



# NEWS & EVENTS

LATE SPRING 2021

## GLT Youth Conservation Corps and Volunteers Help Build Trails on Katan-Ensor and Old Messenger Road Corridor Preserves



Pictured, from left to right: John Kroninger, Sean Kennedy, Mark Kennedy, Rick Orluk, Tim Heinze, Thomas Kennedy, Sean Dowd, Zach Orluk, Elliot Plourde, and Peter Dowd. (Photo by Dave Emery, who also worked hard that day.)

Members of the Granby Land Trust Youth Conservation Corps, along with a solid cadre of adult volunteers including members of our board of directors, our property stewards, and GLT members at-large, have spent six weekends working to construct and blaze trails through the GLT's Katan-Ensor Preserve, Schlicht Family Preserve, and Richard P. Garmany Preserve (all part of the GLT's Old Messenger Road Corridor properties). Volunteers have constructed bridges, laid steppingstones, cleared brush, removed invasives, hung trail markers, posted signage, and constructed Adirondack chairs. Stay tuned for more information on when we will officially open this trail to the public.

To see more photos of the many hard-working volunteers who have been helping out on the Katan-Ensor Preserve, check out this [article from the Granby Drummer](#).

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## Land Trust Heroes: Joan and Charlie Katan



Charlie and Joan Katan met, appropriately, through the Outing Club at UConn. Joan, an agriculture major, and Charlie, U.S. veteran and horticulture major, had much in common. When they married in 1958, they moved to a remote parcel of wooded and wild land in West Granby, where they kept horses and cut trails for riding. The Katans did not have children of their

own, but they had a profound influence on the lives of many young people, who call their farm “Happy Horse Hollow.”

Joan taught horseback riding lessons. Her students say she also taught them the meaning of hard work and the importance of a job well done. Perhaps most of all, she taught them to love and respect the natural world.

Charlie was one of three founders of the Granby Land Trust and served on its board for 40 years. He also was chairman of Granby’s Inland Wetlands Commission. He had a nuanced understanding of Granby’s most sensitive habitats and was eager to protect them. His enthusiasm was best displayed on spring nights, when Charlie would stop traffic, in the wee hours of the morning, to enable salamanders to cross Simsbury Road to mate in vernal pools on the other side.

Together, Joan and Charlie took students on field trips to museums, hiking trails and concerts. They were beloved mentors. Twenty-five years later, when Joan grew too sick to care for her horses, a group of former students arrived from as far away as California, Texas, and Washington, D.C. to muck stalls, groom horses, and eat ice cream with Joan for a full week.

In 2017, the Granby Land Trust bestowed its highest honor, the [\*Mary Edwards Friend of the Land Trust Award\*](#), on Joan and Charlie. Due to his declining health, Charlie could not attend the ceremony, but Joan was there. As she rose to accept the award, she said “I can’t fill Charlie’s shoes.” Then, with a smile, she said, “But I am wearing his socks!” Proudly, she pulled up her pant legs to prove it.

The Katans had long planned to leave their beloved farm to the Granby Land Trust and in 2019, that is exactly what they did. Having nourished and trusted the GLT for almost 50 years, they knew the organization would carry on the conservation values that were so central to their lives. Today, the Land Trust stewards not only the Katans’ land, but also their story. We will celebrate them, their legacy and their generosity forever.

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## To Mow or Not to Mow, That is the Question; The Granby Land Trust has the Answer

By Shirley Murtha, GLT Board Member

The Granby Land Trust has long understood the consequences that mowing inflicts on the organisms that inhabit the fields on its properties, and has taken action to ensure the least detrimental effects possible. For example, around eight years ago, mowing was banned on the agricultural field at the Nuckols Preserve to protect the turtles and snakes. Work on the GLT Mary Edwards Preserve has always been done with an eye to making sure that pollinators and nesting birds are protected. Recently, the organization has become stewards of several properties that include fields that need to be mowed. The realization that the disappearing habitats of so many species of insects, amphibians, reptiles and birds has been a factor in the decline of these groups has caused the Land Trust to re-visit and formalize its mowing practices.



