



The Land Steward

Preserving open space since 1977. Vol. 2 No. 2 • Fall/Winter 2015/2016

We wish you a Great 2016!

Migratory Bird Stopovers And Our Bethel Land Trust Preserves

The coniferous forests of Canada and the New England deciduous forests are home to millions of migrating birds that nest and reproduce in our northern lakes and forests each spring, before returning south in the fall, using migratory patterns that have evolved over thousands of years. For many, it is a long and hazardous journey.



Migrating birds use well-established, food-rich paths called flyways, along a north-south axis. Each day during migration, many species of migratory birds must find a safe place to stop (some more than once daily) to rest, and refuel on insects, fruits and seeds, in order to maintain their health and continue their journey. These places are referred to as stopover sites. A migratory bird, faced with the dilemma of a stopover site having disappeared, may not have any viable options. Without places along the way that provide an adequate food supply for quick replenishment of fat reserves, shelter from predators and storms, and water, many will perish.

One of the Bethel Land Trust missions is the protection of bird stopover habitats to help birds on their journey. Preserving Bethel's forestlands and wetlands is critical to maintaining our migratory bird population.

Migratory Bird Stopovers Sites at our Preserves

Mike's Pond Preserve is a stopover for a variety of waterfowl, forest such as Wood Ducks, Mallards, Bitterns and Herons,

Wolfpit Preserve is a stopover for a variety of and wetland birds, too many to list here.

Come and visit our preserves and spend some quiet times observing our migrants and let us know which species you spot.



Wood duck



Yellow Warbler

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The Land Steward is published by the land trust for its members, supporters and collaborating supporters.

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A Word from the President

Hearing and seeing Canada geese flying overhead is a marker of fall. As we dine on autumn's bounty of cider, donuts and pumpkin pies, millions of birds will leave their breeding grounds throughout New England and northern Canada and begin their journey to their wintering grounds in Florida, Central and South America, via the Atlantic Flyway. This newsletter celebrates our fine-feathered friends, as well as the Bethel Land Trust members and friends who have helped us to accomplish so much in 2015.

The winter season, our holidays and the end of the year are fast approaching. I wish to thank all of our members and business partners for your contributions that have helped our Land Trust succeed in conserving and stewarding land. Your gifts of financial support, as well as goods and services enabled us to install signs at the majority of our preserves, and to perform trail maintenance with loaned equipment.

Sending the warmest wishes from my house to yours for a healthy and happy holiday season.

Don Warfield

Welcome Chris Morton

The Land Trust is pleased to welcome its newest Board of Director member Chris Morton, an IT professional. Chris, his wife Kelly and their daughter Lilly, have lived in Bethel since 2006. They can often be found exploring the woods of Wolfpit Preserve.



Nature Interpretive Signs

The Land Trust has initiated a *nature educational sign project*. The signs cover various topics and are packed with information and illustrations, but in a way that doesn't overwhelm the reader.

We hope the signs will increase visitor enjoyment through the appreciation and understanding of our woodland and wetland habitats. Currently, there is one sign located at our Mike's Pond Preserve and two are located at our Wolfpit Preserve.

As a family, they also participate in Spartan Races, similar to cross country races except they include a variety of obstacles such as cargo nets and walls to be climbed, hurdles to jump over, monkey bars and rope climbing, mud to run through, etc. Spartan Races cover a variety of distances and difficulty ranging from 3 to 20 miles.



Introducing our Wolfpit Preserve

Wolfpit Is our largest preserve, comprising 77 acres, once used for pasture about 150 years ago. In addition to pasture, parts of the preserve were quarried, as evidenced by some large excavation pits. Today, 72 acres are woodlands, and there is a 5-acre marsh.

The marsh is fed by the Wolfpit Brook, which originates in Huntington Park. As the brook flows through the preserve, one can find small waterfalls that flow into a small pond and then into the marsh area where beavers have made their home.

Along some of the property boundaries, and within the forest are remnants of stonewalls. Stonewalls served many purposes: a depository for fieldstone removed for tilling the land, a boundary marker, and a barrier to keep livestock out of the crops. Along many of these stonewalls are remnants of wire fencing embedded in the trees. The stone walls and wire fences are evidence of the decades of agricultural use (livestock pasture) throughout the property.

Old-field trees are found throughout the forest (also called legacy trees). These are large, older trees, with large branches low on the stem. They began growing when the surrounding land was being farmed. This open-grown condition allowed the growth of their many large branches and spreading form. Many large old-field trees are along stonewalls. These trees served as a seed source for the present forest.



The forested areas and wetlands allows for a diverse population of wildlife. During a spring two-hour walkthrough, 26 species of birds were identified by their sounds. Raptors call Wolfpit their home, as does the expected deer, chipmunks, squirrels, fox and perhaps a bobcat. Turtles, frogs and a variety of insects can be found in and around the wetlands.

Parking

There is a graveled parking lot for four cars off Hearthstone Lane , which is an unmarked dirt road located between 37and 39 Wolfpits Road.



