



SINCE 1972



Spring/Summer 2024

CANTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

President’s Message: Motorized Vehicles are Prohibited

Ordinarily, I try to write this message with an upbeat tone, which is usually easy because there is so much positivity surrounding our land conservation efforts. Sadly, I must start with a disturbing report: In April we learned of damage to some of our trails by all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), also known as quads.

This isn’t unprecedented. A few years ago people riding quads tres-

passed on the Swan Preserve, but that seemed to be cured by adding some signage. We’ve occasionally had dirt bike riders use some of the Sweetheart Mountain trails, including one neighbor who constructed a dirt bike track in a portion of the Sweetheart property that didn’t have trails.

especially on sharp curves. Many of our trails, but especially Mary Conklin trails, are enticing to people interested in a calm walk through the woods. Noisy, motorized vehicles disturb the peace people seek and are anathema to a wildlife preserve. Some narrow trails wind through mountain laurel

patches, and the wide quads have damaged the vegetation.

Signs prohibiting motorized vehicles are posted, and someone attempted to remove one of those signs, in order to claim they didn’t know.

State Laws on ATV and Quad Use

Effective January 1, 2006, except where specifically allowed, riding an ATV on state or municipal property may result in charges of criminal trespass. (Public Act 05-234)

Connecticut does not have any public areas open to quads. Additionally, there are no state-managed areas open to dirt bikes.

Private Property

Individuals who operate off-road vehicles on private land other than their own property must carry written permission from the landowner, and all such vehicles must be registered with the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

Damage to Property

Damage to vegetation can result in fines, which can be as much as five times the replacement cost. In determining the amount of damages to be awarded to a land trust, the court shall consider the willfulness of the violation, the extent of damage done to natural resources, the appraised value of any trees or shrubs cut, damaged or carried away, any economic gain realized by the violator and any other relevant factors. (CONN. GEN. STAT. §52-560A)



We discovered that track when we restored the Blue and White Trails in the northern part of the property. We have occasionally seen evidence of motorized vehicle tracks on trails east of Breezy Hill Road, and there are undoubtedly other instances.

I think our membership knows we do not permit dirt bikes or quads on Land Trust property, since our primary mission is land conservation. We seek everyone’s help to ensure the general public knows all motorized vehicles are prohibited.

The most recent example involved multiple ATVs tearing up the trails at the Mary Conklin Preserve. This is upsetting for several reasons. These vehicles tear up the soft ground,

While many people know this is a prohibited activity, many may not realize that Connecticut state laws support Land Trusts. Damage to vegetation can result in fines, which can be as much as five times the replacement cost of the vegetation. CLCT has reported the damage to the police, who are supportive of ensuring no further destruction of the trails occurs.

Canton police have spoken to the people suspected of driving ATVs on Land Trust property, and we hope there won’t be a re-occurrence. Motorized vehicles of all kinds are prohibited on conservation land. The Land Trust is adding cameras and will prosecute.

By Phil Philbrick

“I’m bein’ followed by a moonshadow, moonshadow, moonshadow...”

– Cat Stevens



How lucky were we that the Canton Land Conservation Trust Full Moon Hike actually landed on the full moon date of February 24? And the weather cooperated with clear skies and breezy conditions as well as pleasant temperatures.

volunteers went back and lit the candles; not an easy task with a stiff breeze blowing.

Another team of volunteers set up inside the Smith Barn with food and beverages. Throughout the evening, Larry Smith manned the bonfire in a steel drum while groups gathered around chatting and laughing. Sparks flew in the air like fireflies. Eleanor Smith mingled and socialized among the crowd.



Many people hiking onto the Smith Farm following the luminaries witnessed the full moon rising over the trails and woods.

This year, an estimated 300 people trekked in to enjoy the winter night and social atmosphere. The slightly muddy trails did not slow them down.

Earlier in the day an intrepid group of 16 volunteers positioned 400 luminaries along 2 miles of trails. Luminaries are flame retardant paper bags filled with sand or snow and a candle that burns for 10 hours. The team created both a long trail and a short trail loop. After the bags were placed on the trails,

At the end of the evening, a small sweep team of five volunteers returned to the trails, extinguished the luminaries and removed the bags.

A big shout out of thanks to the luminary setup and sweep crew.

By Harold Mullins

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Dry Bridge Road Property Donation

In the summer of 2023, a professor at the University of Las Vegas Nevada, Martin Schiller, reached out to the Canton Land Conservation Trust to discuss a potential donation of property. While he now lived in Las Vegas, he had previously lived for several years in Canton. He had owned a house with an adjacent vacant lot. He sold the house when he moved to Las Vegas but held onto the vacant lot. He now has a startup company in the Las Vegas area specializing in genetic research and decided it was time to donate his Canton property to CLCT.



