

## Canton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.

Spring 2001  
Newsletter

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### COYOTES IN CANTON?

By Jay Kaplan

Aawroooooo.....I'll never forget how the hair on the back of my neck stood straight up the first time I heard them. A friend and I were searching for owls along Meadow Road in Canton Center early one spring. The first howl was followed by another, then another, and after our initial astonishment, we stopped our owl search, sat back and enjoyed the concert.

When the first European settlers arrived in Connecticut, it was the timber wolf (*Canis lupus*) whose howls greeted these pioneers. As farmers, the settlers had little use for wolves. Many Connecticut towns, including neighboring Simsbury, instituted a bounty on wolves by the end of the seventeenth century. This hunting pressure, in combination with a loss of woodland habitat as the trees fell before the plow, caused wolves to slowly disappear throughout all the New England states. The last known wolf reported from Connecticut was killed near Bridgeport in 1839.

As the wolf disappeared from the landscape, it left an open niche for a large dog-like predator in the eastern states. The adaptable coyote (*Canis latrans*) slowly spread across the northern Great Plains, perhaps interbreeding with a dwindling wolf population along the way. (This might account for the larger size of the eastern coyote). Coyotes gradually moved across southern Canada and into northern Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. Coyotes then spread southward into Massachusetts, eventually entering Connecticut in the late 1950's. It should be noted that some folks believe that coyotes lived in Maine all along and were called "brush wolves," a smaller variety of the timber wolf. This, however, is a minority opinion.

The first official Connecticut coyote was shot by a hunter in 1958. During the late '50's and through the 60's, coyotes were a rarity in Connecticut. During the '70's and '80's, coyotes experienced a real range expansion throughout the state. According to most authorities, the eastern coyote is a relatively recent arrival here in Canton and other Farmington Valley towns. Through the 1990's, reports became more common, and today, coyote sightings have become commonplace throughout our town.

So, how do you tell if you've seen a coyote cross the road in front of your car? Compared to the domestic dog, coyotes have thicker underfur; straighter, more erect ears; a bottle-brush shaped tail; and a longer, thinner muzzle than most dogs. Coyotes also run with their tails held down, as opposed to both wolves and dogs that hold their tails up when they run. As is true

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## Generous Gift of Walter Korder and Florence Bredahl

The Land Trust has been given a beautiful 90.5 acre parcel off Gracey Road by Walter Korder of West Hartford and Florence Bredahl of Simsbury. This property adjoins the Land Trust's Onion Mountain Preserve, and increases the size of our contiguous holding on Onion Mountain to approximately 230 acres. Mr. Korder and Mrs. Bredahl still own an adjacent parcel of about 50 acres.

Mrs. Bredahl is the widow of Mr. Korder's late business partner, Mel Bredahl. Mr. Korder and Mr. Bredahl have owned this property for many years as an investment. This generous gift is somewhat unusual, in that most of the people who have donated large pieces of land to the Land Trust have had a personal connection to the land from living on it. The Land Trust is very grateful for this most generous and important gift.

Mr. Korder first approached the Land Trust with the idea of donating the property at our Land Preservation Seminar last April. This seminar was sponsored by the Canton Land Conservation Trust, Roaring Brook Nature Center, the Town of Canton Open Space Committee and several land trusts from surrounding towns. The presenter was Laurie Boynton of the Land Preservation Alliance. More than 70 people attended to learn of the many options available to them in preserving their land. The seminar was designed to give landowners information on ways to preserve open land, and explained ways in which landowners can donate their land or sell it at a bargain price for conservation purposes and still get economic benefits because of the tax treatment afforded to a transfer to a conservation organization.

The Land Trust has had discussions about potential future donations with a number of landowners, directly as a result of their attendance at this seminar. Whether continuing to live on or use the land or receiving compensation are important to you, there are options for preserving your land. If you own land in town that you'd like protected for future generations, contact us. We can provide you with educational material and, if you'd like, discuss your needs privately with you.

## Cherry Brook Primary School Earth Day Hikes

Once again during the week of Earth Day, 2001, Cherry Brook Primary School children will have field trips to one of the Land Trust properties or another woodland property in town. This program was developed and promoted by Sarah Leff. Students will visit Mary Conklin Preserve, the Breezy Hill Farm Preserve, Sam Humphrey's tree farm and Rhonda and Charlie DeWeese's land on Ratlum Mountain.

## Capen Cabin

After a period of about eight years during which it has been used as a private residence, the Land Trust's Capen Cabin will be available for use by youth groups and other interested members of the community with advance permission. This Cabin was a gift of George Capen in 1976, along with 33 acres of land. It also adjoins other Land Trust property. The Cabin is located at the top of Breezy Hill Road, near the Breezy Hill end of the Ted Wright Trail.

There is quite a bit of maintenance work that will be required to return the Cabin to top condition. Two youth group parties have begun that work on the weekend of April 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Land Trust Director Steve Stang will be coordinating both the maintenance activities and the permit process for use of the cabin. Contact Steve at 658-0344 if you are able to help with cleanup or maintenance, or if you would like to reserve a night at the Cabin. If you would like to be put on an email list for updates about Capen Cabin activities, send a message to Charlie DeWeese at [deweesecc@aol.com](mailto:deweesecc@aol.com).

In our archives we came across the guest book from the Capen Cabin, beginning in 1983. The first visitor in the guest book was Charlotte Craig, who came with Francelia Crittenden. Some other names in the first few pages were George Flynn, Priscilla Tonkin, Robert J. Marshall, John Linnehan, Barbara Clancy, Charlotte Moses, Rebecca Moses, Michael Clancy, Tom Zaylor, Peter Dehey, Jim Mutch, Art Sweeton, Mark Goedecke, Jerry Ricard, Melody Mae Wright, Ben Wielechowski, Dan Clancy, Jeff Ross, Betsy Smith, Barbara Jo Eifes, Bruce and Pat Kauffman, Steve Corutemanche, and Alan Duncan. Do you know these people? Were you there, too? Here's a note from a scout troop, in March, 1986, "stayed two nights, heard two wild turkeys at 10 pm, saw 4 deer."

(Coyotes continued from page 1)

As is true with many mammals, seeing one in the daylight hours does not necessarily mean that the animal is ill. Coyotes can be active by day as well as by night, especially in the spring when they are busy hunting for food for their pups. Coyotes may dig a den, but frequently they enlarge the abandoned burrow of another animal such as a woodchuck or fox. A litter of four to eight pups is born in April, although litters of up to a dozen have been recorded. The pups are weaned at about nine weeks and the family stays together until fall. Coyotes have lived for 12 years in the wild and up to 18 years in captivity.

Coyotes are opportunistic and will eat what is available. This adaptability is a primary reason why they have been so successful in moving into a wide range of habitats. They will feed on a variety of mammals, birds, frogs, turtles, fish, insects, as well as fruits, berries and other plant material. They will also feed on carrion and have been known to raid unsecured trash cans. They are known to take domestic stock such as sheep and calves, and will also take pet cats and small dogs. Just one more reason why residents should think twice about letting cats out at night or leaving dogs unattended. They do not, however, present a threat to larger animals or to people. Although there have been incidents of coyotes attacking children, even adults, in the western states, invariably, these were animals that had been "acclimatized" to people because they were being fed. Please, **DO NOT** attempt to attract these or any wild mammals with food!

Finally, a word about "coydogs." A coydog is a hybrid between a coyote and a domestic dog. Although coydogs have been bred in the laboratory, their occurrence in the wild is

very rare. Besides, a coydog could easily look more like a beagle than a coyote and most coydog reports are either scruffy-looking coyotes or domestic dogs, rather than true hybrids.

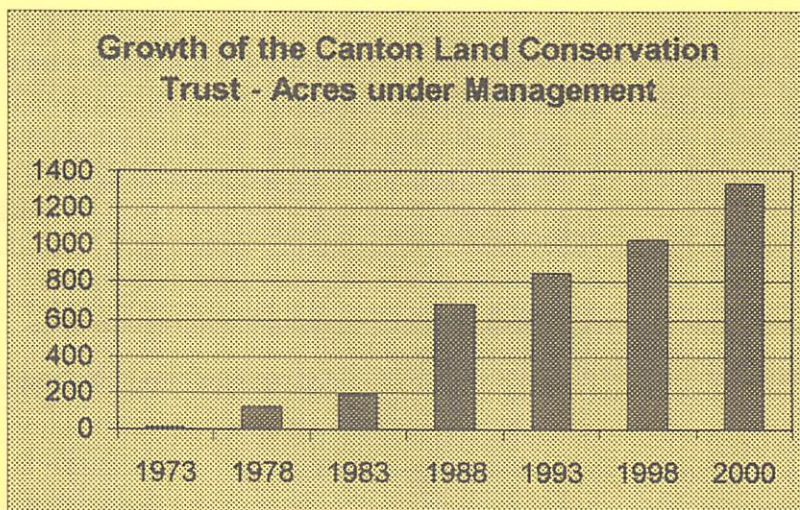
Native Americans have many myths about the wily coyote. This is because coyotes are intelligent, adaptable creatures, and they are here in Canton to stay. As with all wildlife, learn to live with them and enjoy the occasional opportunity to view one of nature's most versatile animals.



#### Sun Wind & Woodland Trail

Volunteers will be laying out and cutting a trail on the Land Trust's Sun, Wind & Woodland Preserve, beginning when the snow melts. Canton High School senior Josh Kaplan will be working on the trail as an honor society project. Others interested in being involved in the process should call Charlie DeWeese at 693-3988 or email at [deweesecc@aol.com](mailto:deweesecc@aol.com).

THE CANTON LAND TRUST STARTED IN 1973 WITH CHARLOTTE CRAIG'S DONATION OF A 1.3 ACRE FIELD ACROSS FROM THE GENERAL STORE IN CANTON CENTER. IN THE 27 YEARS SINCE THEN, THE LAND TRUST HAS GROWN BY A FACTOR OF OVER 1,000, DUE IN LARGE PART TO THE GENEROSITY AND FORESIGHT OF A GENERATION OF CANTON LANDOWNERS.



### **Land Trust Directors Support Treetops Acquisition**

This past winter the Greenwich and Darien Land Trusts completed the acquisition of Treetops, an old estate along the Mianus River. They were working under a deadline to raise the \$11 million purchase price, and made an appeal for help. The directors of the Canton Land Conservation Trust considered the importance of preserving this land paramount, and made personal contributions totaling \$1,000 to the successful acquisition effort. Land Trust Director

Dick Swibold brought the situation before the Board. He said "Connecticut is a very small state, and it is important for us to work together to achieve our land preservation goals." Because this land is not in Canton, the entire amount of the contribution was made personally by the directors, and did not use Canton Land Conservation Trust funds. The Greenwich and Darien Land Trusts have expressed their gratitude to their colleagues in Canton, and have said that they stand ready in the future to help other land trusts, including ours, when help is needed.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Tour of Ratlum Mountain, followed by Annual Members' Meeting and Picnic**

This year the third annual hiking tour of Ratlum Mountain will take place on Sunday June 10, starting at 12:30 pm from the Smith Tree Farm. Hikers will see the results of the 1989 forestry operations, and will follow a logging trail out to Robin Drive in Barkhamsted. They will then go up to Old Derby Road, past the Big Down Marsh, where blue herons nest and otters play, and down the Old Stagecoach Road from Barkhamsted to Simsbury. They will cross Cherry Brook and eventually work their way up to the new Fred Swan Preserve on Case Street, at the site of the annual meeting. There will be refreshments available along the way. Hikers who want to carpool can meet at the Swan Preserve at 12:15, or can park at Smith Farm and get transportation back either before or after the Annual meeting.

The annual meeting will start around 4pm with a hike around the Swan Preserve, followed by the meeting and picnic.

## The Land Trust Appeals For Volunteers

Your Land Trust was the recipient of three wonderful pieces of property in 2000 and January 20001. These properties not only add marvelous opportunities for the study of nature, hiking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, bird watching and photography, but they also increase the need for volunteers. Boundaries need to be marked. Trails will need to be laid out, cut and marked. Existing trails need continual maintenance. For those of you who have expressed a willingness to volunteer, we hope you will contribute your time and energy this spring when we have work parties. We are planning to have a variety of days and times when work can be done. Please check the calendar in this newsletter. Perhaps some among you would like to be responsible for a specific trail much like volunteer organizations take over stretches of roadsides. We are looking forward to an active and productive year. With your help we shall succeed.

Along with the need for volunteers is the ongoing need to continue building our financial base. Projects and normal maintenance require funding, and we would like to have the Acquisition Fund well funded so that we shall be prepared when there is another opportunity to obtain an important piece of property. The Land Trust Board of Directors would like to thank all of you who have generously contributed with your memberships and your contributions to the Land Acquisition Fund. For those of you who as yet have not renewed your membership, we hope you will take some time and do it now. We are very grateful in particular for the continued support of our life members. Many of them make significant annual contributions to the Land Trust, and we encourage all life members to continue to support the Land Trust financially. Your Land Trust has a broad spectrum of properties which benefit the people of Canton. We need your help, both in volunteer time and financially, to manage these properties well, and to add to the amount of protected land in Canton.

Eyes on the land and feet on the ground:  
Your Land Trust needs your help.

The Canton Land Trust is seeking some keen-eyed woodsmen and women to serve as stewards for parcels of land owned by the Trust (there are over 30 tracts in Canton totaling more than 1,300 acres). You would join one or more of Land Trust's Board members to informally oversee each woodlot and check on its condition from time to time. For example, you might be asked to walk the land, identify corner points and boundaries, take a few pictures for the annual photography contest and write a paragraph or two about your experiences. It's a great opportunity to explore Canton's open space, learn about the Land Trust's extensive trail system and take the kids for a hike in the woods. You'll likely see turkeys, deer and all sorts of birds and many other fleet-footed animals. Chances are you'll meet other local naturalists too. For information on the Land Trust or to learn more about land stewardship opportunities, please call Charlie DeWeese 693-3988, or Tim Lord 693-9393.

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### Board of Directors

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**Calendar**

Date	Time	Activity	Location	Contact Person	Phone
Thur, April 26	9 -12:30	Boundary Marking	Sun Wind & Woodland	Chris Williams	673-1425
Sat, April 28	9 - 1:00	Christmas Tree Planting	Smith Tree Farm	Ted Cowles	693-6340
Thur, May 3	9 -12:30	Boundary Marking	Sun Wind & Woodland	Betty Stanley	693-2074
Tue, May 8	5 - 7:30	Boundary Marking	Towpath - High St.	Charlie DeWeese	693-3988
Thur, May 10	9- 12:30	Trail Workshop	Swan Preserve	Betty Stanley	693-2074
Tues, May 15	5- 7:30	Boundary Marking	Korder/Bredahl	Charlie DeWeese	693-3988
Thur, May 17	5- 7:30	Trail Maintenance	Swan Preserve	Chris Williams	673-1425
Tues, May 22	5- 7:30	Pruning/Spring Cleanup	Mary Conklin's	Charlie DeWeese	693-3988
Thur, May 24	5- 7:30	Trail Maintenance	Swan Preserve	Chris Williams	673-1425
Sun, June 10	12:30-3:30	Tour of Ratlum Mt.	Smith Farm to Swan	Charlie DeWeese	693-3988
Sun, June 10	4 - 6:30	Annual Meeting & Picnic	Swan Preserve (Case St.)	Betty Stanley	693-2074
Sat, Jul 7	9- 1:00	Mowing/Trail work	Smith Tree Farm	Ted Cowles	693-6340
Sun, Aug 11	9- 1:00	Tree Pruning	Smith Tree Farm	Peter Lamb	693-4891