

# Joshua's Trust News

## Protecting Land and Preserving Heritage. Forever.



Published quarterly by Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust

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

## KEEPING THE QUIET CORNER QUIET SINCE 1966

by John Hankins

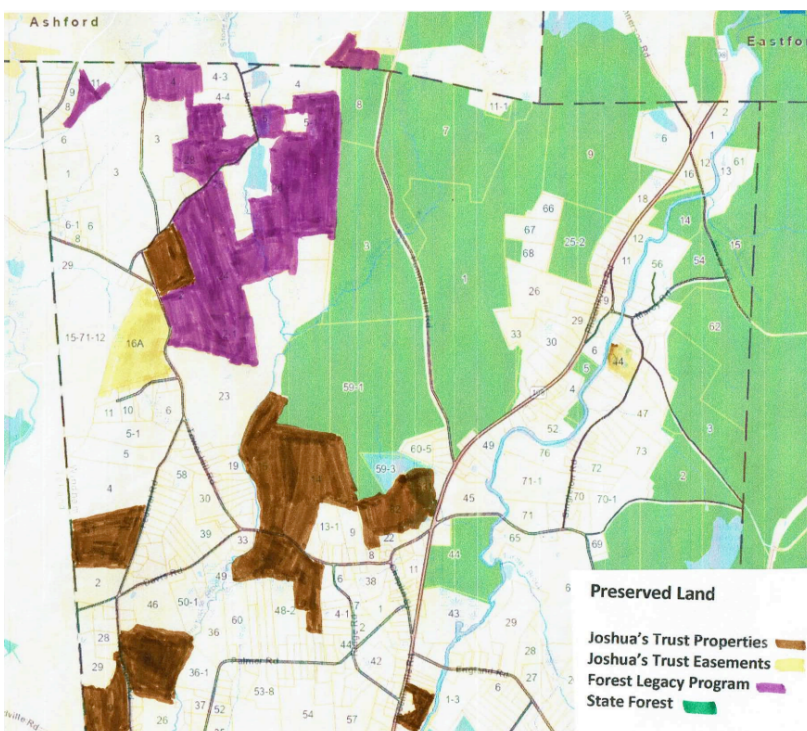
They don't call it the Quiet Corner for nothing. You've likely seen the night satellite imagery that shows the eastern seaboard from D.C. to Boston lit up like a high school football field. Northeast Connecticut, particularly the area between Storrs and the Rhode Island border, stands as an area of relative darkness. If you compare that striking imagery to similar images from just a few decades ago, it is evident that the changes to our region's landscape tend to go in one direction, toward more development, and away from the unfragmented forest and large open agricultural areas that make our area so unique.

Since its formation in the mid-1960s, Joshua's Trust has focused on the conservation of land, both for the public's enjoyment, but also, perhaps more importantly, as a way to preserve the rural character of our area and to keep our wild areas wild.

Connected forest areas are a critical component to preserving sustainable wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and these areas are quickly disappearing as development continues.

For the last several years we have been on a push to increase our rate of land protection, and particularly, to become more intentional about working with the land owners of eastern Connecticut to help them preserve those properties that are keeping the night in our night sky. This effort is called the Eastern Connecticut Highlands Initiative, and started with the development of a Strategic Land Conservation Plan, or SLCP, that involved the use of a geographic information system to identify the specific areas and the specific properties most critical to preserving the

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**"Today nearly 80% of Chaplin is covered by forested land. Much of it is contiguous and part of a huge North/South habitat corridor stretching into Ashford and Eastford and beyond. The Trust has prioritized this area for preservation in its efforts to address the effects of future global warming. In 2021 the Trust made a big headway in this effort by accepting over 425 acres of forested land in the Northwest part of Chaplin. We are thankful to Antoinette Monnier and Sam Harvey for their generous donations. The map of the northern part of Chaplin at the left shows how much of this land has already been protected under various programs. Joshua's Trust is participating in Chaplin's Bicentennial celebration by conducting trail walks this year on their Chaplin properties."**

**- Warren Church**

# JOSHUA'S TRUST NEWS

## JOSHUA'S TRUST

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The accreditation seal recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.

