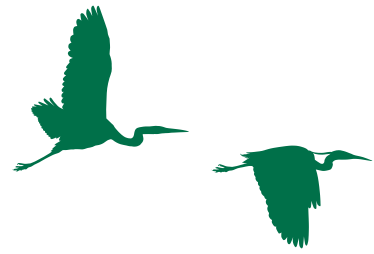


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Lyme Land Trust

WINTER 2019-2020 NEWSLETTER

New Farmers on the Land Trust's Bloom Preserve on Macintosh Road

Farmers Baylee Drown and Ryan Quinn of Upper Pond Farm will be taking over the Land Trust's Bloom property on MacIntosh Road, across the road from Pleasant Valley Preserve. Tiffany Farm had historically managed a handful of fields for the Land Trust, including the Bloom property. When the Tiffanys recently scaled back their dairy operation, they no longer needed the hay and corn they grew on this land, so the Land Trust's Environmental Director Sue Cope talked to John Tiffany Jr. about seeking out another local farm to take over.

The written objective in the Land Trust management plans for these fields is that they be in a farmed or farmable state available to any local farm that may need them. When a friend in town got in touch to say that Baylee might be interested in farming the Bloom property, Sue quickly reached out to her. Baylee expressed an interest in the property (which we will call Bloom Preserve), and John Jr. was happy to hand over use of the field.

In exchange for farming the Bloom Preserve, Upper Pond Farm will help the Land Trust with annual mowing



Farmers Ryan Quinn and Baylee Drown, of Upper Pond Farm, at their CSA distribution. Baylee and Quinn will be farming the Land Trust's Bloom Preserve on MacIntosh Road.

of the Hand/Smith property near the end of Route 82. The Land Trust is very happy to be working with a local organic farm, and to be able to provide them with acreage to support their expanding business. It is equally exciting to know that we will be utilizing the Bloom Preserve in the most environmentally conscious way. Baylee is a self-proclaimed "soil fixer" who is committed to spending unlimited hours in the field to aid in reverting the soils of

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Parker Lord Named Volunteer of the Year

Parker Lord has been named the 2019 Lyme Land Trust Volunteer of the Year, the first recipient of the honor. When considering all the wonderful volunteers that serve the Land Trust, Parker Lord stood out for his outstanding contributions towards the Land Trust's mission of preserving and stewarding land of high conservation value in Lyme.

"He always has a smile on his face, he's proud of his town and the open space it has to offer, and he is a diehard helper-outer!" said Sue Cope, Environmental Director of the Lyme Land Trust.

As a resident of the Town of Lyme for most of his adulthood, Parker Lord has been involved in almost every aspect of local land preservation for decades. From advocating

for public support of land conservation, and working with landowners to facilitate acquisition of open space, to hands-on development and maintenance of preserves in Lyme; he has volunteered countless hours. He is an example to us all in his generosity through service, hard work, and leadership.

Longtime Lyme Selectman and Chairman of the Town's Open Space Committee, Parker has nurtured the collaborative spirit between the Town and the Land Trust. In addition, Parker was on the steering committee and is an appointed board member of the Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Watershed Coordinating Committee, is a local history buff, and spearheads volunteers to restore and maintain the Town's cemeteries.

Bloom Preserve back to a nutrient-rich state. After decades of soil-depleting corn crops, Bloom Preserve will now be replenished with vital nutrients and farmed organically for years to come. Upper Pond Farm recycles nutrients through composting and uses preventive methods of farming that doesn't require synthetic chemical treatment of disease and pests. The first winter cover crop of winter rye has already gone in on the Bloom Preserve, and will be plowed under in the spring to make way for potatoes. Since potatoes are notoriously hard to grow organically because potato bugs



Bloom property.

can seriously damage the crop, potatoes will probably be switched out for another crop after a year or two in order to keep one step ahead of the bugs.

Upper Pond Farm was established on Sill Lane in Old Lyme and now incorporates the five-acre New Mercies Farm on Beaver Brook Road in Lyme under the same name. Baylee and Quinn farm both farms, have a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares pickup on the Lyme farm, and with greenhouses and high tunnels on the property, provide winter crops and micro-greens. Local outlets include Foodworks, Coffee's Country Market, Tri-Town Foods, Ashlawn Farms Cafe, Oceanhouse, La Belle Aurore and the Lyme and Chester Farmers Markets.



Above, turnips at the CSA farm stand. Left, Quinn reveals the lush greens already growing in one of Upper Pond Farm's high tunnels.

