

# LANDMARK

The newsletter of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust



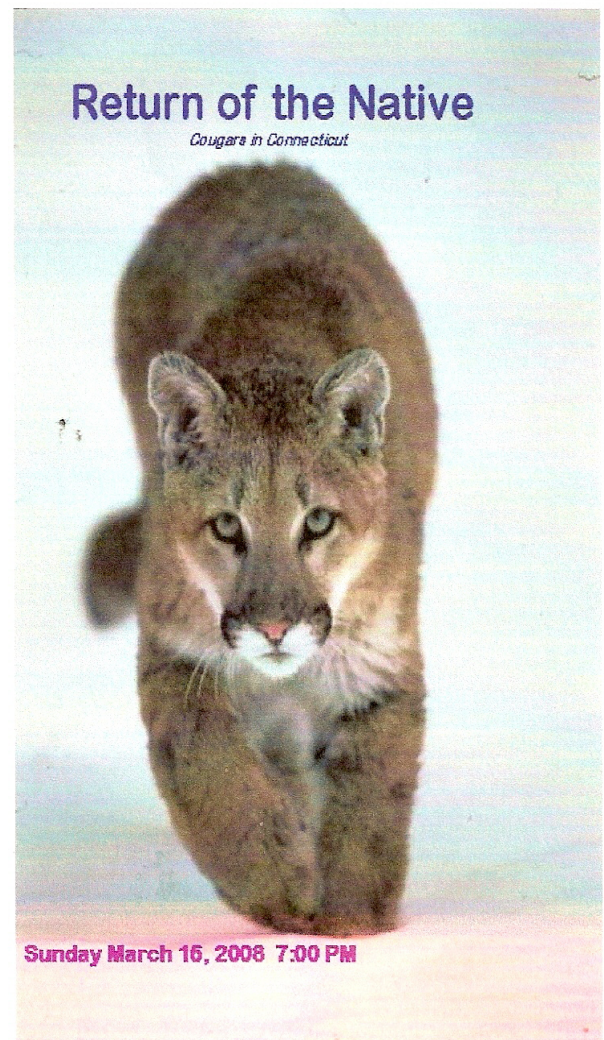
Number 20

February 2008

## Are Mountain Lions Returning to New England?

The Northern Connecticut Land Trust will sponsor a presentation on Sunday, March 16, from 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM, at the Somers Town Hall auditorium exploring various theories that explain how the Mountain Lion is reoccupying the Northeast. The Mountain Lion, also known as Puma, Panther, Cougar, or Catamount, is the most widely distributed mammal in America, ranging from deserts to humid coastal forests, and from sea level to 10,000 foot elevations. These animals were nearly driven to extinction in the continental U.S. and in the last century have been limited to Florida and a dozen states in the West.

Come listen to Bill Betty, a Rhode Island native who studies these amazing creatures, as he gives a 90-minute presentation and discusses sightings and evidence of the big cats in our Nutmeg State. He will cover all aspects of the animal's behaviour and characteristics, as well as how to recover evidence and where and when to search for these amazing creatures. Displays and books on nature's perfect predator will be available. The program is free and will offer refreshments during the intermission. Donations to the Land Trust are welcome.



## **Farmland Preservation Gearing Up in Connecticut**

Governor Rell recently announced the authorization of \$5 million in funds for the State's Farmland Preservation Program, expected to be approved at the State Bond Commission Meeting on Feb 29th. In December, Governor Rell had authorized an additional \$5 million for the program. The Working Lands Alliance, a coalition of more than 200 organizations, spearheaded the push for legislation to release at least \$10 million this year for the acquisition of development rights

This level of bonding for farmland preservation represents a significant increase over recent years. Over the past 5 years, the state's investment in the program has averaged just \$2 million annually. "The new funds will allow us to at least triple the number of farms and the number of acres preserved on an annual basis," reported Joseph Dippel, Director of the State's Farmland Preservation Program. "We will be able to go from preserving five or six farms per year, to between 15 and 20 farms per year," Dippel said.

