



# Natural Surroundings

WYNDHAM LAND TRUST, INC. • SINCE 1975

Conserving the Natural Resources of Northeastern Connecticut

Summer 2018

## About The Wyndham Land Trust

The Wyndham Land Trust, Inc. is engaged in the preservation of natural resources in Windham County, Connecticut. Its emphasis is on wildlife habitat, especially where unique or particularly fragile assemblages of animals and plants exist or may be expected to exist. Its properties are open to the public for the quiet enjoyment of nature. Land may be acquired by donation or purchase. Since WLT enjoys 501 (c) 3 status donations to it are deductible under IRS rules, a feature which sometimes proves attractive! Our work is supported by dues, donations, grants and a very modest endowment income. Members enjoy an annual potluck supper, generally in the fall.

*Inquiries may be directed to the*  
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**or to [info@wyndhamlandtrust.org](mailto:info@wyndhamlandtrust.org)**  
*Please see our web site*  
**[www.wyndhamlandtrust.org](http://www.wyndhamlandtrust.org)**  
**Phone (860) 963-2090.**  
**Your comments, questions and suggestions are most welcome.**

## Wyndham Land Trust Board of Directors:

**President:**  
Michael St Lawrence (Thompson)  
**Vice President:** Michael Green (Killingly)  
**Secretary:** George Jackson (Pomfret)  
**Treasurer:** Stephen Adams (Woodstock)  
**Board Members:**  
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Jo-Ann MacFarlane (Eastford)  
Andy Rzeknikiewicz (Pomfret)  
Jeff Stefanik (Woodstock)  
Ron Tillen (Thompson)  
Benjamin Williams (Pomfret)  
**Staff:**  
Marcy Dawley

## President's Message

At the time of writing, spring has finally made its way back to Northeast Connecticut after a volatile and tenacious winter. During a hike on our Bull Hill Preserve, I was discouraged to see a significant amount of tree damage from this winter's storms, enhanced by the Gypsy Moth infestations of the last two years. Fortunately, as I continued the hike my mood evolved into one of optimism. The return of the region's migrating song birds filled the woods with a variety of melodies in all directions, competing only with the Spring Peepers, also celebrating the change in season.

The Wyndham Land Trust is a 501 (C)3 nonprofit, and, therefore, its mission must provide a benefit to the public. One of the key benefits the land trust provides is public access to some of the best, unspoiled areas of Windham County. A majority of the land trust's properties are available for hikes and the quiet enjoyment of nature. Please go to [www.wyndhamlandtrust.org](http://www.wyndhamlandtrust.org) for information on our preserves. We encourage you to explore—choose a preserve that you may have not been to before, and get out and enjoy nature. You'll be glad you did, just as I was.

## Join Us for a Regional Conservation Conversation

The Wyndham Land Trust will host an informal discussion and short hike for State legislators, community leaders, and other land trusts in northeastern Connecticut at Bull Hill Preserve on Thursday, July 12. The event is sponsored by the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) to celebrate projects made possible in part by DEEP's Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) grant program, funded by the Community Investment Act.

Land trust members and their guests are invited. Please join us for an informal conversation about your local, regional, and statewide land conservation priorities, and enjoy a short walk to the scenic overlook at this featured property.

The event runs from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., and heavy rain cancels. Meet at the end of Bull Hill Road, entering from Senexet Road off Route 171 in Woodstock. Park beyond the metal gate and please be respectful of the residents along Bull Hill Road. Visit [www.ctconservation.org](http://www.ctconservation.org) for more information, or RSVP to [info@wyndhamlandtrust.org](mailto:info@wyndhamlandtrust.org).

*Welcome*

### We welcome the following new members:

Jimi Gothreau, Henry Hall, Irene Juthnas, Thomas Kuchenski, Nicholas Longo, Betti Rollinson, Cris Cadiz & Tom Campbell, and Susan & Roger Foster.

## Early History by Ben Williams and George Jackson

In 1975 a group of like-minded souls gathered in the home of Virginia W. (Jimmy) and Bob Booth in Brooklyn, CT. Also in attendance were John Bigalow, George Jackson, Phil James, and Lois Orswell; all Pomfret residents. During the gathering Jimmy asked, “Why don’t we form a land trust?”

That group became the first Board of Directors of the Wyndham Land Trust.



