



WINTER 2021 Landlines

SIMSBURY LAND TRUST

Since 1976

Your Yard Matters And Not Just to You!

Sally Rieger, SLT Trustee

It's scary to see the decline in insect populations worldwide and in the numbers of birds in North America. Maybe you've read something like this, "Based on bird counts from 1970 and the present, it is estimated that there are about three billion fewer birds now than then." (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/09/three-billion-birds-lost-north-america/>) or like this, "Some scientists have been warning that there is an "insect apocalypse" underway. A global analysis of 452 species in 2014 estimated that insect abundance had declined 45 percent over 40 years." (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/08/insect-apocalypse-under-way-toxic-pesticides-agriculture/>)

When the urge to do some spring planting hits, you can help do something about these problems and make your yard more fun and more interesting at the same time. Plant some native plants that support both native insect and bird populations. Whether it's a native tree or shrub that hosts butterflies and moths whose caterpillars are what most song birds feed their fledglings, a berry-producing shrub that attracts birds, or a flowering plant like the milkweed species commonly called "butterfly weed" (*Asclepias tuberosa*) with its bright orange blossoms, these kinds of plantings will bring beauty and life to your yard and lend a hand to the birds and insects.

Even though we're living through a difficult and contentious time, there are positive things we can do. Here are a few ideas about using native plants to brighten up your yard and bring you visitors from the wild world. First, you don't have to do it all at once.

If you have a yard with alien (non-native) species, consider this suggestion from Doug Tallamy, a strong and early proponent of using native plants to benefit wildlife. "When an alien dies, consider replacing it with

(continued on page 4)



Winter in the Woods

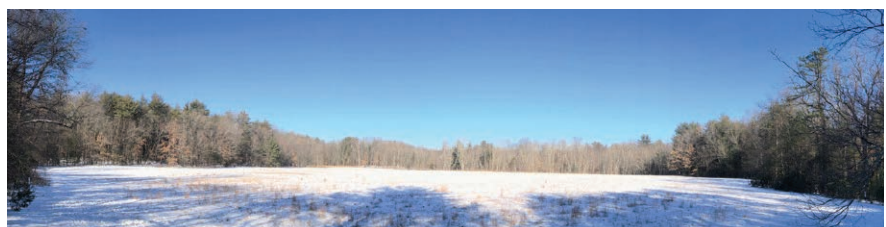
Bob Shea, Wagner Woods Steward

Wagner Woods has seen much more traffic recently than its quiet past. Our sequestration during the pandemic has given people more opportunity to walk outside. It's an easy, level walk on the old roadway into the property and then on mowed paths around eight acres of hay and wildflower fields. Even the Boehm blue trail through the woods is not steep, unlike many other SLT trails. After the hay was cut the field seemed bare, but now it is even more open visually. A little snow just made it more interesting without being deep enough for snowshoes. The small spots where squirrels dig up leaves and earth become obvious against the white.

There is something about an open field that most of us don't get to experience often in New England. Certainly, schools have a lot of space for sports and golfers may see more distance than they might want to. Perhaps that's part of the appeal. But there is so little horizon to see in New England. We have homes and towns that are much denser than they appear because of our small hills and relatively new forests. Unlike the Midwest, very little land was laid out on a grid.

I look forward to turning the corner on the path and reaching Roger Preston's bench on the edge of the field. The full field is visible and it's a sunny spot for the colder months. No paved roads reach this field, so it's a pleasant surprise to find it. A previous owner,

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Letter from the President

—Margery Winters



As I write on January 30, the thermometer outside is registering 6 degrees, confirming what records show is historically the coldest week of the year in our area. A Nor'easter in the offing just days ahead of the groundhog's prognostication of spring's arrival. Regardless of the forecasts we know that we still have a way to go to get through winter.

Our anticipation of spring brings with it not only the promise of warmer weather, but also a hopeful return to better days in general for our community and our country. Many of us have become even more aware that our public open spaces provide us the soothing benefits of being in nature and a destination for a socially distanced walk with friends and family. We look forward to the days ahead when maskless hikes and fog-free glasses become a real possibility.

