



THE LAND STEWARD

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Land Trust

Vol. 22, No. 2

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

Spring 2010

Land Trust Forges Unique Partnership with Ithaca College and Town of Ithaca to Save 100 Acres of Wetlands and Gorge

100 acres will be preserved in perpetuity through two new conservation easements, marking the first collaboration between the Land Trust, the Town of Ithaca and Ithaca College.

The two easements—covering 23 acres of restored wetlands and woodlands at the edge of Ithaca College's South Hill Campus and 77 acres of woodlands owned by the college at Van Buskirk Glen in Newfield—were finalized during a signing ceremony on March 12 at Ithaca College.

Andy Zepp, the Land Trust's executive director; Herb Engman, supervisor for the Town of Ithaca; and Tom Rochon, president of Ithaca College, took part in the signing.

"This is the first three-way collaboration of a private college, a private non-profit and a municipality to protect a total of 100 acres," said Engman.

"We appreciate Ithaca College's commitment to protect a regionally significant natural area at Van Buskirk Glen while at the



GARY HODGES

(left to right) Ithaca College President Tom Rochon, Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp, and Town of Ithaca Supervisor Herb Engman during the signing ceremony at Ithaca College

Water Act requires that when wetlands are removed, they must be replaced by other wetland areas of an equivalent or larger size.

"The Town of Ithaca Planning Board had the responsibility of permitting the new recreational and sports facility at Ithaca College," said Engman. "In recognition of the destruction of some wetlands, the board required the construction of new wetlands at a rate of 1.5 times of that destroyed."

The restored wetlands lie along Coddington Road at the edge of the South Hill campus on two parcels of college land that had the right features for constructing this type of habitat. Along with the four-plus acres of wetland, the parcels include nearly 20 acres of adjacent brush land and upland forest.

To facilitate the project, the Land Trust will co-hold the easement with the town for 5 years; after that, the town will take over exclusive responsibility to hold and maintain the easement.

The second easement includes about 77 acres of woodland owned by the college at Van Buskirk Glen in Newfield. The

continued on page 3



SANDY BONANNO

The newly protected portion of Van Buskirk Glen hosts mature woodlands, a steep sided gorge and several water falls.

same time forging a collaboration between themselves, the Land Trust and the town," said Zepp.

The first easement, at the edge of Ithaca College's South Hill campus, includes close to 24 acres of restored wetlands, woods and brush. Around four acres of wetland were created in order to compensate for the loss of 2.77 acres of wetlands on the site of the new Ithaca College Athletics and Events Center. The federal Clean



PERSPECTIVES

In the midst of a challenging economy and a state fiscal crisis, New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli has issued a timely report entitled *Economic Benefits of Open Space Preservation*. While some are questioning the priority of open space protection, the state's chief financial officer makes a strong case for why action is needed today to secure the future of our most significant undeveloped lands.

DiNapoli emphasizes that open space can provide a variety of public benefits, including storm water drainage and water management. He further states that "open spaces also provide a more direct economic benefit through tourism, agriculture, and the forestry industry."

The study notes that industries reliant on open space contribute more than \$100 billion to New York's economy. In addition, natural drainage and water management provided by open space lands can significantly reduce municipal costs for water treatment. When these lands are converted to other uses, the natural benefits provided by open space must be replaced through the

construction of public infrastructure that is paid for through local tax revenue.

Recommendations from the report include:

- Allowing communities to establish community preservation funds and to encourage good land use planning at the municipal level—these tools are already in place in some downstate communities and have proven to be a cost effective approach to conservation;
- Evaluating the adequacy of protections for lands such as wetlands that provide significant ecosystem services for local communities;
- Improving state-level planning for open space to address long-term funding needs;
- Improving administration of state funds for open space programs—in recent years, for example, farmland protection projects have not been funded due to insufficient administrative resources;
- Encouraging private land conservation through programs like the NYS Conservation Partnership Program, a partnership between the state and the

Land Trust Alliance to provide high-leverage grants to local land trusts.

Both our economy and our overall quality of life depend upon the scenic landscapes of the Finger Lakes region. If our region is to thrive in the future, we must continue to work on maintaining and enhancing the "green infrastructure" we need to maintain water quality, sustain agriculture, provide recreational opportunities and support our tourism industry.

