienced scarcity and fragmentation of young forest, the populations of 55 species have been threatened, including 21 birds, 6 mammals and 9 reptiles and amphibians. These include prairie warbler, ruffed grouse, indigo bunting, American woodcock,

wood turtle, box turtle, black racer, and blue spotted salamander.

As cleared areas grow back, a desirable young brushy environment will develop where New England cottontail and other species can find food and protection from predators. Staggering the tree harvesting will ensure that this successional habitat is available over a longer period of time. For more information about the New England cottontail restoration project, see <http://newenglandcottontail.org>.

The walk will be held from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Parking is available at 435 Hamburg Road (Route 156), Lyme. Follow the dirt driveway to the parking area. We have permission to park at the end of this long private driveway for this special event only. No dogs please.

Reservations appreciated: open-space@townlyme.org

Update on Wood Duck Boxes

Rich Chmiel, who maintains 31 wood duck boxes in Lyme, Salem, Old Lyme and East Lyme, recently completed maintenance on three sites in Lyme: in Hartman Park., on the Land Trust's Beebe Preserve, and on a pond on a Land Trust property off Blood Street. The Connecticut Waterfowling Association (www.ctwaterfowling.org) builds the boxes, and they are installed in conjunction with the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP). The boxes are primarily used on state sites, but three Lyme Land Trust and town properties have been added to the project.

Ducks will not reuse a box for a second year unless it is cleaned out and new wood chips put in. This isn't necessary if wood ducks use a hollow tree to nest in, but hollow trees are scarce, and the nest boxes help increase nesting success. Maintenance is usually done when the pond ices up, but this year the ice never materialized. Chmiel had to drag his kayak through the woods to get to the boxes.

Chmiel can tell quite a bit about activity during the previous breeding season by what's left behind in the boxes. He notes whether they were used at all, or if nests were started and then abandoned, as is the case sometimes if there is a late spring. Chmiel also documents whether the boxes have been used by wood ducks or by hooded mergansers, by the



Photo Public Domain

thickness of the eggshells and the size of the pieces left behind. Hooded mergansers usually nest farther north, but he has noticed them moving south in recent years. It's also possible to determine approximately how many eggs were laid and hatched, and whether there was predation. There are usually between 4 and 12 eggs in a brood. The boxes are also occasionally used by squirrels, owls and songbirds.

Chmiel's check on the Beebe Preserve this past March indicated that one nest produced four hatchlings during the past year's breeding season. A year earlier, in March 2016, Chmiel's check showed that only one of the four boxes had any wood duck activity, producing one unhatched and two hatched eggs. In that year, nest boxes showed flying squirrel use and the two others were not used.

Wood ducklings were also hatched in Hartman Park in 2016. The pond off Blood Street produced five hatchlings, although two of the four boxes were not used. Chmiel suggested that the water there may be acidic, which makes food sources more scarce. There is a fairly active blue heron rookery at that site.

Chmiel is planning to install more boxes on these properties, but the installation of new boxes requires safe ice, and there hasn't been any in the past two years. He hopes to do so next year.

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust Newsletter

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Celebrations and Thanks

Several festive events will be held in the coming months to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust. We want to honor the Lyme residents who had the forethought, the vision, and the energy to preserve both the beautiful and varied open spaces of Lyme and its rural quality. Piece by piece, almost 3,000 acres of wetlands, forest, fields, streams and ponds have been kept safe for future generations.

The Land Trust couldn't have done it without the thousands of volunteer hours donated by those who have cleared and maintained trails, helped with events, led walks, developed programs, and performed many other large and small tasks. We also thank those who have given easements, and donated land and the funds to acquire land. You have all helped our mission in hundreds of ways.

We look forward to celebrating with you. We also look forward to working with all our friends and neighbors in Lyme to maintain the vision and continue our mission, which will

be more important than ever in the coming years.

The 50th Annual Meeting will be held on Friday, May 26, at 6:00 p.m. at



the Lyme Public Hall. Exactly fifty years ago on that date in 1967, a group of Lyme residents met for the first annual meeting of the Lyme Land Trust in the former Lyme Fire Department building. Since that building is now the Lyme Public Hall, this year's meeting will be held in exactly the same venue. A brief business meeting and statements commemorating the

occasion will be followed by a casual social gathering and celebration. Join us for community cheer and refreshments. Everyone is welcome.

