

The Land Steward

<mark>NEWSLETTE</mark>R OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region

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650-acre Conservation Easement Protects Cayuga Lake Farm

magine a landscape of open agricultural fields, broken here and there by woodlots, with sweeping views of lake waters, and a glimpse of a wild, great gully with rushing waterfalls. It looks like a Finger Lakes landscape worth our saving.

The Land Trust recently completed its largest conservation easement to date, covering nearly 650 acres of Great Gully Farm on Cayuga Lake's eastern shore along State Route 90, north of Aurora and just south of Union Springs.

The sloping farmland affords some of the best views of Cayuga Lake from various upland vantage points and includes more than a half-mile of Great Gully, a rugged ravine with rare plants, towering trees, and several popular waterfalls.

Farm owner Dan McIntosh worked with the Land Trust to create a conservation easement protecting his family farm against future development and ensuring the land's agricultural future. The agreement includes special protective measures for the environmentally sensitive gully.

The conserved land comprises about three different farms that McIntosh's parents bought over the course of several decades, beginning in the late 1920s. Great Gully Farm land also has historical significance as the site of a Cayuga tribe

settlement known as Goi-O-Gouen ("Cayuga Castle"). Cayugas lived there until driven from the area by the U.S. military shortly after the American Revolution.

McIntosh informally dedicates the conservation easement to the memory of his parents, Harris and Emily Knight McIntosh, and their commitment to local land preservation.

"They were very charity-minded," Dan said. "Dad would say, 'If you ever have a chance to give back some of what you have to the rest of the world, take every opportunity.' And so I've sort of followed his guidelines, I guess you might say."

Harris and "Betty" McIntosh never lived on the farm; they were not farmers, but they were true lovers of the local land and of the lake. Harris grew up in the village of Cayuga, north of Union Springs, and after leaving the area for work in manufacturing—initially in Syracuse, then settling in Toledo, Ohio—he wanted a place to go duck hunting on familiar land.

The McIntoshes built a summer home on the lake shore for themselves and their children. At the same time, they added acreage to the property and hired a succession of farm managers and other employees to make the farmland productive even in their absence.

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The Land Trust is pleased to acknowledge six new conservation easements concluded at the end of 2012, raising the total number of easements held by the organization to more than 100. The new easements, profiled in this issue, cover a variety of Finger Lakes terrains—from mature forest to agricultural land, from creekside to lakeshore—and they span our region, including the watersheds of Keuka, Seneca, Cayuga, and Skaneateles lakes, as well as the Upper Susquehanna River. All told, they protect nearly 1,100 acres of land, including more than 900 feet of undeveloped lakeshore and close to 19,000 feet of significant creek or stream frontage.

The Finger Lakes Land Trust, along with many other such organizations, finds conservation easements to be an increasingly valuable way both of reaching out to landowners and their communities and of securing lands it otherwise would not have the resources to protect.

We hope you enjoy this conservation easement issue!

Come learn about the birds and the bees at the...

Land Trust's 24th Annual Meeting & Celebration Saturday, May 18th at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. (SEE INSERT FOR DETAILS.)

PERSPECTIVES

I first explored Great Gully during the summer of 1986, when I was ranging across New York state as an intern for The Nature Conservancy. I vividly remember stepping from the blazingly hot farm fields next to the gully through a wall of lush green vegetation and into a different world of towering hardwoods and a pristine creek that seemed to date back to the beginnings of time.

During that summer, I made several forays to the gully, documenting plant communities and developing maps the old fashioned way, before smart phones featuring Google Earth and more powerful geographic information systems (GIS).

Back then, I had the good fortune to meet Dan McIntosh. Dan is the owner and steward of Great Gully Farm and a good portion of the gully itself. Anyone who regularly makes the scenic drive down the east side of Cayuga Lake can attest to the level of care Dan brings to the farm and his farming practices. His well-maintained fields allow the public to savor sweeping views of Cayuga Lake.

