



# The Canton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.

Fall 2018

Newsletter

Edited by Gail Deutsch

## Presidents' Message

Where did the summer go? It was here just a minute ago, but has turned into fall, and by the time you're reading this, we will be preparing for winter.

Our mission statement, which you should see every time you visit our website <https://cantonlandtrust.org/> is a single sentence, but there's a lot packed in there. It starts out talking about acquiring preserving and protecting land. I wonder if our founders in 1972, starting with a single beautiful acre of land, thought we would be preserving north of 2000 acres by now. Protecting land is core to our mission, and I'm happy to report that we are continuing to acquire and preserve land, but I'd like to talk about another aspect of our mission.

We want to "promote public awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the land".

This isn't a new initiative—we've been doing this all along, but my hope is that we can step up and do even more. Many of you attended our recent annual dinner where Dr. Anne Hall shared her extensive research on history aspects of our town. The talk was a follow-on to a hands-on archaeological dig in which the public participated at a former poorhouse located on the Conklin property.

Jay Kaplan has been leading bird walks for years,

helping to inform children and adults about our fine feathered friends. More recently, Sarah Faulkner proposed the idea of a hike of the month, which has all but turned into a learn-about-the-history-of-the-area hikes. Several board members have stepped up to lead hikes, and all are appreciated, but Nate Cantwell's extensive knowledge of the history of the town adds a rich layer to the hike.

I recently had a talk with one of our newest board members, Teresa Barger, about invasives. While we've always had concerns and have taken some actions, based upon recent discussions at the stewardship committee, I think we are going to try to step up involvement, which will be a mixture of education and action.

We recently helped co-sponsor Raptor Day at the Roaring Brook Nature Center. The activities were organized and run by Nature Center staff, while the Land Trust helped with funding for the guest speakers who did more than just talk; they brought along four raptors to share with the audience. That funding is due to the gracious donation of Fred Feibel. I'm personally very excited about that collaboration, and hope we can continue to do more educational projects. While we have some of our own ideas, and are working on more, I would be very grateful for suggestions on programs we might undertake in the future.



## EVENTS

### Wings & Things Wrap-Up

The Canton Land Conservation Trust collaborated with Roaring Brook Nature Center in presenting Wings & Things, a community event focusing on birds of prey and the fall migration, and held at the Nature Center on Saturday, September 15<sup>th</sup>. Over 50 people filled the Nature Center auditorium to hear Christine Cummings and Todd Secki of “A Place Called Hope,” an education and rehabilitation facility based in Killingworth, Connecticut, talk about birds of prey. The one-hour presentation included a live peregrine falcon, an American kestrel and two species of owl – an impressive great horned owl and a barn owl. These avian ambassadors were certainly the hit of the program. Christine and Todd provided details on the birds’ adaptations, habits and their status here in Connecticut to an enthusiastic group that ranged from elementary school

youngsters to seniors.



Following the talk, 15 people joined Nature Center Director and Land Trust board member, Jay Kaplan, on a short walk to the fields of adjacent Werner’s Woods to observe the ongoing fall

migration. Mid-September is the peak of fall migration. In addition to migrant songbirds, monarch butterflies and several dragonfly species, if the winds are from the northwest, one may be fortunate enough to see hundreds of broad-winged hawks riding the winds as they make their incredible journey through the eastern United States, Mexico and Central America to their wintering grounds in northern South America. The hawks rise up on thermals, warm air currents that rise from the hills (think hang gliders on Talcott Mountain) until they hit a wind current. They set their wings, expending

little energy as they ride these wind currents southward. Broad-winged hawks return to our area in April.

Although it was a beautiful late summer day, the winds were not conducive to a large movement of raptors. Fall migration is best on northwest winds and this day was more reminiscent of a summer day at the beach – not ideal for migrants. Nevertheless, participants were treated to several appearances by the resident red-tailed hawks, black and turkey vultures and heard a red-shouldered hawk calling from the adjacent woodland. Migrants included a single broad-winged hawk and an American kestrel. The latter was quite impressive as it was well up in the sky, moving steadily southward into the wind. Two monarch butterflies seemed more intent in feeding on the blooming goldenrod flowers than making their way to Mexico, where all Connecticut’s monarchs end up to spend the winter. An impressive journey from so small a creature, the migration of the monarch is nothing short of amazing and a wonder of nature. A significant portion of the program was funded by the Land Trust’s Miller Feibel Endowment.