The 4.5 acre property is located at 31 Dry Bridge, not far from the Roaring Brook Nature Center. The high point on this property is part of Connecticut’s trap-rock ridge

which contains habitats of “special concern.” Just north of the property but not contiguous, is our Onion Mountain Preserve.

By Phil Philbrick

Geocache at the Sweetheart Mountain Trails

Be part of the world's largest treasure hunt

The Canton Land Conservation Trust is excited to announce that the Sweetheart Mountain trails have officially become part of the world's largest treasure hunt – and we invite you to join the many Canton residents already participating.

What is Geocaching?

The treasure hunt is called “geocaching.” This global game began on May 3, 2000, only one day after the U.S. government stopped intentionally reducing the accuracy of GPS signal information from its satellites available to the public. The practice, called “selective availability,” had been in place for national security interests. On May 3, a researcher in Beavercreek, Oregon hid a bucket in the woods and posted the coordinates online for others to find using their handheld GPS devices. Two separate individuals located the bucket within three days. Soon, thanks to the power of the Internet, people were hiding “stash-es” which later became “caches” all over the country and sharing the coordinates online.

Millions of people play this “secret” game worldwide by using a free app available at geocaching.com. After downloading the app and creating a username, you can look at a digital map and see the hidden caches, including dozens in Canton.

Each hidden cache on the map has a data page that contains information critical to your search. The individual who hid the cache typically provides parking information, attributes about its size and whether the cache is suitable for kids or wheelchair accessible and when it was last located. The caches found

on Canton properties range in size from that of a mailbox to one that can fit in the palm of your hand.

After selecting a cache to find on the geocaching.com app, you press the “navigate” button that will tell you the direction and distance from the cache in miles and feet. Your phone will vibrate once you get within 30 feet of a cache. If you still cannot find the hidden



cache, there is often a hint that can help narrow your search. While geocaches are always hidden, and in some cases very cleverly hidden, they are never buried underground.

Most geocaches contain a log sheet to record your username and date you found the cache. Or, you can record it in the app. Others contain small trinkets you can trade in exchange for an object you leave behind.

First CLCT-approved geocache on Sweetheart Mountain trails

The first “official” geocaches permitted by the CLCT were hidden on the Sweetheart Mountain trails by my family – town residents and supporters of the Canton Land Conservation Trust. The Geocaches can be found on geocaching.com/geocache/GCANAFB_sweetheart-mountain-1 and geocaching.com/geocache/GCANAG5_sweetheart-mountain-2.

My family found our first geocache years ago on the trails at Roaring Brook Nature Center. My wife, Jessica, and I love to hike. We thought it would be easier to get our three kids to go out more often if they knew they'd be participating in a treasure hunt along the way.

Guidelines for geocaches on CLCT properties

The Canton Land Conservation Trust has developed a policy and guidelines for hiding caches on CLCT properties. If you plan to hide a cache, the authorization will be considered through a review process, which begins with the receipt of your geocaching request. You can request a copy of the Geocache Policy and Guidelines via the Contact Us web page at canton-landtrust.org. To hide a cache, please follow these best practices:

1. Ask the CLCT for permission.

Although more than a dozen geocaches are already hidden on CLCT properties, you must ask the Land Trust for permission to hide a cache before you do it.

2. Safety first. Never hide your cache in a place that endangers others – like the side of a cliff or beyond “No Trespassing” signs, etc. Caches should be hidden just a few feet off trails and not require extensive bushwhacking through brush.

3. Be respectful of others. Most of your neighbors simply want to hike and enjoy the trails without engaging in a treasure hunt. (Geocachers affectionately call these people “muggles.”) Caches should not be placed near people's homes.

4. Maintain your cache. The app allows you to report missing, waterlogged or damaged caches to the user who hid it. If you plan to hide a cache, it is your responsibility to maintain it.

“The mission of the Canton Land Conservation Trust is to acquire, preserve and protect land of scenic, natural or historical value within the town of Canton,” CLCT President Phil Philbrick says. “It is also part of our mission to promote public awareness and enjoyment of the land. We are happy to embrace geocaching if it means people are finding their way to these properties and recognizing the value of the trust's efforts.”

