



FALL 2013 Landlines

SIMSBURY LAND TRUST

Since 1976

ACQUISITION UPDATE

George Hall Farm

Although we are \$15,000 short of the \$550,000 needed to provide permanent protection for the combined 50 acres consisting of the George Hall Farm at Old Farms Road and the Pharos Farm at Quarry Road, we are close enough that we have decided to begin the three step closing process this month. If necessary we will bridge the remainder with operating funds. In the first step the SLT buys a permanent conservation easement from the Old Farms Road property. In the second, George Hall uses the proceeds to purchase the Quarry Road land. And in the third step, the SLT purchases a permanent conservation easement on the Quarry Road land. Steps one and two will be completed by year-end. The third step is scheduled to occur by the end of January. (Note that donations for this project are still gladly accepted!)

Tanager Hill

As you know, the SLT has received a commitment from the CT-DEEP-Open Space Grant Program for \$500,000 and has initial pledges from individuals for over \$150,000 to purchase the fee



interest in this 92-acre hillside. Obtaining substantial federal participation remains a major hurdle and the SLT is working hard to find a formula and ownership structure that works for all parties. The good news is that all parties, local, state and federal, as well as other conservation organizations, are unanimously enthusiastic and working equally hard to make this happen. In addition, the owners have recently agreed to extend the purchase and sale agreement to provide more time for the parties to work out a solution. We will provide further details and hopefully good news as it occurs.

Walk Over the Mountain

By Dick Davis, SLT Trustee

On a bright crisp October day, the Simsbury Land Trust joined the Wintonbury Land Trust to undertake the first-ever organized walk from Mountain Road in Bloomfield to the Simsbury Town Center. Some three dozen walkers from the two towns took part, leaving at 9:30 and making numerous stops to discuss the various sights. We took time for a picnic atop the Pinnacle and descended to East Weatogue Street and Riverside Road before crossing the Drake Hill Bridge into the Simsbury Center. Without exception, the group was impressed by the wide variety of terrain and vegetation, the constant beauty surrounding us, and the relative ease of the walk in spite of 500-foot elevation changes.

The purpose of the walk was first to prove that there is, in fact, a feasible cross country route between the two towns, and second, to highlight recent and ongoing acquisitions by the two land trusts that will make a formal trail, over the mountain and across the river, a reality. For this walk and until the acquisitions are completed we had to obtain the permission of several private landowners in order to cross their land.

On the Bloomfield "east slope" of the ridge we encountered rolling terrain, large open farm fields with vistas including the Hartford skyline, the Holyoke Range and unusual views of the Metacomet Ridge. We stopped along the way to discuss the 45-acre Hawk Hill Farm that the Wintonbury Land Trust has under contract as well as at its recently acquired Stout Family Fields that abut the east side of Penwood State Park. As we crossed through Penwood, we stopped at the Pinnacle with its spectacular views of the Farmington Valley with the Simsbury Town Center below and Simsbury's West Ridge and the Canton Highlands to the west. The Pinnacle also provides a great view of the Metacomet Ridge as it stretches south to the Heublein Tower.

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LANDLINES —

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Letter from the President

— Chuck Howard

The Simsbury Land Trust is thriving. With strong support from our members we are continuing our preservation efforts, and we offer a broad range of activities for all ages and interests.

On the acquisition front, we will be completing the George Hall/Pharos Farm project by the end of the year or shortly thereafter. We are also continuing to pursue the acquisition of the Tanager Hill property, an opportunity we consider to be once-in-a-lifetime. Our job has been made harder by the recent issues in Congress; but we are resolute, and with this project a very high priority of the National Park Service we believe we will find a way over the coming year to make the preservation of this property a reality.

Our hikes and other programs on SLT land continue to be signature events. From bird watching to longer hikes along the west ridge or from Bloomfield into Simsbury (see separate article), we have had strong participation and a great time. If you have never joined us on one of these hikes, I encourage you to do so and take advantage of the fabulous resources for recreation and enjoyment within minutes of where we live.

