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The mission of the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park is to conserve ecological systems and natural settings, while providing opportunities for environmental education and recreational experiences.

The Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park represents a partnership between The Nature Conservancy, the Town of Wilton, Saratoga County, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

2006 Preserve & Park Ways

A Supporter Writes

My wife discovered WWPP while combing [The Daily Gazette](#) for articles and announcements about things to do. When we moved to Saratoga Springs about six years ago, we visited the Old Gick Farm parcel and skied at Camp Saratoga. We read the information at kiosks and became interested in the mission of the Preserve & Park. At a presentation on the Karner Blue Butterfly, Director Sarah Clarkin mentioned that she was forming a class for volunteers. Having just retired and looking for volunteer opportunities, I signed up.

At the training sessions, I learned more about the mission of WWPP and knew that this was a good fit for me. I enjoy studying plants, animals and rocks and also sitting by a stream or in a grove of hemlocks absorbing the sights, scents and sounds of nature. I've visited countless preserves and parks in 49 states - yes, I will get to Alaska - and believe that WWPP is special because it is more than a place to save butterflies. It offers natural areas to explore, activities for recreation, and programs for learning. It's a place where people are drawn in by the park and leave with a sense of preserve.

WWPP provides me with opportunities to make use of my interests and talents. A list of my activities illustrates the many opportunities there are for volunteers. This winter, I've helped restore trails after the ice storm and had an opportunity to help with a research project to determine the effect of snow depth on the butterfly population. I've worked on construction projects, helping to build the observation deck at Old Gick Farm and siding the barn on Scout Road. Helping to plan and implement the education outreach programs at Dorothy Nolan and Ballard Road schools gave me a chance to work with students. I've led hikes for children at the Annual Open House and a fifth grade class from Waldorf School. Like most volunteers at WWPP, I have collected seeds for restoration projects and planted seedlings in new areas. Jill Litchfield and I compiled a list of birds that visitors can look for at the park. I've cut out templates for butterfly magnets and helped children decorate Tee shirts. I have donated supplies and support WWPP's mission with financial contributions. And, of course, I've written this article.



I continue to volunteer at WWPP because the more I learn, the more committed I am to help the effort to preserve the habitat and educate the public about conservation. I visit many other places, and my experiences at WWPP help me appreciate and understand them better. The best part of being a volunteer is working with the friendly and committed people who share the work that it takes to maintain WWPP. Sarah Clarkin's ideas for implementing the Park's mission and her warm and energetic personality are an inspiration. If you want to contribute your time, talents and/or treasure to an organization, please consider the WWPP. **Jack Reber**

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Mission Statement

Careful observers of the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park will note its new mission statement.

The old statement provided the necessary direction to the organization but it was long, somewhat difficult to remember and less-than-smooth.

The new statement, making its debut on this newsletter's front page, preserves the old statement's intent and guidance but is shorter, a bit easier to recall and more simply structured.

Trails

Did you know the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park encompasses twelve miles of marked trails that are available dawn to dusk for a variety of non-motorized uses? Marked trails can be found at the Opdahl Farm, Camp Saratoga, Old Gick Farm, Fox, and Neilmann parcels. For more information, visit www.wiltonpreserve.org. New trail brochures will be available this spring!

From the Director

This year's newsletter is two pages longer than past productions. I take that as a good thing, a sign that there's a lot going on and therefore a lot to say.

As you'll read in these pages, whether it's conservation, education, recreation, stewardship, protection, or science, there are individuals, groups, and entities that continue to believe and invest in the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park. Their, and your, belief and investment are critical to the future of this program. With that said, I am continually inspired by the generosity I encounter. From the significant financial contribution from someone I've never met to the beautiful nature photos a regular visitor (and now friend) hands me, everyone can play a role. Everyone can help. With generosity we will attain our goal of a 3,000-acre area that is a preserve for plants and wildlife and a park for people.

This year promises excitement. We will introduce hundreds of school children and their families to the wonders of nature. We will offer a wide variety of educational and recreational opportunities to the general public as well as to specific groups. We will continue our work to recover the Karner blue butterfly; and, I hope we will protect more land. I'm thrilled to be a part of it. *Sarah A. Clarkin*

Meet Our Conservation Intern

Meet Cheri Brunault, our talented Education and Conservation Intern. Cheri, who started in October, is here for 39 weeks. She was selected from dozens of applicants from across the country and around the world for this position, which involves work in a wide array of areas.