Though times are tough for New York State right now, we must continue to make these investments just as we continue to maintain our roads and bridges. If we don't, we will be poorer in the long run, both in terms of the dollars in our pockets and the quality of our lives.

A complete copy of the report may be found at: <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/environmental/openspacepreserv10.pdf>

—Andy Zepp

UPDATE: The Campaign to Protect Conklin Gully

Last summer's newsletter reported on the Land Trust's ambitious efforts to protect two significant parcels of land within the Canandaigua Lake watershed. The two adjacent tracts encompass 144 acres of rugged woodlands that border High Tor Wildlife Management Area and feature half of Conklin Gully, a scenic gorge that is a popular spot for outdoor recreation. The two acquisitions provide the only connecting corridor of conserved land between thousands of acres of public open space.

Together, these parcels feature 10,000 feet of frontage on Parish Hill Road and State Route 245. Their acquisition by the Land Trust now protects the gully and will prevent additional development along those roadways. These conservation lands are significant to the community, to the Canandaigua Lake watershed and to New York State.

The Land Trust intends to convey both properties to the state as additions to High Tor Wildlife Management Area at some point in the future. Any funds raised from the purchases by the state will then be used to support other acquisition projects within the watershed.

To date, the Land Trust has raised \$180,000 toward its campaign goal of \$200,000 to cover the costs associated with the two acquisitions. This includes a donation of \$10,000 from the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Council, a donation of \$5,000 from the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association, and gifts from



A creek cascades across the floor of Conklin Gully.

many other generous supporters. Thank you for your continued support.

If you would like to make a contribution towards completing our goal for this project, or would like to learn more, please contact Jan Hesbon at the Land Trust office, or by e-mail at janhesbon@flt.org.

Land Gift Continues Tradition of Conservation and Helps Protect State Park

The Land Trust recently helped facilitate a gift of 7.6 acres from private landowners to the state that helps protect a sensitive watershed and preserve the scenic beauty of Gorge Road on the south rim of Taughannock State Park.

SALLY PERRETEN



The Culver land gift will help protect the gorge rim at Taughannock Falls State Park.

Donors Olivia and Norman Culver carry on a tradition of conservation they began in the mid-1990s, when they presented the Land Trust with a gift of about 19 acres of their original 45-acre Gorge Road farm. The Land Trust later sold that parcel to a family and holds a conservation easement on the land. The family had previously bought the Culvers' farmhouse and barn, and now own most of the original Culver farm.

Last year, the Culvers contacted Land Trust Executive Director

Andrew Zepp for advice on conserving their remaining property, and Zepp brought them together with State Park officials.

"We've always felt a deep connection to that land and proximity to the park," said Olivia Culver about her commitment to the property's conservation. "It seemed logical to protect the gorge rim and the watershed."

The property in question lies on the south side of Gorge Road at a point where the road and a popular trail crowd the rim of the deep ravine. Protecting that land from development maintains a woodland buffer of sorts for hikers to enjoy the peace and relative isolation of the rim trail.

"Anytime we can minimize construction in the creek watershed is a plus," said Sue Poelvoorde, senior natural resources planner with New York State Parks in the Finger Lakes region. "A second value [of the Culver donation] is that we can keep that area in a natural wooded state, protecting the esthetics of Gorge Road for visitors entering the park from the south side."

Reflecting on both her family's farming history on the upland slopes of Cayuga Lake and the general need for watershed conservation, Olivia Culver said, "We've always felt it's important to keep the shoulders of the lake as wooded as possible."

The Land Trust is pleased to assist all landowners with their conservation goals, but never so pleased as when conservation is their tradition.

— Eben McLane

Board Developments

We are delighted to welcome Donald Specker to the Land Trust's board of directors. Don is an area agronomist with Pioneer Hi-Bred International, a global agricultural company based in Des Moines, Iowa. Prior to that, he served as an area field crops specialist for Cornell Cooperative Extension, based in Cortland. Don has a BS in forest entomology from SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry and an MS in entomology/plant pathology from Cornell University. He has served as past president of the NYS Agribusiness Association and the NYS Forage and Grasslands Council, as well as past vice-chairman of the Northeast Regional Certified Crop Advisors.

In addition to his agricultural career, Don is a regularly published nature photographer. He brings to the Land Trust a broad appreciation of the landscape from both a scientific and an aesthetic perspective. "The Finger Lakes region is truly beautiful and special," comments Don. "It is critical that we

preserve its character for as many generations as possible. The Finger Lakes Land Trust has been making great strides to make that happen, and I'm excited to be part of the organization."

And we are so very excited to have you aboard, Don.



New Board Member Donald Specker

Land Trust Forges Unique Partnership...

continued from cover

wooded parcel of land, donated by Bob Robinson to Ithaca College, is listed as a Tompkins County Unique Natural Area. The newly protected land includes a central portion of Van Buskirk Glen, mature woodlands, a steep sided gorge and several waterfalls. The habitat supports numerous birds, reptiles and amphibians, including the habitat-sensitive Cerulean Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and vernal pool salamanders.

The Land Trust will hold a perpetual conservation easement on this parcel, ensuring protection of this important natural area, while also keeping it available for educational and research uses.

"Van Buskirk Gorge is a gem," said Zepp. "It's a remarkably pristine site. We look forward to working with the college to ensure the future of this natural area."

Both of these easements, along with the restored wetlands, were created as mitigation for the construction of the college's new athletics center.

Ithaca College also made a contribution to the Land Trust's stewardship fund and covered all costs associated with the project.

— Krishna Ramanujan

Kingsbury Woods Dedication Slated for June

One of the Land Trust's newest preserves will hold its official dedication ceremony this summer. The dedication for the Kingsbury Woods Conservation Area, located just outside of Ithaca in the Tompkins County town of Danby, will take place on Thursday, June 17. The event will begin at 4:30 pm with a guided hike through the trails of the preserve. Following the hike, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm, the community is invited to gather at Sheela and David Kingsbury's residence next door for light refreshments, music, and some brief remarks to dedicate the property.

The dedication provides an excellent opportunity to explore the latest jewel in the Emerald Necklace, a greenbelt that is designed to link 50,000 acres of public open space surrounding the greater Ithaca area. In creating the Necklace, the Land Trust and its partners seek to connect existing open space tracts while at the same time protecting unique natural areas and lands that are critical to maintaining water quality.

The Kingsbury Woods Conservation Area joined this greenbelt in early 2009 when local resident Sheela Kingsbury graciously donated 50 acres of her property to the Land Trust. Sheela's generous gift reflected her desire to both protect the woodlands and streams on this land for future generations, and to share the landscape with the greater community. She is also serving as volunteer steward for the preserve.

Kingsbury Woods was a welcome addition to the Land Trust's efforts to protect the corridor surrounding Lick Brook. The Kingsbury tract includes substantial frontage along Lick Brook, as well as a network of small streams in the southern half of the property that serve as the headwaters of the brook. Kingsbury Woods lies approximately a mile upstream from the Land Trust's Sweedler Preserve, where Lick Brook plunges through a steep gorge before emptying into the Cayuga Inlet. All told, the Land Trust has protected more than 300 acres around Lick Brook, including 15,000 feet of frontage on the brook.

Over the past year, the Land Trust has established public access to the Kingsbury Woods parcel while maintaining the natural character of the land. Although the bulk of the preserve is on the south side of Jersey Hill Road, a small parking lot was added on the north side of the road and serves as the access point for the preserve's trail system. The primary trail was completed last fall and begins by following Lick Brook through a narrow section of the preserve. A set of stairs climbs a steep incline to the main area of the preserve, where a one-mile loop winds through



ALLISON BERNETT

Lick Brook at Kingsbury Woods

the southern section of the property.

Kingsbury Woods consists largely of mixed hardwood forest dominated by large oaks, as well as maple and beech trees. A smattering of white pine trees are also sprinkled throughout the preserve. There is some evidence that the property had been logged in the past, but the forest has remained largely intact. The trail crosses a series of rivulets and small waterways, which have emerged from the numerous springs within the preserve and eventually wend their way into Lick Brook. As for the brook itself, it carves a path through the shale, meandering northward along the western boundary of the preserve.

The dedication will be held at the home of Sheela and David Kingsbury at 133 Jersey Hill Road in the town of Danby. From Ithaca, take Route 96B south past Ithaca College, then turn right on Comfort Road. Continue approximately 1.7 miles and turn right on Jersey Hill Road. Bear left to stay on Jersey Hill Road. The driveway will be on your left. Look for Land Trust signs to help you find your way.

The Kingsbury Woods Conservation Area is just a short walk down the road from there. The parking area for the preserve is on the right just before the bridge at the bottom of the hill.

—Jeff Tonole

A. Carl Leopold to Receive the Richard B. Fischer Environmental Conservation Award

The Town of Ithaca Conservation Board has selected A. Carl Leopold, founding president of the Finger Lakes Land Trust, for its 2009 Richard B. Fischer Environmental Conservation Award. The award was established to honor Cornell Professor Dr. Fischer for his important contributions towards improving Ithaca's natural environment. Carl passed away last November, just 30 days shy of his 90th birthday, and will be the first recip-

ient to receive this award posthumously.

"We are especially thankful for Carl's efforts towards the preservation of lands around Lick Brook, conservation easements in the Six Mile Creek watershed, and for his great vision of the need for the Emerald Necklace to connect and conserve the natural areas around us," commented James W. Hamilton, vice-chair of the Ithaca Conservation Board. "We hope that this

posthumous award will keep Carl's memory alive, recognizing him for his dedication and years of work making Ithaca and its neighborhood a better place to live."

All are invited to the award ceremony and tree planting celebration at 11:00 am on Saturday, May 22nd at East Shore Park, adjacent to the East Shore Marina at 1000 East Shore Drive in Ithaca.

DONOR PROFILE

Fred Sarkis: Donor with a Mission

South Bristol resident Fred Sarkis, 83, is an inquiring man with a can-do attitude. It was just these attributes that led Sarkis to attend a public forum in late 2008 to learn about land conservation tools in the Canandaigua Lake watershed and, soon after, to enter into an innovative partnership with the Land Trust. The goal of the partnership: to build an army of supporters who could help the Land Trust achieve its mission in the Canandaigua Lake watershed.

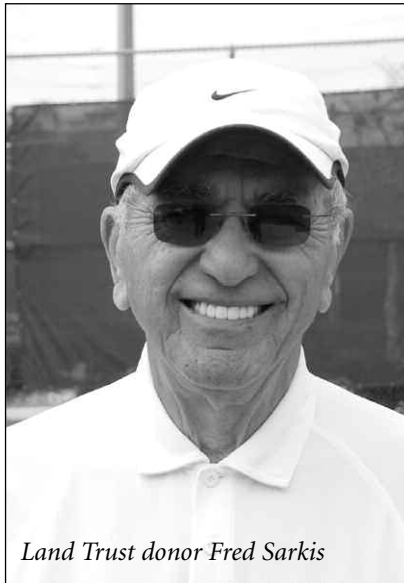
The public forum, co-sponsored by the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association, featured a panel of speakers who spoke about a wide range of issues, from water quality to the role of conservation easements on agricultural lands. Land Trust representatives talked about the organization's vision for protecting prime farmland, world-class scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, water quality, and the rural character of the watershed. Sarkis listened intently, and then asked a lot of questions. He wanted to know the size of our mailing list, how we get information out to the average resident, and whether our staff were paid or volunteer. Clearly his mind was churning.

During a follow-up meeting over lunch at Bristol Harbour Resort in South Bristol, Sarkis talked more about the need for the Land Trust's mission to become everyone's mission. With a lengthy agenda of projects in the watershed, he mused, the key was to build the "army of supporters." Why not start building the ranks right there at Bristol Harbour, where Sarkis resides, and where Bare Hill and South Hill rise majestically across Canandaigua Lake, creating a natural backdrop as beautiful as they come in the region?

"Guardians are needed to preserve and protect the natural beauty of our surroundings," Sarkis says.

Inspired by this insight, Sarkis agreed to underwrite a town-wide mailing in order to broaden the Land Trust's local appeal. Land Trust staff developed a colorful information flyer and membership solicitation, tailored to the South Bristol community, and in 2009, letters were mailed to property owners in this rural, lake-side community.

The results were impressive to Land Trust development staff. "This was an above average response, both in terms of [our] experience with direct mail campaigns, and when compared to data nationally for non-profit organizations," said Director of Development Jan Hesbon.



Land Trust donor Fred Sarkis

"Guardians are needed to preserve and protect the natural beauty of our surroundings," Sarkis says.

The net result: 45 new member households, contributing a total of \$2,300 in new support for the Land Trust in 2009. The organization's job now is to renew and grow these new ranks in the "army" of supporters.