## IN PERSPECTIVE

by Rob Beach

We fought our way through the swamp - clumps of willow rooted in hillocks. Ducking through the tangles, we made our way to towering phragmites, blocking any semblance of visibility. The swamp was frozen, fortunately, so walking was at least possible;



we did not sink in to our knees. And in February there were no hungry insects. But even getting to the swamp had posed a prickly problem, as it was bordered by thorny thickets of barberry and multiflora rose.

Our project was to locate on the ground a parcel of land subject to conservation restrictions. In retrospect it was fun, but at the time, I have to admit, I wondered why we were doing this. This property couldn't possibly be developed, we thought, so why were we going through the redundant effort of trying to preserve it?

The answer, of course, lies in perspective. Though difficult for us bipeds to navigate, the swamp is home to a variety of life whose habitat is shrinking. Life is teeming under the ice; the reeds and branches would soon host a variety of birds. Our discomfort with the swamp may have been a key to the survival of other species.

*Continued on page 4*

## THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS



**StanleyBlack&Decker**





# OUR WATERSHED COMMONWEALTH

by George Jacobi

Like a sturdy oak whose roots entwine with those of other oaks, bolstering all in the face of windstorms, Joshua's Trust collaborates with a lot of organizations in a lot of valuable ways.



With funding from CT DEEP and from the EPA, the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District works to ensure that the many tributaries which form the Shetucket and Quinebaug watershed run clean and clear. As a close partner to ECCD, The Last Green Valley audits those headwater streams by doing temperature monitoring and riffle bioassessments. "We are on a treasure hunt for streams with good health," explains Jean Pillo, who wears several hats in the two organizations. "ECCD has been awarded funding from DEEP to work with eight towns in the Natchaug River watershed to prevent pollution at its source. This is the first EPA-funded 'healthy watershed' initiative undertaken in Connecticut!" Small brooks on Joshua's Trust land have been valuable to past surveys because access is available.

The CT DEEP, after a two-year comprehensive survey of their own, is engaged in a management plan to "conserve, protect, and enhance wild trout populations while increasing awareness and educating the public of the benefit of these efforts." It will include restoration of habitat, expansion of populations where extirpated or declining, and sustainable recreational fishing where possible. Trout Unlimited is a partner in the effort. TU's mission is essentially the same: protect and restore degraded wild trout habitat through partnerships with stakeholders.

In fact, the last populations of Connecticut wild Brook Trout and Slimy Sculpins hold on in the tiniest of streamlets. Many of those cold-water rills run through Joshua's Trust areas in the greater Natchaug watershed, and you don't need to be told how lovely those valleys are. Trout don't live in ugly places. From an eagle to a crayfish, not just in JT conservation areas but far downstream, all life depends on pristine brooks.

Joshua's Trust works regularly with the Wyndham Land Trust and other Connecticut conservation groups as well as the CT Forest and Park Association. We are part of the Pollinator Pathway Project. We interact with UConn's Natural Resources and Geography Departments. And volunteer work groups of UConn and ECSU students are a crucial part of our trail maintenance. Andy Woodcock: "When I started out as Volunteer Coordinator, my goal was a crew from teenagers to seniors. In the last two years, the youngest was three and the oldest was mid-80s!"

Sometimes we concentrate on rehabilitating land: forests, meadows, hills and dales. And sometimes we focus on the waterways that bring life to our properties. The near future will bring opportunities to be part of this greater watershed community, acting on behalf of the biota that surrounds us. A commonwealth is an agreement to work for the common good. We honor that commitment with our many conservation partners, and with the treasured environs under our protection. Like the oaks, we are all co-dependent. JT ECCD TLGV DEEP TU UC ECSU. This alphabet soup is hearty and soul-satisfying.

# JOSHUA'S TRUST NEWS

## KEEPING THE QUIET CORNER QUIET (CONTINUED)

unfragmented forests and wildlife corridors that are key to maintaining the ecological health of this area.

Four target areas of critical importance in the towns of Chaplin, Ashford, Eastford, and Hampton have been identified where we have started the process of engaging partners in this process. Our partners will include owners of the small undeveloped parcels in these corridors as well as the owners of larger critical tracts. Late in 2021, two generous donors got our Eastern Connecticut Highlands Initiative off to a strong start with donations of large tracts of land within one of our target areas in Chaplin. The properties, with a combined total acreage of over 400 acres, are the two largest properties that Joshua's Trust has acquired to date, and represent an increase of land that we protect through ownership by over 15 percent.

Both of the new properties, which will be known as the Tower Hill Preserve and the Harvey Preserve, are located along Stonehouse Brook in Chaplin and will be part of what we will refer to as the "Stonehouse Brook Biodiversity Corridor." The corridor stretches from Mansfield Hollow Park in the south to the Natchaug State Forest in the north and includes Joshua's Trust's Hubbard Sanctuary, Bernard Church Woods, Friedman Forest, and Pinkham Preserve, with additional land in the corridor protected by conservation easements. The watershed serves as a conduit for plants and animals, facilitating species mobility and migration and increasing the climate change resilience of the land. A significant project in this watershed could attract federal, state, and /or corporate funding support as a result of its potential to deliver numerous public benefits including public water supply protection, wildlife and waterfowl habitat preservation, natural landscape connectivity, and climate change adaptation. Expect to hear more about this initiative in the coming months and years. Consider it our contribution to keeping the Quiet Corner quiet and the night sky night.

## IN PERSPECTIVE (CONTINUED)

But there is also the perspective of time. Our mission is to preserve land of conservation value forever. We likely have a reasonably accurate picture of what the swamp will be like next month, next year, and probably for the next decade. There is little or no immediate incentive to subdivide the property or to conduct any activity that will detract from its natural condition. But the swamp won't preserve itself forever. We don't know with any degree of precision what the land will be like in a hundred years or five hundred years;

nor do we know what effect population pressure and technological innovations may have on the ability to develop the land. We hope that our descendants will not look back to our times and forlornly mourn for land that could have been conserved. We trudge forward, then, in the hope that we are doing our part in preserving land of conservation value forever.

### WANT TO SEE MORE OF JOSHUA'S TRUST?

*Follow us on social media!*



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# HESEL'S HAIRSTREAK

by Will Schenck

My obsession with the Hessel's Hairstreak began in 2020, when I had seen 300 different bird species in Connecticut. Options for new habitats were slim; slightly shabby, garage-side hummingbird feeders were the sort of places I was frequenting for rare wildlife. Slightly desperately, I was looking for searches that would take me to the pristine forests, fields, and marshes in which I had fallen in love with while birding. Butterflies



scratched that itch. Most have smaller ranges than local birds because they're dependent on host plants - where their eggs are laid and their caterpillars feed before metamorphosis. Connecticut has thousands of kinds of plants; some butterflies can develop on dozens, while others only live to fly if they feed on one specific plant in caterpillarhood. I was fascinated. I yearned to see butterflies dependent on a rare plant found only at a handful of sites. Before I knew it I was obsessed with seeing perhaps the hardest to find of all Connecticut butterflies: the Hessel's Hairstreak, the mysterious green queen of cedar bogs.

The Hessel's Hairstreak is a tiny green butterfly only found in bogs where its host plant, Atlantic White Cedar, grows. These tall evergreens grow in acidic, anoxic, waterlogged bogs, where towering cedars crowd close together above a 30-foot deep layer of soft, mucky peat. The butterflies depend completely on these rare habitats, which are few, and historically endangered by cedar's timber value. White-cedars soar skyward, ramrod straight, up to 100 feet high. Their bogs' acidic conditions render them resistant to rot. Woodcutters once would trek across bogs frozen solid in wintertime to clear the cedar stands, using the trunks for fenceposts. Few intact bogs - and hence, few hairstreaks - remain.