By Eric Gjede

26 Bird Species Seen or Heard on Spring Walk

The morning of Sunday, May 5 dawned gray and dismal, and the weather forecast was not optimistic. At 7 a.m., it was a far cry from the beautiful morning of the previous day. However, it was not yet raining, and eight hardy souls met Canton Land Conservation Trust board member and Roaring Brook Nature Center Director Jay Kaplan in the Sun, Wind and Woodland parking lot for our annual bird walk to the “bunny cut” and nearby woodlands in search of spring migrants. After hearing birds like gray catbird, song sparrow and northern cardinal around the parking lot, we headed toward the “bunny cut.”

The “bunny cut” is a 10-acre area that was clear-cut in the winter of 2016-2017 in order to provide habitat for the declining New England cottontail, and for what are known as “early successional species.” These birds nest in brush lands and young forest habitats. Although we were not successful in attracting the cottontails, during the first few years following the cutting, this area became a mecca for birds that thrive in brushy areas, a habitat that has decreased in Canton as forests have matured and other formerly open areas have been developed for housing. Now, almost eight years later, the formerly brushy area is growing up into a young forest, and birds like field sparrow likely no longer find it attractive.

That is not to say the “bunny cut” is totally lacking in birds. While their numbers may be down over prior years, our group was still successful finding a couple of prairie warblers and eastern towhees; birds that prefer this kind of habitat. How long these birds will continue to nest here as the forest matures remains to be seen. At one time, we could walk through the “bunny cut,” but the thick growth now makes this impossible, so we followed a new trail

We have a new trail

What: The Bunny Cut Trail was designed for cross-country skiing but is suitable for hiking.

Where: Sun, Wind and Woodland Preserve, starting at the parking area and terminating at the Tom Perry trail. It is just over 0.4 miles

When: Completed and opened February 26, 2024

Who: Jon Peck, Bob Evenski, Roger Frigon, Phil Philbrick

Blazes: Blue

Why: Trails designed for hiking-only can be relatively narrow, and that description applies to sections of the Tom Perry Trail. Cross-country skiers like to have slightly wider trails, especially on the down slopes. The Bunny Cut Trail was developed as an alternative to the Tom Perry Trail. It starts from the same parking area. Head out the northwest corner as if you were planning to do the Sun, Wind and Woodland Trail (yellow blazes) but a few yards after starting, turn left and follow the blue blazes. The initial portion of the trail



hugs the southern boundary of the “bunny cut” (hence the name). Make sure to stay on the edge of the field, especially if hiking in the summer to avoid disturbing nesting birds.

The trail then enters the woods and follows an old logging trail, which helped make it easier to have a wider trail. After initially starting west, the trail turns south and joins the Tom Perry Trail. Cross-country skiers can continue a few yards along the Tom Perry Trail and then follow an unblazed trail marked by black dashed lines on our Avenza maps. Continue to where the Tom Perry Trail and Breezy Hill Farm trails coincide.

along the southern edge of the cut. This trail was put in for cross-country skiers and it makes an ideal pathway between the “bunny cut” and the adjacent mature woods. Where two habitats meet is often the most productive area, one that will hold the greatest variety of birds, and this was certainly the case. In addition to the towhees, prairie warblers and a pair of obliging yellow-bellied sapsuckers on the side of the one mature tree in one section of the “bunny cut,” we were able to lure in several warbler species that provided us with nice, although brief, looks near the tops of the towering white pines. These included pine, black-throated green, black-and-white, and Blackburnian warblers. This last warbler is sometimes known as “firethroat” for the brilliant orange coloring of the throat.

Continuing into the woods on this new blue-blazed trail, we eventually connected with the red-blazed trail and headed back through the forest to the parking area. In the woods, we were treated to red-bellied woodpeckers, black-capped chickadees and tufted titmice. While we heard a number of ovenbirds, a warbler that nests on the ground, but sings from anywhere, we were unable to see one. It was now beginning to rain, and our group leader felt it might be best to call it a morning. Concluding our walk in the parking lot at 8 a.m., we had covered just over half a mile in an hour. A total of 26 bird species were seen and heard on the walk, three more species than had been found the previous year. It was now time to head home for a warm beverage.

By Jay Kaplan

Take a Book. Share a Book. Little Free Library Comes to Swan Preserve

You have probably seen these small, enclosed bookcases throughout town. If not, one can be found on Main Street in Collinsville, at Cherry Brook Primary School on Barbourtown Road in Canton Center and now on Canton Land Conservation Trust property at Swan Preserve in North Canton, thanks to a Land Trust member who came up with the idea.

A Little Free Library is a charming “Take a Book, Share a Book” free book exchange. These miniature libraries come in various shapes and sizes, but the most common version is a small, wooden box filled with books.

