



## Preserve Maps and CT Trail Finder

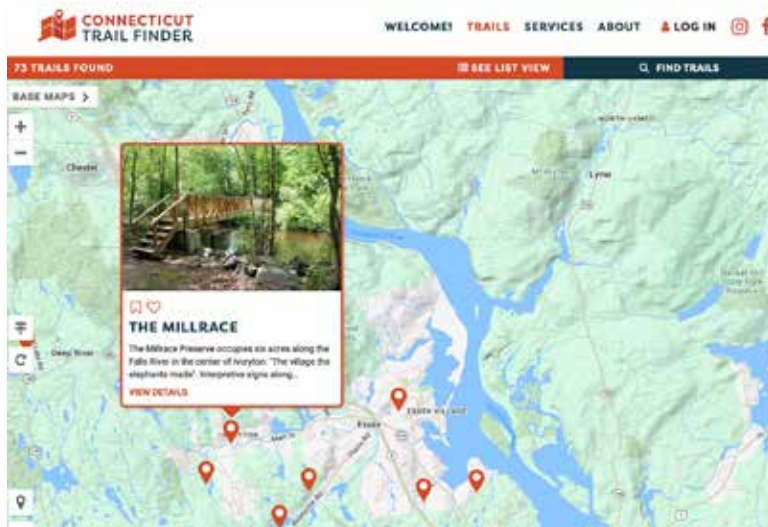
By Chet Arnold and Scott McCoid

Venturing into the woods has progressed quite a bit since Hansel and Gretel left their trail of breadcrumbs. With over 750 acres of woodlands and other natural areas in our 24 preserves, the Essex Land Trust (ELT) has always been aware of the need to help our visitors find their way. The Essex Land Trust Preserves & Trail Guide (free to ELT members) and individual preserve maps are downloadable from our website (<https://essexlandtrust.org/>). They contain striking maps of each of our preserves, showing the trails and include details such as stone walls, kiosks, elevation changes and prominent natural features. Great for Old School hikers -- but what about the digital age of smartphones and GPS?

With the adoption of Connecticut Trail Finder (CTF), the land trust is moving forward to make it easier to enjoy our preserves using a new technology. ELT has been working with the CTF team to take the trail information from our PDF maps and make it available online.

We selected CTF over other available GIS mapping software because it is curated by both the land trust and UConn, ensuring accuracy, it is free of charge and CTF does not disclose your personally identifiable information. Other providers often allow anyone to make entries which may include creating trails that don't exist or access points across private property. They often share or sell your data.

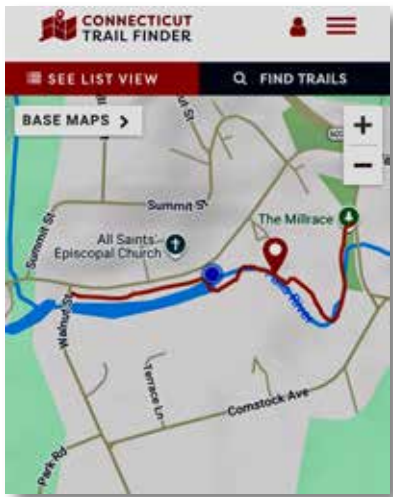
CTF is administered by the UConn CT Trails Program which



is part of the College of Agriculture Health and Natural Resources (CAHNR) with funding from the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the CT Greenways Council. CTF is a Geographic Information System (GIS) digital mapping program optimized for navigating publicly accessible trails located in forests, parks, and preserves. Users of CTF have access to trail maps, points of interest, directions to parking and a brief description of the history, terrain, flora and fauna of preserves and trails.

CTF is an interactive website, not an app that you have to download – so it's easily accessible on your smartphone. Once there, you can use the "Find Trails" filter to locate trails throughout CT. Other tips on using CTF:

- On each trail system's page is pertinent information, like distance, difficulty, and points of interest. There is also a detailed description of the trails and the preserve in general.
- Clicking the Trail Map tab will open a detailed map of the trail system. More in depth information is available by clicking the individual trail lines or pins to open pop-ups providing blaze color, distance, trail surface



and elevation/grade data. Your location will be shown with a glowing blue dot, so that you always know where you are.

