

Protecting open space in perpetuity through acquisition, stewardship, education, and advocacy

Documenting Wildlife with Motion-activated Cameras

Whenever the Farmington Land Trust acquires a new property, one of the first things it does is conduct an inventory. Knowing what plants and animals call the parcel home helps to guide a strategy for the long term stewardship of the site. So it was that Dr. Paul Hapeman and eight students from his Central Connecticut State University biology class in Mammology, were climbing toward the ridgeline on the Land Trust's recently acquired Clatter Valley Road Parcel. Their mission was to set up a series of eight motion-activated game cameras to record passing wildlife.

Who lives on or passes through the nearly 14-acre site? Squirrels, chipmunks, songbirds and owls, deer, bear, raccoons, opossum, and coyotes, for sure. But there may be other mammals who inhabit the mixed hardwood forest that was once the site of one of the first roads leading into Farmington. I would be psyched if we saw a fisher," said Paul. "A bobcat would be a great sighting." One was sighted nearby in a study of the Carey Pasture that Paul led in 2014.



Dr. Paul Hapeman demonstrates the use of a motion-detecting camera he and his CCSU students are deploying at the Clatter Valley Road Parcel. The cameras will be used to conduct a study of mammal diversity at the site.

To watch the video clip, go to www.farmingtonlandtrust.org. In any case we will soon have a much better understanding of mammal diversity and their relative numbers, as Paul and his class complete their site-specific survey.

The group was selecting random locations to place their cameras, which are mounted on trees using nylon straps. The lens is
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Charting a Path to the Future

**Bruce Edgren,
Executive Director**



For the Farmington Land Trust's new Executive Director, Bruce Edgren, it all started in the woods. As a child growing up in suburban Minneapolis, he went with his family on regular treks to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area wilderness, a vast national forest near the border with Canada. Gliding across its waters, camping beneath its spruce and pine, and listening

to the haunting call of the loon, he developed a connection to the land and an appreciation for value of a place left in its natural state.

That link was strengthened in college when Bruce took a "Big Chill" trip with some friends. On the cusp of adulthood, the group were each poised to go their own ways, and the trip afforded them a chance to compare the trajectories of their lives, but what really got Bruce's attention was the setting. "It was the first time, he says, that I began to recognize the power of place."

From there, Bruce stepped into a career that began in the world of academia,

as an assistant professor of pharmacy practice in Michigan, continued on to research in drug safety in neonatal and pediatric intensive care, to working with managed care and medicaid, to serving as a consultant on national health care policy initiatives as a 2012-13 Fellow with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Political Science Association in Washington, DC. He was also the founding Chair of Hartford's University of Saint Joseph School of Pharmacy Practice and Administration where he served as Associate Professor from 2009 until his retirement in 2015.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

“Preserving Natural Areas”

As president of the Farmington Land Trust, I am often asked “What does the Land Trust do?” My answer: “It preserves natural areas.” What does that mean and why is it important to preserve natural parts of our environment?

The preservation of unique natural areas, some with historical significance, has been a concern of town citizens for generations.

In Farmington, areas of natural beauty, both large and small, have been conserved through the efforts of the Farmington Land Trust and the Town since the Land Trust’s founding in 1971. Recent examples, in just the past year, are the 90 acres acquired by the Town on Pinnacle Ridge affording panoramic views of the valley; and the FLT’s 14-acre historic Clatter Valley Road Parcel, a former stagecoach road linking Hartford and the Farmington valley.

The Farmington Land Trust plays an important and unique role in land conservation. It is a private, non-profit organization serving as a “public trust” to protect land. In this capacity, we can hold land and easements donated to the trust. We also serve in a public capacity along with the town’s Conservation Commission, whose chair is an ex-officio member of our board, and the town’s Land Acquisition Committee, on which we have two seats, to preserve unique areas of natural importance and individuality, and to build natural wildlife corridors throughout the town. Because



the Land Trust is a private entity, we can also serve as the advocate for the preservation of these natural areas, something town officials cannot do.

With land growing scarce, uniform suburban development has placed extreme pressure on the diversity of life, the most basic and sustaining character of life itself. Urbanization is one of the most lasting causes of habitat loss for native species. Ecological succession can restore much of the natural forest and habitat loss due to other forms of development such as farming and logging. Suburban development, however, not only persists, but tends to expand.

Natural areas benefit not only wildlife, but people. A significant correlation between the health and well-being of community residents and their access to natural areas was reported earlier this year by The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, in research based on data from the Nurse’s Health Study. Key findings were improved mental health, higher levels of physical activity, and lower levels of respiratory disease for those living in green areas.

We in Farmington are blessed by the foresight of early conservation minded residents who have left us with a legacy of preserved natural areas. They have left us with a treasure of thousands of acres of life-supporting natural areas and, also, with the responsibility to preserve them through our stewardship.

Your membership in the FLT is one step you can take today toward fulfilling that responsibility.

~Richard Kramer

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Do You Shop at Amazon.com?

Then you have one more way to support FLT! Just visit our website; at the bottom of the home page you’ll see the logo for AmazonSmile. By clicking on the logo you can designate the Farmington Land Trust as your “charity of choice.” Amazon.com will then automatically donate one-half percent, 0.5%, of each purchase to the FLT when you shop at <http://smile.amazon.com>.

(Yes, smile.amazon.com offers the same products and prices as amazon.com. And you can change your charity of choice at any time.  Of course, we hope you won’t!)

Join others who take advantage of this opportunity. Combined, these small but regular contributions from Amazon.com are a significant source of revenue to help the FLT SAVE THE LAND.

Great Ditch Event Breaks Our Fundraising Record!

Over 200 people attended The Great Ditch, 1828-1848, Preserving Our Legacy event at Farmington Gardens. The evening started with cocktails and appetizers while folks reconnected and surveyed the fabulous packages for the *Cause Within the Cause* drawing. The event raised \$35,000 net after expenses, including \$8,500 raised from the drawing earmarked to help develop and maintain our Land Trust trails.

Guests enjoyed a delicious surf and turf dinner while learning more about the Farmington Canal from local history enthusiast Jay Bombara, JD. The Land Trust preserves, protects, and maintains sections of the Feeder Canal as well as the Farmington Canal Aqueduct. Henry Mason, emeritus director, was honored for his many years as Steward of the Canal Aqueduct Parcel with a presentation to his family of a framed print by Sarah Prentiss Brown. Guests were treated to the premier of the film *Henry Mason – A Steward's Story*, filmed and produced by FLT board member Steve Silk.

The evening concluded with the drawing of the *Cause Within the Cause* winners. Everyone went home a winner with their REI water bottle and historic map of the Farmington Canal. We thank



Carol Plough, Peter Van Beckum, Kathy Wadsworth and Cindy Stanley enjoying September's Great Ditch event, which raised \$35,000 for the Farmington Land Trust.

our major sponsors Farmington Gardens, The Hometown Foundation, and ProHealth Physicians as well as our many other supporters of this important event to help us continue the work of preserving open space in Farmington for current and future generations.

~Cate Grady-Benson

Charting a Path to the Future *(continued from page 1)*

Throughout, Bruce kept his other foot firmly planted in the natural world. On business trips, he made it a point to spend some time exploring parks and natural areas. "I'd go to a state for a two hour meeting, then try to find some local attraction that wasn't glitzy," he said. "I'd much rather spend time on the water or in the woods; it's what allows me to refresh."

Living for a time in Afton, MN, Bruce had a home near the St. Croix River, a protected area designated a National Scenic Riverway under the aegis of the National Park Service, and experienced the benefits and learned about some of the enforcement issues that go hand-in-hand with protected areas.

He moved to Farmington with his family in 2006. Last year, Bruce joined the Land Trust Board of Directors and soon learned of its search for a new Executive Director. After talks with board members Doug Pelham and Evan Cowles, and Land Trust president Richard Kramer, he sought the position he now holds.

"The thing that attracted me most to the Land Trust, other than its mission, was the quality of its people. They took this very seriously; it seemed like it was in the DNA of a lot of people here. I felt very much at home."

"The idea is that we have a different model here; we have a very engaged stewardship program, a very engaged board, a very engaged membership, and a very engaged town," Bruce said. "One of the biggest assets we have are the stewards, their dedication to looking after these properties and maintaining them." In the Land Trust's quest to further its relationship with the town and the state, those efforts, he says, are viewed as currency.

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Bruce's background in the medical community makes him uniquely qualified to help the FLT explore a potential new source of support from the health care and insurance industries, who are recognizing that open space plays a significant role in the physical and mental health of a community's populace. "We need to create a forum for these types of discovery, maybe by getting grants to explore the impact of open space on health."

"The future of my involvement is to try to equate value with the physical and mental health benefits of open space and the cleansing of the environment that open space provides," Bruce said. "I want to emphasize the benefits of open space to our community, help to create a sound organization, and as we approach our 50th anniversary, to build a foundation for the perpetuity of the organization and for land conservation in Farmington."

Documenting Wildlife *(continued from page 1)*

turned to a nearby tree, ideally ten or so feet distant, which is baited with a liberally punctured tin of sardines hanging from a wire. As if that fragrance is not enough, the researchers return several days after placing that bait to rub skunk quill (yes, the stinky spray emitted from their anal scent glands) mixed with vaseline on the tree's bark. While one might think that olfactory bouquet would send every sentient being running full tilt in the opposite direction, the sardine-skunk scent apparently piques the curiosity of some mammals. Paul says he has seen video of a bear scratching its back on a tree coated with the stink.

Cameras are also sighted along a north-south axis, to avoid glare from a rising or setting sun. Once positioned, the cameras can be set to record still images or video, to fire at specific intervals, or to take a time-lapse video. Students return regularly to download SD cards, and to relocate cameras.

In addition to using cameras to conduct their survey, the class will be trapping (and releasing unharmed) smaller mammals using Tomahawk, Havahart and Sherman traps. They will also be stringing 70 or more transits, 50 meter point-to-point lines along which they will hunt for any mammals or signs of mammals, such as scat or tracks.

When the study is complete, the Land Trust will have a more highly calibrated idea of the mammal population on the site. At the same time, another biology class led by Dr. Barbara Nicholson is surveying plant life at the site. The results will be valuable in going forward with a plan for stewardship and for developing trails on the Clatter Valley Road Parcel, which adjoins several other parcels to which the land trust possesses conservation easements, for a total area of nearly 50 contiguous



Keith Casserino, a CCSU student involved in the mammal survey, adjusts the aim of a camera he is affixing to a tree.

acres abutting the Metacomet Trail.

The studies, which are conducted without cost to the Land Trust, benefit both it and CCSU. Purchase of the cameras and other costs are covered by a grant made by the Farmington Chapter of UNICO to the Land Trust. Paul said when he first came to teach at CCSU, there were no satisfactory sites for conducting fieldwork. "Joining with the Farmington Land Trust gave us a chance to get out and to give them something back in return," he says.

The students appreciate it too. Keith Casserino, a graduate student at CCSU from Berlin, says "I believe there is an instinctual need for humans to interact with nature. A lot of my friends have never really been in the woods," he says. "Being in the field gives you an idea of what you're really getting into [as a biology major]."

What Membership Means to a Longtime Supporter

I support the FLT because its mission supports me and my community. An important part of the character of Farmington is the open spaces that are all around our town. These spaces have varied qualities; many are wild, some are farmed, some are historic and a few are parks. There are even urban or suburban lawns that are protected open space.

