



Friends of the OSWEGATCHIE HILLS NATURE PRESERVE

Newsletter – 1st Quarter 2021

A Message from the President



Have you noticed that the snows of February this year provided a wonderful canvas for an array of animal tracks in the Hills? I am no animal tracker or woodsman, but I am fascinated by the myriad of footprints that appear after each storm. The most plentiful are those of the whitetail deer; their two-toed, heart-shaped hoofprints wander up and down the hillsides around us.



2 1/2" – 3"



After one storm we were startled to see that a pair of bobcats had meandered through the yard. Their large, lobed pawprints, measuring about 2 inches across, showed no claw marks, because like a domestic cat, they can retract their claws. Bobcats are usually solitary creatures, but not apparently in mid-winter when they are mating.

The next storm brought fox tracks below the bird feeder, not surprising as we frequently see a pair of red fox trotting along our driveway and the walls that border it. The claws on their feet, like those of our neighbor's dog, were clearly visible in the snow. This one was probably in search of chipmunks, which are abundant during the warmer months.

H: 2" F: 2 1/4"



But what truly catches my eye are tracks left by smaller animals. On the back steps is a trail of small prints left by a resident chipmunk; the tracks come out the adjacent wall, ascend a couple of stairs and then go back down. (The fox apparently did not find this one) And in the middle of the yard are the tiniest of all the tracks, possibly from a mouse or a perhaps a shrew. They run along the top of the snow and then disappear in a tunnel the animal must dig as it runs. I wonder what brought this tiny creature out on such a cold and snowy day.

Finally, there are the human footprints – from hikers and snowshoers, like my neighbor, who welcome a snowy day to explore the Hills. How fortunate that a place like the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve exists for people to get out and enjoy no matter what season it is! How fortunate we all are that foresighted volunteers knew the importance of protecting this place 20 years ago! Let's continue to follow their tracks!



Kris Lambert

Track illustrations from the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

It Takes a Team!

East Lyme and all Southeastern CT residents are extremely fortunate to have **three** non-profit organizations working to protect the Oswegatchie Hills from overdevelopment: *Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve*; *Save the River-Save the Hills*; and our bi-state partner *Save the Sound*. All three share a common goal of preserving the Hills and work together to make it a reality. The Oswegatchie Hills are 700-plus acres of rocky woodlands. Thankfully, over 400 acres have been preserved forever as a nature preserve! However, the adjacent 236 acres, including a mile of waterfront coastal forest, are still in danger of high-density development.

All three organizations believe the best use of the remaining 236 acres of this vulnerable coastal forest is preservation, not an 840-unit development with 1767 parking spaces. Each entity brings unique skills and focus, while maintaining a common purpose to protect the magical Hills. We ALL know that once the Hills are paved over, they are gone forever – impacting the river, the Sound and beyond. Here's a quick overview:



Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve (FOHNP), a grass-roots organization of volunteers established in 2001, joined forces with local, state and federal legislators and local organizations to raise the funds used in acquiring the initial acreage of the preserve. Because of these efforts, the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve was created and formally dedicated in 2007.

FOHNP volunteers maintain the 457-acre preserve that includes over 7 miles of hiking trails. The preserve provides critical protection to the Niantic River watershed. We manage the preserve responsibly and promote conservation and education while working diligently to ensure hikers and resident wildlife are safe and protected.

FOHNP remains committed to its mission “to acquire the undeveloped land within Oswegatchie Hills and to add it to the adjoining Nature Preserve for future generations to enjoy.”



Save the River-Save the Hills, Inc., (STR-STH) is dedicated to preserving the health of the Niantic River Estuary, its watershed which includes parts of East Lyme, Salem, Montville and Waterford, and the natural beauty of the Oswegatchie Hills. They protect the river through protecting the Hills.

Preserving the health of the Niantic River is crucial not only to locals who boat, swim, fish and live along the River, but also to the well-being of the entire Long Island Sound. The Niantic River, an approximately 790 acre tidal estuary, flows directly into the Long Island Sound carrying with it all runoff from the watershed.

While FOHNP are the ‘boots on the ground’, STR-STH focuses on keeping the river clean and safe. It runs the pump-out boat program and advocates to protect the entire watershed.

STR-STH work tirelessly to keep the Niantic River clean and to help ensure that the Oswegatchie Hills remain unspoiled forever.



Save the Sound (formerly CT Fund for Environment) provides legal support as well as community and regional education and outreach. Since 2015 its team of environmental lawyers and advocates has provided critical legal assistance to FOHNP and STR-STH. Save the Sound supports important environmental action throughout Connecticut and eastern New York. It helped acquire “The Preserve” in Old Saybrook and is a founding member of Preserve Plum Island coalition.

