



## Essex Land Trust Trail Guide

by Steve Knauth

The “Wolf” oak at Bushy Hill Nature Preserve, the rock ledges at James Glen, osprey platforms on South Cove, the cleft rock at Tiley-Pratt Pond. There are plenty of surprises along the 40-odd trails laid out in the Essex Land Trust’s 13 properties; you’ll find them all in the pages of the Essex Land Trust’s first-ever Trail Guide.

You’ll also find brilliant color photography and detailed property and trail information – not to mention a little Emerson, Frost, Cicero, and even Teddy Roosevelt, in the form of quotations, to inspire. All in a durable pocket-size package designed for the trail. The 40-page booklet was conceived by past president Paul Greenberg and put together by a team of ELT members, coordinated by Jim Denham. Funding came from the Middlesex County Community Foundation/Riverview Cemetery Fund, the Essex Conservation Commission, the Essex Parks and Recreation Department, the Essex Community Fund and the Essex



Printing Co. Foundation.

The guide includes all trails in the Trust’s 13 properties as well as those in parks maintained by the Town of Essex and The Nature Conservancy. Sections on local history, trail highlights and flora and fauna add to the enjoyment and understanding of each property. ELT members will receive a copy free of charge and additional copies will be on sale to the public for \$15.

Greenberg recalls the genesis of the publication, about a year ago. “Someone asked if we had a list of all of our trails in one place, and it occurred to me that we didn’t. As president, I was initiating certain goals for my term, and I thought a trail guide should be one of those goals.”

The team just came together naturally, Greenberg says. “There they were, all these talented, dedicated people ready to work on this project. But the Land Trust is like that.”

Project members looked at examples of other similar guides to get some ideas. Maps required fold-out pages, it had to be bound so that if a page was amended, a new one could be easily added – and it had to fit in a coat pocket, Michelin-guide style. Al MacGregor and Bill Grover walked many of the trails using a GPS to accurately depict them, designer Steve Haines created the maps and the look, and Steve Knauth provided the text, aided and abetted by town historian Don Malcarne and First Selectman Phil Miller.

“We are lucky to live in a town that still has access to nearby walking trails, waterfronts, and open space where we have the opportunity to observe the miracles of Mother Nature up close.” Bill Grover, ELT President

*continued on page 2*

Essex Woods & Waters is published three times a year to keep members informed about properties, events and other activities. Call any board member for information or email us at [essexlandtrust@comcast.net](mailto:essexlandtrust@comcast.net). Board members are Bill Grover (President), Bruce Glowac (1st Vice President), Bob Nussbaum (2nd Vice President), Gudrun LeLash (Secretary), Mike Carlucci (Treasurer), Paul Greenberg (Past President), Chet Arnold (Land Acquisition), Suzy Burke (Membership), Jim Denham (Communications), Al MacGregor (Chief Steward), Terry Smith (New Members), Peggy Tuttle (Programs and Events); Brian Willis (Volunteers). Essex Woods & Waters is edited by Steve Knauth with graphic design from AC Proctor, Essex Printing.

# Parking for Canfield Meadow Woods Dennison Road Entrance

The Land Trust and the town's Conservation Commission have been working together to plan a small parking area at the Dennison Road entrance to Canfield Meadow Woods. The parking area will include space for three cars with easy access. Plans call for screening the parking area from the street. Dennison

Road has been a popular entrance to the 300 acre preserve and the lack of parking has been a problem. Cutting down trees and grading the area has been accomplished by Bruce Glowac, the Land Trust's First Vice President, and his son, Mark. Further work on the parking area, which will be finished in the spring, will be done by the Glowacs and the Town of Essex.



## Jim Denham Elected to ELT Board



The Essex Land Trust Board has elected Jim Denham to the Board of Directors. Jim will be taking over the Communications portfolio, handling publications, advertising and contacts with the press.

After 30 years working in marketing and strategic business management in The Gillette Company's international business, Jim volunteered to take on the publication of the recently completed Land Trust Trail Guide (see related article). Jim's avid interest is birdwatching which has led him also to become involved with the Connecticut Audubon Society.

Jim replaces Carol MacElwee who has retired after handling various Board positions over the years. The Board extends its grateful appreciation to Carol for her many and significant contributions.

## Trail Guide continued from page 1

Greenberg calls it an unqualified success. "I think it's going to get a lot of new people out onto the trails, and encourage those who use them already to branch out and try some properties they've haven't walked yet," he said. "And that's good."



# Phil Miller Honored

by Steve Knauth

Land Trust members acknowledged one of the group's most fervent supporters, honoring Phil Miller at the annual meeting for his many hands-on contributions to the organization.

The first selectman-naturalist has guided nature walks, night hikes and kayak tours, sharing his knowledge of and passion for nature with people "five years old to 85," said ELT member Judy Lovelace, introducing Miller at the meeting.

