

A photograph of a sunlit forest. The scene is filled with tall, slender trees, their trunks creating a vertical rhythm. Sunlight filters through the dense canopy, creating a dappled light effect on the forest floor. In the foreground, a wooden boardwalk with a simple railing leads from the bottom center towards the middle ground, disappearing into the woods. The ground is covered with green ferns and other undergrowth. A bright sun flare is visible in the upper right quadrant, casting a warm glow over the scene.

Simsbury Land Trust  
2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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Thanks to our photographers:  
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Tom Crawford, Fred Feibel,  
Scott Hedges, John Johnson,  
William Kim, Charlotte Roberts  
and Bob Shea

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## LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

Greetings—I am very honored to be the new President of Simsbury Land Trust. I have been with SLT since 2019, starting as a trail steward, joining the Board of Trustees in 2021 and serving as Vice President since 2022. I am taking over from the very capable and talented Margery Winters, who has skillfully guided SLT for the past six years through the pandemic, spearheaded the restructuring of the stewardship of SLT properties and taken on the enormous issue of invasive plants. We thank Margery for her leadership on these important issues and look forward to her continued service on the board along with her dedication, passion and ecological expertise.



The board recently completed a strategic planning process which will help shape the agenda for SLT over the next several years. Foremost, 2026 will be the 50th anniversary of SLT and we will have several opportunities to celebrate this milestone with our valued members. While we will continue to provide trail hikes, educational programs, volunteer work opportunities and other programs, one major change will be a renewed emphasis on property acquisition. Simsbury is well known for its natural scenic beauty, a characteristic that is highly valued by its residents and visitors. SLT has paused on property acquisition

for the past several years to focus on the management of our existing properties. We are now ready to resume acquiring property to help preserve Simsbury's natural scenic beauty in a thoughtful and strategic manner. We will identify and target properties that are significant to the character and history of Simsbury and utilize various tools to help preserve them, such as acquiring development rights, obtaining grants, collaboratively working with government agencies and other conservation organizations, and of course direct purchase. To support this initiative, we will also need to grow our membership and aggressively fundraise to help sustain our existing properties and acquire new ones. We hope we can count on your continued support and invite your family and friends to join and support us as well!

Finally, a great thank you to all the amazing volunteers of SLT—the property monitors, trail stewards, the invasive plant removal team and my fellow Trustees for all the time and effort that you put into SLT, its programs and properties. Your contributions truly make Simsbury a better place. I look forward to working with you and continuing the great legacy SLT has created over the past 50 years!

Looking forward to serving,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "BOB PALMER". The letters are bold and slightly slanted.

Bob Palmer

# REFLECTIONS ON MY TIME AS PRESIDENT

**As I write** my last president's letter, much of the northeastern United States has experienced a stretch of unusually warm weather, following a spring and summer marked by abundant rainfall. While we can only speculate about what Mother Nature has in store for the months ahead, we can take some comfort in the current state of the landscape—ponds are for now full and trees that struggled during previous drought years appear to be thriving. It is good to remember that most of the mature trees in our woodlands have survived the vicissitudes of our weather—from State record lows of -32°F in February 1943 to record highs of 106°F in July 1995 and 1912, and from one of the wettest years in 2023 with 65 inches of precipitation to 31 inches during the record drought of 1965. Undoubtedly, they will weather more such extremes and challenges.

In 2026, SLT will celebrate our 50th Anniversary. Over that time, SLT has grown and experienced many changes, challenges and opportunities. Just in the last six years we have endured a worldwide pandemic that sent record numbers of visitors and members to our trails. We underwent major staff and board changes as well as the restructuring of our committees. During this period Simsbury Land Trust shifted emphasis toward stewardship, and the board developed new management plans for our preserves based on the current scientific guidance. We have hosted numerous educational presentations for our members and the public on a variety of environmental topics relevant to SLT's mission and led the public on innumerable hikes, bird walks, and other special events. In short, as an organization, we too are weathering the times in which we live.

And, of course, we could not do this without the efforts, dedication, talents and generosity of our board members, our stewards, our volunteers and our members. Together we share a



commitment to the ecological health of our open spaces as well as a desire to share the beauty of these areas with future generations. Personally, it has been my great privilege to have served as SLT's president over the past six years and to have played a small part in the continuity of the mission of the organization and it is with great confidence that I pass that role onto our incoming President, Bob Palmer. Like our woodlands, I am confident that the Simsbury Land Trust will sustain and grow as we face the challenges and successes of the next 50 years.

With deep appreciation,

*Margery Winters*

Margery Winters

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# A HISTORY OF TULMEADOW

— Susan Van Kleef, SLT Board

**Tulmeadow Farm** in West Simsbury is the oldest continuously operating farm in Simsbury. The first Tuller, John Tuller, settled in Simsbury in 1686. In 1768, Elijah Tuller began farming on 400 acres on Farms Village Road, where the farm is located today.

Originally, the farm was named Basswood Farm because a small grove of basswood trees was located nearby. In the 1950s, O.D. Tuller discovered there was another Basswood Farm when he attempted to register a herd of cattle. O.D. chose Tulmeadow because the farm's north field was called Tuller Meadow.

To survive since the 1700s, the Tullers have adapted by choosing crops based on market trends of the time. During the late 1700s, Elijah Tuller raised beef cattle and harvested timber. Early in the 19th century, the farm raised sheep for wool. In the 1830s, Asaph Tuller grew rye for the village distillery as well as oats. By the 1850s, the farm generated most of its income from a cider mill. After the 1850s, Tulmeadow joined other farms in the Farmington Valley in growing tobacco.



In the early 20th century, Oliver Cromwell Tuller started a dairy business with butter and a creamery. By the 1960s and 70s, Tulmeadow was primarily a dairy farm. Don Tuller referred to this period as “the last golden age of dairy” because milk prices made the effort of keeping and milking a dairy herd worth it.

In 1983, the Tullers started growing vegetables and cut flowers to sell at a self-service stand. Eventually, in 1994, the Tullers



started making ice cream. In 2003, the farm sold its Holstein dairy cows and transitioned to raising beef cattle.

To preserve the farm, woodlot, and wildlife habitat, the Tuller family worked with Simsbury Land Trust to preserve all 260 acres. Through grants and generous donations from the community, the three-phase acquisition of the development rights and a Forest Legacy Conservation easement for the woodlot was completed in 2011.

Today, Tulmeadow Farm is often mentioned in statewide publications as a destination for unique flavors of ice cream and the farm store's interesting products. Stopping for ice cream after a hike on the West Mountain trails, a bike ride, or a walk from Town Farm Road is an experience shared by many Simsbury residents and visitors. Don Tuller and his family have lovingly cared for and preserved Tulmeadow Farm for generations to come. We are forever grateful for this effort.



## In Memory of Don Tuller

The Simsbury Land Trust mourns the passing of Don Tuller—farmer, leader, and friend.

Don was a lifelong steward of **Tulmeadow Farm in West Simsbury**, a property that has been in his family since 1768. Don carried on the tradition of farming the land with both deep respect for its history and a vision for its future. Under his leadership, Tulmeadow evolved from a dairy farm into one of the region's most beloved destinations, known for its plentiful vegetables, lush greenhouse plants, and, of course, its unforgettable ice cream. Generations of families have marked summers with a visit to Tulmeadow, often making a scoop of Red Raspberry with Chocolate Chips part of the ritual.

Don was not only a farmer—he was a leader in agriculture across the state and nation. A proud graduate of UConn with a degree in animal science, Don served as president of the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association for over a decade and represented the Northeast on the Board of the American Farm Bureau Federation. He was a trusted advocate for farm families, voicing their challenges and hopes in Hartford and Washington with clarity, integrity, and unwavering commitment.

Closer to home, Don's efforts ensured that **Tulmeadow's fields and woodlots would be protected forever**. Through conservation



partnerships, he guaranteed that the land that defined his family's history would remain for farming, wildlife, and community enjoyment for generations to come. Trails now wind through the Tulmeadow woodlot, offering quiet places for reflection, just as Don intended.

Don was also known for his generosity. Whether donating ice cream to support local causes, pitching in

during food bank drives, or mentoring young farmers, he gave freely of his time and energy. His steady leadership during difficult times—from droughts to economic pressures—was a source of encouragement for many.

Above all, Don will be remembered for his warmth, humility, and the quiet pride he took in both his land and his community. His life's work leaves us with more than preserved fields and farm-fresh flavors; it leaves us with an enduring example of stewardship, service, and love of place.

Next time you go to Tulmeadow Farm, under its wide skies, we hope you take a minute to appreciate Don's work, a man who never saw farming as just a livelihood, but as a calling. Don's legacy will continue in every harvest, every scoop of ice cream, and every trail walked through the land he so carefully tended.



## STEWARDSHIP REPORT

— Tom Crawford, SLT Board and Stewardship Chair

**What a year it's been** on Simsbury Land Trust trails! Thanks to the hard work of our stewards, volunteers, and community supporters, our trails have remained safe, beautiful, and welcoming for everyone who enjoys them. From June 2024 through August 2025, we completed more than 90 projects across a dozen properties—each one strengthening trail safety, enhancing visitor experience, and preserving the natural character of the lands we all cherish.

This past year brought many improvements. We cleared more than 45 hazardous trees, trimmed back brush, and tackled invasive stiltgrass to keep trails open and safe. Erosion-prone sections were stabilized, footing was improved, and regular mowing at Tanager, Wagner Woods, Case, and Glover kept paths easy to navigate throughout the year. We also invested in better signage, adding or replacing more than 25 entrance signs and kiosks to help visitors find their way and learn more about our natural areas. At Glover, 60 Westledge, and Wagner Woods, new bridges and boardwalks made it easier to cross wet and uneven ground.

One of the most inspiring parts of the year was the involvement of young people. Our new Youth Corps contributed hands-on trail work and even joined board meetings to learn about conservation leadership. Simsbury High School students rebuilt a boardwalk at 60 Westledge as part of their Capstone projects, while Eagle Scouts made their mark by adding a kiosk at Tulmeadow, creating interpretive signage



at Cathles, and expanding parking at Wagner Woods. Their contributions will benefit the community for years to come.

We also remained mindful of the land itself, trimming back invasive species, cleaning up trash, and rerouting trails to protect vulnerable habitats. Beyond the work on the ground, we came together to celebrate our progress at regular trail meetings, our Stewardship Thank You Gathering, and the Annual Dinner—reminders of the strong community that makes all of this possible.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to keeping our trails safe, improving signage and educational features, and continuing the fight against invasive species. With the dedication of our volunteers and the ongoing support of the community, we are confident that next year will bring even more opportunities to care for and enjoy our trail network.

Thank you for your commitment to preserving and enjoying these special places.



## ESTABLISHING ECOLOGICALLY APPROPRIATE NATIVE PLANTINGS

—Fred Feibel, SLT Board and Conservation Chair

### If one takes only one concept

from Douglas Tallamy’s epic book “Bringing Nature Home” it is that native plants provide at least ten times as much nutrition for native wildlife as non-native plants. The biodiversity SLT seeks on our preserves is dependent on this efficiency. Most of our conservation work centers on the removal of non-native species and the planting of site appropriate native plants. Much of our planting lately has been at the Wagner Woods preserve. There is such a void of native plants there that they rarely seed in on their own. You may have seen how beautiful the wildflower field, planted several years ago, has become. In June, members of our Youth Corps spent a morning planting additional flower seedlings there. One of the most dynamic habitats in any ecosystem is the field edge. The creation of a “stadium effect,” where shrubs get progressively smaller down from the trees, provides a large amount of food as well as permanent and transient shelter. Around Wagner Woods we have begun to add dogwood, elderberry and chokeberry among many others.



This year, to add more variety and lower cost we have with great success begun to grow native herbaceous plants from seed. Seeds are collected locally; winter stratified, then planted in chambered flats outside. Plants germinate at different times but we should have a good crop to plant this fall! We will continue native plantings in 2026 by propagating shrubs from cuttings of plants currently growing on Wagner Woods.

All of this would never be possible without our group of dedicated and much appreciated volunteers. If you are interested in cutting, planting or growing, please let us know!