In 2016, Save the Sound, FOHNP and STR-STH formed the ‘Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition’. This brings increased regional visibility and provides an opportunity for organizations and citizens across the state to join the fight to protect the Hills. Over 20 local, regional, and state-wide organizations have already joined the effort, along with nearly one thousand concerned citizens. If you haven't already, please join our efforts and sign the online petition. Details below:

You can show your support by signing our on-line petition at SaveTheSound.org

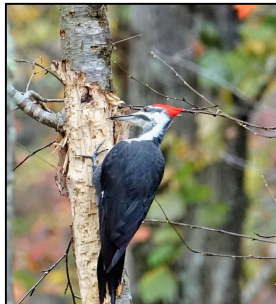
Marvin's Rock

Marvin Schutt, the Friends co-founder with Mike Dunn, had a favorite large glacial boulder just off the Green Trail. Greg Decker said, "I remember hiking with him on the trail and him mentioning that he wanted something there after he passed. It's taken some time, but we now have his favorite rock marked as a memorial to a great guy who had an ambitious dream".



Marvin Schutt at the 10th Anniversary Celebration.
October 2017

Seen in the Hills



Piliated Woodpeckers live in the Hills year-round.
Photos by Brian Lambert.

Tales from the Trails



Starting next issue there will be a new column: *'Tales from the Trails'*. You can contribute!

Please send a brief article, poem, or photo with your experience and adventures in the Hills. This could be from years past or your most recent hike. Let us know about your interactions with nature, wildlife, or fellow hikers. Send them to info@oswhills.org

SAVE THE DATES

Annual Meeting

This year's meeting will be held virtually on Wednesday May 19th at 7PM via Zoom.

You will receive an email with details and a link on how to join.

If we do not have your email address now is the perfect time to provide it, simply visit the oswhills.org home page.

CT Trails Day

Please join us for guided hikes on June 5th for CT Trails Day. This year there will be a limit to the number of hikers per group and each must pre-register. There will be three hiking options:

Birding Hike starting at 7:30AM

Long (~ 4 mile) Hike starting at 9AM

Short (1.5 mile) Hike at 10 AM

Registration information will be available through Parks and Rec. and posted on the East Lyme town website.

FOHNP thanks the following members for their generous support in 2020

Jeff Alling
Dorothy Anselmo
Sandra Austin
Lori and Frank Balantic
Anne and Jeff Barnhart
Jane and Ralph Bates
Rita and Robert Bell
Kathleen Drum Bitgood
Karen and Stanley Bloustine
Tara Borden
Carol and Ed Bourque
Maryellen Brousseau and
Jack Kohanim
Sophia and Bill Brubaker
Lisa and Don Burch
Holly and Louis Camerota
Jane and Al Capozza, Jr.
Holly Cheeseman
Carolyn and Carmin Cimino
Helen Collins
Sandra and Robert Cope
Ed Cramer
Ann and William Curatolo
Cathy and Don Danila
Denette and Bruce Dasinger
Joyce and Justin Daubar
Erin and Eric Decker
Ceil and Greg Decker
Barbara Eberle
Pamela and Franz Edson
Emily Emanuel
Patti Clancy Emanuel
Elenore Fagan
Jane and Tom Fox
Joyce and Rich Gallagher
Marjorie and Edward Geary
Kathleen and Dennis Gilbride
Mary Ellen and Wil Gladue
Linnea Golubchik
Melissa and Joseph Guarnieri

Stefania and Jim Hall
Penny and Ray Heller
Molly Helms
Regina and Joe Hitchery
Addie and Ed Hogan
Mary Jean Hull
Kathy and Ted Jablkowski
Zita and Arthur Kachadourian
Rick Kanter
Claire and Jerry Kavarnos
Raechel Killeen
Peter Kreckovic
Kris and Brian Lambert
Pamela Laramie and
Constance Clabby
Kathy Leindecker
Caren and Bob Linden
Karen Lungren
Marijane and Charles Lusk
Lawrence Magee
Bette Mahon
Madeleine and John Makiaris
Floy and Steve Marks-Hamilton
Betty Martin
Lucy Masi
Beverly and Gerald Mayer
Angela and Jack McLean
Nicole and Paul Michaud
Carol and George Milne
Mimi Mountain
Arlene and Tom Nebel
Niantic Plumbing
Eileen and Ken O'Pasek
Janice and Tony Orsini
Liz and Jim Paganetti
Neil Passman
Pat and Ken Payne
Norman Peck
Isabella Peterson
Janne and Pete Petersen

Pamela and Creig Peterson
Karen and David Quinn
Laurie Ranelli
Susan and Kevin Reardon
Richard Rice
Georgann Ritter
James Rives
Deb and Larry Roberts
Judy and Dick Robertson
Ned Ruete
Robin and Gene Ryan
David Schutt
Jaye and Peter Sepko
Alice and Tony Spinelli
Sharol Stewart
Cecelia Sullivan
Jeremy Susco
Karen and Allan Taylor
Jane and John Templeton
Patricia and John Thompson
Susan and Tom Turner
Margaret Verdon
Carol and Gary Weed
Wild Birds Unlimited
(Karen and Dave Hughes)
Donna Williams
Joan Williams
Michelle and Ryan Williams
Robert Wilson
Sandra Winslow
Yankee Remodeler
Christine and Bob Young
Amy Zinsser

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.

Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'

~ Robin Williams