



President's Message

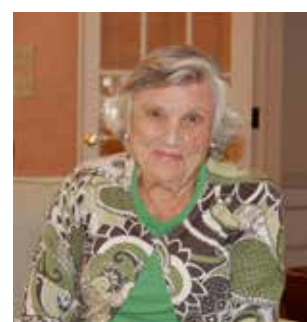
In June, the Land Trust and the Hilles family celebrated 25 years of land conservation on their nearly 250 acres on Grassy Hill. During this time, Ted and Jane placed conservation easements on a number of parcels, thereby removing the development rights while keeping the lands under their ownership. Most recently, they conveyed the ownership of these easement properties to the land trust plus the donation of an additional 125 acres. This legacy preserves the rural character of Grassy Hill. With its connections to other open space tracts, a broad 800-acre habitat corridor stretches from Hartman Park to the top of Grassy Hill. By including abutting Yale University property and preserved state land in East Lyme a nearly contiguous forested landscape of over 5700 acres is created!

Species need space and a variety of habitats, as each has particular life requirements. This necessitates fostering habitat complexity with large blocks of land and their connections to others. By partnering with the town, state, and The Nature Conservancy, the Land Trust is building landscapes that protect and sustain wildlife populations. The Hilles properties and their connections are one example. In the middle of town are the "River to Ridgetop" preserves, forming a contiguous block of nearly 1700 acres beginning with the Johnston Preserve on Route 82 and extending southward to the Joshuatown bridge at upper Hamburg Cove. On the west side of town the nearly 500-acre "Hadlyme Hills" collection of protected lands includes Nature Conservancy properties and the Land Trust's Brockway-Hawthorn Preserve.

We want to expand upon these blocks and their connections and to build new ones. This year, in addition to the Hilles donations, four other landowners dedicated over 100 acres to the Land Trust for permanent protection. These efforts are at the heart of our mission, and we support them with guided hikes, education programs, and outreach events, all for the cause of promoting the importance of nature. We hope you agree.

Last LLT Founder Passed this Year

Shirley Howard, one of the founders of the Lyme Land Trust passed away this year in June. She leaves a legacy that thrives and we would not be here today without her and her fellow founders' forethought.



Shirley Howard

Along with her then husband, William G. Moore, and a few friends, they were determined to prevent what was happening in other parts of the state; large parcels of land being developed into building lots. At nearly the same time as they were creating the trust the CT Public Act 490 was enacted which allowed a landowner to put acreage in excess of the zoning requirement into open space and receive considerably reduced property taxes. The Land Trust was founded in 1966.

Shirley and George along with their neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stephenson donated the first parcels of land in 1968—eight acres on either side of Ram's Horn Creek. Other parcels slowly were added and the foundation was laid. From an interview that Shirley did at the time of the 50th anniversary of the land trust, Shirley said that she and her fellow founders knew it would take years to convey their message and earn trust from the local community but eventually people began to come around when they realized preserving land would not adversely affect property taxes.

Today the land trust holds 72 easements totaling 2,314 acres and 45 fee properties covering 1,133 acres.

Above: Summer 2024 Imagining Lyme photos of distinction: Honeybee on Stonecrop Sedum by Mary St. Louis, Late Summer at Uncas Pond by Rich Sanders and Late Summer Milkweed Seedpods by Rochelle Davis

Bluebird Box Installation

Volunteers have been busy installing the bluebird boxes that were assembled in an April workshop. We wish to thank Wild Birds Unlimited Niantic for their generous donation of pole baffles. The pine wood for the boxes was harvested and donated by CT DEEP. Installation volunteers: Glo and Paul Ferri, Rich Sanders, John Viele, Mike Page—Thank you!



John Viele and Mike Page placed a bluebird box in Clucas Field this Summer



Left: Glo Ferri indicates the sixth box she and husband Paul installed at Pleasant Valley Preserve. Right: Rich Sanders installs a box at Hartman Park



A bird box installed at Reed Landing by Rich Sanders

Jim's notes from the field—the year in weather

There is a sumptuous variety about the New England weather that compels the stranger's admiration—and regret.

