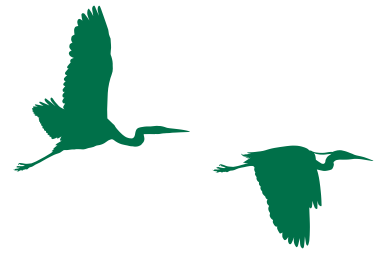


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Lyme Land Trust

SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

Introducing the Hilles Preserve

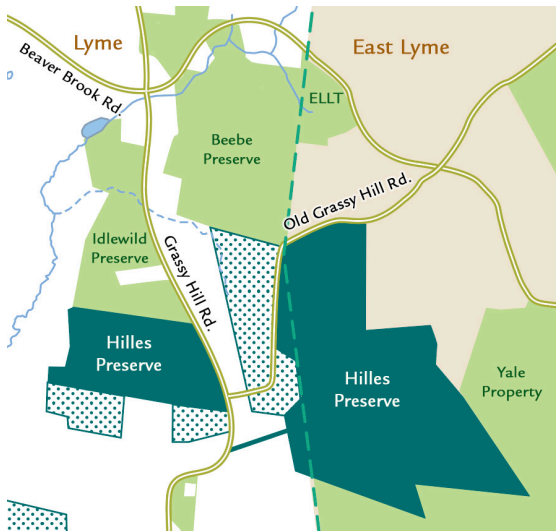
By Tony Irving, *Land Trust Director*

This past November, the Land Trust received a major gift from the Hilles family of 180 acres of property, including land on Grassy Hill and Old Grassy Hill Roads and adjacent acreage in East Lyme. It will be known as the Susan and Frederick Hilles Preserve, named after the parents of the current owner, Ted Hilles.

Ted writes: "My wife Jane and I, with my children, Stephen and Elisabeth, are true believers in land preservation and the importance of protecting this significant property from future development. We think the Lyme Land Trust is the right organization, because of its proven history of success, to hold this land for the benefit of generations to come."

The Hilles family's love of the land began in the 1930s when Ted Hilles's mother acquired acreage on Grassy Hill which she later transferred to Ted. He added to this in the

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This map shows the two portions of the Hilles Preserve, on Grassy Hill and Old Grassy Hill Roads. Dotted areas are LLT easements. Map by Wendolyn Hill. (Map for general reference only).



From left: Jess Kegley, Will Bartlett, Jack Conley, Andre Salkin, Chase Reneson, Alden Wilson, Calvin Scheiber, Ethan Rivera, Regan Stacey.

Tree Collective Reclaims the White Trail on Selden Island

Regan Stacey, *Tree Collective Facilitator*

This past August, the Land Trust's Tree Collective met on Selden Island for our annual year-end celebration, the beginning of a new tradition on the island. Will Bartlett and Jess Kegley scouted out Selden Island and noticed that it needed some care. Because Lyme's Selden Neck State Park is managed by the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), we reached out to the state to see if we could be of service.

Cut off from the mainland by the powerful flood waters of 1854, Selden Island is the largest island in CT at 600 acres; it is the only maritime state park. It was once home to a family farm and later a rock quarry, one of the state's largest at the turn of the last century. Evidence of this history punctuates the landscape in the form of stone walls, building foundations, railbeds and the occasional tool wedged in a rock.

With some coordinating efforts, we were able to put together an adventurous overnight trip. After gathering equipment and supplies, we kayaked out to the island with the aim of reclaiming the white trail. This trail, also known as the Paul Robertson trail, is the main north-south route

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Tree Collective, continued from page 1

from Quarry Knob to Selden Cove. The trail had gone largely unmaintained since the sudden passing in 2010 of a long-time volunteer steward of the island, Paul Robertson, who dedicated his time to reclaiming the trails that David Wordell created in the 1980s.

We walked in his footsteps and cleared nearly 30 downed trees, trimmed miles of trail edges, and will return in the spring to open up a section of trail that was overgrown with saplings.

Later we enjoyed a refreshing swim, a campfire dinner, and a campout, surviving a 3 a.m. thunderstorm that left us with a night to remember!

