



WESTERN NEW YORK
LAND CONSERVANCY

TheResource

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN NEW YORK LAND CONSERVANCY

SPRING 2021



Connecting Forests: The Allegheny Wildlands

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Connecting Forests: The Allegheny Wildlands

By Kyle Semmel, *Communications Manager*

One of Marisa Riggi's favorite summertime activities is the annual tubing trip she takes down the Battenkill River in Vermont with family and friends. As she bobs along on the current, screeching Red-tailed Hawks circle the sky like dark shadows in search of prey, shimmering trout dart through the shallows, and beautiful songbirds sing in the forest canopy. As a kid growing up in Williamsville, she loved spending time in nature—digging for worms, wandering the woods, getting grubby—but these tubing adventures helped her truly see her surroundings. “When you float on a river you get to see how animals and plants move through the world,” she says, “which gives you a greater appreciation for how important connected forests are.”

Marisa's passion for wildlife, especially mammals, fueled her interest in environmental science and policy. After graduate school, she began her career at the Northeast Wilderness Trust in Vermont, and there she saw firsthand how larger, connected forests are far more beneficial for plants and animals; even better, these connected forests create natural corridors that allow plants and animals to migrate, increasing their chance for survival. When she returned to Western New York as the Conservation Director of the Land Conservancy in 2017, she wanted to apply the same principles to our region's forests that had proved so successful in New England.

Thanks to Marisa's determination, the Land Conservancy is raising funds this year to save the Allegheny Wildlands, a 200-acre forest near the shore of the Allegheny Reservoir, nestled between Allegheny State Park and South Valley State Forest. Located within a portion of the Allegheny Plateau that wasn't covered by glaciers during the last ice age, it is an extremely rare landscape in New York State, one that supports a diverse plant community that includes rare orchids, a threatened fern, and even several surviving American Chestnut trees. In fact, naturalist Erik Danielson suggests there may be more chestnut trees on this property than anywhere else in Western New York outside of Zoar Valley. As part of a globally significant Important Bird Area—a designation it shares with the Everglades, the Galapagos, and our own Niagara River—it teems with nesting warblers and other songbirds. It's a truly unique place, but it's also under threat and could be developed.



Marisa Riggi



Save the Allegany Wildlands

Our community has until December 31, 2021 to raise \$879,000 to save the Allegany Wildlands. The Land Conservancy will purchase the land, maintain it as a forest, and open a walking trail so people can always experience this incredible place.

DONATE You can save the Allegany Wildlands by donating today. When you donate, you ensure that future generations will enjoy the amazing diversity of this forest.

If you would like to donate to protect the Allegany Wildlands, please send a check with Allegany Wildlands

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.wnylc.org Select “Allegany Wildlands” in the dropdown menu under “This contribution is for” on our donation page.

If our community can raise the funds to protect it, the Allegany Wildlands will become a vital link in the Western New York Wildway, the extensive series of protected lands the Land Conservancy envisions that will connect the vast forests of northern Pennsylvania to the Great Lakes, through to the Finger Lakes, the Adirondacks, and beyond. Because the Wildway will allow plants and animals to migrate across the land as they once did, and to move as the climate changes, some of our region’s most iconic mammals—such as black bears, bobcats, porcupines, and fishers—will enjoy expanded home ranges and have a greater chance of survival well into the future.

That idea motivates Marisa, who views projects like this as absolutely critical to our region’s future. “If we don’t protect places like the Allegany Wildlands before it’s too late,” she says, “we won’t have the wildlife we love to see here in Western New York. Without connecting these forests, we will become a barrier to plant and wildlife movement in the Eastern U.S., and all we’ll have is sprawl.”

NOTE: Stock photos were used for cover photo of bear cubs and bobcats pictured above.