Cheri oversees our elementary school outreach program that currently involves first and second grade students at Wilton's Dorothy Nolan and Ballard Road schools. This responsibility entails program development, communication and logistical planning with school administrators, teachers and volunteers. Cheri also plans and presents general public environmental programs, which occur every few weeks and address such topics as evergreen plants, clouds and wildflowers.

As its name states, the internship also has a conservation component. Cheri recently spent several days in Corning, New York, where she worked with Nature Conservancy staff mechanically cleaning seeds that were collected last fall and will be planted in the spring as part of our Karner blue butterfly habitat restoration effort. Cheri also collects data that she will use to prepare habitat management plans for the Karner blue butterfly. If she's not busy with one or more of the above, she's out monitoring and maintaining trails. She's working very hard and doing a fantastic job.



Cheri is originally from Massachusetts and has a B.S. in Environmental Science from Unity College in Unity, Maine, and an M.S. in Natural Resources and Environmental Science from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her position is through the Student Conservation Association (SCA), a nonprofit organization "of high school and college aged volunteers committed to protecting and preserving the environment."

Elementary School Outreach Program

The year 2006 marked the kick-off of the elementary school outreach program.

This program, designed to be phased in over four years, involves WWPP staff and trained Leadership Volunteers presenting in-school programs and, in turn, the school children visiting the Preserve & Park for an outdoor educational experience. Last March, the WWPP representatives met with 236 first grade students. Each classroom program was approximately 90 minutes in length and included a presentation on the Karner blue butterfly, the blue lupine, and some of the other interesting animals that inhabit the WWPP; a lupine seed planting activity; the development of a journal in which students recorded the growth of their seedlings; and a book reading. In May, the same students visited the WWPP to transplant their seedlings to a designated habitat restoration area; explore the Karner blue butterfly's habitat; learn about its habitat, needs, endangered status, and work to recover it; and conduct a field investigation.



First graders plant the lupine seedlings they grew from seeds in their classrooms. S. Clarkin

Prior to the school and Preserve & Park visits, last year's Conservation & Education Intern Gabe Cahalan trained the Leadership Volunteers in the details of the first grade curriculum and teaching concepts.

In 2007, the program is expanding to include first and second grade students.

Thanks to Senator Hugh Farley and WWPP contributors for their support of this program.



Education Program Report

In addition to the elementary school outreach program, general public education and group-specific programs were offered throughout the year.

Some of the general public programs offered in 2006 included Winter Landscape Photography, Frogs & Salamanders, Bats, Garden in a Bottle, Natural History of the Timber Rattlesnake, Family Campfire Program, and Wild Edibles. Most of these programs were free.

The WWPP also works to accommodate specific program requests. Staff and volunteers welcome the opportunity to meet and work with students, civic groups, and clubs to share their knowledge about a particular topic. Whether it's a visit to the Preserve & Park to see the endangered Karner blue butterfly and recently restored habitat or a Powerpoint presentation in a local meeting hall, there is so much to see and learn about the wonderful animals, plants and places that comprise the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park.



Rattlesnake expert, Bill Brown. S. Clarkin

Ecological Management Report

Regular visitors to the Preserve & Park's Old Gick Farm and Fox parcels on Route 50 witnessed a large-scale conversion of land from white pine forest to what looks like a grassless golf course in 2006.

More accurately, a total of forty-four acres of woodland were transformed into an area that will develop over the next one to three years into an oak-pine savannah capable of supporting the endangered Karner blue butterfly, state-threatened frosted elfin butterfly, and a host of other Sandplains-dependent species.

These Karner blue butterfly habitat restoration efforts depend on locally collected seeds. In the summer, the WWPP contracted with someone to oversee the blue lupine seed collection process. Blue lupine is at the core of restoration work as it is the host plant for the Karner blue butterfly. Efforts yielded almost 19 pounds of lupine seed, which are planted at between $\frac{3}{4}$ pound to 1 pound per acre. Cheri Brunault oversaw the collection of little bluestem grass and nectar species seeds. TNC and DEC staff also worked with Skidmore students to collect seeds.



