

field, forest & fen



Connecting People with the Land



At Home

Two Women Conserve Bedbug Hill

Thanks to the foresight and action of two remarkable women who probably never met, two working farms encompassing 545 acres along Bedbug Hill in Oakville are now conserved.

The story begins with Anna Gabrosek, who owned this tract of land extending across Bedbug Hill. Assembled by her family starting in 1914, the tract includes two farms—the Home Farm at the base of the hill, and the Hecox Farm at its crest—connected by an expansive forest. Anna lived on the Home Farm.

Several months ago, Otsego Land Trust learned that Anna gifted to us in her living trust a conservation easement on her beloved Home Farm—in itself a very generous gift.

As we began to work with the trustees of her trust, Les Sittler and Ed Leslie, we learned about Anna's passion for the land. Les shared, "Anna cared deeply about the land. Conserving her remaining Bedbug Hill holdings would please her greatly."

That's where the generosity of another noteworthy woman comes in. Hannah Lee Stokes, a seasonal resident of Cooperstown, generously supported the conservation efforts of Otsego Land Trust, and her estate enabled us to establish a fund for purchas-

continued on page 7

CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT

Young Family Moves to Conserve Van Hornesville Water Supply

John Young and his two daughters, Connie and Rebecca, recently partnered with Otsego Land Trust to conserve 147 acres bordering Otsquago Creek in the first phase of a conservation project designed to protect the Van Hornesville water supply. Situated

along the eastern gateway to Van Hornesville in southern Herkimer County, the Young property, known as Kelly Springs, surrounds several freshwater springs that flow into Otsquago Creek, some of which serve as the water supply for Van Hornesville.

In the project's second phase, the Youngs plan to conserve another 40-acre parcel that encircles a freshwater spring selected by Van Hornesville as

continued on page 3

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Field Notes
- 3 Young Family (continued)
Green Fire!
- 4 On the Farm, In the Garden
- 5 Outings and Explorations
- 6 Board and Staff News
Lend a Hand...
- 7 Bedbug Hill (continued)
- 8 Upcoming Events
Wild Leeks



Upland Sandpiper



Otsego Land Trust protects the distinctive rural character of the Otsego County area by securing lands and waters of significant scenic, historic, and ecological value, including forests and farmlands.

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Otsego Land Trust is partially funded by the New York Conservation Partnership Program administered by the Land Trust Alliance Northeast Program with support from the State of New York. A copy of Otsego Land Trust's annual financial report may be obtained upon request from our office or from the New York State Attorney General's Charities Bureau, ATTN: FOIL Officer, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.



On Blueberry Hill

Maima Bravin

FIELD NOTES

What Really Matters

The Otsego Region is a place where families and neighbors live, work and share simple pleasures. It's a place to savor locally grown fruits and vegetables and to drink cold, clean well water. It's place to paddle, fish and explore. It's a place for kids to chase fire-flies on summer nights. Our region is a place to enjoy what really matters.

You are helping us conserve more of the real places where it all happens. In fact, together we have conserved four large farms since this past fall—a working dairy overlooking Otsego Lake, two farms on Bedbug Hill, and one along Otsquago Gorge in Van Hornesville!

Conserving these farms means that one of our elders was able to successfully pass along two farms to the next generation of farmers. Two brothers have the satisfaction of fulfilling their father's—and their own—aspirations for their all-in-the-family operation. Two sisters discovered an unexpected peace of mind knowing a place they treasure is conserved, forever.

Thanks to a very generous friend, we

secured a fourth site along Oaks Creek for canoeing, kayaking, birding, and fishing. For the first time, we are sponsoring research with the Biological Field Station, where students will be looking for fish, freshwater mussels and macro-invertebrates along Oaks Creek. This work will shape our conservation efforts along this waterway, not to mention the lives of the students involved.

I can't thank you enough for getting involved and doing something for the community that really matters. ■

Peter Hujik
Executive Director

BREAKING NEWS

Ringwood Farm Conserved!

