



Lyme Land Trust

FALL/WINTER 2025

President's Message

When I joined the Land Trust in 1995, the board was responsible for stewarding approximately 800 acres. Thirty years later, that number has quadrupled to nearly 3,250 acres across 119 properties, an enduring testament to the conservation ethos of Lyme residents and the commitment of the Land Trust board, volunteers, and staff.

Yet acreage alone does not define the Land Trust's success. At the heart of our accomplishments are the people of Lyme. Since its founding 60 years ago, townspeople have consistently supported preserving Lyme as a rural enclave. But the Trust's mission extends beyond simply protecting open space. We must continually educate and demonstrate the value of these protected lands. In many ways, we must "share the story" of this extraordinary resource that is Lyme.

For some, the appeal lies in the landscape's scenic beauty, rural character, and restorative spirit. Beneath that, however, is something even more vital: the rich biological bank – the diverse plants and animals that make our town ecologically significant. If we are to sustain broad community support for conservation, we must make clear that these lands matter in every respect – environmentally, culturally, and spiritually. Ultimately, this work is not about the Land Trust itself; it is about the land, the people, and the diverse plants and animals that make our town ecologically significant.

As I step down in June, I do so with confidence and gratitude. The Trust remains in strong and capable hands guided by people who care deeply about Lyme and are steadfast in their commitment to protecting the unique natural resources that define our community. Together, this talented and dedicated group, including our many volunteers, shares a steadfast belief in the Land Trust's mission to promote open space awareness and habitat protection.

I am especially pleased to pass on the responsibilities of president to Mal Karwoski, who brings the insight, integrity, and vision necessary to ensure the Land Trust

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Preservation Committee Plans Neighborhood Outreach

By Jennifer Tiffany, Deputy Preservation Chair

The 2025 Plan of Conservation and Development has made clear that Lyme's residents value their rural character, safety, open spaces and farmland, low population density, and access to water and natural resources. The Lyme Land Trust shares these priorities as noted by their mission:

To conserve in perpetuity for the public benefit Lyme's natural, scenic and historic land and water resources by: acquiring and stewarding real properties and conservation easements; supporting open space acquisition by third parties; facilitating scientific study and management of our resources; and educating the community regarding the natural world and the benefits of conservation.

With both the community's values and the LLT's mission in mind, the Preservation Committee is preparing for its first neighborhood gathering titled "Tidbits and a Toast". In the setting of a casual neighborhood get-together, we will discuss the collaborative spirit behind past and ongoing preservation achievements and how it truly takes the whole community to protect these resources. Information on the wide variety of ways to conserve and protect land in Lyme will be shared. Gatherings will be held throughout town in board members' homes. We hope you will find these events helpful and informative.



Marbled Salamander brooding her eggs. This unique species lays its eggs in dry vernal pool basins before autumn rains arrive. Photo by Jim Arrigoni at an LLT Preserve

Lyme Land Trust and Partners Provide Habitat for Declining Bird Species

by Jim Arrigoni, Environmental Director

Through a grant from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the Lyme Land Trust and the Connecticut Audubon Society conducted a scientific survey that confirmed that several wildlife species of conservation concern inhabit our preserves! This confirmation is significant because the Lyme Land Trust, with private and public land management partners, collectively engaged in efforts to attract a targeted group of wildlife species that rely on dense, shrubby growth comprised of tree saplings. This “young forest” forms after events like wildfires, hurricanes, or farmland abandonment and has become a rare habitat in our region, harming species that rely on it. In our case, we created the young forest habitat by strategically cutting patches of existing mature deciduous forest, a habitat type that is in ample supply across our region.

In 2018, we cut a twenty-acre patch in Slawson Preserve near a similarly sized patch on private land that was cut in 2014. The objective was to have multiple patches of different ages near each other to increase the likelihood that suitable young forest habitat is always available in proximity, and that maturing forest doesn’t “age out” of utility for the young forest species we seek to support. The impetus for these efforts was to improve habitat conditions for the New England Cottontail, a species of conservation concern, but the benefits extend to a wide array of wildlife. (The presence of New England Cottontail was confirmed by genetic analysis of pellets collected by CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection biologists at Slawson Preserve in 2024!)

A cut of a few dozen acres was completed in Nehantic State Forest in 2022. This cut was less heavy, leaving several mature trees throughout the area. Last year, we were awarded the Cornell grant to conduct standardized breeding season bird surveys to compare the outcomes of forest management. As an experimental control, we surveyed a nearby undisturbed forest that is typical

of the forests in Lyme. The patterns in the data were fascinating! Some highlights:

- During three rounds of early-morning vocalization surveys during the 2025 breeding season, we detected 49 species of birds. Of these, 26 were detected only at sites that were recently cut. Five species were detected only in the forested control and not at recently cut sites.
- All recently cut sites harbored more bird species than the forested control site, and the effect was more pronounced in heavier and more recently cut areas. At Slawson, we observed an average of 12.5 species during a 10-minute survey while only detecting 8.25 in the forest control.

- Presence and likely breeding were confirmed for several young forest species, including American Woodcock, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Indigo Bunting, Common Yellowthroat, Blue-winged Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and Eastern Towhee. Most of these species are exhibiting decreasing population trends in our region. The observation of the Chestnut-sided Warbler is especially gratifying, considering recent Connecticut Bird Atlas results showing this species has largely disappeared as a breeder in the southern third of the state since the 1980s.