Mark Twain, 1876

It's long been observed that our weather in New England can be volatile and exceptionally variable—this is nothing new. It's arguable whether there is, or ever was, such a thing as a “normal” weather year. Yet, the biota that evolved to live in this climate context need to factor in the temperature and precipitation averages while also being prepared to endure, or perhaps take advantage of, the extremes. From an ecological perspective, this past year's weather stood apart from recent years in several ways.

The year began with winter storms that heavily flooded streams and rivers. In addition to the Eightmile River submerging the newly constructed John Evans bridge on Macintosh Road, the most obvious impact of these freshets is the mobilization, replenishing and re-sorting of large woody material throughout our watersheds. Although downed trees and branches occasionally threaten our infrastructure and impede our paddling, they provide critical structure and habitat for aquatic species like Brook Trout and their invertebrate prey. Less obviously, beneath the water's surface, the flood energy scours streambeds and transports massive amounts of sediment, gravel, stones and cobbles. This substrate is a habitat for freshwater mussels and many other aquatic invertebrates, and their populations can be negatively impacted by floods.



Flooding on Macintosh Rd become a regular occurrence.

Ample and steady rains—but not flooding—occurred nearly throughout the growing season. For vernal pool-breeding species like Wood Frogs or Spotted Salamanders, this was likely a banner year for reproduction. These species take advantage of these temporary aquatic habitats by depositing eggs in early spring, gambling that their progeny will be able to develop and metamorphose during the summer and before the pool dries from lack of rain. Another consequence of the consistent precipitation was incredibly robust plant growth. In addition to allowing the next generation of trees to establish themselves, the Lyme Land Trust was challenged in our efforts to keep trails cleared of encroaching vegetation and invasive plant infestations.

Then in autumn, the rains just stopped, and drought set in. Stream flow in September and October was extremely low, imparting a very different stressor on the stream-dwelling species mentioned above. However, it's worth noting that the stream flow volume this autumn was still several times the volumes recorded during the autumn droughts of 2015 and 2016, a time when many drought-stressed oaks succumbed to Spongy Moth outbreaks. These dead oaks provided some of the woody material delivered to streams this past winter. While every year is different, one thing that can be said with certainty is that no matter what the weather, there will always be winners and losers.

Recent Events



1 To celebrate moths, important pollinators, we were treated to a program with author illustrator John Himmelman - *Discovering Moths: Nighttime Jewels in Your Backyard*. Following a presentation, attendees went outside and looked for moths, using a backlit drop. There are about 10 times more moth species than butterflies, but we rarely see moths because most are active at night. They are an important pollinator species whose habitat is impacted by artificial light. Turn off your lights and help the moths! **2** September 18: Forestry for the Birds: Lyme Land Trust's Young Forest Project with Jim Arrigoni and Joe Atwater of RTEPC focused on the Slawson Preserve where the Lyme Land Trust has collaborated with several partners to provide young successional forest habitat to promote biodiversity. They are conducting a study of the project's effect on bird species funded by a grant from the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology Land Trust Grants Program. **3** September 21: Bill Yule led a rapt group on a walk at Johnston Preserve as he shared his fascination of fungi and their complex functioning in the forest ecology. He explained how fungus breaks down dead trees' woody material into nutrients available for other organisms. **4** September 20 and 22: Regan Stacey provided a presentation and free Autumnal Equinox forest bathing walk funded by Eightmile River Wild and Scenic Watershed Committee. **5** Tree Collective stewardship. The Tree Collective, under the direction of environmentalist Regan Stacey, cleared trails and invasive plants at Walbridge Preserve in October. **6** October 17: The Fall colors were in their full glory for our Cider Celebration Walk at Gillette Castle followed by a friendly gathering of good cheer and hard cider. Thank you to Yankee Cider Company for welcoming us with a special discount. **7** As part of the Biology of Plants class, on October 17, ten Eastern Connecticut State University students and Professor Bryan Connolly, PhD, made a field trip to Hartman Park and pitched in with enthusiasm to experience hands-on invasive plant removal. They joined Lyme Open Space Coordinator, Wendy Hill and two community volunteers to remove autumn olive and other invasives. **8** Saturday, October 26: As part of the Lyme Land Trust's Imagining Lyme Photography program, Joe Standart showed us how to use the features on the smartphone and gave us tips about composition to improve our photos. There was plenty of beauty to photograph in the Pleasant Valley Preserve. **9** November: Over 70 people came to hear John Pfeiffer, archaeologist and honorary Nehantic tribal member, speak about the history of the Nehantic Native Nation. Through disease, slavery, debt, war and loss of land, the Nehantic population was decimated and largely assimilated into society. Today they are striving to conserve their tribal history and culture.

Stewardship

Meadow mowing is an important part of the Stewardship Committee's responsibility to maintain its open spaces. Depending on the preserve, our management is guided by a blend of ecological, historical, and practical concerns. While bucolic fields harken back to Lyme's farming heritage and meeting the need for livestock pasture, our practices today generally aim to promote native biodiversity.

For example, wildflowers provide nectar and pollen for butterflies, bees, and other pollinating insects that are critical links in complex food webs. This is apparent on a summer day when fields are literally abuzz with life, and it is common to see Tree Swallows and other aerial insectivores enjoying the buffet on the wing. They and Eastern Bluebirds may make use of nesting boxes constructed and installed by volunteers in several preserves, while Red-winged Blackbirds construct concealed nests below in the thick meadow growth.

Lyme Land Trust coordinates closely with partners The Nature Conservancy and The Town of Lyme Open Space to cover all the bases entailed by about three dozen sites around town that require annual attention. In this endeavor, and in this year in particular as we grappled with the loss of expert meadow manager Tom Bischoff, we are very fortunate to have a group of dedicated, generous and knowledgeable folks. They include volunteers who use LLT-owned equipment, some that bring their own mowers, and where large mowing equipment is needed, by professionals.

In this newsletter we thank each and every one of them for their service and commitment to our cause.

Dave Brown
Justin Ciccone
Steve Deveaux
Baylee Drown

Fritz Gahagan
Glo Grace-Ferri
Scott Yeomans



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1 Mal Karwoski, Stewardship Chair, and Jim Arrigoni, led a group of volunteers installing a new kiosk in the Eno Preserve. **2** A new cedar-shingled kiosk greets hikers at the Eno Preserve. The kiosk was constructed by local craftsman Ben Kegley. **3** Jim, Board members Wendy Hill and Jen Tiffany and other volunteers planted native shrubs along the banks of Roaring Brook in Banningwood Preserve. **4** Volunteers cleared vegetation from the historic stone wall at Grassy Hill Preserve. **5** We added Ralph Eno to the Eno Preserve sign this Fall in honor of all that Ralph contributed to open space in Lyme (a request we happily agreed to from Trudy Burgess, Chan's daughter). **6** A mowed path in the Pleasant Valley Preserve

Let us Know!

If you notice a safety issue, a problem area, a fallen tree, suspicious use, or even if you enjoyed some time in the woods in Lyme—please let us know. On our website: lymelandtrust.org/trail-condition-form

We are very thankful for our Invasive Plant Warriors. Throughout the summer and fall, a number of area residents joined our work-and-learn parties led by Wendy Hill, LLT Vice President and Lyme Open Space Coordinator. Volunteers learned how to identify and remove invasive plants in several locations in Lyme, including Hartman Park and Mt. Archer Woods.



Lots of hikes to be had for all ages: Wednesday Walks with Wendy, Tuesday Treks and Trail Time with Tori



Tom Bischoff Meadow

We held a ceremony in August at the Jewett meadow in memory of Tom Bischoff. Tom mowed all of our preserves for many years. He was a master at his craft. LLT along with the Town of Lyme and The Nature Conservancy dedicated a bench in his honor as well as renaming the meadow the Tom Bischoff Meadow. The bench was built with locally sourced and milled cedar by Ben Kegley. On the bench there is a plaque that reads "Tom Bischoff Meadow—Named in 2024 to honor his many years of exceptional meadow management throughout Lyme. No one knew our fields better." In attendance were Terry and Travis Bischoff and close friends. Thank you to the Stewardship Committee for bench installation and Kristina White for coordination; funded by the Lyme Land Trust, Town of Lyme, and The Nature Conservancy.



Terry and Travis Bischoff enjoying the view from Tom's bench

Accreditation

The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The Lyme Land Conservation Trust is pleased to announce it is applying for renewal of accreditation. A public comment period is now open.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs. This review helps the Lyme Land Conservation Trust verify that it meets the highest standards of excellence, to protect land and conservation values for generations to come.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how the Lyme Land Conservation Trust complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see www.landtrustaccreditation.org/help-and-resources/indicator-practices

To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit landtrustaccreditation.org, or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments, 36 Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

Comments on the Lyme Land Conservation Trust's application will be most useful if received by May 17, 2025.



Judges Farm Site

Judges Farm Local Ecotype Project

I feel a bit like Johnny Appleseed this fall, collecting small bindles of seed off the tops of native perennials along roadsides, powerlines, and with permission from LLT, in a few of Lyme's treasured preserves. Native Asters, Eupatoriums, Pycnanthemums, Solidagos, grasses, sedges, and countless others all belong here. Unfortunately, they're often edged out by invasive species, development, and even natural reforestation.

While down here at the Judges Farm we've grown some native perennials for over twenty years now, we've only just started to truly focus on them. Most nursery-grown native plants that you'll find at the garden center, while they may be true to name, are not truly locally-sourced plants. Seed grown perennials are propagated all over the world these days. The one gallon Penstemon that you bought last summer may have been originally collected in the Midwest US, grown out in seedbeds in Germany, and then finally produced in New Jersey. While there's nothing 'wrong' with this practice, these plants have become more global than local, lacking adaptation to our soils, sites, and climate.

Here in New London County, we are smack dab in the middle of 'ecoregion 59', the northeastern coastal region, which spans from western Long Island up to Portland Maine. Adhering to US Forest Service and Cornell University protocol, our goal is to responsibly collect seed from as many locally adapted 'local ecotype' species as we can. Then, we'll grow them out in seed production beds at Judges Farm and offer the offspring to the public via the southern New England independent garden center and landscape trade.

Seeds that we collect this fall will spend one to two months in the fridge under moist cool 'stratification' to help break their winter dormancy requirement. We'll then sew them in seed trays, shift the seedlings to plug trays, and finally plant them out in the production beds next June. These first-year plants will spend 2025 getting to know us, and probably won't set much seed next year. But watch out, in 2026 they'll bloom with reckless abandon, providing all the seed we need for production in 2027 and beyond.

We so appreciate our collaboration with LLT on these seed collection efforts, and we'll keep you posted on our progress!

Matt Griswold
Judges Farm

Creating a Resilient Landscape

by Mike Baczewski

Climate resilient landscaping represents a fundamental change in how we think about, design, and maintain our outdoor spaces. Traditional landscaping practices often rely on chemical fertilizers, pesticides, excessive irrigation, and the maintenance of monoculture lawns. In contrast, climate smart or ecological landscaping seeks to mimic natural ecosystems, conserve resources, and promote biodiversity.

Creating ecologically functional and climate-resilient landscapes is not just about aesthetics—it is a statement of our values and a commitment to the future. By enhancing ecosystem functions, we can help sustain life on Earth and help our community as well.

If you're planning to transition your landscape in 2025, consider these tips:

1. Work with Nature: Ecological landscaping is about working with, not against, nature. Embrace natural processes and integrate them into your design. For example, a fallen tree can serve as both a garden seat and a habitat for wildlife, such as woodpeckers. In shaded areas where grass struggles to grow, consider letting moss take over, creating a low-maintenance, water-absorbing alternative to a traditional lawn.

2. Follow the Flow: Water conservation is a core principle of ecological landscaping, especially in light of this autumn's exceptionally dry conditions in Connecticut. Observe how water moves across your property during rainstorms, and look for ways to capture and manage it. Installing rain gardens or bioswales can help absorb runoff, recharge groundwater, and create habitats for wildlife.

3. Choose Resilient Species: Assess the plants already growing on your property, as they can reveal what thrives in your landscape's specific conditions. Select native plants that can perform essential functions, such as improving soil health, control erosion and provide wildlife habitat, while also tolerating climate extremes like rising temperatures, drought, severe flooding, and coastal storm surges.



Slender Mountain Mint—Jewett Preserve

4. Long Term Resiliency: Climate-resilient landscapes have the power to help us adapt to the challenges of a changing climate and help our community bolster its resilience in the face of more sudden, and severe weather events.

Mike Baczewski is the founder of New England Pollinator Gardens, LLC, a Lyme, CT-based ecological design-build company. The company works with both residential and commercial clients to create sustainable, native landscapes that support and enhance the ecosystems essential for our future. For more information, visit NewEnglandPollinatorGardens.com.

THE LYME LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

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iNaturalist Project—Wild Lyme Update

The first year of the Wild Lyme iNaturalist Project has been a wild success! Over 120 people have submitted nearly 2,000 observations of living things, and in the process identified nearly 700 species. It's fascinating to see who has seen what, and where, so even if you don't contribute observations, you are encouraged to explore the iNaturalist website and its endless ways of viewing the biota around us.

Some interesting patterns have emerged. The most observed species is American Wintergreen, and several other common trailside plants are heavily reported: Christmas Fern, Partridgeberry, Ghost Pipe, and Maple-leaf Viburnum. The most observed animals are both amphibians: the American Toad and the Eastern Newt. These species are often encountered (and easily photographed!) on the trails, where they can afford to be conspicuous due to the protection they receive from poison glands in their skin. Three American Bear and three White-tailed Deer have been reported. Because iNaturalist observations are best supported by including photographs, there are very few bird observations, but some of these are supported by auditory recordings.

The most observed invasive plant is Japanese Barberry, and the most observed tree, curiously, is Black Tupelo. Although it was anticipated that the invasive Spotted Lanterfly would spread into our area this year, it has not yet been observed in any of Lyme's protected areas included in the Wild Lyme Project. Check the webpage frequently to see what local biodiversity is being seen—it's always something different!

Visit the Wild Lyme iNaturalist website inaturalist.org/projects/wild-lyme-project and read the article on the Lyme Land Trust website homepage to learn more!



Eight Mile River Wild and Scenic Coordinating Committee along with Jim set up a stream-side station along Roaring Brook in Banningwood Preserve. Using nets, viewing containers, and magnifying glasses, we provided a close-up view of a variety of amazing insects. We found seven important (most wanted) aquatic insects that confirmed the healthy water quality of the brook.



Christmas Fern—Common observation due to its prevalence trailside



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).

New Year's Day 2025 Hike with the Lyme Land Trust

Wednesday, January 1, 2025

Start 2025 off with a refreshing hike in the Lyme woods. Register with the walk leader for the time and location you prefer. Space is limited. You may sign up for more than one walk if space and time permits.

- **10:00 am: Gillette Castle State Park** – Family Trail Time with Tori
Register: vharris1391@gmail.com
- **10:00 am to 12:30ish pm:** Pleasant Valley Preserve with Tony Irving
Register: anthonyinlyme@gmail.com
- **1:30 to 3:30ish pm:** Johnston Preserve with Wendy Hill:
Register: openspace@townlyme.org

Workshop: Propagating Pollinator Plants from Seed

Sunday, January 12, 2025 from 3:00-4:15 pm

Join the Lyme Pollinator Pathway for this workshop with Jim Sirch at the Lyme Grange Hall, 2 Sterling City Road. Watch a slideshow to learn about the various native plants that can be grown from seed, discover different germination requirements for different kinds of seeds, and learn hands-on how to plant a plastic gallon jug filled with a seed selection to stratify over the winter. Proper after-care will be discussed. Space is limited. Registration

required: lymepollinator@gmail.com. Co-sponsored by the Lyme Pollinator Pathway and Lyme Grange CT 147

Astronomy Observing Session

Saturday, January 25, 2025 from 6:00pm - 8:00pm

At the Trail 53 Observatory. Register: astronomy@lymelandtrust.org

Tree Collective: Teen Hike and Steward Group Meet-up

Sunday, January 26, 2025 from 1:00-3:30 pm

Register to learn location. Registration required: reganstacey@gmail.com.

Family Trail Time with Tori

Sunday, January 26, 2025 at 10:00 am

Johnston Preserve, Rte 82, Lyme CT. Walk to the highest point in Lyme. Kindly email vharris1391@gmail.com to register.

Astronomy Special Winter Session

Saturday, February 1, 2025 from 4:30pm - 6:30pm

At the Trail 53 Observatory. Register: astronomy@lymelandtrust.org. Special session. Many planets and the moon will be out. Starting early to attempt to observe Neptune slipping behind the Moon's dark limb at 5:00pm.