We are grateful for the opportunity to work with Jack Hine and Rebecca Durinick of CT DEEP which, among other responsibilities, helps to oversee the state's natural resources and environment. We look forward to continuing our relationship with the state as stewards of Selden Island.

Let the adventures continue!

NEW PROGRAMS FOR KIDS

Beginning March 13, the Land Trust will begin offering two new clubs for kids:

The Sapling Club: Enjoy free play in the forest with friends! We'll meet up the second Saturday of each month from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Banningwood Preserve starting March 13. The Sapling Club is for elementary-aged kids. Parents are welcome to stay or drop-off.

The Hiking Club (official name TBA): Come hike the trails! Each hike will be an adventure to explore the natural world. The Hiking Club is for middle school-aged kids. It meets the second Saturday of each month in a different preserve from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. starting March 13.

Please check the LLT website event listings to register for the club meet-ups.

The clubs are organized by two volunteers, Regan Stacey and Angel Santos Burres. Both have children in the Lyme/Old Lyme school district and Regan currently runs the Tree Collective. Angel relocated to Old Lyme this fall after 20 years of non-profit work in Greater Boston. Most recently, she was the director of Outdoors Rx, a program of the Appalachian Mountain Club. Angel encouraged families to explore the outdoors together with a focus on local spaces. She is thrilled to explore all of the nearby woods, marshes, lakes, rivers, and ocean and hopes to meet you on the trail.

Preserve Volunteers at Work

During the fall of 2020 and this winter, trees were thinned and cleared at the overlooks on the Johnston Preserve White and Orange Trails by volunteers Anthony Irving, Rowen Lucey, Sherry DiGiovanni, and David, Cary and Nick Walker. The overlooks afford breathtaking views of the hills to the south.

Thinning the trees not only affords a year-round view of the beautiful vista, it is also an important management tool for healthy forests. On the overlook hill, several large cedar trees were saved by the removal of trees that overshadowed them. Cedar trees provide important food and shelter for birds and other wildlife. In particular, scarlet tanager and cerulean warbler benefit from gaps that are created by thinning the canopy of a large mature forest.



Before and After on the Orange Trail overlook.

Before it was acquired by the Town, the Johnston property was certified as a Tree Farm by the American Tree Farm System. In cooperation with qualified foresters the land was timbered in the 1980s using silviculture methods to create a healthy forest system. The landowner benefited by selling the lumber that was harvested. Just as in your home garden, the trees that were chosen to remain were better able to flourish once competing vegetation was thinned out.

The Land Trust depends upon and appreciates the many volunteers that help us steward the preserves. If you are interested in learning more about being a trail or preserve volunteer, visit lymelandtrust.org/stewardship.

Virtual Explorations: Serendipity and Teamwork

Last April, Covid-19 put the kibosh on plans for a group walk on the Ravine Trail. Sue Cope, Lyme Land Trust Environmental Director, and Land Trust board members Joe Standart and Wendolyn Hill, who is also the Open Space Coordinator for the town of Lyme, came up with an imaginative solution.

Virtual Explorations is a new Land Trust program to create educational videos in Lyme preserves. The Lyme Land Trust Events and Education Committee had scheduled a group walk on April 30, 2020 to explore forest plants along the Ravine Trail with biologist Mike Zarfes. Soon after the walk was booked, COVID-19 cases began to appear, and large group walks were no longer possible. Rather than cancel the walk, committee members came up with a different idea: make a video of Mike's walk and turn it into a remote learning adventure for everyone who wants to join in.

This educational video, "An Exploration of Forest Plants on the Ravine Trail," was uploaded to the lymelandtrust.org website in October 2020. It's available under "Educational Videos" at the drop-down "Explore" option. And there is a lot more to explore there: photos of recent events, including the Gnome Walk; Trail Cam footage; and Preserve Highlights videos. A new educational video, "An Exploration of Beaver Pond Ecology—Hartman Park" was presented at a Zoom event in early February, and is also now available in the "Educational Videos" section.

