

# *field, forest & fen*



Connecting People with the Healthy Lands and Clean Waters that Sustain Us



## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hello and Happy Fall to everyone! I hope this issue of *Field Forest & Fen* finds you and your family in good health.

We are glad so many of you had the opportunity to get out and enjoy our public lands this summer. Brookwood Point and Gardens, in particular, experienced a large increase in visitation. While we loved seeing the increase in visitors, it did put a heavier strain on staff time and budgets.

One way you can help is to purchase a Brookwood Solstice 2021 Calendar! Ordering information is found on the back of this newsletter. We thank our friend Abby Rodd for her stunning photography of Brookwood through changes in shadows and light as Brookwood experienced Summer Solstice.

May Leinhart, OLT Land Steward, contributed a piece to this issue called Land Protection, Now or Never: A Newcomer's Perspective that resonates with the heart of our work and the threats, some very insidious, we will face here in our region if land planning and land

protection are not prioritized in our communities. I encourage you to read her article and think about your favorite regional landscapes that may be threatened. Check it out!

I want to thank Julia Hickey, our new Communications and Development Manager, for her flexibility in beginning her position under the most unusual of circumstances. After all, how many people can say that they began a new job on the same day as the start of the 100% shut down of business due to a world-wide pandemic? Julia replaced Becky Talbot, who resigned for a career opportunity with the county. Her sense of humor and fresh outlook, particularly

during those very dark shut down days, has been a breath of fresh air.

Be well and stay safe.



Patricia Szarpa  
Executive Director



## Pleased to meet you...



### Introducing Communications & Development Manager

#### Julia Hickey

Julia Hickey grew up in Cooperstown, where she spent her childhood mostly barefoot, running wild through corn fields and woodlands, and sneaking

into other people's fields to pet their horses. She graduated from SUNY New Paltz in 2012 with a degree in English and a concentration in Creative Writing. She is a published poet; her most recent work can be found in issue 38 of *New American Writing* and in the forthcoming issue of *Hayden's Ferry Review*.

Julia began working in nonprofit development in 2014, and since then has worked for a variety of organizations making positive change through the arts, education, and social justice.

After returning to Otsego County, Julia's love for the land of this region—and a sense of urgency to protect the environment from the rapidly accelerating threat of climate change—inspired her to join OLT.

Julia believes environmental conservation is deeply linked to humanity's physical and spiritual well-being. In her spare time, Julia writes poetry, rides horses, and goes for hikes with her dog, Milo.

### OLT's new Development Intern

#### Dillon Eggleston



Dillon Eggleston is a second-year history student at the Cooperstown Graduate Program focusing on museum administration, development, and fundraising. Before coming to Cooperstown, Dillon earned his bachelor's in history from Binghamton University and worked as a museum and planetarium educator.

Dillon is helping to do the important work of finding the funds that make OLT's mission fulfillment possible. In his free time, he likes playing pinball and video games with his friends.

## LATEST LAND MANAGEMENT PROJECT UNDERWAY

# Cherry Valley Creek/Susquehanna Confluence Future Public Access Conservation Site

Located just outside the Village of Milford in the Towns of Milford and Middlefield, this 66-acre property features important habitats, significant stream frontage, scenic vistas, and wonderful potential for education and recreation.

Recognizing the extreme importance of this property for its ecological and water quality conservation values, Otsego Land Trust secured its permanent protection in 2018 with funding from The Nature Conservancy.

At the confluence of Cherry Valley Creek and the Susquehanna River, this property has an amazing 1.4 miles of stream frontage. This means that 1.4 miles of streambank and FEMA floodplain will be forever protected, reducing sedimentation and erosion from large storm events, and providing habitat for countless species. The property also contains Federally Designated Wetlands.

