



The Wyndham Land Trust, Inc.  
P.O. Box 302  
Pomfret Center, CT 06259-0302



# Natural Surroundings

WYNDHAM LAND TRUST, INC. • SINCE 1975

Conserving the Natural Resources of Northeastern Connecticut

Summer 2020

## About The Wyndham Land Trust

The Wyndham Land Trust, Inc. is engaged in the preservation of natural resources in Windham County, Connecticut. Its emphasis is on wildlife habitat, especially where unique or particularly fragile assemblages of animals and plants exist or may be expected to exist. Its properties are open to the public for the quiet enjoyment of nature. Land may be acquired by donation or purchase. Since WLT enjoys 501 (c) 3 status donations to it are deductible under IRS rules, a feature which sometimes proves attractive! Our work is supported by dues, donations, grants and a very modest endowment income. Members enjoy an annual potluck supper, generally in the fall.

*Inquiries may be directed to the*  
**Wyndham Land Trust, Inc.,**  
**PO Box 302**  
**Pomfret Center, CT, 06259**  
**or to [info@wyndhamlandtrust.org](mailto:info@wyndhamlandtrust.org)**  
*Please see our web site*  
**[www.wyndhamlandtrust.org](http://www.wyndhamlandtrust.org)**  
**Phone (860) 963-2090.**  
**Your comments, questions and suggestions are most welcome.**

## Wyndham Land Trust Board of Directors:

Michael St. Lawrence, President  
Michael Green, Vice President  
Stephen Adams, Secretary  
Penny Foisey, Treasurer  
Janet Booth  
Robert Craig  
Anouk de Ruiter  
Andy Rzeknikiewicz  
Jeff Stefanik  
Ron Tillen

**Staff**  
Marcy Dawley

## PRESERVE IN POMFRET EXPANDED

A 9.5-acre property on Harrisville Road in Pomfret was acquired by the land trust in July. The new property is adjacent to our existing Aicher and Holzer preserves, and the three parcels combine to protect a total of 220 acres of valuable forest and farmland in the heart of Pomfret.

The property belonged to Pomfret realtor Cici Cole who passed away in December of 2019. Local residents were alarmed when For Sale signs appeared in May, and they realized

that the fragile habitat could quickly be replaced by two house lots. The neighbors banded together with conservation-minded citizens of Windham County, the Town of Pomfret, friends of Bird Conservation Research Inc., and the Wyndham Land Trust to raise the funds to purchase the property.

“It was heartening to see the community pull together in a short period of time to protect this valuable land,” said President



The new acquisition expands our Aicher and Holzer preserves in Pomfret.

Mike St Lawrence. “It was an example of how a group of people with a common vision can make a difference. Future generations will thank them for their foresight.”

“Through acquisition of this land, a contiguous band of natural habitat now exists,” said Bird Conservation Research Director and new board member Robert Craig. “The importance of parcel size for the protection of wildlife has been demonstrated by multiple studies and is a key principle in the field of conservation biology.”

We recognize the importance of local agriculture and plan to preserve the open fields that cover much of the new property.

“We will work with a local farmer to keep the large field in hay,” said Andy Rzeknikiewicz, our land manager. “In the small field we will work with the American Chestnut Foundation to raise chestnut trees that might show resistance to the blight that decimated them across the country 100 years ago.”

## Welcome

### We welcome the following new members:

Beth Bernard, Bryan Connolly, Greg Denne, Donna Dufresne, John Dunn,  
Cheryl Dziura-Duke, Lisa Hayden, Dr. Neri Holzer, Bill Keefe, Daniel Malo, Thalia Meehan,  
Nancy Nystrom, Wayne Paquette, Paula Schimmel, Sebastian Scripps, David Swenson,  
Guila Wagner, Bob Worsham.

## THANK YOU THE WYNDHAM LAND TRUST, INC.

Individual annual membership \$25

Family annual membership \$35

Supporter \$100

Patron \$500

Benefactor \$1,000

Donation to Land Aquisition Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Checks payable to:

WYNDHAM LAND TRUST, INC.

P. O. Box 302

Pomfret Center, CT 06259

(Gift Memberships Available by Calling: 860-963-2090)

## FLOWERING AMERICAN CHESTNUT TREES ON BULL HILL

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American Chestnut trees were decimated by the Chestnut blight that swept the country in the early 1900s. More than a century ago, nearly four billion American chestnut trees were growing in the eastern U.S. Because it could grow rapidly and attain huge sizes, the tree was often the outstanding visual feature in rural landscapes, like the Quiet Corner. You can still find small Chestnut trees on our preserves. Young shoots sprout from the roots of the original tree but are short-lived and seldom reach sexual maturity and bear fruit. If a tree does survive long enough to fruit, the burrs are almost always infertile. The exciting news is that in 2019 members of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation discovered a Chestnut tree on land trust property on Bull Hill covered in fertile burrs.

