



Pen and ink illustration by Margaret A. Race

SUMMER 2025

Our Mission: The Winchester Land Trust serves as steward of the town's rural character and open spaces, striving to foster the preservation of Winchester's unique lands and natural resources forever. The Trust informs and educates the community to promote the benefits of land conservation and balanced growth.

Exploring Nature: A Woodland Adventure with Young Learners

by Caroline Christensen

On May 16th and 20th, the Winchester Land Trust proudly sponsored a Woodland Educational Hike for the 4th and 5th graders of Pearson School in Winchester. Two buses filled with eager young explorers arrived at 9 a.m. at Houlihan Woods and the Michael Giordano Tribute Area (HW-MGTA)—ready for an outdoor adventure.

PHOTO BY BARBARA DOUGLAS



One of the school buses arrives at HW-MGTA

Before setting out, students were introduced to the historical significance of the land, including its use as an air landing field that helped provide food security to the people of Winsted during the 1955 flood. Prior to the hike, students were prepared with a PowerPoint presentation to help orient them—especially important for those who had never been on a hike or in the woods before. They were also given a fun challenge: to find four things along the trail—a sign of human activity, a glacial erratic, a plant or animal adaptation, and a spring ground flower.

The hike began with a delightful show from bobolinks in the open fields, setting the tone for the morning. As the group entered the forest, students made curious and thoughtful observations that many adults or seasoned hikers might overlook. “What is that green soft-looking stuff on the rocks?” one asked.

“Look at the orange thing!” said another. “It’s a newt!” someone shouted excitedly. They eagerly examined a crumbling pile of wood—once a tree—and marveled at the process of decay and the forest’s natural cycle of renewal.

Further into the woods, students climbed on massive glacial erratics left behind 10,000 years ago by retreating glaciers. They discovered and deduced the reason behind a hidden river flowing beneath the forest floor, emerging just beyond the trail, and they experienced the transition from forest to fern-filled wetland as they crossed plank bridges through a brief, boggy area.



PHOTO BY BARBARA DOUGLAS

Students cross bog bridges on the Anvil Trail

In just an hour and a half, the students experienced a world that many adults overlook. Their excitement, wonder, and joy were contagious. Leading this hike and watching their enthusiasm unfold was a powerful reminder of why connecting young people to nature matters. These students—some of whom had never set foot in the woods before—left with wide eyes, muddy shoes, and the beginnings of a lifelong connection to the land. They are the future stewards of our fields, forests, and streams.

Thank you to the Northwest Community Bank Foundation, our volunteers and the educators at Pearson School for helping grow the next generation of land stewards!



PHOTO BY JEN PERGA

Students, teachers, and WLT volunteers line up for an orientation by WLT Education Coordinator, Caroline Christensen (pink shirt, center).

Healing Our Hemlocks – Naturally

by Barbara Douglas

In the early 1950s an invasive, non-native aphid-like insect from Southern Japan found its way to Richmond, Virginia.

This insect is known as the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). In 1985, the first sighting was reported in Connecticut. By 1990, all Connecticut counties were heavily infested.

Infested hemlock trees can die in a few years. It is a serious concern because our hemlocks provide shelter and habitat for wildlife and avian communities, and also protect our cold-water fisheries.

In 1995, the ladybeetle formally known as *Sasajiscymmus* tsugae, was introduced as a biological agent to combat

HWA in Eastern USA.

Today, the Winchester Land Trust has participated in efforts to distribute the ladybeetle in the Northwest region of Connecticut. Along with New Hartford and Simsbury land trusts, Roaring Brook Nature Center, FALPS and Housatonic Valley Association (just to name a few of the participating organizations) are working to save our hemlocks.

Winchester Land Trust is pleased to support a chemical-free technique to combatting HWA which keeps our forests and waterways healthy and viable for all who depend on them.