- Trailhead Driving Directions are found in two ways using the “Directions Tab”. Clicking that tab will reveal a written description of the parking location and a map. Clicking the parking icon on the map will open Google

Maps allowing navigation to the trailhead.

- Establishing an account also allows access to other features such as a trail log and sharing.

Currently, 9 of ELT’s trails are on CTF, courtesy of a lot of work on the part of CTF folks digitizing our maps, with more to come soon. So, get online and check it out! Trail Finder is at: <https://www.cttrailfinder.com/>.

## Volunteer Spotlight - Chet Arnold

By Bob Nussbaum

**W**ho has the range of talent to write successful grants applications as well as a children’s book of verse Who can make technical presentations such as “low impact development” both understandable and enjoyable? Let me introduce you to Board member and volunteer Chet Arnold.

A past President and Vice President of the land trust, Chet has also been the longest-standing member of our Land Acquisition Committee, first as chair, then as a supporting member, through acquisitions from Falls River Preserve to Turtle Creek. Chet’s focus has been on establishing the conservation value of the properties that have been identified as ELT priorities, mapping the properties and establishing their potential for building open space corridors. He has represented our plans to the Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development, with an emphasis on protecting the Falls River watershed. In 1999, Chet wrote that “The Falls River is the ecological and historical lifeline tying together the villages of Essex.”

Perhaps most important, he has been our go to lead on finding grant funding for acquisitions. Reflecting on Chet’s many years with the land trust, former President and Chief Steward Al Macgregor said, “I think Chet’s outstanding contribution would be his grant writing. His early grants became a model.” Chet’s efforts have generated over \$1,250,000 in state open space grant funds to support seven major acquisitions, starting with the Falls River, which Chet has described as the turning point when ELT “entered a new era of proactive, well-planned land protection.”

Chet joined the Board in 1993, and first retired in 2011. He came out of “retirement” in 2017 to rejoin the board to work on Special Projects. One of the first of these was the creation of ELT’s Science and Technical Advisory Com-

mittee (STAC), which provides expert advice to our stewardship team on land management issues. STAC members Leslie Kane and Dr. Juliana Barrett recently hiked Johnson Farm with Chet to discuss the challenges of shrubland habitat management, which has resulted in a Climate Resilience Planning Grant from The Connecticut Land Conservation Council.



Dr. Barrett has been a colleague of Chet for almost 30 years and has seen him in action as a UConn land use and water quality expert, in the field, the classroom and in front of national audiences. While Chet is adept at navigating all of these, she notes, “...his love for Essex and in protecting the natural areas in and around it is a central part of who he is. Hiking daily with his dogs, through the woods and fields, thinking about how to protect, connect and manage these areas has led to numerous successful grant applications and just as many partnerships.” Chet has also provided many opportunities for UConn colleagues to work with ELT to the benefit of both, including development of a habitat management plan template, tools for riparian buffers and CLEAR’s geospatial trainings – to name but a few.”

Chet and his wife, Wendy, have always made the land trust preserves a part of their family’s experience, hiking with their kids, skating and hockey on the frozen Mill Pond, and walking their beloved dogs, Rusty and Roscoe. When you meet them on the trail, say thanks to Chet and hello to Roscoe.

# Boy Scout Eagle Badge Project at Cross Lots

By Leif Owens

The Essex Land Trust was very fortunate to be the beneficiary of another Eagle Scout project, this time completed at Cross Lots Preserve. The project to construct a storage shelter for our tractor attachments was led by Essex resident Zachary Scott of Troop 13 covering Deep River and Chester. Assisting Zachary from Troop 13 were: Josh Nash, Ben Nash, Brayden Palumbo and Alex Gatto. The Scouts were mentored by parents Peter Scott, G. R. Nash and Roger Gatto.