American Chestnut



© Awa Bukate Hernandez

© Josh Bulsteri

In Memoriam: Dorothy Westhafer and Bill Broderick

We mourn the loss of our friends Dorothy Westhafer and Bill Broderick. As part of the Grand Island conservation commission, Dorothy helped to identify valuable green spaces for permanent protection—including Scenic Woods/Bicentennial Park—and was a tireless advocate for the environment. When the Western New York Land Conservancy was founded in 1991, she became a charter member and served as a board member for many years. She was part of the successful effort to permanently protect the Niagara Escarpment Preserve and Stella Niagara Preserve, and later chose to become a member of our Legacy Society to ensure that her legacy will live on for future generations.

Bill Broderick was a force for conservation, a passionate birder, and someone who was incredibly generous with his time and knowledge in shaping the Land Conservancy. He served for 15 years on our board, leading us as Board President and serving on many of our committees. Like Dorothy, he played a prominent role in our work along the Niagara Escarpment, leading to the creation of the Niagara Escarpment Preserve. His vision and friendship were pivotal to the protection of the Singer Farm with a conservation easement. Dorothy and Bill played major roles in making the Land Conservancy what it is today. They will be greatly missed.

Conservation Updates

College Lodge Forest

We will purchase the College Lodge Forest this year. Right now, the trails are open to the public and we encourage you to visit this spectacular forest to see the spring wildflowers already in bloom.

Grand Island

We've been awarded funding by the Greenway Ecological Standing Committee with support from the Niagara River Greenway Commission to protect three important properties in Grand Island: Love Road Preserve, Funk Preserve, and Alt Preserve. These projects are part of our land protection program in Grand Island, where some of the largest intact headwater forests in the region are found. These headwater forests, coupled with wooded wetlands and meadows, absorb, filter, and retain rainwater. Rainwater here flows into streams and creeks and eventually into the Niagara River as clean water.



© Priscilla Titus

Canada Lily, College Lodge Forest



© Erik Danielson

Blue-spotted salamander on Grand Island

Down on the Farm

We are thrilled to announce that we've protected the award-winning WBB Farm in Alden, owned by Brenda and Warren Bippert. We have also been awarded funding to protect the Schmieder Farm in Alexander, owned and operated by Paul and Lynette Schmieder. Once it is officially protected, the Schmieder Farm will be the largest farm we've ever protected and our first in Genesee County. As a result of these projects, important farmland will

always be available for agricultural use. Agriculture and agriculture-based business play a vital role in Western New York, where small family farms like WBB and Schmieder have dotted the landscape for generations. The region's farms and related businesses employ thousands of Western New Yorkers and pump millions of dollars into the local economy each year. Learn more at wnylc.org/in-the-news.

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.



© Calvin Nemec

The Niagara Escarpment Preserve

We've purchased an additional 9.5 acres at the Niagara Escarpment Preserve in Lockport. Located on former farmland, this addition is home to a unique grassland habitat that was restored nearly a decade ago. This purchase was funded by the Greenway Ecological Standing Committee, and was supported by the Niagara River Greenway Commission. Combined, the Niagara Escarpment Preserve is now 46 acres.

Mossy Point

The purchase of Mossy Point is complete. We will begin to build trails in the fall of 2021, with the intention of opening the preserve to the public in the spring of 2022. Habitat improvements in the form of invasive species control in the forest and along the creek will also begin in spring 2022.

The Riverline

This spring, we hosted a virtual public meeting during which our design team displayed early concept designs and sought community feedback, with a second meeting planned for April 28th. We will announce final design concepts this summer. Thank you to these project funders who make the Concept and Schematic Design phase of The Riverline possible: New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (EPF #180842), KeyBank in Partnership with First Niagara Foundation, Moog Inc, BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York Blue Fund, Erie Canalway Heritage Fund funded in part through the generous support of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor; Kathy Lasher and Scott Bieler; Peggy and Jay Elliott; Nancy and Tom Smith; and other individual community donors.

Photos: (Top to Bottom) © Nancy Smith, Jajean Rose-Burney.



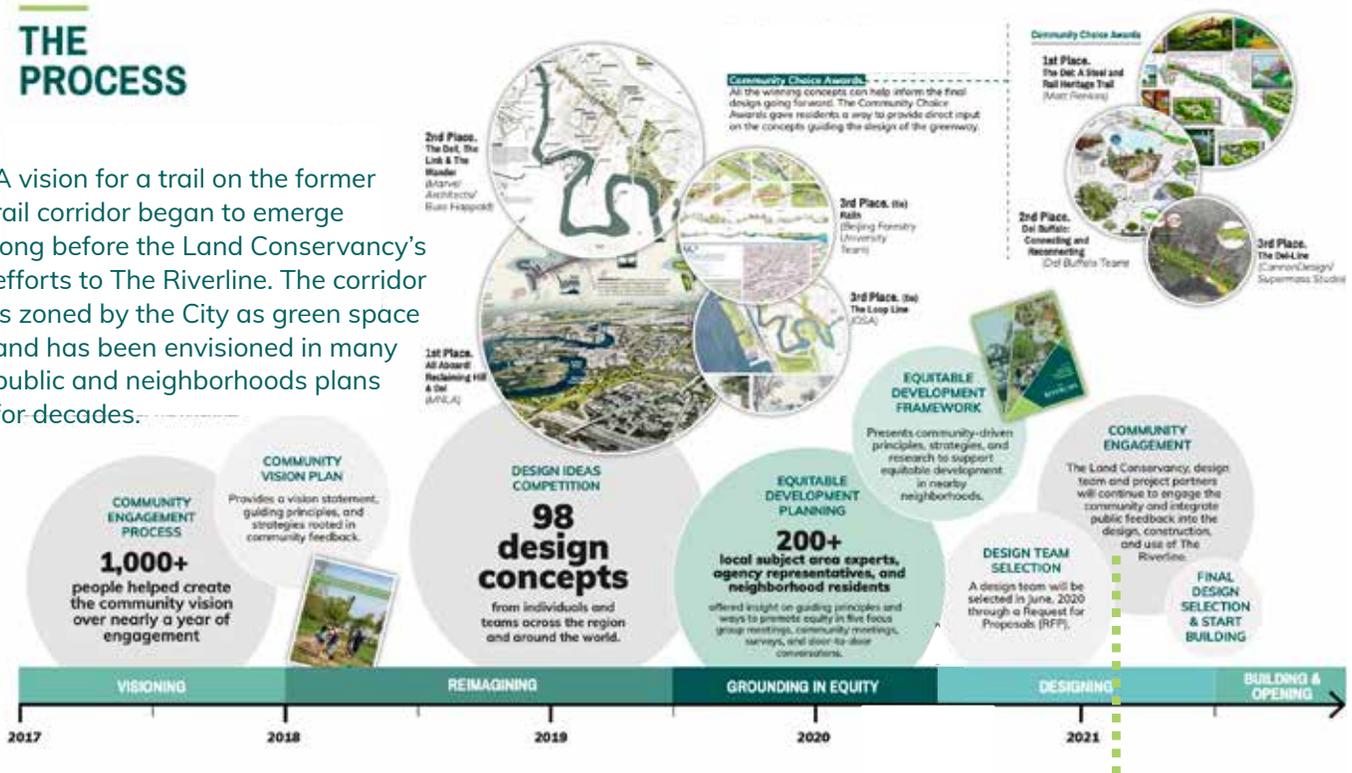
2016 Prescribed Burn, Niagara Escarpment Preserve



Mossy Point

THE PROCESS

A vision for a trail on the former rail corridor began to emerge long before the Land Conservancy's efforts to The Riverline. The corridor is zoned by the City as green space and has been envisioned in many public and neighborhoods plans for decades.





© Erik Danielson

O. noveboracensis: The “Niagara” Cicada

By Erik Danielson, Naturalist

One of the joys of being a naturalist is encountering unusual or rare species, and recently I was thrilled to do just that. While doing an inventory of the threatened flower White Death Camas blooming in one of the Niagara Gorge’s unique limestone cliff seeps, home to some of the rarest plants in our region, I noticed a cicada clinging to a shrubby Carolina Rose. After I’d taken a few photos, it flew away, and I continued counting flowers.

Within a few days, entomologist Will Chatfield-Taylor identified the photos I’d posted to iNaturalist as *Okanagana noveboracensis*. He wrote: “Congrats! One of the rarest of the Okanagan!”

Like many insects, Will explained, this cicada has no common name. But its scientific name would translate to something like “New York Cicada.” Although it was collected, described, and named in the 19th century, its classification as a distinct species was uncertain until a paper published in 2010 clarified its description and relationship with other, similar species. All known reports of this cicada are within the vicinity of the Niagara Gorge, a range stretching from Buffalo west to Hamilton, Ontario. Because of this extremely limited distribution—it lives only in the Niagara region—you might even call it the “Niagara” Cicada.

We know very little about this cicada. Based on some of its more common relatives, though, it probably has a preferred host plant, most likely a tree. Unlike the synchronized mass emergence of periodical cicadas, this species reproduces in multiple staggered broods so that every year, larvae that have lived for several years underground emerge as adults to mate and produce the next generation.

Tracts of healthy forests are likely key to sustaining the long lifecycle of *O. noveboracensis*. This cicada lives only in the Niagara Gorge’s extensive woodlands and in the forests of the Dundas Valley, near Hamilton. Unfortunately, the surrounding landscape of the Niagara region has been heavily developed. As a result, these two blocks of habitat are critical to the long-term survival of this local cicada. Our efforts to restore the Gorge, along with those of our partners, help ensure that these special residents of our region are here to stay.

Restoration Work: Margery Gallogly Nature Sanctuary

By Andrew Lance, PhD, Restoration Project Manager

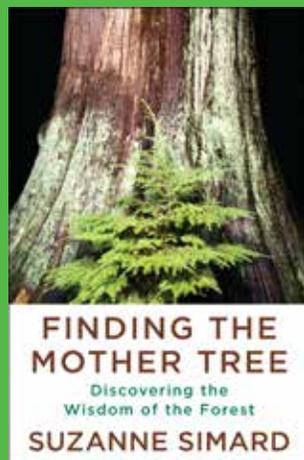
The Margery Gallogly Nature Sanctuary on Grand Island is home to tall oak and hickory trees, vernal pools filled with frogs, and even Pileated Woodpeckers, the largest remaining woodpecker in North America. Unfortunately, some of the preserve is being taken over by invasive shrubs that prevent new forest from growing. We began our restoration work at the Gallogly Nature Sanctuary in January 2021 and completed the initial phase in late February. We focused on removing invasive shrubs, namely common and glossy buckthorn. This fall, we will plant more than 750 native trees and shrubs. If you visit us this year, you’ll see our work in action!

Virtual Event with Suzanne Simard

Join us for a free, livestreamed virtual event with Dr. Suzanne Simard, a pioneer in plant communication and intelligence and author of the forthcoming memoir *Finding the Mother Tree*. Her work has influenced filmmakers (the Tree of Souls of James Cameron’s film *Avatar*) and her TED talks have been viewed by more than 10 million people worldwide.

Wednesday, June 16 at 7:00 p.m.
Register at WNYLC.ORG

Purchase your copy of *Finding the Mother Tree* from the event’s official bookseller, Talking Leaves Books in Buffalo.



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

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TOM ANNEAR

From Thomas Coleman

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EVAN BRADY

From Jason Brady

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2021 Spring & Summer Events

The Land Conservancy will begin hosting in-person events again this year. Please visit WNYLC.ORG for a list of additional events.

Will you make the Land Conservancy part of your legacy?

Thank you to our Legacy Society members who have made us part of their legacy by including us in their planned giving. 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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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 cherished and threatened places today. To donate, use the envelope in this newsletter or visit wnylc.org and make your payment online. Thank you!



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Save the Date

THE LAND CONSERVANCY'S 2021 VIRTUAL GALA

Wednesday evening, September 22, 2021

The Gala will once again be virtual, but we hope by the fall, people will be able to gather in small groups to celebrate together, in person.

Our Mission

The Land Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust that has protected more than 7,000 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.



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