Historically burdened by administrative delays and erratic funding, the program is gearing up for an increase in quantity and quality of landowner applications. The Dept. of Agriculture has been able to add staff to the program to handle the increase in applications. "We are optimistic that the new funds and staff capacity will fuel interest in the program – so it will be viewed as a realistic option for farm succession planning," reported Dippel.

The Farmland Preservation Program preserves farmland by acquiring the development rights on farm parcels from willing landowners. The farms remain in private ownership and continue to pay local property taxes. A permanent restriction on non-agricultural uses is placed on the property. Parcels are ranked for priority based on soil quality, size, and proximity to other agricultural and protected lands. Municipalities may also apply jointly with farmland owners.

Recent data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicates that the rate of conversion of 'rural lands' to developed lands in Connecticut was 11,266 acres per year from 1997 to 2003. Please take a moment to send a note of thanks to Governor Rell for her ongoing leadership and commitment to the preservation of our precious farmlands in Connecticut. (Email Governor M. Jodi Rell - [Governor.Rell@ct.gov](mailto:Governor.Rell@ct.gov)).

## **Trust Working to Acquire Ellington Property**

A 58-acre extension of open space in the northeast corner of Ellington represents the latest acquisition project for the Trust. The Moseley property is bounded by the 818-acre Nye-Holman State Forest and an 8-acre conservation area owned by the Town of Ellington. The property is mostly wooded with a mixture of harvestable timber, mainly hardwood and white pine. It affords natural habitat for wildlife, with fox, deer, turkey, and similar wildlife present. Wetlands comprise about 5% of the acreage, with Bonemill Brook crossing the northeastern section of the parcel. Some logging took place 15-20 years ago, although no forest management has occurred since. The Trust would plan to assess the forest's potential, and with the help of a forester, will develop a management plan when acquired. There are no restrictions on the property, and the Trust feels it could develop a loop trail, starting and ending at the Tolland Turnpike access, affording the public recreational opportunities as well as allowing a means of managing the woodlands.

The Trust has been awarded a 50% matching grant by the State of Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection towards the purchase price of \$185,000. Generous grants have also been received from the Bafflin Foundation of Rhode Island and from Dan Roulier of Somers. The Town of Ellington is currently considering applying some of its land preservation funds to the purchase as well, based on support for the project by the Town, Ellington Conservation Commission, and Ellington Junior Women's Club. Additional donations to close the final purchase price would be most welcome, and are tax deductible as the Trust is a charitable organization under IRS rules.

## Hikers Enjoy Scantic River Excursion

A warm, sunny day on Sunday, February 3, brought out more than 65 hikers of all ages to Enfield. The Scantic River Watershed Association sponsored the walk, which was led by Rex Joffray. Starting off Bailey Road, the group followed the Scantic River exploring labyrinths of

old, abandoned canals, canal locks, an old brick mill, and ended at the historic Mill Pond dam in Somersville. The trail is part of the Scantic River State Park, which includes many parcels in East Windsor, Enfield, Stafford, and Somers. This just an example of the many outdoor activities held throughout the year by the SRWA and NCLT, as scheduled below for 2008



## Hiking/Walking/Paddling thru 2008 with the NCLT



**Sunday March 30<sup>th</sup>**

**2:00 p.m.**

### **Andrew Kenneth Webster Preserve**

Explore the boundaries of the Andrew Kenneth Webster Preserve. This scenic, open space property abuts Rails-To-Trails and Valley Falls Park in Vernon. Some bushwhacking and climbing with a total distance of 3 miles. See vista of Railroad Valley, several large, vernal pools, trail constructions, and more. Meet at Valley Falls parking lot on Valley Falls Rd. From exit 66 on I-84, take Tunnel Rd. south about 0.6 miles, turn left on Valley Falls Rd. for 1.2 miles, turn right into parking lot. 2:00 p.m. Rain or shine. No dogs.