Sarkis' embrace of the Land Trust's conservation goals, and his broad outreach into his community may strike some as ironic. He is, after all, the entrepreneur who developed Bristol Mountain Ski Center and Bristol Harbour Village (precursor to Bristol Harbour Resort) in the 1960s. The building of Bristol Harbour, in particular, was controversial with many vocal opponents.

When asked about this irony, Sarkis explained: "Having been a developer, I know that zoning impacts development, and I know that the attitude of the entrepreneur is, if the law allows me to do this, then I will look at development. Looking back 42 years, I feel those developments [Bristol Harbour and Bristol Mountain] contributed to tourism, jobs and recreation.

"But times have changed. When I heard about the public meeting, I felt a responsibility to learn more about the Finger Lakes Land Trust. I reviewed the web site. At the meeting I felt strongly that there were a lot of dedicated and caring people, not only speaking but in the audience, and not speaking

against development but seeking flexible ways to conserve land. There was also a sense of the need to prevent pollution to the lake...from development on both the east and west sides. I thought, what can I do to creatively help?"

As author of *Yes, Pa*, a character education curriculum guide for youth, Fred Sarkis promotes three core concepts: the power of enthusiasm, the importance of education, and integrity in all relationships. In working with his community and the Land Trust to make a difference in the Canandaigua Lake watershed, Sarkis has been nothing less than an embodiment of his own principles.

—Betsy Landre

Save the Date: Saturday, July 24th at 4:00 pm
For the Land Trust's 21st Annual Celebration at Standing Stone Vineyards
overlooking beautiful Seneca Lake. *Details to Follow!*

Scenes

*from Around
Our Region...*

EMILY EISMAN



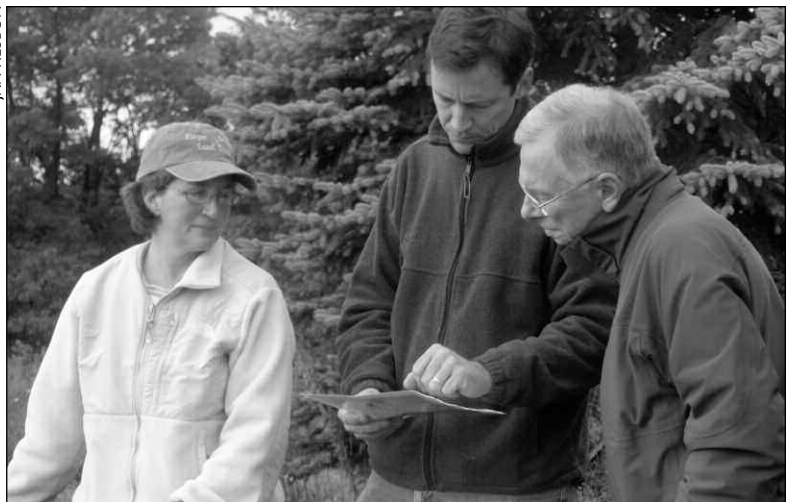
Looking for birds? This year's Bird Quest will be held on May 29-31. (See page 10 for details.)

BILL DAVIS



The dramatic Briggs Gully forms part of the southern boundary of the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve, near Honeoye Lake.

JAN HESBON



(left to right) Senior Field Representative Betsy Landre, Executive Director Andy Zepp, and Board Member Jim Fralick discuss a potential new acquisition in the Canandaigua Lake watershed.



Botanist Sandy Bierbrauer (left) and naturalist Angie Canon-Crothers lead a plant walk at Grimes Glen. Both women are helping to support the Friends of Grimes Glen (FroGG), a volunteer group facilitating stewardship and improvement projects at Grimes Glen in Ontario County.

*spring woods wandering,
only the sound of rain,
waiting for thrushes*

—Becca Harber



The Pink Lady's Slipper is an orchid that flowers from May through June on some of the Land Trust's preserves.



Springtime at the Sweedler Preserve at Lick Brook



An intrepid group of snowshoers took part in a field trip to Carpenter's Falls Unique Area and the Bahar Nature Preserve to learn about and look for signs of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.

Thank you

The Land Trust's work is made possible through the efforts of over 1800 members and supporters. Your commitment to this region and the natural world has enabled us to conserve more than 11,000 acres of rolling hills, pristine forests, deep ravines, and productive farmland in the Finger Lakes region.