Jay Kaplan

### History Buried in the Woods: Canton Land Trust Offers a Hike-With-History!

The Canton Land Conservation Trust invited history buffs and hikers to a “History Buried in the Woods” hike Sunday, Nov. 11 at 1:30 p.m. at the Sun, Wind and Woodland Preserve.

Eric Sloane, in his numerous notes on colonial America, said that it took thirty years to build a farm. Subsistence farming in our newly colonized land only provided for a family, maybe allowing something for trade and little else. Not an easy life. Based on the historic agricultural censuses for the Ratlum mountain area and my estimates, the minimum farm acreage that seemed to achieve this was about 100 acres of woodlots, agricultural fields for various food crops (animal and human) and animal grazing areas. One can’t spend any time in today’s forest on Ratlum

Mountain without seeing evidence of the work of these farmers and their families. Any farmer ever working on the mountain battled with stones. [The running joke in my family is that you leave some little stones – for seed.] Imagine a lifetime of removing stones from acre after acre to be able to plow successfully. What remains of their endless work is left in stone: foundation holes, wells and walls. Someone actually speculated that the combined length of stone walls in New England alone would go around the world.

Several (and possibly most) of our land trust properties have the work of these people written on them, if one learns to see the hidden landscape. On the Sun, Wind & Woodland Preserve to the west of Breezy Hill Road, there are over a dozen piles of stone. In researching the mountain's past inhabitants, the William Taylor Jr. family came to light. Early to this area, the family left marks on the land that were talked about in the incomplete diaries of William Jr., diaries that the Barkhamsted Historical Society located. The available diaries started in 1799 while William Jr. was living on Ratlum mountain and went, piecemeal, until 1830, well after he had moved to Barkhamsted.

William Jr., in multiple diary entries in the summer of 1799, talked about how he handled the ever-present stone so he could farm. "I heaped up stones on the side of the mountain up west of my house and Billy [one of his sons] plowed on the same land." The scattered heaps are visible today and seem to be on ledge outcroppings where plowing wouldn't likely have been possible. William Jr. moved away from the mountain, however, between 1802 and 1804. He went on to mention, in later diary entries, how he and his sons built stone walls in his new home, with no mention of heaping stones.

In the end, the family farms of the 1700's and 1800's on Ratlum mountain were lost to the woods, having people move away, some to supply the growing manufacturing economy, and losing other people to smallpox, spotted fever and the like. I'd rather not have their stories be

lost and I hope that my history hikes will remind hikers of the people who



worked and lived on Ratlum mountain. They were the ones who got it all started, who fought our early wars and gave us a country. I'd like you to know who they were and that they were significant to the area's history and development ....and that they moved a lot of damn stone.

Nate Cantwell

### **Hikes of the Month Offer Variety and Draw Crowds!**

The Canton Land Conservation Trust is delighted with the success of our "hike of the month" program. Led by different volunteers, the hikes showcase our different preserves, add information about habitats, history, and conservation, and are designed for every age group. We hope you can join us at one of our monthly events in the future.

This fall we offered:

September 15: A partnership event between the Land Trust and the Roaring Brook Nature Center, featuring a raptor program by A Place Called Hope. Following the program, Director Jay Kaplan led a hike for families to RBNC's upper meadow to look for wild raptors and other birds.

October 14: Mike Gotaski led a hike on our Sweetheart Mountain Preserve in Collinsville, enjoying both the gorgeous autumn day and the historic aspects of the property. As they hiked the entire trail network system, they stopped to examine the remains of the mechanisms from the old ski hill.

October 28: There were definitely more treats than tricks on the October monthly hike. Despite somewhat questionable weather, hike leaders

Michelle Winkler and Jen Mason, were joined by almost twenty hikers, many in costume, for this fun family event. Participants were encouraged to complete a spook-tacular scavenger hunt as they hiked through the Halloween decorations along the Sun, Wind, and Woodland Trail. Hikers were treated to a post-hike snack and everyone enjoyed time to socialize over apples, cider and pumpkin donuts.