This restoration area on the Old Gick Farm site will be planted in spring 2007. C. Zimmerman

This seed mix, known as Glacial Lake Albany seed mix, consists of wild blue lupine, dotted horsemint, butterfly milkweed, round-headed bush clover, New Jersey tea, and little bluestem grass. It was planted across nineteen acres in the spring of 2006. The remaining twenty-five acres will be planted in April of this year.

Grant awards from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, New York State Wildlife Grants Program, Private Stewardship Grant Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program and New York State Section 6 monies funded this work.

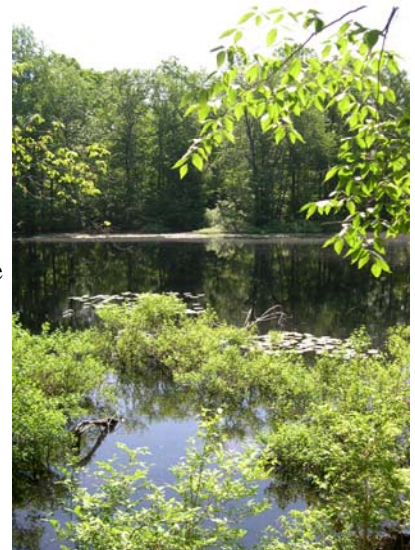
Protection Update

Collaborative efforts led to the protection of two parcels of land totaling 130 acres that harbor habitat for the state and federally endangered Karner blue butterfly, the state-threatened frosted elfin butterfly, the state-threatened Blanding's turtle, several state-designated species of special concern and numerous unlisted reptile and amphibian species whose habitats are threatened by development. One parcel is 101-acres in the Town of Northumberland; the other is a 29-acre parcel in the Town of Wilton.

These two parcels are the eastern and western ends of a contiguous swath of over 695 protected acres that provide habitat for the endangered, state-threatened, and special concern species.

The protection of these parcels reflects this program's strong partnership. The Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park prepared two grant applications that were submitted by The Nature Conservancy and endorsed by the towns of Wilton and Northumberland to the Saratoga County Farmland & Open Space Preservation Program. Wilton and Northumberland were awarded \$85,000 and \$100,000, respectively. The Nature Conservancy is providing the balance of the money. One or both of the parcels will transfer to New York State.

There are now 1,750 acres of protected lands within and immediately adjacent to the Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park Study Area. The goal is 3,000 acres.



Newly protected 101-acre parcel in Northumberland. M. King



Snowpack Monitoring Pilot Study

Near the beginning of January, when the first dustings of snow began to drift down, a new research project began at the Edie Road Restoration parcel. Thirty-nine snow gauges were placed across the landscape of the restored area, and volunteers were recruited to monitor the levels of snow at each gauge throughout the winter.

This first year of monitoring is a pilot study for an investigation of how snow conditions, including depth and duration, affect the Karner blue butterfly's survival rates. Since the butterfly's eggs remain on the ground or attached to vegetation from August to March every year, snow cover may be important in protecting them from freezing, desiccation, or predation. The pilot study is the first step toward understanding this possible impact.

To gather data on the depth, duration, drifting, and variation of snow cover, snow gauges are checked every day or two. Leadership Volunteers Lori McCarron, Jack Reber, and Linda Hovious generously set aside time each week to check the gauges and report conditions. The monitoring crew walks or snowshoes a single prescribed path through the restoration site to minimize trampling. The collected data is forwarded to researchers at the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, where another parcel is also being monitored for snow condition, for analysis.

Recreation Report

Weather. It's been a topic of discussion for millennia. It certainly impacted work and play at the Preserve & Park in 2006.

The Moonlight Ski & Snowshoe was cancelled due to a combined lack of snow and abundance of ice. Its cancellation does not diminish the gratitude to the event's underwriters, Allerdice Building Supply, Allerdice Rent-All, and the Wilton Route 9 Dunkin' Donuts. Allerdice has been making the evening possible since its beginning and Dunkin' Donuts has been an underwriter since its opening.

The Annual 8k Snowshoe Race, sponsored by the Saratoga Stryders, was cancelled for the same reasons.

The summer's 5k Fun Run Series, also sponsored by the Saratoga Stryders, did not fall victim to the cruel conditions this season can impose. All five races were held under near ideal conditions of relatively cool temperatures and low humidity. Between 45 and 60 participants sprinted, ran, jogged and walked the deceptively challenging course each race.

