

## CANTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

FALL 2004  
Newsletter

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### **BIG IS BETTER!**

By Jay Kaplan

A quick glance at the last edition of the Canton Land Trust Properties and Trail Guide notes that the Land Trust is currently responsible for the stewardship of over 1300 acres of land in Canton. Although many of these properties are relatively small, ranging from the half acre Atwood Property on Cherry Brook Road in North Canton to the eighteen acre Bouchard Property on Barbourtown Road, others are substantial in size. Our seven largest holdings are known as preserves and each exceeds 80 acres. In some instances, several holdings are contiguous, providing large, primarily forested areas of several hundred acres. Most notable of these are the Trust's land holdings on Ratlum Mountain in the northwest corner of town and on Onion Mountain Ridge along Canton's eastern border with Simsbury. The soon-to-be completed acquisition of the Arnold Property on Onion Mountain adds 60 acres to an already established preserve that protects approximately 220 acres from development.

These large holdings are valuable for a number of reasons. Benefits may include opportunities for passive recreation or protection of *scenic viewsheds* (a catchy new phrase that has been used when development threatens to mar the view of the northwest hills from certain locations around town). However, as visually important as these large protected areas may be to us, they are, without exaggeration, a matter of survival for much of our wildlife. Some animals such as chipmunks and gray squirrels are perfectly capable of living in close proximity to developed areas. Robins and cardinals will nest in suburban backyards and garter snakes will live under a front porch. Without large unbroken forest tracts, however, many other animal species would no longer be able to call Canton home. The recently completed Farmington River Watershed Association Biodiversity Study focused on several areas in Canton. A census of birds and amphibians, among other life forms, found that larger protected areas harbored a greater abundance as well as a greater diversity of species. If these large forest tracts were to be broken up by housing subdivisions, it is likely that some of these animals would disappear.

Professor Robert Askins of Connecticut College has done extensive fieldwork on the subject of forest fragmentation. Dr. Askins has found that if a 500 or even a 1,000 acre forest block is bisected by a road and a few houses, the productivity of interior nesting birds (that is, birds that nest deeper within the forest away from field edges or developed areas) declines sharply. Interior nesting birds include thrushes, warblers, vireos and tanagers. There are several reasons for this decline. Bisecting the forest encourages raccoons, skunks, opossums, crows, blue jays and other such species to enter the forest. These animals patrol the forest edges and all are predators of nestlings and young songbirds.

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Add to this predatory mix a few roaming house cats, and it becomes obvious that these birds have little chance to successfully raise their young. Most songbirds leave the nest before they can fly and spend as much as a week hopping about the forest floor, still dependent upon their parents for food. In some studies it has been found that these songbirds have a nesting success rate of close to zero as a result of forest fragmentation. Obviously, a few successive years of a zero success rate can come close to eliminating a species from a given area.

In addition to songbirds, several of the more intriguing and secretive species, like bobcats and fishers, live deep within the forest. These animals need large home ranges. Both species currently live in Canton. To continue living here successfully they must have large tracts of forested land where they do not have to compete with neighborhood cats, dogs and motor vehicles. Even smaller animals like box turtles fare better in large forested areas. Recently, this once common turtle was added to Connecticut's endangered species list as a "species of special concern." This means that this turtle may be an endangered species in years to come. Box turtles have landed on this list because they are losing their habitat, they are killed by vehicles on roadways, and they are collected by children as pets. Large unbroken forests provide safe havens for box turtles and a wide range of other species.

Large forested tracts are beneficial to a town, its residents, and its wildlife. The goals of the Canton Land Conservation Trust include expanding upon already existing preserves as well as the protection of new forest parcels in other parts of Canton. Clearly, in this instance, Big Is Better.

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### MUSHROOM WALK

**Marlene Snecinski**, a member of the Connecticut Valley Mycological Society, led a group of very enthusiastic foragers on a hike at the Sun, Wind, and Woodland Preserve on September 19<sup>th</sup>. Numerous mushrooms, varying in color from bright red and even purple to the more expected tan and white, were found growing out of the leaves or along rotting tree trunks. Some were edible, but to eat them would have been like eating cardboard or shredded wood. The others, while interesting to see, were definitely of the poisonous variety. Along with the wonderful diversity of mushrooms, a variety of animal tracks were

evident as were the seed heads and leaves of Pink Lady Slippers and other wild flowers. A hike like this encourages one to slow down and look carefully everywhere.

Upon return to our starting point, Marlene had taste treats for everyone in the form of marinated mushrooms. The mushrooms had been harvested from another foraging expedition and deliciously prepared by our guide of many talents. She also showed us some specimens of edible mushrooms found along the road on the way to the hike. Everyone who participated in the hike was grateful for Marlene's special knowledge. We all had a wonderful time at one of the Land Trust's special places.

## OPEN SPACE GRANT

The Canton Land Trust is delighted to report that we recently received a grant from Connecticut's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. Ours was among 15 proposals reviewed and approved out of a pool of 32 applications. Grant applications totaled more than \$15 million, but only \$5 million was made available for this round of grants. The fact that we were one of those rewarded is an indication of the worth of the project involved, not only for Canton, but also the State.

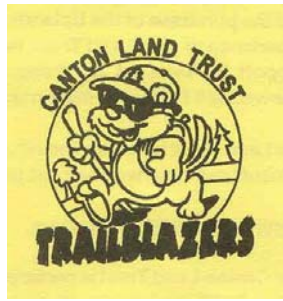
The grant will fund half the cost of the purchase of Dr. John Arnold's property, which runs from Ledgewood Road on the south, north to our Onion Mountain Preserve. The eastern boundary, running 4,125 feet, is the Canton/Simsbury town line. The 65.5 acres of land includes ridge top, an east facing talus slope, outstanding rock outcrops with views to the east and west, and remnants of old logging trails which could become hiking trails. This property is a key piece in the protection of the trap rock ridge and important to a "wildlife corridor" which is already established, primarily to the north of this parcel in both Canton and Simsbury, encompassing some 800 acres.

Because this property is an important "view shed" for the town of Simsbury as well as being part of the trap rock ridge which has important ecological and geological features, the Simsbury Land Trust has decided to buy a conservation easement on the property for \$25,000. This sum will be applied by the Canton Land Trust toward the purchase of the property. We are most appreciative of the Simsbury Land Trust's help with this matter. It is an example of how institutions with similar goals can work together toward a common goal, benefiting all concerned. Before the purchase can be completed, various steps must be taken, including an A-2 survey, but we expect to finalize the purchase very soon.

While we were successful with one grant, a second application was not funded. The Land Trust had hoped to get help to purchase the Sweeton pasture lot on Bunker Hill Road, 43 acres of mixed woodland with a small tributary stream leading to Cherry Brook. When another round of Open Space grants is announced we will apply again. We strongly believe that Governor Rell should be urged to release previously authorized bond funds for another grant round and that the legislative leadership should authorize \$12 million annually in new funds for the next two years for land acquisition purposes. As for now, we are exploring other means to assure this property's purchase.

Your contributions, marked for Land Acquisition are our best source. Please send contributions to CLCT, PO Box 41, Canton Center, CT 06020, or you may use the membership form and the return envelope provided with this mailing to make a gift for land acquisition. For those who wish to contribute securities, please contact H.P. Baldwin Terry at 275-8034.

As always, thank you for your past support and for your future help.



## Trailblazers Go Letterboxing By Maryellen Mullins

Did you ever dream of being an adventurous pirate in search of hidden treasure? Or an early American explorer discovering new, uncharted lands? Wouldn't it be really cool to go out on your very own adventures with your friends and family? Well, that's just what the Canton Land Trust Trailblazers are doing!

**Letterboxing** is a great way to go on a real life treasure hunt and hike the Canton Land Trust trails at the same time. Letterboxing is a fun outdoor activity that combines an intriguing mix of treasure hunting and orienteering with hiking scenic trails and rubber-stamping. It was first started in Dartmoor, England over 150 years ago and is recently catching on all over the United States. The Canton Land Trust Trailblazers are riding the wave.

The basic process involves finding, deciphering, understanding and following clues that lead to the discovery of a letterbox. The clues can be straightforward, cryptic or any degree of complexity in between. Sometimes the clues involve map coordinates or compass bearings from landmarks. Once you have the clues, you need to have your own personal stamp, pocket notebook and inepad. The rubber stamp preferably is hand carved, but it may be purchased. It should say something about you personally, as it will serve as your identification when you leave your mark.