Jack Swatt, the Chapter president, was able to collect an astounding 238 nuts from the tree last fall. "Since the one tree contained fertile nuts and chestnut trees do not self-pollinate, at least one other tree has matured enough to produce male flower catkins and potentially may produce female flowers in the future," explained Swatt.

To assess the current situation, members of the Chestnut Foundation and the land trust gathered on Bull Hill on June 27, 2020 to search for viable, flowering Chestnut trees. Unfortunately, their first discovery was that the tree that produced so many nuts in 2019 had already succumbed to the blight. However, seven additional Chestnut trees were found in flower in the vicinity. Swatt and his team will return to Bull Hill in the fall to check if any of these trees are bearing nuts.

"Sadly, the tree that was found full of burs last year had succumbed to the blight, but it's progeny are surviving as seedlings in some of our Germplasm Conservation Orchards," said Swatt. "With continued habitat management, for the chestnuts and the view, this location can successfully produce chestnuts for years to come."



This is as close as we could get to a flowering Chestnut tree.





## SQUIRRELS

*By Lucas Canavan*

This time of year, you may encounter some new residents in your yard. Squirrel birthing season occurs twice a year, once in early spring and again in late summer. When the young squirrels are around six weeks old they start to head out and explore. This means the number of unwanted visitors to your bird feeder may be on the rise. Here are some tips to keeping squirrels away from your feeder:

- Put pepper flakes on your feeder. The birds will still eat the seed, but the squirrels will smell the spice and leave your feeder alone. The flakes will blow or wash away.
- Keep the feeder away from trees. Squirrels are remarkably good jumpers and can easily jump more than five feet onto your feeder. Poles are harder to climb though, so if you can mount your feeder on a pole away from trees it will be harder for squirrels to access.
- Poles may be harder to climb, but not all poles are impossible to scale. To make it harder for them to climb, put some plastic tubing around the pole or grease it with petroleum jelly.
- Feed the squirrels away from the feeder. Cracked corn can lure squirrels away from your feeder and provide some opportunities to watch them because let's face it, as annoying as they may be, squirrels munching away look incredibly cute.

## ANNUAL MEETING

Because of the COVID-19 situation, the board has decided it would be unsafe to gather for the fall potluck supper and Annual meeting at Hadi and Cheryl Bozorgmanesh's barn in Pomfret. However, we still need to have an annual meeting to provide an overview of our activities to the membership and to vote new members on to the board of directors.

The board thinks we can accomplish those goals with an online meeting, as many other organizations are doing this year. The annual meeting will take place at 6:30pm on Thursday, September 24, 2020, invite to follow. Current members will receive an email message with instructions on how to connect. (Members without an internet connection can use their telephone to dial into the meeting. Please call us at 860 963 2090 ahead of time to get instructions on how to dial into the meeting using your telephone.)

You should be able to attend the meeting with video on your smartphone, tablet, or PC. If you're not sure how it works, Anouk de Ruiter will host a practice session the week before the meeting where you can try out your equipment, solve any technical issues, and learn how to best use the Zoom video app to get the most out of our meeting.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, September 24**, Annual Meeting via Zoom at 6:30pm, invite to follow.

**Sunday, October 11**, Walktober walk on Bull Hill with Andy Rzeznikiewicz at 1pm.

**Saturday, October 24**, Walktober educational walk at the Townshend Preserve in Pomfret with Penny Foisey at 9am.

**Saturday, October 24**, Walktober walk at the Rapoport/Spalding Preserve in Woodstock with Jeff Stefanik at 10am.

Check our Facebook page prior to the event for the latest information.



## IN MEMORY OF Jo-Ann MacFarlane (1949 – 2020)

We were sad to hear of the passing of Jo-Ann MacFarlane on March 13, 2020. Jo-Ann had been part of the Wyndham Land Trust since 2009 and a member of the Board of Directors since 2011.

Throughout that time, Jo-Ann selflessly contributed her time, organizational skills, and assets in order to develop and improve the Wyndham Land Trust. In 2011 she donated 23 acres of farmland and forest to the land trust in honor of her father, Robert MacFarlane, and she continued to work tirelessly to protect her corner of Eastford. She was a true animal lover, and her love of the land and its inhabitants

were always on display and had an impact on those around her.

Her generosity, energy, and unwavering desire to do what's right will be sorely missed.

"I have seen so much of the precious land in Eastford destroyed by development. I thought it was time to slow this development down and preserve some of the land so the animals would have a place to call home. It was an easy decision to donate the land to the Wyndham Land Trust, but I did not want to give up my connection to the land. Donating the land to the land trust gave me a sense of accomplishment and purpose in my life. I honored my dad's wishes to preserve the land for generations to come and to give the animals a home. I like to think that I have made a difference in the lives of animals, no matter how small, and I have given a small piece of land for future generations to enjoy."

*Jo-Ann MacFarlane 2012*



Jo-Ann MacFarlane (center) at the dedication of the McFarlane Preserve in Eastford in 2011.

## YOUR MEMBERSHIP

*We love our members and don't want to lose you.*

We all belong to so many organizations these days, it's often difficult to keep track of our membership status. To help you out, we have printed your membership expiration date on the mailing label on your newsletter. We send our membership renewal forms at the beginning of the calendar year, but there is a lot going on in the holiday season, and sometimes folks forget to renew. Don't worry. If your membership elapsed and you sign up now, you will be eligible to attend the annual meeting and your membership will run through the end of 2021. What a deal! You can renew on the Wyndham Land Trust web site by selecting **Ways to Give->Join** or by mailing in the form on the back of the newsletter.

## Anouk de Ruiter JOINS THE BOARD

I am guilty of geeking out about databases, computers, and technology. Embarrassingly, I can identify only a handful of birds, and maybe a few different trees. Just a few weeks ago my husband, a botanist and environmental scientist, needed to point out to me that what I thought was just a pretty flowering shrub at Bull Hill is actually multiflora rose - an invasive plant in this area. I have the opposite of a green thumb. And yet, I love nature and enjoy being outside!

I grew up in Stamford, CT and used to play for hours on end in the woods adjacent to my parent's property. After graduating from Connecticut College, my husband and I found ourselves in Menlo Park, CA, and on weekends we would escape the hustle and bustle of Silicon Valley and go hiking and camping on gold-colored hillsides. We soon made our way back east and settled in Watertown, MA where I worked for the Town of Lexington as the network administrator. Again, we sought nature with weekend drives and hikes in New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. Our next adventure took us to Utrecht in the Netherlands where we both ended up working at Utrecht University for five years.

When we returned to the US in 2007 (with two kids in tow!), we were finally ready to settle down. Serendipity led us to Pomfret, CT. We were thrilled that our children could grow up playing in the woods and that we didn't need to seek nature by leaving town.

Less than a mile from our house we discovered the Aicher Preserve and saw the sign for Wyndham Land Trust and became members shortly thereafter. I fondly remember the handwritten acknowledgement I received from then President Dick Booth after I sent in my first membership payment. A few years later in 2011, I heeded a call for volunteers on a WLT Facebook post. Mary Anthony had become president and with that came a push to improve outreach and efficiency. I was tasked with digitizing all the membership records—a task that was right up my alley because I love to have organized and accessible data.

After that project was completed, I became a part-time staff member of the land trust with Ben Williams now serving as president. Though the finances had moved from ledger books to an Excel spreadsheet, I was anxious to improve upon that system and moved the financial information over to Quicken and then later to Quickbooks. We also started to

outgrow my homegrown database and moved membership information to Little Green Light (a hosted constituent management solution), which we continue to use today.

In 2015 I started a part-time job at Pomfret School. The following year, that turned into a permanent full-time position in the technology office. It was too hard to juggle my commitments to my family, Wyndham Land Trust, and Pomfret School, so I resigned from my staff role at the land trust. However, I remained active as a steward and as a volunteer with the Marketing subcommittee.

Now that my children are both in high school, I can devote more time and energy to the organization I love; and I am thrilled to join the board of the Wyndham Land Trust. With accreditation practices in place and Mike St. Lawrence at the helm and Marcy Dawley as staff member the recent changes are remarkable. The land trust has doubled the preserved acreage/holdings in the past five years. That's 2000 more acres for birders, nature lovers, kids, and even technology geeks to enjoy forever. It's hard not to be excited about that!



Anouk hiking with her family in the White Mountains



## Mission Statement

The mission of the Wyndham Land Trust is to conserve the natural resources of Northeast Connecticut - the water courses, swamps, woodlands, and open spaces, the plant and animal life therein, and the scenic natural and historic sites - all of which are very much a part of the unique character and beauty of all communities in Northeast Connecticut.



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