

## EHLT NEWS

*-This will be the first in a series about the various preserves of the East Haddam Land Trust-*

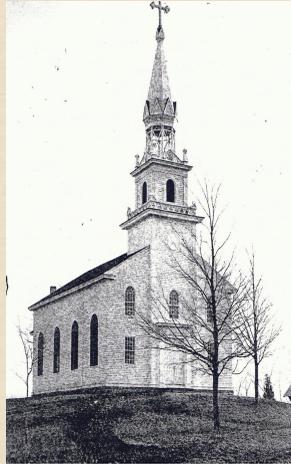
### The Duncan Preserve

The East Haddam Land Trust received the property now called the Duncan Preserve from the Connecticut River Gateway Commission in December 2010. From the cliffs overlooking a portion of Main Street, this twenty-acre donation has great seasonal views of the Connecticut River and the hills of Haddam. The history of this property goes back to the earliest settlement of the town.

Around 1670, some of the first settlers of Haddam looked to the east for better land. A few moved to the area along Creek Row, the first road laid-out and the first area settled in town. The names of these first settlers are synonymous with East Haddam – past and present. They included Ackley, Arnold, Bailey, Brainerd, Brooks, Clarke, Cone, Gates, Shayler, two Spencers, two Smiths, Ventres, Wells, and others.

Development continued in town and about the time of the Revolutionary War, William Gelston

built on his property on the corner of Creek Row and Porges Road, the first Episcopal Church. The present St. Stevens Episcopal church was built about 1790 as folks at and between the Landings were no longer interested in coming up the hill. The Creek Row church was eventually closed after attendance dropped off due to the close



Old St. Stevens Church (Courtesy Rathbun Library)

proximity of the two churches. It slowly fell into disrepair and was eventually fell or was torn down with most of the cut granite being removed from the site. The outline of the foundation is still visible along the new foot trail. Evidence suggests that the stones were probably quarried right on the property.

The property remained in the Gelston family name until it was sold to William Duncan, who had married Rebecca Gelston. Mr. Duncan, a wealthy Brooklynite, had planned to build his summer estate on the high prominence of the property. Unfortunately, the stock market crash of 1929 significantly reduced the wealth of the Duncans, so the mansion idea was shelved and they fixed-up a former pigsty on the property for a summer cottage away from the smells and pestilence of summertime New York City. The Duncans had a daughter, Dorothy and upon her death, through the efforts of the executrix of the estate, Anita Ballek, the family sold the property to the Connecticut River Gateway Commission. This action prevented any further development of the area and preserved the mature forest of this beautiful hill that provides such a lovely backdrop for the village of East Haddam.

The Land Trust has created a foot trail, which takes the hiker on a loop trail through the preserve. It starts at the parking area on Porges Road at the junction of Creek Row. It proceeds past the site of the church and down a steep embankment past a cliff showing evidence of quarrying. It crosses a small wetland and meanders up onto the various levels of the high lands. Here you can view mature oaks (White, Black and Red) and sugar maples. Other hardwoods abound and deer are obvious inhabitants. Beautiful seasonal views of the valley exist to the west. The trail wanders this area until it wends its way back to the starting point.

Please visit this preserve and see just some of what the East Haddam Land Trust has to offer. Enjoy your visit.



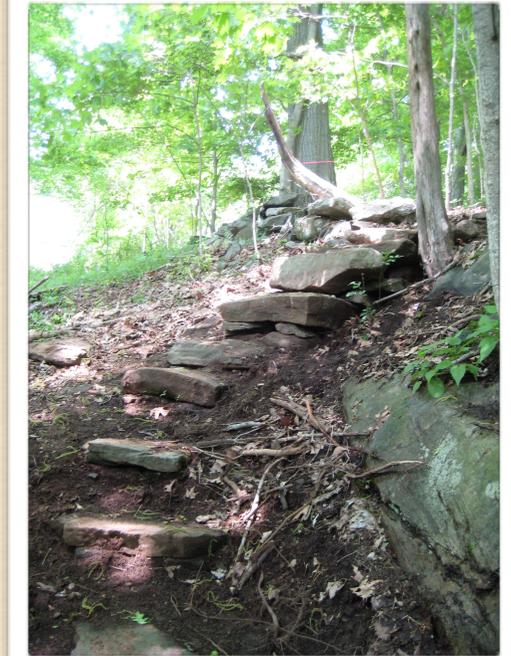
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# EAST HADDAM LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER



*Spring 2011*



# EAST HADDAM LAND TRUST

## Spring! Prime Time for Wildlife Watching!

Spring is here and brings with it ample opportunities for observing and enjoying the wildlife harbingers of the season! From our abundant wetlands we hear the vocal chorus of spring peepers and the quack-like croaking of wood frogs. Our woodlands resonate with the “who, who, who...who cooks for you?” of the barred owls and from our ponds comes the constant honking of Canada geese. This time of year it’s easy to see and hear a multitude of species that will become less conspicuous as time goes on, vegetation gets thicker, and wildlife hunker down to conceal and protect their offspring.