On June 24, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m., we will hold a barbeque, with a raffle and music by the band Plywood Cowboy, at the Grassy Hill Preserve, to celebrate this important anniversary and to thank our members. The event will be free to members. Non-members can make a donation of \$25 or more at the event to become members.

On the Fourth of July long weekend, there will be an exhibit at the Lyme Public Hall commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust. It will include a display of the photographs of the Land Trusts Photo Contest winners, and information about the Lyme Land Trust preserves.

On Sunday, July 2, at the Public Hall, there will be a special day of activities for children. Check our website for more information:
<http://www.lymelandtrust.org/>

Land Trusts Photo Contest Winners

The 11th Annual Land Trusts Photo Contest winners were announced at a March 10, 2017 reception that displayed all the 240 entered photos. Land trusts in Lyme, Old Lyme, Salem, Essex and East Haddam sponsor the annual amateur photo contest to celebrate the scenic countryside and diverse wildlife and plants in these towns. The ages of the photographers ranged from children to senior citizens.



Cheryl Philopena won the John G. Mitchell Environmental Conservation Award for the photograph that best promotes the natural world, with her beautiful photograph of a bursting milkweed seedpod. Alison Mitchell personally presented the award, created in memory of her late husband John G. Mitchell, an editor at National Geographic, who championed the cause of the environment.

Photographs were judged by Joe Standart, an award-winning photographer, director and internationally known artist who loves photographing the natural world; 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.

Support for cash awards was provided by corporate sponsors RiverQuest/CT River Expeditions, Lorensen Auto Group, The Oakley Wing Group at Morgan Stanley, Evan Griswold at Coldwell Banker, Ballek's Garden Center, Essex Savings Bank, and Alison Mitchell in honor of her late husband, John G. Mitchell.

Big Y provided support for the reception.

The winning photographers are:

John G. Mitchell Environmental Award: Cheryl Philopena, of Salem

Youth

First Place: Judah Waldo, Old Lyme

Second Place: Jacob Kateley, Deep River



Clockwise from top left: **Hank Golet: First Place in the Wildlife category for "Great Blue Herons Feeding."** Cheryl Philopena: Winner of the John G. Mitchell Environmental Award for "Bursting Open." Susan Scott: Honorable Mention in Plants for "Daisy Dew." Marcus Maronn: Third Place in Cultural/Historic for "Wooden Wheels."



Third Place: Ava Frausini, Salem

Honorable Mention: Ashley Holt, Westbrook

Honorable Mention: Emily Kateley, Deep River

Honorable Mention: Lael Colton, NYC

Cultural/Historic:

First Place: Richard A. Busch, Bark Hamsted

Second Place: Megan Martin, East Haddam

Third Place: Marcus Maronn, Mystic

Honorable Mention: Cheryl Philopena, Salem

Honorable Mention: Richard Spearrin, Essex

Honorable Mention: Terri Schenk, Salem

Land Trusts Photo Contest Winners

Landscapes/Waterscapes

First Place: Susan Chamberland, Ivoryton
Second Place: Kam Ghaffari, East Lyme
Third Place: Erin Reemsnyder, Old Lyme
Honorable Mention: Gerry Graves, Old Lyme
Honorable Mention: Essex, Susan Scott, Essex
Honorable Mention: Linda Water, Salem

Plants

First Place: Harcourt Davis, Old Lyme
Second Place: Laura Stroebel, Salem
Third Place: Christine Darnell, Chester

Honorable Mention: Susan Hurley, East Lyme
Honorable Mention: Susan Scott, Essex
Honorable Mention: Linda Caldwell, Salem

Wildlife

First Place: Hank Golet, Old Lyme
Second Place: Susan Scott, Essex
Third Place: Linda Waters, Salem
Honorable Mention: Michael Aronson, Farmington
Honorable Mention: Christopher Flick, Old Saybrook
Honorable Mention: Christian Tompkins, Old Lyme

Warblers Return to the Treetops

By Doug Nielson

Lyme Resident, Amateur Naturalist

Is it any wonder that winter in New England can seem sort of dreary? It's not just the monotony of color in the landscape, or feeling cold and damp, or the stress of blocked roads and power outages. We also miss the music — in the trees and in the skies. Most of the songbirds have flown south and the few that remain during the winter months probably don't have much to sing about.

