

Protecting open space in perpetuity through acquisition, stewardship, education and advocacy

“Art at Large” Celebrates Farmington’s Scenic Beauty, Past and Present

Farmington was once called the Barbizon of America, a reference to the French town which became a mecca for landscape and nature painters in the mid 1800s. Farmington’s fields and forests also inspired several generations of painters, sketchers, and artists of all stripes.

Back in the day, plein air painters aplenty set up their easels and sunshades near a bend in the Farmington River where it was joined by the Pequabuck. A painting of the spot by Robert Brandegee, an art teacher at Miss Porter’s School from 1880 until 1893 and a founder of the Society of American Artists, hangs above the fireplace in the Barney Library.

As it happens, Brandegee and many other painters traipsed through or set up shop on what is now known as the Cowles Parcel, Farmington Land Trust’s 2.9 acre preserve off Meadow Road, where they were inspired by the beauty of nature.

To celebrate those halcyon days of making art in Farmington, the Farmington Land Trust is planning to host an “Art at Large” day on Sunday, September 13. We invite painters, photographers, and visual artists of all types to portray the scenic natural beauty of some of our selected parcels. We also invite the public to come visit the same areas to see the artists at work and to celebrate the sites in their own way. On the same day, at 1 p.m., Dr. Charles Leach will lead a hike through several layers of history at Cowles Parcel, and will richly detail the area’s painterly past.

We plan for this one-day event to be followed by an exhibition, and perhaps, a calendar. We will provide updates as plans for the event evolve. So if you’re a visual artist, or are interested in the creative process, save the date! For more information visit our website Farmingtonlandtrust.org, our Facebook page, or call the office at 860-674-8545.



Art at Large celebrates Farmington’s long association with artists and open land. This photograph by Farmington nature photographer Alden Warner captures the area’s wintry beauty.

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Why Join the Farmington Land Trust?

If you are already a member of the Farmington Land Trust, thank you. Your membership contribution helps support our stewardship of the more than 275 acres which have been donated to us by some of Farmington’s most generous citizens. Some of that land has historic value; all of it contributes to the preservation of our town’s character. Membership contributions also help us underwrite the educational and recreational programs we offer each year.

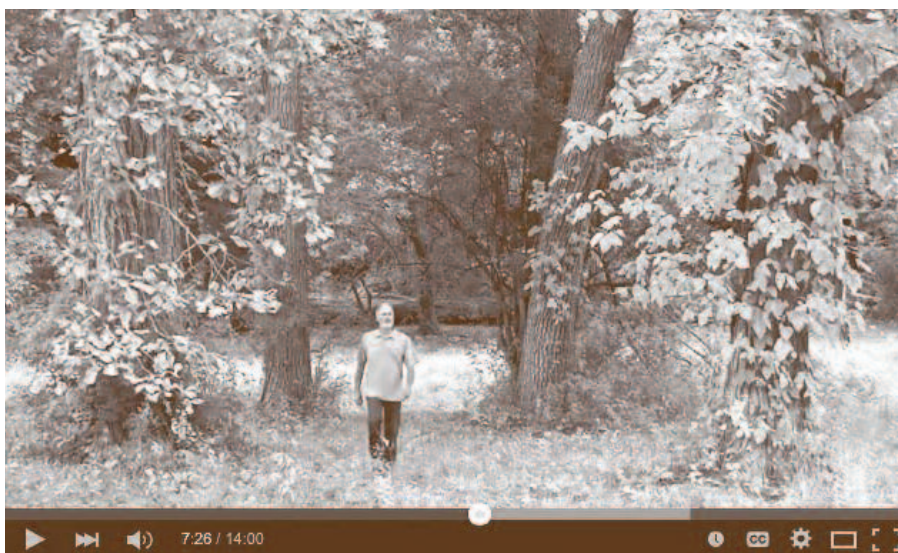
If you’re not already a member, we have a question: Why not? Inside this newsletter, you will find a host of reasons to join. Join one of our strolls on Land Trust land; learn about invasive plants at our annual dinner; watch artists at work at our Art At Large event; enjoy our Harvest Farm-to-Table Tasting. While all these are open to members and nonmembers alike, you might find it more rewarding to become a member and so be part of making these kinds of events possible.

Strolling Toward Stewardship

Ever wonder how Tuvalu, a South Pacific island nation soon to disappear beneath rising sea levels, and our own town of Farmington might be in, so to speak, the same boat? Read on.

But first, a reminder that the Farmington Land Trust is about more than acquiring, preserving and protecting open space. Our mission also recognizes the need to care for those spaces. Whether that means an annual mowing to preserve a meadow, rooting out exotic invasive plants, or working to mitigate damage to sensitive ecosystems, the Farmington Land Trust is, in many regards, Farmington's foremost steward. As such, we also hope to encourage town residents to become stewards of their own properties. To help homeowners better care for their own patch of the earth, we are planning to enhance our annual series of strolls on the land with ideas help homeowners to address larger environmental challenges in small but worthwhile ways.

We aim to accomplish this by means of a series of annual thematic topics. Over the coming years, we hope to cover topics such as pollinators, composting, eradication of invasive non-native plants, establishing native plant gardens, and more.



The video "A Story of Stewardship", which looks at the past, present, and future of the Farmington Land Trust, can be seen at www.farmingtonlandtrust.org

The plan is to use our programs as an opportunity to demonstrate these ideas in action and to show participants how to take positive steps once they return home. The focus will be on things we can do to improve the environmental quality of our own backyards and better integrate them with the beleaguered natural world. You might garden with more bird- or pollinator-friendly plants, conserve water to help ameliorate the extremes of drought and drenchings that seem more commonplace of late, or simply stop treating your lawn with chemicals.

This year's theme will be climate change, which brings us back to the entwined fates of Tuvalu, Farmington, and the rest of the world. We are all in this together.

So, Tuvalu. It is likely to be the first country in the world to be engulfed by rising sea levels brought about by climate change. Plans for the south pacific island's evacuation are already underway.

Fortunately that is an unlikely future for Farmington. But nonetheless, our Connecticut town and that distant nation both face uncertain consequences in the near future, as climate change plays havoc with every place on the planet.

While the consequences may be less dire in Farmington than in Tuvalu, we likely face, at the very least, a disruption of our region's age-old phenology, the sequencing of biological phenomena and climate. Adaptation over the millennia ensures that migrating birds arrive just as their insect food sources, which in turn may rely on the cycle of flowering plants, become available. But with climate changing at an unprecedented rate, the flowers may bloom earlier, and by the time the birds arrive their expected food source is no longer available. Or changing temperatures are causing some typically more southern species to migrate into our area, while some of our longtime avian residents are seeking new homes further north.

While the die for that scenario already may have been cast, and there is nothing anyone can do to change it, there are a few things you could do that, in their own small but significant way, can help reduce the impact of climate change. Join one of our strolls to learn more.



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2015 Strolls on the Land

April 12 (Sunday): Birding at Cowles Parcel

7 a.m., Milan Bull, Senior Director of Science and conservation at the CT Audubon Society, will lead a hunt for early migrating warblers, brown thrashers, and more than 20 other species he thinks will likely be spotted then, including raptors such as Cooper's hawks and red-tailed hawks. He will also talk about how climate change is affecting the bird population of Connecticut and what homeowners can do to make more bird-friendly yards. Meet at Cowles Parcel parking lot off Meadow Road. Bring binoculars.

May 3 (Sunday): Wildflowers at the Canal Aqueduct

The Canal Aqueduct in early May is a prime time and place for woodland wildflowers, and a great opportunity for home gardeners to see these plants in the growing and habitat conditions in which they thrive. Meet at the Canal Aqueduct parking area off Waterville Road (Rt. 10) just before the Avon town line.

We are also considering organizing an exploratory wildflower hunt in a promising wetland area on one of our new parcels that is ordinarily not open to the public, one of the few spots in Connecticut where a native magnolia has been seen.

If you are well versed in native wildflowers as a gardener, a botanist, or just as an aficionado, please consider joining us on a date to be announced in late April or early May. We will have to limit the outing to five participants.

June 7 (Sunday): CT Walk Day/Farmington Memorial Town Forest

There aren't many places in Connecticut where you can hike to the site of a World War II fighter pilot's crash. FLT board member and past president Doug Pelham will lead the way on a hike through the 266-acre Farmington Memorial Town Forest, established in 1926 to

honor the men and women who served in World War I. In addition it's a great place to explore. "I really like the solitude of the place," Doug says. "You can go in there and lose yourself; it's pretty nice to find a place like that so close to home." After an hour-long guided walk, you are free to further explore on your own.

July 12 (Sunday): Butterflies at Carey Pasture Parcel

At 10 a.m. Jay Kaplan, director of the Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, will lead a hike to find and identify butterflies as well as sources of food for both butterflies and their larvae. He will discuss some of the complex interrelationships between host plants, butterflies and butterfly larvae. The best weather for spotting butterflies is full sun; in the event of rain, the walk will be cancelled or rescheduled.



Photo: Alden Warner

August: Chimney Swifts at Farmington High School

Late summer is the time for self-guided viewing of chimney swifts roosting at FHS before the birds begin their annual migration to the Amazon basin in South America. After a day of feasting on insects, the swifts gather at dusk to take shelter in the high school's tall chimney. Before turning in for the night, scores of birds form swirling clusters to circle, dive and swoop. To catch the action, be at the site 10 minutes before sunset, and head to the center courtyard by the school's entrance and main chimney.



Photo: Tina Delaney

September 13 (Sunday): Hike Through History at the Cowles Parcel

Dr. Charles Leach will lead a walk through several periods of history at the Cowles Parcel off Meadow Road. Here native Americans fished and farmed near what was for them a mystical site, the confluence of the Farmington and Pequabuck Rivers. Next came settlers, who divided the fertile floodplain they valued for its rich soil. Later, generations of artists flocked here to paint en plein air bucolic scenes of a bend in the Farmington River. The spot is also overlooked by the imposing brick residence that once was home to the playwright Winchell Smith; nearby is a more modest house built by some of the first Italian immigrants to Farmington. This walk coincides with the Farmington Land Trust's Art at Large event; so you will be likely to encounter painters, photographers, and other visual artists making the most of the site's scenery.

September 20 (Sunday): Harvest Farm-to-Table Tasting

The Land Trust will be hosting its first ever farm-to-table tasting at a parcel that is usually not open to the public. Join us for an afternoon of cooking demonstrations, signature drinks, nature walks and food fresh from Farmington farms and other regional sources. We are still working out the details; visit our website or Facebook page for updated information.

October 4 (Sunday): Photo Workshop Cowles Parcel

Steve Silk will help photographers refine their techniques to create more vivid, impactful nature photographs. The workshop will emphasize how to "see the picture" rather than technical aspects of photography. Bring cameras and, if you have them, tripods. Meet at the Land Trust office. 3 p.m.- 6 p.m. Limited to 12 participants.



Photo: Michael Delaney

October 11 (Sunday): Hike to Will Warren's Den

This hike to the rocky redoubt of Farmington's most famous hermit will be led by Bill Wadsworth or John Vibert. The roughly 1-1/2 hour round-trip hike include some fairly strenuous climbing and scrambling, but the destination features a rewarding panoramic vista of hills and valleys extending all the way to the Berkshires. Meet at the parking area on the south side of Route 6, east of Pinnacle Road and Reservoir Road.

All strolls depart at 1 p.m. unless otherwise noted.
Questions and to register, contact the office at 860-674-8545
or by emailing: farmingtonland.trust@snet.net.
Please, no pets are allowed on walks.

"Preserving Our Legacy" Event Raises \$45,000

More than 160 people attended the Farmington Land Trust's "Preserving our Legacy" event to celebrate the memories of our founder, Jack Emery, and our First Executive Director, Dick Noyes, held at the Farmington Country Club on November 6th.

The attendees enjoyed a delightful social hour and marvelous dinner. Kathy Wadsworth delivered a reflection on the Land Trust's stewardship over the past 43 years since its founding in 1971, which was followed by the premier of Steve Silk's video "A Story of Stewardship." You can see the video at our website www.farmingtonlandtrust.org. WNPR producer Chion Wolf, who grew up in Farmington, closed the evening's festivities with an embrace of the Land Trust and an expression of her appreciation for the open space it supports.

Months earlier, our own Sallie Norris set the vision for the evening in motion and served as its lead sponsor. Cate Grady-Benson planned and organized the event as chair of the event committee, which included Dr. Art Phinney, Kay Browne, Nina Hayes, Sallie Norris, Kathy Wadsworth, Michael Delaney, Debbie Klene, and Gilda Roncari.

The Land Trust wishes to thank our major sponsors for their contributions: Sallie Norris; Kate Emery and The Walker Group; Wells Fargo; Wentworth, Deangelis & Kaufman; Sam and Janet Bailey; Charter Oak Connecticut LLC; Connecticut Wealth Management; Richard and Susan Kramer, Linda and Michael Tomasso; and Bella Rosa International.

The proceeds from the evening were \$45,000, which included new memberships, and contributions from sponsors, individuals, and local businesses.



Better Stewardship Stems from CCSU Studies

In order to best preserve and protect the land in its trust, the Farmington Land Trust needs to better understand the flora, the fauna, and the varied habitats on its parcels.

Ecology students in Central Connecticut State University's biology department need locations where they can learn how to conduct real world research. Thanks to former CCSU professor and former FLT board member David DeNuccio, the two organizations have joined forces for their mutual benefit.

"There was so much need on the different lots," said David. "I thought, 'Well gee, here's a chance for getting people with expertise who could come in and do management studies for the Land Trust, and it would give firsthand field experience to students and faculty.' Everyone benefitted."

Over the last several years students under the direction of biology professor Barbara Nicholson have conducted a variety of research projects on a number of Land Trust parcels, and have explored everything from invasive beetles and soil types to native tree populations.

Grants provided by the Farmington Chapter of UNICO have helped underwrite the purchase of scientific equipment needed to conduct these studies.

Most recently a group of students explored the most effective ways to manage invasive plants at the Bancroft Parcel off Prattling Pond Rd. The results of that research will be presented at the Land Trust's annual meeting April 16. "The findings have been important for developing the Land Trust's mission of stewardship," says FLT executive director Tina Delaney.

"One of the obligations of any land trust is to manage their land correctly," she says. "This program allows us to have more feet on the ground to see what's going on on our properties and it gives us a road map of what we can do. It helps us to better understand our properties," she says.

And by helping to preserve the health and vitality of Farmington's ever more valuable open spaces, the collaboration benefits virtually every town resident, since those vest-pocket parcels do so much to preserve our town's distinctive character.

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*Look inside for our calendar of events
and join us in celebrating some of the parcels
the Farmington Land Trust protects.*

Join Us for Our Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner

Please join us as we celebrate at the Farmington Land Trust's 44th Annual Meeting and Dinner.

This year's gathering will be held on Thursday, April 16th, from 5:30 – 8:00 p.m. at the Sarah Porter Memorial, 75 Main Street, Farmington.

The social hour and dinner will be followed by a brief business meeting which will include the State of the Land Trust message from our President, the annual Treasurer's report, and nomination and election of new Directors. We will also be presenting our Citizen of the Year award to J. David Morrissey, Attorney at Law and Steward of the Year award to Joan and Giles Packer.

Afterward, Barbara Nicholson, a biology professor at Central Connecticut State University, and several of her students who have been conducting field study research at the Land Trust's Bancroft Parcel, will share what they have learned while researching various techniques to determine best management practices for invasive plants. Their findings will interest homeowners trying to cope with invasive plants in their own home landscapes or gardens.

The 'family style' dinner meeting format is a casual pot-luck style meal. Please bring a favorite dish to share or a donation for the dinner. Please RSVP by phone at: 860-674-8545 or by email at: farmingtonland.trust@snet.net.

**THEIR FINDINGS
WILL INTEREST
HOMEOWNERS
TRYING TO COPE
WITH INVASIVE
PLANTS IN THEIR
OWN HOME
LANDSCAPES
OR GARDENS.**



Photo: Tina Delaney