

The MIDDLESEX LANDSCAPE

Serving the towns of Durham, Middlefield, Middletown, Cromwell, Portland and East Hampton

Highland Pond Preserve Gets a Fall Cleanup

On September 8th a crew of land trust members met at our new 30-acre Highland Pond Preserve, given to us by our sister organization, Mattabesek Audubon Society. The preserve is composed of a shallow pond favored by assorted ducks, a couple of mute swans, and most recently, a family of beaver – evidenced by their stick dam built on top of the pond’s concrete dam and the many sapling stumps along the pond’s shore. Surrounded by a mature hardwood forest, the pond was originally a swamp on Sawmill Brook, a clear-running stream that begins on the north slopes of Higby Mountain and flows down through the community known as Highland to its confluence with the Mattabeset River near the Aetna facility in Middletown. One other notable feature is a half-mile of old trolley line that bisects the preserve and in its day ran north to Cromwell and south to Meriden.

Hiking the 200 yards of the trolley bed to the pond, we set ourselves to clearing the dam of

accumulated debris and sediment. Within an hour it was removed and we watched as a thick layer of algae on the pond’s surface began flowing over the dam. With that task completed successfully, we moved on to the boathouse, an interesting a-frame structure with an orange tile roof (the previous owner was apparently a Howard Johnson’s restaurant fan!). We clipped away the young forest of birch saplings that had sprung up around the building. A rowboat left behind sat rain-filled beside the shore. We emptied it and Land Trust Co-Chair Ralph Urban stowed it safely inside, locking the door from the inside and crawling out a rear window. We left a pile of miscellaneous rusted and broken items stacked to be hauled away later, and continued down the trolley line, clipping as we walked.

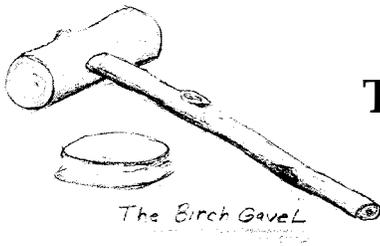
Just beyond, we passed the beaver lodge on the bank of the pond. One hundred yards farther on, Sawmill Brook cuts through the trolley bed with two logs spanning the 25-foot gap. Aged and rotting, they are still strong enough to support our weight one at a time. Safely on the other side, we complete the last 300 yards to Atkins Street.

Inspired by its scenic qualities, the Land Trust Board envisions that in addition to offering a quiet spot for bird watching and nature appreciation, the Highland Pond Preserve may also provide a great place to gather for picnics, outings and skating parties.

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The *Chairman's* Corner

Dear MLT Members:

With some fear and trepidation, we'll admit, but plenty of enthusiasm, Diane Moore and I accepted the honor of co-chairing the MLT Board of Directors beginning in July 2002. While Diane is an experienced and dedicated longstanding MLT director, I am a relative newcomer to the Board, having only served as an interim director for a few months. Fortunately for all involved, your Board continues to have a strong and unwavering core of dedicated volunteer members with plenty of institutional memory, expertise and dependable energy - including Donna Monnes as Treasurer, John LeShane as director of stewardship, Bill Hincks, our secretary, and Joyce Powzyk, who has long been involved in outreach and publicity, to name just a few of many.

In these last few months, I believe Diane and I have forged a strong working relationship, dividing up the tasks and keeping the many lines of communication open (thank heavens for e-mail!). While we've fumbled our way through a few things that we were unfamiliar with, Alan Hurst and the other Board members have been there whenever we've needed advice or direction. The best sign of the strength of any organization is when it can continue to function relatively well even after the loss of a solid, long term leader like MLT had in Alan. This organization shows those signs in spades. Alan, of course, remains an active member and still lends his invaluable assistance to our various projects. The road may be a bit bumpier, but this bus is still moving forward!

The past several months have seen the MLT continue to prosper and disseminate the land preservation and stewardship message. As you'll read in this issue, successful and well attended work parties groomed trails and spruced up various trust parcels, including Highland Pond, Sellew, Abe Temkin, and most recently Mica Ledges, the last completed with remarkable extra volunteer help, and in cooperation with the Madison Land Trust. There are some exciting possibilities brewing in cooperation with the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Our information and outreach efforts have continued to move forward at local fairs and schools, and we continue to receive excellent support from the Land Trust Service Bureau.