Despite sweltering heat and storms, the team was able to finish the project in early August. All told, the Scouts put in over 200 hours of work to design, prepare the site, raise



all the funds necessary to purchase all the materials, construct the shelter and cleanup. Cross Lots Stewards Al MacGregor and Leif Owens were incredibly impressed by their efforts and professionalism. The final product speaks for itself. It is incredibly well made and will last for many decades!

Past Eagle Scout projects have included the entrance bridge at Pond Meadow, a trail bridge at James Glen and tree

clearing at Canfield for the viewing platform.

Zachary is in the process of receiving his Eagle Badge for the project and we couldn't be happier for him and his team. Thank you, Scouts, great job!



# Remembering Jean Leuchtenberg and Jean's Island

By Steve Knauth

*Editor's Note: Long-time member, supporter and past land trust President Jean Leuchtenberg passed away on July 2, 2024, at the age of 99. Throughout her long life, Jean remained devoted to preserving the environment. Jean will be remembered for her zest for life and her enormous capacity to envelop those around her with love and compassion.*

**M**ain Street Centerbrook, where it passes alongside the Falls River, offers a picturesque view on a summer's afternoon; the Mill Pond's placid waters, green trees, soaring birds and a fleet of canoers and kayakers plying their paddles, circling around a small, wooded island.

It's a scene that warmed the heart of Jean Leuchtenberg, who, with her family, transferred the 8-acre island to the Essex Land Trust (ELT) in 2005, ending 40 years of ownership. For Jean and her husband, William, then a history professor at Columbia University, and their three sons, those eight acres made their summer home unique.

It was the mid-1960s when Jean and her husband were looking for a summer place; they spotted an ad in the New York Times for a Federal style house whose grounds included an island. "It seemed like a good price, and we jumped in the car and drove up to look at it. We loved the house and the town, and we were ready to buy."

The family called it simply The Island. "We had a lot of fun finding out about its three ponds and its history. They were used [as quarries] to build the Deep River Road." Today it is known as Jean's Island, and it's an integral part of one of the Essex Land Trust's most popular properties on the Mill Pond, part of the Falls River.

In the mid-1960s, when the Leuchtenbergs acquired it, the island looked much different than it does today. It was not as wooded. The middle of the island was still a meadow that had been used for grazing livestock years ago. The water would be released [at the Centerbrook dam] and the livestock could walk across through the mud. The family also had a screen house in the center of the island, and people came over for summer get-togethers and ice skating in the winter.

Over the years, Jean found herself falling in love with the Essex villages. "... and all the things around it ... It was a little town, it was a blue-collar town, still a factory town

in those days. It was a very different era, but it was changing. Essex was finding itself again, and I saw it."

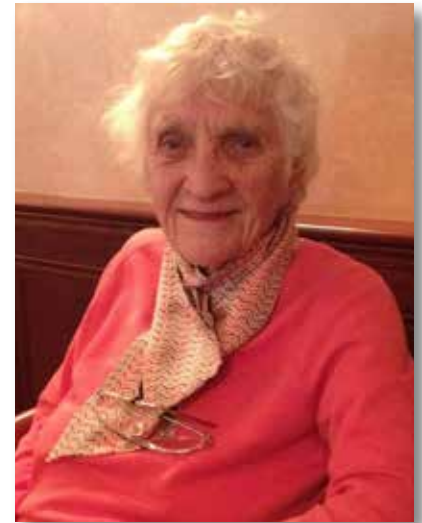
She decided to get involved with preserving its natural beauty. "I was at the cleaners in Deep River, and someone said to me, 'Jean, you better go out and do something about trees.' So, in 1990, Jean approached then First Selectman Bruce Glowac with the idea of creating a tree committee that would obtain funding to plant new trees in town. Today's Essex Tree Committee was born, and Jean headed it up for its first years.

She made it a goal to become a member of the land trust. "I started to go to meetings at the Town Hall and I saw that people were working together. The land trust was "the only organization to get excited about and I realized my goal - I finally became a member."

Then she became president in the mid-1980s, a time of change and expansion. "There was plenty to do," she says. "We had just inherited the Downey estate (soon to become Cross Lots). Members were passionate about it."

Her tenure bore fruit when, in the early 2000s, it became time to sell the family property; the beloved island was a chief concern. Although the family agreed that developing it would have been possible, it was not something they considered. "We didn't want to sell to just anyone." The land trust - Jean had served as president in the late 1980s - expressed interest, and eventually acquired the property in 2005. "We wanted to keep Essex more like a village."

Today, Jean's Island is now part of the land trust's 56-acre Falls River Preserves. After re-visiting her old home some time ago, the island's namesake could look back on a decision well-made. "When I saw [the river] that day, with the boats and the families all around, I thought it was the greatest thing ... It was beautiful, and the land trust keeps it that way."



# Riparian Areas Assessment by VRHS Students

By Chet Arnold

A quick look at the map of ELT preserves is all that's needed to confirm that the land trust has a strong emphasis on protecting our local waterways. In fact, ELT's Falls River Initiative has guided much of our land acquisition since the late 1990's, including about 140 acres in seven properties along the mainstem of the river and its tributaries.

In addition to the water itself, a very important feature that we wish to preserve are those areas adjacent to streams, rivers, ponds, lakes and other aquatic resources, known collectively as "riparian" areas. These areas, also referred to as riparian "zones," "corridors," or "buffers," are critical to the environmental health of their adjacent water bodies and the entire watershed. Riparian areas with healthy vegetation and soils help to slow runoff, filter pollutants, reduce flooding, regulate stream temperature, prevent erosion, and provide habitat, food and transportation corridors for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife.

To be better stewards of these important areas, ELT embarked on a project to assess the health of our riparian areas. The first step was taken over the last year with the help of Valley Regional High School (VRHS) students Abby Reardon, Anna McCauley, Joanna Petrone, and Natalie Novak. For their senior Capstone project, over the summer of 2023 the VRHS team assessed the riparian areas of four ELT preserves: Osage Trails, Falls River Park, Stanley Park, and The Millrace. Using a form adapted by the experts on the ELT Sci-



ence and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), the VRHS team conducted site visits of the four preserves and recorded key statistics such as the width, condition, and vegetation types in the riparian zone. Information on the major threats to these areas, including areas of erosion and the presence of invasive plant species, was also collected.

After working on collating and writing up their analyses during their busy senior year, the team's final report is now in the hands of the ELT Board members and stewards.

ELT's goal is to use this information to aid our stewards in the protection of our riparian areas. In addition to the specific information on the four preserves, the VRHS team helped ELT test the effectiveness of the survey form so that we can go on to conduct these assessments on other preserves. In fact, the form worked so well that faculty from the UConn Center for Land Use Education and Research are making a smartphone app version that can more easily be taken into the field and used by other land trusts and organizations around the state.

Many thanks to Abby, Anna, Joanna, and Natalie for a job well done!



# Volunteer Appreciation Event

**The Essex Land Trust Board recently hosted a volunteer appreciation event at Cross Lots in recognition of the important work performed by the many people who help us deliver on our mission. This group contributed approximately 5,000 hours of their time (valued at the equivalent of \$167,000). While volunteer efforts are most noticeable in the stewardship of our preserves, pollinator gardens and our American Chestnut orchard, considerable effort goes into managing our finances, programs and events, and communications. We could not be the organization we are without the dedication of all those individuals who spend their free time supporting us. The 60 people who attended enjoyed pizza, beverages and dessert. A big thanks to all!**





# Coming Events – Mark Your Calendar!



## Full Moon Hike

**Thursday, October 17, 6:30 PM**

**Johnson Farm, Reed Hill Road, Ivoryton**

There'll be "a moon out tonight" for our Full Moon Hike at Johnson Farm. See Johnson Farm in a "new light."