**A photo of a land trust meeting at the Golden Lamb in 1987 with, from left to right, Ben Williams, Virginia “Jimmy” Booth, Phil James, Lois Orswell, Dick Booth, and George Jackson.**

Although interest in open-space preservation was the motivating factor in establishing the land trust, the organization was not proactive in the early years. The first property, the 29-acre Chaffee Preserve in Putnam, Connecticut was donated to the land trust in 1977. Other donations followed and the membership began to grow at a modest rate.

Phil James served as President for the early years until his death in 2001. Phil was succeeded by Richard W. (Dick) Booth, who served as President until 2011. Dick Booth’s commitment to the land trust was unprecedented and unmatched. Under Dick’s leadership, driven by his scientific curiosity and his sheer dedication, the Land Trust experienced its initial growth surge in terms of both membership and land under protection. In 2005, 30 years after the first meeting in Brooklyn, Dick presided over a party celebrating ownership of our first 1000 acres of land.

George Jackson is the only surviving member of the group that met in 1975. George is still a contributing board member, and we value his wisdom and experience; he served as the Treasurer for many years and is now the Secretary of the land trust.

## Bull Hill Preserve

The land trust continues to acquire land on Bull Hill in Thompson in an effort to protect this large, unbroken forested lot from development. We now own 771 acres on Bull Hill, including a few properties across the town line in Woodstock, a remarkable achievement by the Board of Directors in just 18 months.

An Eagle Scout project is developing a blazed trail system that will lead visitors to the dramatic overlook point. Once the trail markers are in place, we will encourage members to visit and enjoy the scenic vistas.

In the meantime we continue to host guided walks on the property, including a joint Connecticut Trails Day/Last Green Valley Spring Outdoors event on June 2 and Walktober events in the fall. In addition, Andy Rzeknikiewicz has led several Connecticut Audubon birdwatching trips onto the property in search of hard-to-find migrants.



**David Ostrowski and Last Green Valley Ranger Bill Reid on a recent hike on Bull Hill. (Photo: Denise Coffey)**

David Ostrowski and Karen Durlach, residents of Thompson, recently donated 10 acres on Bull Hill to the land trust. Ostrowski, who had owned the property for over 30 years, stipulated that it be preserved as a bird sanctuary and wildlife habitat and that the parcel be called Avian Haven Wildlife Preserve.

“We appreciate nature’s wildlife: fur, feathers, leaves, and mushrooms,” explained Ostrowski “both above and below ground. It brings satisfaction when you’re in contact with nature. It’s hard to describe, but you need that contact to be healthy. Nature has given us a lot, and I wanted to give something back by preserving this property forever.

“We have been stewards for the land trust for many years, and when we heard of the Bull Hill project we felt it was a perfect fit for preservation. We hope that the land trust continues to protect more of Bull Hill, one or two steps at a time.”



Andy Rzeznikiewicz addresses the annual stewards meeting.

## Stewards Meeting

The annual stewards meeting was held on April 10 at the Connecticut Audubon Center at Pomfret. The land trust has assigned one or more stewards to each of our properties, and they keep an eye on the property, report any issues, and prepare an annual stewardship report. As the land trust continues to grow, we have increased the number of stewards, and they have become an essential part of our ground operations.

## The Big Picture

Noted aerial landscape photographer Leslie Sweetnam from Woodstock took Board members Ron Tillen and Jeff Stefanik on an early morning flight investigating many of the preserves from the Massachusetts state line south to Plainfield on Saturday, May 26. Thanks to Leslie for being a longtime friend to the Wyndham Land Trust.



The view over Bull Hill from 3000'



### Dates to Remember

**June 21:**

Summer Solstice,  
Duck Marsh, Pomfret

**July 12:**

Regional Conservation Conversation,  
Bull Hill, Thompson

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Wyndham Land Trust is to conserve the natural resources of Northeast Connecticut - the water courses, swamps, woodlands, and open spaces, the plant and animal life therein, and the scenic natural and historic sites - all of which are very much a part of the unique character and beauty of all communities in Northeast Connecticut.



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**WYNDHAM**  
LAND TRUST, INC.

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## *Summer Solstice Gathering*



Land trust members watch the sun set at the 2017 Summer Solstice event.

The land trust is holding its sixth annual Summer Solstice event at the Duck Marsh Preserve in Pomfret on Thursday, June 21. Members, family, and friends are invited to spend the evening with their fellow land trust members and supporters. Watch the sun settle into the western sky from the observation platform while Bobolinks settle into the grassland meadows. What better way to celebrate the longest day of the year!

*The event runs from 7 to 9pm. Drinks and light refreshments will be served around a small fire. Bring a friend and a lawn chair. Park along Holmes Road, between Modock Road and Wrights Crossing Road.*