The video venture started out with a lot of serendipity and teamwork. "The Events and Education Committee thought it



Mike Zarfes, biologist and narrator, at the Hartman Park beaver pond, with the beaver lodge showing in the background.

would be good if we could record it," Sue Cope said, "but we really didn't know what the process was going to be." It turned out that several committee members possessed both talent and experience in the video field: Joe Standart, a board member and professional photographer, was also skilled in shooting video and had professional video and audio equipment; Sue had studied documentary film making and editing in graduate school; Wendolyn also had some experience with video and was able to supplement Joe's footage with shorter pieces she took on an iPhone. Sue, editor of the films, took the several hours of raw footage and wove the pieces together with well-placed graphics, to produce a half-hour long film that flows seamlessly and is a pleasure to watch.

Mike Zarfes, a PhD Candidate in Conservation Biology at SUNY ESF, proved to be a talented guide, teacher and narrator. "The camera loves Mike," Sue said. "He's very comfortable in front of the camera, a real natural, talking about the things he sees around him, and connecting with his audience." Wendolyn added, "Mike doesn't just identify things he finds; he also tells you interesting facts." While the locations of the videos are pre-selected, all Mike's narration is unscripted, depending on what he finds along the trail.

"We've all learned a lot since that first video from early spring 2020," Sue said. The first video was the Chestnut Hill Preserve Highlights video done by Kristina White, executive director of LLT, and Nick Myers, which was posted on May 22, 2020. On the first full length educational video, Sue enlisted the help of her brother, Tom Aiezza, a sound engineer and music producer, to clean up the audio. The next video benefited from lessons learned and the audio required minimal intervention.

More videos are in the works, Sue said. "Mike has already expressed an interest in going out with us again this spring. He wants to do an inland wetland location, maybe some vernal pools, and look at the spring ephemerals and other unique spring finds." Sounds like a virtual walk to look forward to!



Environmental Director Sue Cope holds one of the 100 redbud seedlings donated to the Lyme Land Trust by Dominion Energy. The native pollinator-friendly trees were distributed throughout Lyme.

Live Bees in the Mail?

By Karina Li, *Wildlife Biologist*

What do you do if someone sends you live bees in the mail? You thank them for the gift, and place the bees in your refrigerator. If you are imagining a horde of stinging insects swarming out of an envelope, rest assured. Your bees will not arrive in an angry swarm, but individually packaged in separate tubes, where they will snooze quietly until warmer temperatures induce them to awake, and, one by one, venture groggily into the green outdoors.

There are approximately 3,600 species of wild bees in North America, ninety percent of which are solitary, meaning they prefer to live alone rather than in large, crowded hives like honeybees, or *Apis mellifera*. Solitary bees are not aggressive and rarely sting. Because they live alone, solitary bee species avoid the suite of stressors, parasites and contagious viruses collectively called “colony collapse disorder,” which often plagues their hive dwelling cousins. In fact, solitary bees began social distancing long before 2020, which is precisely what makes them healthy, no-stress pets that will dutifully pollinate your garden before laying next year’s brood in their respective tubes, ready for the refrigerator once again.



Bee house.

Like anyone considering a new pet, there are a couple important things to consider before purchasing. First, take some time to familiarize yourself with the species that are available online and understand that each has specific needs in terms of temperature, housing, and diet. Many species have flexible diets but emerge in temperatures that correspond with the blooming of their favorite foods. For example, blue orchard bees (*Osmia lignaria*) prefer to emerge in spring when temperatures are consistently above 55 degrees and search for fruit tree flowers that bloom early in the growing season such as



Solitary bee.

apple blossoms. These bees also require a little offering of mud near their home which they will use to seal their tubes at the end of the season. Alfalfa leafcutter bees (*Megachile rotundata*) on the other hand, rely on flowers produced by vegetables, which tend to emerge in mid-summer. These bees should not be put outside until daytime temperatures reach 70 degrees. As their name implies, leafcutter bees do not require mud but rather create compartments for their young inside each tube using bits of leaf material. If you observe small cutouts in the leaves in your garden, you will know your bees had a



Leafcutter bee. Photo: Jon Hawkins, Surrey Hills Photography.

successful season. This is sometimes a nice cue, as solitary bees can be rather diminutive and easy to miss if you’re not looking carefully for them.

