

WLCT TIDINGS

Fall 2023



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The Westbrook Land Conservation Trust Newsletter

President's Message by Bill Neale

Dear Members, Friends and Neighbors,

The Land Trust has had a busy year of volunteer work and activities.

- In November 2022, volunteers picked up litter at a number of properties to the south of I95.
- A trail and stair planning hike took place on our property that connects Autumn Ridge Road and Lake Louise Drive on February 11. Now that the Town of Westbrook owns the former Toby Hill VIII property, the Land Trust will be able to make a trail connecting the to it. This will eventually allow a two to three mile circular trail (with about a half mile on roads).
- In preparation for ospreys, on February 25, we inspected our two osprey nests, removing fishing line and plastic that could harm the birds.
- On a cold Saturday morning in March, we had a table at the Daisy Dash, cheering on runners while providing juice and information on the Land Trust.
- In April, we celebrated Earth Day outdoors with home-made refreshments and a nature knowledge quiz including objects, bird calls and questions.
- Connecticut Trails Day saw Land Trust Board and Conservation Commission member Molly Bernstein lead a hike at Chapman Mill Pond.
- May 21 was the spring cleanup of properties north of I95. Volunteers picked up numerous bags of trash and were thanked by positive neighbors.
- Family Day on the Green, June 10, saw Land Trust volunteers helping children make sun catchers with paper plates and plant materials from gardens.
- At the Westbrook High School Graduation, a student received the Land Trust Environmental scholarship and a book.
- After a quiet summer, the Land Trust sponsored the International Coastal Cleanup for Westbrook. This event was initiated by the Ocean Conservancy to allow folks from all over the world to work together to gather many tons of trash and document ocean cleanliness. Save the Sound coordinates activities in Connecticut and we work through them. This year, 21 volunteers picked up over a hundred pounds of trash.
- The Tom O'Dell Memorial Open Space was the site of a planned short nature walk by Doug White and Molly Bernstein in September with members of the Senior Center and Garden Club. Rained out twice!

Annual Meeting! November 8, 2023. The Bear Reality

Learning to Coexist With Black Bears in Residential Connecticut

Connecticut DEEP Wildlife Division's Felicia Ortner, a Connecticut Master Wildlife Conservationist and a bear enthusiast, will be the speaker at WLCT's annual meeting. Her topic is "The Bear Reality," will provide education regarding bears, while dispelling common misunderstandings.

Library Community Room, @ 7 pm

A Look ahead at the The Bear Reality..

Felicia Ortner has been studying bears for 30 years. In the mid-1990's she turned her passion of learning about bears into a passion for teaching about them. In 2008, the Connecticut Department for Energy and Environmental Protection came together, and Felicia began presentations on behalf of the DEEP. Since then, Felicia has given nearly 200 programs across the Northeast.

Glimpsing a black bear in Connecticut was once unlikely because bears were eliminated from the state by the mid-1800s. Since then, black bears have made a comeback. Their return is due, in part, to the regrowth of forestland throughout the region following the abandonment of farms during the late 1800s. Accumulated data indicates that the black bear is seldom aggressive towards humans.

Nevertheless, as bears become more regular residents of Connecticut towns, it is important that people learn to adapt to the presence of bears and take measures to avoid damage and problems. If people do not take precautions, problem behavior by bears can increase, possibly leading to bears being removed or destroyed. Here are some hints:

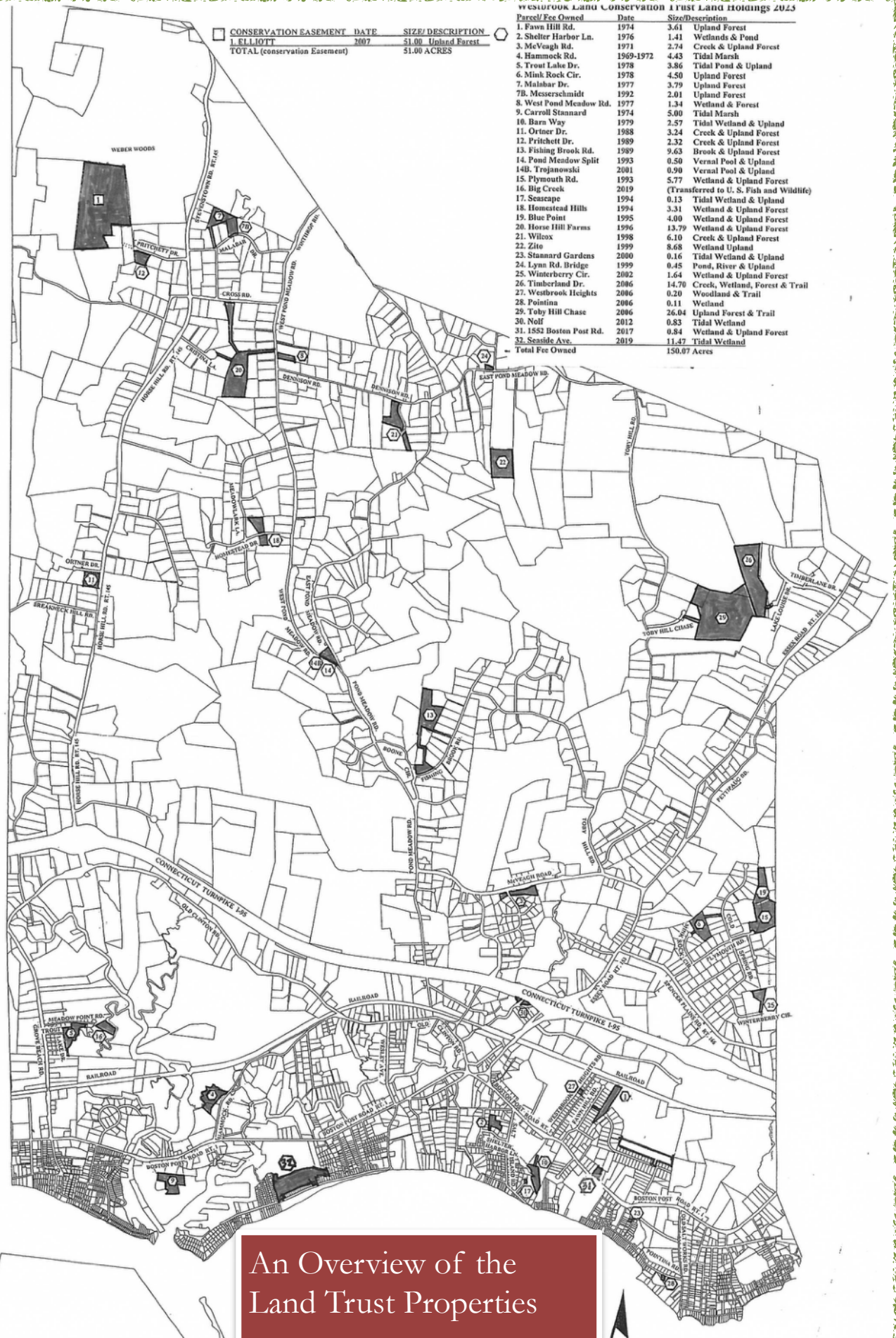
Some bear advice from Felicia Ortner:

- Remove bird feeders from late March through November. If a bear visits a bird feeder in winter, remove the feeder.
- Wait until the morning of collection before bringing out trash.
- Add a few capfuls of ammonia to trash bags and garbage cans to mask food odors. Keep trash bags in a container with a tight lid and store in a garage or shed.
- Do not leave pet food outside overnight. Store livestock food in airtight containers.
- Do not put meats or sweet-smelling fruit rinds in compost piles. Lime can be sprinkled on the compost pile to reduce the smell and discourage bears.
- Thoroughly clean grills after use or store in a garage or shed.
- Never intentionally feed bears. Bears that associate food with people may become aggressive and dangerous. This may lead to personal injury, property damage, and the need to destroy problem animals.
- Encourage your neighbors to take similar precautions.
- Report bear sightings to the Wildlife Division, at (860) 675-8130.

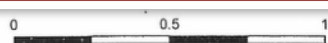
WESLINGTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST LAND HOLDINGS 2025

CONSERVATION EASEMENT	DATE	SIZE/DESCRIPTION
ELLIOTT	2007	51.00 Upland Forest
TOTAL (conservation Easement)		
		51.00 ACRES

Parcel/ Fee Owned	Date	Size/Description
1. Fawn Hill Rd.	1974	3.61 Upland Forest
2. Shelter Harbor Ln.	1976	1.41 Wetlands & Pond
3. McVeagh Rd.	1971	2.74 Creek & Upland Forest
4. Hammock Rd.	1969-1972	4.43 Tidal Marsh
5. Trout Lake Dr.	1978	3.86 Tidal Pond & Upland
6. Mink Rock Cir.	1978	4.50 Upland Forest
7. Malabar Dr.	1977	3.79 Upland Forest
7B. Messerschmidt	1992	2.01 Upland Forest
8. West Pond Meadow Rd.	1977	1.34 Wetland & Forest
9. Carroll Stannard	1974	5.00 Tidal Marsh
10. Barn Way	1979	2.57 Tidal Wetland & Upland
11. Orner Dr.	1988	3.24 Creek & Upland Forest
12. Pritchett Dr.	1989	2.32 Creek & Upland Forest
13. Fishing Brook Rd.	1989	9.63 Brook & Upland Forest
14. Pond Meadow Split	1993	0.50 Vernal Pool & Upland
14B. Trojanowski	2001	0.90 Vernal Pool & Upland
15. Plymouth Rd.	1993	5.77 Wetland & Upland Forest
16. Big Creek	2019	0.13 Tidal Wetland & Upland
17. Seascape	1994	0.13 Transferred to U. S. Fish and Wildlife
18. Homestead Hills	1994	3.31 Wetland & Upland Forest
19. Blue Point	1995	4.00 Wetland & Upland Forest
20. Horse Hill Farms	1996	13.79 Wetland & Upland Forest
21. Wilcox	1998	6.10 Creek & Upland Forest
22. Zito	1999	8.68 Wetland Upland
23. Stannard Gardens	2000	0.16 Tidal Wetland & Upland
24. Lynn Rd. Bridge	1999	0.45 Pond, River & Upland
25. Winterberry Cir.	2002	1.64 Wetland & Upland Forest
26. Timberland Dr.	2006	14.70 Creek, Wetland, Forest & Trail
27. Westbrook Heights	2006	0.20 Woodland & Trail
28. Pointina	2006	0.11 Wetland
29. Toby Hill Chase	2006	26.04 Upland Forest & Trail
30. Nelf	2012	0.83 Tidal Wetland
31. 1552 Boston Post Rd.	2017	0.84 Wetland & Upland Forest
32. Seaside Ave.	2019	11.47 Tidal Wetland
Total Fee Owned		150.07 Acres



An Overview of the Land Trust Properties



Parcel Spotlight: Hammock Road and Seaside Avenue, #'s 4 and 32

Estuaries, where freshwater meets the sea, are often called “nurseries of the sea.” In our area, estuaries are predominated by salt marsh meadows, which are amongst the most productive environments on earth. Estuaries are fragile ecosystems, sensitive to human activity. The muddy salt marsh grass environment supports diverse and unique marine life, from microbial organisms to snails, crabs, reptiles, fish and birds, that feed and reproduce here. Rarer birds include the willet, clapper rail, egrets, salt marsh sparrows, and ospreys. Recent studies show increasing tidal levels in the marshes, perhaps affecting nesting. Investigate current research at www.tidalmarshbirds.org. Salt meadows are critical to tangential ecosystems, as they relinquish organic matter and life forms that feed food webs in the river and coastal mudflats and waters.



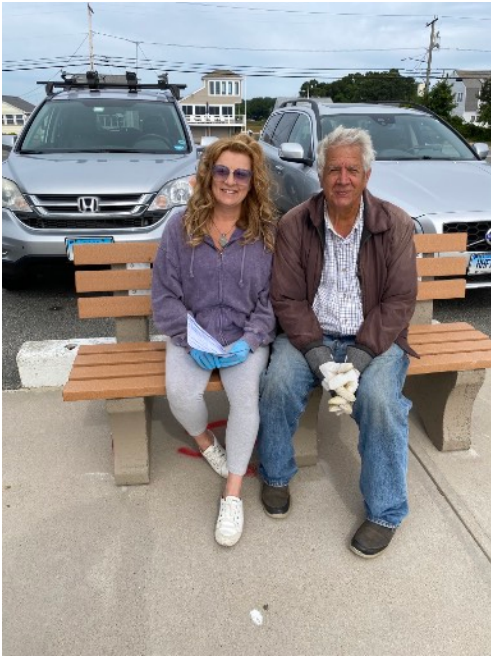
Annual osprey nest cleaning in late February 2023

In 1969, a 0.99 acre salt marsh on **Hammock Road** was donated to the Land Trust, establishing our first parcel. Since then, the Trust has acquired five more salt marshes parcels. Two have the distinction of osprey platforms - on the Hammock Road piece, built by the Trust, and on the recently acquired 11.47 acre tidal marsh property behind **Seaside Avenue**.