All are places that if unprotected would have been developed one way or another. This balance between open and developed spaces is critical to our sense of Farmington as an important place, a beautiful and historic place, and a good place to live.

I feel a connection to the past through the land that has been preserved. I know that this was accomplished because those who came before me had a vision and were willing to do the work to make it happen. I feel a debt of gratitude to these good citizens and I feel a commitment to continue their good work.

On a daily basis, I feel a connection to the land in the present. As I drive, bike, or walk around my town I appreciate its varied beauty and function. When I am away from Farmington my sense of home is enhanced by knowing I come from such a special town. And I feel a connection and an obligation to the future of my town. I want this place to remain beautiful and protected for those who come after me.

The Farmington Land Trust has led the way on protection of open space through acquisition of land by gift and by promoting the town's acquisition of land by purchase.

I have supported the Farmington Land Trust since I moved to town 32 years ago and I will continue to for as long as I am able. I encourage everyone who appreciates this fine place to do the same.

I FEEL A CONNECTION TO THE PAST THROUGH THE LAND THAT HAS BEEN PRESERVED. I KNOW THAT THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BECAUSE THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE ME HAD A VISION AND WERE WILLING TO DO THE WORK TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. I FEEL A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THESE GOOD CITIZENS AND I FEEL A COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE THEIR GOOD WORK.

~Peter Van Beckum, Farmington

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, January 22, 1 p.m.

The Plight of the Honeybee

Learn about the crucial role honeybees play in all our lives and get up to speed on the threats that face their very existence. Board members will be screening several bee documentaries to select the one that is most worth seeing. After the film, Stuart Worenecki, of



Stonewall Apiary, will give a talk about bees. Farmington Community and Senior Center at 321 New Britain Avenue. Questions and to register, contact the office at 860-674-8545 or by emailing: farmingtonland.trust@snet.net.

Friday, February 10, 5:30 p.m.

Snow Moon Snowshoe Outing

Depending on snow cover, we will snowshoe or walk the Nancy Conklin Trail on the Cowles Parcel off Meadow Road. We will take an engaging verbal tour spanning 10,000 years on the site before we set off on a path silvered by the light of a full winter moon. Afterwards we will gather for drinks and snacks by a fire. Questions and to register, contact the office at 860-674-8545 or by emailing: farmingtonland.trust@snet.net. No pets please.



Hikers pause near Will Warren's Den during an October hike to the hermit's hideaway led by John Vibert.

Sunday, March 5, 1 p.m.

Owl Howl

Join us to learn all about owls. Mary-Beth Kaeser of Horizon Wings in Ashford will bring a few of her feathered friends so we can get up close and personal with several different owl species. Afterwards, we will dissect owl spit, the odd little hairball-like, bone-filled pellets they produce shortly after feeding. Harry Potter will not be in attendance, but it should be fun! The event will be held at the Farmington Community and Senior Center at 321 New Britain Avenue. Questions and to register, contact the office at 860-674-8545 or by emailing: farmingtonland.trust@snet.net.



Thursday, April 20th, 5:30 p.m.

Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting and potluck supper will be followed with a presentation by Bill Duesing, one of the founding fathers of organic gardening and landscaping in Connecticut. "Working with Nature in Home and Community Landscapes" will cover the ways our choices of plants and materials for our landscape have many consequences for the environment and human health. Learn how your land care choices can improve pollinator habitat, attract birds, fight climate change and be beautiful with less maintenance. Questions and to register, contact the office at 860-674-8545 or by emailing: farmingtonland.trust@snet.net.

For 40 years, organic farmer, author and environmental activist **Bill Duesing** has been working to promote organic agriculture and greater local food sufficiency in Connecticut and the Northeast through lectures, writings, media, and community work. He spent a decade on the Board of Directors for the Oxford Land Trust and still serves them as a volunteer educator. With his wife Suzanne, Bill grows fruits and vegetables on the Old Solar Farm and advocates for a local and organic food system. He served for 12 years as the Executive Director of CT NOFA, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut. He is currently the CT NOFA Organic Advocate. At its 2015 Summer Conference, the NOFA Interstate Council awarded Bill the first Bill Duesing Lifetime Achievement Award.



Meet Our New Board Member: Francie Brown

I've lived in Farmington for all but 10 years of my life, when I lived in Wisconsin attending college. That's about 50 years. I guess you could say that means I love Farmington, which I do! One of my favorite things is to be out in nature, especially walking. I had the great fortune of being able to walk 500 miles across Spain a couple of summers ago. Professionally, I am a psychotherapist and have been in practice for the last 30 years in West Hartford with five good friends who are my partners. I'm very lucky to say that I love my work, and find it both challenging and rewarding.



How did you first become involved with the Farmington Land Trust?

Many years ago my first introduction to the Land Trust was attending a meeting at the country club when Jack Emery was still involved in the Land Trust. Since then, I've heard about it from various friends over the years. Last September, I volunteered at the annual Fundraiser held outside at the Bushley Property.

What made you decide to join the Board of Directors?

I think the Farmington Land Trust is an extremely important, and valuable organization dedicated to preserving open space. I wanted to be more involved in its mission, and I respect and really like the people involved!

What part of the Land Trust's mission — education, stewardship, acquisition — is most interesting to you and why?

Being a new steward this year, my first response would be stewardship, but I think acquisition and education are equally important. I choose all three.

How do you think the FLT could reach out more effectively to the community?

I think it's really important that we reach out to younger people and find ways to involve them in the Land Trust. In addition to our annual fundraising events, we could organize some fun activities where families can participate and learn about the Land Trust — smaller scale activities, outdoor activities —marshmallows on an open fire some starry night, or hike out a bit onto one of the properties and provide a chili dinner and beverages on a cold winter night, or have a contra dance and the proceeds go to the Land Trust.

Is there anything specific you hope to accomplish during your term?

I'm daring to dream — double our membership, double our acquisitions, and double the education events so that so many more people in Farmington know about the Land Trust and its mission and goals.

State Grant Assists Town of Farmington in Purchase of 90.5 Acres on Pinnacle Ridge

The Town of Farmington closed on an important open space purchase of 90.5 acres on the southeastern ridgeline of Rattlesnake Mountain and fronting on South Ridge and Settlement Roads this past July. We are thrilled by the recent announcement from Governor Malloy that the Town's grant application for funding under Connecticut's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program was approved. Liz Dolphin, author of the grant application and the town's Land Acquisition Consultant, estimated that the grant proceeds will fund \$550,000 of the \$1,050,000 purchase price.

The parcel is part of a larger contiguous area of more than 700 acres identified in the 2008 Farmington Valley Biodiversity Project as a Primary Conservation Area, which is defined as an important site featuring a high diversity of habitat types. The Metacomet trail, a local landmark and part of the National New England Scenic Trail, crosses over the property for approximately two-thirds of a mile.

The FLT has worked closely with the Town over the past 45 years to put in place and promote an active plan of conservation, which has preserved thousands of acres of open space in Farmington. We extend our gratitude to the Town Land Acquisition Committee, chaired by Peter Mastrobattista; to Liz Dolphin, Land Acquisition Consultant; and to the lead negotiator, Bill Wadsworth for their foresight and work in preserving this important part of Farmington — a treasure for future generations.



The view from Pinnacle Ridge is one of the highlights of the 90.5 acres on Rattlesnake Mountain.

