



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

Newsletter – Fall 2018

**A Message from the President**

-I am relinquishing this space normally reserved for a message from the president, so members can hear from others on our board. We all share a passion for saving and preserving this precious coastal forest, so I thought it would be good to give others an opportunity to share their thoughts with you. Below is a message from our newsletter editor, Liz Paganetti.



As the year comes to an end, it is a good time to reflect on our accomplishments in 2018 and to recognize and celebrate what an incredible, unique community we have in Southeastern CT, with the Hills in our backyard!

This exceptional community started many years ago, when a group of dedicated neighbors joined town officials, state and federal legislators, the East Lyme Land Trust and The Trust for Public Land to raise money to buy the property which is now our 457-acre Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. The Friends' strong public/private partnership continues its work to achieve its shared vision of protecting this pristine land.

A destination for school groups, scouts, hikers, archeologists, birders, runners and a natural respite for many more, the Hills attract more than 7,000 visitors a year! The preserve has also been recognized along with other shoreline gems in a new book, *Treasures of Southeastern Connecticut*, written by Steve Fagin of The Day.



2018 was a busy year! With support from the town of East Lyme and many generous local businesses and volunteers, we were able to accomplish so much! For example, the East Lyme Parks and Recreation Department assisted with clearing space for the future pitch pine nursery; dedicated volunteers provided ongoing stewardship to re-route and improve the trails; and local landscape designer, Drew Kenny, owner of Outdoor Lifestyles CT, donated design and installation services for the entrance improvement project. Most of all we are grateful for the many generous donations YOU gave that made the purchase of the beautiful Clark Pond bridge possible. This project will transform the entrance forever. YOU, our community, are fundamental to our success. We could not do any of this without your support.

I have witnessed the power of this unique community and public/private partnership and I thank you. We hope you take pride in supporting an organization that is making an important, positive impact locally as well as regionally, and will give as generously as you can when you renew your membership.

Liz Paganetti

## Winter

- Groton Open Space Association (GOSA), Avalonia Land Trust and STR-STH joined us for a tour of the Hills' Pitch Pine stands.
- Trail changes were implemented to include an extension of the Blue/White trail to loop-back to the Red Trail, all of which will be blazed red in the spring map update.
- EL Cub Scout Den #7 from pack 23, installed 5 blue bird nesting boxes they built. Their work marks the beginning of a CT DEEP conservation project for a "Blue Bird Trail" in the Hills.



*East Lyme scouts starting the Blue Bird Trail*

## Spring

- CT Agriculture Experiment Station installed 6 southern pine beetle (SPB) traps in our stand of pitch pines. The Hills were one of 4 sites in CT chosen to help determine if the beetles survive CT winters or if new ones are coming yearly.
- Tara Borden and Mike Sheehan were elected new board members at the annual meeting in May.
- CT Trails Day hikes were hosted by FOHNP
- A new Purple Martin House was installed at the entrance of the preserve



*Dave Hughes helps install new Purple Martin House*

## Summer

- Pitch Pine Conservation project started with EL Parks & Rec mowing the nursery area and volunteers covering the space with clear plastic to kill mugwort currently populating the area.
- Members enjoyed a 'Birding Basics' hike hosted by the CT Audubon Society.
- Laurie Gorham from the CT Valley Mycological Association and a FOHNP member along with naturalist Al Burchstead, led a hike to explore the abundance of unique mushrooms.



*Laurie Gorham examines an interesting mushroom*

## Fall

- The Hills were a destination in the "Bike, Hike & BBQ" event to support East Lyme historic places and open spaces.
- Volunteers are removing construction debris deposited years ago in a steep valley in the preserve near the Sleepy Hollow development.
- Realignment of the Green Trail is currently underway to provide enhanced views and avoid walking under the power lines along Oswegatchie Hills Rd. This will also be included in the map update this coming spring
- A Rain Garden, with 25 filtering plants, was installed as an extension of the Riparian Buffer Project at the north end of Clark Pond. The garden is critical to filtering stormwater runoff and protecting the pond and Niantic River.



