

Whispers In The Forest

The Newsletter of the Newtown Forest Association
Connecticut's Oldest Private Land Trust

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A Letter from the NFA President



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Greetings. Another Autumn has turned into Winter, seemingly overnight. The end of another year causes us at the NFA to reflect on this past year's events and the impact they've had on our organization. It has been a very full year, and we continue to be recognized in the region for the work we do here in Newtown.

One of the most important things that came from a strategic planning meeting held earlier this year was the need for more volunteers. Our all-volunteer Board is a dynamic team of individuals from all different career paths joined together to do the work of land conservation here in Newtown. And we do accomplish a lot. That being said, we need more volunteers to

engage with us on specific topics and projects. Recently, a number of people joined us for a volunteer property inspection training session. Our thanks go out to all who attended. If you could not attend, or if you are able to help in another way, we'd love to hear from you.

Whether it's clearing a trail or baking cookies for an event or generating ideas for increasing our membership or sharing your passion for birds and pollinators we want you to have fun and share your skills, talent and passion with us in this coming year.

Warm and Sunny Regards,

Bob Eckenrode

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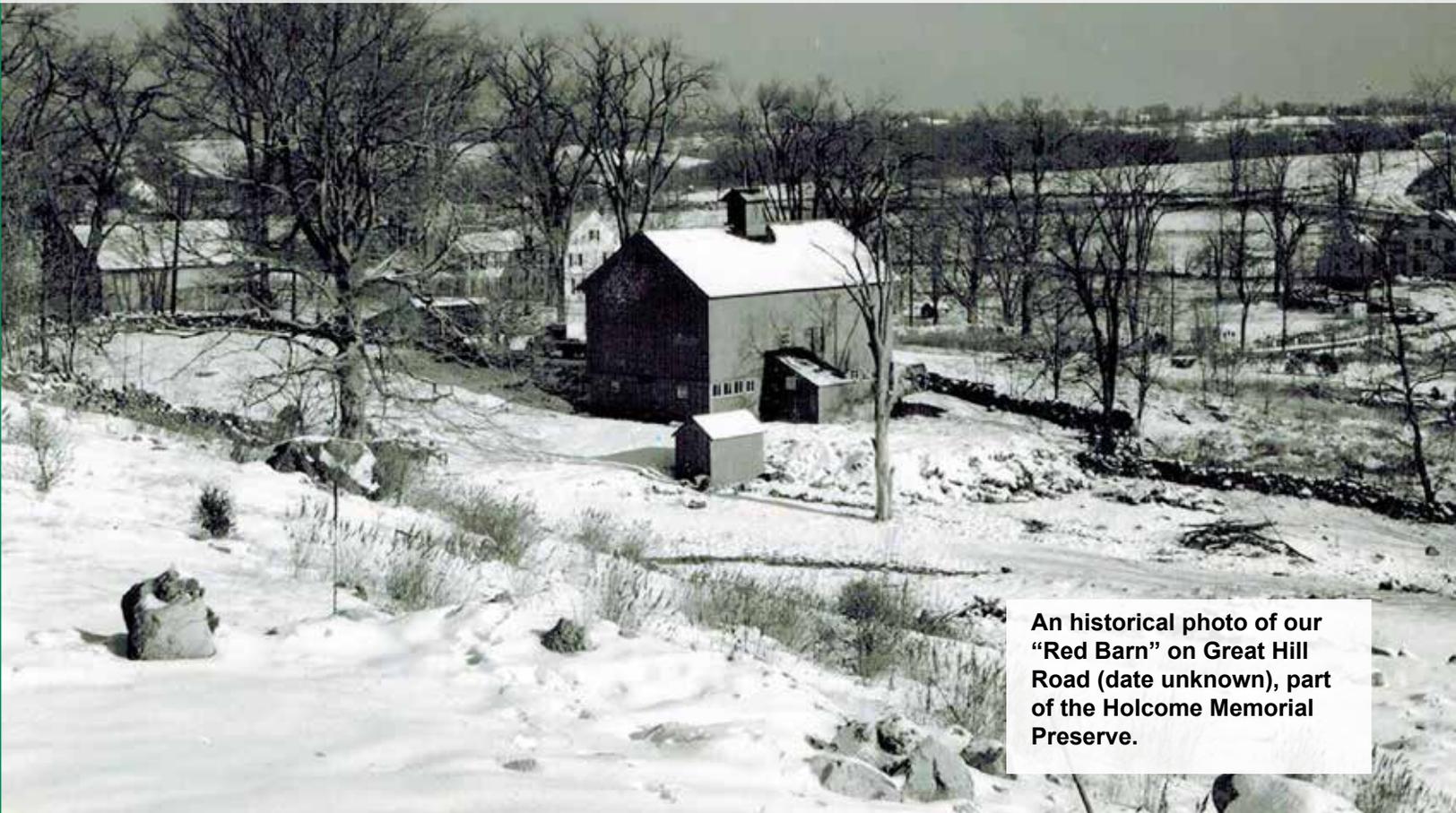
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News Briefs



