



Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

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Newsletter—Summer 2013

FOHNP thanks Dominion for printing this newsletter

Archaeological Assessment in OHNP is Inconclusive

A potential archaeological site in the OHNP, which was discussed in the Spring Newsletter, was excavated this spring by the Anthropology class at East Lyme High School (ELHS). The excavation, led by ELHS teacher Jim Littlefield, was unable to reach conclusions on the origin of apparent fire scarring on a rock formation.



ELHS students used standard archaeological procedures to excavate the site

Some evidence of 20th century activities was found, including “numerous nails and some spikes all of the 20th century ‘wire nail’ variety, and a piece of stove pipe.” Mr. Littlefield found it “almost inconceivable that an area that would bear fire scars to this degree would reveal so few artifacts. This would suggest that either the area was picked clean at an earlier time, or that the scarring is not due to fire.”

In fact, subsequent to the excavation, at the FOHNP Annual Meeting, long-term area resident Carl Stamm stated that the previous landowner had excavated that site several times.



ELHS students sift through the excavation.

Mr. Littlefield called a colleague, Dr. John Pfeiffer, to discuss possibilities. Dr. Pfeiffer’s initial hypotheses include:

- It could be Native American from the archaic (used as a hunting lodge) or even the contact period when Native Americans were moving back into the woods away from Europeans.
- It could be a “Leatherman” abode. This term refers to a vagabond dressed all in leather who wandered throughout CT from 1839 until his death in 1889. Dr. Pfeiffer was using the term generically to mean someone who is homeless and who sought refuge.
- “Charcoal men” were known to look for woodland with a brook to make mud to cover their slow burning piles of wood.

FOHNP Hosts Hike in the Hills on Connecticut Trails Day

Connecticut Trails Day, sponsored by the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, was held this year on June 1st and 2nd. East Lyme Parks & Recreation, in conjunction with FOHNP,

supported hikes in The Hills June 1. An intrepid and enthusiastic group of hikers from the area, shown below, enjoyed a hike on the Red, Yellow and Blue Trails, including a stop at the old quarry and Mount Tabor.



Three Bluebirds Born in Preserve Nesting Box



Once again this year, a pair of bluebirds made one of the nesting boxes, installed two years ago, home. An early spring check indicated three eggs (inset above), followed by the appearance of the three young above. We don't know how many fledged, but the next time the nest was checked, it was empty.

The box has been cleaned out with hopes for another brood.

OHNP Riparian Buffer project makes more progress

Work continues on the Clark Pond Riparian Buffer Project with the help of the Town of East Lyme P&R Dept., biologists from Dominion's Millstone Environmental Lab and volunteers from the Eastern Connecticut Conservation

District. Four different species of native trees and shrubs (105 in all) were planted on Wednesday, May 22 by the group, pictured below. The ongoing project will be 90% complete this fall when the remaining two species of native trees and shrubs will be installed along the shoreline of Clark Pond. The native plants are supplementing the invasive plants that were removed from the pond's shoreline this spring. The hillside was also seeded with wildflower meadow mix in early spring and is being transformed from a mowed grassy area into a meadow with defined paths leading to/from the red trail. Funds for the project were provided by contributions to the "Friends" from the Dominion Foundation and two grants awarded to the Town of East Lyme and FOHNP.



Girl Scout Project in The Hills

On June 20, FOHNP board member Rich Gallagher and intern Amy Whitehouse led a group of eight Girl Scouts from local-area troop 63800 in performing a "tree inventory" project. The group's work was part of the larger effort of the FOHNP in creating an ecological survey of The Hills. The tree inventory project can be considered a supplement to the survey conducted in 2010-2011, found at:

<http://www.oswhills.org/uploads/1/1/9/2/11925417/ohnpterritorialecologysurvey.pdf>.

A quadrat was set up near the entrance of the Red Trail, and the troop wasted no time in identifying trees, measuring trunk circumference, and recording data for over 50 samples. The group was so efficient, they were even able to complete a second quadrat in the area.