I also want to briefly highlight two programs started last year that have really begun to take root and grow. To help us reach kids and their families, we have our Dirty Boots Kids Club. These programs are offered four times a year and are extremely well done. If you come once with your kids (or grandkids), I am sure that these programs will become a fixture on your schedule. Also, our Green Scenes documentary film and discussion series at the library continues to grow in popularity. In addition to presenting movies on a variety of environmental topics, we have a panel discussion afterwards with local experts. I have really enjoyed these programs and think you would too.

Of course, all of this could not happen without such a strong membership base and your generous financial support, and for that we thank you. If you have not already done so I hope you will consider renewing that support by making a year-end membership contribution to the SLT today!



President's Circle Members Celebrated at the Simsbury Free Library

Members of the Simsbury Land Trust President's Circle — donors who contribute over \$500 in one year and donors who have contributed for 10 years in a row — were invited to a celebration and thank you event at the Simsbury Free Library in

November. Over 40 guests were able to wander the library and view the exhibits while sipping drinks and having a lovely dinner provided by Kane's Market.



Trustee T.J. Donohue, longtime members Ted and Marge Storrs, and Life Member Ruth Ann Preston enjoy the evening at the Simsbury Free Library.

Dirty Boots Kids Club: Down on the Farm!

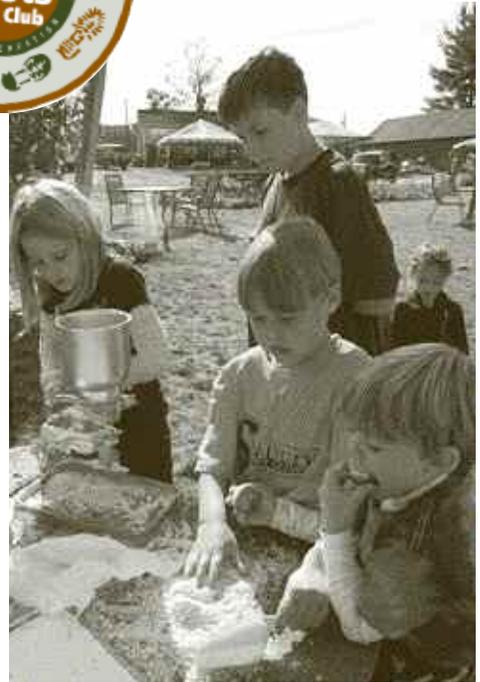
By Joan Allen, SLT Trustee

This fall and spring the Dirty Boots Kids Club is exploring some of the town's farms and learning about some of the farm animals, plants and their products! In September, the group met at Tulmeadow Farm and learned all about cows, ice cream and how to make butter. Farm owner Don Tuller talked to the kids and their families about the different kinds of cows on the farm (all beef) and what they eat. The cows were curious about all the visitors and rewarded us with lots of attention. Then we had an up-close tour of the ice cream-making equipment and freezers and learned how the farm's ice cream is made. A fun and popular activity was making fresh butter by shaking cream in jars until it solidified and then trying some on crackers. It was delicious! We all went for a short walk on the farm trail and finished up with a free ice cream cone. Thanks for a great visit Don!

Corn was the focus of our trip to Rosedale Farms in October. The kids learned about corn history, different kinds of corn, the parts of a corn plant and many different ways that corn is used today in foods and other products. Did you know that there is one corn silk strand for each kernel that forms? After listening to a book all about corn, the kids eagerly awaited their turn to grind some corn with an old-fashioned crank-type grinder. Dried field corn was placed in the hopper and everyone got to give it a try. Grinding corn is hard work! The result was coarsely ground corn like that used in polenta or grits. We snacked on blue corn chips and fresh mini corn muffins. Everyone had a great time in the corn maze on the farm. Thanks to everyone at Rosedale Farms for hosting us!

