



Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

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Newsletter—Winter 2015

FOHNP thanks Dominion for printing this newsletter

A Message from the President

Every year around New Year's Day, a spot of bright blue appears at our bird feeders. It is the lead blue bird, returning to spend the winter in Oswegatchie Hills. This year it was January 6 when I first spotted him, followed by a half dozen or so. I am wondering, with the two plus feet of snow on the ground and temperatures in the single digits, if they are thinking they made a mistake this year. But as I watched the woods fill up with snow once again (apologies to Robert Frost), I found myself reflecting on all that has happened in the Hills this year.

First of all we are celebrating the acquisition of almost 40 acres to the preserve. On October 23, we signed the last of the documents that formally conveyed the property from the Bayreuther family to the town of East Lyme. It took over a year to accomplish, but what is important in the end is that additional land has been protected in the Hills. We cannot say thank you enough to everyone who made this happen – to the Thompson Family Foundation for its generous support, to all of you for your generous support, and to Mike Dunn, who worked tirelessly to negotiate the contract and to obtain the grant from the State of Connecticut.

In June we experienced one of the most exciting hikes I've ever taken in the Hills – 90 middle school students accompanying Rob Klee, Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. When I recall the energy and interest of these students, I am reminded of why we continue our efforts to

acquire additional land. It is so the Hills and all its flora and fauna will be there to enrich the lives of succeeding generations of students.

And finally I would be remiss not to mention the ongoing work of managing the Preserve. With now over 450 acres to steward, it is no small task. But ably led by Greg Decker, vice president of the Friends, the Stewardship Committee ensures that trails are clear and safe, that any concerns regarding inappropriate usage of the Preserve, e.g. dirt bikes, are addressed quickly, and that any other work needed is accomplished. We are indeed fortunate to have such a dedicated group of volunteers.

Protecting the Hills continues to be the major focus of the Friends. The work to protect the last unprotected mile of the Niantic River from inappropriate development by Landmark is never ending, and our goal is to acquire all of that land. That is why your financial support of the Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve is so important. Your gift helps us to pay the expenses incurred in this lengthy and complicated process. Please consider making one now. Gifts can be made online at www.owshills.org or sent to our Membership Chair at P.O. Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357. Thank you in advance for your support.

Here's to an early spring

Kris Lambert

FOHNP Welcomes the Newest Member to the Board of Directors

The FOHNP Board of Directors is extremely pleased to welcome our newest Board member, Gwen Macdonald. Gwen is the Director of Habitat Restoration for Save the Sound, a program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE).



Gwen holds a B.S. in Ecological Engineering from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry with post-graduate studies at Rutgers and the University of Massachusetts.

Before joining CFE in June 2010, she was an ecological engineering consultant with GEI Consultants in Glastonbury on such projects as ecological impact assessments, wetland and stream mitigation and restoration designs, and gained broad environmental engineering project management experience.

At CFE, Gwen oversees all habitat restoration design, implementation, and monitoring activities. These often include marsh restoration, dam removal, and fish passage projects. Gwen is one of eleven representatives to the national organization Restore America's Estuaries, of which CFE is a member.



Gwen's outstanding background and association with both state and national ecological organizations make her a great fit for FOHNP. Her membership is already having a significant impact on FOHNP's efforts.

Welcome, Gwen!

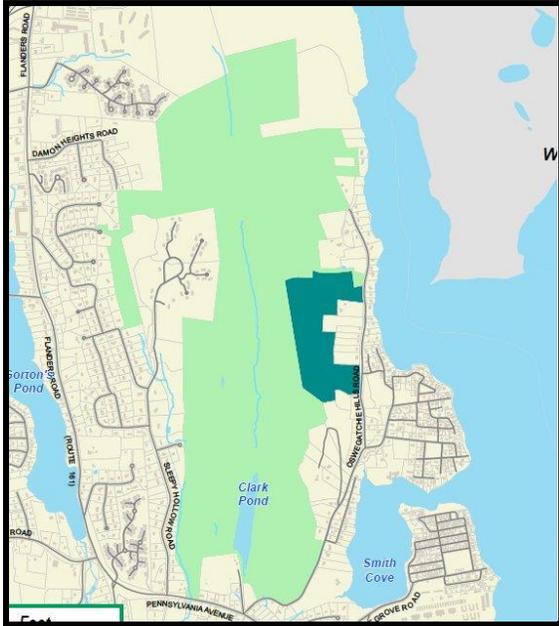
It's Official: OHNP Adds 37 Acres!