The official opening at Swan Preserve was held April 28. It was

attended by CLCT President Phil Philbrick, CLCT board members and 20 others interested in the latest little library addition that encompasses a network of 175,000 boxes in 121 countries. CLCT member Sandy Trionfani led the effort.

Sandy started this library because she loves to share reading and books with friends. She says being a steward of a Little Free Library is a perfect way to do this. Also, she believes the location in the Swan Preserve is ideal in that it hopefully will invite local folks to visit our preserves and support our great CLCT properties.

Anyone can participate: borrow a book, read it and then return it



when finished. Alternatively, it can be replaced with another book, perpetuating the cycle of literary generosity. Little Free Library book-sharing boxes are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and are freely accessible to all. How nice would it be to read in the serenity of the woods or with the sounds of the babbling brook?

By Jeanne Lecrenier Day

Invasive Species Page Added to CLCT Website



The Canton Land Conservation Trust, with the support of the Canton Conservation Commission, published an Invasive Species Page on our website on Feb. 7, 2024.

The group worked together over several months to define what an invasive species is and to come up with a short list of common invasive species that are

likely to be in your own backyard or the forests around you. The page serves as a jumping off point to other more detailed websites with more in-depth information. We can all help by learning how to identify and control invasive species around our homes and community.

From our home page choose the **What We Do** menu selection and then click on Invasive Species 2024.

By Holly Hambleton

Two Common Invasive Plants with Yellow Flowers to Eradicate from Your Gardens



Lesser celandine, (*Ficaria verna*)

April This ephemeral is only apparent in the spring and dormant the rest of the year. Shiny, kidney-shaped leaves and glossy yellow flowers. Creeping habit from 3 to 6 inches tall. Reproduces by bulblets, tuberous roots, and seeds. Dig and destroy all parts of this plant.

May-July Foliage, 4-petal yellow flowers and seed pods persist into the summer. Dull, deeply lobed leaves with wavy edges. Bright yellow-orange sap from broken stems and roots. Plant height from 12 to 40 inches tall. Reproduces by seed in long green capsules. Easy to pull.



Greater celandine, (*Chelidonium majus*)

Quarter Century Spotlight Spring 1999



1999 was a signature year for the Canton Land Conservation Trust. The state Department of Environmental Protection, now known as DEEP, awarded the CLCT a significant grant to help acquire the Sun, Wind and Woodland Preserve. This property remains the Land Trust's largest, single acquisition. This property forms the centerpiece of many of our outdoor activities. The Tom Perry Trail starts at the Sun, Wind and Woodland parking area and connects to the Breezy Hill Farm Trails. The Sun, Wind and Woodland Trail heads north from the same parking lot and continues over to the Taylor–Moses Trail as well as several trails on the east

side of Breezy Hill Road. It's a favorite spot for cross-country skiers (when we have snow, of course). The so-called "bunny cut" was created to encourage the return of New England cottontails, as well as other animal species, especially birds, favoring young forests. For that reason, it's a common destination for birdwatching hikes.

This newsletter also announced the development of the Ray Smith Trail on the Mary Conklin Preserve. The trail was named after Ray Smith, who served as the CLCT VP from 1988 to 1991 and the president from 1992 through 1995.

By Phil Philbrick

Half Century Spotlight Spring 1974



The 1974 newsletter was only the Canton Land Conservation Trust's third newsletter. It featured photos of the first two acquisitions by the Land Trust.

The first acquisition should be well known to our membership. It is our 1-acre property across the street from Cherry Brook Pizza & Grocery donated by Charlotte Craig. Years ago, bluebird houses were added to the property. More recently, we reintroduced native flowering plants to the property. It also holds two young, hybrid chestnut trees, part of an initiative to reintroduce the virtually extinct American chestnut tree to the area.

In addition to her inaugural donation, Charlotte Craig joined the Land Trust board in its fourth year, serving for 13 years from 1975 to 1987.

The second acquisition is much less known, unless you're adventurous enough to traverse the deeply rutted, partially paved Meadow Road, a farm road that connects Cherry Brook Road to West Road. About halfway across, there is a 4-acre parcel on the south side of Meadow Road, where Cherry Brook meanders southwest through a wetlands area. This property was generously donated to the land trust by Mr. and Mrs. James Potter.

Jim Potter was a member of the original board formed in 1972 and continued as a board member through 1976. He served as the Land Trust president in 1975.

Both properties remain preserved as open space and a natural habitat for birds, flora and fauna.

