



AUTUMN 2013



THOMAS MINER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Highlights from the Wildlife and Botanical Survey

The Land Trust is managing the Thomas Miner Nature Preserve as a Wildlife Sanctuary. Our goal is to protect the species present. To that end, a year-long Wildlife and Botanical Survey is being conducted to identify the plant and animal species found on the property. Using a strategy developed in consultation with Connecticut College professor of Biology, Robert Askins, PhD, seven hard-working volunteers are collecting and recording data on birds, reptiles, amphibians and plants. Also, data on dragonflies, butterflies and incidental observations of mammals are being recorded. The survey data will enable the Land Trust to better manage the preserve by maintaining and improving the habitats, on which the various species depend. ~ *S. Simm*

ORNITHOLOGY

The property has been found to support some exciting and less commonly seen species. For example, in the 27 acres of grassland, an environment which is in short supply in Connecticut, were bobolinks (nesting), woodcock, bluebirds and American kestrels. In the woods were great crested flycatchers, a resident great horned owl, blue-gray gnatcatchers and scarlet tanagers, amongst many others. The eastern edge of the property appears to be an important autumn migration gathering site for many migratory birds, as a first feeding site in the morning. The mixture of excellent berry-bearing trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants and vines, combined with the early morning insect activity, all contribute to making this an important site for tired newly arriving migrants. Among recent sightings were a great egret, Lincoln's sparrows and an adult Northern Goshawk! ~ *Naturalist, Ornithologist, Bob Dewire; Niall Doherty, Larry Reiter, Glenn Williams*



Bobolink in Treetop

AMPHIBIANS

Vernal pools are among the most endangered habitats in the State. Efforts on the Preserve were centered on two of the vernal pools found. The North Pool was especially interesting because it successfully served as a nursery for at least several Marbled Salamanders, which are not common in our area. The North Pool was also a nursery for Four-Toed Salamanders. In the South Pool, Spotted Salamanders and Wood Frogs, the more typical vernal pool amphibians, laid their eggs. These hatched, grew and in small but significant numbers, metamorphosed into land-living adults, before the pool dried in July's heat wave. ~ *Biologist, Bruce Fellman*



Marbled Salamander Larva

Dear Friends-

The Stonington Land Trust has had another very productive year. As mentioned in last year's letter, we were able to complete the purchase of the 82 acre Thomas Miner Preserve. During the year, we were fortunate to have a number of distinguished naturalists study the flora and fauna on this important piece of property. The bulk of this newsletter summarizes their findings.

We completed the acquisition of the Meadow Woods Preserve, a 19 acre parcel on Meadow Road donated by Cherenzia Development Co. We also received a gift of three acres on Osbrook Point Road from Mr. and Mrs. Roger Gilbert. This gift is particularly significant because the land abuts property of the Davis Farm and contains part of the remains of an Indian Ceremonial ground, the balance of which is on the Davis Farm.

During the year, the SLT paid \$60,000 to members of the Davis family for an option to buy a conservation easement on 168 acres of farmland for a price of \$2 million. The option extends until the end of 2015, and we have recently started fund-raising efforts to accumulate the money needed to complete the purchase.

As always, we are very grateful to Nick and Happy Smith and the Stonington Vineyards for their generosity in hosting our annual meeting, and to Nick Bellantoni, the Connecticut State Archeologist, who spoke at the meeting on the archeological significance of the Davis Farm.

Finally, we thank each of you, our members, for your continuing generous support and we ask that you take a moment now to renew your membership by returning the completed membership form which is enclosed.