Join the Dirty Boots Kids Club and have fun with us at Flamig Farm and Community Farm of Simsbury in the spring as we continue this year's farm theme. Thanks to a generous contribution from Educational Playcare, membership in the Dirty Boots Kids Club is free to Simsbury Land Trust members. There is a small fee for non-members. Contact the SLT office at 860-651-8773 or amyzeiner@aol.com for additional information on the club. All Kids Club members receive an activity guide, knapsack and water bottle. The program is for children ages 3 to 12 and an accompanying parent.

Special thanks to SLT Trustees Joan Allen and Susan Van Kleef for running this wonderful program!



Walk Over the Mountain

(continued from page 1)

From the Pinnacle, we crossed the north/south New England Trail, one of only two National Scenic Trails in New England, and walked around Lake Louise to see the location of its outflow over the rim of the trap rock precipice. We then descended the precipice along an ancient cart path to the 92-acre Tanager Hill, a property that the owner and the Simsbury Land Trust are currently working to preserve. Highlights there included the trap rock terrain and upland forest, lowland forest interspersed with a number of delightful meadows, wetlands and vernal pools and the spectacular Lucy Brook Ravine that consists of a narrow cut through a 40-foot high glacial moraine all the way into the bedrock. We then walked across the Simsbury Land Trust's Owen-Mortimer Property down an old



Dick Davis points out the route to the hikers.

farm road to East Weatogue Street, then along Riverside Road through the river flood plain to the Flower Bridge and into the town center.

Everyone who took part had a great time, and we were all impressed by the consistent beauty and the many points of interest along the route. Both land trusts are committed to repeating this joint event again next year. Once the respective acquisitions have been completed, we expect this to be one of the more popular trails in the two towns, towns that have a number of exceptional trails already.

We are thankful for the participation and leadership of the Wintonbury Land Trust. In particular, we'd like to thank Kevin Gough and Paula Jones for advocating the idea of a town-to-town walk and for all their great work in organizing the event. We also want to thank Bloomfield Leisure Services for its donation of a bus and driver to take us back to our cars.

Alder Stand Renovation at Case Property

By Sally Rieger, SLT Trustee

Alders, large shrubs which tend to grow along streams and in other damp places, often put up multiple stems that provide good cover for wildlife. They also produce seed-bearing cones that provide food for some birds. Alders are unusual among trees in hosting the bacteria that convert nitrogen from the air into a form that plants can use, thereby enriching the soil. Additionally, according to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protections, alders stands near second growth hard wood forest provide an important habitat for woodcocks which feed on earthworms in the damp soil around the alders.

At the northwestern side of the Case property on Ferry Lane, there is a small stand of alder that seemed to be declining. Alder thrives in a sunny habitat and at Case, overhanging trees and adjacent brambles and shrubby dogwoods were shading many of the alders, many stems of which had died.

On October 31 a group of six Simsbury Land Trust volunteers worked at Case in an effort to renovate about one third of the alder stand. Birches that bent over both the alders and the walking path were cut down and brambles and shrubby dogwoods on the east side of the stand were trimmed to allow more light to reach the ground. Some of the alders were cut back to stimulate the development of new shoots from the roots in the spring. If this effort proves successful, another workday next year or the year after will focus on another section of the stand.

In addition to the alder stand renovation, volunteers extended the bridge over the stream at Case. Like all rivers and streams, this one is a dynamic system and has shifted its course in the past couple of years so that the existing bridge no longer spanned the stream's main channel. The bridge extension provides a dry crossing for walkers. Also the volunteers trimmed bushes that interfered with the walking paths at Case and removed downed limbs from around the trees in the meadow so that it can be mowed annually.

Simsbury Land Trust extends its thanks to Dick Clark, Tom Clifford, Joe Springman, Joe Treacy, steward of the Case property, and Don and Sally Rieger for their work. Amy Zeiner kindly delivered much appreciated coffee and doughnuts to the group.



