



Friends of the  
**OSWEGATCHIE HILLS**  
**NATURE PRESERVE**

Newsletter – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2024

## A Message from the President

The recent rain and damp weather brought forth a vigorous eruption of flora in the landscape around here. Did you notice it?



The first thing I noticed were the numerous clusters of what are often called Indian Pipes (*Monotropa uniflora*). They are also known as Ghost Pipes, an appropriate name because these wildflowers are not your typical green plant. Rather they are completely white and produce no chlorophyll. Like fungi (although they are not fungi), they do not depend on light for nutrients and thrive in humus in the shady woods. Indian Pipes derive their nourishment from tree roots through an intermediate source called mycorrhizal fungi. (Source: U.S. Forest Service)

Another native plant that has been flourishing this summer is Pipsissewa (*Chimaphila maculate*), commonly known as spotted wintergreen. This is a conspicuous plant in both winter and summer because of its white and green mottled leaves. I have observed it along the trails in the Hills as well as in my back yard where it appears to be thriving. Right now, it is very noticeable because of its nodding, waxy, white or pinkish flowers in small clusters at the top of a stem. According to the Lady Bird Wildflower website, Pipsissewa is considered a member of the Ericaceae or heath family, the same genus to which blueberries belong.



The other “plant” that caught my eye was the lichen (*Umbilicaria*) that covers virtually all the old stones around my yard. Lichens have no roots, leaves or flowers; they are made up of algae and fungi growing in a symbiotic relationship. What fascinates me is how this organism that appears crisp and dry most of the time comes to life and instantly changes color with the rain. On the rocks around here the lichen glow with a soft green hue. Robin Wall Kimmerer devotes a whole chapter to lichen in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*. She explains that it is “highly sensitive to air pollution [so] when you find *Umbilicaria*, you know you are breathing pure air.”

Breathing pure air – just another reason to protect habitats like the Oswegatchie Hills. That’s what we strive to do every day, whether installing new bog walks, re-routing trails to mitigate erosion, or dealing with breaches in the beaver dam. The next time you are in the Hills, take a deep breath and notice all that is around you.

*Kris Lambert*

# CT Trails Day



For over 31 years Connecticut Forest and Park Association has sponsored the annual CT Trails Day. The goal is to encourage new and experienced hikers to share their love of the outdoors and "take a hike.". The Friends participate in this event by offering guided hikes of the Hills. We are grateful for our many volunteers who have supported us this year, including the hike leaders below, Greg Decker our organizer, and John Starrett who assisted with registration.



*Bruce Kolowsky and Dave Baer led the short 1.5 mile hike past the pitch pine stand, quartz pit and a fun small crawl through rocky overhang.*



*Paul Parulis shared his extensive knowledge of the Hills and led the perimeter hike on the blue and red loop trails, including a short hike up to Mount Tabor.*



*The first hike of the morning was a birding hike hosted by three members of the Dasinger family, Bruce with sons Andrew and Steve. This lucky group was able to experience the Hills and learn from avid bird enthusiasts about the several various species of birds that call it home.*

## Seen In the Hills Spring 2024



***To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival.***

*~ Wendell Berry (environmental activist)*

## Caren Linden Memorial Scholarship

The East Lyme Scholarship Organization assisted in selecting the recipient of the \$1,000 Caren Linden memorial Scholarship. The recipient is Georgia Anglin. She graduated in the upper 25% of her class and will be majoring in Environmental Studies at Clemson University. Per the Association "Her work ethic is shown in her community service and summer jobs" and they feel she is the most deserving of the scholarship. We wish her the best in her endeavors this fall.

# Run for the Hills 9/14/24



The 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Run for the Hills Trail Run is scheduled for September 14th! Registration is now open at [RunSignUp.com](https://RunSignUp.com). Not a runner? Hikers are also welcome to participate and enjoy the trails as well. Last year participants ranged in age from 5 to 76! What a fun way to support the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. Plan to come and join the fun and bring your friends!



## Hiking in Warm Weather

Some practical tips for staying cool and comfortable

### 1. Time Your Hike:

- Avoid the hottest part of the day (typically noon to 3PM).
- Start early in the morning if possible.