The moon will rise at 5:00 PM as we begin our hike and we're hoping for a crystal-clear night so the moon can light our way. The first part of the hike is moderate and goes over rocky terrain with lots of roots and a bit of elevation. The trail then opens to meadow and pasture-land for an open view of the moon. Following the hike, we'll head over to the Tap Room at the Blue Hound for socializing. Dress warmly and wear appropriate footwear. Bring a flashlight as well as binoculars or scopes for some stargazing.

This hike is weather dependent. Please check our Facebook page for updates. Registration is recommended. Scan the QR Code to register.



## Fall Hikes

Join us for Thursday morning guided hikes exploring some of ELT's 24 preserves and 35 miles of trails. Come for all or come for one, bring a friend or make a friend.

This is a great way to stay active, connect with others, and enjoy the beauty of nature. Hikes begin at 10 AM. Arrive by 9:45 AM so the group can review the planned trails and highlights. Hikes will be 1-2 hours depending on location. Hikes are weather dependent so check our Facebook page for updates.

### October 24 – Canfield Woods

Book Hills Woods Rd., Essex

### November 7 – The Preserve (West)

End of Ingham Hill Road, Essex

### November 21 – Bushy Hill/ Pratt Preserves

Bushy Hill Rd., Ivoryton

## Ivoryton Pumpkin Chase

**Saturday October 19 9:00 AM**

**Ivoryton Village Green**

Supported by the Essex Land Trust, this race benefits the Ivoryton Library and its programs. A portion of the run goes through our Falls River Preserve. Registration is online and check-in is at the Ivoryton Village green starting at 7:30 am. Race starts at 8:30 am for children and at 9:00 for adults.

## Pokewalk with Pokémon Go with the Essex Library Saturday

**October 26 11:00 AM Essex Library/Cross Lots**

Program for families and teens interested in getting outside and exploring Pokémon Go! All children under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Snacks will be provided. Get ready to catch some Pokémon! We will meet at the Essex Library and then travel over to the Cross Lots to get those kilometers in and stop by some PokéStops! And since this event is close to Halloween, we encourage you to get into the spirit by dressing up as your favorite Pokémon or Pokémon Trainer! Don't forget to download the app from the App Store or Google Play Store. Essex Library and Essex Land Trust programs are free and open to the public. No registration required, drop in!

## Preserve Fall Clean Ups

Help your land trust keep our preserves open by helping with one of our upcoming cleanups. Bring rakes, blowers, and tarps. Families are welcome. Dress warmly. Refreshments provided. Check our Facebook page for last minute updates.

**Saturday, November 23- 9:00 AM**

Osage Trails, Foxboro Road

**Saturday, December 7 - 9:00 AM**

Cross Lots, 40 West Avenue

**Saturday December 14 - 9:00 AM**

Falls River Park, Falls River Drive

Printing and mailing of *Woods & Waters* made possible by the generous sponsorship of  
**The Carlson Family Foundation**

*Woods & Waters* is published three times a year. **Jim Denham**, Publisher & Editor - A.C. Proctor, Essex Printing.  
**Board Members:** **Jeff Croyle**, President, Nominating & Volunteers; **Bob Nussbaum**, Vice President, Development & Membership; **Deb Carreau**, Treasurer; **Carrie Daly**, Secretary; **Joel Anik**, Finance Committee; **Chet Arnold**, Special Projects; **Jim Denham**, Communications; **Tom Gezo**, Programs & Events; **Paul Greenberg**, Acquisitions; **Peter Holland**, At Large; **Leif Owens**, Preserves Manager; **Kathryn Ryan**, Outreach.

**Essex Printing**

Essex Printing Company  
Centerbrook, CT 06409  
860 767 9087  
www.essexprinting.com