Volunteers Tom Clifford and Joe Treacy help Trustee Sally Rieger with a branch.

Hats Off to Volunteer Bill Lorenzen!

Bill Lorenzen, a junior at Keene State College, offered his assistance to the Simsbury Land Trust this summer. With the guidance of Trustee Susan Van Kleef, Bill set out to clean up the Ketchin Quarry property. He cut and removed fallen limbs from the trail, trimmed branches that were growing over the trail, and cleaned up the trash and broken bottles that had been discarded.

The SLT has problems controlling the invasive plants on some of our property and the Ketchin Quarry is no exception. After learning to recognize several common invasive plants, including garlic mustard, Japanese barberry and oriental bittersweet, Bill removed many trash bags full of problem plants he had pulled. Barberry is very prevalent in our area and unpleasant to remove because of its many thorns, not a job most volunteers are interested in doing.

It is common for the SLT to receive offers of help from students in the summer and it is also common for them to decide not to work for us once they see what needs doing because it is hard, dirty work in location with lots of mosquitoes and poison ivy. Bill Lorenzen proved to

be the exception, and we applaud his efforts this summer.

Note: The Ketchin Quarry Trail is located on Quarry Road. It is a great short walk with several informational signs along the way. Stop in and see Bill's work!



Billy Lorenzen is shown with SLT Trustee Susan Van Kleef (center) and his mother Patti Lorenzen.

Eagle Scout Project Boosts Glover Property Development

The Simsbury Land Trust's continuing project of opening up the Glover Property for public use has taken a big step forward with the completion of a boardwalk through a seasonally wet area and a footbridge across an adjacent brook. Tommy Kim, an Eagle Scout candidate with Troop 76, designed the boardwalk and bridge and led a team of scouts in building them. The effort was on time and on budget, a great success for Tommy and a great boon to us.

The Glover Property is at the corner of Hartford Road (Route 185) and Princess Lane, where the Simsbury brownstone obelisk marks the entrance to town. Walking paths are accessed from the King Philip Road side of the property. The property is still a work-in-progress, so walkers will encounter some dead end trails. Even so, it is a pleasant place to walk and a good birding site in season.

We look forward to finishing the trail development and instituting a stewardship plan that will facilitate walkers' access while protecting wildlife habitat.



Trails Day Hike to Penwood

The Simsbury Land Trust sponsors a hike each year to observe National Trails Day. This year's trek took about 25 walkers from Simsbury's Flower Bridge to the Pinnacle at Penwood State Park and back. They traversed the trail on SLT's Owen-Mortimer property and, with permission, ascended to Penwood across private land. That route, the only practical ascent in the area, could become a regular SLT public trail if we are successful in acquiring the Tanager Hill property.



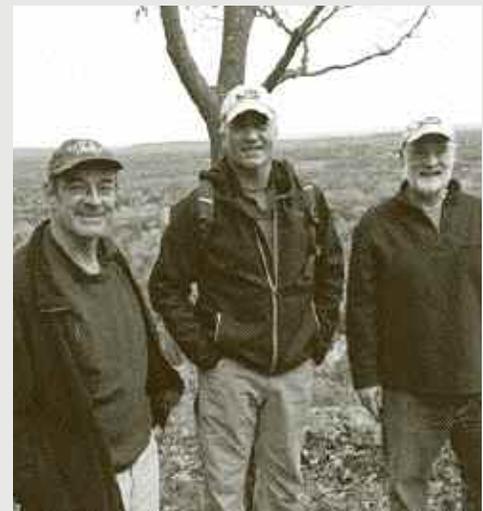
A great day for the birds!

On Saturday, October 12 a group of SLT members were fortunate to have Roger Preston leading a Bird Walk at Great Pond. For both the experienced and novice, this was very enjoyable morning. While most participants came with their binoculars, some brought spotting scopes, and this makes all the difference because they allow close up viewing even from a great distance. The group paused at various point along the trail around Great Pond to search for and then identify a variety of species found in the park. Among those observed were: Turkey Vultures, Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, American Black Ducks, Mallards, Blue-winged Teals, Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Willets, Pectoral Sandpipers, and Rusty Blackbirds.



West Mountain Trail Hike

On November 3rd an intrepid group of hikers braved the autumn chill to cover the Simsbury Land Trust's entire West Mountain trail system. The fast pace and sense of camaraderie kept everyone warm and the hike was finished in three and a half hours. Much of the hike followed the fault line between the major formations of volcanic basalt and much older metamorphic schists that make up much of the Farmington Valley. The group followed Hopbrook to its origins and enjoyed some very scenic vistas along the West Ridge of West Mountain. In the end everyone was tired but agreed that there is no more beautiful and satisfying way to get a workout.



A Presidential Gathering on the Summit! Past SLT President Dick Davis, upcoming President Fred Feibel, and current President Chuck Howard on a recent hike on Simsbury's West Ridge.

Identifying Deciduous Trees in Winter

By Joan Allen, SLT Trustee

If you're into hiking, snowshoeing or other outdoor activities during winter, you might have wondered at times what kind of trees you're seeing. They may have had interesting bark or seeds, or even a distinctive growth habit or form. It can be fun to take a closer look at some of the more subtle features of trees and try your hand at identification without the help of the leaves.

There are a surprising number of characteristics besides leaves that can be used to tell trees apart. When you start examining the twigs more carefully you will find that features including leaf position, buds, leaf scars and thorns all differ quite a bit from one species of tree to another. Many trees hold onto their seeds or fruits after the leaves have fallen, giving additional clues to the tree's identity. Other features that can be used, especially after some practice, are the overall form or growth habit of a tree and the texture of the bark (on mature trees). It can also be helpful, especially in natural areas, to think about the geographical and geological features of the site.

If there's little or no snow cover, you can often cheat a little and look for seeds, fruits, nuts and even leaves on the ground below the tree. Be careful though! When different kinds of trees are growing near each other, it may be difficult to tell where a particular leaf or fruit on the ground came from.

As you're approaching a tree of interest, notice its overall shape or growth habit. Is it tall and narrow? Broad and spreading? Some trees have a 'craggy' appearance due to somewhat angular branching. A few have very distinctive shapes, like the weeping willow, and you will know what it is right away. With practice, some trees can be identified this way, but more often, you will need to take a closer look. Next, notice the bark, especially on mature trees. Young trees may have smoother or less broken up bark surfaces than older ones. Trees with distinctive bark include beech with its very smooth bark, birches with prominent lenticels (pores) and sometimes papery, peeling bark, American sycamore with its unusual mottling, and shagbark hickory, which has, as its name implies, shaggy-looking bark with long, vertical pieces that appear to be peeling or shredding away from the tree.

The next feature useful in narrowing down the possibilities is to check out whether the leaves (and twigs) are opposite or alternate. Maples, ashes, dogwood and horsechestnut (MAD HORSE is a memory trick) all have leaves that are borne in pairs opposite each other on the twig. You can often determine this from a short distance away from the tree. When the leaves fall, a leaf scar is left on the twig. Each tree species has a distinctive leaf scar shape, size and pattern of vascular bundles. These are described and illustrated in winter tree ID guides and are a very good feature to use.

Other twig features include size, color and other details about the terminal and lateral buds, the prominence of lenticels, bark color, and the presence of thorns or spines. Sometimes the flower buds are distinctive as on magnolia and dogwood trees. Honey locust has very large, branched thorns and black locust has smaller spines at the base of the leaf petioles (next to the leaf scars). A few trees, especially members of the oak family including beech, tend to hold onto many of their leaves until spring. The delicate, golden leaves of the American beech give it almost fairy-like appearance as a young tree in the otherwise rather gray winter landscape.