All that changes when the weather warms up. Coinciding with the emergence of flowers, leaves and insects is the arrival in mainland North America of two billion to five billion birds — 150 species — that have spent the winter in tropical areas of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Among this vast horde is the warbler, a smallish, often brilliantly colored, vocal, insectivorous passerine, that is, a perching bird. There are 50 different species of warblers, which are closely related to sparrows, finches and buntings. They often nest in the deep forest, but as they pass through this area, there are easier opportunities for observing them. Blackpoll warblers, for instance, breed exclusively in spruce-fir forests, but during migration can be found among willows or cottonwoods.

The greatest number of different warbler species is usually seen in the northeast in early May. By the time you read this, some may have already moved on, but there are still many warblers out there. To help predict when they will be in your area, two websites are useful: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Birdcast site (birdcast.info) displays real-time bird forecasts based on observations of groups of migrating birds moving across North America, complete with wind maps and arrival date predictions for many species. Another site, ebird.org, shows recent sightings, the best places to see particular species, and historical information. Both sites are replete with data, invaluable resources for birders. And if you want to get moment-by-moment information from birders about birds they've just seen, you can go to: birding.aba.org/maillist/CT01.

Here are a few tips for viewing warblers in our area: Try to view warblers near their travel corridors. Seek elevated areas along these corridors, because they are closer to the cruising altitude of the birds. Early morning and early evening are often the best times to catch them.

Study their feeding habits. Since they travel at night, they often feed in the mornings before moving on. Also note that different species feed in different parts of the trees, so know where to look.

Seek large swathes of forest or microhabitat



Public Domain.

Pine warbler.

oases amid non-favorable areas, such as city parks. In this area, Hartman Park and Nehantic State Forest are ideal for warbler watching.

Some of the warblers seen in Lyme include American Redstarts, Ovenbirds, Blackburnian, Blue-winged, Wilson's, Nashville, Pine, Chestnut-sided, Prairie, Hooded, and Worm-eating Warblers. The Cerulean Warbler in particular can be seen (and heard) in Hartman, Jewett Preserve, Eno Preserve, and Mount Archer Woods Preserve. Many bird watchers frequent the Corner Trails (Hartman, Walbridge, Young Preserves), where Cerulean Warblers, Worm-eating Warblers and others can be seen.

Watch the weather. The birds ride north on a south wind, but can be grounded briefly by rain, snow, or strong wind, particularly a headwind.

Use your senses. At this time of year, the males are in their brightest breeding plumage, and as they near their breeding areas, both the frequency and intensity of their calls increases.

Music has returned to our skies.

Brockway Hawthorne Preserve Dedication

By Humphrey Tyler
Past Land Trust Director

In late February, the Lyme Land Conservation Trust completed the purchase of the new 82-acre Brockway Hawthorne Wildlife Preserve in Hadlyme. There will be an opening and dedication ceremony in the near future.

The new preserve is part of a forested landscape just south of Hadlyme Four Corners and Ferry Road (Route 148), and forms a large part of the watershed for Whalebone Creek, a key tributary that flows into Whalebone Cove, most of which

is a national wildlife refuge under the management of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.



The Land Trust plans to name the new nature refuge in honor of the

Brockway and Hawthorne families, which have owned the land for several generations. William Hawthorne of Hadlyme sold the property to the Land Trust at a discount from its market value.

Lyme Land Trust volunteers are planning trails in the new preserve that will start at a parking area on Brush Hill Road and connect to the Ravine Trail and other trails in Selden Creek Preserve.

When the dedication ceremony and opening date are scheduled, the Land Trust will notify members by email and via social and news media.

Lyme Families Protect Properties

By Tony Irving
Lyme Land Trust Director

Two properties in Lyme recently received permanent protection due to the generosity of the landowners. An anonymous gift of a 10.8-acre approved building lot was donated to the Lyme Land Trust, and Jack and Jane Griffin placed a 46-acre conservation easement on their property on Grassy Hill Road.

The 46-acre Griffin conservation easement (shown in red at right) incorporates land that backs on to the Nehantic State Forest, enhancing the habitat value of this nearly 2,000-acre block. In addition, other easement properties border the parcel, including the town's 83-acre piece to the west and the Lyme Land Trust's 30-acre easement to the east, donated by the Rosseaus. In addition, other easements along Grassy Hill Road to the north are



nearby, forming a nearly uninterrupted forested block up to the Salem border.