Each Letterbox will also contain a rubber stamp, inepad and small notebook. The hunter who has found the Letterbox, can stamp the logbook with his personal stamp and stamp his personal logbook with the stamp found in the Letterbox. The box's logbook provides a record of all its visitors and the Trailblazers keep a record in their personal logbooks of all the boxes they have found.

If you want to learn more about Letterboxing, go to [letterboxing.org](http://letterboxing.org). There you will find answers to all your questions, find clues to local Letterboxes and directions to make your own stamp, as well as many other interesting facts about Letterboxing.

The Canton Land Trust Trailblazers and their families went on their first Letterboxing adventure in September. Parents had as much fun as the kids. As one family said, "We're hooked." Dad liked the walk in the woods, and "the search" provided mom with a sense of purpose. Predictably the kids just wanted to be outside – so the whole family was happy.

Now that the Trailblazers have learned about Letterboxing, they are ready to explore other hidden boxes within Canton and surrounding towns. Some of the kids are thinking about hiding Letterboxes along the Land Trust trails and posting the clues on the CLCT website for other Trailblazers to find. The wave just keeps getting bigger!

## GENEROUS GIFTS

This summer Canton lost a very special person, **Noel Baker**. Noel was active in all aspects of Canton life from town government and the library to the world of the theater. She was a lover of all living creatures, particularly dogs and cats and our woodland neighbors. Just before she died, she gave the Land Trust property totaling 16 acres of woodlands and a field where red pines once stood. The field will become a meadow, which the Land Trust will maintain in a way beneficial to wildlife. We are grateful to Noel who never stopped giving to the town. Hers was a thoughtful and generous gift.

Jane Goedecke, with the encouragement of her family, Peter, Amy and Mark, has given the Land Trust 2.6 acres off West Road. The Goedecke land abuts the easement that the Humphrey family gave the Land Trust last year, and this allows access from West Road to a long and particularly lovely section of Cherry Brook. Canton's history is evident on both properties. The outline of an old sluiceway, used to provide waterpower to a mill near the neighbor's pond, still exists along the west slope of the property. A large pile of rock is all that remains of the mill that probably began as a sawmill but became a cider mill by 1860. An old road running parallel to the stream was used by the Humphreys for years to bring wood out of their back lot. The Humphreys had bought the land from Selden Brown, a relative of the abolitionist John Brown in October 1888. The Goedecke property, too, was once owned by the Browns. Both Mark and Jane Goedecke were lovers of the land and early supporters of the Land Trust. Their gift is a significant contribution to the preservation of our town's heritage.

### EAGLE SCOUTS

The Land Trust is extremely fortunate to have two Boy Scouts who are planning to do their Eagle Scout projects on Land Trust property. **David Gunsallus** proposes to improve access to the main Swan Trail and the trails around the stream. Next spring he will build a bench to be placed near the stream so that hikers will have a comfortable spot for rest and contemplation.

Joe Haller proposes to build a new trail on the Sun, Win and Woodland Preserve on the east side of Breezy Hill Road. The trail will go from Breezy Hill Road up along an abandoned road to a former logging road and along a stream to an impressive rock formation. Eventually the trail will continue north to the Old Taylor Road and then west, back to Breezy Hill Road. The northern portion of the trail will be worked on by Land Trust volunteers. The Land Trust is most appreciative of these Scouts who are dedicating the significant time and effort required to complete these projects.

### PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

While the quantity of photographs submitted to this year's Sam Collins Day contest was not large, the quality was most impressive. We would like to thank everyone who entered. First prizes went to **Cindy Howland** for her picture of the Ax Factory and **Connie McAlindin** for his waterfall picture. Best in-show went to **Cynthia Smith** for her impressive picture of the Rails-To-Trails Bridge taken on a foggy morning.

We look forward to more entries and improved prizes for next year's contest, which will once again be concluded with a display of pictures at our Sam Collins Day booth. Further information will be posted on our web site at [cantonlandtrust.org](http://cantonlandtrust.org) during the year. If you have questions or wish more information, please call Chris at 673-1425. When you take that super shot of a Canton subject, save it for the show!