### Rich in Life and Diversity

- SUNY Oneonta botany professors identified over 191 plant species on the property, which included a cluster of butternut trees along Cherry Valley Creek. "Butternuts are considered "at risk" by most ecologists," added Marcie Foster, Stewardship Director, "since the majority of these trees are susceptible to butternut canker disease.
- An aquatic survey found at least 42 genera of aquatic insects, with the most diversity of species at one location along Cherry Valley Creek. Of particular interest was the presence of a macromiidae dragonfly. It is the first time the SUNY Oneonta Biology Dept. has collected this family of dragonflies in our region.
- In addition to the above, a pearly mussel inventory and an invertebrate survey are currently being completed.
- A two-day bird survey identified 55 bird species including barred owls, American woodcock, 3 types of vireos, cedar waxwings, American kestrels and bald eagles.



COURTESY OF BYWAYS.ORG, COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

*"OLT is excited to make this amazing parcel a community conservation area for fishing, hiking, kayaking, birding and snowshoeing. It is particularly relevant given that the pandemic has amplified demand for accessible outdoor places for public recreation and enjoyment."*

**- PATRICIA SZARPA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

## So What Happens Next?

In recognition of this property's strategic importance as a community asset for both the promotion of outdoor recreation and habitat protection, Otsego Land Trust is seeking funding to help open this property for public access in the next 2-3 years.

Funding will support public access infrastructure including parking area, trails, information kiosk, signage and canoe & kayak access.

### You Can Help Make this Happen

Donations to OLT's Blueway Land Management Fund will help to make this future public access conservation area a reality! You can use the envelope in this newsletter to make your donation today!

**Interested in Volunteering Your Time and Talents?**  
Contact [marcie@otsegoLandTrust.org](mailto:marcie@otsegoLandTrust.org)

## UNLOCKING BROOKWOOD'S SECRET GARDEN

# Garden Master Plan Unveiled

There is something for everyone at Brookwood Point & Gardens. Birders find the property teeming with warblers in the spring, and paddlers launch their boats into Otsego lake's waters from one of its most breathtaking shores. Brookwood has seen decades of quiet contemplations, celebrations, community events and more.

Centered in all the different reasons to visit Brookwood is a secret treasure, enchanting visitors and peacefully waiting for someone to unlock its history—an approximately 100-year-old Italianate garden.

*"The bones of the garden—the walkways, beds, stairs, and features—are remarkably intact and have changed minimally since they were built in 1915. Brookwood Gardens is one of the last remaining gardens from this time period and the only one in the area that is open to the public."*

— PATRICIA SZARPA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Marcie Foster, Stewardship Director worked directly with garden professionals and enthusiasts to gather critical garden design input. Critical input was gathered from staff, board and volunteer garden enthusiasts. Landscape architect, Anne Wilfer, then completed a conceptual Master Plan based on collaborative input and efforts.

The Master Plan blends authenticity and sustainability, including both original and native plants in its plans for planting. Its design elements are focused on restoring the aspects of enclosure that gave Brookwood its original "Secret Garden" feel.

Walking through the arched garden door at Brookwood and being surrounded by the gardens is already a magical experience. The Brookwood Garden Master Plan capital campaign will be announced soon!

Main entrance to Brookwood Gardens, restored



## Highlights of the Garden Master Plan:

- Restoring pathways in the garden and making them more accessible for wheelchair users
- Constructing a pavilion to replace an original structure, with improved bathrooms
- Planting plans to incorporate historic and native New York plants
- Restoring the pond and fountains
- Restoring the Garden House



## Land Protection, Now or Never: A Newcomer's Perspective

When I moved to Otsego County from South Carolina one frozen February, people often asked me, "why?" It was a bit of a stumper, I'd admit, while learning how to scrape snow and salt off my car. There were many personal and practical reasons of course, but best I could come up with was "you don't know how good you have it here."

I have lived much of my adult life in the rapidly suburbanizing Southeast—in landscapes that changed drastically over the short years I spent in them. I watched farms I loved paved over, rural roads straightened and widened, and creeks channelized. Over my visits to Otsego County the past 16 years, the land has remained largely unchanged. Here, I can tromp through boggy creek bottoms with meandering streams. Most of the ridgelines are covered in trees—not houses—and the hillsides all sprout springs.