GLT Vice President Dave Emery

I recently talked to the Land Trust's vice-president and agricultural community liaison Dave Emery about how the organization has developed its mowing protocol. He began by noting that it was only natural that farmers would want to mow their hay fields for the "first cut" while the plants were fresh, and their meadows when the tall vegetation made the area look unkempt. This was usually in June, which turns out to be the worst possible time for the birds, turtles, snakes and many mammals such as deer that have made nests and are nurturing their eggs or young in those fields. Not visible to the person on the tractor, many of these young are sacrificed for the sake of a hay cut or a neat appearance.

At first, the Land Trust deemed that the months of May and June would be exempt from mowing fields, but under the guidance of board member and avian specialist John Weeks, it was realized that many birds produce second clutches in the latter half of the summer, so the July 4 date to begin mowing was moved up to August 1. Emery noted that Land Trust board member Jen Plourde has been particularly helpful in educating those involved about other significant ecological relationships. For example, she noted that an August 1 mowing was not pollinator-friendly given the importance of the fall goldenrod bloom. Also, the monarch butterflies need as much milkweed as they can get on which to lay their eggs in August and September. Their decreasing numbers definitely call for further mowing consideration, so the date was moved again, this time to October 1.

Still not to the bottom of the rabbit hole, the board became aware that many insects important for the propagation of myriad plant life depend on the vegetation in these fields. Think of the praying mantis cocoons attached to sturdy stalks and the native bees living in hollow stems. They are just the tip of the iceberg; there are hundreds of species too small to garner our attention, but they play important roles.

The conclusion to this conundrum is that necessary mowing will take place after the first frost and before April 1. There will always be some disruption, but this is the least detrimental time range. Also, Emery stated that, when possible, half of a given field can be mowed one year, and the other half the alternate year. This allows whatever species are in that field a full year to complete their life cycles.

In addition to taking care of its own properties, the Land Trust has been encouraging its members to be protective of whatever amount of yard they possess, as evidenced by two recent zoom presentations it hosted with the Granby Public Library. Simply stated, homeowners are encouraged to mow less and plant for pollinators. One doesn't have to have many acres to help: each of us who has some area of our yard that can be left to a cycle of natural growth can contribute to the health of the planet. The Land Trust is doing its best to protect habitats and species when and wherever possible.

# Makes Statewide List of "Hidden-Gem Trails"



The GLT's Seth and Lucy Holcombe Preserve made *Connecticut Magazine's* list of "Secret Hikes -- 30+ Hidden-Gem Trails to Avoid the Crowds" in its May 2021 issue.

Journalist Peter Marteka says, in part, of hiking the Seth and Lucy Holcombe Preserve: "The first view gives visitors a slice of what they will see once they reach the main fields, known as 'Big Field' and 'Rosie's Field.' The views of the surrounding hills are tremendous, with huge white pines mixing in with a deciduous forest."

Peter also points out the pair of wolf trees – two large oaks that are much older than the forest around them, and which likely once provided shade for livestock. What Peter doesn't know is that we fondly refer to those amazing, bountiful trees as "Seth" and "Lucy."

We are so fortunate to have this "hidden gem" here in North Granby; and we are so grateful to the Holcombes for leaving this magnificent gift for all to enjoy.

- Read the [full article](#) in *Connecticut Magazine*.
- Download a [trail map](#) of the Seth & Lucy Holcombe Preserve.
- Learn more about [Seth and Lucy Holcombe](#).

## Celebrating Trails Day on Seth & Lucy Holcombe Preserve



GLT Board Member and Middle School Science Teacher Jen Plourde led a group of hikers on an educational tour of the GLT's Seth and Lucy Holcombe Preserve in North Granby on Saturday, June 5, as part of Connecticut Trails Day.

Connecticut Trails Day is organized by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association as part of a two-day national "Trails Day" event that takes place annually. It is a great time to pay tribute to all the wonderful trails our country has to offer. The GLT's event was one of 180 events that took place in Connecticut alone this year.

## Variety of Birds Seen on Spring Bird Walks



Photo by Jim Watso

By John Weeks, GLT Board Member

After a hiatus in 2020 due to the covid-19 pandemic, the Granby Land Trust (GLT) once again hosted two bird walks over the Mother's Day weekend at the GLT's Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve. The excursions have become something of a tradition since local birders Chris Chinni and John Weeks first led them in 2005 at the GLT's Goddard Preserve. In 2007, the walks took place for the first time on Jamie Gamble's property at the north end of Loomis Street — the 210-acre property that is now, thanks to his generous donation last year, open to the public as the Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve.