Winter is a season to plan. Gardeners peruse their plant catalogues and anticipate this year's garden, evaluating what did and did not work. Likewise, the Simsbury Land Trust Board has been in a planning mode, adjusting to the resignations of long-time committee and board members, and restructuring the tasks and responsibilities of our board members and volunteers to make the organization more resilient and inclusive. The SLT Board has been developing guidance documents that provide a better structure when addressing the myriad of land issues that are encountered each year. SLT is also taking part in a series of discussions with other local land trusts sponsored by the Connecticut Land Conservation Council to learn how we might combine our efforts to strengthen our respective organizations.

Many thanks are due to Tom Crawford and Fred Feibel for stepping up to assume leadership positions on the Stewardship Committee after the resignations of long-time and dedicated chairs, Sally and Don Rieger. Tom will lead the Stewardship Committee's day-to-day trail and property tasks with the help of a new team of trail coordinators, along with our many property stewards. Fred will head up our Habitat and Conservation section of the Stewardship Committee. This new group is tasked with evaluating and recommending the best conservation management practices for our various properties. An ad hoc committee will be formed to take on projects such as the development of a new parking area for Tanager Hill.

Additional thanks to our outgoing Treasurer Bob Ellis, who, after 18 years on the board as treasurer, agreed to stay on in that position at least another year until we were able to recruit a new board member for that role. The SLT Board is so pleased to announce that role has been accepted by Karen Langlois. Welcome and thank you Karen!

And to you, our members who this year have supported us in near record levels, many thanks as well — we could not fulfill the Simsbury Land Trust's mission without you.

So, while planning for spring, stay warm and healthy. Here's to better days ahead!

See you on the trail,

Margery Winters

Farewell and Thank You to Bob Ellis

In January, the Simsbury Land Trust said a heartfelt farewell to Bob Ellis. Bob served as SLT Treasurer for nearly 20 years. He led the organization's financial operations during the successful Campaign for Simsbury which preserved 800 acres of open space via personal donations and grants from town, state and federal governments. In addition to supervising routine financial administration and reports, Bob's tenure included establishing our endowment fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving; changing the fiscal year end to better monitor operating expenses; and overseeing our Investment Committee to maximize return on the organization's financial reserves.

We thank Bob for his tireless efforts on behalf of the Simsbury Land Trust and hope to see him and his wife, Linda, at many future events.





Birding the SLT Preserves

Zellene Sandler

Past President, Hartford Audubon and SLT Member

On a nice May morning, a group from the Hartford Audubon Society slowly climbed the trail into Tanager Hill, led by Simsbury birder Doug Beach. We were in search of spring migrants, especially the colorful little warblers who frequent this preserve. We were especially hoping to find the Hooded Warbler, a species of special concern in CT.

We stopped at a patch of Japanese Barberry, a dreadful invasive bush that is, however, great habitat for these warblers. We heard the song as a brilliant male popped out before us, giving great views.

At least 96 species of birds have been reported in the Tanager Hill/Owen Mortimer preserves, making this a CT “birding hotspot.” It is a pleasure to bird Tanager Hill at any season: the trails and boardwalks are well maintained and the scenery is lovely. In winter, the sight of chickadees and cardinals brighten the day. For those wishing a longer hike, Penwood State Park with even more bird species can be accessed from the property.

Size is not everything: the little Glover preserve provides an easy, short walk that is rich in a variety of habitats. Many species of birds have been seen here: look for cardinals and Blue Jays in the trees. I have delighted in watching nest boxes housing swallows and wrens as they fed their chicks. A small brook, open fields, and large pines offer food and shelter for Blue-grey Gnatcatchers, Red-tailed Hawks, and Common Yellowthroats. In addition, native plants and shrubs have been planted here, including tags describing benefits to birds and wildlife.

Where can you go to see bluebirds in winter? Check out the Tulmeadow Farm fields, where these bright blue lovelies with rose-colored breasts can make a cold, grey day seem like spring is not far off. Red-tailed Hawks may be seen flying over the fields looking for prey, such as rodents tunneling under the snow. Over 29 species of birds have been reported here though I believe the total may be higher. In summer, take the trail from the Town Forest parking lot which leads through the woods, where you can check for forest birds such as tanagers and warblers. It is about a mile to the farm, where you may be rewarded with their luscious ice cream before doing more birding and heading back.