Over the years, I checked in on Dan from time to time as my conservation career took me to Washington, DC and then back again to the Finger Lakes. We sometimes talked specifically about conserving the farm but other times just caught up with one another.

It was probably about a year ago that we got into

serious discussions about crafting a conservation easement for the farm, and we both marveled that we were picking up on a conversation that had started 25 years ago.

And how have Great Gully Farm and the gully fared over those years? The Farm is much as I've known it: a diversified and quite scenic agricultural enterprise that continues to thrive. And the gully? It's not quite as pristine as when I first saw it—the upper gully is crowded by several homes, and invasive plants have displaced some of the natives—and yet, at its heart it remains a wild place, its magic unchanged. On a quiet morning, a walk up the gully can still make you feel that you are embarking on a journey that will take you far, far away from the nearby corn fields and homesteads.

Thanks to Dan, the other easement donors featured in this issue, and all of those who came before, the future of 100 special places is now much brighter. From all of us at the FLLT, a heartfelt thank you to our conservation easement donors for your commitment to the land and to the future of our region.

Curlew 5

—Andy Zepp

650-acre Conservation Easement Protects Cayuga Lake Farm continued from cover

But land conservation and a sense of public benefit were at the heart of what his parents were thinking about, Dan said. At one point, they bought land for a park in the village of Cayuga; at another, they gave money to The Nature Conservancy to buy a neighbor's land along the gully.

"My father had a dream of preserving the gully. This was his place," Dan said. "He always thought people

with rare plants, towering trees, and several popular waterfalls.

would want to plant houses all along the edge of the gully. He died in '81 and never saw the development around the land we've seen the past couple of decades... so I guess he was sort of visionary."

Dan feels indebted to his father for giving him the opportunity, in the early 1970s, to run the farm and get to know and love the land. Recently returned from "a long stint" with the U.S. Army in

The 650-acre easement includes more than a half-mile of Great Gully, a rugged ravine



Vietnam, Dan was admittedly at sea, and his father felt it. "My dad said to me, 'Hey, why don't you come back here and give it [farming] a go for year?' Well, I'd never farmed in my life—didn't know how to run a tractor—but I said, yes, I'd give it a go for a year, and I've been here for, oh lord, close to 40 years now!"

As farm owner and manager, Dan employs two fulltime and one seasonal worker cultivating soybeans, winter wheat, field corn, hay, and about 60 acres of sweet corn. The terms of the easement will keep the roughly 500 tillable acres of prime agricultural land in production for the foreseeable future.

"Perhaps it was a gamble for me to take the farm," Dan mused, "But my dad and I were really close towards the end, and he did mention to me often that I was very fortunate, and that he would be proud if I could give something back to my community. So perhaps this easement is it." —Eben McLane

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Charles Crum in Ithaca for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.

Easement Benefits Skaneateles Lake

and Trust members John and Robin Hinchcliff recall their children playing in the woods above Skaneateles Lake's southeastern shores. "The kids would disappear into the woods in the morning, and we wouldn't see them again until they got hungry or returned to show us some new treasure, like broken pottery or a chunk of rusty barbed wire from when the forest was pasture," Robin said.

"This land has been returning to woodlands for almost a century," said John.

"It's been untouched for my entire lifetime, and much further back."

Thanks to the return of those forests and good stewardship by generations of landowners, Skaneateles Lake is today known as the most pristine of the Finger Lakes. It is one of only six unfiltered public drinking water sources in the country, daily providing an average of 43 million gallons of water to residents of Syracuse.

This winter, the Hinchcliffs contributed to the legacy of clean water and healthy forests by donating a conservation easement on their property, protecting 31 acres of mature woods, including 5,600 feet of land along Randall Gulf Creek, a tributary to Skaneateles Lake.