As this newsletter goes to press, Ringwood Farm, a 334-acre working dairy farm with an expansive sugar bush overlooking Otsego Lake has been conserved. Read more about the Ringwood Farm story in the next issue. ■



Young Family Moves continued from page 1
part of an initiative to move and upgrade the community's water supply. "We are very excited to work with Van Hornesville in updating the local water supply and to partner with Otsego Land Trust in conserving the land that means so much to me and my family," remarked Connie Young.



At Peace

The Young Family Story

The Young family goes back for more than ten generations in New York State. They first settled north of the Mohawk River in 1710 and later migrating to the area now known as Van Hornesville in 1760. It wasn't until the late 1800's that the first member of the family left the farm. His name was Owen D. Young, the famous industrialist.

Owen's successful business practices brought him all over the world, but he remained connected to his home and community, returning to Van Hornesville every year to vote in the local elections. Van Hornesville's strong sense of place inspired Owen to invest his wealth back into the community. This legacy of commitment to the community and land has clearly been passed down to John and his daughters Connie and Rebecca, two of the 51 great grandchildren of Owen D. Young.

A Peace Beyond Understanding

As a child, Connie spent many summers exploring her family property

and trail running through the nearby Otsquago Gorge, a route established by the Mohawk tribe. Connie, an avid hunter, was personally motivated to conserve the extensive forest and the wildlife habitat that it provides along Otsquago Gorge.

"Who knows what will change in the

future," she said after explaining the financial ups and downs of landowners that are forced to sell their properties. "Knowing that what I and my family value about our property will be conserved in the future brought an unanticipated sense of comfort. No longer do we have to worry about unwanted residential, commercial or industrial development of our beloved property when we are gone." ■

Green Fire!

Otsego Land Trust was delighted to share the first full length documentary about Aldo Leopold to two audiences this March. Many people reunited with Leopold's message of cultivating a land ethic, while others experienced the inspiration and wisdom of his message for the first time. We could not have shown this movie without the support of the two hosting organizations:

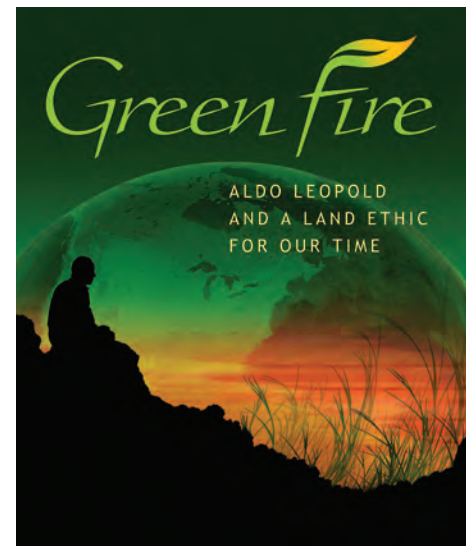
SUNY Oneonta: President of the SUNY Oneonta Environmental Activism Club, Alex Lyakhov was happy to

help put together the screening on campus. Alex stated, "The legacy of Aldo Leopold clearly resonates with conservationists today. Leopold understood what it took to be a steward of the land, and it is heartwarming to see that others see this wisdom as well."

"The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land"

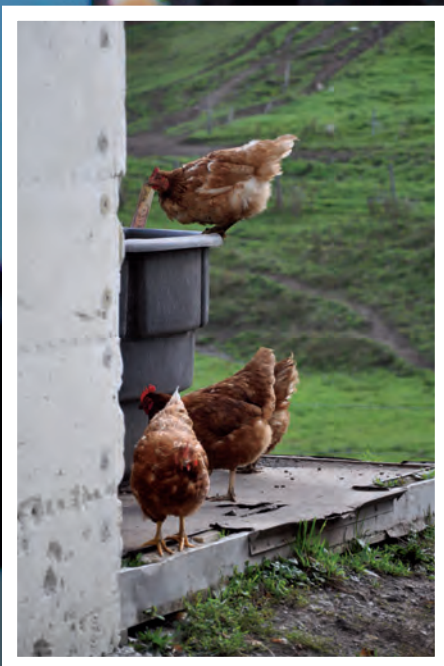
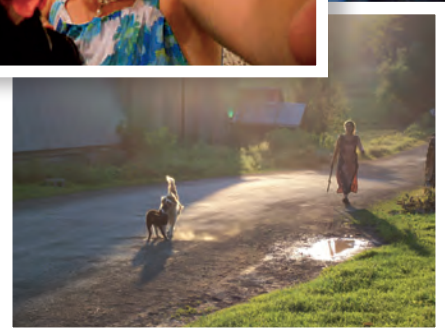
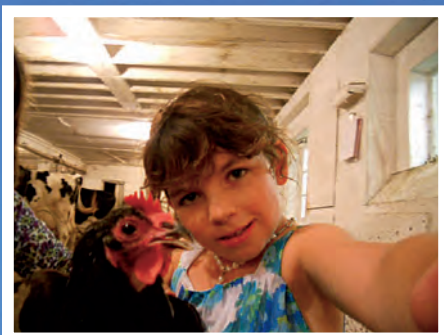
— ALDO LEOPOLD

Fenimore Art Museum: The New York State Historical Association sponsored a screening in the Fenimore Art Museum auditorium. Garet Livermore, Vice President of Education at NYSHA, explained why he got involved, saying "To maintain and expand upon the region's rich conservation legacy it's vital that individuals, families and organizations work together to sustain a land ethic." ■



"On the Farm, In the Garden"

Photographs of farms and gardens were captured throughout the Otsego Region, celebrating the importance of agriculture in our lives. Here are a few of the submissions...



Check out more of these great photographs, at the "On the Farm, In the Garden" community photography exhibit, at the Smithy Center for the Arts, in Cooperstown through June 24.

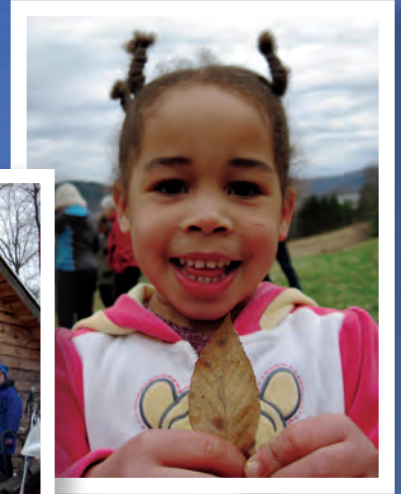
2012 Photography Contest Theme... "Water, Water Everywhere"

Explore the lakes, streams, wetlands and rivers this year to capture images of the Otsego Region's bountiful water resources. Contest is open to all residence of Otsego County and neighboring towns. Prizes are sponsored by Otsego Lake Association, an educational organization that works with municipalities around Otsego Lake to protect this natural treasure. Submission guidelines and forms and more information can be found at www.otsegoLandtrust.org. ■

Top left: "Self Picture of Myself and a Chicken," Erin Rock. Left center: "Sonia Sola, Arthur and Daisy, Nectar Hills Farm, Late August, 7 p.m.," Robin Supak. Left bottom: "Mountain View Chicken," Cynthia Falk. Top center: "Wheat in Field," Eden Griger. Background: "Curious Cows," Leah McDonalds

M. Foster

Outings and Explorations



M. Foster



Despite the rainy weather this December, many dedicated hikers showed up for the Winter Solstice night hike at Brookwood Point. Not a star could be found, but many laughs and warm conversations were shared around the Garden House fire.

On one of the few snowy Saturdays this winter, twenty nature enthusiasts bundled up for a Winter Ecology Hike on Sibley Gulf Road in Cooperstown. Board member and biologist, Joe Homburger and Outreach Coordinator, Marcie Foster, led hikers to the third highest point in Otsego County.

While the weather did not cooperate this winter for the Hike on the Ice across Otsego Lake, many people enjoyed the hike near the ice at Brookwood Point. Historian Jessie Ravage enlightened hikers about the fascinating history of ice harvesting in the region.

Landowners from across Otsego County attended the Conservation Course at the Milford Historical Association to learn about ways to protect their property with a conservation easement.

Jim, Steve and Luke Bartlett gave a walking tour of their third generation sugar bush at Ringwood Farm this spring. Ascending to the top of the ridge that overlooks Otsego Lake, the Bartlett's explained their maple sugar operation and gave everyone a sweet taste of spring. ■



Nicholas Laskowski

June 10: Shiitake Mushroom Cultivation Workshop

Check out our website for the up to date schedule of upcoming summer outings...

www.otsegoandtrust.org



M. Foster



Harvesting Leeks

BOARD AND STAFF NEWS
Spring Migrations

We are pleased to welcome **Martha Frey** as the newest Otsego Land Trust board member to fill a position vacated by **Francis Nolan**, who left the country to serve as an emergency room physician in Australia. Martha is a native of Madison County, New York. Raised on the family farm, her ancestors homesteaded the area in the 1790s. Martha’s professional work has focused on historic preservation planning, cultural resource management, and redeveloping historic properties. ■

“I was raised on a farm, so I feel a strong connection to rural landscapes. The interplay between land and the built environment and how places evolve over time has always interested me”

— **MARTHA FREY**

Beyond Random Acts of Conservation

Peter Hujik was invited to discuss Otsego Land Trust’s collaborative conservation efforts to the Maryland Land Conservation Conference, a statewide conference geared toward the land trust community in Maryland and throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. He outlined the role Otsego Land Trust is playing in the several regional conservation efforts, including:

- Identifying critical lands and waters for conservation throughout the Upper Susquehanna Basin and Southern Tier in partnership with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other land trusts;
- Working with landowners to conserve miles of frontage along the waterways in our region, the headwaters of the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay; and
- Securing public access areas along Oaks Creek and the Susquehanna River with local supporters. ■



M. Foster

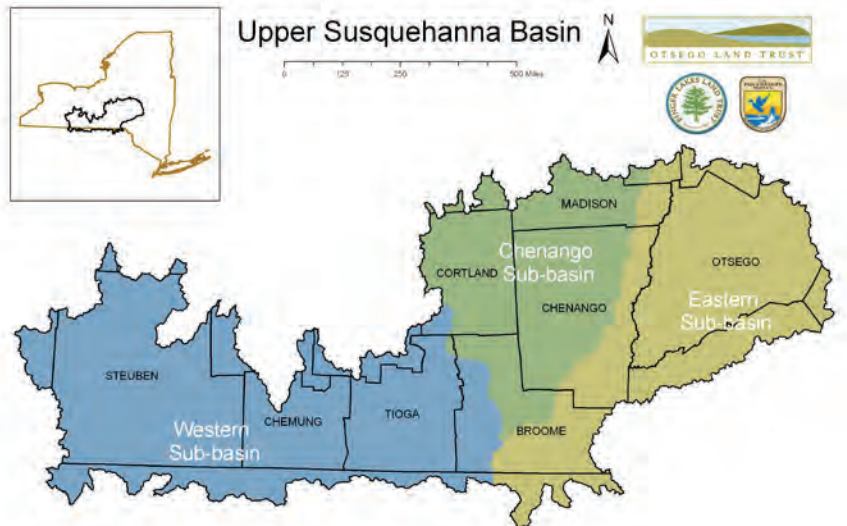
Lend a hand . . . or a shovel!

We are excited to report that since November 2011, 35 volunteers have accumulated over 130 hours of work for Otsego Land Trust. Whether working at Brookwood Garden or folding envelopes in the office, we sincerely thank all who have helped out.

Let’s keep up the momentum . . .

We have many new projects in the works and we need your help and expertise. Upcoming volunteer opportunities include:

- Trail building, maintenance and stewardship of public conservation areas;
- Photographing hikes and events;
- Co-leading hikes or workshops;
- General help preparing for large events;
- Helping in the office, filing, copying and mailings;
- And much more—share your ideas and interests with us! ■





Bedbug Hill

Bedbug Hill continued from page 1

ing and conserving land. Bedbug Hill is where the visions of these two remarkable women converged into a common vision of conserving an entire landscape.