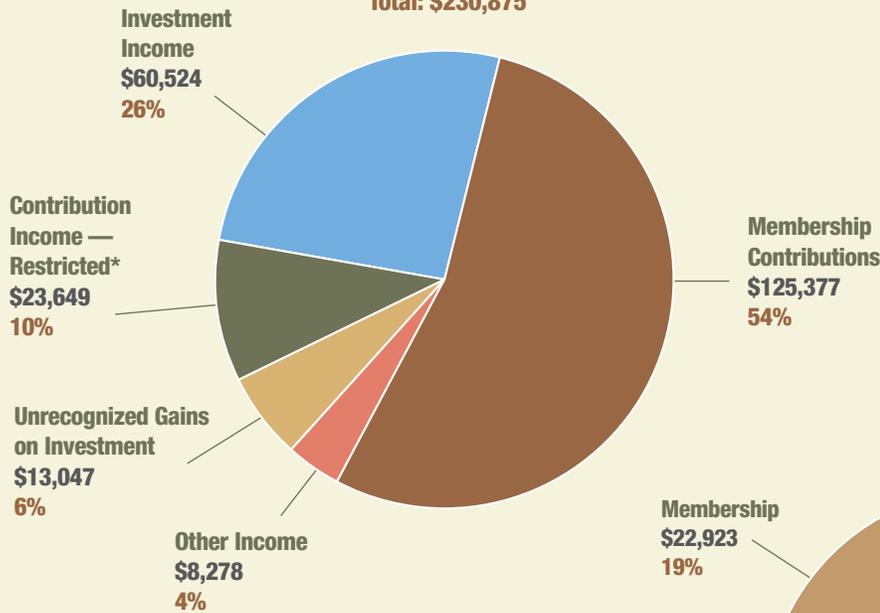
# 2025 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

For the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2025



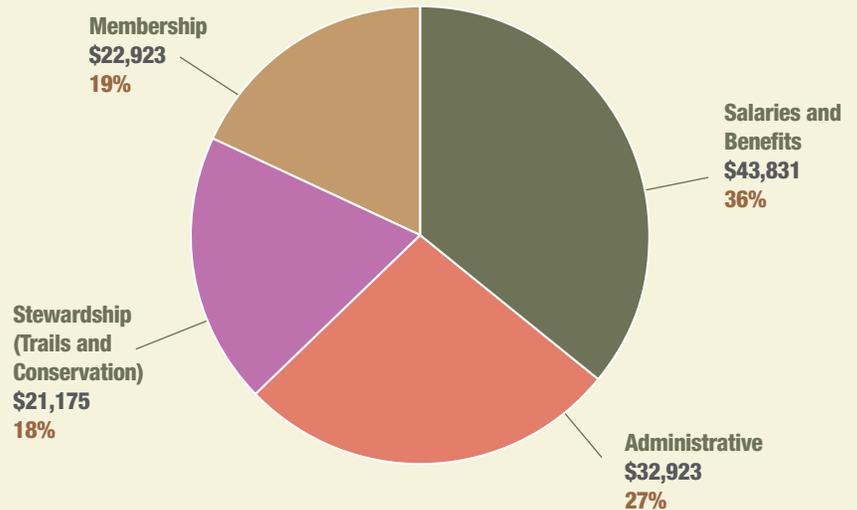
## REVENUES

Total: \$230,875



## EXPENSES

Total: \$120,852



\*Restricted contribution income consists of funds donated to The Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund held at The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Note: Full financial statements are available upon request.





## MEMBERSHIP

—*Amanda Thompson, SLT Executive Director*

### As I look back on this past year,

I am filled with gratitude for the individuals, families, and businesses who make Simsbury Land Trust what it is today. Every trail walked, every scenic view enjoyed, and every acre of land protected has been made possible because of people like you.

Our 2025 membership list is now posted on our website. I encourage you to take a look. It is impressive to see a strong membership of 766 neighbors and friends standing together for conservation. Each name represents someone who cares deeply about preserving Simsbury's natural beauty, not just for today, but for generations to come. Please renew your membership today for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

Memberships are at the heart of everything we do. They keep our operations running, support the care of our trails and preserves, and give us the resources to acquire and protect more land when opportunities arise. Just as importantly, a strong membership base demonstrates to grantmakers and partners that our community is



committed to conservation. Your renewal makes a powerful difference.

To make renewal easier, we now offer automatic renewals on our website, either monthly or annually. Many members have told us how much they appreciate this simple option to stay connected year after year.

As we approach our 50th anniversary in 2026, I invite you to think about the kind of legacy you would like to leave. Some members have chosen to donate land that will forever remain open for wildlife and community enjoyment. Others have included Simsbury Land Trust in their estate plans, ensuring that their commitment to conservation carries forward well into the future. If you'd like to explore either of these options, please reach out to me.

Finally, I encourage you to stay engaged by visiting our website for new maps and updates, joining hikes, children's programs, talks and volunteer days. Simsbury Land Trust is more than an organization. It is a community, and your membership is what makes it thrive.