## The Bridge Is Coming!!



*Franz Edson and Greg Decker take a quick break after getting the first half of the new bridge beams down to the site (notice the old bridge on the right).*

As you can see, the Clark Pond Bridge has been delivered; installation is underway with the help and guidance of Drew Kenny of Outdoor Lifestyles in East Lyme. This entire improvement should be completed by spring when we will host a grand opening event! The improved entrance will last for generations.

## Niantic Watershed Day

The Hills served as an outdoor classroom on Niantic Watershed Day in September, when students from East Lyme, Montville and Waterford High School science classes toured water retention and filtration sites in East Lyme and Waterford including the rain garden and riparian buffer. The education program, organized by Save The River-Save The Hills, was made possible by an environmental grant from Community Foundation of Eastern CT. Greg Decker shows students the location for the new Clark Pond Dam bridge in photo below:



FOHNP, PO Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357

## Discovery in The Hills!

The ELHS Archeological Club found a very interesting snake tongue buckle in the Hills this fall! Buckles were used for shoes, belts, suspension straps, stocks, spurs, weapon slings etc. The club is consulting with the Office of State Archaeology from UCONN for help in determining the age and possible function. For updates and additional photos of the students and their discoveries check out [www.oswhills.org](http://www.oswhills.org)



*ELHS Archeological Club dig*

## Legal Update

As you are aware, this fall we received word from the Appellate Court that the decision of Judge Cohn will stand regarding the Sewer Capacity. Judge Cohn decided that adequate sewer capacity must be provided so as not to completely foreclose the project. The CT Supreme Court has recently denied our final appeal, so the East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission is planning to make a capacity allocation decision in December.

Please be aware that the court stopped short of stating that the developer should receive all of the capacity requested. In addition, once the developer is allocated sewer capacity, he then must apply for zoning and wetlands permits, this is where the real environmental issues will be addressed. Furthermore, our goal has always been to purchase the entire property, and we will continue to pursue acquisition.

Visit our website at: [www.oswhills.org](http://www.oswhills.org)

and our Facebook page at  
[www.facebook.com/fohnp](https://www.facebook.com/fohnp)

[www.oswhills.org](http://www.oswhills.org)

**The Friends of The Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve (FOHNP)** is a non-profit volunteer organization, funded by private contributions, whose mission is to create, manage and improve The Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. We are a 501.c.3 corporation and your donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law and are greatly appreciated. Management of the preserve is performed via conservation easements and a management agreement with the Town of East Lyme and the East Lyme Land Trust.

**FOHNP Mission:** To acquire the undeveloped land within Oswegatchie Hills and to maintain a public nature preserve for future generations to enjoy.

Our Current Priorities:

1. Effectively manage the Nature Preserve
2. Prepare a plan and form a team to raise the necessary funds as opportunities arise
3. Maintain public awareness and support of the Nature Preserve
4. Develop and promote educational programs
5. Lead the Legal Defense effort to prevent inappropriate development in the Hills.



**SMILE if you love the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve!**

If you shop at Amazon, there's a way to support the 'Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve' through your purchase! Amazon.com will donate 0.5% of the price if you use Amazon Smile. Your purchases this holiday season and all year long could be helping the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve!

AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know – same products, same prices, same service!

**To use it - just start your shopping at 'www.smile.amazon.com'.**

**You can select or change your charity under "Your Account".**

If you've already selected FOHNP as your charity of choice through Amazon.com, Thank You!



As the end of year approaches, please consider a gift to the Friends. Your annual support helps to fund ongoing projects as well as operational expenses such as legal fees. Please renew your membership today. If you have already made a gift, thank you.

Enclosed is my gift in the amount of:

\$500     \$250     \$100     \$50     \$25    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Please make checks payable to FOHNP, Inc. and Mail to: Friends of the Oswegatchie Nature Preserve, ATTN: Membership Chair, P.O. Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357 or visit [www.oswhills.org](http://www.oswhills.org) to donate online  
Thank You