The post-race watermelon and raffle prizes were a fun affair with almost everyone winning something by season's end.

At the Annual Open House (see article on page 6), the Stryders donated the proceeds of the Series, \$500, to the WWPP.



The 5k Fun Run Series at Camp Saratoga. D. McNamara

Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park Office Move

The Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park office will move to 80 Scout Road, adjacent to the Camp Saratoga property, this spring. Over the past year, the Town of Wilton has renovated the residential dwelling into space that accommodates offices, exhibits and an intern. A barn on the property has already been upgraded and is being used as the Preserve & Park's storage and equipment facility. Town Councilman Larry Gordon has spent months planning and overseeing the renovations with help from many at the Town of Wilton and the Preserve & Park. Once the move is complete, an Open House will be held to introduce the facility to the public.

Saratoga County Joins Habitat Restoration Effort

The Economic Development Committee of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors approved a proposed plan to restore 12.5 acres of land on Saratoga County forestlands that are in close proximity to occupied Karner blue butterfly habitat. This project stems from a 2003 agreement between Saratoga County and the Town of Wilton that allows for possible habitat restoration and trail development on the approximately 600 acres county-owned forestlands within the WWPP Study Area.

What's the Weather?

That question can now be answered in detail at the Preserve & Park. Thanks to an anonymous contributor, a weather station graces the grounds of the Preserve & Park's future office at 80 Scout Road. The weather station will be a resource for education programs and scientific research. If you would like to contribute a much-needed item, see our Wish List, below.

Wish List

- Digital camera
- LCD projector
- Pick-up truck
- Sponsors for
 - ⇒ intern position
 - ⇒ materials needed to upgrade trails
 - ⇒ development/printing of new trail brochures
 - ⇒ printing of WWPP educational materials
 - ⇒ Blanding's turtle study

Over 400 Attend Annual Open House

The sixth Annual Open House was held on September 9th. To the surprise of many, Camp Saratoga remained dry while heavy rain fell both north and south of Wilton!

Thanks to underwriting from the Saratoga National Bank, Beth Bidwell of the Wildlife Institute of Eastern New York displayed numerous large birds and reptiles and discussed their adaptations and characteristics. Children had the opportunity to make wildlife t-shirts, Karner blue butterfly magnets, and decorative boxes.

State wildlife biologists Al Breisch and Kathy O'Brien engaged all who came their way. Kathy handed out nets to young and old and encouraged exploration of Deegan Pond. Calling upon her field expertise, she unlocked the mysteries associated with netted critters. Al and his wildlife biologist daughter Kirstin had numerous snakes, turtles, and toads and spoke about their identifying traits and habitats among other things.

Nature Conservancy staff Jason Bried and Chris Zimmerman were also present. Jason focused his efforts on dragonflies and damselflies while Chris talked about Karner blue butterfly habitat restoration and the plant species that make up this endangered butterfly's world. Wild Birds Unlimited tested participants' knowledge of birds and their needs and answered all ornithological questions. New York State Forest Rangers and the Lower Adirondack Search & Rescue (LASAR) had information tables.

The local running club, Saratoga Stryders, presented the WWPP with a \$500 check representing the proceeds from the 2006 5k Fun Run Series. Wilton Scout Troop 24 sold barbecued hotdogs, hamburgers, and veggie burgers as well as accompanying food and drink items. They ran out of most food items—proof of their culinary prowess!

Thanks go to the many people who volunteered their time and talent to make this event possible.



Kirsten Breisch with reptiles and amphibians. S. Clarkin



Beth Bidwell with turkey vulture. S. Clarkin



Kathy O'Brien conducting the pond exploration. S. Clarkin



Children's environmental crafts. S. Clarkin

Our Steadfast Volunteers

The Preserve & Park's volunteers are outstanding! The adjectives that describe them include but are not limited to: talented, generous, energetic, thoughtful, involved, fun, intelligent, curious, dedicated, personable, articulate, and fun.

There are scores of volunteers who assist with workdays revolving around trail maintenance and Karner blue butterfly habitat restoration efforts. The workdays are a great combination of work and fun. People are there for a good cause and get the opportunity to meet and talk with others who share an interest in the outdoors and conservation. Of course, the refreshments are a plus! These volunteers are critical to the program's success and greatly appreciated.