Prior to moving North, I worked for land trusts in two quickly growing Southern cities—Nashville, Tennessee and Greenville, South Carolina. Both of these cities made a lot of progressive changes and investments in their downtowns to accommodate the influx of population. However, many newcomers found comfort in the new suburban neighborhoods just outside the cities. Land and housing was cheaper, the schools were bright and new, the countryside was neat and scenic and offered seemingly endless space for everyone.

What happened next is a familiar story: an older farmer would die and his kids, now living

elsewhere, would sell the property, in many cases, to developers. Developers and land speculators would show up on doorsteps and offer unheard of, unrefusable prices for land. Once insurmountable problems, like steep slopes, inaccessibility, or periodic flooding—were magically solved. Literally overnight, heavy equipment would appear, roads were paved, and streets took on names that suggested the pastoral scenes they consumed.

I walked through a development with gigantic million dollar "meadow mansions," ringing with the sound of hammers and buzzing saws, and stepped in a cow pie. It was still fresh from a few short months before when only cows lived there. Helicopters flew over spotting the next ideal spot and savvy well-funded developers bulldozed small rural county planning authorities to get their developments not only built, but serviced by new, fast, taxpayer funded roads, water and sewer lines.

It was tragic to think about all that was lost, and so quickly. And these changes had real and disastrous consequences. The land clearing, rooftops, driveways and concrete stopped rainwater from infiltrating slowly, and dangerous flash floods became more common.

In 2010, the Cumberland River flooded huge portions of downtown Nashville for the first time in the city's history. The images of long-haul trucks stuck in several feet of water on interstates, and flooding up to the doorways of famous downtown music joints, made national news.

Even in areas where zoning controlled parcel sizes to larger, one to five acre lots, change was evident. Most of these "farm-ettes," while deemed a more desirable "look" for rural regions, involved a new well and often a pond.

Over time, all this parcelization and new infrastructure lowered the water table. Springs that had run for centuries stopped, babbling creeks' average volume decreased significantly for most the year (only to swell and scour after a big rain). Even with an increase in annual rainfall some years, the water was now all violently running off, rather than gently washing over the landscape.

And most tragic of all: There could have been another way. The sprawl into the country far outpaced the rate of population growth, fueled in part by short-sighted policies that incentivized short term property tax gains over sustainable growth.

Don't get me wrong, both Nashville and Greenville are lovely, vibrant places. A lot of amazing conservation work went in to saving the last great open spaces; projects that at first

seemed controversial and impossible paid off ten-fold in protecting the regions' desirability and quality of life.

*"We may soon find ourselves at a tipping point where we can either steer this growth in a helpful way, or lose our landscape to random and rapacious sprawl."*

But what I learned was that nothing is "safe" from quick and irresponsible development. It can happen anywhere that residents are not paying attention. Lovely villages like Cherry Valley, Cooperstown, and Gilbertsville do not look the way they do by accident. Forward-thinking land-owners have consciously protected the wooded hills, healthy creeks and scenic pastures you see on entering those towns, or looking up from main streets. And it is these attributes that attract new residents to our area in the first place.

However, I'm afraid with the twin threats of climate change and a global pandemic, the Leatherstocking region could find itself in the crosshairs of growth patterns it doesn't want.

The recent increase in real estate transactions is encouraging. This is a region where outmigration

and loss of economic opportunity has characterized the last few decades. But we may soon find ourselves at a tipping point where we can either steer this growth in a helpful way, or lose our landscape to random and rapacious sprawl.

There is still much to do. I am very excited about all the new residents, life and increased activity in the Otsego region. Real estate agents and contractors have been busy, old houses are getting new life, and there are many new families. We need your to help engage them, and to undertake more projects that preserve our open spaces, protect our farmland, and maintain our clean water supply.

While there are many worthy environmental concerns at the moment, **the Land Trust is the only organization that permanently protects private land.** This takes time and money, forethought and planning. While you are social distancing and enjoying time outside, take note of how the falling leaves reveal the shapes of hills and valleys in the distance.