East Haddam is blessed with an abundance of wildlife in large part because of the many protected parcels of land trust properties and other conservation lands. The Connecticut River also serves as a migratory funnel for many birds



as well as habitat for summer residents like Bald Eagles and Ospreys. Even the relatively drab cormorants dress up for spring with the males sporting a spectacular purple eye ring and throat patch (you’ll need good binoculars or a spotting scope to see them, however!). Our town provides many pleasant places to view the spring spectacle of wildlife.

Hike the Sheepskin Hollow Preserve trail in April and when you get to the pond you’ll see

swallows, Canada geese and if you’re lucky, some handsome ring-necked ducks. The male ring-necks are mostly black and gray, but have a bright white crest on their shoulder. They frequent many of our ponds and lakes, resting and feeding during their northward spring migration. Or visit the Gelston easement tract where you are sure to see wood ducks and mallards. Check the large stick nests in the standing dead trees in the pond to see if the Great-blue herons have returned to nest there this year. The herons are actually more gray than blue, but easy to recognize with their 6 foot wing-span and long neck and legs.



Ring-necked Duck

There are many other great places to view wildlife, especially birds. If you hike in Machimoodus State Park to the sites overlooking Salmon River Cove you may see Bald Eagles or Ospreys. The Babcock Pond Wildlife Management Area has a nice viewing platform in the parking area off of Route 16. And, of course, any spot along the Connecticut River should afford views of a variety of water birds.

It’s nice to get outside after a long winter and seeing wildlife enhances every outdoor experience. It also provides tangible evidence that your support of conservation through organizations like the East Haddam Land Trust helps preserve healthy habitats that benefit both people and wildlife.

## Invasive Plant Alert: Pale & Black Swallowwort

The town of East Haddam is an area of special and unique biological diversity. Freshwater tidal marshes occur along the Connecticut River, the Eightmile River flows through a largely natural landscape, and 25,000 acres of forested lands cover 70% of our town (<http://clear.uconn.edu/>).

One of the biggest threats to these natural resources is the presence and spread of invasive plant species. Invasives not only crowd out both common and rare native species, but can also impact human health. Research by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station shows a strong correlation between dense barberry stands and high numbers of Lyme Disease-carrying deer ticks. Japanese Stiltgrass is one invasive plant making inroads in town; other plants worth getting to know, especially if you own land with pasture or open fields, are Pale Swallowwort and its closely related cousin, Black Swallowwort.

Swallowworts are perennial vines. They may survive in shaded, mixed hardwood habitat, but prefer sunny areas such as fields and roadsides.



Pale Swallowwort

Plants tend to grow in clumps with multiple stems and can form extensive patches. Swallowwort seed pods mature in late summer, and release a downy seed that is readily dispersed by the wind.

Swallowwort leaves are oval shaped with pointed tips, 3-4 in. long, occurring in pairs along the stem. Pale Swallowwort has small, star-shaped flowers, and are creamy pink to reddish brown in color. Black Swallowwort flowers have shorter petals and appear dark purple to black. Swallowworts are related to milkweed species, and will attract Monarch butterflies. However, Monarch larvae, which develop naturally on native milkweed, cannot survive when deposited on swallowwort, owing to the chemical composition of swallowwort leaves. g

Small numbers of plants may be removed by digging, making sure to get out the full root system. If nothing else, remove seed pods before they mature! Even mowing/cutting can prevent seed set - do this in July, when there are small, immature pods on the plants. Check the area a few weeks later, and cut again if needed, to ensure no seed is produced. Caution: hay fields with swallowwort, if harvested in late summer, may aid in the spread of this plant. This can occur through on-site wind dispersal of seed, or through sale of hay bales that hold swallowwort seed.



Black Swallowwort

## Upcoming Events

Stewardship Trail maintenance at Sheepskin Hollow Preserve on Saturday, June 18th at 9:00 AM. Watch for emails and website for more specifics.

Father's Day Paddle which will be Father's Day morning, June 19th, at 11:00 AM. President Shannon Goyette will be leading the paddle down the Connecticut River to Selden Cove and Creek. Put-in will be at the Hadlyme ferry landing.

The last hike until September will be held on June 26th at 1:00 PM at Hurd State Park.