Many more SLT preserves deserve further exploration. For example, a unique SLT property includes the Bog, or Esker Trail. A very short walk on the esker, with a maple swamp on one side and the bog on the other, leads to an overlook where a boardwalk heads into the bog. This trail is dedicated to Dick Davis, president

of the SLT from 1996 to 2008. The bog is rich with unique plants, such as swamp azalea and chokeberry. I look forward to spring when I hope to find some interesting bird species, perhaps an Eastern Phoebe or even an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Each SLT property contains varied and interesting habitat for birds and wildlife at any time of

year. There is always something new and exciting to find on the Simsbury Land Trust preserves....happy exploring!

At least 96 species of birds have been reported in the Tanager Hill/Owen Mortimer preserves, making this a CT “birding hotspot.”



Winter in the Woods *(continued from page 1)*

Ralph Boehm, had a house and hangar to keep his airplane here, landing in the fields. More than once people reported a plane crashing in the woods, when it was just Ralph coming home to his own field hidden in the forest.

In the winter you can see deep into the trees, and you can hear sounds from quite far away. Sometimes I can hear the dogs from Hall Farm on the other side of the woods. The birds are not the noisy bluebirds, wrens and tree swallows that fly over the fields in summer. Woodpeckers are here all winter and can be heard from far away. The nuthatch and chickadee might come by in a crowd. I don't hear the Red-tailed Hawks that were here into the fall, and I don't stay late enough for owls, but I'm sure they are here.

On the other side of the field is Jim Ray's bench. The two benches were placed in memory of friends Roger Preston and Jim Ray who did much for the Simsbury Land Trust here in Wagner Woods. Jim's bench is still covered in snow because the sun doesn't reach this shady spot. I like the view across to the north side, with the afternoon sun on the trees above Roger's



bench, even after most everything else is shaded. There is no real wilderness in New England, every bit of land has been explored and probably farmed. The rock walls around these fields are now overgrown, back in the woods, yards from where the open fields are now. Behind me is a magnificent oak, right in the rock wall that edged the roadway down the hill to Hop Brook.

I know the deer that live here. I collect videos from a SLT game camera in the remote woods. These images provide a view to the hidden world we rarely see, right under our noses. I have seen five doe all at once this month, and there are two bucks, one 10-point and one 5-point. In the fall they were mostly crossing through at night. In January they seemed to leave in the early morning and return near dark. There are also racoons, coyote, bobcats, possum, and more. We have not gotten a good photo of a bear, but twice I have seen mothers and cubs. With more people walking their dogs here I expect less wildlife. There's still room for everyone for now. It hasn't been truly wild for centuries.

Your Yard Matters

(continued from page 1)

the native species that comes closest to the attributes (habit, size, texture, and flower color) of the lost alien." (Tallamy. Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens, Timber Press, 2007, p.109) Or you might choose a section of your yard, perhaps now lawn or garden, and turn it into an area for native plants. (Tallamy, p.111).

If you decide to use native plants and help protect the populations of insects and birds, you will need to choose plants suited to the soil, the amount of moisture and the availability of sunlight. Not everything is well suited to every site, and some plants are more tolerant of a variety of conditions than others. Have fun choosing and enjoy the wild visitors you get!

Resources for Helping You Choose the Right Plant for Your Yard

Plants for Birds | Audubon Connecticut <https://ct.audubon.org/plants-for-birds>

10 Plants for a Bird-Friendly Yard | Audubon <https://www.audubon.org/news/10-plants-bird-friendly-yard>

Grow Native Massachusetts | Every Garden Matters ~ Every Landscape Counts <https://gownativemass.org/>

For a Good Article About Doug Tallamy and Suggestions for Rejuvenating the Wild Landscape

Meet the Ecologist Who Wants You to Unleash the Wild on Your Backyard | Science | Smithsonian Magazine at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/meet-ecologist-who-wants-unleash-wild-backyard-180974372/>



How Can I Help?