An infestation of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid on a hemlock tree



Doug Pfenminger carefully distributes the ladybeetles on the hemlock branch



The ladybeetles Winchester Land Trust received

PHOTOS BY BARBARA DOUGLAS

“Sly Like a Fox”

Approximately 40 people attended Ginny Apple’s presentation on foxes at the American Museum of Tort Law, sponsored by Winchester Land Trust. As a Master Wildlife Conservationist with Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Ginny is a font of knowledge and an entertaining speaker. No wonder people follow her to speaking engagements across the northwest corner!

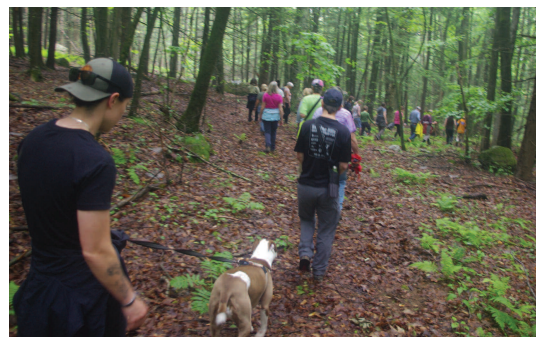


PHOTOS BY BARBARA DOUGLAS



Connecticut Trails Day Hike at New WLT Preserve

Despite predictions of rain, 38 passionate hikers and three dogs turned up to hike the new trail at WLT’s Antonio & Maria Cannavo Preserve. Everyone had a great time, and the rain held off!



PHOTOS BY DAVID WHITNEY

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY STONE WALLS IN NEW ENGLAND?

Thanks to Napoleon, Tariffs and Sheep

by Doug Pfenninger

A walk through the meadows and woods of New England almost inevitably includes encounters with the ubiquitous stone walls that lace our landscape. Although many serve as boundaries and lie on the edges of arable (plowable) land most do not. Why bother to remove stones and build walls in a landscape so clearly unsuited to planting crops? One commonly held explanation is: Sheep. Until they were defeated by Napoleon in 1810 the Spanish tightly controlled the export of one of their most valued commodities: Merino sheep. Prized for their long and soft fleece these sheep were exclusive to the Iberian Peninsula until Napoleon's victory made it impossible to enforce the embargo on their export. William Jarvis, US consul to Portugal, saw an opportunity and imported 4000 Merinos to his farm in southern Vermont in 1810. Sheep Fever had arrived!

The timing could not have been better; the US was soon at war with the British (the War of 1812) and the importation of wool from Britain

subject to stiff tariffs. Mechanical innovations for processing wool coupled with abundant water power in New England propelled wool production and sheep farming to new heights. By the 1840 nearly three quarters of the land in New England had been cleared, most of it for sheep pasture.

PHOTO BY JEN PERGA



Growing crops on the hilly rocky land of New England had always been challenging. The opening up of fertile stone free lands to the west made growing wheat and other crops here a poor choice. Raising sheep required

only pasture, no plowing needed! At the peak of the fever Merino wool sold for \$2.00 a pound, a high premium over the 37.5 cents paid for a pound of other wools. Top Merino rams were selling for \$1500. Forests were cleared and surface rocks removed to create more and more grazing land. The abundant stones were put to use creating boundaries to contain the flocks. By 1840 nearly 240,000 miles of stone walls had been built in New England, enough to circle the globe ten times! The fever was short lived. Pastures were overgrazed and the thin soils eroded, in some places down to the bedrock still visible today. Most of the sheep farming moved west and New England farmers began to focus on dairy production where they maintained an advantage over western farmers since refrigeration had yet to be invented and milk could not be transported long distances without spoilage. But the legacy of sheep fever remains in what has become one of the most iconic features of the New England landscape.

Laurel Ridge – 507 Acres Coming Soon!