**Thank you for your past support, and thank you for considering renewing your membership today. Together, we can continue protecting the places that make Simsbury so special.**



## LIGHTS OUT FOR WILDLIFE (AND HUMANS TOO!)

—Margery Winters, SLT Board

### When teaching in my role as a naturalist

at Roaring Brook Nature Center I often asked my students, “what is the name for animals that are active at night?” Without hesitation they respond in unison, “nocturnal!” If then asked, what is the name for animals awake during the day, I see puzzled faces and general silence. Rarely do I get the correct answer, diurnal. My favorite answer, however, was “normal,” and I have often wondered if we, as diurnal animals, consider daytime to be the norm and nighttime to be an unsettling aberration. And is it our diurnal nature, and perhaps a fear of the dark, that makes us have a profound desire to light up the night?

In fact, night is a habitat essential to much of the Earth’s wildlife. About 70% of mammals are nocturnal, and more than 60% of invertebrates are active at night. Nocturnal animals are designed for low light conditions with large eyes and heightened senses of smell and hearing. Some nocturnal animals, especially nocturnal mammals, have a reflective mirror-like membrane called the tapetum lucidum located at the back of their eyes that aids night vision and accounts for their eyeshine, or seemingly glowing eyes at night. When exposed to artificial lighting at night (ALAN), the

vision of nocturnal animals will be blurry and overstimulated, perhaps resulting in momentary blindness and increased vulnerability to predators.

The predictable light cycles of day and night have been encoded in the DNA of all plants and animals for billions of

years and govern a host of circadian processes from sleeping, mating, migration, hunting, predator avoidance, hibernation, to plant budding, flowering and leaf drop. Daily, monthly and annual activity patterns for many species are closely tied to the natural solar and lunar light cycles. These circadian rhythms were unaffected until the invention, and use, of the electric light bulb 140 years ago.

**About 70% of mammals are nocturnal, and more than 60% of invertebrates are active at night. Nocturnal animals are designed for low light conditions with large eyes and heightened senses of smell and hearing.**

The excessive or inappropriate use of outdoor artificial light has been found to be responsible for a host of negative and deadly effects on many nocturnal creatures including migrating birds, mammals, insects, amphibians and plants. According to the National Audubon Society, almost 60% of North American birds make their seasonal migratory flights at night, navigating by the light of the moon and stars. ALAN however can disrupt spring and fall bird migration.

The skyglow from urban areas disorients migrating birds from their routes and stopover feeding areas, causing birds to exhaust their energy reserves at this critical time in their life cycle. Bird collisions with brightly lit high-rise buildings result in millions of bird fatalities each year. Light sensitive bat species, like the Big Brown and the imperiled Little Brown bats, have been found to be significantly less active in well-lit areas. ALAN has been found to decrease the ability of fireflies to attract their mates and is one of the many reasons for their decline. ALAN strongly affects important nocturnal pollinators such as moths, beetles and even some bees which pollinate a more diverse set of flowers and crops than their diurnal counterparts.

Nocturnal wildlife is sensitive not only to the brightness of light at night, measured in lumens, but also the color of the light, measured in Kelvins (K). Most nocturnal wildlife is extremely sensitive to the cooler, whiter, blue-rich light in LED lighting (3000 K and above) and less sensitive to the warmer, amber-colored lights (less than 3000K) but the most wildlife-friendly lighting at night is no lighting at all.

ALAN also impacts our health. In 2012, the American Medical Association declared light at night to be carcinogenic. The AMA recommends against blue-rich white streetlights to “minimize potential harmful human health and environmental effects.” Light of any kind can suppress the secretion of melatonin, a hormone that regulates the body’s sleep-wake cycle, and blue-white light at night does so more powerfully, especially in children. Melatonin has antioxidant properties, induces sleep,



boosts the immune system, lowers cholesterol, and helps the functioning of the thyroid, pancreas, ovaries, testes, and adrenal glands. By suppressing melatonin, blue light can shift the body’s natural sleep-wake cycle, making it difficult to maintain a regular sleep schedule while also increasing the risks for obesity, depression, breast cancer and more. A 2008 study in Israel found that women living in neighborhoods where it was bright enough to read a book outside at midnight had a 73% higher risk of developing breast cancer than those residing in areas with less outdoor artificial lighting.

Fortunately, ALAN is one of the easiest environmental problems to solve, and the necessary technology is available to do so. Practices such as using amber-colored porch lights, shielding and dimming lights or using timers to minimize the total number of hours lights are on will help reduce light pollution. When replacing or purchasing new outdoor light fixtures, choose lighting fixtures with the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) seal of approval. Install motion-activated sensors that allow lights to go on only when needed. These sensor-activated lights not only save energy but provide greater safety in that they alert property owners to possible disturbances. Even simple actions like closing drapes or blinds at night to reduce light spillage to the outside will help. Your neighbors, whether furry, winged or two-legged, will appreciate it.

For more information on the impacts of ALAN and what you can do to restore the nocturnal environment, please visit [darksky.org](https://darksky.org), [lightsoutct.org](https://lightsoutct.org), take the Lights Out Pledge (<https://tinyurl.com/2hjsh7de>), or watch the SLT’s Community Conversations presentation Seeing Stars on Simsbury Community Media, <https://tinyurl.com/2p9us345>





## SIMSBURY LAND TRUST YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS

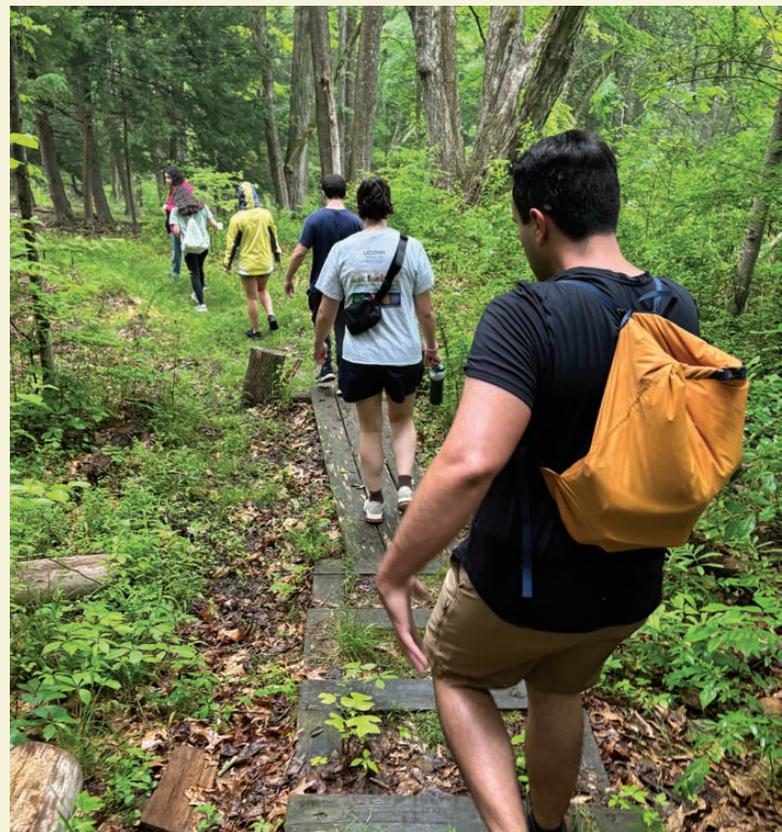
### Simsbury Land Trust is continually inspired

by the dedication and energy of young volunteers. Together, we seek to answer an important question: What can I do locally to impact the environment in a positive way?

The Simsbury Land Trust Youth Conservation Corps (SLT YCC) is the answer. This dedicated group provides Simsbury youth with meaningful opportunities to engage in hands-on conservation efforts. Through activities such as hikes, educational programs, trail maintenance, invasive plant removal and construction projects, participants actively contribute to Simsbury Land Trust's conservation mission. This work is both physically and mentally rewarding, offering teenagers a chance to make a tangible difference in their local environment.

All SLT YCC activities are supervised by Simsbury Land Trust Board members, who guide participants in learning about local trails, farms, conservation properties, invasive species management, trail work, and more. Through hands-on experience, youth gain valuable knowledge and skills while fostering a deeper connection to the natural world. Our goal is not only to make a lasting environmental impact but also to inspire a lifelong commitment to conservation and stewardship among the next generation.

Thank you to Simsbury High School graduates Clare Lepak and Charlotte Roberts for their help founding the SLT YCC. We wish them luck at college. Ella Capozzi, Addy Escamilla and Jonah Lipar will continue to serve on the SLT YCC this year adding additional programs to encourage local youth to get to know and appreciate Simsbury's open spaces.





## The Next Generation of Conservation

—Jonah Lipar, SLT Youth Conservation Corps

Ever since I began volunteering with Simsbury Land Trust the summer before my freshman year, I have wanted to get more teens involved with conservation. I was inspired by the Granby Land Trust Youth Corps, and began planning the Simsbury Land Trust Youth Conservation Corps the winter of 2024 with the help of Margery Winters and Amanda Thompson. Members from the Earth Advocates Club at Simsbury High School were willing to join me in getting this group started and running events. Founding members are: Ella Capozzi, Addy Escamilla, Clare Lepak and Charlotte Roberts.

We have been very successful in our first spring and summer. We coordinated with Environmental Protection Fisheries Biologist, Matt Devine, from CT DEEP, and hosted a trout release at Stratton Brook in April, our first event. It was extremely successful, and we had many families, young fishermen, and athletes from the distance track team participate. Since then, we held a native tree planting at Simsbury Land Trust Wagner Woods property, ran youth and adult invasive plant tables at the Simsbury Sustainability Fair, and held a CT Trails Day youth hike at Tanager Hill/Owen Mortimer Preserve.

The process has not been without its challenges as we try to engage, not only teens, but also young families. In July we held a Dirty Boots Club program for young children at the Drake Hill Flower Bridge and saw many families attend; we handed out 23 scavenger hunt packets for kids to learn about the environment around the Farmington River. We held another Dirty Boots Club event in August at Stratton Brook State Park. Kids and adults brushed insects off rocks into nets to collect a sampling of the insects that live in Stratton Brook. Everyone assessed our findings to see if there were insects present that are more sensitive to pollutants. We were happy to find many sensitive species like mayflies, stoneflies and caddis present in Stratton Brook leading us to the happy conclusion that it is a clean brook!

We are looking forward to more invasive plant removal work and youth hikes in the fall and winter as well as a bigger project—helping to restore the pond behind Simsbury High School to a healthy ecosystem. We hope to keep collaborating with other great high school clubs beyond Earth Advocates Club. We have a lot of common goals with the Green Team, the new Science National Honor Society, and the newly forming Middle School Environmental Club. We are looking forward to a lot of collaboration and exciting developments in the very near future. If you want to stay updated on what SLT YCC is doing to promote the appreciation of conservation in Simsbury follow our Instagram page at SimsburyLYouth.

# BLUEBIRDS AND SWALLOWS THRIVE DUE TO DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

—*Doug Beach, SLT Volunteer*

Over the past few years, Simsbury Land Trust has deepened its commitment to supporting bird populations across our preserves and at the town-owned Meadowood property. From the brilliant flash of an Eastern Bluebird to the graceful sweep of a Tree Swallow, these birds have become familiar and cherished residents of our local landscape.

## Building Homes for Bluebirds and Swallows

In 2022, SLT volunteers launched an intensive nest box program to help two cavity-nesting species: the Eastern Bluebird and the Tree Swallow. Historically, bluebirds relied on natural tree cavities, but competition from invasive House Sparrows and European Starlings caused their population to crash by nearly 90% in the mid-20th century. Thanks to human stewardship, their numbers have rebounded. Tree Swallows, however, are still in decline, with populations down about 30% since the 1960s.

Because both species require similar nesting sites, boxes are often installed in pairs—about 20 feet apart—allowing bluebirds and swallows to coexist as neighbors. The strategy has paid off: in just four seasons, volunteers documented nearly 50 successful broods across Wegner, Case, Glover, Tanager Hill, Wagner Woods and Meadowood.

Across SLT preserves, four broods of Eastern Bluebirds and four broods of Tree Swallows fledged successfully.



Protecting these boxes is no small task. Bears, raccoons, snakes, blowflies, and even blue jays have all threatened the nests. SLT members Randy Dalton and Doug Beach monitor each box weekly from April through July, installing predator guards, refreshing nesting material, and even removing invasive sparrow nests. Their dedication, though sometimes heartbreaking when predation occurs, is deeply rewarding when fledglings take wing for the first time.

Looking ahead, the nest box program will continue with adjustments. Glover Preserve, which has struggled with wrens and other predators, may see its boxes retired in 2026. All SLT and Meadowood boxes will also be treated with Pine-Sol, a deterrent that helps keep bears away.