The protected property grades from forested uplands of oak, birch and hickory on its eastern edge down to a large wetlands complex along the Nehantic Forest edge. It was once cleared for pastureland, but over the past 100 years it has been reverting to forest. The easement protects the property from development in perpetuity, while retaining other uses such as forestry, agriculture and passive recreation. The Griffins are long-time supporters of Lyme's open spaces and this gift confirms their commitment.

Both of these gifts demonstrate the commitment of Lyme's land holders to conserve our open spaces. With the addition of these two parcels, lands protected by the Lyme Land Trust add up to 2,880 acres, including 69 easements and 39 owned properties.

A group of Lyme Elementary School students from kindergarten, and first and second grades explored the rock ledge, meadows and stream at Clucas Preserve at the end of March. As part of the Lyme School's after-school program, The Curiosity Shop, the Lyme Land Trust offered a series of outdoor adventures in Lyme Preserves. During this session, the students examined a collection of bird's nests and talked about what kinds of habitats birds need to build nests and raise their young.

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Like us on Facebook and follow us on Instagram (@lymelandtrust). Share your adventures with us and tag us in your photos!



Photo by Mary Guitar

Phragmites, continued from page 1

used, Imazapyr, is effective, while being the least impactful environmentally. It was registered with the EPA for aquatic use in 2003, and has the EPA's lowest toxicity category for fish, invertebrates, birds and mammals. There are no restrictions on recreational use of treated water, including swimming and

eating fish from treated water bodies. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has just completed mowing many of the large densely packed stands of phragmites in the Cove. Mowing the dead phragmites stalks makes it easier, less expensive and more effective to apply herbicide to the new seasonal

growth. DEEP, for its part, has agreed to spray the phragmites in the southern half of Lord Cove where most of the densely packed stands are located. (The phragmites stands on Goose Island, which is the fall roosting spot for hundreds of thousands of tree swallows, will be untouched.) That leaves the northern half of the Cove to be handled by the other coalition members.

Based upon past phragmites management efforts, the coalition expects that these efforts will be highly successful in restoring native plants, and thus excellent wildlife habitat, to the Lord Cove marsh system. Since efforts will continue on an annual basis beyond the coalition's prior three-year program, eradication is expected to be more successful.

To contribute to the grant fund, send your tax-deductible contribution to the Lyme Land Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 1002, Old Lyme, CT 06371 and designate the contribution as being for the phragmites project.



Making a planned gift to the Lyme Land Conservation Trust will help protect what you value most in Lyme — our open space.

One way is to name us as a beneficiary of your IRA/401(k). To learn about our Heritage Society for Planned Giving and how to include the Land Trust in your estate plans, contact Milt Walters at milton.walters@lymelandtrust.org

Photo by Leonard Green

Heritage Society for Planned Giving welcomes members:

Ann Rich
Humphrey and Susan Tyler



Lyme Land Conservation Trust, Inc.

PO Box 1002, Lyme, CT 06371

Lyme Land 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 receive email notifications, send an email to: info@lymelandtrust.org.

50th Annual Meeting

When: Friday, May 26, at 6:00 p.m.

What: A brief business meeting and statements commemorating the occasion, followed by a casual social gathering and celebration. Join us for community cheer and refreshments. Everyone is welcome.

Where: The Lyme Public Hall.

Community Barbeque

When: June 24, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

What: A celebration of the 50th anniversary, and a thank you to our members. Food, drink, a raffle and music. Free to members. Non-members can make a donation of \$25 or more at the event to become members.

Where: The Grassy Hill Preserve.

Lyme Land Trust 50th Anniversary Exhibit

When: July 2-4.

What: Displays include photographs of the Land Trusts Photo Contest winners, and information about the Lyme Land Trust preserves. On Sunday, July 2, there will be special children's activities.

Where: The Lyme Public Hall.

Connecticut Trails Day at the Slawson Preserve

When: Saturday, June 3, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

What: A walk with three conservationists to view the on-going process of improving the land for the benefit of the threatened New England cottontail rabbit and other young forest species. Reservations appreciated: openspace@townlyme.org

Where: Park at 435 Hamburg Road, (Route 156).

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