



# The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE BETHEL LAND TRUST

*Preserving open space since 1977*

Vol. 3 No. 2 • Fall/Winter 2017

## Wolfpit and Janet P. Miller Preserves

An update on the Wolfpit – Miller Wildlife Sanctuary

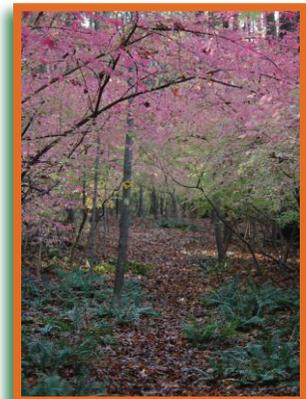
The Wolfpit and Janet P. Miller Preserves constitute a 90-acre wildlife sanctuary owned and maintained by the Bethel Land Trust. You will discover several miles of marked trails over a varied topography, a defunct feldspar mine, a peaceful brook with several small babbling waterfalls, a diverse ecosystem of wetlands, hardwood and evergreen forests, ubiquitous stonewalls and a beaver crafted pond. During this Spring and Summer:

- ✓ The trail system has been increased with the addition of the Janet P. Miller Trail. All trails have been cleared and marked. Numbered trail intersection posts have been installed to help hikers locate where they are while using a newly developed trail brochure.
- ✓ A bog walk, constructed by Tom Dolman (Boy Scout Eagle Project), has been installed on the Orange Trail.
- ✓ Five additional nature interpretive signs have been installed to enhance your educational experience.
- ✓ A kiosk, constructed by Josh Adams and Chris Morton, has been installed. The kiosk contains a trail map and a description of both Preserves. Trail map brochures are available on-site and are posted on our website.

In 2015, we had a forest bird habitat assessment, conducted by an Audubon biologist, a CT licensed forester and technicians from the Connecticut Agricultural Experimentation Station. The assessment, which can be viewed on our website, was conducted in order to:

- Determine which birds are currently utilizing the habitats in the sanctuary
- Describe and assess current forest bird habitat conditions in the sanctuary
- Make recommendations for protecting and for improving the habitats for the birds.

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BLT Mission

The mission of the BLT is to protect the natural diversity and beauty of Bethel by acquiring, managing and preserving in perpetuity environmentally sensitive land and to foster appreciation for and understanding of the environment.

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

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**Dear Friends**

This will be my last Newsletter. I hope the newsletters have been both informative and educational as to the need for land conservation.

For forty years, a broad coalition of individuals, families, and businesses have not only generously donated many important landscapes which make Bethel so attractive to people and wildlife, but also the funds and equipment that it takes to develop trails, bridges and other improvements that will let generations enjoy our Preserves. By definition, land conservation has no end date, so we will plan to care for our preserves well beyond our lifetimes.

Currently, the Land Trust is in negotiation for three parcels of land totaling 45-acres. Given that we are a small Land Trust as compared to our neighbors, we continue to have remarkable success in our mission of land conservation.

The Land Trust is run by a group of diverse, accomplished, talented individuals who share a passion not only for our mission but for our town as well. While still a lean and nimble team, the Board has proven it can handle every opportunity and challenge with skill and care.

Over the past few years, the Board has attracted some younger Directors, with families, which bodes well for the sustainability of the Land Trust.

On the horizon, the Land Trust will be launching an outdoor learning initiative and will be working with our Town leaders in exploring the possibility of establishing a Conservation Commission, with the Land Trust taking a leading role.

I have been delighted to have been at the helm of the Bethel Land Trust and thrilled to have been making a difference "in perpetuity," but now it is time to say goodbye, goodbye to all past and current Board members, past and current volunteers and business donors, each unselfish with their time in order to keep Bethel the wonderful community that it is.

Soon, we will be hearing and seeing Canada geese flying overhead as a marker of Autumn. As we dine on autumn's bounty of cider, donuts and apples pies, burn those calories with a friend or family hike in our Wolfpit-Janet P. Miller wildlife sanctuary or view migratory waterfowl at Mike's Pond rest stop or stroll along the Enchanted Trail Boardwalk. Escape the noise of urban living and enjoy a personal connection with nature. A connection with nature is critical to our health, social well-being and creativity.

These wildlife sanctuaries are our efforts to enable families and individuals to get outside and connect with nature.

Best regards,

**Don Warfield**

## Why Do Autumn Leaves Change Their Color?

The Splendor of Autumn - Some consider it to be the most incredible time of the year. Gorgeous colors, the mixture of reds, purples, orange and yellow leaves vibrantly signal the end of summer as the trees put themselves to bed for the long sleep of winter. New England floods with thousands upon thousands of annual visitors all hoping to achieve a breath taking view of the beautiful renaissance of nature.

During the spring and summer, leaves serve as factories where most of the foods necessary for deciduous tree's and shrub's growth are manufactured. This food-making process takes place in the leaf in numerous cells containing **chlorophyll**, which gives the leaf its green (pigment) color. Chlorophyll absorbs from sunlight the energy that is used in transforming carbon dioxide and water to carbohydrates, such as sugars and starch.

In late summer, as daylight hours shorten and temperatures cool, the veins that carry fluids into and out of the leaf are gradually closed off as a layer of special cells forms at the base of each leaf. As this layer develops, water and mineral intake into the leaf is reduced, slowly at first, and then more rapidly. During this time, the chlorophyll pigment begins to decrease eventually giving way to other color pigments such as yellows and oranges. The reds, purples and browns come from anthocyanins, a pigment that is formed when the sugars in the leaves breakdown in bright autumn sunlight.

### How does weather affect autumn color?

The amount and brilliance of the colors that develop in any particular autumn season are related to weather conditions that occur before and during the time the chlorophyll in the leaves is dwindling. Temperature and moisture are the main influences.

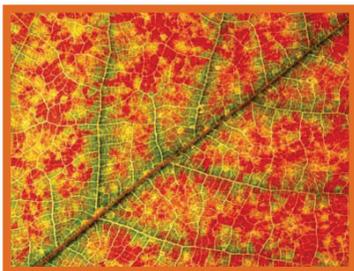
A succession of warm, sunny days and cool, crisp but not freezing nights seems to bring about the most spectacular color displays.

The amount of moisture in the soil also affects autumn colors. Like the weather, soil moisture varies greatly from year to year. The countless combinations of these two highly variable factors assure that no two autumns can be exactly alike. A late spring, or a severe summer drought, can delay the onset of fall color by a few weeks. A warm period during fall will also lower the intensity of autumn colors. A warm wet spring, favorable summer weather, and warm sunny fall days with cool nights should produce the most brilliant autumn colors.

### What happens to all those fallen leaves?

Needles and leaves that fall are not wasted. They decompose and restock the soil with nutrients and make up part of the spongy humus layer of the forest floor that absorbs and holds rainfall. Fallen leaves also become food for numerous soil organisms vital to the forest ecosystem.

It is quite easy to see the benefit to the tree of its annual leaf fall, but the advantage to the entire forest is more subtle. It could well be that the forest could no more survive without its annual replenishment from leaves than the individual tree could survive without shedding these leaves. The many beautiful interrelationships in the forest community leave us with myriad fascinating puzzles still to solve.



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# 40th Year Anniversary

Thanks to all Board members past and present



Josh Adams  
Kim Adams  
Eric Anderson  
Frank Borysiewicz  
Judi Borysiewicz  
Deborah Case  
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Roberta Warfield  
Peter Wise  
Elizabeth White  
Thomas Wolf  
Diane Worden  
Paul Young

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The sanctuary is one of the of the largest contiguous areas of forest within Bethel, a relatively large “green” space relative to Bethel’s high density residential neighborhoods, which helps it act as a magnet for wildlife -- particularly birds which can see it from the air.

Overall, the sanctuary provides a variety of habitats for birds. The mixture of upland hardwood dominated forest, Wolf Pit Brook, forested wetlands, and a relatively open wetland all provide important potential food and nesting resources for many species.

Invasive plants are a major issue in the sanctuary and will be addressed in a phased approach. Because invasives can provide a habitat that is beneficial to some nesting and migrant birds, some areas will be allowed to grow back up before all areas are cleared.

The Boy Scout Troop and volunteers have already started to remove an invasive, the winged euonymus, which will enable more sunlight to reach the forest floor and allow native plant species to grow.

Continued from page 3 - Leaves

## Can you tell a tree from its colors?

In addition to leaf shape, you can use fall leaf color to help identify different trees species. Look for these leaf colors on the trees when walking in your neighborhood or walking in our Wolfpit Preserve or our local parks:

Oaks: Red, brown or russet

Hickories: golden bronze

Dogwood: purple-red

Birch: bright yellow

Poplar: golden yellow

Maple trees show a range of colors

- Sugar Maple: yellow to orange to -red
- Red Maple: bright scarlet

Sassafras: deep orange, scarlet, purple, yellow

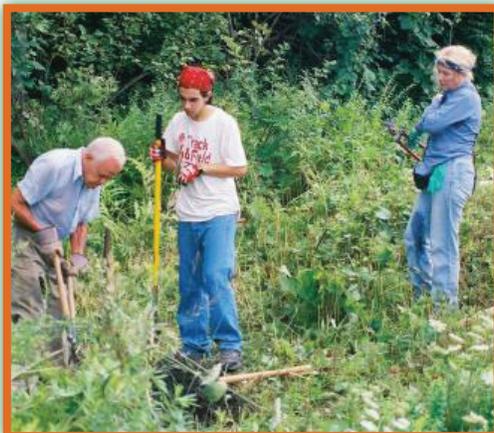
## Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of the Bethel Land Trust, playing a critical role helping us achieve our mission of land conservation. We rely on the support of volunteers to assist in a variety of ways, such as stewardship work parties, trail building and maintenance, etc. Every minute is appreciated and every second of your work has an impact. Give it a try! Please contact the Bethel Land Trust at [bethellandtrust.org](http://bethellandtrust.org).



“No Act of Kindness,  
No matter How Small,  
Is ever wasted”

-Aesop-



# FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER 2017

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The Bethel Land Trust is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, and gifts are fully tax-deductible.  
For Gift Memberships, Tributes, Land and In-Kind donations, please visit our website; [bethellandtrust.org](http://bethellandtrust.org)

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ANNUAL BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP

- Small business member \$50
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100% of all donations go to help your local Land Trust in our efforts to maintain and protect your local environment.

Please make your check payable to: Bethel Land Trust

Mail this form and your tax deductible 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](http://www.bethellandtrust.org)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**