**L:** George Arthur [860-871-0137](tel:860-871-0137), [trailsarthur2@comcast.net](mailto:trailsarthur2@comcast.net). **CL:** Joe King.

**Saturday March 29<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 a.m.**

### **17<sup>th</sup> Annual Scantic Spring Splash**

Down river canoe and kayak race. Largest in Connecticut. Registration at 9:00 a.m. at Powder Hollow Barn, South Maple St. Race is 5 mile course. Novice course 2.5 miles. Participate or observe, lots of fun. **Contact:** Mike Dynia (860) 745-9986 or visit:

[www.scanticspringsplash.com](http://www.scanticspringsplash.com).

**Saturday April 12<sup>th</sup>**

**6:30 p.m.**

### **Sunset/Moonlight Hike**

#### **Skyline Scenic Area**

After climbing the short, steep ½ mile ledge trail hikers have a fine vantage point for watching the sun set across the Connecticut River Valley. From there the group is led northward in the moonlight on unmarked trails on Minnechaug Mountain in Massachusetts. Sturdy hiking shoes and flashlights are recommended. Meet at Somers Town Hall at 6:30 p.m. **Contact:** Jerry Stage (860) 870-4255

**Sunday April 27<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 a.m.-Noon**

**McCann Family Farm and Whitaker Woods, Somers, CT**

McCann Family Farm and Whitakers Woods are two unique pieces of property totaling over 350 acres in the center of Somers. Both properties have an abundance of flora and fauna, a large variety of trees, vernal pools, delightful brooks and unique stone walls all of which make for homes for an abundance of wildlife. We will hike at a leisurely pace to give everyone time to absorb this wonderland of preserved open space-it is nature at its best! Rolling terrain with a few uphill climbs. Layered clothing and sturdy boots are recommended. Bring snacks and drinks. This is a special invitation to the Narturalist Club members from the Northern CT Land Trust. **Meeting Place:** Somers Town Hall parking lot-center of Somers on Route 190. **Leaders:** Wes Smith, Judith Snyder. **Registration:** Judith Snyder-(860) 749-5411.

**Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**8:30 a.m.**

**Canoe/Kayak Birdwatching Trip on the Scantic**

As spring unfolds, enjoy the beauty and serenity of the Scantic River and its surroundings on a leisurely canoe/kayak trip starting from Mill Pond and going north. Casual bird watching will be encouraged so be sure to bring your binoculars. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Mill Pond in Somerville. Bring your own canoe or kayak and PFD for all. This is an ideal family activity; however, all children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Inclement weather cancels. This trip is sponsored by the **SCANTIC RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION**-on the web at [Scanticriverwatershed.org](http://Scanticriverwatershed.org). For more information call Judith Snyder-(860) 749-5411 or e-mail at [nctia@yahoo.com](mailto:nctia@yahoo.com).

**Sunday May 25<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 a.m.**

**McCann Family Farm/Scantic Riparian Area**

Join Naturalist Jerry Stage on an informative nature walk looking for spring flowers on some of the Land Trusts prettiest and biologically interesting properties. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Somers Town Hall Parking Lot. Jerry Stage (860) 870-4255.

**Saturday June 7<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 a.m.-12 Noon**

**Soapstone Mountain to McCann Family Farm-Somers, CT**

Hikers will start with a chance to climb the observation tower in the Shenipsit State Forest. On a clear day the view can include Western MA, southern VT, NY, and Mt. Monadnock, NH. The hike will continue down the mountain along trails maintained by CFP, the Town of Somers and Northern CT Land Trust. For those who do not wish to hike the entire 5 miles, they can hike half way and be shuttled back to the parking lot. The hike will then continue on to the recently acquired 272 Whitaker property by the NCLT. Rain or shine. Bring plenty of water, snack, and wear sturdy shoes. Optional pizza afterwards. **Leaders:** Wes Smith, Judith Snyder. **Meeting Place:** Soapstone Mountain parking lot off Gulf Rd., Somers, CT. **Information:** Judith Snyder-(860) 749-5411 or e-mail [nctia@yahoo.com](mailto:nctia@yahoo.com).

**Saturday June 7<sup>th</sup>**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Rt 74 Vernon, CT**

Join CT Water CO and CFPR Trail Managers George Arthur and Joe King for a celebration walk on the newest section of the CFPA Shenipsit Trail along abandoned trolley track on the east shore of Shenipsit Lake. This very scenic walk will be 1 ¾ miles in length, flat terrain, casual pace and will include conversations about flora, fauna, area history, and more. Meet at 10 a.m. at the trailhead on RT 74 in Tolland across from Rock-Vern Electric. 0.1 miles east of the Vernon/Tolland line. Rain or Shine. **Contact Information:** George Arthur, (860) 871-0137, [trailsarthur2@comcast.net](mailto:trailsarthur2@comcast.net), or Mary Ingarra, (860) 669-8630, x3014, [mingarra@ctwater.com](mailto:mingarra@ctwater.com).

**Sunday June 8<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Explore Bald Mountain in Somers**

Enjoy exploring parts of Bald Mountain with leader Albie Grant. This bushwhacking excursion will visit parts of the Galbraith and the Bridges parcels, two properties owned by the land trust. Since these two lack marked, maintained trails this is a good opportunity to see them. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Somers Town Hall parking lot.

**Sunday June 8<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Naek Rd Vernon, CT.**

Join Vernon Parks and Recreation Dept and CFPA Trail Managers George Arthur and Joe King for a nature walk on the Hockanum River Linear Park Trail. Meander along the river, enjoy the scenery, learn about flora and fauna, trail construction, and area history. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Naek Rd. cul-de-sac, turn west from Rt 83 about 1 mile north of I-84, exit 64/65. Rain or shine. **Contact Information:** George Arthur, (860) 871-0137, [trailsarthur@comcast.net](mailto:trailsarthur@comcast.net), or Bruce Watt, Vernon Parks & Rec. (860) 870-3520, [bwatt.vpa@spcglobal.net](mailto:bwatt.vpa@spcglobal.net).

**Sunday June 22<sup>nd</sup>, July 6<sup>th</sup>, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, September 14<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 a.m.**

**McCann Family Farm/Scantic Riparian Area**

Join naturalist Jerry Stage on an informative nature walks. Jerry Stage (860) 870-4255. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Somers Town Hall Parking Lot.

**Sunday October 19<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 a.m.**

**McCann Family Farm**

Tree lover George Grant and Naturalist Jerry Stage will take you to some of the most spectacular views of fall foliage on McCanns and perhaps Whitakers. If you are unsure of the species, they can help. Jerry Stage (860) 870-4255. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Somers Town Hall Parking Lot.

**Saturday November 8<sup>th</sup>**

**Sunset/Moonlight Hike 3:30 p.m.**

**Skyline Scenic Area**

After climbing the short, steep ½ mile ledge trail hikers have a fine vantage point for watching the sun set across the Connecticut River Valley. From there the group is led northward in the moonlight on unmarked trails on Minnechaug Mountain in Massachusetts. Sturdy hiking shoes and flashlights are recommended. Meet at Somers Town Hall at 3:30 p.m. Jerry Stage (860) 870-4255



**LANDMARK: Newsletter of the**

**Northern Connecticut Land Trust  
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Somers, CT. 06071**

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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:**

Individual - \$25.00

Family - \$35.00

Supporting - \$50.00

Patron - \$100.00

Business - \$200.00

Champion - \$500.00

Benefactor - \$1000.00

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**Would you like to receive the newsletter by e-mail?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Northern Connecticut Land Trust  
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**If you would like to volunteer to work projects such as fund-raising, trail maintenance, newsletter, or others, please check YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_**