Results found that the most common trees in the area, which was located on a ledge, were Oak and Birch trees. Species of Maple and Hickory were also identified. A big thanks to the Girl Scouts and their families for their efforts!

Red-Shouldered Hawk Nest Produces at Least Two Fledglings



Anybody who has spent much time near the head of the Red Trail by the ball fields this spring and early summer, has probably heard the plaintive cries of the nesting pair of Red-Shouldered Hawks next to the ball field. On a sunny afternoon in mid-June, an FOHNP board member was privileged to witness the first tentative steps of one of the chicks out of the nest, onto the adjacent branch. This chick, shown in the pictures below, took tentative steps along the limb, trying to muster up the courage to try its first flight, along with a nest mate, who stepped tentatively along a nearby branch.

The two have subsequently fledged, and have been observed in the area of the nest. It is not known if these two fledglings have any nest mates. If you make any observations in this area, please record them at the kiosk at the entrance to the preserve.

A Note From the Board

The kiosk at the The Hills main entrance at Veterans Field has been subject to extensive, repeated, vandalism this summer. The kiosk has since been restored, and the FOHNP have taken security measures in the area in addition to working with the East Lyme Police Department. If any members have any information please contact the ELPD at (860)738-4435.

As Seen on The Preserve



Recent visitors Susan and Bob took this picture of a Turkey Vulture perched on a prominent cairn.

Susan and Bob have a dynamite website on state mammals, reptiles and amphibians that is really worth checking out. Thanks Bob and Sue, for allowing us to make your website link available to our members! The site is available at:

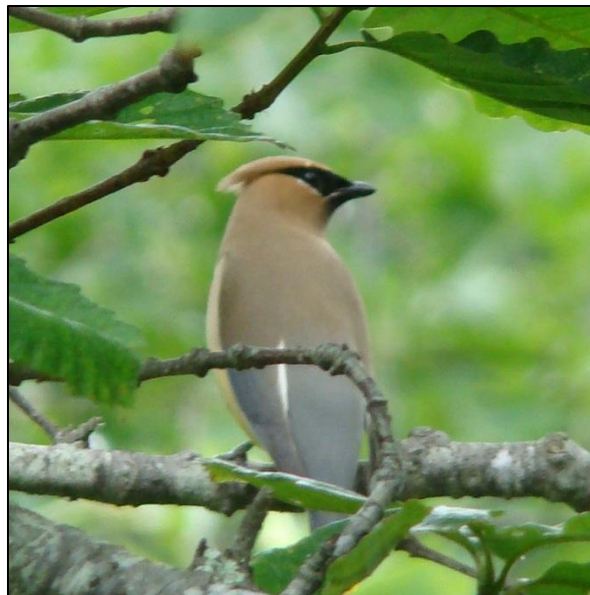
<http://www.wildlifeofct.com>



Area residents Mike and Gina enjoy taking their lab, Olive for long walks in the Preserve



Adam and Cat Puslys recently took their daughter, Ava, for her first hike in The Hills. "Very nice hiking area. Can't believe we've only recently discovered it. We'll be back!"



A Cedar Waxwing, recently spotted on the Blue Trail in the "lunar landscape" area.



GIFT CONTRIBUTION FORM

Thank you to our members who sent in a 2013 membership gift! If you have not had a chance yet, please consider renewing today. Membership in Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve is an important way to ensure that the hills we love so much are preserved for future generations.

Name: _____

☐ \$25 Hiker

Address: _____

☐ \$50 Trailblazer

City/State/Zip: _____

☐ \$100 Nature Lover

Email: _____

☐ \$500 Pathfinder

Phone: _____

☐ Other _____

Please make checks payable to FOHNP, Inc. and mail to:

FOHNP
ATTN: Membership Chair
P.O. Box 163
Niantic, CT 06357

Or contribute online at <http://www.oswhills.org/become-a-member-contribute.html>

If your company matches gifts to non-profit organizations, please be sure to enclose a matching gift form.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFT!