



# Friends of the OSWEGATCHIE HILLS NATURE PRESERVE

Newsletter – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2023

## A Message from the President

It was a strange winter. According to the weather forecasters on WTNH, Connecticut experienced the fourth warmest winter on record (the records go back to 1873). ACCU Weather for Hartford reported a temperature of -6° on February 4, but twelve days later it was 69°. As for snow, the shoreline got barely 4 inches, while the northwestern hills were buried in up to two feet. Strange indeed!

As a result, spring seems to have arrived early. At the end of January skunk cabbages were breaking through the ice in marshy areas of the Connecticut College Arboretum. Daffodils are already in bloom and the wood frogs are doing their spring thing. Paul Parulis, a dedicated volunteer on the Stewardship Committee, sent a video of a wetland in the Hills in which you could hear the duck-like call of those frogs. This means that Don Danila and Susan Gonzalez will be heading out on their annual Frog Watch soon.

Was LaNiña the cause? Global warming? Fickle New England weather? My guess is “all of the above.” Whatever the cause, it makes the case for protecting our forests even more urgent. The importance of having places like the Hills and other open space to enjoy is the subject of increasing scientific study. A book I just read, *The Nature Fix* by Florence Williams, delves into new research that explains “why Nature makes us happier, healthier and more creative.” Daniel Levitin, a neuroscientist and cognitive psychologist, who studies how our brains work, emphasizes the importance of getting outdoors, preferably in the woods. And of course, Henry David Thoreau understood the importance of being in the woods when he wrote *Walden*, almost 170 years ago.

We on the Board of the Friends totally “get it” and know you do too. The Hills play a critical role not only in providing habitat for wildlife but also in providing a place for us to “get outdoors.” *The Day* has reported on the encumbrances placed on acreage in the preserve owned by the East Lyme Land Trust, the largest piece of which lies at the heart of the preserve. Our obligation is to preserve the OHNP for you and future generations to enjoy. As stated in the article of March 10th, we have communicated our concerns to the Attorney General’s office and are continuing to monitor the situation. The future of our beloved Hills is at stake.

*Kris Lambert*



## Save the Dates

### Annual Meeting – Saturday May 6th

Please join us on Saturday, May 6th for the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. The meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. in the East Lyme Room, located in the Library. Hope to see you there!

### CT Trails Day – Saturday June 3rd

Please join us for guided hikes on Saturday June 3rd for CT Trails Day. Once finalized, the hike details will be posted on OSWHills.org, the Friends Facebook page and the East Lyme Park and Rec website. Hope to see you there!



Don't forget to join the iNaturalist community and post photos or videos of your observations in the Hills (or anywhere). If you are in the Hills, upload your media using the iNaturalist app and it will be added to the 'Diversity in the Oswegatchie Hills' project. This amazing platform is a resource to connect all of us! iNaturalist is a joint initiative of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society. Special thanks to Al Burchsted, our in-house naturalist, who started and oversees the 'Diversity in the Hills' project.

## In Memory of Caren Linden

In December we lost a key member of the Friends' board, Caren Linden. Caren was a loving mother and grandmother as well as a dedicated, behind-the-scenes supporter of many organizations in the community. She served as the FOHNP Membership Chairman since 2013, and was a strong advocate, along with her husband Bob, for preservation of the Hills. You most likely have received many communications and thank you letters from her over the years. She was always giving. Before her passing she was set to be named and assume duties of the treasurer of the EL Library Foundation in January.

It was a pleasure to know and work alongside Caren. She was always ready with a smile, and generous with her knowledge and time. The Ralph Waldo Emerson poem 'Success', below, exemplifies her life. Caren left her mark on the world and made it a better place. She is sorely missed by all who knew her. Our sincerest sympathies



to her family - we share your loss. Her family asked that gifts in Caren's memory be made to the Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. To date we have received almost \$10,000. In addition to planting a memorial tree in the Greg Decker Pitch Pine Park, the board plans to use some of the donations to establish a scholarship fund in Caren's name, to be awarded annually to an East Lyme High School student with a passion to pursue a career in Environmental Science, Forestry or Conservation.