The Lyme Land Trust’s Executive Director, Kristina White, received a solitary bee kit for Christmas, and the bee cocoons are resting in her refrigerator until spring. She promises to give us an update when it’s warm enough to bring the bees outside.

For more information about bee kits, here are a couple of links: masonbeesforsale.com, bjornapiaries.com/masonbees and crownbees.com.

Lyme Pollinator Pathways

In the past, we have asked one thing of our gardens: that they be pretty. Now they have to support life, sequester carbon, feed pollinators and manage water.

—Doug Tallamy, professor of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology,
University of Delaware

In the past several years there has been a serious loss of key pollinators, including bees of various types, flies, wasps, butterflies, moths, bats, ants, and birds, because of pesticide and herbicide use, habitat loss including loss of native plants, climate change, and plant diseases. Since insects and other animals pollinate 75 percent of the world's flowering plants, including 35 percent of food crops, this is a crisis in the making.

While there is a lot of undeveloped land in Lyme the fragmentation caused by human occupation and development leaves gaps in pollinator habitat and puts obstacles in the way of wildlife mobility. Although we can't change the climate or eradicate viral infections on our own, we can help to foster pollinators by changing the focus of parks, municipal spaces, and household gardens so that they provide habitats and food sources for bees, birds, and other important pollinators. And as a community, we can work together to create pathways of vegetation to connect our individual pollinator gardens. Most foraging bees have a range of about a half-mile so the goal is to connect pollinator friendly habitats within that range (see box).

The Land Trust has partnered with Lyme Pollinator Pathways, established February 4, 2021, a Town initiative of volunteers that aim to help Lyme residents and friends establish and connect pollinator-friendly habitats. For more information, email LymePollinator@gmail.com. Explore more at pollinator-pathway.org.



We can all help by:

- fostering native pollinators (see article about solitary bee houses in this issue)
- growing native plants on our properties, keeping beneficial “weeds,” and managing invasive species
- avoiding the use of pesticides and herbicides and finding other ways to discourage pests
- rethinking our lawns—reduce the size, mow higher and less often; add native shrubs and trees, leave some bare ground and dead wood for nesting native bees, leave some autumn leaves for overwintering eggs and pupae of pollinating insects
- Learning to love native caterpillars and larvae. Accept that your garden plants are a vital food source for pollinators and that they will eat leaves and flowers. Caterpillars are baby pollinators. No caterpillars = no butterflies. If a garden looks perfect, it may not support life
- Join the effort and connect with Lyme Pollinator Pathways. Visit them on Facebook.

New Challenge for Imagining Lyme Program

A new challenge, “Spring: Compositional Elements”, has been announced in the Lyme Land Trust program Imagining Lyme: A Visual Exploration of Lyme's Preserves. This new program encourages everyone to expand their visual awareness and highlight the beauty of our preserves by taking photographs prompted by inspiration from Joe Standart, a professional photographer and Land Trust board member. There will be a different challenge each season, with related tips from Joe. Explore the details, watch videos of Joe's photography tips, and try the first challenge, all at the website imagininglyme.org. Rules and upload instructions are on the website.

Photos will be showcased in an online gallery hosted by the Land Trust on the Imagining Lyme website. Three photos of distinction in each specific category will be chosen quarterly based upon the criteria of emotional impact and creative design. A photo of the year will be chosen by the Lyme Land Trust membership. Each of these photographers will receive a framed print of their photo.



Joe Standart and a student work on a good angle at Roaring Brook.

Hilles Preserve, continued from page 1

late 1970s, and in 1998 donated the first of a number of conservation easements to the Land Trust, followed by further easements in 1999 and 2000. In 2019 Ted and Jane donated an additional 134-acre easement to the Land Trust, bringing the total of protected parcels to nearly 230 acres, all in easements. Thanks to this latest donation, 180 acres of the 230-acre property have been transferred to full Land Trust ownership, while still being protected by the easements.

