



**Canton Land
Conservation Trust**

Spring 2004

CANTON'S BLACK BEARS

In the Canton Land Conservation Trust's 1999 newsletter, a brief article on a few of Canton's "newer" woodland residents, including black bears, closed with the following sentences: "Will you see a bear in Canton this year? Although the odds are against it, one never knows where or when the next sighting will take place, but it could be in your backyard!"

Well, a lot has changed over the past five years. Our black bear population has grown considerably and there is no question that Canton is now home to an increasing number of bears, although it is difficult to estimate just how many bears may live within the limits of our town. This spring, the odds are good that the next black bear sighting will be tomorrow, if not today. This does not mean that your pets and/or children are in any danger as black bears are generally shy, reclusive creatures that are more afraid of you than you are of them. Nevertheless, it might be helpful to go over a few points on the natural history of the black bear, as well as a few suggestions that may help to keep bears away from your home.

Bears are just now awakening from their winter sleep. Although they are often in good condition when they awaken, they lose weight rapidly and spend most of their time searching for food. Although they are not active predators like bobcats or foxes, as opportunists they will eat anything that crosses their path. Bears are omnivorous and will feed on insects, including grubs, fruits and berries, seeds, nuts, frogs, fish, mice, carrion, and garbage. They are particularly fond of sweets and have been known to steal unprotected backpacks in search of candy bars and other camper delicacies. Agile climbers, they will climb trees for nuts, honey or even a quick nap. In Canton, however, their most likely prey is the backyard bird feeder.

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Backyard bird feeding has become a very popular activity over the past decade and feeders have proliferated throughout the Farmington Valley. Bears in this area have come to associate feeder poles with an easy source of food. Like other mammals, bears can be active during daylight hours and, if you live in a remote area or at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac, don't be surprised to come home from work one day to find your bird feeders on the ground. If there is too much daytime activity around your yard, bears adjust their behavior and feeders are frequently damaged at night when there is no one around. While bears will initially run off at the sound of a barking dog, they soon recognize an indoor dog poses no threat and will demolish your feeder as your dog continues to bark from inside the house. In addition to bird feeders, bears may also damage fruit trees, bee hives, trash cans and, in rare instances, domestic livestock from chickens and rabbits to sheep and goats.

In order to minimize bear damage, homeowners should consider removing food sources such as unprotected garbage cans and bird feeders. If possible, domestic stock should be enclosed at night. Once bears awaken, a decision must be made as to whether to continue to fill bird feeders. Some residents stop putting out suet, a favorite food for bears as well as woodpeckers, and bring sunflower feeders indoors at night. Other residents have, to this point, outwitted bears by hanging their feeders on elaborate pulley systems that can raise feeders thirty feet or more into the air. It remains to be seen whether such innovations will continue to work for long.

Although bears are generally afraid of people, they can lose this innate fear. Under no circumstances should bears be approached or coaxed with food. Bears that are intentionally fed in order to get that special snapshot or video come to associate people with food and serious problems can result. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection was forced to euthanize such a "problem" bear last year in Goshen when it broke into a home in search of food. Other bears have killed livestock. Fortunately, there have been no instances to this date of bears advancing upon people here in Connecticut. Nevertheless, this is a large, powerful wild animal and pets and younger children should not be left unattended in wooded areas. Older children should be instructed to come indoors or walk away slowly should a bear be sighted in the vicinity. Under no circumstances should bears be approached or chased, and obviously, bear cubs should be left alone.

Residents with concerns or questions about bears in Canton and the surrounding area may call Roaring Brook Nature Center (693-0263) or the Sessions Wood Wildlife Management Area (675-8130), a division of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

The American Chestnut Foundation recently held a meeting in Norfolk, Ct. Their "focus is to restore blight resistant chestnut trees to their original habitat." The Chestnut blight was found in New York City 100 years ago and perhaps had been introduced into the country 20 years before in New Jersey. As a result of the blight some 4 billion trees were lost. They grew from Georgia to Maine and from the Piedmont to the Ohio Valley.

Today there are still large chestnuts in Wisconsin, west of the blight area and seemingly still healthy. It was the dominant tree of the forest providing everything from fence posts, railroad ties, telegraph poles, caskets and lumber to food not only for people but also for livestock and wildlife. Because it blooms late, late frosts were not a problem so they were able to produce huge quantities of nuts. Some old fence rails that can be seen on Land Trust property were made from chestnut. It is extremely slow to rot. The tree grew almost as fast as a poplar, but unlike the poplar, it had only 30% water instead of the poplar's 70%. It was lighter and stronger than oak. It can sequester carbon so today would be helpful in pollution abatement.

The Foundation is hard at work trying to hybridize a Chestnut with the blight resistance of the Chinese Chestnut and the characteristics of the American Chestnut. Mature American Chestnuts averaged up to five feet in diameter, some even were ten feet in diameter, and were up to one hundred feet tall. To help the Foundation meet their goal they are asking for our help. The blight killed the chestnut trees in our forests, but the root systems were not affected and gamely continue to put up sprouts. Some of these sprouts actually can reach considerable size before the blight knocks them down. Should you in your hikes through the woods find some of these "survivor trees" which are large (a minimum 8" diameter at breast height) and accessible, the Foundation would like to know. They will need twig and leaf specimens to confirm the tree's identity.

Call the American Chestnut Foundation at 802-447-0110 or write them: PO Box 4044, Bennington, Vermont, 05201-4044.

Charlie and Rhonda DeWeese addressed the Land Trust Service Bureau's annual Land Trust Convocation this spring on the subject of Forest Stewardship Essentials. They relayed their own experiences and those of the Canton Land Trust with regard to property management and forest stewardship. Members of the other land trusts were very interested to hear about Canton's experience with forestry activities, as well as about the numerous children's activities on Land Trust properties, including Trailblazers and the annual Earth Day field trips for Cherry Brook Primary School children.

CLCT engages the services of a forester to help with proper management of its woodland properties. The Land Trust has also recently had a visit from UConn professor of wildlife ecology Jack Barclay, who has advised on how we can improve woodcock habitat at our Sun Wind & Woodland and Mary Conklin preserves. During his visit, a woodcock was flushed at Sun Wind & Woodland, so we have a good start.

DOUBLE YOUR MONEY!!

- **125% TO 200% THROUGH YOUR EMPLOYER**
- **100% WITH YOUR UNITED WAY CONTRIBUTION**
- **5% WITH SNET COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

Yes, you can potentially double your contribution to the Land Trust. If your employer has a Charitable Giving Program or a Foundation, your employer will potentially match all or a portion of your contribution to the Land Trust. Simply ask your HR department if this opportunity exists in your company. When you mail your contribution to the Land Trust, enclose the Program Match form that you will be given. We will do the rest.

Did you know that you can direct your United Way Contributions to the Land Trust? When you fill out the annual appeal form, indicate that you would like your contribution to go to the Land Trust. The United Way will do the rest.

And finally, the Land Trust is a participant in SBC's Community Connections program. SBC donates 5% of the total "All Distance" billing (based on in-state, out-of-state, international, and calling card charges) for those individuals with "All Distance" service who have indicated that they would like the Land Trust to be their designated recipient for the Community Connections program. If you have SBC "All Distance" service or switch to this service, inform SBC that you would like the Land Trust to be the designated recipient for Community Connections for your account. You can call SBC at 1-800-635-7638 and ask for Community Connections. Give the SBC representative your name, phone number and 3 digit code at the end of the account number on your bill; give them our name, the Canton Land Conservation Trust and our group Organization number- 3506. You can also sign up online; go to www.sbc.com/gen/general?pid=3409, or just go to www.sbc.com and search for "community connections".

Our address is on the last page of this newsletter. Our legal name is Canton Land Conservation Trust, Inc. Our tax ID is 23-7187569.

Any questions? Call our treasurer, Sara Campbell, at 860-722-5511.

Photo Contest

Take your best photographs in one of three categories: Land Trust property landscapes, Nature close-ups; and Canton images. Pictures should be submitted to Betty Stanley by September 1, 2004. Pictures will be returned after the contest, but we would like the right to use prize winners in future publications. Awards will be announced at Sam Collins Day.

BEARS AND THE CLCT

In the middle of March, on a cold, damp, and snowy morning, several members of the Land Trust were treated to a wonderful experience by Paul Rego, DEP Biologist, his assistants, and two conservation officers. A mother bear and her two cubs had been spotted on Land Trust property. It had been determined that the Ursus family should be checked out; a radio monitor collar put on Mom; and the cubs weighed, measured and tagged with micro chips. Everything that was to be done to the bears was carefully explained to the group of onlookers. This was a true Biology 101 course in bears: everything from the kind of tranquilizer to be used on the mother (if they were able to get close enough) to the extent of a female bear's territory.

Unfortunately, Mom ran off before there was an opportunity to tranquilize her. However, her two cubs were safe in their "den" which was nothing more than a low spot by a fallen trunk of a large tree. Mother had chewed or clawed some bark and wood from the trunk to make a sort of

bed; the cubs had been kept warm by their mother lying on them. She also is their sole source of food for the first few months. The cubs, one male, one female, were of average size -about six pounds - and had been born sometime in the beginning of January. They were in very good voice and were equipped with serious looking and very sharp claws, which they had no inclination to use. In fact one was very happy to be cuddled under one of the conservation officer's jackets while waiting to be inspected. The other was swaddled in a towel.

Bears start appearing from the middle of March to the first of April, depending on weather conditions. We are all going to have to get used to these new neighbors. According to Mr. Rego, the survival rate of cubs is very high, so the population will increase.