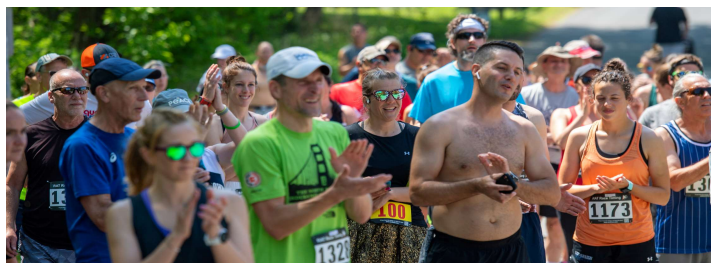
### Success

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual 'Run for the Hills' – May 21, 2023



The Friends will host their second annual 'Run for the Hills' trail run on Sunday, May 21, 2023. Last year's 5K race was a huge success with over 140 registered runners, ranging in age from 8 to 74. The course skirts Clark Pond and continues around the perimeter of the beautiful 457-acre nature preserve.

If you are not a runner, join in the post-race festivities at the Niantic Public House where prizes will be awarded, you can listen to live music by The Lowtiders, enjoy the Flanders Fish Market food truck, and participate in a silent auction. All proceeds from the trail race will go directly to maintaining this special place of quiet beauty for future generations to enjoy. To help or sponsor, email [RunfortheHills@oswhills.org](mailto:RunfortheHills@oswhills.org).

To register, scan the QR code below:



## 'Finding the Mother Tree' by Suzanne Simard

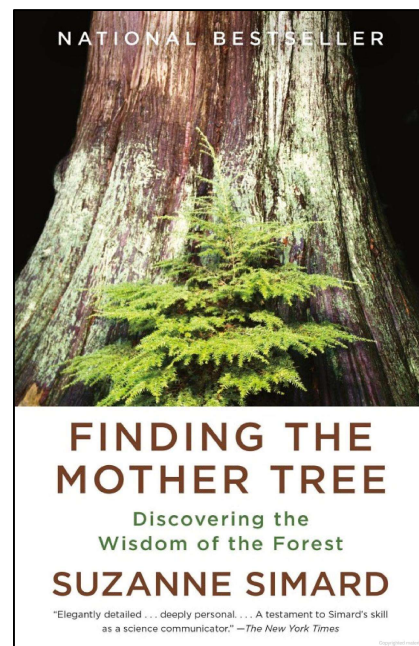
Suzanne Simard, the author '*Finding the Mother Tree, Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest*', studies the complex, symbiotic networks in our forests. She is a professor of forest ecology at the University of British Columbia's Department of Forest and Conservation Sciences in Vancouver.

She has discovered that trees are linked to neighboring trees by an underground network of fungi that resembles the neural networks in the brain. In one study, Simard watched as a Douglas fir that had been injured by insects appeared to send chemical warning signals to a ponderosa pine growing nearby. The pine tree then produced defense enzymes to protect against the insect. "This was a breakthrough," Simard says. The trees were sharing "information that actually is important to the health of the whole forest." In addition to warning each other of danger, Simard says that trees have been known to share nutrients at critical times to keep each other healthy. She says the trees in a forest are often linked to each other via an older tree, she calls a "mother" or "hub" tree.

In the introduction she states, "I discovered that trees are in a web of interdependence, linked by a system of underground channels. The evidence was at first highly controversial, but the science is now known to be rigorous, peer reviewed, and widely published".

To maintain these complex systems, she recommends we need to maintain good forest stewardship, save old growth forest, and encourage and maintain diversity of species. We need to be conservationists. Professor Simard also has an insightful TED Talk for your enjoyment.

On your next hike in the Hills, remember that a forest is much more than trees... it's a single cooperative organism, worth protecting.



Cover photograph of a young western hemlock growing in front of a western red cedar by Paul Colangelo / National Geographic Image Collection

## FOHNP thanks the following members for their generous support in 2022

Jeff Alling  
 Dorothy Anselmo  
 Lani Avocet  
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 Amy Zinsser

Many donations were made In  
Memory of Caren Linden

Editor's Note: Every effort has been  
 made to ensure the accuracy of this list.  
 However, we are only human so if you  
 find an error or omission, please let us  
 know.