Many Ways to Support the Simsbury Land Trust

Ted Almy, SLT Trustee

Annual membership donations continue to provide the vital everyday financial support for the operations and functions of the Simsbury Land Trust. But there can be additional stewardship and long-term needs — expected and sometimes unexpected — that exceed annual membership contributions.

You can support our stewardship mission by giving in one (or more) of these ways:

Through a gift to the Simsbury Land Trust Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund — Launched in 2015, the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving has a \$500,000 goal that will allow the Simsbury Land Trust to continue and expand its work protecting properties and provide financial flexibility and resources for critical property stewardship needs in perpetuity. We are pleased to report that thanks to generous support the endowment has reached \$300,000 and will provide over \$11,000 in vital income for stewardship activities in 2021.

Through a Planned Gift — A bequest to SLT or the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund translates your commitment to protect Simsbury open space, farmland, and scenic vistas into a lasting legacy. If you are considering a general use gift to the Simsbury Land Trust as part of your estate plan, you can add a simple provision to your will or trust such as: “I give (specific amount, percentage or residue) to Simsbury Land Trust Inc. Tax ID# 06-0958573, having its principal offices at 10A Phelps Lane, Simsbury, CT 06070, for its general purposes.” Please note that planned gifts to the SLT Endowment Fund require different language specifying the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving as the recipient. The SLT and HFPG can work with you and your attorney to craft the appropriate language.

Through a planned gift from an IRA — Retirement monies can be donated through an estate after the donor’s death by naming the SLT or the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund as the designated beneficiary — or one of them — of the decedent’s IRA. The charity will receive whatever percentage of the assets the IRA account owner states on the beneficiary form.



Through your Corporate Matching Program — Many employers have charitable matching foundations, which will, in many cases, double your contribution to Simsbury Land Trust, either a membership contribution or a donation to the endowment. Please contact your employer’s human resources department for information on whether your company has a matching gift program.

Through annual required distributions from an IRA — If you’ve reached the age where you need to take required minimum distributions (RMDs) from your traditional IRAs, you can avoid paying taxes on them by donating that money directly to the SLT or the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund. This tax break was made permanent in 2015 and was extended under the 2020 CARES ACT. Normally, a distribution from a traditional IRA is subject to ordinary federal and state income taxes. But IRA account holders who make a contribution directly from a traditional IRA to a qualified charity can donate up to \$100,000 without it being considered a taxable distribution. This method of gifting effectively lowers the donor’s adjusted gross income (AGI) and provide additional tax-savings benefits.

For more information and assistance in customizing a large or planned gift, or to notify us that you have already done so, please contact us at 860-651-8773 or amyzeiner@aol.com.

SLT Welcomes New Treasurer

Karen Langlois has recently joined the SLT Board of Trustees, and now serves as the organization’s treasurer. She is a certified public accountant with CohnReznick LLP since 2001. Karen moved to West Simsbury in 2018 with her husband, and is thrilled with the area and all it has to offer. When not working in the accounting field, she enjoys kayaking, hiking, biking, and spending time with her two grown children. A passion of Karen’s is visiting National Parks, and she has been to several throughout the country. She is excited to serve on the Simsbury Land Trust Board of Trustees in the town she now calls home.



Hiking 101

Katie Piccirillo, SLT Trustee

With the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shutdown of many businesses, people found themselves looking for safe activities to keep themselves occupied. ‘Naturally’ embracing social distancing, sure enough, hiking turned out to be the perfect (and safe) option. While hiking does not demand significant skill, per se (it’s very similar to walking!), there are some simple guidelines and tips that are helpful to follow and that someone new to hiking may not know. Here they are:

1. Choose your hike before you go. Make sure the hiking trail is the appropriate distance and terrain for you. Keep in mind that one mile of uphill/downhill hiking is very different than one mile of flat road walking. Use resources like the Simsbury Land Trust website (or its Simsbury Walkbook), the AllTrails phone app, Google maps, or a state park website to find an appropriate trail for your needs.

2. Wear proper shoes. You don’t necessarily need hiking boots, but a pair of shoes with some traction on the bottom that stay snug around your foot is important. It is also important to consider the weather and the terrain. In the spring or after a big rainstorm it can be very muddy, so a waterproof shoe or boot might be the best option. In winter, opt for a shoe with insulation or at minimum a really warm pair of wool socks.

3. Follow basic trail etiquette. Trail etiquette is slightly different now since the COVID-19 pandemic, but the basic rules still apply. Move to the side of the trail to let oncoming hikers pass. Hikers going uphill have the right of way. Hikers have the right of way over bikers. Horses have the right of way over hikers. Pull your mask up over your mouth and face when passing another hiker. Stay on the trail (which sometimes means walking through mud, muck, or puddles) at all times.



4. Leave No Trace. This is a code of ethics that most hikers and backpackers follow. It is simple but easy to forget. Don’t litter, don’t pick flowers, don’t start a new trail, and clean up after your dog. Avoiding any disruption to the woods or trails is the best way to maintain the ecosystem.

5. Don’t be too nervous about wildlife. Be aware of your surroundings, but remember that most wildlife wants to avoid you. If you are talking or walking with a good cadence, any wildlife will likely hear you coming and hide or leave the area. In an instance that you do see more than a bird or a squirrel, keep your distance and continue walking if the wildlife is not in your path.

6. Keep your phone and keys in a zippered pocket. You do not want to retrace your entire hike with your eyes focused on the ground. Find a secure zipper pouch in the pocket of a jacket, backpack, or fanny pack for your keys and leave it zippered throughout the hike. You may want your phone handy for pictures — and it should definitely be with you in case of an emergency — but still keep it in a zippered pocket while not in use. Also, don’t feel rely on your phone for safety; many trails lack strong cell service.

7. Bring food and water. The general rule of thumb for hiking is 200-300 calories per hour and a half liter of water per hour. Not sure exactly how long the hike will take? Overestimate.

8. Abide by dog etiquette. Check the rules for bringing dogs on the trail before you get there. Most trails require dogs on a leash. Remember to bring poop bags and have a spot to carry that bag out with you. There usually are not garbage bins on the trails.



If you have more questions about hiking trails or hiking information, the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) has good information on its website as does REI and Leave No Trace. Or, ask a friend who hikes if you can pick her brain or join her on a hike. With few ways to get together with friends these days, hiking outdoors is still a great option.

Take a Hike in Simsbury and Join the SLT 12-Hike Challenge!

Every day is a perfect day to get out on the trails. Our community is full of beautiful trails and paths, with scenic vistas, forest views and lovely open fields. There are over 28 trails in the Simsbury Walkbook, ranging from very easy, short and flat to several miles with tougher terrain. So many places to explore right in your own backyard!

The rules for the SLT 12-Hike Challenge are simple.

- Sign up for the 12-Hike Challenge on our website. (www.simsburylandtrust.org)
- Join if you are not already a member — memberships range from \$40 and up, but any amount is welcome. Membership is not required *but strongly encouraged* as membership donations fund our trail work, publications and educational materials!
- Keep track of your hikes — date and location. Any distance hike or walk counts toward your 12-hike goal. SLT-sponsored hikes, regardless of the location, also count toward the challenge.
- When you are finished, complete the SLT 12-Hike Challenge Completion Form on our website and you'll get a free SLT baseball cap!
- Please respect the trail rules, stay on the marked trail, take out any trash you bring in (bonus if you bring out any trash you may find on the trails), and be courteous of our neighbors when you park for your hike.

Join the fun! Please post pictures of your hikes on the Simsbury Land Trust Facebook page or our Instagram page. #SLT12hikechallenge #hikesimsbury #simsburylandtrust

Need a copy of the Simsbury Walkbook? The Simsbury Walkbook can now be found on our website. Want a hard copy? Any questions? Contact our office at 860-651-8773 or amyzeiner@aol.com. See you on the trails!



An Amazing Twenty Years

Margery Winters, SLT President

In January twenty years ago the Simsbury Land Trust board made one of its best decisions: they hired Amy Zeiner to be their part-time executive director. The Land Trust recognized the need for help with the day-to-day tasks of running a land trust and Amy, a mother of young boys at the time, was interested.