If you would like to see pictures of this "encounter" they will be on display at the Canton Public Library in May.

And don't worry: Mom returned as soon as the intruders left.

New Properties

CLCT has options to buy two substantial new properties, and is in the process of raising funds to do so. The Simsbury Land Trust has offered to assist us by purchasing a conservation easement on one of the properties. Nevertheless, the amount of money needed to complete these acquisitions is considerable, and we are actively pursuing other opportunities as well. Any assistance to the Land Acquisition Fund would be very timely.

THE TRAIL AT THE SWAN PRESERVE



We are highlighting this issue the trail at the Fred Swan Preserve. This trail was constructed in 2001 and 2002. It has been the site of the February Trailblazers hike and will be the location for a hike with Walt Landgraf this coming May 9.

The trail covers a total distance of 2 miles, it can be found on Case Street about 1/10th of a mile from the junction with Cherry Brook Road (Rte 179). There is a new parking lot that was constructed last fall.

Frederick R. and Bea Swan bequeathed 85 acres of forest land in North Canton to the Land Trust in

November 1999. A fifty-foot right of way provides access to the preserve from Case Street along the south boundary of the Swan family property at 39 Case St. The access trail into the preserve runs from the parking lot between two old stone walls that once provided a small-enclosed path to guide cattle to and from pasture.

A wide variety of wildflowers can be found on the property, and May is an excellent time to see them, as well as the numerous forest birds who nest there.

Generosity of our Friends and Neighbors

After Ski Sundown's very successful 2002-2003 ski season in its first year under new management, its new owner Bob Switzgable shared its success with the Canton Land Conservation Trust in the form of a very generous donation.

Doris Adams, is the sole remaining member in town of the no longer active Green Valley Garden Club, and has been in charge of their Canton Beautification Trust Fund. Since the Club and Trust have been inactive for a number of years, Doris wanted the fund to be used in an appropriate manner. Doris has generously given the money to the Canton Land Conservation Trust. It will be added to our Land Acquisition Fund so that it may help to preserve some of the Canton landscape that the members of the Green Valley Garden Club loved. Thank you Doris! All of us are most appreciative of this gift.

In the last newsletter we inadvertently left Sam Humphrey's name out of an article on the donation of an easement along Cherry Brook by Sam and his siblings. Thanks for your generosity, Sam.

Trailblazers Club

The Trailblazers Club has had a very successful second season, with 70 or more participants at each event. This year's schedule included an orienteering event, a tree and leaf identification workshop at Sweetheart Mountain, a Valentine's Day hike at the Swan Preserve and a hike and hayride at Sun Wind and Woodlands.

Congratulations to Coty Consic, complete all of the Canton Land special recognition and a Trailblazers, where Trailblazers & Woodlands trail and enjoyed a Cabin.



the first Trailblazer to successfully Trust Hiking Trails. Coty received sweatshirt at the March meeting of the and family members hiked the Sun Wind hayride and a cookout at the Capen

Coty is an 8 year old who attends the 2nd grade at Cherry Brook Primary School. Coty and his family have been hiking with the CLCT Trailblazers since the club began in 2002. Coty has many interests in addition to hiking. He likes to play soccer, he enjoys karate and he is an active Cub Scout.

Coty also likes to collect things. He has extensive collections of matchbox cars, key chains and rocks, among other things. Coty decided to put his passion for collecting to help in an environmental way when he started collecting trash to clean up the streets and trails. When he realized that the cans and bottles he found were actually worth something, he opened an account at the bank. He is now busy cleaning up Canton and is eager to see how much money he can deposit by the end of the year.

We are very proud of Coty and happy to have him as a valuable member of the Canton Land Trust Trailblazers.

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Calendar:

- **April and May – Wednesdays at 5 pm, trail work days. Call Betty Stanley for information. 693-2074.**
- **May – Trailblazers, details to be announced. Call Mary Ellen Mullins for information 693-2299.**
- **Saturday, May 8 – Valley Book Dinner Dance to benefit local Land Trusts at Blue Fox Golf Club 6-10 pm. Cocktails, buffet dinner and salsa music. Tickets \$50 or \$400 for table of 8. www.thevalleybook.com/openspace.**
- **Sunday, May 9 – Spring hike with Walt Landgraf at Swan Preserve 1 pm. The focus will be on wildflowers. Limited to 25 people Call Chris Williams for information and reservations 693-6142.**
- **Saturday, May 15 – Tree planting at Smith Tree Farm 9 am. Call Peter Lamb for information 693-4891.**
- **Sunday, June 6 – 4th Annual Hiking Tour of Ratlum Mountain, followed by Annual Meeting, both at Capen Cabin. The hike will traverse almost all of the Land Trust properties on the mountain. Hike at 1 pm, annual meeting and picnic at 4 pm. Call Charlie DeWeese 693-3988.**
- **September – Photography contest in conjunction with Sam Collins Day.**