One of these is the Windham Atlantic White Cedar Bog of Joshua's Trust. This beautiful, pristine bog, which is located south of Route 6 in North Windham, is, possibly, one of the few Connecticut haunts of the (as I have learned) quite unfindable Hessel's Hairstreak. The butterfly is miniscule, with a wingspan of less than an inch. Its green and brown colors completely hide it in the murky shadows of its swamps. And, of course, its host plant is one of our tallest trees - the butterfly is thought to spend much of its time at the (completely unviewable) top of the dense cedar canopy. Despite this, the butterflies do need to find nectar - and it is possible that, with luck rivaling a million-dollar night in Vegas, it could be encountered sipping at a flower on the outskirts of such a bog. By me, not yet.

Rare habitats, rare plants, and rare animals are unique blessings. They invite us to contemplate our planet's beautiful - and fragile - biodiversity. Joshua's Trust has a unique role in that it conserves all three of these in one spot. The Hessel's Hairstreak still eludes this manic birder-turned-butterflyer, but I deeply hope that even if I miss it yet again, they will be fluttering among the green shadows of one of the most marvelous treasures of Joshua's Trust this spring.

*Will Schenck, 18, of Greenwich, is a writer and student at Wesleyan University interested in all manner of rare Connecticut wildlife, from rattlesnakes to Bog Turtles to Moose. To contact him regarding the Hessel's Hairstreak or any other rare wildlife, feel free to email him at [wschenck@wesleyan.edu](mailto:wschenck@wesleyan.edu).*

# JOSHUA'S TRUST NEWS

## IT'S SPRING – TIME TO MOVE!

by Nancy Silander

With the end of meteorological winter, we are all looking forward to getting out in the woods without worrying about slipping and sliding on ice and snow. For all the walks and most of the activities, please sign up at [josuustrust.org/events](http://josuustrust.org/events) and click on the event.

If you want to look for those early signs of spring, come join us on Saturday, April 9, at 1 p.m. at Friedman Forest, Ashford. Debra Hultgren and Peg Curtis will be searching for those elusive flowers beyond skunk cabbage, and for the migrating birds as well as nesting ones.

For those of you with an interest in history, come join us on Saturday, May 21, 1 p.m. at Madeline Regan Preserve, Tolland. Tina Waller, local historian, will introduce us to the Old Connecticut Path which forms a part of this preserve, and explain the importance of it.

Celebrate Chaplin's 200th anniversary with a walk at Hubbard Preserve on Saturday, May 28th, 1 pm. with local residents Deb Field and Warren Church. They'll talk about the natural history and the colonial history of this parcel.

On Connecticut Trails weekend, join us for a walk at on Saturday, June 4, 10 a.m., at Chenes-Roches to explore the newest trail and perhaps see Mountain Laurel in bloom. On Sunday, June 5 – 1:30 p.m. in a walk coordinated with Mansfield Parks and Rec – join hiking enthusiast and Joshua's Trust Regional Trail Steward, Juston Manville, for a guided hike in Sawmill Brook Preserve to celebrate CT Trails Weekend. Over three miles of trails wind through historic stone walls. Meet at the Sawmill Brook Preserve Trailhead on Puddin Lane (approximately 2/3 of a mile from the intersection of Rte. 195 and Puddin Lane). Please register with Mansfield Parks and Rec:

Want to discover one of the Trust's newest properties? Come join us on Saturday, June 18, at the Tower Hill Preserve (Tower Hill Road, Chaplin – look for the blue house on the north side). Deb Field will lead us on the newly developed trail system that highlights the stone walls and the flora of this unique preserve.

### Membership

Membership is given to anyone who gives at least one dollar to Joshua's Trust for one year. Our members are critical to the mission of Joshua's Trust and have the important role of voting on new trustees and other topics at our annual meeting (this year on April 9th, see page 7 for more details). Become a member of JT today by returning the envelope in this newsletter.