Making Conservation Happen

Hannah Lee Stoke's generosity and foresight enabled Otsego Land Trust to enter into a purchase agreement with the Gabrosek trust. Over the course of several months, we completed a series of complex transactions, buying the Hecox Farm and adjacent forest and selling the farm with a conservation easement in place, for a heritage-breed livestock operation. Then we completed the gifted conservation easement on the Home Farm.

These conservation transactions along Bedbug Hill just happened to occur next to a previously protected farm located along Oaks Creek. Together, these conserved lands extend from Oaks Creek to the top of Bedbug Hill.

Bedbug Hill is now protected in a manner that truly ensures that farming and forestry may be sustained over time because of the inspiring commitment to land conservation of these two visionary women.

Bedbug Hill is a great example of the power of community-based conservation. We are grateful to Les and Ed and the vital role they played in this pioneering project.

The Story Behind the Story

The Gabrosek family was unknown to many around town, living a simple life in Oaksville and slowly acquiring vast tracks of land all over Otsego County. Friends, neighbors and trustees of the Gabrosek holdings enabled us to share with you the story of the Gabrosek family and their love of the land.

In 1914, Louise and Jacob Gabrosek settled in Oaksville after living in several places throughout the United States. The Gabroseks bought what they affectionately called the Home Farm at the bottom of Bedbug Hill Road. There, Louise and Jacob raised their nine children and worked as dairy farmers.

Cash, Cows & Ducks

Many of the children remained in the area and gradually grew their land holdings, which included purchasing the neighboring Hecox Farm at the top of Bedbug Hill in the 1950s and another farm along Hoke Road in the 1970s. Ed Leslie, Gabrosek neighbor,

shared "Martin Gabrosek bought the farm with cash, cows and ducks."

Anna, who was born in 1919, lived her entire life on the Home Farm. She shared stories with neighbors about the treeless landscape and lack of wildlife in her childhood. Under Anna's stewardship, the nearly 100-year old Home Farm found a balance between farming and the needs of wildlife.

Most of the family's properties were eventually willed to Anna Gabrosek, the last surviving sibling. Anna was the one who took the initiative to map out the future for these wonderful family farms. Anna believed deeply in protecting the Home Farm.

In her 90s, Anna Gabrosek made the effort to learn about conservation easements as a means to ensure that what she valued would remain conserved forever. We did not learn about Anna's conservation legacy until after her death on January 2, 2011. Anna's bold move to conserve her family lands is inspiring. ■

Conservation Land for Sale

Approximately 147 acres of forested land on Bedbug Hill are available for sale to interested conservation-minded buyers. Land will be sold with a conservation easement in place and proceeds will go toward protecting additional properties. For further information, contact Peter Hujik at (607) 547-2366.



Ed Leslie and Les Sittler at Anna's Place



Post Office Box 173
Cooperstown, New York 13326

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|------------|--|
| June 5 | Twin Pines Farm Hike |
| June 10 | Shiitake Mushroom Cultivation Workshop |
| June 13-17 | Susquehanna Sojourn |
| July 4 | Springfield Parade |



Wild Leek



Wild Leeks

THE NATURE OF CONSERVATION

Wild Leeks

For many people, the first sign of spring may be seeing robins pick worms. For others, it's the strong onion aroma and green leaves on the forest floor.

Wild leeks, *Allium tricoccum*, also known commonly as ramps and wild onions, are a native species that thrives throughout eastern and central North America from Canada to Georgia. Leeks can be found in rich hardwood forests and commonly form large patches. Leeks have green leaves, which are smooth and broad, and white bulbs, both of which are edible.

Used commonly in cooking, leeks are a popular addition to potato soup and pesto. This delicious spring treat has inspired festivals throughout the country, dedicated to the celebration of the wild leek.

Over-harvested in some areas, however, many states have listed the leek as a species of special concern. Fortunately, wild leeks are not listed in New York. With a little care, we can keep these tasty harbingers of spring common and abundant! ■