



Invasive Species

By Steve Knauth

Invasive Species – they're here!
Sounds like the title of a sci-fi movie.
Unfortunately, they're a troubling reality.

These non-native plants – trees, shrubs and grasses – are alien to the local ecosystem and their aggressive growth can out-compete and displace indigenous species and greatly affect animal habitat, as well. The state DEEP calls invasive species “a serious problem in Connecticut.”

They are also a concern for the Land Trust. The two most troublesome species are the *Ailanthus altissima* tree and the marsh grass, *Phragmites australis*. “These invasives have been a major problem at many of our properties,” says Tom Rutherford, chief Land Trust steward. “Cross Lots and Great Meadow have been the primary focus of our eradication efforts and our spending.”

Phragmites australis is an aggressive perennial grass that's overgrown hundreds of acres of marsh land in the lower Connecticut River valley. It favors brackish, tidal water and was once part of the natural ecology. Fifty years



Phragmites' thick growth and root structure have an adverse affect of animal and bird habitat.



The native and the invasive phragmites species can be found growing side-by-side.

ago, according to the DEEP, a “mono-typical” phragmites, different from the native growth, began spreading in our region.

Using underground rhizomes, or vine-like roots, the grass produces new shoots as it grows, forming a complex, interwoven mat. Tall, stiff stalks, growing as high as 20 feet, form thick, impenetrable stands that completely take over the invaded area.

The grasses soak up nutrients used by native plants while blocking necessary sunlight. The thick stands hamper the movements of animals and birds, resulting in a loss of habitat diversity.

The Land Trust is using a 3-year program of bio-degradable herbicide application and mowing endorsed by the DEEP. (A longer method focuses on restoring salt water tidal flows as *Phragmites australis* cannot tolerate salt water.) “At Great Meadow we have sprayed and cut roughly 30 acres of phragmites last year and we've

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continued with more treatments this year,” says Rutherford. That would leave room for the native *Spartina alterniflora*, or cord-grass, to grow in.

Ailanthus altissima was first brought to the U.S. in the late 18th century and for many years was a favored tree used in city parks. In Betty Smith’s famous book, “A Tree Grows in Brooklyn,” the *Ailanthus* (also called the Tree of Heaven) was used as a metaphor for its way of thriving in a gritty, municipal environment.

Today, the tree is considered an invasive. It’s possibly the fastest growing tree in the U.S., according to the DEEP, spurting as much as six feet in a year in its early stages. It spreads quickly, both by seeds and by root sprouts, re-sprouting rapidly after being cut.

The tree secretes a chemical from its bark and leaves that inhibits plant growth around it. For



Spartina, or cord-grass, is a favored species for the open marsh, supporting a variety of wildlife.

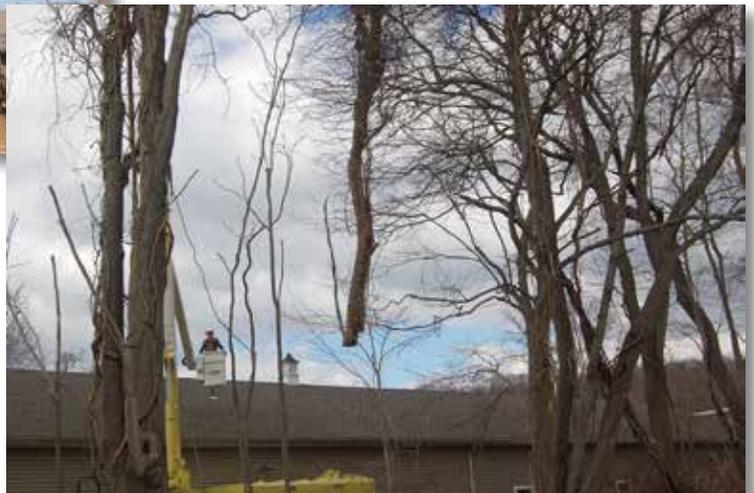


The fast-growing Ailanthus tree presents a challenge when it comes to removal.

this reason, it’s considered a noxious weed in the U.S. and much of Europe, as well as Australia and New Zealand.

At home, Cross Lots is the most affected by these Oriental invasives. In the last two years, with the help of Bartlett’s Tree Services, the Land Trust has removed 20 of the trees – some of them as tall as 70 feet. It’s the first step in restoring the park’s natural plant growth and habitat.

“These activities are part of the land trust’s on-going commitment to conservation and management of the properties we’re entrusted with,” says ELT president Jim Denham. “Acquisition is only the first step in what we do.”



Because they are so tall, the Ailanthus trees require special equipment for removal.

