

Aspetuck Land Trust



EXPANDING THE GREEN CORRIDOR

ALT Acquires New Property in Monroe



It was only last July when Aspetuck Land Trust combined with the Monroe Land Trust, adding Monroe to its regional territory. A year later in August 2022, we acquired a 7.8-acre property for \$20,000 previously owned by the Boy Scouts of America. This property is connected to other undeveloped open spaces and is rich with natural resources including glacial features, a pond, streams, and wetlands.

We are so grateful to Aspetuck Land Trust members for making this acquisition possible; and for the hard work and dedication of new ALT board member from Monroe, Barbara Thomas, who helped us identify and purchase this beautiful

property from the CT Yankee Council, BSA. Surrounded by Aquarion and Town of Monroe open space lands, this property helps to protect about 120 acres of wildlife habitat. It is a great addition to the Green Corridor and is an important opportunity to partner with the town of Monroe to create awareness and build support for more conservation across the region. Thank you to our **generous supporters of the Green Corridor Capital Campaign** for helping us add another property to the Green Corridor! 🌿

BUILDING BRIDGES TO BRIDGEPORT

by **Reggy Saint Fortcolin, Conservation Outreach Manager**

My time so far at Aspetuck Land Trust has been nothing short of amazing. This summer, I began our conservation work in Bridgeport by engaging the community in the mission of Aspetuck Land Trust and building relationships with groups from all around the city with a special focus on the youth. In this short time, I have found that they are eager to learn about the natural world and how to protect it for the future.

The summer started in early July at Seaside Sounds, Bridgeport's first annual environmental festival, where we hosted an Aspetuck Land Trust table. We connected with local students, politicians, and





members of the community and shared our vision for the Green Corridor. This was a great introduction as we look ahead and establish our conservation priorities with stakeholders who live and work in Bridgeport.

Next, we partnered with Bridgeport's **Wakeman Boys and Girls Club** and facilitated multiple workshops and events. Thank you to **Trout Unlimited, CT DEEP,** and

From left: Reggy Saint Fortcolin, Rep Justin Farmer, and Harper Treschuk

Backyard Beekeepers Association. From exploring beehive models to fishing in a local pond, we appreciate the way they helped us connect kids to the outdoors with such meaningful learning and hands-on experiences making nature accessible and exciting.

We also partnered with Bridgeport's **Green Village Initiative** providing youth with a tour of a local Easton farm, **Gilbertie's Organics**, which Aspetuck Land Trust preserved in April, 2020. We thank Sal for a great tour of the farm where the students learned about his herb and microgreens farming operation.

Next we will be embarking upon identifying conservation opportunities in Bridgeport and establishing priorities for projects based on environmental



Bridgeport youth participating in ALT's fishing workshop with CT DEEP and Trout Unlimited.

GVI student enjoying the tour at Gilbertie's Farm in Easton.



impact and interviews with stakeholders in the community. It was a great start to our work in Bridgeport, introducing Aspetuck Land Trust to the community, building trust, providing access to nature, and building bridges to the natural world for youth.

Building Bridges has been made possible by generous individuals and funding from **Fairfield County Community Foundation's Donor Advised Funds** and **Newman's Own Foundation.** 🌱

GREEN CORRIDOR LANDOWNER ENGAGEMENT 4 YEARS AND ON A ROLL!

By Mel Lemay, Landowner Engagement Director

In order to connect and heal the landscape, we have to connect the people first. That is the premise of the Green Corridor and its dual objectives of Land Protection and Land Stewardship. As we approach the end of the 4th year of this first- of- its- kind land trust initiative, we have seen the vision move into action steps that translate into impact within the 40,000-acre Green Corridor and beyond.

We never imagined how enthusiastically people would welcome the invitation to focus their attention on the natural world that surrounds them. Members were inspired, and continue to be inspired, to embrace a new way of treating their landscapes and to have a deeper appreciation for the "little things" that have always been in front of them but remained unnoticed.