These donations lie at the heart of the Land Trust's mission to conserve our natural, scenic and historic land and water resources and connect with other protection efforts by the town and the Land Trust, creating a nearly three-mile corridor of open space running south from Hartman Park to Nehantic State Forest. Like the Hilles property, many of these efforts were initiated by private landowners wishing to ensure that their land remains forever wild.

This most recent Hilles gift is adjacent to large forest blocks in East Lyme, including Yale University lands. It adds



Photo by Sue Cope

Rock formation in Hilles Preserve.

greatly to the future environmental integrity of this near-coastal region. To better understand our new holdings, the Land Trust is conducting an ecological inventory and review to best determine future management of the Susan and Frederick Hilles Preserve.



With help from Ralph Lewis, the former State Geologist of CT, using CT ECO Elevation Viewer data, the highest point in Lyme has been found on the Town of Lyme's Johnston Preserve, off Rt. 82. At 469 feet of elevation, this spot beats out Nickerson Hill (451 ft.), the hill south of Wegner Pond (452 ft.), Mt. Archer (436 ft.), and Grassy Hill (420 ft.). Pictured: Land Trust Tuesday Trekker and education volunteer Angel Santos Burres celebrates the highest point.

New Year's Day Hikes, 2021



Patrell Preserve 1/1/21



Beebe Preserve 1/1/21



Brockway-Hawthorne Preserve 1/1/21

Because we couldn't organize the usual large trail walk on New Year's Day this year, LLT board members led seven trail walks with smaller groups. Here are photos of four of the groups.



Johnston Preserve 1/1/21

THE LYME LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

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Sue Cope, Kristina White,
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Linda Bireley—Keeper of the Trails

In memory of Lyme Land Trust board member Linda Bireley, this beautiful cedar bench, custom-designed and built by Ben Kegley, has been installed on a serene and remote overlook on the red trail in Jewett Preserve. Linda, who passed away in 2019, was a highly-esteemed member of the Land Trust's board of directors from 1997 to 2007, serving as president from 2006 to 2007; and was the first Town of Lyme Open Space Coordinator from 2006 until 2014. She played a large part in the preservation and management of Jewett Preserve and it held a special place in her heart.



Lyme Land Trust

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Events Calendar

All events subject to change. Dates and times will be posted on the Land Trust website, and may be announced by press release, email, and Facebook page. Contact: education@lymelandtrust.org (unless noted otherwise below).

Sacred Earth Celebration

Saturday, March 20, 2021, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Young Preserve, Gungy Rd.

A walk among the laurels and rock outcroppings of Young Preserve, one mile over easy to moderate terrain. Periods of reflection and a guided meditation will be offered. Group is limited to 10; social distancing guidelines will be followed. \$30 per person. Registration required. Land Trust members receive 15% off with discount code LLT15. More information: Events section at lymelandtrust.com.

To register, email: regan@awakentheforestwithin.com.

Reading the Landscape–Talk and Walk

Saturday, April 24, 2021, 10:00–11:55 a.m.

Brockway-Hawthorne Preserve, Brush Hill Road

Forest ecologist Anthony Irving will point out examples of glacial forces that influenced the historical uses of the land and the forest ecology we see today. Anthony is a Lyme Land Trust board member and chairman of the Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Watershed Committee. Family-friendly; space is limited; social distancing guidelines will be followed.

Registration required: education@lymelandtrust.org.

Ongoing-DIY Family Walks:

Gnome Hunt, Pleasant Valley Preserve, MacIntosh Rd.

Faery Quest, Hartman Park, Gungy Rd.

See more details at lymelandtrust.org

52 Trail Challenge

One Town • Six Months • 20 Preserves • 52 Trails

Hike all the trails in Lyme before June 1 and become a champion.

For more information, go to:

lymelandtrust.org/the-52-trail-challenge

THANK YOU!

We would like to thank all of our dedicated and generous supporters who make our work possible. Your support ensures that we continue to fulfill our pledge to manage and conserve our open spaces. We also appreciate everyone who has hiked in Lyme for being so kind to our trails in this time of high usage.