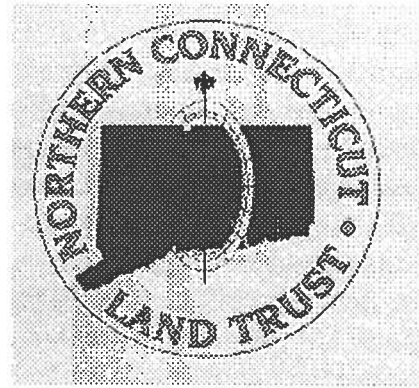


LANDMARK

The newsletter of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust

Number 6

February 2001



New NCLT Website Available for Checkout

With the help of a skilled volunteer, a new website is being constructed to keep all our members and other interested Internet users aware of the Trust, its objectives, and current news items and activities. Access to the site is at www.nclt.icomm.ca. This is a great way to keep up with information between newsletters!



UPCOMING PROGRAMS



Catching the Biggest Fish in Connecticut

Wednesday March 21, 7:30 PM at Rockville Fish & Game Club in Vernon, George Babey of the DEP Fisheries Division will give a talk with slides. Head south from I-84 Exit 67 on Rt 31 towards Coventry, take a right after 9/10 mile onto Fish & Game Road, left thru gate after 2/10 mile.

Bird Walk at McCann Family Farm

Saturday March 24, 8:30 AM at the Farm on Rt 190 in Somers just east of the intersection with Rt 83. This walk will visit a number of habitats that attract several species of both migrating and resident birds.

Grassland Birds & Bluebirds in Northern Connecticut

Thursday April 19, 7:30 PM at the First Lutheran Church, Orchard St in Ellington, up Middle Butcher Road from Rt 83 at Agway. Jenny Dickson, DEP Wildlife biologist, will give a talk with slides on creating habitat for endangered species.

Somers Outdoor Festival

Saturday May 5: Hiking, biking, canoeing, and horseback riding. See details inside.

Farm Tour

Sunday, June 3, 12:30 to 4:30, starting at the Grant's Meadowpark Farm at the corner of Rt 140 and 191 in the Melrose section of East Windsor. The tour will feature 4 farms that produce a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and dairy products for local consumption. A bus will be provided free of charge to transport the group, or a map will be available for those who wish to drive themselves. The 4 farms include: (1) Meadowpark Farm, which cultivates 300 acres of corn, straw, hay, and pumpkins; (2) Muska's Applebrook Farm in Broad Brook, an apple orchard which also produces a special recipe cider very popular in the area; (3) EZ Pickins farm in Enfield, owned by Brian Kelliher, who grows a variety of fruits, vegetables, and cut flowers; (4) Collin's Powderhill Farm and Creamery in Enfield, a dairy which makes and sells gourmet ice cream on the premises as well as marketing a compost made from manure and decomposed leaves. All the farms incorporate modern farming methods and practice responsible land and chemical management.

NCLT hopes you will join us for an opportunity to visit some diverse local farms, ask some questions, eat some delicious ice cream, and appreciate some of our wonderful and productive open space. For more information, please call 623-5487.

Chile through Connecticut Eyes

At the Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper Sunday, September 23 at the First Lutheran Church in Ellington, Michelle Hayward will talk of her recent research on wildlife in Patagonia. Ed and Fay Dresner will also show slides of their visit to Chile in 1996. Social hour and dinner start at 5:00. Bring a hot dish, salad, or dessert to share, and bring your own utensils and plate. \$1.00 donation suggested to cover costs.

Somers Outdoor Festival Saturday, May 5

The Somers Open Space / Trails Committee, in conjunction with the NCLT, is sponsoring an outdoor event for the whole family, young and old. Activities include hiking, biking, canoeing, and horseback riding. All events with the exception of the horseback riding will meet at the Somers Town Common on Battle Street. There will be exhibits by conservation-related organizations at the Commons and refreshments will be available at nominal charge. Horseback riders will meet at Worthington Pond on Mountain Road. Brochures giving more details will be available at the Somers Town Hall and Library, or you may call Judith Snyder at 749-5411. (Volunteers still needed to lead or co-lead hikes; call Ginny Patsun at 763-4047 or e-mail to gpatsun@yahoo.com).

HIKING: 6 hikes of varied length and difficulty on NCLT owned properties.

- 7:00 AM bird walk at the McCann Family Farm led by Dr. Jerry Stage, a renowned birder and naturalist, who has identified over 60 species of birds at the farm to date.
- General hikes on the Farm later in the day.
- General hikes at the Skyline Scenic area in the northern section of Somers.

BIKING: Activities will include three self-guided tours around Somers that are of varied length, with plans being developed for a guided tour of several hours going beyond the town of Somers. Wes Smith, who has done many 100 mile events, will be coordinating this activity.

HORSEBACK RIDING: Coordinated by Jan Collins, an accomplished competitive trail rider who has been active in trail preservation in Somers for over 10 years. It will probably cover approximately 15 miles through much of the Shenipsit Forest and surrounding areas.

CANOEING: Culver Modisette, President of the NCLT and an experienced canoeist who has done extensive river travel in Alaska, will lead the canoe trip on portions of the Scantic River. With the winter snow, there should be plenty of run-off to adequately fill the river this spring.



Raise Money with No Work at All

Through the Southern New England Telephone Community Connections program, the Trust has a simple way to raise funds. When our members or friends sign up with SNET for all their long distance calling - or confirm that they are already using SNET Long Distance- SNET will donate to our Trust 5% of their long-distance bill every month. There is no cost to the user or to the Land Trust, nor does it either raise or lower the monthly bill. We are already seeing significant income from this program thanks to several folks who have signed up, so please give the idea some thought. How easy can it get? To sign up, call 1-800-635-7638 and give the name of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust and our code number, 3178. It's a simple way to raise money for a good cause!