Thank you to all of our members and supporters and, in particular, those who gave leadership gifts of \$100 or more in 2009. *

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** Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of this list. If we have made an error, accept our apologies and feel free to notify us.*

*Our sincere
appreciation for
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THE WHITE PINE SOCIETY

A Gift from Your Estate Will Help the Land Trust Conserve Land for Future Generations

Two years ago, the White Pine Society was created by the Land Trust to recognize individuals who have named the Land Trust as a beneficiary of their estate plan.

The following charter members of the White Pine Society have included the Land Trust in their estate plans. We are grateful for their consideration, and their legacy will ensure that our most cherished open spaces are protected for future generations.

The Land Trust can be named as a beneficiary of your estate through a bequest, a living trust, life insurance, retirement plans or charitable trusts. If you have already made provisions for the Land Trust through your estate, please let us know so that we may appropriately acknowledge you. For more information contact Jan Hesbon, Director of Development at janhesbon@flt.org or 607-275-9487.

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Spring Bird Quest 2010:

Celebrating Birds and Preserving Habitats in the Finger Lakes!

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, MAY 29-31, 2010



MARIE READ



LANG ELLIOTT



MARIE READ

Join us again this year to celebrate birds and bird diversity on Land Trust protected lands. Come experience the stunning diversity of breeding birds this spring while also raising funds to protect critical bird habitat!

In late May, Land Trust lands offer a birding spectacle without equal in the Finger Lakes. Resplendent in their breeding colors, birds have begun a season of song, courtship, foraging, and raising young.

This year, Land Trust volunteer and experienced birder, Mark Chao, will lead participants on four guided walks on Land Trust protected lands. The walks are free, but donations are strongly encouraged.

Saturday, May 29, 8:00AM, Guided Bird Walk at the McIlroy Bird Sanctuary in Summerhill, Cayuga County. This preserve features a variety of wooded wetland and wetland habitats, as well as a viewing platform.

Sunday, May 30, 8:00AM, Guided Bird Walk at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in West Danby, Tompkins County. A diversity of habitats including wetlands, open fields, and mature forest.

Monday, May 31, 6:30AM, Early Morning Bird Walk at the Goetchius Wetland Preserve in Caroline, Tompkins County. A large, unique wetland complex promises a wide variety of birds and other wildlife.

Monday, May 31, 8:30AM, Guided Bird Walk at the Park Nature Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County. Successional fields and mature forest host a diversity of bird species.

Mark will also be collecting pledges per bird species found on Land Trust protected lands throughout the weekend. We welcome you to pledge in support of Mark's efforts or to visit Land Trust sites, count birds, and raise pledges yourself!

Contact Emily Eisman, Outreach and Membership Manager at 607-275-9487 or emily@flt.org

A CLOSER LOOK

The Ever So Adaptable and Resilient Fisher

When former Land Trust President Tom Reimers found evidence of bears on his property in the town of Danby, he set up a motion-sensing camera to confirm his suspicions. The camera hasn't succeeded in photographing any bears yet, but last summer it captured a picture of a fisher (*Martes pennanti*). The photo shows a large, dark animal, something like a cross between an otter and a large cat, strolling nonchalantly across the forest floor.

Fishers, sometimes called “fisher cats,” may look vaguely feline, but in fact they are mustelids—long, sinuous, fierce members of the weasel family. Thanks to its varied habitat, upstate New York is unusually rich in mustelid species: otters swim in the waterways; mink hunt at the water's edge; weasels live in the uplands and hedgerows; martens are adapted to deep snow at higher elevations; fishers inhabit old-growth coniferous forests.

That, at any rate, was the received wisdom about fishers, but it turns out to be only partially correct. Like so many other North American animals, fishers almost went extinct in the nineteenth century as the forests were clearcut and the animals themselves were indiscriminately trapped for their dense, glossy fur. When it was all over, the only fishers left in the state were in the Adirondacks. Adirondack fishers were live-trapped and released into the Catskills in the late 1970s, where they flourished. Because the animals were only found in undisturbed wilderness, biologists wrongly assumed that they could only survive in old-growth forests.

This misconception persisted until fisher sightings began trickling in from all over the state, from Albany to western New York. DEC wildlife biologist Lance Clark saw his first fisher in the mid-90s in Bear Swamp State Forest in Cayuga County; a roadkilled animal turned up in Onondaga County at about the same time. Beginning in 2007, naturalist Linda Spielman has found fisher tracks in Tioga and Tompkins Counties.

Fishers, it turns out, are a lot more adaptable than anyone had expected. As

largely arboreal predators, they will not live in treeless areas, but they do not seem to be bothered by most human activities and have made themselves at home in many areas throughout the northeast. In fact, so-called “edge habitats”—areas at the junctions between distinctly different habitats, especially forest and field—are particularly attractive to fishers because



Fishers, sometimes called “fisher cats,” may look vaguely feline, but in fact they are mustelids—long, sinuous, fierce members of the weasel family.

they are home to high populations of the small mammals that are their primary prey. Fishers aren't picky, however: they will eat amphibians and reptiles, birds, eggs, insects, carrion, and even berries and acorns.

They are also one of the few animals that dare to prey on porcupines. A fisher will repeatedly attack the porcupine's face

until it weakens and can be flipped over for a kill. In some cases, they can force porcupines to fall out of a tree and then attack their stunned prey on the ground.

As marginal farmland reverted to woodland in recent decades, most of upstate New York turned into potential fisher territory. Fishers were reintroduced into Pennsylvania in 1994 and, combined with populations from West Virginia, are now dispersing into western New York. Animals from both the Adirondacks and the Catskills are colonizing central New York, including the Finger Lakes forests.

In fact, fishers are in the process of reclaiming many parts of their former range. When they were eradicated in Vermont, porcupine populations skyrocketed; the forests didn't get a break from those voracious bark-eaters until Maine fishers were imported to control them. Vermont fishers then moved into New Hampshire and Massachusetts, and have recently even been spotted just outside of Boston.

There have been many sightings of “black panthers” in upstate New York. Panthers, or cougars, were long ago extirpated from the state and, in any case, are never black. If you see a “black panther,” it is most likely a fisher. At approximately three feet long, the animal may look formidable, but even a very large specimen rarely weighs more than fifteen pounds. Unlike cougars, these animals are no danger to human beings, but owners of free-ranging cats and poultry would be wise to take appropriate precautions.

Angie Berchielli, a trapper and naturalist who assisted in the efforts to restore fishers to the Catskills and Pennsylvania, is excited by the growing fisher population. “It is truly one of the greatest success stories [showing] what very good management of a species by the DEC can do. They are now available for all of us, whether we are trappers, photographers, or people who just like to watch wildlife.”

The NYS DEC is collecting information about fishers. Please report any sightings to fwwildlf@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller

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SPRING 2010 CALENDAR

SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 10:00 AM

Sweedler Preserve in Ithaca: Join Cornell student intern Mike Roberts and Land Trust volunteers to help us pull up those pesky non-native invasive plants that threaten the beautiful forests of Lick Brook. Some light trash pick-up along the road is needed as well. Meet at 10:00am at the Sweedler Preserve parking area (road shoulder) on Town Line Road, and will work until approximately 2:00pm. Tools and work gloves will be provided; bring your own water and lunch. *Please contact Mike Roberts at mr586@cornell.edu or Chris Olney at chrisolney@fltl.org or 607-275-9487 to sign up prior to this work day. Directions to the Preserve can be found at www.fltl.org.*

SATURDAY, MAY 22, 11:00 AM

East Shore Park in Ithaca: 2010 Richard B. Fischer Environmental Conservation Award Ceremony and Tree Planting Dedication honoring the contributions of founding Land Trust President A. Carl Leopold. (*See page 4 for details*)

MAY 29-31 (Memorial Day Weekend)

Spring Bird Quest 2010: Celebrating Birds and Preserving Habitats in the Finger Lakes! (*See page 10 for details*)

THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 4:30 PM

Kingsbury Woods Hike and Dedication in Town of Danby (*See page 4 for details*)

PLEASE SEE ENCLOSED INSERT FOR OUR 2010 SPRING TALKS & TREKS SERIES

See our web site for maps and photos of the preserves.

WALKS GO RAIN, SUN OR SNOW. PLEASE BRING SNACKS AND WATER, AND WEAR STURDY SHOES. CALL THE LAND TRUST AT (607) 275-9487 FOR DETAILS.