We are extremely grateful to all MLT members for their dedication and commitment. Please contact us (Ralph, 267-6836; Diane, 349-9817) if you have ideas, suggestions or want to get more directly involved, or even just want to hike our preserves! Let's keep up the good work.

Enclosed in this newsletter you will find your annual MLT membership renewal form. In it, and throughout this newsletter, we describe how we have sought to earn your continued trust and support. Each day, each week, each month we seek to preserve more of the natural beauty and character of this corner of the world, and get the message out to our neighbors about our mission, and our properties and the great opportunities they provide. Your continued support is vital to our efforts. Please make your tax-deductible renewal commitment today, and thank you for ongoing support.

Ralph and Diane



Jeeps, Chains and Torches - Cleanup at Mica Ledges

After years of spoiling the idyllic view near Frank's Pond on the Mica Ledges Preserve, the old Buick is finally gone. We can thank a new group of friends, mostly from Meriden, for taking on and completing this enormous task.

Mica Ledges neighbor and University of New Haven student, Nicholas Berkun, approached the MLT board with detailed plans to organize a cleanup day, and his assistance was gratefully accepted. Early on November 2nd, Middlesex Land Trust and Madison Land Conservation Trust volunteers were joined by a youthful group of volunteers in a convoy of jeeps and pickups. The "Jeep Junkies" proceeded to wade chest-deep into the freezing pond, attach a chain to the submerged car and haul it out with a winch mounted on the jeep. The other car was cut into pieces with acetylene torches, stacked up and carted out as well. Meanwhile, others re-blazed and trimmed the hiking trails and removed bags of trash.

We are extremely grateful to all those cheerful, skilled volunteers whose hard work and good will transformed a jarring eyesore back into a beautiful, natural landscape.

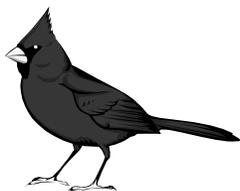


Mica Ledges Cleanup Crew



2002 Annual Meeting Recap

The Middlesex Land Trust Annual Meeting was held on May 18, 2002 at the Connecticut Forest and Park Association headquarters in Middlefield. Outgoing Chairman, Alan Hurst was honored with a certificate for his leadership and dedicated service as Chairman for the past five years. The following officers were elected: Co-Chairs, Ralph Urban and



Diane Moore; Secretary, Bill Hincks; and Treasurer, Donna Monnes.

Our thanks to guest speaker, Adam Moore, new Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, who brought us up-to-date on the latest initiatives of CFPA and discussed the blue blazed hiking trails, one of which crosses Land Trust property. The meeting concluded with a guided tour of the John R. Camp demonstration forest at the rear of the CFPA headquarters property, and a potluck lunch provided by Land Trust Board members.

MLT Gets the Message Out

Although the weather initially did little to cooperate, the MLT sponsored a colorful information booth and display at the Portland Fair October 11-14, 2002. Placed between the equally engaging displays of the Meshomasic Hiking Club and the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, the MLT booth featured display boards highlighting photos and maps of some of MLT's premier preserves, informational packets and trail guides to MLT properties, as well as recent MLT newsletters. Donations were received, and several interested folks took home informational materials.

Katherine and Carlton Winslow, Joyce Powzyk and Ralph Urban were on hand in shifts to man the booth, as well as the ever faithful John LeShane, who at times did double duty for the Hiking Club. John's "living forest" display, as well as the Hiking Club's popular homemade walking sticks proved strong attractions for all of the "earth friendly" displays.

While the fair was originally slated to end Sunday night, organizers kept it open through the holiday, Monday, October 14th, when the deluge finally ended and the weather turned cool and crisp, attracting last minute patrons to the fair.

Many thanks to John, Katherine, Carlton, Joyce and Ralph for another successful event!

Middlesex Land Trust Board of Directors

Co-Chair - Diane Moore, Durham

Co-Chair - Ralph Urban, East Hampton

Treasurer - Donna Monnes, Cromwell

Secretary - Bill Hincks, East Hampton

Jane Brawerman, Middletown

David Brown, Middletown

John Greeno, East Hampton

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Nancy Woolhouse-Mueller, Portland

Joyce Powzyk, Middletown

Tom Wells, East Hampton

Stuart Winquist, East Hampton

Carlton Winslow, Middletown

Katherine Winslow, Middletown

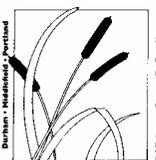
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