More for Your Money

Because the NCLT is an organization made up entirely of volunteers with no paid employees, your contributions go farther. Last year the cost of fund raising was less than 2% of total income. Therefore, virtually all of the money you contribute goes directly to our primary objective - the protection and preservation of woodlands, wetlands, agricultural land and open spaces. Please continue your support by sending in your 2001 membership with the application on the back page of this newsletter.

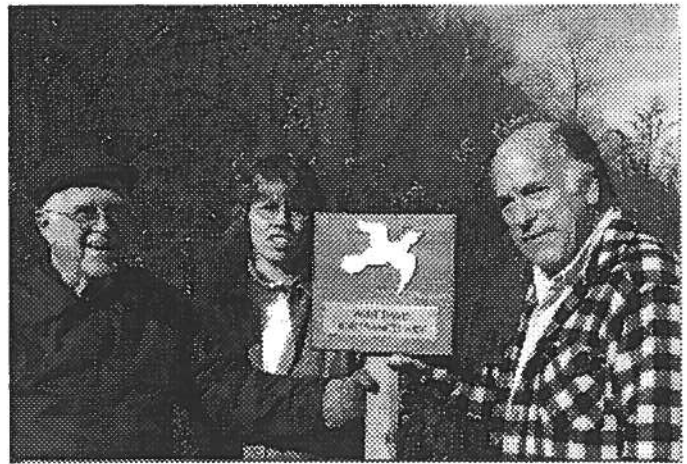
Conservation Easements: What are They, and What Can They Do for You?

More and more people these days are turning to conservation easements to protect the land they love from development and at the same time realize significant tax savings. From large farms of hundreds of acres in Kentucky to one acre plots on Cape Cod, property owners are donating these land protection devices to charitable organizations in order to insure that open spaces and wildlife habitats remain in their natural state for future generations to enjoy.

Owners of property have many individual "rights" on that property: lumber, mineral, agricultural, water, and development rights to name a few. A conservation easement reduces the value of a property by giving away only the building rights. These rights are given up in a deed to a nonprofit organization, and their value is then deducted from the market value of the land for estate tax, and possibly property tax, purposes. An easement can be written very specifically to accomplish exactly what the owner wants to do, and to retain certain capabilities they may wish to keep. Contrary to the thoughts of some, this donation does not mean that the owner has to allow public access to the property if it is against their wishes. Even though the easement reduces the property value, it places no other restrictions on future sale of the property either. In fact, the only buyers likely to be scared away are developers.

Since estate taxes are automatically based on the "maximum use value" of the property, which is usually residential development-based, these taxes are substantially reduced if the land cannot be developed. The second motivation is that the charitable donation is an income tax deduction equal to the value of the development rights given up. Although the IRS limits this deduction to a percentage of adjusted gross income in any given year, the excess can be carried forward for as many as 5 years. And thirdly, the value of the property may also be reduced for local property tax purposes.

People who have donated easements say it is a great right to leave a lasting mark by protecting valuable property and vistas. The tax incentives just add to the benefit. For more information, contact any of the Directors or Officers of the Trust and they will be happy to supply either further written material or set up an appointment to discuss options you might be interested in pursuing.



Whit Davis, left, poses with the marker designating the new Whit Davis Bird Sanctuary on the McCann Family Farm, along with NCLT's Virginia Patsun and Jerry Stage.

Whit Davis Appreciation Day

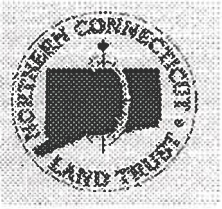
On Saturday, November 11, 2000, NCLT held a special "Day" for Whit Davis, long time Trust advocate, Director, and Somers Town Historian. As the date coincided with Veteran's Day, festivities began in the morning with a gathering of China-Burma World War II veterans, of which Whit is a member. A short ceremony on the Somers common, hosted by First Selectman Gordon Mello, featured Congresswoman Nancy Johnson as guest speaker. A reception was held afterwards at the Senior Center. Congresswoman Johnson presented Whit an American flag which had flown over the nation's capitol.

A reception and dinner was held that evening at the Somers Inn. A packed house heard from Selectman Phil Roland, who presented Whit with a recognition award for his service to the town. The highlight of the evening was the announcement of the Whit Davis Bird Sanctuary, an area of the McCann Family Farm to be set aside as a special preserve for grassland birds. Whit's dedication to wildlife and his successful "blue bird trail" on the farm made the dedication of the bird sanctuary in his name most appropriate.

And in case you become weary while visiting downtown Somers, you can stop over at Piedmont Hall and rest on the new "Whit Davis bench", a comfortable convenience on the porch, properly designated with its own brass plaque!

The day long activities were sponsored by the NCLT and the Somers Historical Society, and was co-chaired by NCLT's Culver Modisette and Michelle Hayward of the Historical Society NCLT.





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If you have a friend interested in joining the Trust and supporting the work of protecting our natural resources, please pass this newsletter on to them. Contributions are tax deductible.

MEMBERSHIPS:

Student - \$2.00	Individual - \$20.00	Family - \$30.00
Business - \$100.00	Life - \$250.00	Patron - \$500.00
	Benefactor - \$1000.00	

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE: _____ **E_MAIL:** _____

Would you like to receive the newsletter by e-mail? _____

Mail to: Northern Connecticut Land Trust
PO Box 324
Somers, CT. 06071

If you would like to volunteer to work projects such as fund-raising, trail maintenance, newsletter, or others, please check **YES** ___ **NO** ___