On October 23, 2014, East Lyme First Selectman Paul Formica, and FOHNP President Kris Lambert, below, put the finishing touches on the purchase of the 37-acre Bayreuther property.



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This property is shown in the map below: The present Preserve is shown in light green, the new acquisition in teal green.



“This is a beautiful piece of property, and the Friends will work with the town to ensure this addition enhances the nature experience of the many people who enjoy the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve,” said Kris.



This portion of the new tract is visible from the current Blue Trail.

“The stewardship committee is excited about having the additional acreage for the Preserve’s trail system and plans are already underway to have part of the Blue Trail traverse a portion of the property,” said FOHNP VP Greg Decker. (Above picture shows section where the proposed trail will go).

Snow, Snow and More Snow!

Had enough snow yet? We may be tired of all the snow we’ve had this winter, but according to an article appearing in an online newsletter of the University of Delaware in 2011, there are benefits to all this white stuff.

- That “blanket of snow” is good insulation for gardens and woodlands. It protects soil and vegetation from extremes of temperature and offers protection from freezing winds to wildlife.
- The blanket also helps to conserve soil moisture throughout the winter and provide needed moisture to trees and shrubs.
- Melting snow also replenishes the water supply, especially if it is a slow melt that trickles through the soil and into our aquifers.



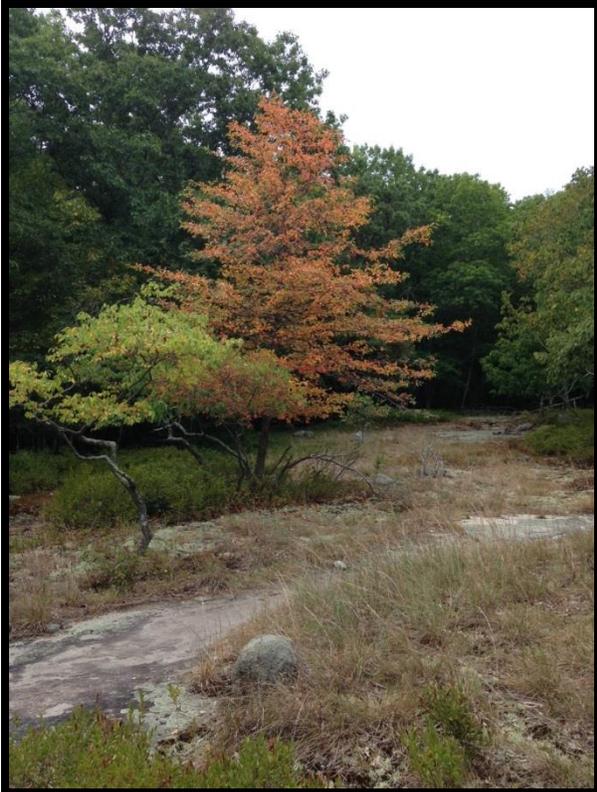
And it does make the Hills look beautiful with the trees frosted in fluffy white and snow drifts that sparkle even in the moonlight. We just have to forget about the shoveling for a little while!

Save the Date!

Mark your calendars now for the annual meeting of the Friends. It will be held on Saturday, May 16 at 10:00 a.m. in the Chendali Room at the East Lyme Park & Recs. on Society Road.

Seen Around the Preserve

The following pictures come to you courtesy of Paul Parulis, long-term hiker of the Hills and one of our most active volunteers. Whenever work needs to be done, Paul can be depended on to get his hands dirty! Thanks, Paul.



And this photo of two juvenile eagles on the Niantic River was taken by FOHNP's Mike Dunn

