



Hamden Land Conservation Trust
 Box 6185
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Outdoor Lighting, Open Space, Good Neighbors - *By Bob Pattison*

The Hamden Conservation Land Trust mission is to protect and preserve our open spaces and in doing so, these properties become small urban and suburban habitats for native plants and wildlife. We strive to have the properties remain undeveloped and as free as possible from human encroachment.

The protected properties are dark, not lighted from within, but often they are lit from external sources such as streetlights, neighbors light or even the headlamp of a train passing by. But by and large, the properties remain naturalized and habitat friendly to many of our native wildlife.

Currently here in Hamden and other towns and cities across the country, we are coming to grips with advancements in lighting technology which have led to much more energy efficient and less expensive lighting options, specifically outdoor LED lighting. In the rush to take advantage of the many good benefits of such lighting, we are not aware of some issues that have gone unnoticed or unmentioned. These

include things like over-lighting by replacing current lighting with LED lamps of same wattage, or using only the highest CCT value (correlated color temperature) lamps, which produce a near daylight spectrum of light that is very high in the blue color. This color is perceived as a cool, harsh light.

These issues are coming to Hamden as the town and United Illuminating are about to start a program to replace all of our current sodium street lights with LED fixtures.

The growing body of evidence that this



Red eft by Connie Gersick

spectrum of light color is not healthy for humans or animal life is pointed out by The International Dark Sky Association which notes that; "Plants and animals depend on Earth's daily cycle of light and dark rhythm to govern life-sustaining behaviors such as reproduction, nourishment, sleep and protection from predators." Scientific evidence suggests that artificial light at night has negative and deadly effects on many creatures including amphibians, birds, mammals, insects and plants."

Lighting is important, but it should also be practical. We urge you to consider how you use outdoor lighting and whenever possible, outdoor lights should be shielded so they concentrate the light where you want it. Lights should be aimed and checked often so as not to light your neighbors house or into the street, or into natural areas. They should be on motion detectors, so they only come on when needed and lastly, you should minimize the wattage of the bulbs.

These simple steps will go a long way to keeping neighbors and wildlife happy.

President's Message A Lesson from a Farmer

I've recently been contemplating the tagline of one of our sister organizations--the Greenwich Tree Conservancy: The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit. This was the advice one young man's father gave upon that young man's graduating from college--and it is still good advice today. It also just about sums up what we are all about at HLCT. Clearly, this quote is about more than trees. But the fact that it uses trees to illustrate a meaningful comparison is all the more welcome to those of us who value nature.

There are those who say that protecting land is no longer relevant or at best a losing strategy in the age of urban and suburban sprawl. To say that is to ignore the contribution that has already been made. There are currently more than 1,200 land trusts in the U.S., according to the Land Trust Alliance. Together, they have protected 6 million acres of land! Non-confrontational and apolitical, they are small grassroots groups whose primary mission is to preserve open space in their own local community.



HLCT President Jim Sirch and two young friends look for caterpillars on milkweed.

Land preservation plays a vital role in the future of our environment. Maintaining open space is critical if we are to protect our drinking water supplies and clean air, promote healthier, active lifestyles, preserve habitat for native plants and animal species, and provide nesting and breeding places for birds.

We don't, however, need to do this solely for ourselves. The land in all its natural biodiversity and rich abundance was here long before us. It is incumbent on every generation to determine how and in what condition it will pass the land and other natural resources on to the next. To do anything less is to fail to keep trust with those who came before us and those who come after us.

The good news is that, throughout the country, land trusts are joining forces with other cultural heritage groups and building their influence. And, that matters--because being good stewards of the land is not something that a handful of individuals can do by themselves. When we join together, however, and work in community with the goal of preserving open space, we can do much. Best of all--unlike some other land-saving measures--land trust accomplishments are permanent. At the end of a cooperative process between a landowner and the local land trust, the land is saved in perpetuity.

Nelson Henderson, the author of the quote above, was a humble, pioneer farmer in Canada who lived during the 1800s. He farmed a landscape that has changed dramatically from what it was when he lived. He inhabited a vastly

different world than the one we know. His advice to his son, however, still resonates. That simple quote speaks volumes about the man. It represents a legacy of which to be justly proud. It is a legacy that you share in fully as a member of HLCT. Thank you for your contribution to land preservation and your faith in our efforts.

