



Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

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Newsletter—Spring 2014

FOHNP thanks Dominion for printing this newsletter

A Message from Kris

I have just returned from an amazing morning in the Hills – a hike with 90 middle school students. Accompanying this energetic, enthusiastic group was Rob Klee, Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection; Ed Jutila, our state representative; Paul Formica, First Selectman of East Lyme; teachers; and Board members from the Friends. In addition, Attorney General George Jepsen was on hand to greet the students as they arrived.

Have you ever hiked with 90 students? Believe me, it is an adventure, one I highly recommend if you ever have an opportunity. Besides the boundless energy, there is the endless stream of questions. Are there wild animals in the woods? (yes, many) Will we see any snakes? (perhaps) Is that poison ivy? (yes, so you may not want to stand in it) What is that noise? (a bullfrog).

It was quite an adventure, but more importantly this hike made me think even more about how lucky we are to have such a resource in our backyard – and how critical it is to continue the efforts to preserve this land and save it from development. Without it there would be no home for the wild animals. There would be no outdoor “laboratory” for kids to explore.

Our responsibility as members of the Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve is to ensure that this precious resource, this natural lab, is there, not only for the students who hiked today, but also for future generations of students. It is our job to steward what land we already have

acquired and to continue our efforts to acquire additional acreage so it, too, is protected in perpetuity. I hope we can count on all of you to help us in this effort.

Kris Lambert

President

P.S. Thanks to all of you who gave so generously to help us acquire the Bayreuther property. To date we have received nearly \$20,000 toward our goal of \$25,000. We are so grateful for this support. If you have not yet made a gift, please consider making one now. Checks, made payable to FOHNP and noted that they are for the Bayreuther purchase, may be sent to: Membership Chair, FOHNP, P. O. Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357

Connecticut DEEP Commissioner Visits OHNP



DEEP Commissioner Rob Klee(r), fields questions from East Lyme Middle School students during his visit to the preserve.

Commissioner Rob Klee of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) hosted a hike through the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve on Monday, June 9. The hike, a part of the DEEP's "No Child Left Inside" initiative, took 90 students from East Lyme Middle School on a loop through the 420-acre Preserve. Commissioner Klee discussed the importance of preserving land, and the many facets of his job that touch every citizen of Connecticut.



Commissioner Klee, the first Commissioner to Tweet, takes a "Selfie" with the ELMS students.

"Local partners, such as the Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve, play a key role in preserving important and environmentally sensitive lands in our state," said Commissioner Klee. "We appreciate their efforts – and I loved putting on my hiking boots and seeing this nature preserve first hand. I was very impressed with the students, and they confirmed to me that Connecticut's environment will be in good hands when we pass the baton on to their generation."



On behalf of the school, 8th Grader Genavieve Ogren presented a Certificate of Appreciation (inset) to Commissioner Klee.

The Commissioner was accompanied by State Attorney General George Jepsen, who has strong ties to the area; State Representative Ed Jutila; and East Lyme First Selectman Paul Formica.

Thank you to TriTown foods for donating 120 apples for the Middle School hike with Commissioner Klee.



Attorney General Jepsen discussed his ties to the area with the students.

"The Oswegatchie Hills Preserve is a Connecticut treasure," said Attorney General Jepsen. "Connecticut has undertaken significant efforts to preserve open space for future generations, and I'm proud to support those efforts and the efforts to expand Oswegatchie Hills. Raising environmental awareness and teaching our children the value of places like the nature preserve are an important part of these efforts as well."



First Selectman Formica discussed how the Preserve was formed, what an asset it is for the Town, and stressed that one day it will be up to the students to carry on the job of preserving land.



Representative Jutila talked about the process of getting funding from the State for land preservation, and reiterated the intrinsic value of the Hills.

East Lyme is Active on June 7, Connecticut Trails Day!

East Lyme Parks & Rec, FOHNP, and the East Lyme & Niantic Land Conservation Trust all provided hiking opportunities on June 7.



Parks & Rec and the Friends hosted about two dozen hikers in the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. Greg Decker and Kris Lambert escorted one group up the east side Blue Trail; Susan Gonzalez led a “Kids Hike” on the Green Trail; and Rich Gallagher led a group on the full loop around the preserve. Based on the feedback, everyone had a great time!

Trails Day for the East Lyme & Niantic Land Conservation Trust was held at the Bobrow Property on Post Rd. across from the Rustic Cafe. Linda Vegliante led 24 hikers on a bird walk and Al Burchsted led them on a wildflower walk.



Al discussed the difference between huckleberry and low bush blueberry, and showed a piece of green wood that fluoresces at night, but only in the woods.

Linda thrilled everyone by calling in a Rose Breasted Grosbeak. The participants were able to explore the woods, see and hear a Veery sing, and ended up at the back of Goodwin Pond in a beautiful marsh watching a Great Blue Heron and a Common Yellowthroat.

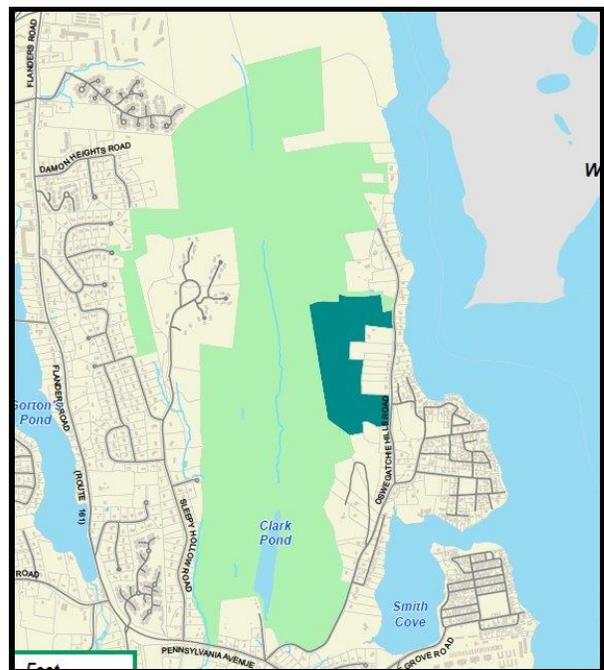
FOHNP Fundraiser a Rousing Success

The FOHNP fundraiser, held at the American Legion Hall in Niantic on January 29, was a huge success. More than 100 guests enjoyed a night of great music by the Boathouse Blues and The Hoolios! And, in spite of the weather, we had a great crowd - and a very generous one. By the end of the evening, we had taken in over \$5000 in gifts and pledges. Many thanks to everyone for making the evening such a success.



The Preserve is Growing!

The Oswegatchie Hills is about to expand by about ten percent! FOHNP and the Town of East Lyme are putting the finishing touches on the purchase of the 37-acre Bayreuther property. This property is shown in the map below: The present Preserve is shown in light green, the new acquisition in teal green.



Rock Structure Examined by ELHS Archaeology Class

Editor's Note: the following was written by Mr. Wil Reed & the Students of the Spring Anthropology class 2014 at East Lyme High School. They excavated an interesting rock structure in the Hills this Spring.

We would first like to thank the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve for letting us dig in the Preserve. It was a major experience digging at the Quartz mine in hopes of finding arrowheads. The trails and walk were beautiful.

The students had many theories about the origins of the mine. It was possible Native Americans had dug into the ground to use the quartz to make gravestones. Quartz was used to mark a symbolic resting place for the souls of their fallen warriors.

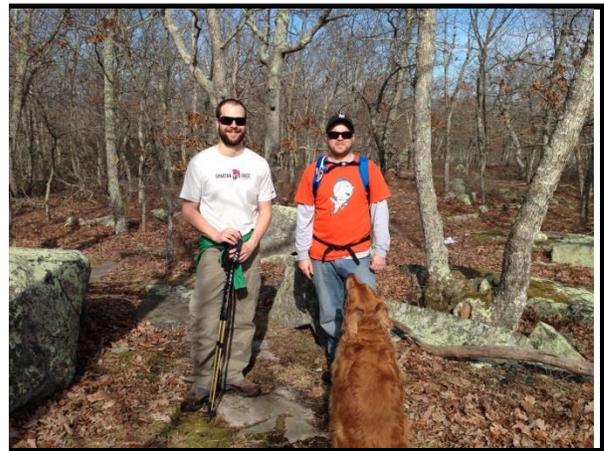
It also could have been used to make tools, spears, arrowheads etc. Another possible theory is that someone came across the quartz mine and had started to dig their way down to see if they could find and take anything valuable (the quartz). They then took what they needed and instead of moving the rocks and boulders back they had just left it.

We used trowels and shovels to dig through the dirt. We then sifted the dirt and picked out what we found. On the last day we found a very sharp pointed quartz in the shape of a possible arrowhead, but according to Mr. Reed it had not been worked down enough to be an arrowhead. We spent three days at the Quartz mine.

We the class, do believe that if we had more time to dig we could have come up with more possible arrowheads. Overall it was a great time being outdoors and finding history in our home town.



Carolyn Christmann and husband Ian and their two boys Sawyer and Roan (left) from New Haven, joined Carolyn's brother, Brian and wife Nicole, along with their three boys, Naylan, Finn and Teo (right) from Stonington, for their first hike through the Preserve. "We all enjoyed our hike," said Brian. "We look forward to coming back again."



Ryan Mulligan and Ryan Whitley like to take Brodey with them when they geocache in The Hills

Seen Around the Preserve



The Pequot Hiking Club enjoyed a December 28 hike at the Preserve

Want to bird for the Hills?

The Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve are looking for volunteers to help establish the Hills as an Important Bird Area in Connecticut (IBA). The IBA Program is a global initiative to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity.

You don't need to be an expert!

As you walk the trails take note of any birds you see, identify them as well as you can and report your sightings. Observations can be made online through ebird.org using the "Oswegatchie Hills" location or you can drop off your information at Wild Birds Unlimited in Niantic (190 Flanders Road) and they will submit your data for you.