PHOTO BY ALDEN WARNER

Caring for the Land As the Steward Sees It

If you noticed, the name of this newsletter is “The Steward”, and throughout previous newsletters over the years, and in all the emails and fundraising events, the underlying theme is always stewardship. Yeah, I know there are Board Members, and Executive Directors, and Executive Committees, task forces, and a lot of other volunteers who step up and step in when there’s a fundraising event, campaign, social events, and so on, and it’s all very important and they’re very important. They do things I don’t like to do, and, frankly, can’t do. It keeps the Land Trust afloat and allows us to do what we’re supposed to do – steward the properties that have been entrusted to the FLT, and in turn entrusted to you, the steward.

As for me, I like getting out to the properties, getting sweaty and bloodied, pulling and cutting barberry and multiflora rosa and identifying tasks and projects we may need to tackle as a team. But I always take the time to stop, watch, and listen. The creatures you hear and see, the wildflowers and wild weeds. Sometimes, I see and hear nothing...some days, that’s just what I need.

We have 37 stewards assigned to 65 properties and easements, nearly 300 acres. That’s an area equivalent to all of the “flats” – from the Farmington River on the north, to Route 6 on the south, and Main Street on the east, to New Britain Avenue on the west. That’s a big chunk of the town.

Your responsibility, and it is a responsibility – you’re not just a place keeper on The Steward’s List – is to get out on your property once a year. Make some observations: check to see if the FLT signage is in place. If there are any encroachments, let us know and



Steve Nelson

we’ll take care of it. Does it host invasives? I know, what’s an invasive? Remember that brochure we sent to you? You lost it! No problem. IPANE, the free app, has it all. When you’re done, fill out the report, send it in. That’s the minimum, and we’re happy to get it.

Remember our mantra: preserve and protect? Okay, not sure if we actually have a mantra, but if we did, that would be a good one. Because the next step I’d really like to see FLT stewards take is ridding a property of invasives, which can be a daunting and overwhelming task. You’ll never be able to do it by yourself. So why start? Because it helps.

Remember the IPANE app? That will help you to identify and find any invasives. You don’t have to tackle the whole property. Start with 100 to 200 square feet, or an hour- or two-hour session three or four times a year. Instant gratification? Definitely. No one may see it, but you will, and you’ll feel better...you will. And the good news is you only have to do it for perpetuity, or until *The Simpsons* get cancelled, whichever comes first.

So the above motivational speech didn’t get you, huh? Didn’t get me either. But I will get out there, and I’ll feel better after I do.

If things have changed and you don’t have the time to get out and do your report, let the office or me know. And don’t feel bad about it, don’t worry about letting us down. Our membership is growing and we have new volunteers ready to step in.

How about you? Are you ready? Let us know. Maybe you’re still unsure. Contact me or the office. We’ll arrange a time you can walk a parcel with a steward, or assign you to a steward mentor to get a feel for what it’s all about.

~Steve Nelson

Central Connecticut State University biology students in the Clatter Valley Parcel choosing locations for motion-activated cameras. See story on page 1)





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Annual Meeting

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*"And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
I would not change it."*

"AS YOU LIKE IT", WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Why Become an FLT Member?

The Farmington Land Trust depends on its members for the financial and volunteer support that will enable us to continue our mission to preserve and protect open space in Farmington. As a not-for-profit organization, we provide monthly educational programs free of charge to the community, guided hikes on our trails, a bi-annual newsletter, and stewardship of 65 properties in the Town of Farmington. We could not do this without the support of our members. Join or renew today and you will receive these benefits:

1. You will be part of an amazing group of conservation minded, fun-loving people devoted to sharing the common cause of preserving open space.
2. You will be invited to our Annual Meeting in April, where there is bound to be a fabulous speaker and great food to share.
3. You will receive a discounted price to our annual Fall Fundraiser, again with great food and folks!

4. You will be invited to special events throughout the year focused on enjoying and learning about the some of our interesting properties.
5. And last but not least, you will be helping to preserve and protect more than 300 acres in the town of Farmington for current and future generations.

Return the enclosed membership envelope or go to our website www.farmingtonlandtrust.org to secure your 2017 membership!