Help us make sure they are still here for future generations.

---

*By May Leinhart, Stewardship Associate*

---

**If you are interested in learning more about conserving your land contact David Diaz at [david@otsegoLandTrust.org](mailto:david@otsegoLandTrust.org).**



## LAND PROTECTION It's for the Birds!

The first season of the **NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III** (2020-2024) is nearly over! The atlas is conducted every 20 years, by the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation and Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It assesses the status of bird species in the state, specifically breeding activity. Much of the data is collected by "citizen science" volunteers and submitted via the **eBird** phone app (Cornell Lab of Ornithology). Birdwatchers of all skill levels are encouraged to participate, including beginners!

During this year's atlas, David Diaz, OLT's Director of Land Protection, has been assigned the "Cooperstown East" breeding bird block. David and others identified 102 species with possible, probable, or confirmed breeding status. With four more years to go, even more species will be added!

### Highlights from this season:

Bobolink, Savannah Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Pine Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, American Kestrel, Hairy Woodpecker, Barred Owl, Eastern Screech Owl, Purple Finch and White-Throated Sparrow.

**Fun fact:** David has participated in a birding competition called the World Series of Birding, six times.

---

**NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III:**  
<https://ebird.org/atlasny/home>

**NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III Steering Committee:**





Otsego Land Trust conserves our natural heritage of woodlands, farmlands, and waters that sustain rural communities, promote public health, support wildlife diversity and inspire the human spirit.



## Board of Directors

Marjorie B. Kellogg  
BOARD CHAIR

Martha H. Frey  
VICE CHAIR

J. Joseph Homburger  
SECRETARY

Kent L. Barwick  
Eugene Berman  
David T. Bliss  
Jane Couch  
Carla Hall  
Richard O'Keefe, MD  
Don Raddatz  
Gilbert T. Vincent, PhD

## Directors Emeriti

J. Michael Moffat  
Earle N. Peterson

## Staff

Patricia Szarpa  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Marcie Foster  
STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR

David Diaz  
DIRECTOR OF LAND PROTECTION

Julia Hickey  
COMMUNICATIONS & DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGER

May Leinhart  
STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATE

Front cover: Photograph by Susan Rowland.

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.



P.O. Box 173  
Cooperstown, NY 13326

Call us at 607-547-2366.

 A Simple Way to Support OLT...Like us on Facebook!

## GIVE BACK TO THE LAND...

# Be a Land Protection Hero!

Support Otsego Land Trust's work by donating today. Donations in honor of a friend or family member make great holiday gifts, too!

Use the envelope inside this newsletter to send your support, or visit [otsegoLandtrust.org](http://otsegoLandtrust.org). Land Protection Heroes giving \$200 or more will receive a 2021 A Brookwood Solstice Calendar as a thank you!



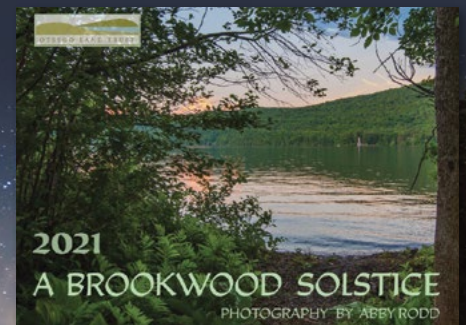
## Looking for a gift this holiday season?

Our 2021 "A Brookwood Solstice" Calendar is stunning and makes a great gift! Photographer and friend of OLT, Abby Rodd, captures Brookwood from sunrise to sunset, letting the changing light and shadows create the beauty of this very special place.

Calendars are \$25 each and support Brookwood Point and Gardens.

To order, please make checks payable to: Otsego Land Trust, and write "Brookwood Calendar" in the memo field. Please mail to Otsego Land Trust, P.O. Box 173, Cooperstown, NY 13326.

Orders of 8 or more calendars will receive one (1) free calendar.



© ABBY RODD