## FINANCIAL PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAND OWNERS

By: Charles DeWeese

There are good financial planning reasons to consider donating land to a charitable organization like the Canton Land Conservation Trust, or offering it at a bargain sale price (below market value). In some cases, the net after tax effect may result in a better return than selling at market to a developer or other commercial buyer. A donation or bargain sale may be appropriate for someone who has owned the land for a long time and seen it appreciate in value, and who has income that can be offset by deductions for tax purposes. If you would like to learn more about the considerations involved, many of the Land Trust directors are generally familiar with how this works, and would be happy to discuss this with you in a confidential manner. However, every person's financial and tax situation is unique. A charitable donation or partial donation of land may or may not be in your interest. The Land Trust cannot give you legal, tax or financial advice. If you decide to proceed with a plan to donate land or offer it at a below market price, you should consult your own legal and tax advisers.

### *Many Hands Make Light Work*



From left: Cindy Sondergeld, Alexei Sondergeld (age 5), Michael Gotaski, John Furtney, Ned Furtney, Kim Bowen, Art Mauger, and Steve Mitchell. Not shown: Katherine Pearson, Eric Sondergeld, Don Tarinelli, and Bunny Terry.

On Saturday, October 2, a group of twelve land trust members converged on Sweetheart Mountain for general trail maintenance and to rebuild some stone steps that the root system of a large tree destroyed when it toppled in a storm. Sweetheart Mountain has two hiking trails totaling about one mile in length and has spectacular views of Collinsville (especially in Winter when the leaves are down). For more information, directions, and a trail guide, visit [www.cantonlandtrust.org](http://www.cantonlandtrust.org).

## CLCT NAMES NEW DIRECTOR

The CLCT introduced **Scott McAlindin** as its newest director at their June meeting.

Scott was born and raised in New Jersey. He earned a degree in psychology from West Chester State University in Pennsylvania and in 1975 began a successful career in the insurance industry. He is currently Senior V.P. of Claim Field Operations at The Hartford. Scott is a graduate of both the Greater Hartford Area and Harrisburg PA Executive Leadership programs. He has served as a member of Canton's Insurance Commission, as chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission, and as a coach in Canton's youth soccer and baseball programs.

Scott and his wife Pat moved to Canton in 1988. Linking conservation and recreation is a long-standing family tradition for the McAlindins. During their 12 years as members of the CLCT Scott, Pat and children Sean, Connor and Kelly have enjoyed participating in many Land Trust projects.

Please join us in welcoming Scott to the CLCT board of directors.

### OUR NEW WEBMASTER

**Chris Camporeale** is the Land Trust's new web master. Chris is the owner and operator of AdvanTech Micro Development. He is a student at Canton High School with an extensive background in web site maintenance and development, as well as computers and technology in general. Recently he earned his Microsoft Certified Professional credential. Along with becoming the Land Trust's web master, Chris designs and manages web sites for many local businesses. He also provides assistance to the Town of Canton and to the Canton Board of Education.

Chris lives in Canton with his parents, Lynn and Lou, and his younger brother Evan. In addition to school and work, Chris enjoys photography and playing jazz piano and saxophone. He continues to be a great asset to the Land Trust. Please visit our website at [www.cantonlandtrust.org](http://www.cantonlandtrust.org). There you will find upcoming events, trail guides, information on protected land, our latest newsletter, and information on how you can become involved with the Land Trust. All the information is current – thanks to Chris.

### A SPECIAL VOLUNTEER

The Land Trust's newsletters are a joint effort. Articles and ideas for articles come from a number of Directors, but it is our unsung hero **Kathy Jenkins** who, since 1995, organizes the material submitted, does the layout, proof reads the articles and formats the newsletter. Once Kathy has done her part, the newsletter is ready for the printer.

Kathy, a longtime resident of the Farmington Valley and Canton, is a retired professor who taught Business Office Technology at Tunxis Community College for 35 years. The Land Trust has benefited enormously from her extensive knowledge of computer and graphic programs. Many thanks to Kathy. They are long overdue.

In addition to helping the Land Trust, Kathy serves on the Canton Zoning Board of Appeals and is the librarian and a tour guide at the Canton Historical Museum. The importance of citizens like Kathy Jenkins cannot be overstated. The Land Trust is privileged to have her as a volunteer.