ELT Briefs

Source to Sea Clean-up Scheduled for Saturday, September 27, on Great Meadow

The annual Source to Sea Cleanup sponsored by the Connecticut River Watershed Council will take place on Essex's Great Meadow from 9 to noon on Saturday, September 27. Each September communities along the 410-mile length of the Connecticut River dedicate themselves to cleaning up their shoreline. Last year, over 2000 volunteers collected a haul of 45 tons, which included electrical appliances, furniture, automotive parts, and mattresses, among many other items. Join with your neighbors and help us clean the shores and marshes of our beautiful CT River. All ages and abilities are welcome.



Source to Sea volunteers with some of the debris collected in 2013.

The Ninth Annual Land Trusts Amateur Photo Contest - Deadline Is October 31, 2014

Amateur photographers, no matter where they live, may submit photographs of the scenic countryside, wildlife, plants, and cultural and historic features in the towns of East Haddam, Essex, Lyme, Old Lyme, and Salem. Submissions are accepted from the first to the last day of October 2014. Contest rules are available online at <http://www.lymelandtrust.org/news/photo-contest/>. Entry forms for the contest will be available after September 1 by email only at photocontest@lymelandtrust.org. A panel of three judges will award cash prizes in the following five categories: landscape/Waterscape ~ Plants ~ Wildlife ~ Cultural/Historic ~ Youth (photographs of any of the

The Preserve: Coming Down to the Wire



Satellite view of Preserve's 70 acres located in Essex

Fundraising for the purchase of the 1000-acre Forest (aka The Preserve) continues with momentum building toward a successful conclusion. With approximately \$2 of the \$3 million private fundraising in hand, we are still seeking contributions to make this project a reality. The transaction is scheduled to close in December. So time is of the essence. Support from Essex and Old Saybrook voters, the Governor and our legislators, have raised \$6.5 million of the \$7 million public funding target and the balance is in process. We are working hard to secure the remaining \$1 million and hope that you will consider joining us. If you have any questions or would like more information, do not hesitate to contact ELT President, Jim Denham at 860-876-0306. Donations can be mailed to the Essex Land Trust P.O. Box 373 Essex, CT 06426.

above subjects by photographers aged 14 and younger). Additionally, a special John G. Mitchell Memorial Award will go to the photograph determined to best promote and support biodiversity and the environment.



One of the 2013 Photo Contest Winners by Hank Golet.

“Listen-Up, Environmentalists”

By Paul Marden

The Essex Land Trust, The Essex Garden Club and The Potapaug Audubon Society have joined forces to present a talk on Rachel Carson, the celebrated author of “Silent Spring.” on October 6th at 2 pm (Essex Town Hall). Author and environmentalist William Sauder will present.

Carson was arguably the leading figure in sounding the alarm bell to the public on environmental issues and managed to force major changes in reversing the nation’s pesticide policies beginning in the 1960s. The chemical industry stopped manufacturing many dangerous products which were poisoning wildlife and the earth.

Publisher’s Weekly called Carson “a woman passionate in friendship, poetic and innovative in her books about the sea, gentle but ambitious, assiduously keeping tabs on her publisher’s promotion of her work. She explored the cold war anxiety about nuclear annihilation, the chemistry of pesticides like DDT and their flagrant postwar use, and an emerging understanding of ecology. Under severe stress and exhaustion from a cancer that eventually took her life, she synthesized these issues in ‘Silent Spring’, a meticulously researched, policy-changing picture of an earth poisoned by humanity. Fifty years later her insights are surprisingly relevant. We are challenged as mankind has never been

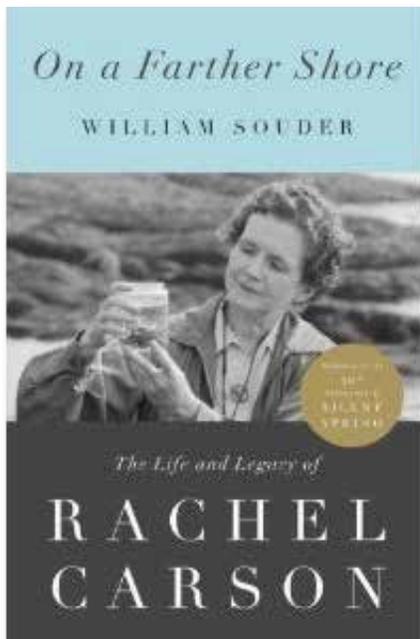
challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery not of nature, but of ourselves.”

Sauder’s talk is based on his book, “On A Farther Shore: The Life and Legacy of Rachel Carson” published in September 2012 on the fiftieth anniversary of Carson’s “Silent Spring.” His work has appeared in many publications including The Washington Post, The New York Times, Smithsonian and Harpers. He is the author of “A Plague of Frogs” which followed the investigation into the deformed frogs across America and “Under a Wild Sky”, the story of pioneer and bird artist John James Audubon. He was also a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize. Sauder lives in Grant, Minnesota.