An historical photo of our “Red Barn” on Great Hill Road (date unknown), part of the Holcome Memorial Preserve.

Thank You, Bill Watts

Long-time NFA Board member Bill Watts recently announced his intention to retire from the Board. Bill moved



to Newtown in 1959. Along with his wife Evie and two sons, he was an avid camper and skier. Bill is also a long-time member and

past president of the Newtown Rotary club. Speaking of Bill, NFA President Bob Eckenrode said, “I’ve always valued his opinions and his uncanny

knack for being able to simplify even the most complicated issues with some straight forward solutions. Bill has been a very valuable member, leader and a resource for all of us here at The Newtown Forest Association.”

New Property Donated

In September the NFA accepted the donation of two parcels totaling approximately six acres from John & Martha Gaynor, Frosty O’Keefe and Elizabeth Bradley. The property is in western Newtown and abuts other open space owned by the Bethel Land Trust, as well as a large undeveloped parcel. Thank you to the donors! □

Thank you, Rotary!



NFA Board member Harvey Pessin (left) and NFA President Bob Eckenrode (right) accept a generous donation from Newtown Rotary Club President Joe Hemingway (center).

Howat Family Bequeaths Land

Gift Follows Long Relationship With The NFA

The Newtown Forest Association (“NFA”) received the deed to 73 acres in the Sandy Hook section of Newtown. Known locally as Snake Rock Farm, the protected land lies along scenic Zoar Road, extends to properties on Lone Oak Meadows Road and connects with other NFA property in the Cobbler’s Mill subdivision. This generous gift, which becomes a hub for protected land in that area of town, was in the works for more than a decade.

In 2006, and at the request of the Howat family, NFA board members met with the family to discuss conservation options to ensure the family homestead would remain undeveloped. Shortly thereafter, the NFA received a letter from Anne Hadley Howat, the donor family matriarch, noting, “On Earth Day (2007), it seems appropriate to report that the Howat’s signed new wills leaving the Snake Rock Farm property to the Newtown Forest Association.” On August 20, 2009, the family of Anne Hadley Howat graciously donated to the Newtown Forest Association, Inc. (NFA) a 68-acre conservation easement over the family’s homestead encompassing all of the Snake Rock Farm, except for the house and the immediately adjacent five acres. Mrs. Howat sadly passed away on January 5, 2016 and on September 22, 2017 the deed was recorded transferring the Snake Rock Farm to the NFA.

The NFA specifically views the acceptance of the Snake Rock Farm as critical to the protection of a diverse

ecosystem that directly abuts 33 acres of NFA property. The NFA’s property also abuts approximately 16 acres of Town-owned open space. With the addition of the Snake Rock Farm there



is now a 120-acre tract of land that will forever serve as a wildlife refuge with diverse habitats and a reminder of the Town’s agrarian history. The Snake Rock Farm property includes forestland, meadows and wooded wetlands. The preservation of the meadows provide important habitat to ground nesting birds and butterflies

and is of critical importance, as it is contains habitats that are quickly being lost to development and reforestation. The mixed hardwood forest, which dominates the site, contains numerous mature white oaks which have exceptionally high conservation value and support a wide diversity of birds and other wildlife.

The NFA will open the Snake Rock Farm Preserve to the public in the near future, once the boundaries and trails are posted, a parking area prepared and trail hazards remediated. There is a wonderful network of farm roads and trails throughout the property and we look forward to seeing these trails opened up for the public to enjoy. This will be NFA’s largest Sandy Hook-based preserve, and we expect to be able to share this newest Preserve with the community some time in the Spring of 2018.

NFA Treasurer, Guy Peterson states, “We are eternally grateful and honored that Anne and the entire Howat family have entrusted the NFA to preserve the Snake Rock Farm in perpetuity and that the beauty and solace that Anne’s family enjoyed for over a century will be shared with our community now and forever. In all of my interactions with Anne she always spoke so deeply of her love of the Snake Rock Farm, and I hope the NFA will exceed her expectations of how we care for this preserve and share it with the community for all of our guests to fall in love with it as Anne did.” □

Cherry Grove Farm

Help Us Save This Newtown Icon For Nature



An aerial view of Cherry Grove Farm

The Newtown Forest Association recently learned that Cherry Grove Farm, an iconic Newtown landmark with origins dating back to 1912, was recently sold to a local developer. The forty-five acre farm parcel is a collection of meadows, streams and forestland. This sale is alarming to all who value Newtown's rural character. Concerned with expansive development, the NFA reached an agreement to save and preserve a majority of the farm. The terms of the agreement allow the NFA to purchase 30 acres of farmland for \$600,000. The challenge for us is that we only have seven weeks to raise necessary funds. If we do not succeed, then the

full parcel will be fully developed. This poses a monumental dilemma for our community, and we need your help.

Your tax-deductible contributions will bring these benefits:

- Preserve history and town legacy
- Enhance neighborhood property values
- Cleaner air and greener community
- Reduce traffic and pollution
- Lower your personal property tax

There is still time to preserve this special part of Newtown history.

Please help us continue to preserve open space in our community by making a tax-deductible gift. Your support will help protect our town's quality of life

and natural resources for generations. Your contribution matters. Visit www.newtownforestassociation.org to see our protected properties or to make an online donation. □



Did you know you can make a secure online donation?

Go to our web site at www.newtownforestassociation.org/donate to contribute to the Appeal today!

Build A Better Bog Bridge

Eagle Scout Candidate's Project Improves Trail

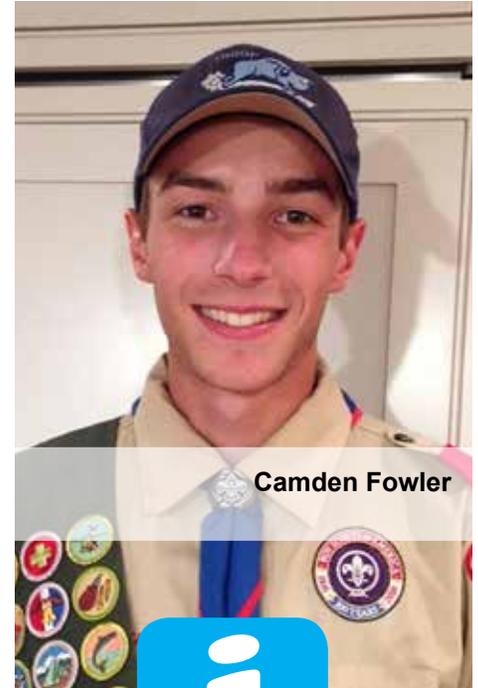


The NFA's Holcombe Hill Preserve was the site of a wonderful Eagle Scout project earlier this year.

In the summer of 2017 Eagle Scout candidate Camden Fowler from Troop 70 reached out to the NFA for some community service project ideas. To make Eagle Scout it is required that the candidate completes a community service project demonstrating the scouts planning and project management skills.

Camden—with the help of his scoutmaster, Jeff Zibluk—selected to build a new trail and bridge near the small pond at the NFA's Holcombe Hill Preserve. The new section of trail gives hikers a way to bypass a chronically muddy trail. In addition, a bridge was built to aid hikers safe passage over a stream near the trail. Before Camden's project, hikers had to step from rock to rock to cross. Now, they can more safely walk over the bridge and not risk slipping or tripping on the wet rocks.

Camden's project clearly demonstrated his leadership capabilities by planning, executing and completing this community service project with great pride and professionalism. The NFA is grateful to Camden and to all of the parents, friends and Scout volunteers for helping complete this project that will leave a lasting impact and benefit all future visitors. □



Camden Fowler



Hey, Scouts! Want to help?

The NFA has a back log of projects and is certainly open to suggestions for any other scout seeking a community service project. Please contact NFA treasurer Guy Peterson at nfatreasurer@newtownforestassociation.org or 203-733-2030 if you or your Scout is interested in doing an Eagle Scout project on an NFA preserve. □

Volunteer Training

Town Residents Learn How To Do Preserve Inspections



An impressive group of volunteers

We recently found out just how many great and helpful people there are in Newtown when we put out a call for volunteers to come to the NFA's first ever Preserve Inspection Workshop. Besides wanting to be good land stewards by knowing what's going on with our properties, annual property inspections are a required in order for the NFA to maintain our national accreditation.

The property inspection workshop was facilitated by Kate Losey, Conservation Easement Manager from the Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust in Kent, Connecticut. The training was held on November 4th, a sunny and warm Saturday, at our

offices at the Holcombe Hill Preserve. We were impressed with the turnout which included volunteers from Newtown and all of Fairfield County. Word of the event spread thru "Meet Up," a popular social media site.

Board members Dr. Aaron Coopersmith and Bart Smith coordinated the invitations and preparations. After an introduction from NFA President Bob Eckenrode and event coordinator Harvey Pessin, Ms. Losey presented the proper procedures for inspecting our more than 100 protected properties. Using a detailed form and maps, volunteers were asked to go to a designated property and walk it noting

such things as trail condition, proper signage and encroachments, if any. An encroachment is an illegal use of a land trust property.

The initial training segment was followed by a short presentation on invasive plant identification given by arborist, educator and NFA Board member Dan Dalton.

It was great to see the passion and dedication these volunteers have for our natural treasures. We appreciate their help with our property inspections and the opportunity to welcome new friends and supporters of the Newtown Forest Association. □



Newtown Forest Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 213
Newtown, CT 06470

Support The NFA

PLEASE CUT OUT AND RETURN THIS FORM TODAY!

Name _____
Address _____
E-mail _____
Phone _____

If paying by check, please make your check payable to "Newtown Forest Association" or "N.F.A."

- NFA Individual Membership (\$25)
- NFA Family Membership (\$35)
- Additional donation of \$ _____ to _____
- Additional donation of \$ _____ for the NFA Land Acquisition Fund

MAIL COMPLETED FORM AND CHECK TO: NFA, P.O. BOX 213, NEWTOWN, CT 06470

Give online at NewtownForestAssociation.org.

The Newtown Forest Association is the oldest private land trust in Connecticut. The non-profit Newtown Forest Association relies heavily on membership dues and other contributions from our neighbors, like *you*. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today and/or becoming a member to help the NFA continue its mission to preserve Newtown's open spaces.

Unless otherwise specified, donations will be allocated first to membership dues