Other volunteers have assumed the responsibility of a more regular gig and play regular roles in Preserve & Park activities. These include our Leadership Volunteers, Volunteer Preserve Stewards, Volunteer Coordinator and Board of Directors.

A formal Volunteer Acknowledgment Event for the "regulars" was held at Camp Saratoga in early November. Hot clam chowder and black bean soup, breads, cheeses, and tasty desserts adorned an outdoor table. Volunteers brought their own mugs and conversation.

Wild Birds Unlimited donated items to give to volunteers who had contributed in excess of 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 hours in the past year. After the formal acknowledgements, the group took a hike on the Camp Saratoga parcel to admire the last of fall's foliage.

Please share our appreciation of:

Leadership Volunteers (underwent training and volunteered in 2006):

Roberta Ambrosino
Kathryn Anilowski
Shereen Brock
Linda Dziengielewski
Gus Fleming
Lynne Florio
Frankie Gabriele
Doris Gomez
Linda Hovious
Peg McCanty
Virginia Newton
Keith O'Bone
George Pilkey
Jack Reber
Beverly Relyea
Jerry Robinson

Volunteer Preserve Stewards (monitored protected lands)

Fred Cady
Lynne Florio
Lori McCarron
Matthew Miczek
George Pilkey
Wilton Rotary

Volunteer Coordinator (chief organizer)

Jill Litchfield

Board of Directors

Listed on page 2

Recruiting New Leadership Volunteers

The WWPP Leadership Volunteers keep this program humming! They are at the heart of so many things: the elementary school outreach program, the Annual Open House and Moonlight Ski & Snowshoe, information tables and booths, and the wide-ranging volunteer workdays.

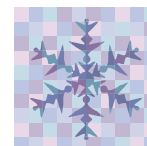
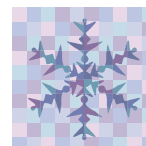
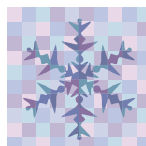
I hope you read Jack Reber's piece on the front page. If you are like Jack and connect with WWPP's mission, enjoy talking with people of all ages, and have a few hours to volunteer each month, consider becoming a Leadership Volunteer.



Linda and Richard Hovious at the Annual Open House. S. Clarkin

Leadership Volunteers undergo three introductory training sessions and participate in regular meetings and special trainings that enable them to represent the Preserve & Park in a number of capacities.

Our next training begins in April. Please contact Jill Litchfield at volunteer@wiltonpreserve.org if you are interested in learning more.



Upcoming Programs

Late Winter Survival; Saturday, March 17th, 10am; Old Gick Farm. The best berries are gone, seeds are scarce, and insects are still deep in dormancy. Winter holds the region in a chilly grasp. Spring may be around the corner, but will it come soon enough for hungry wild creatures? Come take a walk at the Old Gick Farm and learn how our resident animals survive when the larder runs low. Please register by calling Cheri at 518-587-1939 ext. 320.

Considering Climate Change; Saturday, March 31st, 10am; Old Gick Farm. In recent months, a spotlight has been cast on global warming and its various consequences. The effects of this change can already be seen in nature, and conservation organizations worldwide are planning strategies to save critical habitats. On a walk through Karner blue butterfly habitat at the Old Gick Farm parcel, let's consider the local effects of global climate change and discuss what can be done to turn the temperature tide.

Parasites, Pests, and Invaders; Saturday, April 14th, 10am; Camp Saratoga. All across the country, certain plant and animal species are spreading out of control. Often introduced from other countries, either accidentally or deliberately, these species are damaging native ecosystems and costing millions in control efforts. From tiny insects to tree-choking vines, learn some of the species that threaten our natural landscape, and discuss what we can do to prevent further damage. Please register by calling Cheri at 518-587-1939 ext. 320.

Cloudwatching; Saturday, April 28th, 10am; Fox Parcel. Out in the open terrain of the Fox Parcel, the sky plays a strong role in the landscape. The ever-changing view of the far reaches can uplift or subdue, illuminate or mystify. Cloud forms and sky phenomena each have their names, causes, and effects on the weather. Let's see how they speak to us! Please register by calling Cheri at 518-587-1939 ext. 320.

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