Along the way, he's opened people's eyes to the ways of nature. "Who took you on your first salamander walk? Who showed you whether you were following the deer tracks of a doe or a buck? Who knows where the old spring is at Cross Lots? Where to find Lady Slippers in May? And who else could take an hour and a half to walk from Pettipaug to the Boat Club? Many people, like me, have Phil Miller to thank. I think it's safe to say that literally thousands of people have benefitted from his genuine love and excitement about the world around us. He epitomizes what the land trust stands for - caring about green spaces and passing on this world to our followers."

It all started in North Carolina.

Sitting on a picnic table at Bushy Hill Preserve, Miller recalled growing up around Camp LeJeune, where



his Navy family was stationed. "It was 40,000-acres of loblolly and white pine, with turtles, lizards, sticks and rocks," he said. "It was fascinating, and my parents always encouraged me to be inquisitive about the world."

Grade school in New Jersey, living alongside the Pine Barrens, further ignited his interest and summers at YMCA camp introduced him to field work and the importance of documentation.

After working with Nature's Classroom, Miller came to the Bushy Hill Nature Center and Essex in 1988.

It's been a good match. Essex is a forward-looking community, when it comes to the environment, he said at the meeting. And the Land Trust continues to be a part of that, taking advantage of "creative opportunities" such as working to protect the Johnson Farm property. In fact, Essex, with its combination of wooded preserves and river properties is well on its way to becoming known for its open space. It's already an eagle-watching destination and harbors the first natural nesting of the Peregrine falcon in the region in 60 years. "The town is empowered by your efforts," Miller told the Land Trust audience.

"For myself, I'm fortunate to be associated with the Essex Land Trust," he said. "Whatever I've given, I've received back ten-fold."

We all have our favorite properties and trails, the one's we walk with our spouses, children, grandkids, friends, visitors - and the family dog. For Phil Miller, Bushy Hill is the "neighborhood" park, close to home, friendly and familiar, year-around. Canfield/Meadow Woods is a good hiking property, with plenty of different terrain. As Miller puts it, "I like the lay of the land there."

But, come spring time, it's hard to beat Falls River

Preserve in mid-May for the sheer exuberance of nature; its emerging foliage, the waters surrounding the peninsula and the varied songbird and water fowl population. In the second or third week in May, "it's an avian paradise," with the Yellow Warbler, the American Redstart, the Veery, the Wood Thrush and the ducks and other wading birds, Miller says. "At dusk, it's a symphony."

- Steve Knauth



# Annual Meeting Wrap-up

by Steve Knauth

The annual meeting of the Essex Land Trust, held April 7 at the Incarnation Camp, closed in time for most people to hurry home and cheer the Univ. of Connecticut women's basketball team to an NCAA championship.

The Land Trust had a pretty good year, too.

Before a packed house, ELT president Bill Grover, looked back on the group's accomplishments and highlighted things to come. "It was an active year," he said, citing the opening of The Millrace, the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary gathering at Essex Meadows and the dedication of a conservator's plaque at Cross Lots. Membership rose 14 percent, to about 420, and there was increased interest in and attendance at ELT events; more than 60 people showed up for a winter walk over the ice to Jean's Island and a spring hike in Canfield/Meadow Woods.

This year looks like a big year, too. Eight hikes and kayak tours are planned for the spring and summer, along with a visit from the bird rehabilitation organization, "Wind over Wings," and a sheep-shearing demonstration at the Johnson Farm. (Go to the trust web site at [www.essexlandtrust.org](http://www.essexlandtrust.org) for a schedule and updates.)

The rest of the game plan is just as ambitious. Present goals concern the continued improvement of individual properties and trails. ELT volunteers plan to build a bridge at the East Pond Meadow entrance to the Platt Property,

widen and clear trails at The Millrace, remove of invasive species at Canfield/Meadow Woods, in cooperation with the Deep River Land Trust and the plant more indigenous grasses at Cross Lots.

Volunteerism, in fact, was alive and well in 2008, too. Carol MacElwee and Tia Smith earned special recognition for their services, MacElwee, for her work in communications and as editor of Essex Woods and Waters, and Smith for her many hours stuffing, stamping and addressing envelopes. In all, more than 100 people gave their time over the past year, many of them on a regular basis. "For their help, we are most grateful," Grover said.

Chet Arnold wrapped up the meeting with his annual (and always much anticipated) voice-and-picture commentary on the past year. This time around, Chet eschewed the microphone in favor of a "silent movie" highlighting last year's accomplishments, from the Millrace opening to the winter night hikes. Though well-larded with Chet's inimitable humor (remember Bob and the Beavers?), the slide show did not fail to produce heart-felt ooohs and aaahs as it concluded with a host of gorgeous eagle pictures and stirring Essex sunsets – reminders to all present that the beauty of our town is what had brought us all together in the first place.

(At the Annual Meeting, Phil Miller was feted for his contributions to the Trust and the town. See related article.)



## Sheep Shearing at the Johnson Farm

Come watch the Johnson's sheep being shorn of their winter coats as shearer Lara Sullivan, a junior high science teacher, answers your questions. Sponsored by the Essex Land Trust, the event will take place from 12 to 2 pm on June 13<sup>th</sup> rain or shine. Fiddle music will accompany the fun and hot dogs, chips and drinks will be available.

Additional activities will include wool spinning by Polly Johnson and Jane Fuller, observing baby chicks under heat lamps and seeing the egg grading machine in action.



Sheep shearing is an ancient tradition, as old as the domestication of animals. The work is done by an experienced "shearer" using either blade shears (like a pair of scissors) or a machine, similar to a barber's clipper. The process usually takes only a matter of minutes, and causes little or no discomfort to the sheep. Indeed, they're grateful to shed their coats in the warm spring and summer months.

Sheep shearing is a ritual in sheep-raising cultures, and "world championships" are held every few years in England, Australia and New Zealand. Closer to home, annual sheep shearing festivals are held in Massachusetts and Vermont, as well.

The number of sheep in Johnson's flock varies, but he's usually got a dozen or more animals in the spring. They're housed in a barn he built himself in 1955, shortly after acquiring the 50-acre farm from his family.

The Johnson Farm is located at 77 Walnut Street, Ivoryton. Parking will be nearby; signs will be posted.



## Anonymous Donor Presents Johnson Farm Matching Challenge

Through the generosity of many donors, the Essex Land Trust has made good progress towards its target of \$200,000 for the purchase of the development rights to the Johnson Farm. But, the Land Trust still has \$85,000 to go to reach its final goal. To help out, an anonymous donor has offered to match new donations (not associated with pledges already made) between now and July 1<sup>st</sup>, up to a total match of \$15,000.

If you haven't yet donated, or would like to make an additional contribution, please send your donations to Essex Land Trust, P.O. Box 373, Essex CT 06426, and write Johnson Farm Challenge on it.

The Land Trust has signed an agreement to acquire conservation restriction and development rights to over 42 acres of the working farm property, owned and operated by Murwin Johnson, and located in Ivoryton.

## Like to Write? Enjoy being in the Land Trust? Join our Staff!

Essex Woods and Waters is looking for a writer/reporter to join the staff. Position requires writing on deadline one or two articles of 300-500 words for each of the four annual issues. Stories may be assigned, or generated by the author. Reportorial skills are a plus, and knowledge of photography is a help. Contact EWW editor Steve Knauth at [sknauth10@comcast.net](mailto:sknauth10@comcast.net)

## Coming Events - Mark Your Calendar!

### **SATURDAY MAY 16TH AT 2PM FAMILY WALK AT MILLRACE PRESERVE**

Chris Pagliuco, local historian, teacher and freelance writer, will lead a leisurely walk through the newest of the ELT properties. Millrace Preserve has a half-mile trail along and over the Falls River in Ivoryton, complete with many historic markers and displays. Park on Ivory Street.

### **WEDNESDAY MAY 20TH AT 5PM CANOE/KAYAK TO TURTLE CREEK AND SOUTH COVE**

Phil Miller, First Selectman and naturalist, will lead the flotilla through South Cove to the Turtle Creek Preserve. He'll talk about the native birds and plants found in the cove. Co-sponsored by Potapaug Audubon Society. Meet and launch at Connecticut River Museum's Steamboat Dock river access at the foot of Main Street in Essex.

### **SUNDAY JUNE 7TH AT 4:15PM NATURE WALK, PICNIC AND JAZZ CONCERT AT CROSS LOTS**

Starting at 4:15 walk through this beautiful property with Phil Miller as your guide. At the walk's conclusion, enjoy the Essex Corinthian Jazz Band's music at 5pm. Bring your own picnic, blankets and chairs. Park at the Town Hall.

### **SATURDAY JUNE 13TH FROM 12-2PM SHEEP SHEARING AT THE JOHNSON FARM**

Come watch the Johnson's sheep being shorn of their winter coats as the shearer answers your questions. See also spinning of the wool. Fiddle music will accompany the fun. Hot dogs, chips and drinks will be available. The farm is located at 77 Walnut Street in Ivoryton. Parking will be nearby; signs will be posted. Rain or shine.

### **THURSDAY JULY 16TH AT 5PM WALK AND PICNIC AT GREAT MEADOWS**

Come enjoy one of the Land Trust's most beautiful properties, along the Connecticut River, in an area not generally open to the public. Phil Miller will lead the walk. He recommends bringing binoculars or telescopes to view the wildlife. BYO picnic to eat at the Essex Boat Club after the walk. Park at Essex Boat Club which can be accessed on a dirt driveway just north of 143 River Road. Follow the driveway past Pettipaug Yacht Club to the end, which will be EBC. Signs will be posted.

For further information on the Land Trust's programs and events, please contact Peggy Tuttle at [abhftc@aol.com](mailto:abhftc@aol.com) or 767-7916.



The above programs are partly supported by a grant from The Rockfall Foundation, Middletown, Connecticut.



The Essex Land Trust would like to thank Essex Savings Bank for its generous ongoing support, including underwriting *Essex Woods and Waters!*