- Recently cut sites harbored more individual birds than the forested control site. At the Slawson Preserve, we observed an average of nearly 17 individual birds during a 10-minute survey while only detecting an average of less than 12 in the forest control.

In addition to demonstrating our potential to actively manage preserves to meet the needs of targeted local wildlife species, we are pleased to collaborate with so many diverse individuals and organizations for the greater good and a greater impact.



Chestnut-sided Warbler by Stefan Martin

Slawson & Rabbits' Rest Preserves are open to the public, but access is limited and there are no maintained hiking trails.

Recent Events



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1 Volunteers, including board members, planted over 100 native plants in the front meadow at the Pritchard Conservation Center.

2 At Eightmile Riverfest, Jim Arrigoni holds invasive Red-eared Slider Turtles. We shared the importance of protecting native turtle habitat.

3 4 Board Member Ryan Quinn presenting on decomposition with the Fifth Grade of the ISAAC School. The following week, the class came to Hartman Park where they found examples of decomposition with several board members and staff.

5 The Tree Collective repainted the chalkboard in preparation for the ISAAC School visit in Hartman Park.

6 Board and staff spent a day at the Bingham Camp in Salem working on its five-year Strategic Plan.

7 Tony Irving and Jim Arrigoni led a walk at Clucas Field for the President Circle, our highest-level membership group, prior to our annual cocktail party hosted by Board Member Dan Hulseberg and husband John Kiker.

8 9 November nights programming—Fercroft Wildlife Rescue brought its opossum ambassadors and Maureen Heidtmann, wildlife rehabilitator, presented a talk on bats.

10 Cider tour and tasting at Yankee Cider Company—co-hosted with East Haddam Land Trust.

11 Wildlife Biologist Ginny Apple discussed how changes in Connecticut's landscape over the centuries have affected wildlife populations.

12 Alexander Amendola, DEEP forester, gave a talk and walk on the Nehantic Forest timber harvest and its benefits to the local ecosystem.

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continues to succeed in its commitment to protecting the unique natural resources that define our community.

Still, the continued success of the Land Trust depends on the citizens of Lyme. It is your support, vision, and commitment that will carry this work forward.

It has been my great privilege to serve on the board for so many years and to work alongside such exceptional and devoted individuals. I want to thank the people of Lyme for their support, generosity, and shared purpose.

I leave with gratitude and optimism, knowing that the Land Trust is well-positioned for the future and that there is more important work ahead in protecting our lands for generations to come. Lyme may be a small town, but together we have accomplished something big for all the people, plants, and animals who call Lyme home.

—Tony Irving (*Tony will finish his term as President in June 2026*)

Summer 2025 Photos of Distinction



Monarch in Grassy Hill Preserve by Rochelle Davis



Roaring Brook Ripples by John Gluszak



I spy with My Little Eye by Kristina White



Honorable Mention - Walking Tree by Hong Wan

THE LYME LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

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Stewardship



During the annual monitoring visit of an easement, Mal Karwoski, Stewardship Chair, and Tom Wing, the easement owner, worked together to mark the boundary.



Fall Mowing at Grassy Hill Preserve by Deveaux Lawn and Landscape



Lyme Land Trust Board members and volunteers helped Wendy Hill, Open Space Coordinator, erect a new Kiosk built by Ben Kegley at the Jewett Preserve.



East Haddam Land Trust Board Director, Ralph Chappel led a training on difficult tree take-down techniques to LLT and EHLT trail steward volunteers. Using a winch anchored to a nearby tree, we safely dropped a dead ash tree that had broken off about ten feet above the ground, and was hanging perilously over a hiking trail.



Jim Natale, owner of Wilder Gardens LLC, founded the Invasive Species Work Group this fall to support property managers in controlling invasive plants and restoring native habitats. On several Saturdays from November 8 to December 20, 2025, he led volunteer work parties with Wendy Hill, Lyme Open Space Coordinator and LLT Vice President, benefiting the Town of Lyme, Lyme Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy. Volunteers cleared acres of Burning Bush and other invasives near Jewett and Pleasant Valley Preserve. A big thank you to the eighteen volunteers who joined in to lend a helping hand to restore this vital native habitat.



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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).

Fishing the Local Waterways

March 10, 7:00pm

Rowan Lytle, a registered Connecticut fishing guide, blogger and writer will explore the history of Lyme area fisheries, examining the challenges they have encountered and continue to face, and will discuss the responsibilities of anglers and guides in safeguarding these resources, as well as the impact land preservation has on protecting both local and adjacent waterways. Drawing from his dual perspective as a resource stakeholder and committed conservationist, he offers insights and conclusions that may differ from those typically held by fishing guides. *Lyme Public Hall*

Astronomy Observing Session

March 14, 7:00pm

View the winter night sky with Orion and Gemini visible in the south at the session's start. Jupiter beams brightly high in the sky with three of its four large moons visible as well. The fourth large moon, Europa, will peek out from behind the planet at about 9pm. *Register to learn location.*

Native Plant Sale

April 18, Noon

We will be selling native plants from Judge's Farm in Old Lyme. Mike Baczewski, from New England Pollinator Gardens, will be on hand to answer questions and offer tips on how and where to grow these local wonders. *Pritchard Conservation Center.*

Tour de Lyme

May 31, 7:00am

Our 13th Annual fundraising event at our new location, the *Grassy Hill Preserve*. All new routes, same great food trucks and music.

Tourdelyme.org to register and more information.