



THE CLINTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

TRUST TOPICS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE CLINTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

P. O. BOX 121, CLINTON, CT 06413

www.clintonlandtrust.org

JUNE, 2007

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Kenneth McDonnell

The Clinton Land Conservation Trust was established in 1967 by a group of volunteers dedicated to the preservation of our natural environment. When they began their efforts they only had a few acres of salt marsh to monitor. Now, forty years later, the Land Trust has grown to include miles of walking trails and many hundreds of acres of salt meadows, wetlands and forests. Despite the passage of time and the growth in our stewardship responsibilities, we still manage the Trust and all its properties through the efforts of our volunteers. This year, in celebration of the Trust's past, present and future, we are making a special effort to reach out to everyone in the Town of Clinton.

The efforts of our volunteers this year have been tremendous. As you can see by all the past and planned activities summarized in this newsletter, our current volunteers are reaching out in all directions to raise awareness about the Land Trust's present responsibilities and needs and our objectives for the future.

It is always risky to attempt to acknowledge and thank people who have exerted extraordinary efforts on behalf of any organization. There are always a few who may be unwittingly overlooked and for that I apologize in advance. Nevertheless, here are a few examples of names that immediately come to my mind as leaders in our joint volunteer efforts on behalf of the Land Trust.

Sally Heffernan, our outreach committee chairman, has been instrumental in organizing various events and educational programs sponsored by the Land Trust. Diana Byrne, our newsletter editor has put together a fantastic brochure that we intend to use for our membership and fundraising campaign this year. Frank Byrne, a board member and land management committee chairman and Dana Whitney, our new vice president, have worked together organizing and preparing for monthly Saturday work days that have resulted in miles of newly blazed hiking trails in areas that were previously inaccessible.

I hope that all the efforts you see in this newsletter and the ongoing work of our volunteers inspires you to become a member of the Land Trust. You do not have to be a board member to participate in our environmental stewardship efforts. Even if you cannot find the time to work on a trail or monitor and clean up one of our properties, a monetary contribution will be put to good use. Become a part of Clinton's environmental future.



CLCT sponsored beach excursion — looking for horseshoe crabs at the Clinton Town Beach

CLCT CELEBRATES ITS 40th ANNIVERSARY

The CLCT Board decided to put forth both funds and volunteer effort to make 2007 a special year devoted to celebrating the 40th anniversary. Under the energetic guidance of Board member Sally Heffernan meetings were held throughout the winter to plan the year's activities.

The main objectives of the 40th Anniversary plans are:

- To celebrate the past successes and achievements of the Trust since 1967
- To increase the local visibility of the Trust by more widely publicizing its mission and by disseminating information about the lands and trails currently managed
- To increase the number of people actively involved in the affairs of the Trust by expanding the membership, encouraging members to volunteer their time and promoting more trail use by members and the public in general

An ambitious calendar of events has been planned and much has already been achieved in terms of public

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40th ANNIVERSARY

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outreach and trail publicity. A brief summary of events so far...

- Early in 2007 **Lou Bougie completed a fascinating and informative video which he wrote and narrated** explaining the history and achievements of the Trust over the last 40 years. The DVD covers a lot of history including the story of the first group of Clinton residents and Trust members who spent week-ends with their families smashing glass- in the very early days when re-cycling seemed eccentric! The money they raised went to fund land purchases. But the energy they displayed inspired Ethel Peters to leave funds in her estate which were used to purchase the magnificent Peters Memorial Woods. The video (DVD) will be shown on public access and available to the public in the fall.
- Please **check out our website** at www.clintonlandtrust.org. It is awesome! Thanks to everyone who has helped with this project, particularly John Pease of Networks Plus in Clinton and Judy Postemsky. Now anyone can find out about trust work days, events, trail directions and view exciting photographs from the comfort of their desktop.
- A **new informational brochure** identifying the Trusts work and goals has been written and printed and will be mailed to all Clinton residents later in the year. Current members are being mailed a copy with this newsletter. Diana Byrne put together this brochure and wants to thank every one for their contributions, photographs and support. Thanks also to Essex Printing who donated \$300.00 towards our printing expenses and to everyone helping with the mailing process.
- On March 18th CLCT hosted a very successful **meeting of local Land Trust leaders**, courtesy of David Adams of Smith Barney in Essex. Representatives from the towns of Old Saybrook, Madison, Chester and Branford, listened to a short presentation by a speaker from the CT Land Trust Alliance and then each group talked for a while about the recent concerns and achievements of their own Trust. Our Chairman Ken McDonnell moderated a very open and lively debate. While every town varied in specific local land issues many common areas of concern were discussed including obtaining grants, motivating volunteers and maintaining properties. Hopefully more meetings like this will take place as

