




WESTERN NEW YORK
LAND CONSERVANCY

TheResource

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN NEW YORK LAND CONSERVANCY

SPRING 2023



The Floating Fen: A Birder's Dream

Terry Mosher ©Erik Danielson



Western New York Land Conservancy
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A Note from the Executive Director

As I settle into my role as the Executive Director of the Western New York Land Conservancy, I've got many things to be grateful for: an incredible, talented, hardworking staff; an extremely generous, engaged, and knowledgeable board and community of Land Conservancy supporters; and a region—Western New York—that has been as welcoming as it possibly could be. I have been humbled in the most positive of ways by it all.



Equally humbling is my rediscovery, after not being in the area for a number of years, of the extraordinary wealth of Western New York's natural resources. Extraordinary wealth. It's not a phrase to use lightly, but it accurately describes the natural resources of the region. From the shores of two of the mighty Great Lakes—Erie and Ontario—to the spectacular 36-mile Niagara River and Gorge. From the fertile Allegany forest of New York's Southern Tier, to the bountiful farmland in each of the eight counties in which the Land Conservancy operates. And in Buffalo, we are at work on the flora for Buffalo's new Ralph C. Wilson Park and our own remarkable project: The Riverline. The Land Conservancy does indeed get to work with extraordinary natural resources.

Humbling as well as exciting is the task ahead. When thinking about the portfolio listed in the preceding paragraph, what's clear is that the role of the Land Conservancy has expanded greatly in scope and importance since its founding a generation ago. With the support and understanding of all of you, the Land Conservancy will accomplish each and every ambitious conservation task before it. I am delighted to be here as we advance our increasingly important work on the challenging conservation issues we face. I look forward to tackling these issues with each and every one of you who believes in protecting Western New York's extraordinary wealth, now and for future generations.

Jon Kaledin

The Floating Fen: A Birder's Dream

By Kyle Semmel, Communications Manager

When Fredonia college students purchased the land that would become the College Lodge Forest in 1939, they did so because they were looking for a place to experience nature. As a result of their foresight, the forest became a prized learning laboratory for thousands of professors, researchers, and students from Chautauqua County and around the world, including Terry Mosher, who was an Associate Professor of English at SUNY Fredonia for nearly thirty-six years.

Terry, who grew up north of Syracuse, used the forest in his teaching by developing courses that combined his love for literature and nature. As a Friend of the College Lodge Forest, he helped our community save that property. Now he's committed to helping our community save the land that's adjacent to the College Lodge Forest: the Floating Fen.

In late April, he will join Land Conservancy naturalist Erik Danielson and local birding enthusiasts to catalogue the birds found there. Though he's retired now, Terry is an avid birder

who still leads occasional birding tours for the Land Conservancy. Like the College Lodge Forest, the Floating Fen is situated directly in a migratory bird corridor. That means birds as diverse as Veeries, Blackburnian Warblers, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, and Scarlet

Tanagers will all descend on the forest to nest in the spring. This creates a spectacular atmosphere for birding—a dream opportunity for birders to visit an unexplored forest.

“The Floating Fen is a gem of a property,” Terry says, “with habitat as unique as any Western New York woodland can boast. Along with the peace and beauty of a lovely woods, the Floating Fen will offer visitors the sight and sound of so many birds drawn to a forested wetland: tail-bobbing Northern

Waterthrushes nesting in swampy thickets, Red-shouldered Hawks circling over the fen, Acadian Flycatchers rapping out their ceaseless ‘Pit-SEET’ calls, and brown-eyed Barred Owls barking out their favorite question: ‘Who cooks for YOU? Who cooks for YOU-ALL?’”

In the 1870s, the wetland here was known as “Randall’s Fly”—an anglicization of the Dutch word for marsh, “vlei,” and it was lush with many plants that are now very hard to find in our region. Fens are richer in nutrients than bogs because they are fed by groundwater and rain. As a result, it’s home to an exceptional array of rare peatland plants, carnivorous sundews, blue flag iris, and the very floating fen from which it derives its name. The Floating Fen’s diverse habitats make it an ideal home to black bears, wood ducks, porcupines, fishers, and beavers.

Unfortunately, the Floating Fen is under imminent threat. If our community cannot raise the funds necessary to purchase the forest by the end of 2023, it could be sold, and its upland forest then logged and subdivided. Once we reach our fundraising goal, the Land Conservancy will purchase the land, maintain the forest and wetland, and open a walking trail so people can experience its beauty for years to come. Even better, the Floating Fen will combine with the College Lodge Forest to form nearly 400 acres of connected forest in Chautauqua County, making it a significant addition to the Western New York Wildway.

This is a win-win for everyone, including Terry’s beloved birds, some of which travel thousands of miles from Central and South America in the spring to nest here or pass through to distant places up north. Can you imagine a future in which people come from around the world to see the Floating Fen? We can.



Northern Waterthrush



Blackburnian Warbler

Save the Floating Fen

The Floating Fen is an incredible 223-acre property adjacent to the College Lodge Forest in Chautauqua County. It is home to a unique wetland, extraordinary life, and a diverse forest. Unfortunately, it is in danger of being sold, its forest cut, and the land subdivided. If that happens, it will be lost forever. But there is good news. You have an opportunity to protect this forest. In order to protect the land for future generations, **the community must raise \$925,000 by December 31, 2023** to be able to purchase the property, build trails, restore wildlife habitat, and steward the preserve. Fortunately, the community

has already raised \$225,000, and we are ahead of schedule.

Donate If you would like to protect the Floating Fen, please send a check with Floating Fen on the memo line to

Western New York Land Conservancy
P.O. Box 471
East Aurora, NY 14052

You can also donate online at www.wnyc.org. Select “Floating Fen” in the dropdown menu on the donation page.

In the Wild: Fishers

By Kyle Semmel, Communications Manager

During a public hike at our Mossy Point Preserve in January, we came across an unexpected sighting: fisher tracks. Once ubiquitous throughout Western New York, fishers were all but wiped out in our region; trappers prized their pelts to make fur coats, and that led to a massive decline in their numbers by the 20th century. As we knelt down to inspect the animal's footprints, with its distinctive five toes, we were struck by its sheer size. Fishers are long, sleek-looking creatures that resemble oversized weasels for good reason: they are members of the same family. This particular animal was clearly full grown.

Fishers are native to North America, with a home range extending through the boreal forest of Canada and across the northern United States, so it's not entirely surprising that we'd find fisher tracks in New York State. Until relatively recently, according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, their dwindled range was largely confined to the northern, eastern, and southeastern parts of the state. That makes a fisher's appearance at a preserve like Mossy Point notable. In fact, fishers have been spotted at several of our preserves, from Cattaraugus to Niagara Counties, and landowners have also reported sightings on their own properties. Thanks to conservation and restoration efforts, fishers are making a comeback.

A recent Land Conservancy study of wildlife movement and occupancy using Circuitscape, an open-source program that allows researchers to track wildlife movement, shows that fishers are likely to utilize and move through areas across Western New York that correspond with our Western New York Wildway corridors and cores. That's truly exciting news. Since fishers are shy and elusive, you won't see them in the wild very often, only their tracks. But their return to our

region is further proof that land conservation efforts here in Western New York have real, tangible benefits for our region's returning wildlife.



© Josh Balisteri



We have recently launched the **Western New York Wildway StoryMap**. Scan this QR code to visit the site and learn all about the Wildway.



**Save Land
by Donating
Today!**

Want to save our farms, forests, streams, and meadows for future generations?

Become a member, renew your membership, or donate to protect Western New York's most valuable resources today. To donate, use the envelope in this newsletter or visit wnylc.org and make your payment online. Thank you!

What's new with The Riverline

By Jeffrey Lebsack, *The Riverline Director*

The year 2023 is off to a flying start for The Riverline. We hosted a Winter Fun Day at Valley Nature Park on February 18 and had a wonderful time doing outdoor winter events on a sunny and windy day. There were nature hikes, a curling sheet for the kids, art projects, wonderful food, and a fire pit where kids (and adults) warmed-up and made s'mores.