New Board Member Mal Karwoski



Like many other board members, Mal started working with the Land Trust as a trail volunteer and was (and still is) regularly found at work parties and with the chainsaw brigade. He

feels that board service allows him to participate in and contribute more to the overall stewardship of Lyme's open space.

Mal serves the Land Trust on both the Stewardship and Tour de Lyme Committees. He says, "My interest in the out-of-doors stems from a variety of personal experiences and hobbies, primarily among them hiking the trails throughout Connecticut and backpacking trips around the country as a Boy Scout leader. Not to mention my own personal battle to eradicate our former property of Japanese barberry!"

In 2017, Mal and his wife Gail retired and moved to Lyme from Fairfield County to have more elbow room and proximity to family and friends. Mal notes that an added benefit to joining the Lyme Land Trust is that it allowed him to quickly meet many people in the community and begin to establish new friendships through common interests.

Thank you!



A work group of volunteers from the environmental engineering company Tighe & Bond helped clear trails at the Johnston Preserve on October 27. (Right) Dominion Volunteers made several benches for our preserves this summer, like this one at Walbridge Woodlands.

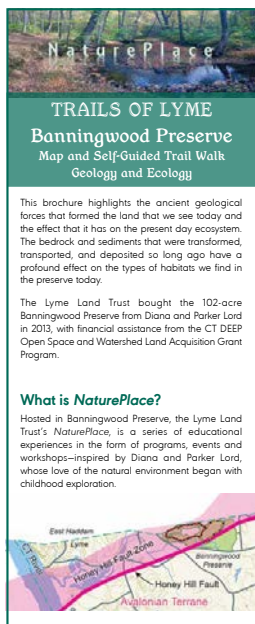


In August, Audubon CT invited Rep. Joe Courtney and local conservation partners to join them for a bird walk at the Chapel Farm Preserve, to thank Rep. Courtney for co-sponsoring the Restore America's Wildlife Act, which has been introduced in both the House and Senate. Chapel Farm includes the Patrell Preserve, owned by the Lyme Land Trust and East Haddam.

New Self-Guided Interpretive Trails at Banningwood Preserve

There are now two versions of self-guided trail brochures for Banningwood Preserve. The first one, the *Banningwood Preserve Self-Guided Trail Walk for All Ages*, is an overview of ecology, history and geology designed to engage curious hikers of all ages and interests. The second one, *Banningwood Preserve Self-Guided Trail Walk Geology and Ecology*, complements and adds a layer of scientific detail to the information in the brochure for all ages. Because the new guide only focuses on specific topics, it doesn't visit all the lettered and numbered stations on the trail. Each guide is designed to stand on its own, with distinctive information. For the most enjoyment and information, use both brochures.

Printed brochures are available at the trailhead, the Lyme library or the Lyme Town Hall. They are available online with the trailmaps: lymelandtrust.org.



Former LLT President Linda Bireley Passes Away



Former board member and Land Trust President Linda Bireley passed away on November 8, 2019 after a long illness. Linda served on the board of directors of the Lyme Land Trust for more than ten years, and as president from 2006 to 2007. As stewardship committee chair, she worked to develop many of the trails in Lyme and set up a digitized stewardship monitoring program. She spearheaded the campaign to build three fish ladders in Lyme, most notably the Moulson Pond fishway, and went on to coordinate their maintenance and monitoring. Linda was the first Town of Lyme Open Space Coordinator, from 2006 until 2014.

Linda's interest in science and marine life was spurred by her family's salt water fishing expeditions when she was growing up. She earned a degree in biological sciences from the University of Connecticut, followed by a master's degree in marine microbiology and then a PhD in biological oceanography.

Linda loved the environment and the preserves of our town. We in Lyme were very fortunate to have had a woman with such a dedicated and generous spirit serving on our behalf. She was also a beloved and admired friend. There will be a ceremony in the Spring to rename the Moulson Pond Fishway in Linda's honor.



On October 27, Kim Hargrave, Education Director of Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center, led a walk in Banningwood Preserve geared for families with young children. The young explorers examined rock outcroppings, tasted sassafras, explored for plants under the leaves, and drew pictures of all the sounds they heard.



The Lyme Land Trust celebrated nature with a Family Fun Day at Banningwood Preserve in September. Kids of all ages listened to music by Sophia Griswold as they roasted marshmallows at the bonfire. Other activities included crafts, games, a nature walk with biologist Jim Arrigoni, and goodie bags.

Hoo (H'HOO hoo-hoo)'s That in the Woods?

By Douglas Nielson, *Amateur Naturalist*

It's a pleasure to lie in a warm bed on a cold winter night and listen to owls talking to each other. Most owls start courting during the winter months and return to the same nest year after year, mostly between December and April, both parents caring for the young.