Saturday's walk took place under less-than-ideal conditions, with cloudy skies and chilly, almost March-like temperatures. Despite this, the 20 participants enjoyed fine views of many species of birds. The "teacher, teacher, TEACHER!" cry of a half-dozen Ovenbirds resounded through the woods. Male Red-winged Blackbirds, in their black livery with red-and-yellow epaulettes, jostled noisily over the two marshes. A Virginia Rail yucked it up out in the South Marsh as in past years, but was not ready for its close-up this time around. At Creamer Pond, a male Wood Duck displayed his polychrome finery, while a pair of Canada Geese cruised the pond with their six offspring in tow. Towards the end of the walk, a pair of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks exchanged close looks with the human visitors. Trip leaders Chinni and Weeks tallied 49 species in all.

Sunday saw an improvement in the weather — mostly sunny skies, with somewhat warmer temperatures. The birds were correspondingly more active and more vocal. The walk kicked off right in the parking lot with a Brown Creeper, a winsome little bird that hunts insects by hitching its way up a tree trunk like a miniature brown woodpecker. Baltimore Orioles, as colorful as the little Creeper is drab, are always a favorite sight during these walks, and several of them put on a fine performance on this occasion.

Prior to the walk, John had heard an uncommon bird, a Blue-winged Warbler, singing near the old entrance gate. The group proceeded to the spot and the bird popped out in response to a recording of its song. The elegant bird, lemon yellow with slate-blue wings and a stylish streak of black eye-makeup, flitted back and forth just above everyone's heads. The Blue-winged Warbler is a species in decline because its preferred habitat — open spaces dotted with large bushes, such as abandoned farm fields — has become increasingly scarce. At Dismal Brook, however, Blue-wings have been present for years. To keep it that way, GLT

Board member Dave Emery worked diligently last year to expand the suitable habitat by clearing small areas that had become overgrown.

An American Bittern boomed out its "onk-a-donk" song (if you can call it a song) from somewhere out in the South Marsh but declined to show itself. Avid birders prize any sighting of this scarce bird, and Granby is fortunate to be able to offer it a place to stop and rest during its travels.

At Creamer Pond, two Green Herons stalked the muddy margins in search of fish, frogs and crayfish. One of them posed calmly in plain sight atop the beaver lodge. As the group made its way back towards the parking lot, a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak perched up near the bridge as if to bid everyone good-bye. Fifty-two species were noted during the day's visit.

The variety of birds to be found at Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve (140 species and counting) is nothing short of remarkable. Yet all the participants in this weekend's field trips would no doubt agree that the preserve itself is the real star of the show. It is thanks to Jamie Gamble's generosity and the Granby Land Trust's stewardship that this ever-changing spectacle is now open to all.

Want to learn more? Download a [checklist of birds](#) that have been identified on the Preserve to date (recorded by John Weeks, April, 2021) and watch for details on a special talk by John Weeks, which will be hosted by the GLT and the Granby Public Library this fall.

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## Spring Migration at Dismal Brook

Spring migration is in full swing at the GLT's Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve in North Granby. Clockwise, from top left: Yellow-bellied sapsucker (photo by Don Shaw), Green heron (photo by Merle Yoder), Virginia rail (photo by Don Shaw), Red-bellied woodpecker (photo by Don Shaw), Belted kingfisher (photo by Don Shaw), Hooded merganser (photo by Merle Yoder).





## Keep Bears Wild

The Granby Land Trust is pleased that Granby's Board of Selectmen has agreed to draft an ordinance prohibiting the intentional feeding of bears in Granby. We have seen an increase in bear activity in areas of town where bears are being fed by humans -- including near the GLT's Mary Edwards Mountain Property -- and because of the danger posed to both humans and bears, the GLT board of directors strongly supports the creation of this ordinance.

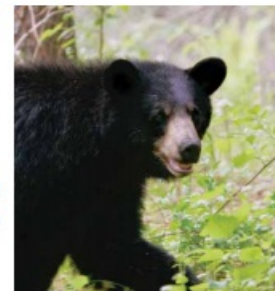
The primary contributing factor to bear nuisance problems is the presence of easily-accessible food sources. Fed bears can become habituated and lose their fear of humans. Bears should never be fed, either intentionally or accidentally.

The GLT has posted Bear Aware signs on its properties and we ask that hikers show caution, particularly on the Mary Edwards Mountain Property.

Bears must be kept wild. Please do your part by removing bird feeders from late March through November; securing your garbage and/or adding ammonia to your garbage can; bringing pet food inside; and keeping meats and sweets out of your compost pile. Lastly, do not EVER intentionally feed bears. Thank you.

## Be Bear Aware

*Black bears are increasing in numbers and being seen more frequently in Connecticut. They are rarely aggressive towards humans but can create a variety of problems. In particular, bears that are fed – either intentionally or accidentally – can become habituated and lose their fear of humans. Connecticut residents must take steps to avoid problems with bears. Birdfeeders, garbage, pet food, and compost attract bears close to houses and people, and should be made unavailable to bears.*



### Black Bear Do's and Don'ts

#### Bears Near Your Home

- DO** remove bird feeders and bird food from late March through November.
- DO** eliminate food attractants by placing garbage cans inside a garage or shed. Add ammonia to trash to make it unpalatable.
- DO** clean and store grills in a garage or shed after use.
- DON'T** intentionally feed bears. Bears that become accustomed to finding food near your home may become "problem" bears.
- DON'T** approach or try to get closer to a bear to get a photo or video.
- DON'T** leave pet food outside overnight.
- DON'T** add meat or sweets to a compost pile.

#### Bears When Hiking or Camping

- DO** make your presence known by making noise and waving your arms if you see a bear while hiking.
- DO** keep dogs on a leash and under control. A roaming dog might be perceived as a threat to a bear or its cubs.
- DO** back away slowly if you surprise a bear nearby.
- DON'T** cook food near your tent or store food inside your tent. Instead, keep food in a secure vehicle or use rope to suspend it between two trees.
- DON'T** run or climb a tree. If possible, wait in a vehicle or building until the bear leaves the area.



Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Natural Resources  
Wildlife Division

**Report**  
bear sightings  
to the DEEP  
at 860-424-3011 or  
online at [www.ct.gov/deep/blackbear](http://www.ct.gov/deep/blackbear)

## Upcoming Events

## First Hike - Katan-Ensor/Old Messenger Road Area Trails

July - Date TBA

Katan-Ensor Preserve Trailhead - End of Strong Road, West Granby

Come explore the GLT's newest trail system, which starts on the Katan-Ensor Preserve located at the end of Strong Road in West Granby and proceeds through the Schlicht Family Preserve and Richard P. Garmany Preserve. This hike will lead you through old horse trails, past magnificent glacial erratics, to a spectacular lookout, a beautiful waterfall, a historic road, and the foundation of the old Messenger Farm, which dates to the 1700s. We will host a guided hike in July. More information to follow!

## Sunrise Hike at Katan-Ensor and Schlicht Family Preserves

August 28

Katan-Ensor Preserve Trailhead - End of Strong Road, West Granby

See the sunrise from the lookout on the Schlicht Family Preserve. We will depart from the Katan-Ensor trailhead at 5:30 am SHARP. We will proceed across the Katan-Ensor Preserve to the Schlicht Preserve, where there is a wonderful lookout to the east. Raindate: August 29. RSVP to Rick Orluk: rick\_orluk@goldorluk.com.

## The Birds of the GLT's Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve

September - Date TBA

Location TBA

Over the last 15 years, birders Christine Chinni and John Weeks have identified 140 species of birds and seen all kinds of interesting bird behavior on the GLT's Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve (formerly Jamie Gamble's property). More recently, Don Shaw, the unofficial photographer for the Granby Land Trust, has taken hundreds of outstanding photographs of many of these birds. John will give a presentation on the many birds that spend time here in North Granby, using Don's photos to illustrate his presentation. We will post a date for this event on our website as soon as it's decided! (And we will email you, too!)

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**Renew Your Membership**

Already a member? Please forward this email to a friend who you think would enjoy learning more about the Granby Land Trust.

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## A Mark of Distinction

The accreditation seal **AFFIRMS** national quality standards are met.



- SOUND FINANCES
- ETHICAL CONDUCT
- RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE
- LASTING STEWARDSHIP

[www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org)

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**"Ring of Fire" Eclipse at the GLT's Mary Edwards Mountain Property**

Photo by Jim Watso

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