Author William Sauder

Editor’s footnote: In 1956, our writer, Paul Marden, took a course entitled “Ecology” at the University of Michigan. This paved the way for his understanding of “Silent Spring”, first serialized in The New Yorker magazine in June 1962 where he was employed. “The shock waves it generated were staggering and some of them are still with us,” says Marden.



Volunteers Needed: The Land Trust continues to rely on its membership and the community to contribute with their most valuable asset, time. We have many tasks including helping plan events, sitting on committees, hospitality and greeting at events, trail maintenance, office assistance, and mailings. Please contact Judy Saunders at 860-581-8106 or email volunteering@essexlandtrust.org if you would like to become a more active part of our team.



By Steve Knauth

August saw construction of the fishway at Tiley-Pratt pond, the first of three planned “ladders” on the Falls River. The fishway opens more than two miles of new habitat for

migrating fish. A “grand opening” is planned for next spring, when the waters rise and the fish begin to move.



Spillway

The old Tiley-Pratt dam on the Falls River was chosen as the first fishway location – now a private home, it’s one of Essex’s oldest industrial sites



Damming the Flow

Workers from the Nature Conservancy and state DEEP spanned the spillway with an impervious tarpaulin anchored with sand bags. The pond drained through a second spillway, at far left.



Building Foundations

The fishway takes shape as the spillway’s generous supply of stones are built up into walls and the foundations laid for the fishway steps



Taking Shape

The steps and walls are in place; the fish will instinctively swim against the water flow.



Group shot

Sally Harold, director of River Restoration and Fish Passage for the state’s chapter of the Nature Conservancy stands at far left. Next to her is Steve Gephardt of the DEEP Inland Fisheries Division. Wearing the hat is property owner Larry Timmerman.

Coming Events – Mark Your Calendar!



Saturday, Sept 27 - 9 am – 12 pm at Great Meadow

“Source To Sea”, Annual River Cleanup

Join with your neighbors and help us clean the shores and marshes of our beautiful CT River. The event, coordinated by ELT and sponsored by the CT River Watershed Council, will also be conducted simultaneously by volunteers along the length of the river from Old Saybrook to Canada. Meet for your assignment at the Essex Boat Club (dirt road access between #143 and #145 River Rd, the lane that also serves Pettipaug Yacht Club). Wear waterproof boots and come rain or shine. Refreshments will be served. All ages and abilities are welcome.

Saturday, October 4 – 9 am

Hike Bushy Hill Nature Preserve – Bushy Hill Road entrance

Monday, Oct 6 – 2 pm

at Essex Town Hall Lecture: The Life and Significance of Rachel Carson

A presentation by William Sauder, Pulitzer Finalist and author of the biography “On a Farther Shore: the Life and Legacy of Rachel Carson.” Sponsored by the Essex Garden Club, Potapaug Audubon Society, and the Essex Land Trust, the presentation will delve into the life and impact of this remarkable scientist as she raised public awareness about the consequences of modern industrial development and the need to create environmental laws to protect the natural world.

Saturday, Oct 18 – 7:30 am

Register at Ivoryton Village Green 5th Annual Run Local / Read Local

Bring the family to run or cheer participants in the Ivoryton Library’s 5th Annual Run Local, Read Local 5K Run/Walk. Proceeds will benefit the Library’s community programs. The race meanders through Ivoryton Village and the Essex land Trust’s Falls River

Preserve. Prizes awarded in many categories. Runners 8 and under are given medals and pumpkins to paint. Sign-up at the Ivoryton Village Green opens at 7:30 am. Race starts at 8:45 am for children and at 9:15 am for adults. Parking is available in designated lots. Rain or shine. Co-sponsored by Essex Outdoors.

Saturday, November 1 – 9 am

Hike Fern Ledge – Next to former Shoreline Clinic, off Route 153

Thursday, Nov 6 – 7 pm

at Essex Town Hall

Lecture: Alternative Energy 101

Are you interested but confused by all the talk about “green energy”? Should you install a solar panel to power your home? How efficient are heat pumps? Is it smart to invest in home-generated wind power? These questions and more will be answered in a mini-seminar called “Alternative Energy 101” that will focus on green technologies and whether they are a cost-effective and practical choice for your home. Led by experts, the educational presentations will assist us in making informed energy-related decisions about these fast-changing technologies.

Saturday, Nov 22 – 9 am - 12 pm

at Cross Lots, 40 West Ave

Cross Lots Clean-up

A Fall Raking Extravaganza. Help put the Cross Lots Preserve to bed for the winter, get a mild workout, and connect with your neighbors, all at the same time and in a beautiful setting. Join us for a morning of raking and blowing and tidying up. Refreshments will be served. Please bring rakes, blowers, etc. Meet at 9 am in Cross Lots. All ages welcome including families, dogs. Rain date: Saturday, Nov. 29 at 9 am.

Saturday, December 6 – 9 am

Hike James Glen – End of Hudson Lane, off River Rd.

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