Join Us as a Volunteer

The Hamden Land Conservation Trust is an all-volunteer organization. The Board of Trustees is a dedicated but small group, but with assistance from interested members, there is virtually no limit on what we can accomplish. We have standing committees that address various tasks: publicity & programs and acquisition & stewardship are two of the important ones. Help is needed with everything from approaching prospective donors to picking up litter and pulling invasive plants. With your help, we can do even more to fulfill our mission of preserving open space and educating the public. If you're interested in joining a work party or helping out in other ways, contact us at HLCT, Box 6185, Hamden, CT 06517.

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Hamden Heritage Family: The Butterworths

The Beauty of Giant Valley Farm - By Gail Cameron



Oliver(left) and Butch Butterworth of Giant Valley Farm

Giant Valley Farm has been in the Butterworth family for four generations. Frank Seiler Butterworth, Sr. must certainly have been in awe of the beauty of the property when he purchased it. Born in 1870, he attended Yale and was the coach of the Yale football team in 1897-98. He also served as Connecticut State Senator from 1907-1909.

His son Frank Butterworth, Jr. took over management of the farm from about 1929 until his death in 1991. The Farm tradition continues with grandson Frank III (Butch). The farm had primarily been a dairy operation, but through time, the herd was sold off and polo ponies became the main focus. "My father sold the herd in the 1950s, but we continued haying here until 1986," says Frank "Butch" Butterworth III. "My father always thought this was a special part of the world. Although in later years he spent the winters in Florida, he always said he could not wait to get back to Mount Carmel."

Butch is a renowned polo player and host of polo matches at Giant Valley Farm. His son Oliver is also an accomplished player and joins in on many of the games.

Today, in summer, you can watch a polo match there on many sunny Sunday afternoons. You can also enjoy the peace and beauty of Giant Valley Farm by driving or cycling by down Tuttle Avenue any time you choose. But that nearly was not the case.

Today, Tuttle Avenue is designated a scenic road. "Just driving down a road like this, seeing the farm on one side and Sleeping Giant State Park on the other, does something good for your soul," says Butch. At one point, however, the state considered putting a road through the property. They were thinking about making Tuttle Avenue a four-lane highway," says Butch. "We're glad that didn't happen. Having the farm here is good for the community. It's also good for wildlife at the park. It provides a corridor." Habitat fragmentation is one of the main reasons why wildlife struggles to survive in suburban areas.

Many local residents fondly recall a Giant Valley farm hand named Bubbles—a mainstay of the farm for many years. "He came from South Carolina with a load of horses," says Butch. "He needed work and found a home here for half a

century. There are so many people like that who care about this farm and have helped make this a special place over the years."

Over time, the Butterworths have generously donated several parcels of land to the State of Connecticut in order to permanently protect it. It costs a lot to maintain farmland, observes Butch and his son Oliver. Yet, dollar for dollar, agricultural land is a stronger asset to the town than residential land, they feel, because it doesn't use up school, police or emergency assets. Having family farms like Giant Valley Farm is part of what gives Hamden its unique character that combines urban and suburban areas, open space, woodlands and farmland.

Donate Land

Donations of land/property fall into two broad classifications: property that meets the Hamden Land Conservation Trust's criteria for permanent conservation, or property that can be sold or traded to benefit the overall mission of the Trust. We may also be able to help you if you wish to retain title to your land, but have it protected through conservation easement. The most common way to protect land is by "conservation easement." A conservation easement (also known as a conservation restriction or conservation agreement) is a voluntary, legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. It allows landowners to continue to own and use their land, and they can also sell it or pass it on to heirs. The limits of the conservation easement 'runs with the land,' meaning that even if the land is inherited or sold the restrictions stay in place. Contact us at HLCT, Box 6185, Hamden, CT 06517 for more information.