Sincerely,

**JOURNEY of DISCOVERY
on THOMAS MINER**



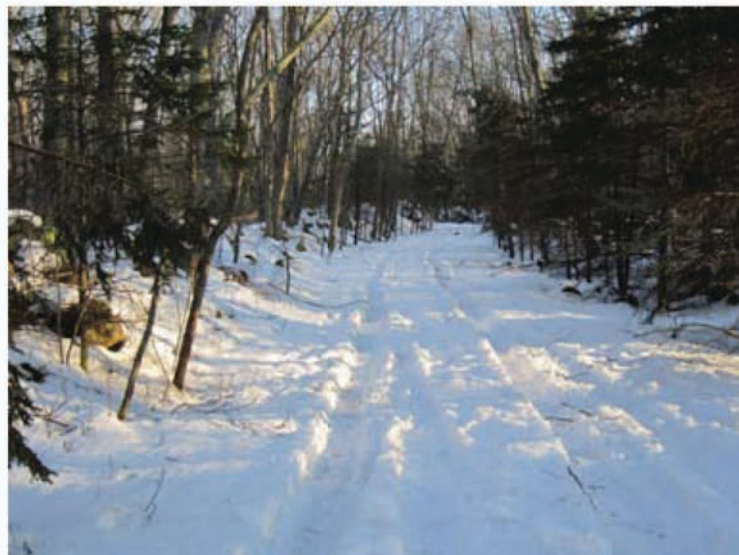
ANNUAL MEETING



RECENT LAND ACQUISITIONS

GILBERT PRESERVE

This 3.19-acre parcel was donated to SLT by the Gilbert Family in December, 2012. It is located on Osbrook Point Road and is adjacent to the Davis Farm. The property is mature forest and is rich in Native American and Colonial History. The 1940's Connecticut State Archaeological Record of Norris Bull and William Beebe identified the location of a Native American Ceremonial Ground, on this property and the adjoining Davis land. Having knowledge of the historical significance of this land, the Gilberts had long been interested in preserving it. SLT is appreciative of this gift and wishes to thank the Gilbert Family for their generosity. ~ *S. Simm*



Gilbert in Winter

MEADOW WOODS

A 19.18-acre parcel was donated to SLT in November, 2012. This donation was made by the Richard C. Panciera Charitable Trust II, as part of a Cherenzia Company subdivision. The Preserve is primarily wooded with stone walls to the south and east and includes several acres of active farmland, as well. SLT is appreciative of this generous gift. The public may access the property at the end of Meadow Road. The Preserve abuts a 9.62-acre parcel owned by the Town of Stonington. Trails wind through both properties and are open to the public, dawn to dusk. ~ *S. Simm*



Trail on Meadow Woods

Please visit us on our website at stoningtonlandtrust.org, for more information on our Preserves.

STONINGTON VILLAGE FARMER'S MARKET

Since May, SLT has frequented the Farmer's Market on Saturday mornings. We introduced the Land Trust and its mission to local residents and other visitors. We also informed them of our Campaign to preserve the remaining unprotected 168-acres of the Davis Farm, which would complete the preservation of the entire 422-acre farm. At the market, it was our pleasure to meet some of our newest members and connect with our existing members, on a frequent basis. ~ *S. Simm*



BUTTERFLIES and DRAGONFLIES

Many species of butterflies were observed. Two large and showy butterflies ~ the Great Spangled Fritillary and the Tiger Swallowtail ~ were frequently present in considerable numbers. As in many areas today, the Monarch was notably absent, despite the abundance of milkweed. Dragonflies were observed in abundance. The highlight of the summer was a chance encounter with a female Wandering Glider, which is fairly common but rarely encountered, given its peripatetic ways. The Wandering Glider holds the distance record for any insect migrant. They have been known to cross oceans! ~ *Biologist, Bruce Fellman*

Wandering Glider Dragonfly



Pearl Crescent Butterfly



Twelve-Spotted Skimmer Dragonfly

BOTANY

The wooded portion of the property is a red maple forest with a very high water table. Amongst the expected plants was a lovely patch of trout lilies; both *Erythronium americanum* and *Erythronium albidum* were present, the latter was my first sighting in Connecticut. During the first week of August, the profusion of late summer-flowering herbaceous plants was astonishing, a display comparable to that of coastal Marin County, California and an area south of Capetown, South Africa. ~ *A Giant Flower Garden! Botanist, Paul Armond; Joyce Fingerut*

This year-long survey will be completed in the spring of 2014. SLT wishes to thank Dr. Robert Askins, whose input and guidance helped to get this survey off the ground. Thank you also to our seven dedicated survey volunteers, for their countless hours of vigorous efforts on the Preserve. ~ *S. Simm*

Join SLT on January 12th, with naturalist, ornithologist Bob Dewire for our 5th in a series of guided walks through Thomas Miner Wildlife Sanctuary. ~1 PM~



Cardinal Flower