According to Land Trust Director of Land Protection David Diaz, protecting each stream and sloping hillside is important to the lake's exceptional water quality because sediment eroding from any of the streams or hillsides harms water quality, not only for drinking but also for the flora and fauna that depend on the lake's clean waters.

"The Hinchcliffs have helped us make progress on one of our top conservation priorities: connecting the forested highlands that keep these waters clean," Diaz said. "The health of Skaneateles Lake is intertwined with the condition of lands within its watershed and the numerous waterways that feed into it."

For the Hinchcliffs and their extended family, the upland ridge and its streams are also interlaced with family history. "My dad and his brother grew up tromping in the woods and creek, followed by me and my cousins, and then our kids," said John. "It became a tradition to hike up the stream to route 41, collecting fossils and watching the woodlands change over the years."

As a result, the family shares a deep commitment to protecting the area. John and Robin's property borders nearly 200 acres the Land Trust seeks to acquire with the lead support of John's aunt, Ann Hinchcliff. The adjacent property extends for nearly two miles between existing protected lands, representing the single largest link in a growing network of open space lands that may ultimately extend around the southern half of the lake.

"We admire the Land Trust's long-range vision to build an emerald necklace around the lake," John said. "It would be a spectacular recreational resource, and a great way to protect the area's pristine woodlands and waters." - Kate Frazer

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Richard P. Urda in Ithaca for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.





Dick and Janice Ryan on their easement property in Starkey

Seneca Lake Shoreline Preserved

ne of the Land Trust's major objectives is preserving water quality in the Finger Lakes region through comprehensive watershed protection. As development continues to grow around many of the region's lakes, the Land Trust places a high priority on protecting any remaining undeveloped lake frontage, particularly on the largest and most developed of the lakes.

Dick and Janice Ryan share this priority. They own a 7.5-acre property in Starkey, Yates County, with nearly 600 feet of frontage along the west side of Seneca Lake, and they recently inked an agreement to protect this land through a conservation easement with the Land Trust.

The Ryans have spent much of their lives in the Finger Lakes region. The couple originally met as undergraduates at Cornell in the late 1940s. Dick spent 35 years as a biology professor at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, retiring in 1987. Janice retired three years later, after more than two decades as a social worker for Ontario County.

The couple bought the Seneca Lake property in 1975—"through great good fortune," Dick said—with the aim of retiring there.

"When we learned of the existence of the Finger Lakes Land Trust, we enthusiastically endorsed its mission and have been members for some years," said Dick. "The idea of a conservation easement for our property through the Land Trust was very much on our minds. This wonderful piece of lakeside property is now secured from further development in perpetuity."

Excluding a boat dock, the Ryan property features approximately 400 feet

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250-acre Woodland added to Emerald Necklace

In 1970 Gene Likens, then a newly appointed Cornell biology professor, and three of his colleagues bought 500 acres of forest and agricultural land bordering Shindagin Hollow State Forest in Caroline, Tompkins County. Their goal was to protect the land from development and enhance the wild open space already secured by the state forest. Their unique vision predated the Land Trust's conservation efforts by almost 20 years.

Now, 43 years later, Gene and his wife Phyllis are permanently protecting 250 acres of the property through a conservation easement with the Land Trust. "It's a full-circle dream come true," Gene said. "We couldn't be more delighted."

Gene Likens is a well-known figure in the field of ecology. An expert in the study of stream ecosystems, he was part of a group of scientists that discovered acid rain in North America and produced one of the first studies linking acid rain to air pollution. He was also a founding director of the Institute of Ecosystem Studies, a leading independent environmental research center located in Millbrook, New York. For his contributions to ecological research, Likens was awarded the National Medal of Science in 2002.

Gene and Phyllis no longer live in the Finger Lakes region, but they maintain strong ties to the area through family and friends. Phyllis is a native of northern Tioga County, and they both maintain an abiding appreciation for the local landscape and the need to conserve it.