By Phil Philbrick

Smith Tree Farm



Dec. 2, 2023 – Annual tree sale

This event is always a good time to catch up with members who come out every year for our less-than-perfect trees. Even with the limited number of trees available there were still some standout trees and happy members. Volunteers provided hot cocoa and cookies.



April 23, 2024 – Christmas trees planted on a chilly spring day

A crew of 16 volunteers helped plant the next generation of Christmas trees at the Smith Tree Farm. The bare-root trees were larger this year, and consisted of 100 Douglas Fir and 100 Blue Spruce. We welcomed some new volunteers to the crew who have committed to help mow and water over the summer. The new trees look great, and we have every reason to believe that they will thrive. They were well planted.

Cabin at Pratt Preserve Gets Much Needed Repairs this Spring



Nov. 12, 2023 – Cabin condition before repairs



May 18, 2024 – Work party spruces up after tree work, new roof and outdoor security lights



June 2, 2024 – CLCT annual meeting, BBQ and picnic

The summer cabin on the Pratt Preserve was in need of a new roof, and some large hemlock trees nearby were endangering the structure. The Land Trust contracted out the two jobs. Once there was access to the property, Jules Poirier replaced the roof and Dexter Cheney cut down the trees. In April, Land Trust Director John Pech helped restore electrical service to the cabin. Directors installed motion-activated lights to alert neighbors to intruders and removed and disposed of years of accumulated debris from around the foundation.

In preparation for our annual meeting a crew of 18 volunteers raked and swept the grounds while being careful to save the Lady Slippers that were in bloom. Crews trimmed vegetation encroaching into two driveways.

After the June 2 meeting, the Board of Directors ushered in summer with a BBQ for Land Trust members. Land Trust Director Sarah Faulkner led an early morning bird walk for families and people took self-directed hikes before the meeting.

Hike Report

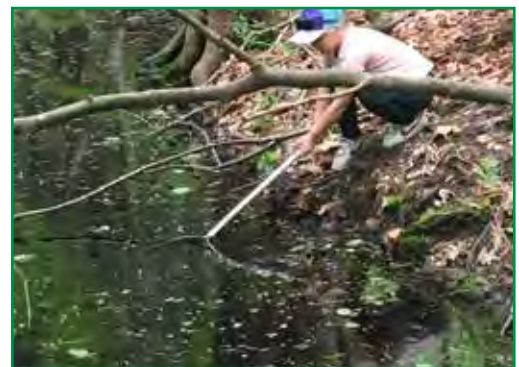
April 6, 2024 – Spring YogaCHI Hikes

YogaCHI instructor MaryEllen Mullins led morning and afternoon hikes at the Mary Conklin Sanctuary. She encouraged participants to tune into their surroundings, become aware of what is above and below and feel the effects of the rising yang energy of spring.

May 19, 2024 – Vernal Pool Hike at Uplands Preserve

Terri Kucia led a hike to see what life was emerging in the seasonal vernal pools on the Canton Land Trust's Uplands Preserve.

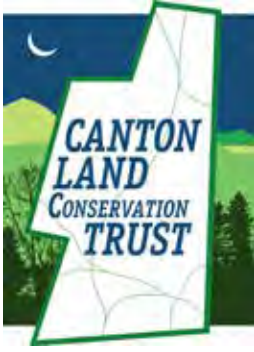
"Terri did an easy paced walk on the trail. The highlight was stopping at a vernal pool and using nets to catch tadpoles. Along the trail, Terri pointed out a stone wall and asked why was there some very large trees growing with some much smaller trees. All hikers walked past a Rat Snake resting along the blue trail; but it was the youngest hiker who saw the snake and reported it. Hikers were encouraged to now or at a later date



walk the longer white or yellow trails. And we were reminded to watch out for poison ivy that might be growing at the trailhead.

Upon returning home, grandma, dog and grandchildren walked to an intermittent stream to compare to the vernal pool, and decided to walk back to the vernal pool in early fall."

As reported by Judy Hinman



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CLCT Properties Summary

Property Protected: approximately 2,100 acres
Added in 2024: 4.5 acres
Trails: 44 trails; 26 miles
Added in 2024: 1 trail; 0.4 miles

DONATE to CLCT

Canton Land Conservation Trust continues to encourage and accept donations by check.



CLCT also accepts credit card payments for membership and donations over \$20.

Website: CantonLandTrust.org

Facebook page:

[Canton Land Conservation Trust](#)

Thanks to your donations, membership renewals and volunteer time, CLCT continues to protect land and create and maintain trails for all to enjoy.

Take Action; Become a Volunteer

Our many activities, all done by volunteers, require people.

Our direct link is cantonlandtrust.org/time-and-talent