**We are looking for property monitors in these towns!**

Ashford  
Chaplin  
Columbia  
Hampton  
Mansfield  
Tolland  
Willington  
Windham

Email [ada.snodgrass@josuustrust.org](mailto:ada.snodgrass@josuustrust.org) for more information.





## BEYOND WALKS – JOIN US FOR THESE SPECIAL EVENTS!

by Nancy Silander

Our annual meeting will (finally) be held in person after a 2-year hiatus. We will meet on Saturday, April 9, from 4-6 p.m. at the Mansfield Eagleville Firehouse Community Center on Rt. 32 in Mansfield. Lynn Stoddard of Sustainable Connecticut is the speaker. We will have a short social hour – so come greet your fellow Trust members, elect our Trustees, and find out what sustainable Connecticut is all about. Please let us know if you are coming so we have enough snacks and drinks by visiting [joshuastrust.org/events](https://joshuastrust.org/events).

Celebrate Earth Day – April 22 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. Bring a short (1-2 minutes) reading – poem, essay – that inspires your affection for nature. Robert Thorson, co-coordinator of the Joshua's Trust Book Critters, will lead a short walk through the Knowlton Hill Preserve. At two stops, the overlook of Knowlton Pond and the crest of the drumlin, attendees will be invited to share short excerpts of their favorite nature writing (nonfiction, fiction, poetry) for adults and children with the group. Before, after, and between those reading stops, we will enjoy a lovely spring afternoon celebrating the splendor of the Earth, rain or shine. After the readings, we will take an optional walk around the trail loop. Please check the website for updates and please sign up in advance at [joshuastrust.org/events](https://joshuastrust.org/events) so we know how many to plan for.

Dance around the Maypole with us on Sunday, May 1, 2-4 p.m. The Mansfield Middle School Fiddlers will lead us as we twirl our ribbons around the pole at the Atwood Farm. We'll make May baskets and windsocks to keep or give away. Please note that this is weather-dependent and no need to sign up in advance.

If you have the urge to express yourself, come out this spring and give nature and a notebook your conscious attention for a while. See what happens to your imagination without barriers. Maybe we'll "live deliberately" as did Thoreau, at least for 45 minutes. Maybe we'll be aware of our awareness, like Annie Dillard. Want to find out? You won't really be learning to "write" (you may already write) but reminding yourself how to be in the world, engaging purposefully with the living mystery hidden in the living details. The act of writing hopefully nourishes your insight, intuition, and intimacy with a particular time and place, or perhaps with yourself. That's why we'll do it. Not so much to write, but to SEE. Call it Enviro-Sensory Perception. Join George Jacobi on Saturday May 14th (rain date of the 15th) at the Gurleyville Grist Mill at 1:00 pm. Register at [joshuastrust.org/events](https://joshuastrust.org/events).

Come to the Trust's inaugural Ice Cream Social: (from the Dairy Bar!) on Saturday June 11, from 12- 4pm. at the Atwood Farm. (There will be a small charge for the ice cream.) We will join with other Connecticut museums on Open House Day – including our Gurleyville Grist Mill – to showcase the two historical properties that the Trust cares for.

### JOSHUA'S TRUST AND CRYPTOCURRENCY

Joshua's Trust now accepts donations of cryptocurrency. For information or to donate, visit [joshuastrust.org/ways-to-give](https://joshuastrust.org/ways-to-give) or contact [kailyn.kowolenko@joshuastrust.org](mailto:kailyn.kowolenko@joshuastrust.org).

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# **VOLUNTEER WITH US ON SATURDAYS!**

**For the full calendar of volunteer opportunities visit  
[joshuastrust.org/events](http://joshuastrust.org/events).**

**April 9 at 10:00 am**

**H.E. Preston, Hampton**

**April 16 at 10:00 am**

**Josias Byles Sanctuary, Ashford**

**April 23 at 10:00 am**

**Tower Hill, Chaplin**

**Contact [andy.woodcock@joshuastrust.org](mailto:andy.woodcock@joshuastrust.org) for more information.**