## 2025 Nesting Results

Despite quirky spring weather, 2025 proved to be another strong season. Across SLT preserves, four broods of Eastern Bluebirds and four broods of Tree Swallows fledged successfully. At Meadowood, results were similarly encouraging, with three Eastern Bluebird broods and one Tree Swallow brood. Even more notable: after eight bear attacks in 2023, there were none on SLT properties this year.

### Here's a snapshot of the results:

Location	# Boxes	Eastern Bluebird	Tree Swallow	Notes
Wegner Preserve	4	2 broods fledged	3 broods fledged	No bear activity
Case Preserve	2	1 brood fledged	–	
Glover Preserve	2	1 brood fledged	1 brood fledged	Ongoing wren/snake challenges
Meadowood	4	3 broods fledged	1 brood fledged	1 bear incident (unprotected)
<b>Totals (2025)</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7 broods fledged</b>	<b>5 broods fledged</b>	

#### Efficiency Rate (broods per available box)

SLT Preserves (2025): 1.00

Meadowood (2025): 1.00

This marks steady progress compared to 2023, when overall efficiency was just 0.375.



## Honoring a Champion: Art Gingert

Behind these successes stands a network of dedicated volunteers and one especially tireless advocate. In 2022, SLT Board of Trustee Danielle D'Ermo reached out to Art Gingert, founder of Connecticut's American Kestrel Nest Box program. Since 1977, Art has installed and tended more than 100 kestrel boxes in 31 towns, earning the Aquarion Water Company's Environmental Champion award in 2021.

Art generously brought his expertise to SLT, building and installing kestrel boxes at Wegner Preserve and Meadowood. He has continued to monitor them, mentor volunteers, and even drive from West Cornwall to remove stubborn poison ivy near a box. His passion for birds and his willingness to share his time and knowledge has been invaluable.

Simsbury Land Trust recognizes with appreciation Art for his years of guidance, generosity, and friendship. His efforts have not only strengthened native bird conservation but have also inspired a new generation of SLT bird stewards.





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## FINDING VALUE IN CONSERVATION TOGETHER

As we head into the 50th Anniversary of Simsbury Land Trust, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your continued support. **A COMPLETE LISTING OF OUR 2025 MEMBERS** is available on our website, and we are grateful to every one of you for making this work possible.

Land conservation means something different to everyone. For some, it's the miles of trails that offer peace and adventure. For others, it's the chance to protect native plants or ensure that wildlife has safe space to thrive. Whatever the reason, every connection to nature is meaningful—and every reason for supporting conservation is a valid one.



In 2025 alone, we hosted more than 25 hikes, 20 invasive plant removal days, planted over 30 native plants, held bird and amphibian walks, offered presentations, screened films, and even released fish and studied water quality by looking at macroinvertebrates. These programs provide opportunities not only to enjoy open spaces, but also to learn, share, and deepen a passion for the natural world.



Scan QR code to view membership listing

Your membership donations make all of this possible. Your donations fund trail maintenance, stewardship projects, and educational programs that keep our landscapes healthy and our community engaged. Together, we are preserving open spaces while fostering the knowledge and connections that ensure their value for generations to come.

## Spotlight on Native Plants: Ghost Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*)

— Amanda Thompson, SLT Executive Director

Ghost Pipe is one of the more unusual native plants you'll find in our forests. This plant can be spotted year round; however, it is most visible in the summer when its white or pale pink flowers emerge from the leaf litter.

Unlike most plants, Ghost Pipe has no chlorophyll and doesn't make its own food. Instead, it taps into the underground partnership between trees and fungi. Trees and fungi exchange nutrients in a symbiotic relationship, and Ghost Pipe cleverly mimics tree roots to access the fungus—making it what scientists call *epiparasitic*, or a parasite on a parasite.



Though it resembles a mushroom, Ghost Pipe belongs to the Heath family, which also includes blueberries, cranberries, azaleas, and rhododendrons. Its primary pollinator is the bumble bee.

As the flower matures, it straightens upright and dries, releasing dust-like seeds into the wind. Only seeds that land near a partnering fungus will germinate, and thus few succeed. Ghost Pipe is most often found in moist, shaded forests—especially under beech, oak, or pine trees where fungi thrive in rich, decaying soil.