Mel Lemay

Through the **Landowner Engagement Initiative**, we provided exciting learning programs like "**Lunch & Learn**" lectures and webinars, mini videos from Doug Tallamy called "**Tallamy's Tidbits**", demonstration gardens, and **Native Plant Sales**. The impact of **1,300 people signing ALT's Green Corridor pledge** to avoid pesticides, rethink lawns, and plant natives has been staggering. **Over 1,000 people participated annually in our zoom lectures** during 2020, 2021, and 2022. **More than 20,000 native plants have been put into the landscape** to attract our native birds and pollinators through our 5 plant sales. This is real impact that is improving biodiversity in our region.

By understanding the connections that exist within nature and creating those connections in our yards by planting in "layers" and providing different types of forage and nesting, "leaving the leaves" to let nature sleep and rest in the winter, and creating a toxin-free landscape for nature and people...***we now appreciate that we are part of nature, not separate from it.***



It takes a village...and a few carts! Thank you to all the volunteers who make the plant sales a huge success.

This vision, action, and impact strategy has helped the Green Corridor to connect 1,000's of acres of open space to 1,000's of acres of biodiverse private yards at a time when we all needed to heal as much as the land does. We are clearly part of a movement that encourages respect and gratitude for the natural world and our part within it. Thank you for joining us on this healing journey. 🌱

NATIVE PLANT SALE CUSTOMER ATTRACTS CATERPILLARS AND HAPPY NEIGHBORS



Adam Goodman, ALT's new Land Protection Specialist, wasn't sure what he had gotten himself into. "To be honest, I was a little nervous", Adam remembers. He had to call for backup from a friend with a truck to help him get all the native plants he had bought at the Spring Plant Sale in June back to his house.

Committed after taking ALT's Green Corridor pledge, Adam decided on a native pollinator garden along the perimeter of his small ¼-acre property near downtown Fairfield. He then met with native landscape designer Debra De Vries-Dalton who helped him design a deer-resistant full sun garden with colorful blooms from Spring through Fall, that would attract a variety of birds, bees, and butterflies.

It took Adam 2 weeks to prepare all 600 square feet of the beds and dig holes for 300 plants. He was dirty, sweaty, and happily putting the last of the natives in the ground when a dog walker passed by and said, "Hope the homeowner will be able to appreciate that garden since it's on the outside of their fence". Adam replied, "Indeed they will, I am the homeowner!"

Adam's favorite plant in his new native garden is the butterfly weed (*asclepias tuberosa*). Pollinators and monarchs love it. Butterflies lay their eggs then caterpillars start to magically appear. After munching away for several days, the caterpillars leave for a safe spot to form a chrysalis before becoming butterflies. He has counted over 10 caterpillars and butterflies, amazed by the lifecycle of his new garden.

"It's been very addictive, uplifting, and has the neighborhood a-buzz" Adam said, as more and more of his neighbors on his street notice the garden. "Happily, this provides a great opportunity to share with more people the importance of creating biodiversity in our own backyards." 🌱



YOU'RE INVITED TO LEAVE A LEGACY OF OPEN SPACE FOR ALL

By Walter Greene, Aspetuck Land Trust Board Member

In the fall of 2017, Aspetuck Land Trust communicated to our members about formalizing our efforts around planned giving. In the spring of 2018, we officially announced the **Open Space Legacy Society** and since that time we have grown our "membership". Open Space Legacy Society members are those people who have designated a portion of their estate to benefit Aspetuck Land Trust.

Today we have a number of people who have made us aware that they have included Aspetuck Land Trust within their estate plans. We have also received multiple estate gifts from members who are no longer with us but wanted to sustain our effort to save land for the benefit of future generations.

As was mentioned back in 2018, we wanted to create a memorial to recognize those people who made estate gifts. The good news is we recently finished the Open Space Legacy Society memorial! The memorial is **situated at the highest point in the Trout Brook Valley Preserve Orchard** above the blueberry bushes with views all the way to Long Island Sound. Affixed to the memorial are the names of the first four people whose legacy gifts have been received by your land trust to support open space.

The memorial is designed as a cairn. Cairns are an ancient tradition and for thousands of years have been used as a waypoint for travelers to assist them in their journey...alerting them about the correct route to take. The mound of stones has also been described as a "balancing act where the balancing stones carry with it a practice of patience and a physical effort of creating balance..." As land trust supporters, we need to practice patience and extend effort to build on the work of our predecessors to ensure that future generations will have access to more open space and more biodiverse land.

