



SUMMER 2026



Pen and ink illustration by Margaret A. Race

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.

Celebrating the Future of Rebillard Forest and Farm

by Addie Mehl



The Still River delineates the western boundary of 93-acre Rebillard Forest.

The Winchester Land Trust (WLT) is pleased to announce significant progress toward permanently conserving the Rebillard properties on the northeast end of Winchester, CT. WLT officially closed on the Rebillard Forest (93 acres) on May 8 and is actively working to acquire the adjacent Rebillard Farm (37 acres), with an expected closing later this year contingent on securing additional funds. None of this would be possible without the generous support of friends and neighbors, through private donations and dedicated grant-writing efforts.

The Rebillard lands are cherished by the Winchester community. Held by the same family for generations as a heritage farm, the properties have long been valued for their local historical significance as well as a recreational destination along the scenic

Still River. Because of their attractive setting, the parcels have been targeted for development in the past, rallying neighbors and community members to support WLT's efforts to protect these beloved lands.

After being approached by neighbors and conservation organizations, in February, we all gathered at a nearby residence to discuss preservation efforts. They shared their hopes for how they would like to see the lands enjoyed for generations to come.

Protecting the Rebillard properties will safeguard important natural and cultural resources. The forest parcel runs along a half-mile stretch of the Still River, and maintaining it as a riparian buffer will ensure that clean waters continue to flow into the Farmington River. The adjacent farm's upland fields can be restored and mowed to provide native grassland habitat for species of special concern, such as the Bobolink. The combined properties offer excellent opportunities for passive recreation and environmental education.

Planned improvements include a low-impact trail system and informational kiosks guiding visitors past a pond, wetlands, and diverse forest stands of white pine, hemlock, oak, and cherry trees rising above a mossy glen of ferns. WLT is especially excited to prepare the site as a field trip destination for local students.

Through established partnerships with local volunteers and organizations, WLT is well-prepared to implement habitat restoration, public access, and educational programming responsibly and efficiently on both parcels and manage them in perpetuity. We thank the community and supporters who have already contributed to this effort, especially Connecticut Land Conservation Council's *Land and Easement Acquisition Program*, Farmington River Coordinating Committee, David Slemmer and the late Sandy Elson Slemmer. We welcome additional assistance to secure and steward Rebillard Farm.



WLT hopes to preserve 37 acres of Rebillard Farm.

Grand Opening of Laurel Ridge Hiking Trails

by Louise Van Alstyne

CT Trails Day June 6 was a great hit in Winsted! Over 55 people of all ages participated in hikes on the 507-acre property of Laurel Ridge. From walking around the 1920's quarter mile Carey Trotter Park to the more demanding Ridge and Long Pond Trails, hikers enjoyed a delightful summer day of

forest bathing and exercise, particularly those who reached the impressive scenic overlook. So many friends of the Winchester Land Trust worked many long hours to clear and mark the new trails and became enthusiastic trail leaders. Additional trail maps are available on the WLT website.



Hikers gather to officially open 507-acre "Laurel Ridge".



Views from the lookout on the Ridge Trail.

Lawns

by Doug Pfenninger

BEFORE
This extensive lawn offered no benefits to wildlife

We Americans love our lawns. A manicured swath of grass surrounding our homes has long been a standard of suburban beauty, so much so that lawns occupy two percent of our nation's land, an area about the size of the state of New York. We use between 70 and 80 million tons of pesticides every year to maintain our grass, more per acre than farmers use. And to keep it green and lush we apply over 2.7 million tons of fertilizer. Add

to that the cost of maintenance: gas powered mowers consume 800 million gallons of gas annually. Lawn maintenance or landscape companies earn 63 billion dollars a year cutting grass.

While a green apron of grass provides a pleasing setting for our homes, it does come at an ecological price. Lawns provide little or no sustenance to the complex ecosystems on which our planet depends. With the price of gas at record highs this might be a good time to reconsider our dedication to the perfect lawn. An easy first step is to mow less area or less frequently. We can also reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides and allow a little bit of nature to creep into your yard. Yes, it can look a little messy. But if we stop to appreciate the diversity of plants and insects that inhabit an untended plot of meadow, we start to enjoy a different aesthetic that supports a healthier environment and saves time and money in the process.

8 MONTHS LATER
Pollinators (and people) benefits to wildlife

Photo credits: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/get-started-planting-native/>

Llamas at the Library

by Carol Parent



Because of the generosity of the Winchester Land Trust, Beardsley Library was able to host a lovely Llama from Country Quilt Llama Farm! Our stately guest rode the elevator down to the community room and while he quietly observed us, Debbie shared some interesting and fun facts about our furry friend. As Harley stood straight and tall, everyone had a chance to pet and praise him.

Thanks again Winchester Land Trust!



Harley the Llama enjoys a story read by Debbie of Country Quilt Llama Farm.

TREIBER FIELD

by Jennifer Perga

Imagine 15 acres of undeveloped land located near the Green in Winchester Center – land that includes field, forest and wetland. WLT board members were thrilled when approached by owners, Betty Treiber Ahrens and Bill Ahrens, who wanted to preserve this parcel, and WLT purchased the property in March.

Treiber Field abuts roughly 110-acres owned by Torrington's Heritage Land Preservation Trust (HLPT) and a significant amount of the HLPT parcel was donated by Betty's father, William Treiber. Treiber Field, like the HLPT parcel, drains into Park Pond which feeds the Naugatuck River. The grassland section of Treiber Field is large enough to support bobolinks, who are a species of special concern, and other ground-nesting birds.

WLT would like to thank the following organizations for making this acquisition possible: the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation, Connecticut Land Conservation Council's *Land and Easement Acquisition Program*, Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy's *Acquisition Grant Program for Partners* and The Harold Anfang Foundation.



Betty Treiber Ahrens & Bill Ahrens



PHOTO BY BARBARA DOUGLAS

Winchester Land Trust's Annual Field Trip Inspires Young Explorers

by Caroline Christensen

With support from a grant from First Light Energy and community donors, the Winchester Land Trust successfully hosted its annual outdoor education field trip for Pearson School's fourth- and fifth-grade students on May 28 and June 3.

About 210 students participated in a guided two-mile hike through the Houlihan Woods and Michael Giordano Tribute Area trails, where they learned about local ecosystems, bird identification, geology, wetlands, native plants, and forest ecology. Many students were experiencing these natural environments for the first time.

Grant support also allowed us to expand the program beyond the hike to include a picnic lunch and additional educational activities. Students participated in birdwatching with binoculars provided by Litchfield Hills Audubon Society volunteers, created leaf rubbings to study plant structures, explored nature through microscopes, and enjoyed outdoor recreation activities. The program provided meaningful

hands-on environmental education while fostering curiosity, appreciation for local conservation efforts, and a deeper connection to the natural world.

We are grateful for the funding that made this experience possible and helped advance the Winchester Land Trust's mission of environmental education and community engagement.

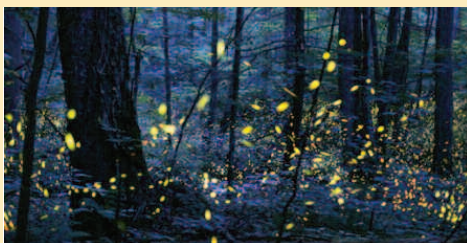


WLT board member Addie Mehl leads a group.



Students navigate the bog bridges, always a favorite part of the hike!

PHOTO BY BARBARA DOUGLAS



The magic of the night is in the dance of the firefly. Do you remember those warm summer nights when the flashing just seemed to come out of nowhere?

Love is in the Air

by Barbara Douglas

Male fireflies emit a distinct pattern of flashes to communicate their species and to attract a female.

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation is an international non-profit organization that protects the natural world through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitats. The organization lists 19 different species of fireflies in CT. Some have single, some

double, and some triple flash patterns.

Fireflies need dark skies, clean water, a food source, shelter and protection from pesticides.

Currently the Winchester Land Trust is monitoring several of our preserved areas to determine which may be suitable for establishing a firefly sanctuary. Fireflies need our help, and we need their magic.

Be part of our mission. Stay in touch!

Please make sure we have your current contact information.

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.**

Board of Directors

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Doug Pfenninger, Vice President
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The 2026 Annual Meeting of the Winchester Land Trust will be held on Sunday, August 30 at 4 pm in the gazebo on the Winchester Center Green.



P.O. Box 10
Winchester Center, CT

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Why Leashes Matter: Safe Dogs, Safe Trails

by Addie Mehl

We at WLT love to see your dogs! We welcome all dogs enjoying the outdoors alongside you and your families. In the name of preservation, WLT kindly asks that you keep your dogs leashed at WLT preserves and all public spaces not specifically designated as off-leash areas.

Here are five reasons why:

1. Leashes prevent unwanted encounters.
2. Leashes help reduce tick exposure.
3. Leashes help all visitors feel safe.
4. Leashes protect your dog from hazards.
5. Leashes protect the land and wildlife.

We greatly appreciate your cooperation!

Happy hiking...and sniffing. ;)

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.