



LAND TRUST NEWS

Preserving Open Lands In Our Towns

Spring 2016



Wolfrun Natural Area

HINTS OF SPRING

Ice softens, snow melts and the first, fragile hints of Spring appear. Once frozen ground becomes alive with growing things and our senses excite to the parade of life to come. Wildflowers such as springbeauties, bloodroot, and trout lilies confirm the seasonal change. Trees and shrubs, once barren, produce the soft green haze of budding leaves. The bright color and sound of newly arrived bird species fill our trees once again. The season of Spring assures us that new life greets us predicably, even after a long, cold winter... year after year. How fortunate we are to live in a rural community where Spring is experienced in so many, beautiful ways.



We're on the web: www.jult.org

Remember to "Like" us on



COME CELEBRATE OUR SPRING BIRDS!

Thursday, May 19 and
Saturday, 21, 2016

Join avid birder Evergreen Erb for a delightful slide preview of our favorite local birds and recent spring migrants at the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library's Fireside Room at 6:30 PM on May 19th. Next meet her at Mills Riverside Park at 7AM on May 21st for her Annual JULT Bird Walk. Evergreen has led this very popular walk for over seventeen years! Bring your binoculars and get ready to celebrate the variety of birds found within the park's numerous habitats. The event series is co-sponsored by the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library. Please call Livy at 899-2693 with any questions.

WHAT DOES "CONSERVED LAND" MEAN?

Sometimes there is a lot of confusion about the term "conserved" as this word is used broadly. For example, real estate advertisements may proclaim that a house sits by "conserved" land or include "preserve" or "conservation" in a development's name. There is also the general perception that public lands owned by the town, the university, and the federal government are conserved. In Jericho, these would include Mobbs Farm and other Town owned land, the Ethan Allen Firing Range and the UVM Research Forest.

But what does "conserved land" really mean? Is it the same as "open space"? Is any large parcel that is undeveloped and especially with public access "conserved"? Are zoning regulations strong enough to protect property? **The answer is, "No"**. The only way that property can be truly conserved is by working with a land trust to create a "conservation easement". The conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust that **permanently** limits uses of the land, primarily development, in order to

protect the property's special conservation values. These restrictions remain with the land and apply to all subsequent landowners. This is why land trusts describe property as permanently conserved. The land trust that "holds" the easement is responsible for ensuring year after year that the restrictions within the conservation easement are being followed. The Jericho Underhill Land Trust often partners with the Vermont Land Trust so that the larger organization holds the easement.

The language of a conservation easement is carefully crafted between the landowner and the land trust to make sure it reflects the landowner's wishes and protects the property's most important conservation values. An easement on property containing rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development (Wolfmun Natural Area) while an easement on a farm (the Barber Farm) might allow continued farming and the addition of agricultural structures. An easement may apply to all or a portion of the property, and need not require public access.

A landowner may sell a conservation easement, but easements are often donated to a land trust. The value of a conservation easement is determined by a qualified appraiser who establishes the highest selling price for the land, usually through development, and what the land would be worth without that right. The difference between the two numbers is the value of the conservation easement. If the donation benefits the public by permanently protecting important

THANK YOU!



JULT wishes to thank our many members that have renewed this year. Your support allows us to focus on land conservation and land stewardship within our community. ***We also seek new members! Please fill out the newsletter panel and join us.***

Thank you!

conservation resources, and meets other federal tax code requirements, it can qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation.

YOU ARE INVITED to JULT's Annual Meeting on May 2, 2016

Come get an update about your local land trust and join Susan Morse, one of the country's most experienced naturalists and founder of the non-profit Keeping Track ©. Sue will be presenting about:

THE COUGAR RETURNS TO THE EAST

There is no question about it. Cougars are not only being seen in eastern North America, some are attempting to recolonize their former habitats. Where once it was flatly dismissed as an impossibility in the so-called "developed" east, scientists have now documented cougar dispersals and even occupancy of a growing list of eastern states and provinces. Join us for a magnificently illustrated introduction to cougar biology and ecology in the broad diversity of habitats where Sue has studied them, from Alberta to the Arizona/Mexico border. We will also get the low-down regarding the latest confirmations of cougars in the east, including the recently documented suitability of a substantial amount of wild habitats from Manitoba to Louisiana and Maine to Georgia. It is only a matter of time! Sue states, "Cougars are the embodiment of the wild; they are out there beyond us. They are in the world and of the world."

Please join us on May 2, 2016 at the Underhill Town Hall to hear more about the return of the cougar and Sue's field research! Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and light refreshments will be available; the presentation follows a short JULT business meeting.

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WANTED

JULT's small board of trustees is in need of more folks who share our passion for land conservation and wish to become involved in this effort. All skills and talents are appreciated. Please call Livy (899-2693) with questions or come to our monthly meeting. We meet in the back room of the Community Center (Jericho Center) at 7PM, the first Monday of every month.

TOWN LAND CONTRACTS END IN JERICHO

Landowners who have benefited by entering into the Town Land Contract will no longer have that option. These contracts offered reduced taxes for property that remained undeveloped over a period of time. Back taxes were required as a penalty for breaking the contract. The concept behind this agreement was to create an incentive for land to remain open and undeveloped, a desired goal for many Town residents. Undeveloped land requires little in services and offers the "rural character" which is greatly appreciated and enhances our quality of life. This open land is now in serious peril as landowners must choose to either enroll in State Current Use (if their property qualifies) or simply pay higher taxes. Many cannot afford either and so there is now, greater pressure than ever, to subdivide and develop.



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Membership Matters

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Help protect our future landscape...TODAY

Please note: All JULT memberships now run on a calendar year from January 1st to December 31st.

Please sign me up for:

- Conservator** membership \$500
- Steward** membership \$100
- Sponsor** membership \$50
- Family** membership \$35
- Individual** membership \$25
- Student/Senior** membership \$10
- Lifetime** membership \$1,000
(Beat inflation and avoid renewal notices!)

Name _____

Address _____

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Please make **checks** payable to **JULT** and mail to the address below. Or you may **pay by credit card via our website: www.jult.org**. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Other considerations:

- My employer's matching gift is enclosed.
- Please **do not** send me a "thank-you" gift.
- I wish to remain anonymous.

Please contact me regarding:

- Conservation options for my land
- Making a gift of stock
- Including JULT in my will
- Other planned giving opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities:
 - ___ Fundraising/Events
 - ___ Office/Administration
 - ___ Trails/Land Stewardship