Our intention with the **Aspetuck Land Trust Open Space Legacy Society** memorial is for us to recognize those who came before us, and in life made a commitment through their estate plans. A commitment to leave some of their treasure to Aspetuck Land Trust so future generations will be able to access and enjoy more open space that only will enhance people's lives.

We hope that hikers on their journey see the **Open Space Legacy Society Memorial Cairn** as a waypoint in their lives...pointing them in the right direction and giving them an opportunity to reflect on the importance of one generation's support of the next.

If you want to identify Aspetuck Land Trust as a benefactor in your estate plans (will, retirement plan, life insurance, etc.), or already have done so, please let us know so we can welcome you to the Open Space Legacy Society. When your legacy gift is received, we will add your name to the Open Space Legacy Society Memorial Cairn.

For further information or to let us know about your estate plans or planned giving opportunities to support Aspetuck Land Trust, please reach out to Kim Craig at kcraig@aspetucklandtrust.org. 🌱



RIPN RAISING FUNDS FOR ASPETUCK LAND TRUST!

At the beginning of the summer, Aspetuck Land Trust member **Rocky Progano** and friends hosted **RipNRaise 2022**, a weekend of adventure culminating with a concert at Penfield Beach in Fairfield. This event included a choose your own adventure Saturday

encouraging hikes, nature walks, bike rides, and even yoga at Haskins Preserve, followed by a concert and party with Joe Torres and his band Summer Camp.

A great time was had by all and we are so grateful to Rocky and his gang for inspiring outdoor adventure and raising over \$13,000 to support conservation of open spaces, help create biodiversity, and expand the Green Corridor in our urban spaces. Thank you Rocky! 🌱

Rocky Progano (in green) and ALT Executive Director David Brant.



Harper maintains a blog about the progress (wildflowerpreservesouthport.blogspot.com), complete with vibrant pictures of flowers, bees, butterflies, and the occasional pic of hard-working volunteers with their shovels and sunhats. Her posts are both beautiful and educational, explaining some of the conflicts Mother Nature faces when non-native plants are introduced to the ecosystem.

Harper speaks comfortably and authoritatively about the Land Trust's activities, the importance of the **Green Corridor Initiative**, and how we can all be part of the mission. Her confidence and knowledge will serve her well as she heads off to Williams College. "Biology," she says, when asked what she intends to study. "Plant Science and considering Psychology, too."

Whatever she decides to focus on, we know she'll be good at it. She's proven herself to be hard-working and smart. The Land Trust will certainly miss her. 🌱

Harper Treschuk pictured above at the Wildflower Preserve in Southport. Harper's work was supported by a gift from **The Tucker Fund**, created to remember Tucker Secrist for the bright, gifted, and kind friend he was and to honor his love of Fairfield and the outdoors. We are honored to have the support of the Tucker Fund and to honor his memory through this summer internship program.



A FOND FAREWELL AND GOOD LUCK TO VOLUNTEER AND INTERN, HARPER TRESCHUK

By Sherri Daley

Should Harper Treschuk mention Joe Pye Weed, most of her classmates at Ludlowe High School where she is a senior will think she's talking about a hayseed character in a bad sitcom. Her personal circle of friends, however, will know that she's talking about a hardy perennial loved by birds and butterflies.

"Especially Monarchs," Harper adds. She's sitting at a table at the Fairfield Library, interrupting her studies to talk about her work with the Land Trust. "I've always been connected to the outdoors, and my family has always encouraged me. We're all involved in some way. Mom was involved with Aspetuck Land Trust's Natural Playground in Westport, and when we moved back to Fairfield, she passed the baton to me.

I've been in 4H for a long time, so I see other approaches to the natural world around us. We've got a vegetable garden at home, flowers, and bees."

But her "special place" is the garden in the **Wildflower Preserve** across the street from the entrance to the Southport Pequot Library. She spends hours watering, weeding, and ridding the garden of invasive plants. "It's specifically designed to show homeowners how to include native plants in their landscaping. I've been working with landscape designer Deb De Vries-Dalton who has been an amazing teacher."



THANK YOU FOR A GREAT SUMMER!

by Anna Sorgie, **Bruce LePage Conservation Fund Intern, Summer 2022**

My name is Anna Sorgie and I'm a senior studying Wildlife Conservation and Biology at the University of Rhode Island. I am passionate about conservation and land stewardship and was so happy to be a **Bruce LePage Conservation Fund Intern** and have the chance to get more experience in my field.

My internship began during the **Spring Native Plant Sale**. I really enjoyed working with the many land trust volunteers and staff, and it was a great (and fast paced!) introduction to my internship. A major portion of the internship involved stewarding a few of the Land Trust's key properties. I loved walking the preserves with the Land Stewardship team, Lou Bacchicchi and my fellow intern Owen Harlacker, and discussing and analyzing management objectives for specific areas. This was very valuable to me as I plan to have a career in land management.

I also was involved in a project at the **Hilla von Rebay Arboretum** in Westport inventorying and mapping the tree species there. Currently full of invasive and non-native ornamental species, Aspetuck Land Trust is creating a showcase for native tree species on the property, which is very exciting.

The last major contribution I made this summer, along with Harper Treschuk, was updating the **Homeowner Engagement** pages on the Land Trust website. My proudest accomplishment was creating a 20-page guide for homeowners for transforming a yard to a native landscape based on the principles of the **Green Corridor Pledge**. As a result of many conversations with ALT members and supporters, I found there is no lack of passion for the Green Corridor and its mission, but much of the science behind stewarding land is not easy to understand or accessible. My guide, now on the website, will hopefully be a helpful tool for people on the journey to building biodiversity in their backyards and creating a healthy balanced ecosystem for all.

I loved my internship and am grateful for the opportunity to bring my passion for plants, wildlife, and public engagement to action. My experiences with ALT were varied, interesting, and allowed me to further develop my commitment to the conservation field. I am more excited than ever to return to school for my last year. **Thank you to everyone who taught, supported, and encouraged me this the summer, and thank you to the donors who made this internship possible.** 🌱

SALUTE TO BRUCE LEPAGE INTERN OWEN HARLACKER

By Lou Bacchiocchi, Land Stewardship Director

Aspetuck Land Trust was pleased to have Owen Harlacker as one of the two Bruce LePage Conservation Fund Interns for this summer. Owen worked with the Land Management department, where he is no stranger, having volunteered many hours of hard work over the past several years.



His first task was to supervise a group of Staples high school students while they completed their own 5-week internship program in preserve maintenance. Their activities included blueberry cultivation, assisting with the plant sale, planting several areas with native plants, trail clearing, and invasive species control. Owen also shows quite an aptitude for chainsaw work and helped with tree removals in the preserves and with trail maintenance activities.

From equipment maintenance and repairs, erecting fencing to protect our native plant gardens, assembling memorial benches, mapping trails in GIS, and taking photographs at the annual meeting, Owen embraced every challenge.

As he returns to University of Utah where he is majoring in Mechanical Engineering, we wish him the best of luck and can't thank him enough for his hard work and dedication this summer! What I wouldn't do to have 5 Owens all year round!

Thank you Owen! 🌿

The Bruce LePage Conservation Fund is dedicated to supporting summer internships with Aspetuck Land Trust for young people, like Owen and Anna, who are interested in land preservation and conservation, Bruce's passion. For more details and to contribute, visit our website at aspetucklandtrust.org/bruce-lepage-conservation-fund

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT AT SOUTHPORT WILDFLOWER PRESERVE

We are so grateful to **Campbell Treschuk**, class of 2024 at Fairfield Ludlowe High School and Bridgeport Aquaculture. He has been a part of Boy Scout Troop 82 since October 2017. For his Eagle Scout project, he built a fence and installed a stepping stone path at the Land Trust's **Wildflower Preserve in Southport**. His family has been helping maintain and replant the preserve as a native plant garden, so he thought it would be great to do more with the preserve and we are so glad that he did. Thanks Cam!

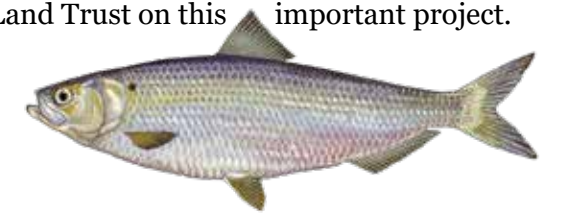


SUCCESS: BULKLEY POND DAM REMOVAL



The fish are free to swim once more! We are happy to announce that we have successfully removed the Bulkley Pond dam on the Post Road in Westport at the Old Mill building where the road crosses the stream. The dam was a barrier to upstream fish passage for Alewife and Blueback herring and the freshwater habitat these migratory fish require for spawning.

The project was funded by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP). Thanks to Sally Harold, a dam and fish passage expert, for working with Aspetuck Land Trust on this important project.



THANK YOU TROUT UNLIMITED

Not only did they help get out the vote, help with the cleanup of the property and teach our Bridgeport youth this summer about the wonderful river wildlife in our area, Trout Unlimited also matched **\$10,000 for a total of \$20,000** towards the purchase of **South Park in Easton**, one of the very few Class 1 Wild Trout Management Areas in the state.

Thank you **Nutmeg Chapter of Trout Unlimited!** We appreciate your enthusiastic partnership and commitment to the natural world and conservation in our region.

And thank you to all the generous donors who made this match possible!





Hawk Walk with Larry Fischer
Trout Brook Valley Orchard

TOGETHER AGAIN: IN THE WOODS AND ON THE TRAILS

It's been wonderful to be back out in nature and learning about the wonders of our regional ecosystem. We are lucky to have so many passionate naturalists who share their knowledge with us. Thank you to them all! Look for more hikes, walks, and talks to come as well as our wonderful webinar series! Visit aspetucklandtrust.org/events for details.

ANNUAL MEETING 2022

Thanks to all who came to the Annual Meeting on June 16th at Pequot Library in Southport. Over 150 attended the meeting, which included special guest speaker Gerald Torres followed by pizza and drinks on the lawn. It was a wonderful evening, especially as we celebrated the success of our Green Corridor Capital Campaign, raising \$5.6 million for open space and biodiverse private lands, and announced the continuation of these efforts by expanding the Green Corridor Initiative across the region, including conservation and accessibility in our urban spaces. It's amazing what we are accomplishing together. If you're not already a member, please join us at AspetuckLandTrust.org.



Ephemerals with Anthony Zemba
Trout Brook Valley



Invasives with Charlie Stebbins
Smith Richardson (CT Audubon)



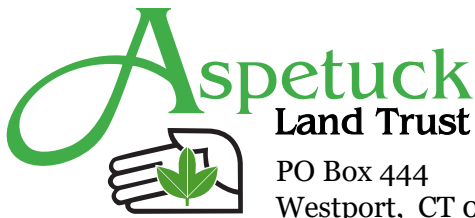
Butterfly Hike with Victor DeMasi
Randall's Farm Preserve



Vernal Pools with Edward Pawlak
Jump Hill Preserve



2022 Aspetuck Land Trust Board of Directors



PO Box 444
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photo by Carol Skog

Make a Donation to Aspetuck Land Trust

The Annual Appeal letter is on it's way but you don't have to wait to support all the wonderful work we're doing together. Please use the enclosed envelope to send your tax-deductible gift of support or use one of the secure options below to donate by credit card.



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SUPPORTING ALT'S WORK IN BRIDGEPORT



ALT recognizes the generous gifts received from Donor Advised Funds at Fairfield County's Community Foundation (FCCF) for ALT's conservation work in Bridgeport. We are so grateful to FCCF's donors for their generous support.

More information about Donor Advised Funds at Fairfield County Community Foundation is available at fccfoundation.org



We are so grateful to Newman's Own Foundation for their generous support of our conservation work providing access to the natural world for the health and well-being of kids and youth in Bridgeport.

For more information about Newman's Own Foundation, visit their website at NewmansOwn.org