In early March we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority that sets the stage for us to be able to build The Riverline. We will start the design approval process for The Riverline this spring with \$900,000 federal dollars we were awarded last year; later this year, we will use an additional \$500,000 awarded through the New York State Environmental Protection Fund to initiate the final design of the first segment of The Riverline. We are actively pursuing additional federal, state, and philanthropic funding for construction of the first segment.

We've got three clean-ups scheduled along The Riverline in April before Earth Day, and on May 20 we are partnering with GObike Buffalo to provide bicycle tune-ups and education to celebrate National Bicycle Month. We also expect to resume The Riverline Rambles in May, providing the public with the opportunity to experience the corridor and learn about the proposed design.

Finally, I'm particularly happy to announce that our Community Art Program is underway. We are asking artists and art organizations to send us a letter of interest with their ideas for a community-based art project. Our Arts Advisory Committee will then select up to five of the entries to submit a full proposal for their project. The proposals will be on display for community review in June, and the winning entry will be recognized at an event this fall.

Please check WNYLC.ORG and THERIVERLINE.COM for additional information on upcoming events—including the Community Art Program—and how you can be involved.



News

Alt Preserve

We have protected the Alt Preserve in perpetuity with a conservation easement. Owned by Nicole Gerber and Dave Reilly, the Alt Preserve is located on Whitehaven Road, Grand Island near the Margery Gallogly Nature Sanctuary. This 36-acre property consists of grassland habitat and



wooded wetlands. It's also home to many grassland nesting birds, including Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows, and Northern Harriers. It is not yet open to the public.

The Western New York Wildway

We received a \$25,000 grant from The Nature Conservancy of New York to identify priority parcels of land that fall within the WNY Wildway. We are looking for other important places to protect, like Mossy Point, College Lodge, and the Allegany Wildlands. The grant will also help us engage directly with communities and finalize our Western New York Wildway Conservation Plan.

Providence Farm Collective

Thanks to our incredible community, we reached our joint fundraising goal with Providence Farm Collective to "Plant the Future of Farming" in Western New York. PFC will now be able to purchase the farm in Orchard Park, while we make sure it is protected for farming.





The Invasive Tree that Threatens our Forests

By Liz Thomas, Native Plant Technician

On the Farm: Springhill Farm

By Kyle Semmel, Communications Manager

When you talk to Vince Meyers of Springhill Farm in Alexander, one word comes to mind: dedication. Farming is not a simple job. It's a daily grind of challenges, perhaps the biggest of which is how do I make a living at it? For Vince, who worked for the Erie Lackawanna Railway for 41 years, that meant farming was what he did in addition to his full-time job. Like his father before him, who also worked a second job, Springhill Farm was his passion.

Founded in the early 1900s by Vince's grandparents, Springhill is a 5th-generation dairy. Vince's sons Matthew and Tim run the farm today, milking around 70 cows and growing corn and soybeans on nearly 400 acres in Genesee County. Even in the best of times, owning and operating a farm is no easy business.

So, this year, Springhill Farm is partnering with the Land Conservancy on a farmland protection grant to ensure that their land will always remain in farming. If the grant is successful, Springhill Farm may become a 6th-generation dairy once Matthew and Tim's young sons are old enough to take over. After more than 100 years, the family's passionate dedication will be rewarded.

Are you a farmer? Would you like more information about protecting your farm? Contact our Farmland Protection Specialist, Rachel Chrostowski, at rachelc@wnylc.org or (716) 687-1225 ext.126.

Norway maples are everywhere in Western New York. You see them flanking city streets, dotting suburban lawns, and crowning rural homesteads. Unfortunately, you're also likely to find them in our forests and natural areas, where they invade native plant communities and use the resources required by our local wildlife.

A Eurasian species, the Norway maple was first brought to the United States in the 1750s, but didn't gain popularity until the mid-to late 19th century, and remains one of the most popular street trees in the northeast and midwest. This popularity has come with a cost: as with so many other plants brought into this country from abroad, it escapes our domestic landscapes to proliferate in our natural areas. In the case of the Norway maple, its wind-dispersed seeds travel into neighboring woodlands where they may shade out native species and continuously reproduce, spreading throughout the woods and destroying the diversity and integrity of the ecosystem.

If these trees are invasive, you may ask, why are they still available for purchase? Sadly, even plants that are classified as "regulated invasive species" by the state can still be sold, as long as they meet certain labeling requirements. If you have a Norway maple planted in your yard, we don't expect you to run out and chop it down, but if you're working with a landscaper to choose trees, consider requesting only native trees. Norway maples are chosen by landscapers because they are readily available and can tolerate harsh urban conditions, but there are plenty of other trees that are accessible and can thrive just as well—without the environmental repercussions.

A longer version of this story appeared on our blog. To read the full version, visit wnylc.org/blog

**A resource
to build
compassion**

We want to make it easier for you to find peace of mind and protect what you love. One way to do that is to write a legal will, an essential task to plan for your future and protect the people and natural landscapes that you care about. Scan the QR code to use this free will-writing tool to get started; it will take 20 minutes or less. You can also visit wnylc.org/planned-giving.



Thank you for honoring those you care for and supporting their love for nature.

In Honor of

KATHY BIELER
From Charles Hardy

ROBERT KLICK
From Bruce Plummer

FR. PAT
From Mary & Marc Dunn

NANCY SMITH
From Beth Brosmer & the Sisters of St. Francis; Jolene & Mark Jeffe; Kathryn Bieler & Scott Bieler; Paula & Randall Pirson

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BARBARA LANDREE
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From Adirondack Foundation & Peter Paine

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From James Roorbach

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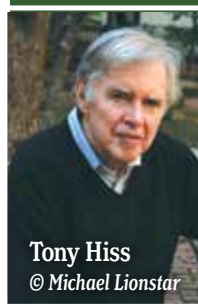
Thank you to our **Legacy Society members** who have made us part of *their* legacy by including us in their planned giving, like their will. Are you interested in joining our Legacy Society and ensuring your favorite places are protected for future generations? Email Kyle Semmel, Communications Manager, at ksemmel@wnylc.org.

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LeRoy and Carla Smith
Tom and Nancy Smith
Greg and Nancy Stevens
David and Janet Stout
Clarence Wigler

2023 Spring Events

An Evening with Tony Hiss
Thursday, May 25 | 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Montante Cultural Center at Canisius College



Tony Hiss
© Michael Lionstar

Join us for a unique opportunity to hear from one of the most important conservation writers working today, critically acclaimed author Tony Hiss. He will discuss his seminal book *Rescuing the Planet: Protecting Half the Land to Heal the Earth*.

This event is part of the community's efforts to save the Floating Fen and create the WNY Wildway. To learn more about this and other upcoming events, or to register, visit WNYLC.ORG/events.

Thank you to our sponsors: Renee Bush; the Bank of East Aurora, a wedding venue and boutique hotel; the Biology and Environmental Science Programs at Canisius College; Mark P. and Deborah E. Kisker; and the Nature Sanctuary Society of Western New York.





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Save the Date!

The Land Conservancy's 2023 Gala

Wednesday, September 27
6:00 ~ 9:00 p.m.

The Powerhouse (near The Riverline)
140 Lee Street, Buffalo



Our Mission *The Land Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust that has helped protect more than 8,000 acres of land with significant conservation value in Western New York for the benefit of future generations. We envision a future in which forests, farms, meadows, and waterways are connected, cherished, and protected in Western New York. Our clean air, clean water, and fertile soils will equitably support the health and wellbeing of future generations of every living thing. We are accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.*

The Land Conservancy recognizes that we serve on the traditional and ancestral lands of the Seneca, Tonawanda Seneca, and Tuscarora Nations and other indigenous communities. We are thankful to the Haudenosaunee who have been and

continue to be the stewards of this land. We are committed to the Haudenosaunee Seventh Generation Principle which asks us to honor the lessons of the last seven generations as we work in partnership to shape and heal the world the next seven generations will inherit. This acknowledgment, while important, is just a start. We are listening, learning, and taking actions to address injustices that have impacted the Haudenosaunee and the land.



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