### 2. Choose the Right Trail:

- Stay in the shade: Opt for trails with tree cover.
- Hike near water if possible, pick a route near a lake, river, or ocean for a cool breeze.

### 3. Dress Appropriately:

- Wear light colors: white, tan, or khaki to reflect the sun's rays.
- Loose, breathable, quick drying UPF-Rated clothing works best.

### 4. Stay Hydrated:

- Start hydrating before your hike.
- Carry plenty of water or a sports drink with electrolytes.
- Take breaks and sip water regularly.

### 5. Protect Against Sunburn:

- Apply sunscreen.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.

Remember, to enjoy the view and take it slow.

## Pitch Pine Park Produces!

An experiment to collect seeds from pinecones of pitch pines in the Greg Decker Pitch Pine Park has been a success!



*Netted bags were placed over female pinecones on the now maturing trees in the park.*



*The bags capture the seed when the cones release them (after 2-3 years of developing).*



*The Friend's Stewardship Committee germinated the seeds in potting pods to produce several new trees.*

There will be many more trees to raise as we gather more seeds. Stay tuned!

## Annual Meeting 2024

This year's annual meeting was held on May 4<sup>th</sup> at the East Lyme Library. Paul Whitehouse presented the nominations and oversaw the election of Officers and Directors for two-year terms. They included:

**Officers:** *Kris Lambert, President; Dave Huges, Vice Pres; Jane Templeton, Treasurer and Raechel Killeen, Secretary*  
**Directors:** *Bruce Kolowsky and Michael Sheehan*

After updates from FOHNP board members, we heard from Kathy Cziepel and Chase Lindemann from Save the Sound and Suzanne Thompson, Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition coordinator. Also speaking were EL First Selectman Dan Cunningham, and Representative Holly Cheeseman. Diane Honer, from Beaver and Wildlife Solutions, presented a slideshow and discussed beavers – the challenges they present and solutions available.



We are happy to welcome Dave Baer to the board. He retired from full-time work in 2023 after a 25-year career with Pfizer, starting in the UK before relocating to the US in 2003 with his wife and two sons. Dave has a passion for the outdoors and enjoys time hiking and trail running, as well as participating in triathlons. He has jumped right in and is helping organize the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual 'Run for the Hills' trail run! Dave is busy running a small project management consulting practice, volunteering at the Flanders Fire Dept as a licensed EMT, and also president of the East Lyme Ambulance Fund. We are happy to have Dave join the team and look forward to working with him!

In other board news we are going to miss Rich Gallagher who is stepping down after serving many years on the board. He has been active with CT Trail Days and a hike leader for scouts and private groups, as well as communications director for many years. From 2010 to 2011 he conducted "*The Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve Terrestrial Ecology Survey*". This is a 45-page comprehensive inventory of the general habitat types. It documents the general plant and animal communities/species present over each season and locates and maps over twenty-five wetlands and eight area-specific communities. It is a living and valuable resource available on the website. Rich's expertise, dedication and passion for the Hills will be missed.



## Paul Whitehouse – Director Emeritus!

Paul Whitehouse, a founding member of the FOHNP, has decided to step down from the board after 25 years of dedicated service. Paul has been in the Hills for years... as a child it was his playground, as an adult, he was one of the architects of the trail system and a key activist to save them. Paul's passion and commitment to the Hills is contagious, inspiring others to join the cause. Over the years he has nominated many board members, including our president Kris Lambert 16 years ago!



Kris recognized Paul with deepest thanks from the board. She presented him with a gimbaled compass engraved with: "*Navigating the Way for 25 Years. Protecting Oswegatchie Hills for Future Generations*". As he accepted it, he recalled that his daughter Amy was in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade when the group first met at Marvin Schutt's house, to start a grass root organization to save the Hills from development (she is now 31). Amy has followed in her dad's footsteps, now on the board of directors for 'San Diego Children and Nature'. She learned first-hand to get involved, and that being in nature is critical for healthier, happier, smarter children [and all of us].

The board voted unanimously to make Paul a Director Emeritus, which ensures that his influence will continue. Although he won't have voting rights, his presence at board meetings will be invaluable. The FOHNP board, East Lyme community and the Oswegatchie Hills owe much to his leadership and dedication. We are all grateful for his efforts to keep this special place safe for future generations to enjoy!