Much of their property consists of mature woodlands, accompanied by an open field used by a local farmer to grow corn and hay. The easement buffers a portion of the Finger Lakes Trail, which follows the property's southern border and continues through the adjacent state forest. A south-bound stream courses through the property, eventually feeding the Upper Susquehanna River.

The easement also protects another critical link in the Land Trust's long-term Emerald Necklace project, a greenbelt of protected open space surrounding Ithaca. "This easement is a wonderful addition to the Emerald Necklace," said Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp. "We're grateful to the Likens for their commitment to the land."

A portion of the costs associated with this easement were covered by a grant from the Tompkins County Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection, as well as a contribution from the Town of Caroline's Stewardship Reserve Fund.

—Jeff Tonole

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Eric Haselbauer of the law firm of Harter Secrest & Emery LLP in Rochester for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.





Stretches of undeveloped shoreline are like diamonds on the Finger Lakes, rare jewels of great value. But unlike diamonds, shorelines hold an ecological worth that goes beyond their financial and aesthetic value.

For these reasons, a conservation easement finalized in late January that protects 500 feet of undeveloped shoreline along Keuka Lake, along with 4.2 acres of mature hardwood forest, is an important addition to the area's conserved lands.

Donated by Dr. Bruce Cutler, his wife Leslie, and their daughters Nancy Sadecki and Kimberly Buttonow, all longtime summer residents of Keuka Lake, the easement lies at an iconic spot on the lake, namely Bluff Point, the prominent bluff that separates Keuka Lake's two arms. The easement will protect a rare stretch of undeveloped shoreline at the very tip of Bluff Point—a popular spot for both water birds and boaters to relax. In addition, the intact acres of mature forest will prevent erosion that would otherwise occur if the property were cleared for development.

The easement will also allow the Cutler's continued use of the land, while also permitting their sustainable harvests of firewood from the woods. The easement, though, does not include public access to the site.

"This is a spectacular property," said Andy Zepp, Land Trust executive director. "The Cutler's generous gift will be enjoyed by anyone who appreciates Keuka Lake or the scenic views of Bluff Point that can be seen from miles around. We're grateful to the Cutler family for their wonderful commitment to the land and the lake."

"This is a wonderful start to protecting the unique attributes of the bluff both for the residents and for our neighbors across the lake," said Tom Close, president of the non-profit Bluff Point Association, which provided financial support to the Land Trust to help cover transaction costs associated with the project.

-Krishna Ramanujan

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney Kim Rothman of the law firm of Miller Mayer, LLP in Ithaca for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.

Southern Tier Easement Protects Owego Creek

Jeanne Paisley was a schoolteacher raising three children in the early 1970s when she purchased 128 acres of forests, fields, and wetlands in the Tioga County town of Richford.

"I was perfect for me because it was a half-hour drive to school, and it was beautiful," she said. "I remember there were red salamanders in the driveway when we first came. Plus, I was happy to live where my neighbors wouldn't tell me to mow the lawn."

Now 86 years old, Paisley lives on the Southern Tier property she has owned for more than 40 years. She recently donated a conservation easement on her property to the Land Trust, protecting mature forests and prime agricultural land nestled along the east branch of Owego Creek.

Paisley found the property shortly after setting off with her husband and their three children to explore the wilds of the United States and Canada. "We had been living on Long Island and had no summer work, so we bought a tent and took the kids across the country to see beautiful places," she said. "When we returned to New York and found this place, we said it was the best campsite we ever saw."

The Paisley "campsite" lies within a Land Trust focus area which encompasses tributaries to the Upper Susquehanna River watershed, which in turn feeds into the Chesapeake Bay, the nation's largest estuary.

According to David Diaz, Land Trust director of land protection, the Paisley property along Owego Creek helps maintain local watershed quality and sustains fish, like eastern brook trout. Diaz said that the land's steep slopes and a

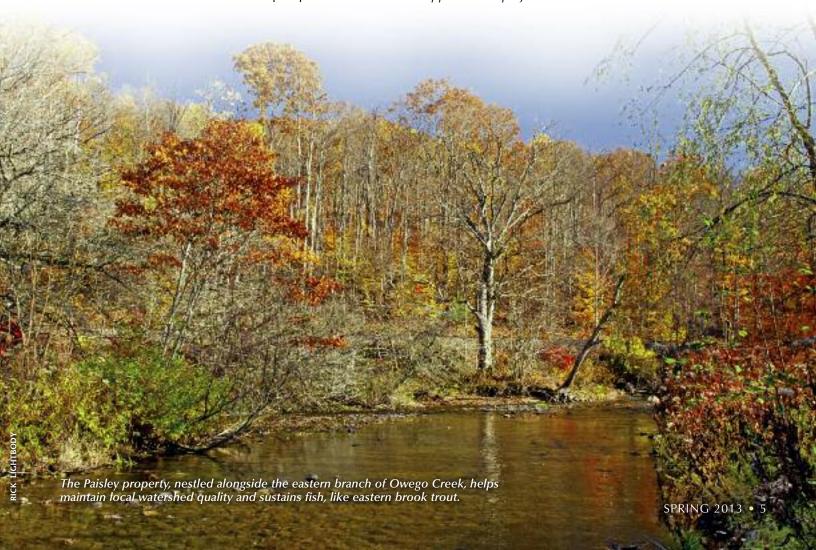
seasonal tributary stream would be particularly susceptible to accelerated storm water run-off and erosion damage if disturbed by future development, harming the water quality not only of Owego Creek but also of waters many miles downstream.

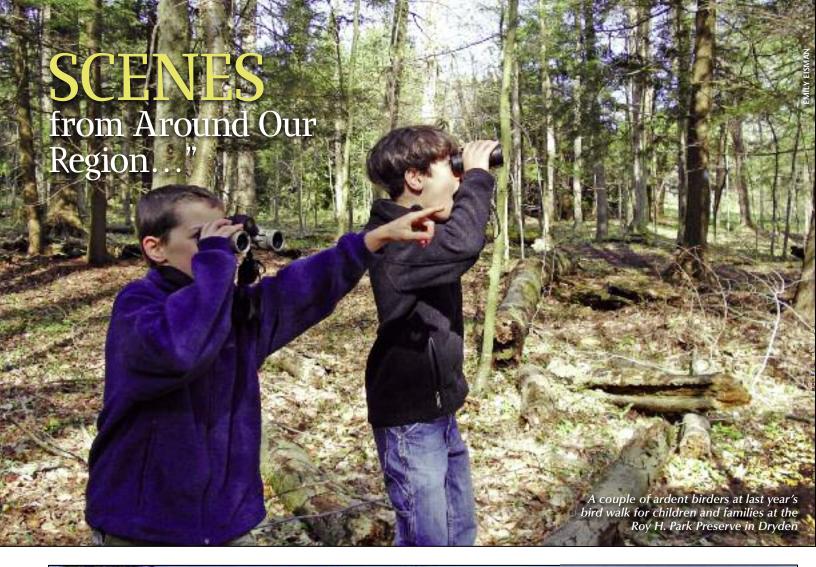
"Mrs. Paisley and her family have helped us to expand a network of protected lands in her Southern Tier neighborhood," said Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp. The Paisley property joins several protected areas nearby, including multiple state forests, the Land Trust's King Nature Preserve, and another conservation easement.

As to what prompted Paisley to donate her conservation easement, she says it was a love for the outdoors developed as a child during the Depression. "When my father was out of work we moved to the country, where we built a small house and carried spring water up the hill," she said. "Caring about nature is just part of how I think. It's just in you. I always knew I wanted to do this at some point."

-Kate Frazer

The Land Trust gratefully acknowledges Attorney John Alexander of the law firm of Sayles & Evans in Elmira and Attorney Eric Haselbauer of the law firm of Harter Secrest & Emery LLP in Rochester for providing pro bono legal services in support of this project.









Long-time member and volunteer Tom Reimers takes in the vista at the Stevenson Forest Preserve in the town of Enfield, Tompkins County.

Campaign Update

We dedicated the winter newsletter to announcing the Finger Lakes Land Trust's capital campaign. This spring, we are thrilled to tell you how well the campaign is progressing as the Land Trust works to protect even more of the lands and waters you love.

Thanks to the generous support received to date, the Land Trust has reached 83% of our \$5 million fundraising goal. We are confident that with your help, and that of many other friends across the Finger Lakes, our campaign will be a resounding success.

To learn more about how you can contribute to local conservation, please contact Kelly Makosch, Director of Development, at (607)275-9487 or kellymakosch@fllt.org





Participants listening to naturalist and tracker Linda Spielman (far right) during last February's Winter Wildlife Tracking Walk at the Ellis Hollow Nature Preserve in the town of Ithaca, Tompkins County

Our work is made possible through the contributions of over 2,000 members, volunteers, and supporters. Your commitment to the future of the Finger Lakes has enabled the Land Trust to protect more than 15,000 acres of our region's most treasured forests, farmland, wetlands, gorges, and shoreline.

We are grateful to have such dedicated members and supporters. In particular, we wish to thank everyone who generously made a gift of \$100 or more in calendar year 2012.*

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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.

Seneca Lake Shoreline Preserved

continued from page 3

of undeveloped shoreline, along with six acres of adjacent forest land with a mixture of hardwoods, such as white and red oak and sugar maple. With much of the Seneca Lake shoreline developed with waterfront homes, this upland wooded area is vulnerable to "second-tier" development that is rapidly spreading around the lake.

"Undeveloped shoreline is one of our region's most precious land resources," said Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp. "We're grateful to Dick and Janice for their generous donation and delighted to have the opportunity to work with them to ensure the future of this scenic lakeside property."

—leff Tonole

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Tax Incentive for Conservation Easement Donation Extended

While there hasn't seemed to be much agreement in Washington lately, Congress and the President recently renewed an important conservation tax incentive through 2013. A federal tax incentive associated with conservation easement donations was include in the "fiscal cliff" package, but prospective easement donors must act quickly as it could expire again on December 31, 2013.

The enhanced easement tax incentive:

- Raises the deduction a donor can take for donating an easement from 30% of their adjusted gross income in any year to 50%;
- Allow qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their income; and
- Extends the carry forward period for a donor to take tax deductions for donated easements from 5 to 15 years (in addition to the year of donation).

Please contact the Land Trust's Ithaca office at (607) 275-9487 for additional information on conservation easements and the enhanced tax incentive.

A CLOSER LOOK

The Honey Bee

2006, American beekeepers began noticing that their charges were mysteriously disappearing from one hive after another. The losses didn't stop the next year, or the next, and although the catastrophic declines have recently abated a bit, no one knows why the bees are dying or how to save them. Experts have warned that colony collapse disorder (CCD), as the phenomenon has been dubbed, could imperil our food production systems: a full one-third of the agricultural crops in the U. S. are pollinated by bees.

The little insect that shoulders most of this responsibility is the European honey bee (Apis mellifera). This relatively sleek, orange-and-black-striped, highly social animal is what we usually think of as a "bee," and it produces the fragrant honeys and beeswax found in our markets. Like most Americans, the European honey bee is a naturalized species. They arrived on this continent with the first European

colonists. Humans have lived side-by-side with honey bees for a very long time and have bred them for certain desirable characteristics. However, a bee can never be entirely domesticated. The apiarist can encourage his bees to stay in a man-made hive, but there is nothing to prevent them from swarming, the process by which a colony splits in two; if swarming bees are not coaxed into a new hive, they will find another cavity—a hollow tree, an empty barn—in which to nest. In addition, the close proximity of domesticated and feral

bee populations means that there is always some gene flow back and forth. There are over a hundred native bee species in the Finger Lakes, but they do not live in large colonies or produce significant amounts of either honey or wax.