If there are seeds, fruits or nuts still present on the tree, those can be a great help in identification. Maple, elm and ash have a winged seed called a samara. The shapes are different for each group. Trees that have seeds in pods are legumes and are in the same family as beans and peas. Trees that bear their seeds in pods include catalpa, redbud, honey locust and black locust. Birch and alder produce their seeds in a structure of many seeds called a catkin, and fruit trees including apple and cherry produce fleshy fruits. Acorns and nuts can be used to identify oaks, beeches, horsechestnut, hickories and walnut.

It's very helpful to use a winter tree ID guide as an aid in identification. They will take you step by step through a key, one feature at a time. Sometimes it's not that easy to determine which option is correct but with practice you will develop an eye for the finer differences and for the variation that does occur within a species because of genetic variation, age, and environmental conditions.



During winter, beech trees hold onto their golden, papery leaves, giving them a delicate fairy-like appearance and adding a bit of cheer to the otherwise gray winter landscape.



Honey locust trees can be identified easily from their sharp, branched thorns, found on branches and even the main trunk.

Suggested guides include:

- 📖 *Winter Tree Finder* by M. T. Watts and T. Watts
- 📖 *Wood Plants in Winter* by Core and Ammons
- 📖 *Fruit Key and Twig Key to Trees and Shrubs* by W. M. Harlow

Note: The SLT Wagner Woods Trail is a great place to look at trees and try your hand at tree ID this winter!



Preserving Simsbury Open Space Since 1976

SIMSBURY LAND TRUST

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**WHO...
WHO**
should be
a member
of the
Simsbury
Land Trust?



Have you ever?

- Eaten an ice cream at Tulmeadow Farms
- Walked the Corn Maze at Rosedale Farm
- Enjoyed a stroll through Wagner Woods
- Attended a Simsbury Land Trust BBQ
- Participated in a group hike
- Gone birdwatching on our morning hike
- Watched a Green Scenes movie
- Attended a SLT sponsored lecture at the library
- Brought your child or grandchild to a Dirty Boots Kids Club Event
- Had a glass of wine from Rosedale Farm
- Used a map from our website
- Read the Simsbury Land Trust Walk Book
- Rode through the woods at the Flamig Farm Haunted Hayrides
- Hiked the trail from Westledge Road
- Enjoyed the company of like-minded friends at our Annual Membership Dinner
- *Or just liked the idea that you could do any of these things?*

If you can answer yes to any of these then YOU should be a member of the Simsbury Land Trust!

Please consider joining as a member or renewing your membership in the Simsbury Land Trust for 2013 today!

Thank you for your support.

HELP WANTED!

While we are always looking for folks interested in helping out at the SLT, from time to time we have a need for specific jobs. If you are interested in helping out with any of the jobs below please contact Amy Zeiner at the Simsbury Land Trust office at 860-651-8773 or amyzeiner@aol.com. **Please note that these are all volunteer positions!**

Webmaster

The SLT maintains a website and sends electronic newsletters and updates on a monthly basis. We are looking for an experienced Webmaster who would keep our website up-to-date with material and photographs provided by our office. In addition, we have an electronic newsletter mailing list to maintain and electronic newsletters to send on a regular basis.

Publicity

Press releases and news stories are an important way for the Simsbury Land Trust to keep the community aware of our many events and land preservation projects. If you have experience writing press releases and news stories and would like to donate time to the Simsbury Land Trust on a monthly basis please let us know.

Simsbury On Canvas Art Auction Committee

The SLT has begun work on our 2nd Simsbury On Canvas Art Auction, scheduled for November of 2014. A lot of work goes into a successful fundraising event, and we are looking for a few volunteers willing to help plan the event, solicit art auction items, secure program ads, sell tickets, set up and work the night of the event. If you like to work on projects, this year long volunteer opportunity may be of interest to you.