Hiking

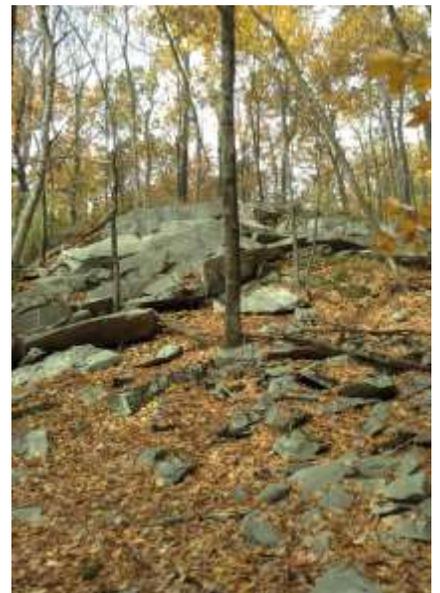
There is a marked trail system, consisting of yellow markers, blue markers and red markers. The Enchanted Trail, stretching from Bennet Park, through the East Swamp Boardwalk and the Bethel Educational Park, passes through a mix of Bethel Land Trust properties and public land, entering Wolfpit at Hearthstone Lane and ending at the far eastern side of the preserve at Jennifer Way.

We are embarking on a fund raising campaign to enhance our visitors experience when visiting this preserve. Among the projects slated are:

- Install an informational kiosk ~ \$500
- Install a boardwalk ~ \$3000 *

* With each boardwalk donation, your or your family's name will be engraved on a board.

* Each eight-foot section is \$50.



Boundary Marking Program by Chris Morton

Over the last few months I've learned a lot about boundary marking. I had eagerly volunteered to help mark the property boundaries at the Wolfpit's preserve as one of my first assignments as a new director on the BLT Board. Although I have had some past orienteering experience as a child, I naively expected this task to be a simple process of locating a few easy to spot landmarks on a map and marking them accordingly. I was quick to learn however the process is more a sophisticated mix of high tech science, low tech field work, and an artful interpretation of hard to read hand written notes on copies of old maps.

Fortunately, I was teamed up with Herb Kommritz who's an expert when it comes to navigating via GPS and orienteering with old maps. In preparation for our first trip out into the field, Herb had worked his magic by locating the GPS coordinates of each of the preserve's corners using various publically accessible GIS systems and marking them accordingly on his handwritten maps. He was then able to draw in any landmarks visible on satellite imagery such as stone walls, buildings and a neighbor's pool.

The actual field work I found quite enjoyable and much more within my element. It provided a great opportunity for some nice hiking and I got to explore parts of the preserve which I previously had not seen. I was also shocked at how accurate Herb's GPS waypoints were as we quite frequently found survey spikes, or other old boundary markers within just a few feet of the waypoint. However, in some locations, we were left to rely on old maps and visual clues to properly mark the corners.

The process of completing marking the Wolfpit Preserve's boundary corners is one of a number of steps the Land Trust is taking to enhance the usability, visibility and community value of the Wolfpit Preserve. It also marks the start of a boundary marking initiative for many of our preserves. Herb has graciously volunteered to continue this effort with other preserves while simultaneously teaching others, such as myself, his artful combination of Orienteering, GPS navigation, GIS system mastery and good old fashion field work.



How does GPS work?

The Global Positioning System (GPS) is a network of about 30 satellites orbiting the Earth at an altitude of 20,000 km. The system was originally developed by the US government for military navigation, but now anyone with a GPS device, be it a mobile phone or handheld GPS unit, can receive the radio signals that the satellites broadcast.

Wherever you are on the planet, at least four GPS satellites are 'visible' at any time. Each one transmits information about its position and the current time at regular intervals. These signals, travelling at the speed of light, are intercepted by your GPS receiver, which calculates how far away each satellite is, based on how long it took for the messages to arrive.

Once it has information on how far away at least three satellites are, your GPS receiver can pinpoint your location using a process called trilateration. GPS receivers require an unobstructed view of the sky, so they are used only outdoors and they often do not perform well within forested areas or near tall buildings.

The accuracy of a position determined with GPS depends on the type of receiver. Most consumer GPS units have an accuracy of about +/-10m.

Thank You for your Support in 2015
Our next Winter Newsletter will list 2016 donors
Please let us post your name in gratitude

The Board of Directors would like to recognize you, our generous partners, who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to land conservation through your support of our organization and those who made a decision to leave a legacy of open space in Bethel for future generations to enjoy. The names on this page represent you who believe that land conservation is important and that the work of the Trust matters in our daily lives. Thank you for being part of the Trust.

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Please consider becoming a member or making a contribution.

The Bethel Land Trust is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, and gifts are fully tax-deductible.

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100% of all donations go to support your local Land Trust and our efforts to maintain and protect the preserves.

Please make your check payable to: Bethel Land Trust

Mail this form and your contribution to: Bethel Land Trust, P.O. Box 332, Bethel, CT 06801

OR you may go to our website and donate through that portal: www.bethellandtrust.org

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT