
THE The Colebrook Land Conservancy NEWSLETTER

“In Land We Trust”

Spring 2017

It Takes A Village, Part II

Colebrook Land Conservancy Celebrates 30 Years



Right, Preparing for the 30th Anniversary Celebration. Far right, special guests Richard Hale with wife, Cynthia, and daughter, Elizabeth



To commemorate the Conservancy's 30th anniversary, our last newsletter included some of the highlights from its first fifteen years (1986-2001). Here, now is a description of some of the Conservancy's challenges and successes during the years 2002-2017.

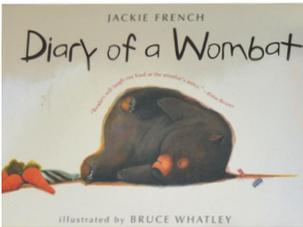
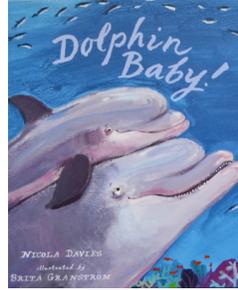
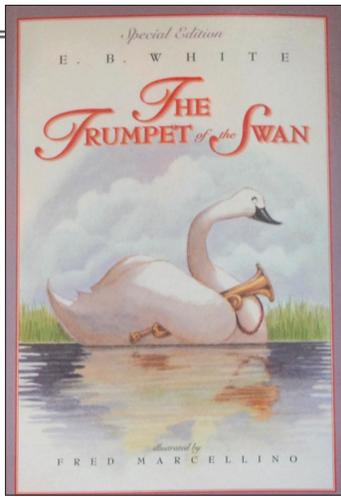
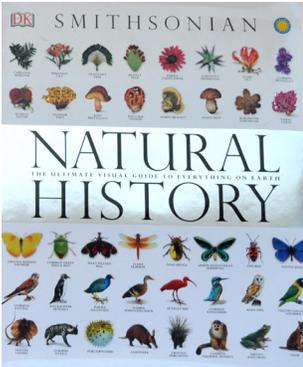
Not long after the Conservancy had successfully purchased the Hale Farm, another significant opportunity arose. Cited in the CLC newsletter as “its largest single purchase ever”, the Conservancy bought 100 acres of land from Thomas and Chrystene

Adams in June, 2005. After trying to get a zoning permit for a housing development, the couple eventually decided to sell their land and the Conservancy leapt at the chance to buy it: the area comprises the western side of Corliss Mountain, offering myriad habitats for wildlife, and including forest, wetlands and streams, and is an important part of the Sandy Brook watershed.

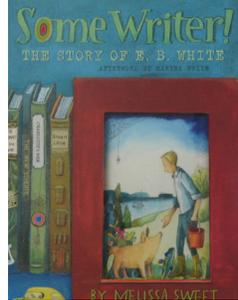
That same year, Colebrook resident Eva Martinez died and her will specified that 93 acres of her land on Cobb City Road be protected by a conservation

easement administered by the Conservancy.

Then, in 2009, The Nature Conservancy, which had been given the 394-acre Phelps Research Area parcel before the Colebrook Land Conservancy even existed, decided to formally return ownership to local hands. As Dan Strickler noted, this was proof of The Nature Conservancy's faith in the CLC's stewardship, as they had been overseeing the property for them for the past decade. The following year, another smaller but important parcel of 7 acres along Sandy Brook Road ►



LISLE FUND BOOKS
 Each spring, for Earth Day, with money from the Lisle Fund, CLC trustee Joyce Hemingson chooses books and videos on the natural world for donation to the Colebrook Consolidated School. This year's selections are shown here.



adjacent to the brook and the Kitchel Wilderness area was donated by the Faraway Hill Trust to the Conservancy. The Farmington River Coordinating Committee generously offered matching funds to remove an existing structure on the land, returning the property to an entirely natural state.

Since land conservation was going so well in Colebrook, no one was prepared for BNE Energy's application to build six industrial turbines, some to be sited south of Route 44 on Flagg Hill Road and some on Rock Hall Road, both in residential areas and adjacent to fragile animal habitats. In order to oppose the application, Conservancy trustees Sukey Wagner and Joyce Hemingson and Rock Hall Inn proprietor Stella Somers formed FairWindCT in 2010. They and other supporters wrote letters, lobbied state and local officials and held meetings to organize local opposition to the turbines, calling for the State to establish clear regulations for their placement. FairWindCT appealed the Siting Council's approval of the six Colebrook turbines, first to the State Superior Court and then to Connecticut's Supreme Court, without success.

CLC president Manuel Cords and vice-president Linda Raciborski led the Conservancy's fight against the turbines in Colebrook and for the establishment of state regulations relating to industrial wind turbines. Together with other members, they wrote letters and lobbied elected officials, attended hearings and public meetings, citing health concerns for humans and animals, as well as their adverse effect on the sensitive ecology of the area.

So far, two turbines have been built on Flagg Hill Road. Their looming presence—each stands nearly 500 feet tall—now dominates the landscape south of Route 44. Despite this outcome, local pressure in Colebrook and Prospect (where other wind turbines had been proposed) eventually helped convince the State of Connecticut to adopt regulations for the future siting of wind turbines.

Looking back at the past 30 years, CLC trustees and volunteers can point to some real achievements in protecting

Easements: An Important Decision

An easement is a legal restriction an owner puts on the development or use of property and is tailored to meet each owner's wishes. People grant conservation easements primarily because they wish to protect land they cherish, land that will be invaluable for its natural attributes in the uncertain future. For example, there may be special natural features, such as streams, wetlands, ridge lines, scenic views, types of vegetation or wildlife habitats, or perhaps man-made features such as farmland, historic houses, or outbuildings. The greatest reward is the satisfaction of being responsible for the land's permanent protection. The reality of today's tax laws has its role, too. Granting a conservation easement can result in attractive income and estate tax advantages.

Anyone deciding to put an easement on property may of course continue to enjoy the land in any manner desired, provided that it is kept in whatever state is specified in the easement. The owner may sell or lease the property and may dispose of it in a will, but the easement's conditions will be binding upon the lessees, grantees, heirs, or any other future owners of the land.

Taking steps to preserve your land with an easement is a highly personal and complex decision. However, it is a decision that many others have made, one that is relatively simple to put in place. It has already contributed enormously to the preservation of Colebrook as we know it. In fact, we have a strong precedent in our town for these land-preserving legal devices. As of 2017, the Colebrook Land Conservancy holds a dozen easements encompassing 571 acres.

As you consider this important decision, please be aware that the CLC stands ready to discuss your individual situation with you. For further information, send an email to info@colebrooklandconservancy.org or visit the Land Trust Alliance web site at <https://www.landtrustalliance.org/what-you-can-do/conservate-your-land/getting-started>.

— Joyce Hemingson



land, stopping unsightly and harmful development, protecting watersheds and viewsheds and roadways and sharing knowledge and love of nature with local townspeople. And the number of acres owned outright or under conservation easements continues to increase. In 2014, as former trustee Ken Andresen recalls, after the death of Bill Betts, the descendants of Sally Hale, one of the first CLC trustees, granted a conservation easement on 157 acres of land bordering Smith Hill Road. It was a fitting gesture, continuing the strong link between Mason and Sally Hale and land conservation in Colebrook. To date, the CLC has acquired 656 acres and holds voluntary conservation easements on a further 571 acres. For a town the size and population of Colebrook, it is an indication of the commitment of its members and the support of the community. A substantial list of people have donated land and given easements on their property.

The Conservancy has been very lucky, too, to have had many dedicated friends who have contributed their time and skills to support its efforts. Past newsletters are sprinkled with the names of trustees and CLC members who have been instrumental, like Holly Bodycoat, Carla Wanner, Norma Spada, Cindy Baldwin, Barney Adams—and Alden Wallace, who so capably designs this newsletter—to name just a few.

To celebrate its 30th anniversary and to thank its members for their valuable contributions, the Conservancy hosted a wood-fired pizza party at the Hale Barn last September. About 80 people attended, including Richard Hale and his wife, Cynthia, and daughter, Elizabeth. There was live music and a poetry reading. The historic barn was open for viewing, and some goats roamed among the guests. Richard Hale reminisced with Jake Thompson and other CLC members about his escapades growing up on the farm.

The current president of the CLC, Linda Raciborski, who has been a trustee of the Conservancy almost since its founding, recently recalled the high points of her years on the Board: having the opportunity to learn from and work with dedicated conservationists, ▶



An Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on a Deutzia "Magicien" bush. Inset: John Himmelman.

John Himmelman to Speak at This Year's Potluck

John Himmelman, a noted author, illustrator, naturalist and popular lecturer, will be the featured speaker at the Colebrook Land Conservancy's Potluck Dinner on Friday, April 21st. His subject will be butterflies and moths, the habitat they need to survive and how to create a garden that is beneficial for them.

For many years, Himmelman has combined his love for nature with his talents as a writer and illustrator, creating dozens of books about natural history for adults and children, including *There's a Bug on My Book!* and the very amusing Barnyard Rescue series.

He is also an avid supporter of butterflies and moths, having co-founded the CT Butterfly Association in 1994 to "promote awareness and appreciation of butterflies and moths", to "encour-

age preservation of butterfly and moth habitat" and to "develop and maintain a lepidoptera database." These initiatives are important, since Monarch butterflies are facing near-extinction in the next 20 years, according to a 2016 Scripps Oceanography Institute report. The threat to Monarchs is due to significant loss of habitat, principally because of the decline of milkweed and nectar sources.

Himmelman has also served as president of the New Haven Bird Club, president of The Nature Connection and past president of the Killingworth Land Trust. He has lectured and led many trips afield in search of various flora and fauna throughout the country for over 25 years.

The potluck dinner will begin on Friday at 6 pm at the Colebrook Senior Center, followed by Himmelman's presentation at 7 pm. ■



30th Anniversary, continued

starting with Nancy Phelps Blum; walking for the first time on land that is being donated or acquired, knowing it will forever be protected; participating in CLC-sponsored nature walks, canoe rides and events that are fun and educate people about Colebrook's natural resources; and helping develop a map of "Colebrook's Notable Trees." Going forward, she says, "I hope the Conservancy continues to preserve

our town's incredible natural beauty by protecting land and water resources — through acquisition when necessary, and also by connecting with landowners who want to donate land or easements. I also hope we maintain and expand our broad-based community support, and that we continue to speak up for and provide education about conservation." And one thing is certain, there is plenty more to do. —Amy Bernstein ■

We lack email addresses for many of you, and if there is an alert we wish to send out, information about upcoming events or other announcements, we have no way of contacting you but snail mail. Please send us your email address:

info@colebrooklandconservancy.org

*The Colebrook Land Conservancy
P.O. Box 90 Colebrook, CT 06021*

The Colebrook Land Conservancy Newsletter is produced in the public's interest. Comments and suggestions for articles are welcome.



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