



Litchfield Land Trust, Inc.

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Postal Patron

Dedicated to land conservation and stewardship since 1968

We need your support

To share an old expression, the landscape across Litchfield this fall was eye candy. The forests displayed incredible colors, the meadows were gorgeous, the hills and valleys idyllic. A major reason that all this natural beauty surrounds us is that so much of our open land is preserved. The Litchfield Land Trust is honored to be the steward of more than 3000 acres around Litchfield, protected in perpetuity, thereby guaranteeing that these memorable landscapes will not disappear. Taking care of these properties is a big job, and Litchfield Land Trust is reliant on the support of its members for its ability to continue its work.

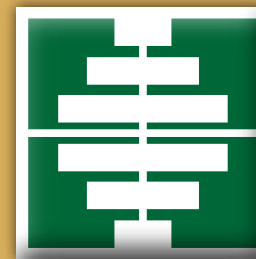


This newsletter provides accounts of some of the activities and projects we have undertaken in 2015, and that we plan for 2016. It also includes our annual appeal for membership and donations. We encourage you to continue supporting us, and if you are able, to increase your donation to the fullest extent possible.

There are many ways to financially support the Litchfield Land Trust and create a meaningful legacy

Financial support can mean more than writing a check. As LLT is a not-for-profit 501c(3) organization, a donation of stock or real estate can be given to LLT at full market value without incurring capital gains taxes. A bequest to LLT in your will or other element of your estate plan can provide a meaningful legacy; bequests are varied in type and can include real estate, a charitable remainder trust, a retained life estate arrangement involving a personal residence or a financial, retirement or life insurance asset. Take into account your goals and needs and consult with your tax advisor.

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the Litchfield Land Trust, Inc.

PRESERVING OUR NATURAL HERITAGE FOREVER

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2015-2016

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President's Message

It is exciting to have been given the opportunity to lead the LLT beginning last May, but at the same time it's a challenge to follow in the footsteps of our outgoing president Peter Litwin, whose tenure was one of vision and high energy. In the three years of Peter's leadership the land trust has come a very long way: the professionalism of the board has been raised with the addition of new board members and the hiring of an executive director; the quality of our acquisitions has improved; our office accommodations are much better; and thanks to two public symposia and heightened community outreach our fundraising efforts have been more successful. Fortunately for all of us, Peter remains on the board and will continue to apply his talents to the benefit of the organization.

John Endicott recently elected to resign from the board in favor of attention to family and his wide-ranging intellectual projects. We give a big 'Thank You' to him for his many contributions during his tenure, including most recently his devotion of time and knowledge to the property records project.

LLT continues its focus on rapid evolution in organizational excellence, including projects such as a major upgrade in our property records and organizational files, development of a comprehensive property stewardship program, establishing formal standards and practices that will lead toward accreditation by the Land Trust Alliance, enhancing our community outreach and fundraising, and all the while keeping a focus on our core mission, the protection of Litchfield lands so that the conservation values inherent in them—open space, forests, working land, watercourses and watersheds, wildlife habitat, historic and scenic qualities—are preserved in perpetuity. We greatly appreciate the support of the Litchfield area community in these efforts.

Thank you. *Richard Heys*

The White Oak

The Litchfield Land Trust hike on its 80-acre Shepaug Crossing Preserve this fall had much to offer the hikers. Overcast and cool, only four people came to walk along the pristine banks of the Shepaug River. While the trail stays on the northeast bank, we never actually crossed this benchmark riverine habitat. Along its shore we watched a squawking kingfisher and a red-tailed hawk search for food. A flycatcher and a yellow-shafted flicker silently glided from tree to tree as we experienced this splendor. What impressed me most on this hike was not the wildlife, but the tall, silent and dominant presence of the white oak (*Quercus alba*).



White Oak (*Quercus alba*)

The White Oak (Cont.)

As I trampled upon the White Oak's characteristic rounded lobed, freshly fallen leaves, I thought of my many ecology lessons. This tree prefers deep, rich, moderately drained soil. The upper steep slope of the Shepaug Crossing Preserve is teeming with rocks laid out as a lateral moraine; these rocks resemble a western scree slope – only not gravel-sized, but rather large jagged-edged boulders. Where the grade softens and the soil has accumulated – particularly during the glacial retreat – a sanctuary was created for Connecticut's beautiful state tree.

In the fall, the acorns of *Quercus alba* begin to germinate, lowering their tannin concentration. Presumably, this makes them sweeter and more palatable for deer, turkey, and squirrels. In addition to being full of fat, protein, carbs and other nutrients, oak acorns have varying levels of tannins which signal the acorns from other oak species to postpone germination, giving it more time to land in (be buried by a squirrel or jay or other acorn-dependent critter) a suitable location for growth.