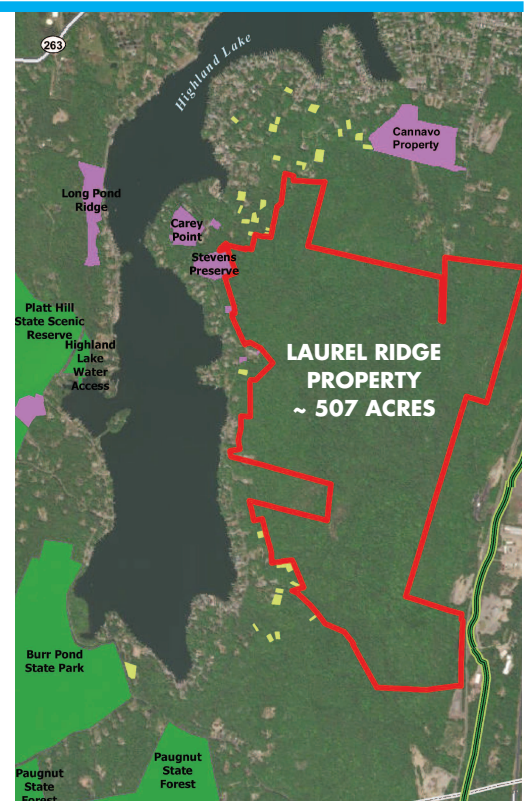
by Jen Perga

Winchester Land Trust (WLT) and our partner, the Highland Lake Watershed Association (HLWA) plan to close on the 507-acre “Laurel Ridge” property in the next few months. With a grant secured from Connecticut’s Department of Energy and Environmental Protection’s Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Grant Program, a grant from the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation, and many very generous donations from HLWA and WLT members we are close to reaching the funds needed to acquire the parcel.

Laurel Ridge offers countless benefits to the environment; protecting water quality in the Still River and Highland Lake, supporting wildlife and biodiversity, and protecting a large tract of core forest.

Laurel Ridge boasts an extensive trail network. With added signage and mapping, the property will be ready for hikers, trail runners, dog walkers, birdwatching and cross-country skiing. The land was once the site of the Carey Racetrack on Pratt Hill. Visitors will enjoy walking the ½ mile track, which is almost completely surrounded by spectacular stone walls.

We will, of course, need many volunteers to maintain trails and monitor this tremendous parcel. Email us at winchesterlandtrust@yahoo.com to join 14-15 enthusiastic recruits who have already signed up!



Be part of our mission. Stay in touch!

Please make sure we have your current contact information.



Winchester Land Trust

See the latest WLT information on our Facebook page

Visit our website: www.winchesterlandtrust.org.

Email us at winchesterlandtrust@yahoo.com

Call us at 860.379.9622.

Mail to P.O. Box 10, Winchester Center, CT 06094

**Winchester Land Trust is grateful for the support
to help preserve the beauty around us.**

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Caroline Christensen
Alan Colavecchio
Barbara Douglas

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The 2025 Annual Meeting of the Winchester Land Trust will be held on Sunday, August 24 at 4 pm in the gazebo on the Winchester Center Green.



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Winchester Center, CT

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WLT Sponsors Educational Program at Beardsley & Memorial Library

by Carol Parent

Ms. Colleen from White Memorial led an exciting and informative animal program for our library families! Along with a visit from a

contented turtle, tiny snake and yellow spotted salamander, the children played guessing games as to the identity of several nature-made props. She explained Connecticut's amazing biodiversity and captured everyone's attention during her interactive program called "Wildlife Outside Our Windows."

PHOTO BY CAROL PARENT



Ms. Colleen with the "contented turtle" and excited participants in the background.

VOLUNTEER

Do you want to volunteer
for Winchester Land Trust?

WLT needs property stewards: a board member will walk a property with you.

Then, as a steward of that property, you visit it at least once a year.

You can also volunteer on clean-up days or trail maintenance days.

Email: winchesterlandtrust@yahoo.com or look for updates on WLT's Facebook page.