Trusts can learn a great deal from each other. Thanks to Mike Houde , Larry Ouellette and Sally Heffernan for planning this event.

- On March 24th the Trust put together a **dynamic table at the annual Clinton Expo**. We were very hi-tech in our presentation- which encouraged many people to stop by and look at the new video or the website and pick up information. New trail maps and brochures were handed out. Thanks to George for setting up the technology and to all who helped man the booth that day- Mike, Sally, Diana, Frank, Jane and Larry.
- Using the artistic pen and ink drawings of long time member Bert Godwin we have been able to print a set of beautiful **note cards depicting local flora**. These are for sale, at a cost of \$10.00, in sets of 8 and can be purchased at the Clinton Historical Society, Sarba's Fine Art gallery and the UPS store in town -or by calling Sally Heffernan at 669 5276. All proceeds go directly to fund Land Trust work. Sally came up with this creative fundraising opportunity and the Trust is delighted to pay tribute in this way to the many years Bert and his wife Ginny spent improving Trust properties and cataloguing our natural resources with diligence and imagination.

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Published periodically for the members of The Clinton Land Conservation Trust, Inc., P. O. Box 121, Clinton, CT 06413

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kenneth McDonnell, President

Elizabeth Shea, Treasurer

Jane Southern, Secretary

Frank Byrne

Michael Castiglioni

Sally Heffernan

Robert Herlihy

Michael Houde

Lawrence Ouellette Jr.

Judith Postemsky

George Schaedler

Dana Whitney

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Membership Categories:

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Business \$40; Individual Life \$100

Family Life \$175

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Girl Scouts enjoy Habitat cupcakes, courtesy of Patty and Courtney Venter, after cleaning trails on Taylor Ridge

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

The Clinton Land Conservation Trust has a strongly held belief in educating and inspiring children with respect and love for their natural world. They are, after all, the guardians to whom we will turn over this land.

With this philosophy in mind the Trust has been active this year with many youth and family groups.

• THE 5TH ANNUAL PEEPER PROWL

The 5th Annual peeper prowl was held on April 21st 2007 and on a clear, starry night about 30 children and their excited parents arrived at the Indian River Park and Recreation Building. Thanks to John Picard and Chuck Annicelli they were able to get to know what creatures they might find outside later that night. Families were able to handle turtles and snakes and looked at a video before heading out with flashlights to the vernal pools on the other side of the park.

Knee deep in the pools John and Chuck introduced the group to an extraordinary variety of peeper frogs, water beetles, salamanders, leeches and embryonic tadpoles in their frog spawn. It was an amazing glimpse into a night-time world of activity and much fun was had by all. Thank you to John and Chuck for leading this adventure and to new volunteer Dana Skidmore for advertising and setting up this activity with the help of Sally.



Getting to know a painted turtle before The Peeper Prowl

• THE MORGAN ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB

In May Board member Mike Houde renewed our connection with this group of high school students interested in the environment. During a meeting of the Morgan students Environmental Club Mike explained what we do, outlined our role in resource conservation in Clinton and told them about the website. Led by their advisor Mr. Ali Izadi, a science teacher at Morgan, this group has helped with many trust projects including some very hard work on the newer part of the trails in the Jessie Buell forest. Thank you, Mike for taking time for this.

• PIERSON 4TH GRADERS ENJOY A DAY AT THE BEACH

As a further outreach project Board member Frank Byrne arranged with teachers at the Pierson School (grades 4 and 5) to provide an educational experience, courtesy of Land Trust volunteers, centered around a walking trip to the Town Beach at the end of Waterside Lane. We are lucky to have such an interesting coastal habitat in our town and CLCT has been a big part of preserving marsh and coastal wetland in Clinton.

The amazing weather on Tuesday & Thursday in the final week of May helped get everyone in the right frame of mind for exploring the beach, its wildlife and ecology. All of the 4th graders from Pierson were able to walk down Waterside lane and take part in a 'coastal ecology excursion', planned by the CLCT. In the Town's gazebo at the Clinton beach the students met up with Board member Mike Houde who introduced them to the majestic osprey that nest in the Hammock River marsh. They witnessed the feeding patterns of these birds and also saw the female tending to her newborn chicks. °

After learning about the osprey, students joined marine biologist and Land Trust volunteer, Dana Skidmore, to study the sand-marsh ecology in this location. With buckets, nets, and beach seines they became true scientists, collecting all sorts of critters! They learned about carnivorous mud snails, the difference between a ribbed mussel and a blue mussel, the adaptations of a hermit crab, and compared a *dead* green crab to the *molt* of a green crab. They enjoyed noting the difference of a snowy egret vs. a Great egret and learned that cormorants dry their wings atop pilings in the harbor. The highlight of both days was witnessing a pair of horseshoe crabs mating (or just attached and *waiting* to mate) in the shallow waters. Each child got to hold the "living fossil" and relish the fact that it was harmless!

Who knows what seeds may be sown in these young minds from a day like this exploring the natural world. Thanks to Mike and Dana for giving up a big chunk of their week to these presentations.



Pierson students listen to Mike Houde explaining the life cycle of the magnificent osprey

MEMBERSHIP – 2007

Grateful thanks to our new Secretary Jane Southern, who took on the daunting task of updating and revising our membership rolls. We now have an accurate list of paid up members. Our current membership stands at 223, of which 64 are life time members. Research showed that in 1971 the Trust had 285 members and in 1983 the number was as low as 68. Surrounding Land Trusts have had similar difficulties with fluctuating membership and varying degrees of volunteer commitment.

Now we have an accurate list of members, E mail addresses and those interested in volunteering. The Board wishes to increase member involvement in Trust projects and hopes that members will continue to support our conservation work and join in planned activities.

Membership dues will now be solicited annually, towards the end of the year, for the following calendar year. Any contributions received at other times will be put towards the general fund. This year we will send out a town wide mailing of our new brochure with the hopes that it will generate an increase in membership.

HELP WANTED!

A Land Trust such as ours here in Clinton is only as strong as its volunteers. The Board of Directors meets monthly to direct the efforts of the Trust but is only a group of 13 people and needs help in many areas. If you have some spare time, please consider getting involved.

Specific projects in need of some member support and or initiative include:

- Making wooden trail signs and repair to existing trail signs...Contact Mike Houde 669 -2466
- Repair and maintenance of Osprey nests...Contact Lou Bougie at 669 -7538
- Inserting envelopes in mailers etc ...contact Jane Southern at jrsouth@earthlink.net
- Land improvement and maintenance:
 1. New footbridge needed at Peters Woods
 2. Spreading wood chips and clearing weeds at Lars Fagin sanctuary on Liberty St
 3. Meadow project at Jessie Buell Forest needs a coordinator
 4. Trail days on the 2nd Saturday of each month from 8.00-10.00am...contact Frank Byrne at fbyrne@snet.net
- Help in Sept with photographic display in Henry Carter Hull Library. Contact Sally at 669 -5276
- Assistance with maintaining and entering information on our website and with general publicity. Contact Judy Postemsky at franceskapost@snet.net
- Help with organizing kayak/canoe trip in Sept. Contact Larry Ouellette at 669-4585



Girl Scouts work in Jesse Buell Forest

LAYING TRAILS AND MAPPING LAND TRUST BOUNDARIES

Board member Dana Whitney tramped the woods all winter and has done an outstanding job continuing to mark new trails in the Taylor Ridge part of the Jessie Buell Forest, Chittenden Hill and Kenilworth Forest properties. He has also performed miracles in finding boundary markers and gently explaining to land owners where their property ends and CLCT land begins. Land owners abutting Trust property are usually very supportive of passive recreation such as walking trails and are encouraged to become partners in keeping land areas cleaned up and free of litter and debris.

