



Friends of the OSWEGATCHIE HILLS NATURE PRESERVE

Newsletter – 4th Quarter 2023

A Message from the President.

The other morning I glanced out the window and noticed a small flock of bluebirds busily eating the bright red berries on winterberry bushes in my garden. The bushes were planted about three years ago when I worked with a local landscaper to redesign the garden with the goal of including native plants. This is the first year that the bushes produced a nice crop of berries. I thought that a few sprigs of berries would add the perfect festive touch to a Christmas arrangement. Not so! By the end of the day, the bushes were totally bare. But then that is why we chose those plants - so they would attract and nourish wildlife.

We also included plants that would attract pollinators, plants like mint, bee balm, and hyssop. There are times in the garden when there are so many bees that I can hear the hum. An unexpected attraction for black swallowtail butterflies was the parsley I had planted with other herbs. Actually it was their larvae, aptly nicknamed parsley worms, that were munching greedily on the plants. My first thought was to get rid of them. Then I realized there was plenty of parsley to share, and besides I could always buy more at the farm stand.



Black Swallowtail Larva

Then there was the lecture I heard recently about the importance of designing gardens to attract pollinators. The speaker also provided suggestions for prepping your garden for winter. For the most part, the advice was “leave it be.” Don’t cut back all the plants because the stems are where insects can harbor during the winter months. Don’t blow or rake off all the leaves because they provide a crucial habit for all sorts of creatures, including salamanders, frogs and many insects.

Being thoughtful about what we are planting and how we cultivate and harvest is becoming more and more important in today’s world. Being thoughtful acknowledges the critical relationship we should have with nature, with this earth. In her book, *Braiding Sweet Grass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer, puts it this way: “*One of our responsibilities as human people is to find ways to enter into reciprocity with the more-than-human world. We can do it through gratitude, through land stewardship, science, art, and in every day acts of practical reverence.*”

I think the Friends try hard to “enter into reciprocity” with the “more-than-human world.” For over 20 years we have worked hard to protect land from development, to steward the land that is protected, and to undertake projects that help to restore threatened species. We take this responsibility very seriously. With your ongoing support, we will continue to do so.

Kris Lambert

One thing I've learned in the woods is that there is no such thing as random. Everything is steeped in meaning, colored in relationships, one thing with another.

~ Robin Wall Kimmerer

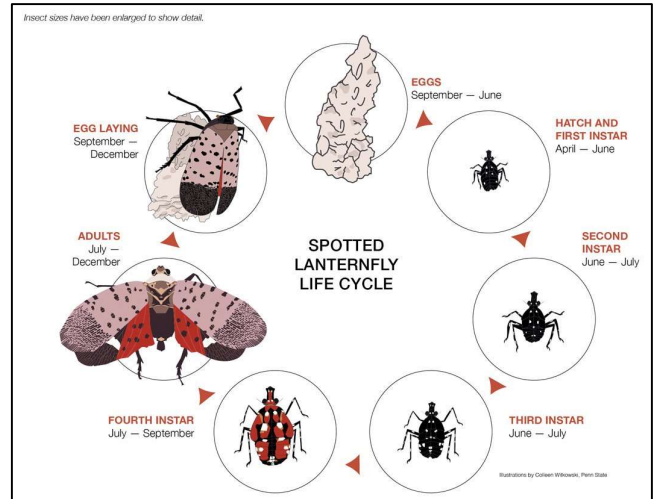
Lanternfly – Be on the Lookout!

The Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) likely arrived in North America hidden on goods imported from Asia. The first detection in the United States was in Berks County, PA in September 2014. Since then, it has spread throughout many states.

The SLF is an insect with a large and diverse host range of about 60 genera of the trees and plants. In CT, approximately 47% of the forest trees are considered susceptible to the SLF, including maples.

SLF lays its eggs in the fall on almost any smooth surface, including vehicles, trailers, outdoor equipment, and patio furniture, and can be spread long distances when people move infested material. Eggs are laid in masses of 30-50 eggs, with the individual eggs yellowish-brown in color. The egg mass itself is covered by a gray, waxy coating that is very indistinct. Eggs hatch in the spring and early summer, and nymphs begin feeding on plants by sucking sap from young stems and leaves.

Early detection is important for the protection of CT businesses and agriculture. You can find spotted lanternfly egg masses from September to June. The DEEP is urging residents to report potential sightings of this invasive pest to ReportSLF@ct.gov



Left: Unhatched egg masses. Right: Mass with some eggs hatched. Photos by Emelie Swackhamer, Penn State University, Bugwood.org (left photo) and Kenneth R. Law, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org (right photo).

Beech Leaf Disease



Beech leaf disease (BLD) is a serious threat to the health and survival of American beech trees. The disease is caused by a nematode, a microscopic worm, and was first detected in the state in 2019 and has since spread to seven out of eight counties! Beech trees are important sources of food and shelter for many wildlife species, such as birds, squirrels, deer, and bears.