Here in the northeast, no other plant genus supports more Lepidopteran species, namely butterflies and moth



caterpillars. Over 540 species may use plants from the Genus *Quercus* for food or other nesting needs. One might guess that the oak's attractiveness might quickly lead this species to extinction. Enter the birds. Over 95% of our terrestrial birds feed caterpillars to their young. In fact the hatching of bird eggs often correlates with the emergence of these caterpillars. During the breeding season, Black-capped chickadees and other birds need a lot of caterpillars—in the case of chickadees, more than 5,000 per clutch of hatchlings.

To me, Shepaug Crossing Preserve will be known as *Quercus hollow*, a rich, vibrant habitat with many stately white oaks supporting its rich diversity. I urge you to take a stroll along the Shepaug River to observe the many bird species; see how many songs and calls you recognize. The tall, silent oaks will be there waiting to provide.

Contributed by LLT Board Trustee John Markelon

Trails News

The Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA), steward of the statewide blue trail system, has adopted ALL of LLT's trails on the Prospect Mountain (PM) Preserve. The 2-mile blue trail crossing the preserve, previously a segment of the Mattatuck Trail, is now officially designated the Blue Trail of the Prospect Mountain Trail System. Our yellow, red and white trails on PM are named analogously. As a result of this action, all of our PM trails now appear on CFPA's interactive trails map (<http://www.ctwoodlands.org/blue-blazed-hiking-trails/blue-blazed-hiking-trails-interactive-map>) and will be included in the next edition of CFPA's Connecticut Walk Book. In addition, our trails will share the designation as part of the Connecticut State Greenway (http://www.st.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2707&q=323852&deepNav_GID=1704). In the near future, look for additional trailhead kiosks at the Red Trail and at the western end of the Blue Trail, and improved trail map signage inside all the PM kiosks.

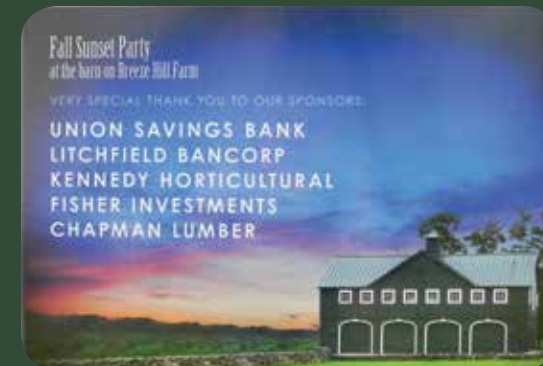
Connecticut Trails Day on June 6 was a great success. Our hike took place on the newly re-created 1.2 mile Graham Thompson trail (aka The White Trail on Prospect Mountain) attracted more than a dozen participants, ranging in age from 4 years old. Richard Heys led the hike and was joined by several LLT board members; it was a fine experience for all.

Guided hikes open to the public also took place during Land Trust Days in October; board members Marie Kennedy led a hike on the Prospect Mountain Yellow and Blue trails on Saturday, October 17 and John Markelon led a hike on the Shepaug Crossing trail on Sunday, October 25.



Willing to be a Land Steward?

Caring for our owned properties and conservation easements is a daunting task, but one that is necessary for good stewardship of the lands entrusted to the Litchfield Land Trust. The LLT is developing a program to carry out monitoring visits to each of its properties on an annual basis, with the help of GPS-based property boundary data being measured by our contracting forester Ian Branson. The monitoring program is being piloted by members of LLT's Stewardship Committee, who will provide organization and training for volunteer land stewards. Volunteers could commit to as little as a once-per-year visit to a neighboring property, or take on multiple properties. What a great way to get out into nature while doing good for land preservation!



The Litchfield Land Trust Board of Directors wish to thank everyone ~ sponsors, hosts, volunteers, donors, vendors and participants for their help to make this year's Sunset Party a smashing success!

Going Inward

*Wood smoke in hollows and roofs are hoary;
for bygone summer we feel so sorry.*

*The light is fading earlier with each passing day;
the thermometer dropping as the heat ebbs away.*

*Scurrying like squirrels to put the garden to bed;
brown, rusty colors replacing yellows and red.*

*Water hoses coiled and hung away;
winter squash stashed like a farmer's hay.*

*Chipmunks on the run with puffed out cheeks;
blue jays at the feeders with seeds in their beaks.*

*Bird bath water as hard as a rock;
swimming season now closed for all the flock.*

*Time to thicken the blood and stay close to the stoves;
pull on your woolens and layer up your clothes.*

*The pace of life slows as inward we go;
time to catch up on your reading as we head toward snow.*

October 24, 2015 ~ Sunrise 7:13 am, Sunset 5:58 pm ~ Peter A. Litwin