November 11: History Hike with Nate Cantwell

We hope to see you out on the trails!

Sarah Faulkner

### **Flatbread Pizza**

On Tuesday night, October 8th, the annual Flatbread fundraiser was held. The event brought in \$215, similar to what was raised last year. We rolled out a new banner this



year for the event. It features a copy of our familiar Canton-shaped trailhead signs, some footprints and a paper plate that can be swapped out for a new date or message as needed. And just in case

you were concerned that the pepperoni pizza slice would get eaten - it won't - it's made out of papier-mâché.

Holly Hambleton

### **Annual Dinner**

The Canton Land Conservation Trust's Annual Dinner will be held on Tuesday, March 26th at 6 p.m. at Season's Restaurant that is part of the Avon Old Farms Hotel, located at 279 Avon Mountain Road in Avon. The restaurant is located at the top of the hill on the left. There is ample parking and the event will take place in the Towpath Ballroom. Cocktails will be available at the cash bar from 6 to 7 in the adjacent Glass Room where you'll have a chance to bid on the auction items displayed there. Dinner will be served at 7 and the presentation will begin about 8 pm. Please look for invitations in the mail in February and plan to bring friends along.

Our speaker will be Anne Hall, Ph.D, who has been doing ongoing historical research for the land trust in Canton. Her topic will be "Flowing Wealth: The Historical Usage of Canton's Streams and Ponds." This overview will explain how water was used, guided, and controlled in Canton throughout its history....apples to ice, buttons to coffins will be examined.

Our thanks to La Trattoria for many wonderful years of hosting this yearly event. As you know, La Trattoria closed its doors this past September after a very long run in Canton. We shall miss our fine collaboration with them.

We sincerely hope you will join us this coming March. It's a joy to share the preserved land in our town (over 2,000 acres), with each and every one of you. This land is your land! Gather with us to celebrate all that your land trust does to preserve and to protect this land in the Town of Canton.

Anne Duncan

### **MOONLIGHT HIKE!!! – JANUARY 19<sup>TH</sup>**

Watch for more information!

## **PROJECTS**

### **Tackling Invasives on CLCT Land**

Because invasive trees, shrubs and plants have no natural competitors, they take over and threaten the biodiversity of native habitats that provide food and shelter to native wildlife. Left unchecked in woodlands, meadows and marshes, they can imperil endangered species.

Some invasive plants produce attractive flowers, foliage and berries, so homeowners may be tempted to leave them on their properties. But birds eat the berries and spread the problem elsewhere, including on some of CLCT land.

After habitat loss, invasive species are the second biggest threat to biodiversity in Connecticut, says CLCT Director Jay Kaplan, director of the Roaring

Brook Nature Center. Habitat biodiversity is critical to the health and stability of ecosystems.

The CLCT has conducted two invasive plant removal initiatives through grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). With a Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program grant, the CLCT removed invasives from the fields and meadows at the Mary Conklin Sanctuary and the Sun, Wind and Woodland (SWW) property, says Mike Gotaski, chair of the CLCT Stewardship Committee. This multi-year grant's goal was to improve the habitat for ground-nesting birds.

The effort included pushing back the encroaching, successional growth along the perimeter fields, reseeding the fields with warm-season, native meadow grasses, annual mowing and invasives control to maintain the enlarged fields, Gotaski says. During the initial phase, the CLCT used heavy mechanical equipment to push back the growth at the field's perimeter, which included primarily invasive barberry, multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, Autumn olive and Russian olive.



This was followed by spot treatments in the reclaimed fields and near the existing tree "islands," using mechanical means. In addition, licensed professionals applied minimal chemical treatments in accordance with state and federal regulations, Gotaski says. Since the grant-period ended, CLCT members have continued annual mowing of the Conklin and SWW property fields.

The most recent invasives control effort occurred at the SWW property off Breezy Hill Road for the New England Cottontail "bunny cut." During the first phase of this two-year effort, CLCT stewards removed invasives along the perimeter, followed

by a DEEP-directed forestry management activity, removing mature-growth forest to encourage regrowth of a more rabbit-friendly, successional forest habitat. In the second year, stewards managed invasive regrowth along the perimeter with cutting and removal methods. Licensed professionals applied limited chemical treatments in accordance with state regulations.

Lessons learned from this property will help develop additional invasive control strategies on other CLCT properties."

*To see the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council list of invasive plants, go to*  
<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg/list.html>

Theresa Sullivan Barger

**Flowing Wealth: The Historical Usage of Canton's Streams and Ponds (FOR MORE INFORMATION, JOIN US AT THE MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DINNER)**

As a child, I remember going to Miner's lumber in its old place in Collinsville, now the Collinsville Canoe & Kayak Company. The cavernous building with its stacks of lumber intrigued me; but what I didn't know was that Miner's lumber represented a last, tenuous link to a major part of New England history. Today, there are few independent sawmills. Generally, lumber from New England heads out of the country in its raw form and returns as a finished product. The fate of sawmills and the lumber industry is more closely connected to the machinations of Washington DC and Beijing than Collinsville and Hartford.

This was not the case originally. Sawmills were some of the first things to be built in any town in New England, right alongside the equally important grist mill. Timber in its raw form is heavy and difficult to move; but it is also an absolutely critical building material and fuel. So sawmills had a robust local market. Studies have shown that New England sawmills tended to have a catchment area approximately six miles in diameter. If we look at Canton between the late

1700's and the mid to late 1800's, we find that the three mile radius is actually a bit too large, probably due to the abundance of material and the difficult terrain which divides the town. Canton was able to support mills at closer to a two-mile radius. The list includes: four or five on Cherry Brook alone: one to the north of North Canton, North Canton, West Road, Center, and possibly one at the confluence of Cherry Brook and the Farmington River. There was one at the base of Indian Hill in Satan's Kingdom. In Collinsville there were several, some of which became part of the Collins Company's complex. In addition, there were sawmills in the surrounding towns. Not all of these sawmills operated at exactly the same time, but many of them overlapped.

The problem of moving material to and from a sawmill had several consequences. First, many sawmills had ephemeral time lines: vanishing and reappearing depending on the need for building materials and depending on the amount of raw material available. If the amount of raw material dipped along with demand, mills closer to each other than that break even travel point were in trouble. Because of this, not only did most owners have other businesses: farming, cider production, blacksmithing; but few mills simply cut wood into lengths.

Additionally, from the perspective of how a town ends up looking like it does, the placement of a mill, whether for the purposes of lumber, grist, or other products, drove road alignments. Several times the Canton town meetings in the early 1800's through the 1840's explicitly addressed this question. A mill would be proposed, or built, and then the town would be asked to consider building a road to it. This is not dissimilar to the way the late 20<sup>th</sup> century subdivision roads have been built and become part of the town road map. West Road was probably as prominent as Route 179 when Sisson's sawmill was active.

If the logistics of placing a mill were important, equally important was the actual layout. Getting

water to the mill was complicated. Water privileges, i.e. the right to use water, did not have to run with the property. They could be quite valuable.



The first thing that one needed was a dam, which meant one needed the right to impound the water, the land to build the dam, and the space to impound the water. Because acquiring the right to impound large amounts of water and land on which to do so (the most valuable sort of land as it was in a valley) was difficult, the challenge of building a large dam was considerable. Consequently, the smallest dam possible would be used or a series of dams. The mill at what is now the Canton Creamery was massive, with one of the largest wheels in the area (claimed to be fifty feet high, but this is unlikely to have been correct). It used not only a dam on Cherry Brook but also two smaller 'check' dams on Creamery Brook as supply.

Once dammed, the water needed to be transported to the mill itself. Sometimes, the mill was incorporated into the dam structure, but more commonly it was located some distance away. Canton has two examples of this on Cherry Brook. Today only a few stone piles exist to remind us of this structure.

Indeed, most of these mill ponds are gone along with their mills. They tended to impound fast moving streams, which quickly undermined dams lacking regular maintenance. Some, such as the old gristmill dam in the Canton center lasted until the late twentieth century. A few were rebuilt as recreational dams. Others have vanished with very few traces. At Sisson's mill the raceway and the mill foundation remain, but no trace of the dam. The structures that are left have become valuable refuges for various animals that depend on rocky or swampy environments.

They are also reminders of the ingeniously complex local economies that created our towns.

Anne Hall

### **Fresh Snow**

*Last evening's fall amounts to an inch of fluff,  
Just enough, in dawn's glisten, for a morning coat  
of fur,  
or a glove of dust--a pennant of the season.*

*Squirrel prints belie acorn forage. Songbird tracks  
stitched across the hillside's rounded belly  
lead to underbrush shadows  
where burrows hold promise of the day,  
now-quiet creatures.*

*In the stillness, a lone cardinal chirps for  
company.*

*Unanswered, he cries again; then heads toward  
the river*

*where an eagle sits atop an ancient dead pine,  
overseer of the morning's light.*

Joan Hoffman

## **ABOUT US**

### **Goodwin Family Donates 4 Acres**

Thomas C. and Sherry B. Goodwin donated four acres of land adjacent to existing Canton Land Conservation

Trust property in the northwest part of Canton. The four-acre parcel, which has been in the Goodwin family for 110 years, contains a small stream which leads to Cherry Brook.



The CLCT owns a 39-acre parcel of forestland at 77

Bunker Hill Road, called Sweeton Meadow, which

is contiguous to the Goodwin land. With the Goodwin parcel, that creates 43 acres of preserved open space.

“While the property is desirable in its own right, we are particularly happy to acquire parcels of land adjacent to existing parcels, as this helps create contiguous corridors for wildlife,” says Phil Philbrick, president. “I’d like to send out a special thanks to the Goodwins for their generous contribution.”

The added land benefits interior forest nesting birds, such as thrushes, warblers, tanagers and vireos, says Jay Kaplan, director of the Roaring Brook Nature Center and a member of the CLCT board of directors.

When land is developed, it can lead to forest fragmentation, Kaplan says. This allows nest predators that live on the edge of suburbia, such as possums, skunks, raccoons, blue jays and cowbirds, easy access to forest nesting birds and their young.

Connecticut’s forests are home to some of the highest concentrations of bird species breeding in the continental United States, says Audubon Connecticut’s Forest Bird Habitat Assessment Report, prepared for the CLCT, Feb. 28, 2017. These forests serve as a “nursery” for about 70 species of neo-tropical migratory birds, many of whom are experiencing long-term population declines; Audubon Connecticut has identified them as “Priority Species.”

“Audubon Connecticut’s Forest Bird Initiative focuses its conservation efforts on Priority Species, giving us an opportunity to keep these species common before they become threatened or endangered,” the report says. Audubon Connecticut listed some of the birds found on the Goodwin land as priority species.

Theresa Sullivan Barger

## CLCT 2018 Membership by Michelle Winkler

The Canton Land Conservation Trust has been in existence for over forty years and continues to acquire, preserve, and protect land of scenic, natural, or historic value within Canton. We thank all those members who have contributed time and money in the last four decades.

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President: Stephen (Phil) Philbrick  
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Treasurer: Christian Winkler

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Theresa Barger, Karen Berger, Nate Cantwell, Ted Cowles,  
Gail Deutsch, Anne Duncan, Fred Feibel, Mike Gotaski, Holly  
Hambleton, Jay Kaplan, Jen Mason, John Pech, Scott  
Persing, Thom Rice, Elenor Smith, Betty Stanley.

**CLCT Assets as of 11/15/2018**

by Christian Winkler, Treasurer

Current Assets

Total Checking/Savings	-	\$384,756
Endowment Investment	-	\$414,632

Fixed assets

(land, buildings, equipment)	-	\$7,186,718
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<b>Total Assets:</b>	-	<b>\$7,986,105</b>
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**DONATE to CLCT - use your credit card!**

Canton Land Conservation Trust continues to encourage and accept donations by cash or by check. CLCT also accepts donations and payments over \$20 by major credit cards (Master Card, Visa, Discover and American Express).

Please go to our website:

[www.cantonlandtrust.org](http://www.cantonlandtrust.org): Canton Land Trust to find the DONATE NOW button,

or search Facebook for  
Canton Land Conservation Trust

Become a member today

**Upcoming Events of Note:**

**Moonlight Hike – January 19th**  
**Annual Dinner - March 26th**



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