On October 6th, 52 enthusiastic hikers joined the Essex Land Trust to celebrate its 50th anniversary with a tour of the newly expanded Windswept Ridge. Hikers gathered at each of the three entrances and stewards led each group to a central meeting area for refreshments, a history of the property and a demonstration of a tree coring.

For its first 17 years, Windswept Ridge was a fairly basic small neighborhood park. Over the last three years, the Land Trust increased the preserve’s acreage by 50%, tripled the trail mileage and addressed some of the preserve’s original challenges. After many hundreds of hours of stewards time, the new Windswept Ridge Preserve was ready for its big reveal.

Windswept Ridge is now the Land Trust’s 3rd largest contiguous preserve and the only one that connects Essex, Centerbrook and Ivoryton. There are now three entrances – the original entryway on Windermere Way, a new entrance at the end of the cul de sac on Windsor Lane and behind Essex Financial on Plains Road.

We engaged a professional trail builder who developed a creative loop approach to address the steep terrain from a...
recent acquisition. The valley of the property is dominated by wetlands that limited access between the east and west sides. Recently, the Land Trust’s Chief Steward Geoff Furtney designed a set of three bog walks covering over 100 feet, allowing easy and dry access over the wetlands connecting the Yellow and Blue trails:

- The Lost Shoe Bridge, aptly named by the 11 VRHS seniors who carried in all the wood on a wet and muddy Community Service Day;
- Bridget’s Bridge aptly named for a good friend at the Ivoryton Tavern who heroically puts up with us during our weekly Steward’s lunches;
- The last and longest of the bog walks is still awaiting a name. Take a hike through the property and send us suggestions for a name to Gfurtney@aol.com.

Myron Stacks, the youngest old man among the stewards, tackled the steep terrain that connects the Green Trail to the new Red Trail loops. This required heavy leveling of the trails, installing steps and building a set of stairs offsite and carrying onto the trails for installation. They are really a sight to be seen and hiked.

To cross over a centuries old large stone wall, Bill French built a wooden bridge offsite that was transported, rebuilt onsite and gives a nod to the Rialto Bridge in Venice Italy.

Red Trail Tip – These three loops offer some exciting sights – a soaring seven trunk tulip tree, a recently exposed rock cliff, and a hanging glacial boulder. But this trail, closest to the parking lot behind Essex Financial, is an aggressive uphill climb. From experience, the easiest approach is to hike down the Red Trail. Park behind Essex Financial but start by going straight out the Blue Trail to the second set of bog walks and then go left up the Yellow Trail. From there, take a left onto the Green Trail which will connect to the Red Trail. Hiking down the Red Trail with a slight but longer uphill climb on the Yellow Trail is much easier. Your heart and knees will thank you.

The Essex Land Trust has invested a great deal of resources and steward time over the last 18 months and we encourage all to explore this new gem of a preserve. For those keen to get to know the expanded Windswept Ridge Preserve and its trail systems, the following map highlights its main features and access locations.
Welcome to Windswept Ridge

- Please respect the privacy of our neighbors.
- Please stay on marked trails, to avoid damage to soils and habitats.
- Dogs are welcome but must remain under the control of owners.
- Please clean up after your dog.
- Leave no trace – please carry out what you carry in.
- No fires, hunting, bicycles, or motorized vehicles allowed.
2018 in Pictures ...

Making maple syrup at Bushy Hill in February

Barn building at Cross Lots

Winter tree work

Celebrating Arbor Day at Essex Elementary

Valley Regional HS Community Service Day in May

Eagle Scout Michael Ryan putting finishing touches on James Glen Bridge
Making maple syrup at Bushy Hill in February

Kayaking in South Cove

June Picnic Concert at Main Street Park

Installing Williams Shipyard Complex sign at Osage Trails

Canfield Meadow Woods Hike in September

December hike at Johnson Farm

November Cross Lots clean-up
Phil Putnam was an avid member of the Essex Land Trust (ELT), a long-time volunteer, photographer and Conservator for Life. He would sit on the porch of his home off River Road near the James Glen Preserve and look out over what is now the Land Trust’s latest property – Woodja Hill – a view he enjoyed throughout the seasons.

Putnam, who passed away in 2017, is sharing his love of the land and nature with future generations. Phil made a significant legacy bequest to the ELT, which has been used as seed money for a dedicated stewardship fund, according to board member Bob Nussbaum. “I think Phil would be pleased to know that his gift will help take care of the land he loved to look at from his house,” said Nussbaum.

Legacy Giving is a chance to pass on what’s important to you, values which will live beyond you, in the form of land or funds. These will go to preserving the natural beauty of our town – the conservation and care of ELT’s open spaces.

The Land Trust has established a Legacy Circle acknowledging donors who’ve made a bequest in the past or have included the trust in their estate plans. Perhaps the best example of legacy giving is that of Harriet Cheney Downing who, in 1980, donated the property which is now Cross Lots, as well as funds to maintain it through the years. Today, Cross Lots is one of the Land Trust’s most popular and best-kept properties. “In recognizing the need for stewardship, she was ahead of her time,” says Nussbaum.

Mrs. Downing set a precedent which has been followed by others. Over the years, Fisher Buell gave land on Great Meadow; Daniel and Elizabeth Dewey left a financial bequest; board member Jean Hanor and Estelle Ives Zahn also left a monetary legacy. Elizabeth “Diz” Callender donated the land which is now Osage Trails and left a $200,000 legacy to cover the cost of the property’s maintenance in perpetuity.

Inspired by Callender, board member Bob Nussbaum has included the Land Trust in his own estate plan. “I hope people will consider a legacy bequest as a way of supporting their belief in the importance of preserving our open spaces and stewarding them well in the future.” In fact, stewardship – the development, care and maintenance of the Land Trust’s 900 acres involving 23 properties - will be a priority as the organization looks beyond 2018, its 50th anniversary year.

The Land Trust recommends discussing your charitable planning options with your attorney, accountant or financial advisor. There are low or no cost options, such as naming the Essex Land Trust as a beneficiary of designated assets, such as IRAs, 401Ks and insurance policies. Estate planning is often done on an annual basis or with significant milestones, such as births, marriages and retirement. That is often a good opportunity to also consider charitable bequests.

To inquire further, for information about how to name Essex Land Trust in your estate plan, or if you have already included the Essex Land Trust in your estate plan and would like to be acknowledged in our Legacy Circle, please contact us at info@essexlandtrust.org and put legacy giving in the subject line.
ELT Briefs

The Land Trusts Photo Contest - Attention Amateur Photographers!

Share the beauty! Essex Land Trust and five other local land trusts annually host an amateur photography contest. Cash prizes are awarded for the best photos in the categories of Land Trust Properties, Landscape/Waterscape, Plants, Wildlife, Cultural/Historic, Black & White, Youth Age 14 to 18 and Youth Age 13 and Younger. Every photo entry is exhibited at the Land Trusts Photo Contest Reception in April of 2019. Entries must be submitted between Jan. 2 and Feb. 28, 2019.

For contest rules, entry forms, and a special page for youth, visit landtrustsphototcontest.org.


Accreditation Update

As reported at April’s Annual Meeting, the Essex Land Trust Board began, in the latter half of 2017, the process of applying for accreditation by the national Land Trust Alliance. Coordinated by Board member Joel Anik a specific Board committee that included ELT President Nancy Rambeau, Vice President Bob Nussbaum and Archivist Cynthia Field have been working over the past months to prepare and submit the required documentation. The process of obtaining accreditation is comprehensive and lengthy and results in the submission of several binders that are reviewed by a dedicated commission of Land Trust Alliance officials.

Accreditation is a mark of distinction that will enable the Essex Land Trust to maintain public confidence by reviewing and implementing policies and procedures to improve operations that lead to more effective land conservation. It also provides third party assurance of quality and permanence of land conservation and is demonstrative of a strong, effective organization that can be trusted.

The Essex Land Trust has now completed its application and has responded to questions from the commissioners reviewing our application. Next steps include providing additional information to support our responses and a final review by the full commission. We have received very favorable comments regarding our presentations to date and are hoping for a positive decision by mid-summer 2019.
Coming Events – Mark Your Calendar!

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<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
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<tr>
<td>Land Trusts Photo Contest</td>
<td>January 1 - February 28, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horizon Wings Live Raptors Presentation</td>
<td>Thursday, January 10, 7 pm</td>
<td>Essex Town Hall, 29 West Avenue</td>
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<td>Amphibian habitat in CT: Is there enough for populations to persist?</td>
<td>Thursday, January 24, 7 pm</td>
<td>Essex Town Hall, 29 West Avenue</td>
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<td>Winter Raptors Field Trip</td>
<td>Saturday, February 2, 12 pm</td>
<td>Essex Town Hall Parking Lot, 29 West Avenue</td>
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<td>The Archaeology Road Show</td>
<td>Thursday, February 7, 7 pm</td>
<td>Essex Town Hall, 29 West Avenue</td>
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<td>Live Owls!</td>
<td>Monday, March 4, 2 pm</td>
<td>Essex Town Hall, 29 West Avenue</td>
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<td>Collectible Creatures Walk</td>
<td>Saturday, March 23, 10am</td>
<td>Canfield Meadow Woods, Book Hill Road entrance</td>
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<tr>
<th>April</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essex Land Trust Annual Meeting</td>
<td>Thursday, April 11, 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Essex Meadows, 30 Bokum Road</td>
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<td>Edible Mushrooms for the Table</td>
<td>Tuesday, April 23, 7 pm</td>
<td>Essex Town Hall, 29 West Avenue</td>
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<td>Geology Cruise with Ralph Lewis on River Quest</td>
<td>Saturday, May 4, 1-3 pm</td>
<td>Eagle Landing State Park, Haddam</td>
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<td>Birding and Nature Walk</td>
<td>Saturday, May 18, 8:30 am</td>
<td>Essex Meadows, 30 Bokum Road</td>
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<td>Canoe/Kayak Trip North Cove and Falls River</td>
<td>Saturday, June 22, 2 pm</td>
<td>Meet at the public Boat Launch, foot of Bushnell St. off of N. Main St.</td>
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<td>Concert in the Town Park</td>
<td>Saturday June 22, 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Essex Main Street Park</td>
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