In 2001 SLT was a much more modest organization. Annual meetings were attended by only a few and Amy baked brownies for those who came. Annual reports were produced and printed on the president's home computer. And then Amy set to work.

In her ten hours a week, Amy has elevated SLT's game. Amy is responsible for the look of the handsome annual Landlines publication, our popular Simsbury Walkbook, property signage, membership mailings, and invitations. Our annual meetings have morphed from brownies for a few to splendid annual dinners attended by upwards of 200 people. Fundraisers to accompany the numerous capital campaigns have included art auctions featuring local Simsbury artists, silent auctions, country-rock bands at local venues, and the President's Circle thank you event for major donors and long-time supporters. Amy has also organized ice-cream and cookout events to celebrate the completion of major land acquisitions of which there have been many in the past twenty years. These events are always beautifully done, imaginative, fun — and no matter the event, whether large or small Amy always makes sure there is good food.

In addition to the usual tasks of board, committee and stewardship meetings, the annual mailings, phone calls, emails and handwritten thank you notes, Amy also instituted a Green Scenes environmental film series for the public and kept the board and committee members moving forward on their selected tasks with timely reminders and gentle prods when needed.

We all are fortunate that SLT is the recipient of her many talents and skills. Amy has raised the profile of the SLT and made it into one of the most respected land trusts in the state.

Normally, we would celebrate Amy's 20 years of service in person. We look forward to the date when it is safe to meet again in person and SLT can celebrate Amy's many contributions to the Land Trust in a more public fashion. We can also ask Amy how she manages to accomplish all she does in ten hours (!) a week.

Until then, thank you Amy!



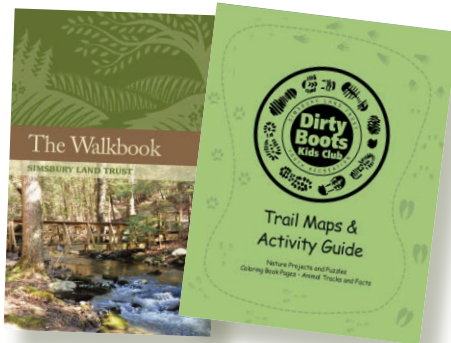
Preserving Simsbury Open Space Since 1976

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Did You Know? The SLT Walkbook and the Dirty Boots Kids Club Map and Activity Guide are available for download — free of charge — on our website! Visit simsburylandtrust.org to download your copy today!



Are You a Member? Time to Renew or Join for 2021!

Katie French, SLT Trustee

Simsbury! It's beautiful here — but our ridgelines, river, meadows, and farmlands are more than just scenery — they're also a valuable resource, providing the area with recreation and protected land, and a vital connection to nature. Simsbury Land Trust works to ensure that we will be able to enjoy the benefit of our cherished natural areas for years to come. SLT has permanently protected over 1,100 acres of important open space that serves not only to provide wildlife corridors but places for passive recreation. Your membership donations help make this possible.

Our properties offer something for everyone, with activities including:

- Hikes — we have our own Hiking Club open to hikers of all levels!
- Bird watching
- Wildlife tracking
- Plant identification
- Snow-shoeing and cross-country skiing

We also offer programs to help you learn more about what we do and why we do it:

- Informative conservation-related programs with a variety of guest speakers
- Educational films and discussion programs

Your membership contributions fund stewardship projects that include:

- Trail building
- Invasive species plant control
- Property management plans
- Trail informational signs

Why Become a Member?

- Your membership supports an organization that works diligently to protect and promote land conservation.
- Our engaging programs and activities increase access to and awareness of nature.
- Your donations fund our work conserving the character, natural beauty, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities of the region.
- Members help create a healthier community, and greater awareness of the value of conservation. Most importantly, members gain the knowledge that they're leaving a legacy on the landscape.
- Joining the SLT and participating in our educational programs also provides an opportunity to make new friends and learn about the land around us.

Membership is based on the calendar year — last year 875 families supported SLT. Please consider joining or renewing as a member of the SLT today! Use the enclosed envelope or visit our website to join online —

www.simsburylandtrust.org.