BLD causes dark green striping between the leaf veins, which becomes more noticeable as the disease progresses. The affected leaf turns yellow, brown, or black, and curl downward. The disease can also cause branch and tip dieback, aborted buds, and thin canopies. BLD makes the trees more susceptible to other pests and diseases. BLD is especially harmful to young and sapling beech trees, which can die within three to five years after showing symptoms. Scientists from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) are studying the biology of BLD and working to develop strategies to prevent its spread, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) advises against moving any beech materials, such as firewood, nursery stock, or logs, from infested areas to uninfested areas.

Tara and Ralph are Moving On and will be Missed!

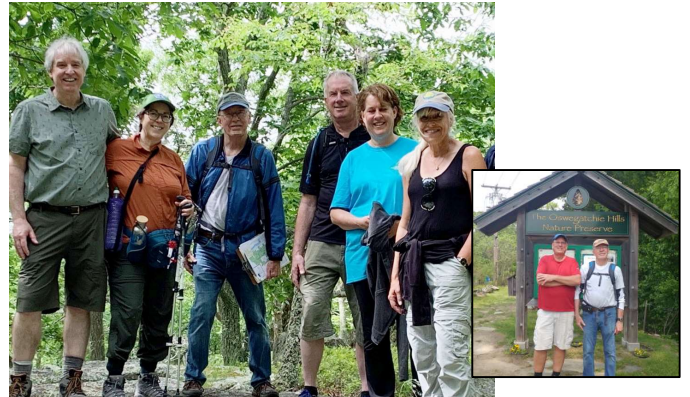
Tara Borden



Tara Borden on the Clark Pond Bridge in 2023, and at the Run for the Hills

Tara will be starting a new chapter in January, as the director of the 'West Nyack Free Library' in West Nyack, NY. Before she joined the FOHNP board in 2018, she helped with the kick-off of the Coalition to Save Oswegatchie Hills in 2016. She has been involved with the Run for the Hills fundraiser and started a 'Books and Boots' hiking group, "Reading and Exploring the Natural World Together". She led hikers along trails in the Hills, Rocky Neck, and others, pausing along the hike to discuss the book they were reading. We wish Tara the best as she moves on.

Ralph Bates



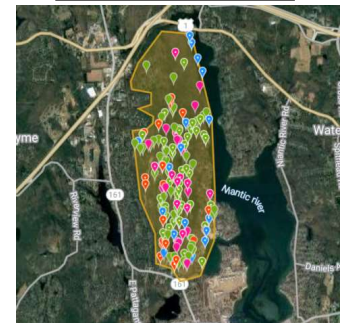
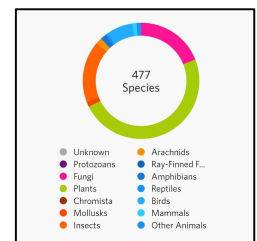
Ralph in center above leading hikers, and on right, with Paul Parulis in 2019

Ralph has been supporting the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve since 2010. As a member of the stewardship committee, he has shared his extensive knowledge of the Hills with many hikers... from working with scouting troops, to leading annual CT Trail Days hikes. He has worked tirelessly on cleanup projects and trail maintenance, as well as supporting the annual inspection of Darrow Pond, the rain garden, and the Greg Decker Pitch Pine Park. We are thankful for Ralph's generous contributions to the Hills and wish him the best with his new adventures.

iNaturalist



Don't forget to use the iNaturalist app on your next hike! Easily access ***'The Diversity in the Oswegatchie Hills'*** project from the trail with your smartphone – there are currently over 1,100 observations and 477 species. You can do onsite research and look up observations, or if unable to identify the species, upload a photo to have it identified!



Thanks to Al Burchsted, FOHNP member and retired biology professor, for his efforts to start and oversee this excellent resource. The iNaturalist project brings so much value to our community. It's a great time to download the app and start using these tools available at our fingertips!

East Lyme Referendum

A deep-felt thank you to everyone who turned out for the referendum in October and voted a resounding “yes” to acquiring all the acreage mortgaged by the Land Trust, including the parcels in the heart of the preserve. The 130 acres at the heart of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve are now owned by the town of East Lyme and protected forever!

You understand the importance of these preserved lands, and that nature sustains us in ways beyond measure. We are working with the town to ensure that this acreage continues to be protected and stewarded.

Recent Activities



Members of the stewardship committee under the direction of Greg Decker worked on installing and refurbishing three bog walks this fall. What a great job to help keep the trails safe and dry!

In the picture (below right) is Sean Rogers, Don Danila, Paul Parulis, Greg Decker, John Starrett and Bruce Kolowsky.