Dana's efforts, coupled with those of the Land Management group led by Frank Byrne have opened up extensive new trails for public use. Thanks to the many volunteers who have helped with this work.

Trail maps are available on-line.



Girl Scouts after clearing trails on Taylor Ridge

LAND TRUST SPONSORED EVENTS PLANNED FOR LATER THIS YEAR INCLUDE:

JULY : SCOTT TUCKER'S EXPEDITION NEW ENGLAND

CLCT is co-sponsoring, with the friends of the Henry Carter Hull Library, a children's summer activity with Connecticut Naturalist Scott Tucker. A Public Interest Television program will be made on one of the CLCT properties emphasizing local flora and fauna. Scott Tucker's *Expedition New England* is a cable TV show designed for families, that allows viewers to discover the amazing environment we call home. Ten Clinton families (with kids ages 5 and older) can be on Scott's TV show as he leads a group through Peter's Memorial Woods to film an episode. For more information on this unique opportunity go to <http://www.hchllibrary.org/kids/kids.php> and view the summer reading program flyer, or stop in at the library.

SEPTEMBER : KAYAK/CANOE TRIP

A CLCT kayak/canoe trip is in the works to showcase the new Hammonasset River Recreation Corridor. Board member Larry Ouelette has been working on this project, a joint cooperative venture with the towns of Madison and Killingworth. We are planning on getting families out on the water to enjoy the last of the summer and celebrate the tremendous resource that the Hammonasset River represents in terms of wild life habitat and recreation. More details will be in the local paper and on the website.

OCTOBER : PHOTOGRAPHIC SHOW

A photographic celebration of the beautiful and unique natural features of many Clinton Land Trust properties is booked for October in the Town Library. Sally and Diana reviewed hundreds of incredible photographs taken over the years by Trust members. About a dozen photographs representing the spectrum of Trust properties have been selected and will be displayed for visitors.



Winter in the Jessie Buell forest



Kayaking to Cedar Island

CT TRAILS DAY A GREAT SUCCESS ON JUNE 2ND, 2007

Connecticut Trails Day, part of a State wide annual event, was led in Clinton this year by John Picard in The Jesse Buell Forest, which we entered from Cream Pot Rd Parking area. John, who many of you know from his work on the Peeper Prowl, took a small group on a tour of Bluebird houses he has installed and maintained in the Jesse Buell Forest.

John has an extensive knowledge of local birds, plants and animals living in the Jesse Buell Forest and we could have listened to him for hours on the subject. He explained the decline and then the rise of the Bluebird population in this area and also talked about the breeding, feeding and nurturing habits of these brightly colored, cavity nesters. These stunning and vibrant blue feathered birds are not to be confused with the larger, more common and very noisy blue-jay.

John also talked about the making of Bluebird houses and the reasons for the use of PVC pipe, critter guards and proper door and hole construction. Sometimes, the construction is so appealing that Bluebirds are chased out by other birds and small animals, giving John extra housecleaning chores.

A number of families and other members attended this walk and we would like to thank John for his continuing support of our educational programs. As a final note, it is also encouraging that most of the Bluebird houses put up by Eagle Scout Scott Loescher in 2006 were in active use this year.

And finally, as a fitting conclusion to all this positive activity...a quote suggested by Lynabeth Mays – our ex Secretary and loyal supporter of Conservation in all forms. From the Chekov play Uncle Vanya ;

“...Every time I drive by a stand of trees that I persuaded the owners to spare, or hear the breeze at night in young trees I planted myself, I realize that I can do something..., and if a thousand years from now, people are a little happier, then it's partly because of me.”

Anton Chekov was a doctor and a conservationist who wrote over a century ago. We hope that 100 years later we may be doing a little to merit his approval.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE EVERY 2ND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH

8.00-10.00am...all are welcome.

See website for location of each month's project

www.clintonlandtrust.org

Maintenance, clearing and tidying trails as well as the cutting of new trails has benefited greatly from regularly scheduled work days. These mornings- 2 hours only- have been well attended by Board members and new volunteers, who have learned about them from the paper or by going to our website. Thanks to Frank Byrne and Dana Whitney for all their organizational efforts and for lending their tools! **Here is a brief outline of what has been achieved since November:**

November 11th 2006 We began work trying to finish trails in the Jesse Buell Forest - trails extend from Cream Pot Rd to Iron Works Rd via the extraordinary rocky outcrops of the Taylor Ridge. Lisa Richard also organized Clinton Girl Scout Troop 2809 to give a hand to the regular group of volunteers and the girls made wildlife piles with fallen brush and branches. Jeff and Patty Venter, who live nearby, left refreshments for everyone afterwards in the creative form of cupcakes with pretzel stick wildlife piles on top complemented by cold cider!

Dec 9th 2006 On a crisp sunny morning we completed more work in the Jesse Buell Forest and the Venter family again kindly provided refreshments for the work party.

January 8th 2007 Mild weather in January gave us a chance to finish work on trails in Jesse Buell Forest. Although it was wet and rainy a small group of loyal volunteers turned out but managed to finish clearing the final trail system. The trails are interesting and well worth exploring. The Venters came through and the hot coffee was much appreciated on a chill, damp morning.

February 10th 2007 This morning represented a new initiative, as our group began work creating more organized and well marked trails in the Kenilworth Forest. This forest - over 100 acres of conserved Land Trust property runs from Park View Estates through to Kings Grant Road in the western part of town.

Volunteers met at the home of Ken McDonnell, the Clinton

Land Trust president, on Pepperbush Lane. The McDonnell household had rashly promised breakfast for everyone. When a large work party of about 18 people showed up to lend a hand an emergency supply run had to be made. That day we had an interesting visitor - Kent from New Zealand- who dived in to help with trail maintenance -winning the "volunteer from the farthest distance" record. New Zealand is a country devoted to preserving its natural resources in a pristine state and we felt proud to show him that in a small corner of Connecticut people with the same priorities were working on land Conservation.

Sally's dog was also there and got very wet!

The Lower Connecticut River Valley Horse Council (LCRVHC) continued helping out in earnest with our trail

work. Led by Melissa Evarts, The LCRVHC has been very generous with their time and expertise and has attended every trail workday since then. Kathy McDonnell made a great breakfast for everyone afterwards and, there WAS plenty of food!

March 3rd 2007 We continued more work in The Kenilworth Forest creating trails. Paths had been marked out earlier by Frank, Dana and Ken which made the work go easily. Went to the McDonnell's house afterwards. Began to get the idea that people are starting to come back just for the French toast.

April 14th 2007 A small group celebrated Valentines Day with more work in The Kenilworth Forest followed by another excellent and quite romantic breakfast at the McDonnell's.

May 12th 2007 We finished up cutting and clearing the principal marked trails in the Kenilworth Forest. Once again a huge thank you to Kathy for "Breakfast at the McDonnell's"

Across town, on the same day, Patti and Courtney Venter arranged a workday for 2 Girl Scout Troops led by Leaders Katrina Carroll and Danielle Ramcke. The Venters took the time to explain the importance of appropriate animal habitats and then formed a work party to make wildlife brush piles in The Jesse Buell Forest. Afterwards they invited the scouts back to their house for wildlife themed games and baked goodies. The girl scouts had a great time and generously responded with a \$50 donation to the Clinton Land Trust to help out with Trust expenses. Thank you to all involved.



Volunteers work in the Kenilworth Forest