Exotic species can have disruptive or even devastating impacts on native ecosystems, but honey bees do not seem to negatively affect native pollinators; if anything, the presence of so many additional bees has increased the reproductive capacities of many plants. Plants fiercely compete for attention by producing colorful, nectar-filled flowers; their success, however, is always limited by the number of pollinators available to take the bait. Although small fields surrounded by natural areas may be serviced entirely by native insects, modern large-scale farming often involves growing vast fields of single-species crops in landscapes that cannot support large populations of wild

pollinators. Consequently, hives are trucked around the country on a regular schedule in order to pollinate crops as they come into bloom.

The hard-working, peripatetic insects that ensure our food supply are particularly susceptible to the recent bee plague. CCD seems to be caused not by a single factor but by a perfect storm of stressors that weaken a colony past the tipping point: fungal, bacterial, and viral pathogens; pesticides; stresses associated with migratory beekeeping; malnutrition (a particular problem for bees that feed on monocultures); and parasites. In particular, the Asian mite Varroa destructor is very often associated with colony collapse. Because beekeepers control mite infestations, bees never get a chance to evolve resistance to the parasites. In addition, colonies are crowded into apiaries, combs and broods are regularly transferred between colonies, and bees

are discouraged from swarming, all of which favor the spread of mites.

If Varroa mites have wreaked havoc on beekeepers' hives, they have had an even more honey bees: some experts estimate that one place in New York, feral bees are doing surprisingly well. In Cornell's Arnot Forest, Schuyler County, the bees are going about their business as they have for the last four hundred years. In fact, the forest contains at least as many feral

devastating effect on feral there are almost no wildliving colonies left in the U.S. However, in at least

honey bee nests today as it did thirty years ago, despite the fact that the bees are as heavily infested with mites as are their hive-dwelling cousins. The reasons for their success are still unclear. The bees may have developed biological resistance or behaviors that reduce mite populations, such as more frequent grooming. Perhaps the mites' strategies have evolved, as well, and they are learning to live more peacefully with their hosts. Then, too, perhaps swarming acts as a natural sort of mite control: feral bees are free to swarm whenever they please, and each swarm reduces the mite population in the original colony. Much more research remains to be done on this subject, but it is comforting to realize that at least part of the solution to the bee die-off that threatens our national agricultural security just might be found in the wild spaces of upstate New York.

—Jacqueline Stuhmiller



A worker honey bee engages in collecting pollen and nectar. The pollen that she has collected is visible as the yellow pellet on her hind leg facing the camera.

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Legal Counsel: Elizabeth Bixler; Randy Marcus; Miller Mayer, LLP; Peter Miller; Richard Ruswick; True, Walsh, & Schubert, LLP

Forestry Consultant: Michael DeMunn Stewardship Advisor: Betsy Darlington



Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 E. Court Street
Ithaca, New York 14850
Ph: 607-275-9487
Fax: 607-275-0037
email: info@fllt.org • www.fllt.org





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Spring 2013 Calendar



SATURDAY, MAY 18th, 8:00 am - 11:00 am:

Come learn about the birds and the bees at *The Land Trust's 24th Annual Meeting & Celebration* at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road in Ithaca. The event will be preceded at 8:00 AM by a bird walk around Sapsucker Woods led by Mark Chao. *Please see insert for details*.

FRIDAY, MAY 31st, 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm:

Join us for the dedication of the new boardwalk at the Roy H. Park Preserve in Dryden. *Visit our website or call us at 607-275-9487 for details*.

PLEASE SEE INSERT FOR THE SCHEDULE OF OUR SPRING 2013 TALKS & TREKS SERIES AND VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

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

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