Owls are found worldwide except in polar regions and a few islands. They are usually nocturnal, and often mate for life. They prey on small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish (some smaller owls eat insects), and can take animals as large as themselves. A number of features make them very effective hunters.

They have very acute hearing and vision. Since their ears are placed asymmetrically, the slight difference in when a sound reaches each ear allows owls to pinpoint the source of the sound. They have binocular vision, and even though the eyes are set in the front of the face (unlike other raptors, whose eyes are set along the side of the head), they can turn their heads an astonishing three-quarters of a circle, allowing them to see large areas behind them without moving their torsos. They can fly almost silently; their feathers absorb high frequency sound, muffling the sound of air moving over the wings.

Once their prey is captured, owls often eat it whole, otherwise they tear it apart with their strong talons and sharp downturned beaks. Indigestible parts, such as bone and fur, are later regurgitated as owl pellets, which can be pulled apart to assess the owl's diet.

Another interesting feature is that, unlike many other birds, most female owls (and other raptors) are larger than the males of the same species. The reason is not entirely understood, but since owls nest during the cold winter months, it might help the female retain heat while on the nest, or it might be due to natural selection in which the female selects a smaller mate to guard against the aggressive tendencies of the male. It may also be designed to reduce competition for food, with each gender hunting prey of its own size.

What we often call "ears" in owls actually have nothing to do with hearing, but are tufts of feathers that help both in identification and camouflage. Owls with these tufts can raise and lower them, helping other owls, particularly family members, identify them. Sitting silently in a tree, with eyes open just enough to detect any movement, the tufts can be raised to break up the distinct outline of the head. Since its matte-toned feathers mimic both the color and texture of the surroundings, the bird can be invisible as well as silent.

Several owls are native to Connecticut, from the tiny saw-whet owl to the better-known great horned owl. Although other owl species appear in this area, these are the most common:

The **barred owl**, named for the brown and white vertical bars in its feathers, is the most familiar in Connecticut. It has a rounded head with no ear tufts and lives in dense woods



Great horned owl. Photo by Creative Commons

and swamps, nesting in tree cavities. Adults weigh up to two pounds, with a wingspan of four feet. Its calls include hoots, whoops, barks, and shrieks. It typically lays three to four eggs; the young hatch within a month, and begin to fly in three or four months, and are independent by fall. They live up to eighteen years in the wild.

The **eastern screech owl** weighs less than six ounces, with a twenty-inch wingspan, and has red-orange, brown or gray feathers. It has large yellow eyes and prominent ear tufts, and its main call sounds like a high-pitched whinny. They like to bathe and sometimes use birdbaths at night. They usually have four to five eggs and live up to six years in the wild.

The **great horned owl**, the largest in North America (two to five pounds), has dark brown feathers mixed with white, black and tan. It has large yellow eyes and large ear tufts ("horns"). Its call is a soft, ghostly "hoo, hoo, hoo." It is highly adaptable, living in forests, deserts, and city parks throughout the US and parts of Canada and Mexico. Its prey includes skunks and geese. Its breeding season starts early, in December or January, and it lays three or four eggs, using the nests of hawks, crows or squirrels. It lives up to eighteen years in the wild.

The **long-eared owl** is medium sized, less than a pound, with a three-foot wingspan. It has brownish feathers with vertical streaks, and large blackish ear tufts. It nests in open country and forests, especially in conifers, and is rarely seen. It lays four to six eggs, using the nests of crows and hawks.

The **short-eared owl** is about the same size as the long-eared owl. It has mottled tawny or brown feathers with a barred tail and wings, and yellow-orange eyes, exaggerated by black circles surrounding them. It flocks during the breeding season, when the male makes displays during flight to attract the female by swooping over the nest. It is found nearly world-wide and nests on the ground, hidden by vegetation, in prairies, meadows, and tundra. It breeds later than other owls, peaking in April. It usually lays four to seven eggs, but will lay up to a dozen when voles (its preferred prey) are plentiful.

The **northern saw-whet owl** is the smallest owl in New England, less than five ounces. It has an oval head with no ear tufts, brown feathers with dark streaks, and yellow eyes. It

often winters in Connecticut, but does not breed or nest here. It is so small that it often eats half a mouse, then stores it to eat the rest several hours later. If food is plentiful, the female will take a second mate and raise another brood. It lives up to seven years in the wild, but is considered a species of special concern in Connecticut.

The **barn owl** has a beautiful white heart-shaped face, and light to golden brown feathers with grey markings on the body. It is medium sized, less than two pounds, with a wingspan of about four feet. Its usual call is a scream, but it also clicks and shrieks. It lives in open areas along the coast and in river valleys, but due to habitat loss, is endangered in Connecticut.

The barn owl is a highly efficient rodent hunter. Since it is not territorial and lays five to eleven eggs at a time, it is ideal for rodent control. A single brood of barn owls can eat 2,000 rodents a year, eliminating the need to use expensive and dangerous poisons on farms and vineyards.

A young owl found on the ground might not be an orphan. It is best to leave it where it is for 24 hours before taking it to a rehabilitator. Be careful! Even a small owl can inflict a great deal of damage with its talons and beak. If you do find one that needs help, a licensed rehabilitator can be found at the www.ct.gov/deep website.



On November 15, documentary photographer Markham Starr presented a talk and slideshow of ceremonial stonework left behind by the indigenous population that inhabited New England for 12,000 years. While Native American stonework is widely recognized in the western and southern US, New England's stonework remains obscure, having blended back into the woods, or having been disrupted or scattered by later development. On the following day, Starr took a group of people who had attended the talk on a walk through the Lyme woods. He pointed out cairns, stone serpent effigies, and other Native American spiritual offerings that still remain standing, including these stones in Hartman Park's Three Chimneys area.

KNOW THESE INVASIVES

— THIRD IN A SERIES —

Oriental bittersweet *Celastrus orbiculatus*



Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) is a familiar woody ornamental vine, native to East Asia, that was introduced to the US in the 1860s, and now spreads from Georgia to Hudson Bay, and from the East Coast to the Mississippi River.

It is easily identified in the fall by its distinctive fruit with a yellow casing and bright red interior; in the summer it has nearly round, finely toothed leaves that spiral evenly around the stem. Older vines are grayish, while younger ones are light brown. The vines also have tendrils that can hold onto trees or structures, enabling them to climb quite high. The roots are orange colored.

Climbing high into trees, bittersweet can block out light in the canopy so that other plants can't thrive. A group of vines growing unchecked for even a few years can choke out a large tree or topple it to the ground with its weight.

It looks similar to another plant, American bittersweet, which is native to the US and not considered harmful. For identification purposes, the American plant has orange seed capsules, rather than yellow, on red berries; and the berries are clustered towards the end of the stem rather than all the way along it. Be aware that unscrupulous distributors sell the oriental version of the plant as American.

Oriental bittersweet should be fought aggressively. Pull up new shoots by the roots in the spring. Cut larger vines close to the ground, repeatedly. For vines that are too high to reach, sever them completely and cut the rest down to ground level. The lack of water and nutrients will kill the rest. Spraying foliage with triclopyr, and treating stumps with triclopyr or glyphosate are also recommended. As always, follow safety instructions on the label.

At a recent workshop given by Audubon CT, Connecticut College botany professor Pam Hine discussed herbicide use for invasive control. Pam noted that she found strong evidence in scientific papers that it is the additives in the product Roundup that are cancerous, and not glyphosate itself. She wants to protect the proper and responsible use of glyphosate because it is sometimes the most effective and often the only tool that land managers have for restoring fish and wildlife habitats destroyed by alien plants. Use very small amounts of the chemical, and inject it into individual plants or paint onto cut stems, rather than spraying it.

Welcome, Beavers!

By Wendolyn Hill, *Land Trust Director*

In the preserves in Lyme, beavers are welcome. Beavers are our partners as we, stewards of the preserves, strive to enhance habitat that will attract the most diverse wildlife population. Most of the woodlands in Lyme consist of mature-growth forests, with trees 80 years old or older which have grown up from abandoned fields. Mature forests are desirable, but certain species do not flourish there. As young forests and meadows have become rare, so have many species that were once common in Lyme.

The Lyme Land Trust recently joined the Young Forest Initiative to create open meadows and young forests at Slawson Preserve. Funded by a federal grant, the land trust harvested a large swath of mature trees. The successional habitat that will be created there as the forest regenerates will attract many endangered species, including the New England cottontail.

Where beavers make dams, they clear the land for us. They open up the tree canopy as the trees in the flooded area die, allowing sunlight to reach new growth. Beavers further clear trees and vegetation to use for food and shelter. The ponds the beavers create provide valuable sources of water and food for wildlife. Eventually, as the beavers use up their food source in the area and move on to another location, the pond fills in.



Beaver Art at Hartman Park.

A meadow develops and supports new growth, including wildflowers and berries. After several years, the meadow will have provided fertile ground for an emerging young forest of trees and bushes. The evolving environments created by beaver activity provide habitats for an abundance of wildlife. In return, our preserves provide sanctuary for beavers. If beavers flood a trail, we reroute around it. It is fascinating to visit an area in a preserve, such as Hartman Park, which has unrestricted beaver activity. Every day there is something new to see. The beautiful sculpting of the trees and the alteration of the landscape is amazing as they selectively clear an area. The dams they build are engineering marvels.

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at 203/485-6070 or milton.walters@lymelandtrust.org

An Appreciation of Goodwin Trail

We were recently forwarded a kind note. It read in part:

Today I hiked the entirety of the Goodwin Trail . . . I have only recently heard of this trail and decided to check it out. The trail was in great condition. It was well marked and well planned. The terrain throughout the trail was beautiful and very scenic. For nearly the entire trail one can only hear quiet and nature while viewing an idyllic setting.

I have lived in Connecticut for most of my life and have done a fair amount of hiking and exploration of lesser known trails. This trail was truly a pleasant surprise. . .

A sincere thank you to all who were involved in creating this trail and those who continue to maintain and support it. Thank you for not only supporting and defending such a beautiful region of CT, but also allowing people to have free access to it.

Peter Zarabozo, RN, Manchester, CT

THE LYME LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

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Tree Collective: Field Notes

By Jane Scheiber, *Lyme-Old Lyme High School student*

The Tree Collective is a program designed to engage young conservationists ages 14 to 18 in outdoor fun and education, while working to maintain trails in Lyme. It is sponsored by the Lyme Land Trust, as part of the NaturePlace education program.

The Tree Collective is now in its second year of service to the trails of Lyme. Over the past few months, we have partnered with the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA) to build a footbridge in Nehantic State Forest for the Nayantaquit Trail, delivered a painted picnic table to the Fairy Circle at Hartman Park, camped out at Banningwood Preserve, had a summer celebration, welcomed new member, Andre Salkin, and are now up and running with power trail trimmers to be of better service.

Part of our work at Nehantic State Park included not only a footbridge, but two hours of heavy trail clearing. Ethan Rivera couldn't believe it when he was told the work he did will serve the hikers of Nehantic for five years. He said, "Really? I feel so useful."

We celebrated all of our hard work and efforts over the past year—clearing over twenty-five trees and many miles of trails (while learning along the way)—at our summer celebration.

Amidst barbecue food and ice cream cake, we bade farewell to our first graduating member, Jess Kegley. Inspired by what she learned while a member of the Tree Collective, she plans to minor in botany while at Western Connecticut State University.

This fall, we cleaned up the picnic area at Pickwick Preserve and serviced the trails at Pickwick, Mount Archer, Jewett, and Pleasant Valley preserves, as well as Hartman Park. Along the way, we saw frogs, spiders, salamanders and their egg sacs, as well as red efts, a cecropia moth caterpillar, and all kinds of plants, including spicebush. We also noticed the beavers are up to some shenanigans at Hartman Park.

In the coming months, we plan to help trail blaze the Johnston Property, a new town acquisition encompassing 250 acres. Once finished, the public will be able to access the Johnston trails from Jewett Preserve.



(L to R): Ethan Rivera, Jess Kegley, Chase Reneson, Calvin Scheiber, Jack Conley.



Lyme Land Trust

PO Box 1002, Lyme, Connecticut 06371



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Events Calendar

All events subject to change. Dates and times will be announced by press release and email, and posted on the Land Trust website and Facebook page. Consult the Upcoming Events page at lymelandtrust.org/news/events/ for the latest information.

Dendrology Walk

Sunday, January 19, 1 p.m.

Selden Creek Preserve, Joshuatown Road, Lyme

Contact Email: openspace@townlyme.org



Please join us for an enlightening walk in the woods. Michael Whelan, conservation biologist and Deep River Land Trust board member, will lead a walk to identify trees and plants in the winter landscape. We will observe the bark and twigs, and apply forest forensics using clues on the ground (leaves and nuts). Reservations appreciated: openspace@townlyme.org

SAVE THE DATE: Tour de Lyme 2020

Save the date for the eighth annual Tour de Lyme on Sunday, May 17 at the always spectacular Ashlawn Farm. Food trucks, local brew, blues by Dan Stevens, and more await you this year. For more information, visit the Tour de Lyme web page at tourdelyme.org. Registration will open February 14, 2020.



The Lyme Land Trust inaugurated Tour de Lyme in 2013 as an annual bike ride to raise funds to support its mission of preserving and protecting environmentally important land in Lyme.