Planting Your Wild Yard

Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*) - By Tom Parlapiano and Andy Brand

Elderberry is a large shrub that is native to a variety of Connecticut habitats. Its common name derives from the Anglo-Saxon word "ellen", which means fire-kindler and refers to the use of its dry pith as a fire starter. In the wild, elderberry is commonly found growing in early successional habitats and in sunny openings in moist forest environments. Along watercourses, it provides an important function stabilizing banks and maintaining cool water temperatures through the shade provided by its large compound leaves. Elderberry can tolerate a range of soil conditions but does poorly if it does not get adequate water. Under good conditions with bright sun and well-drained, fertile soil, elderberry will sucker to form a thicket and can reach a height of 10-12 feet.

In springtime, elderberry produces rosettes of white flowers similar in appearance to Queen Anne's lace. Once pollinated, these become bunches of bluish-black fruit in mid to late summer. It is recommended to plant multiple clones to ensure good fruit set. The bluish-black berries from *Sambucus canadensis* can be used to make wine, juice, jams and pies. In the past, and in some

native cultures today, elderberry is also used as a medicinal plant. Local nurseries often offer the cultivar 'Adams' which is a prolific flowering and fruiting selection. A variety of elderberry that produces red fruit – *Sambucus racemosa* – should be avoided. Its berries are toxic to humans.

For attracting wildlife, elderberry is rated among the most useful of plants. According to *Landscaping for Wildlife*, a publication of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, elderberry provides food and shelter for more than 75 native species. Songbirds such as cedar waxwings, mockingbirds and indigo buntings rely on the fruit, while deer, squirrels, bears and other mammals can also make use of the fruit and foliage for food. It is also an important plant for supporting a multitude of pollinators. Dense stands of elderberry can provide nesting locations for many birds.



USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 3: 268.



Event Roundup

Our first program of the new year took place on January 18th at Whitney Center. Brian Hess, wildlife biologist with the Connecticut DEEP, spoke about eagles, including information on the ones that nest on our Gargiulo Preserve. Brian told us about the decline of eagles in the DDT days and how they've made a tremendous comeback since it was banned. We learned about their biology and behavior and had great audience participation. Mike Horne, who has followed the State St. nest since its start, was there and contributed several of his observations as well. The night was a great success and we will plan on hosting more programs like this in the future.

Our winter hike with John Triana of the



Marsh Marigold

Regional Water Authority was postponed from February 12th to Sunday March 5th. You never know what you may see on one of these hikes and it's great to have John as our leader. He is a very knowledgeable naturalist and the property manager for the RWA so he knows these sites very well. The HLCT is eager to partner with other local land trusts as well as the RWA, West Rock Ridge Association and Sleeping Giant Park Association to promote the outdoors and strengthen our membership through joint events, and we are pleased to have this opportunity.

Saturday April 22nd, from 10am until 1pm, will be a very different program that you shouldn't miss. In honor of Earth Day, Jan Blencowe, a local artist and outstanding teacher, will lead a nature journaling workshop at Brooksvale Park. The class is focused on improving our observations of nature, learning simple sketching and watercolor techniques, and showing us how to personalize our experiences. **You don't have to be an artist** to be a successful journaler, just allow yourself to become immersed in the beauty of nature and you will find it very easy to do. Class size is limited so be sure to sign up early. There will be a fee of \$25 to help cover some of our expenses but it is well worth it. See the events page on our website for more details on registering.

Pollinators are in the news a lot lately,

we're all becoming aware of their struggles. On May 13th (May 14th rain date) 9:30 til noon, we'll be holding a combination educational event/ plant sale by the butterfly garden at Sleeping Giant State Park. Naturalists will be on hand to talk about how we can use these plants in our home landscapes and help pollinators at the same time. There will be a variety of plants available for a donation and all profits will go to the Sleeping Giant Park Association. Spring should be well on its way by then and we'll all be eager to start gardening!

Last year Birds and Brew turned out to be a great way for us to showcase the eagles nest on our State St. property and then get to know each other a little better at No Worries Brewery afterwards. We'll repeat the event again this year on Sunday May 7th (May 21st rain date) at 1pm. Stop by the W.B. Mason parking lot, view the eagles through spotting scopes and join us for some locally made beer and fellowship when we finish. The eagles successfully fledged 3 chicks last year, hopefully this year they will do as well.

Watch for other events to be posted on our website in the coming months. We hope to see you at one or more and would love it if you would bring a friend along that might be interested in becoming a member. We need your support to make us a strong and successful organization and help preserve open space in our town.