Adult ospreys migrate here from the south in March. Fledglings leave the nest in late July. Once threatened with extinction by DDT and shoreline development, ospreys, with the assistance of osprey platforms, have made a major comeback in Connecticut. In the mid 1970s, there were fewer than 10 nests in the state. In 2021, 622 nests with young were counted. Sadly, entanglement with line or plastic in their nests is considered a current threat. Ospreys are considered an indicator of the health of the natural world. They survive on 99% fish in shallow waters, as they cannot dive more than 3 feet deep - despite soaring to over 600 feet to dive! Research ospreys at www.allaboutbirds.org. Find an osprey nest near you, and follow a pair's progress.

Our community endeavors in pictures..

Annual International Coastal Cleanup Day September 18, 2023



Beautiful day with a hurricane out to sea



DECOMPOSITION RATES OF MARINE DEBRIS	
Glass Bottle	1 million years
Monofilament fishing line	600 years
Plastic beverage bottles	450 years
Disposable diapers	450 years
Aluminum can	80-200 years
Foamed plastic buoy	80 years
Rubber boat sole	50-80 years
Foamed plastic cup	50 years
Tin can	50 years
Leather	50 years
Nylon fabric	30-40 years
Plastic film canister	20-30 years
Plastic Bag	10-20 years
Cigarette filter	1-50 years
Wool sock	1-5 years
Plywood	1-3 years
Waxed milk carton	3 months
Apple core	2 months
Newspaper	6 weeks
Orange or banana peel	2-5 weeks
Paper towel	2-4 weeks

From: "Pocket Guide to Marine Debris," The Ocean Conservancy, 2004. Sources: U.S. National Park Service; Motu Marine Lab, FL and "Garbage In, Garbage Out"

A Timberlane Trail Planning Hike

Early in February, members of the Board ventured into the Timberlane Property from Lake Louise Drive to inspect the entrance and to locate survey markers on the way in. The intention of the Trust is to develop a trail system the would link this property with that of the Town's Toby Hill VIII property, which it borders. An invigorating walk along Trout Brook transpired. Go visit!





Program Review “America Outdoors” with Baratunde Thurston

Instead of a book review, this year we have a TV program review and recommendation.

America Outdoors is in its second season on PBS and you can see it on YouTube as well. Baratunde Thurston is a person you would enjoy going hiking with. He shows so much enthusiasm for the outdoors he could get even a confirmed indoor hermit to be enthralled by an adventure with him. He says he loves making compost and he loves making cocktails with his characteristic warmth.

Each episode focuses on a nature destination and the people of the region who love it. Thurston says one of his goals is to bring people together over nature. He visits people of all colors, ages, and political persuasions as they share their favorite natural space with him. There are some famous places and some simply locally known but all are treated with the personal connection. Thurston relates to everyone’s love of their favorite place in an open and respectful way. We members of the Westbrook Land Trust can connect with them through our shared appreciation for our protected open space.

This show does bring nature lovers together. The viewer feels kinship with each of the locals along with Thurston. We recommend watching.

In Thanks for Foundation Support

Westbrook Foundation Grant

At this time last year, we were awarded \$3362 for ongoing promotional materials, including new signage for all properties and our website.

The Community Foundation of Middlesex County

In the form of two separate grants, in November and December of 2022, we were awarded a total of \$2283. Thank you to the Lenny and HoAnn Goldberg Kindness Fund and to the Mary Javnrin and Natalie Janvrin Wiggins Fund for Birds, Other Animals and Nature. The Board has determined to use these funds for and improved entrance to the Timberlane Property, Lake Louise Dr.



February 25th Osprey Nest Visits Hammock Road



and



... Seaside Avenue



Out in the Community: **The Daisy Dash, in March**....We had a table with juice and water,...fun and cold!



Family Day on the Green, in June
.. Making dream catchers from paper plates!



Management Plans for the Trust's 32 Properties

Tom Elliott, Properties Committee Chairman, is writing Management Plans for each of our 32 parcels. Along with the formal, written Management Plans, he is gathering maps and plans such as the Assessor's map, the relevant surveys, aerial photographs and topographic maps. A management plan lists the maps, surveys and photos found with their dates and source, then it covers the town volume page and parcel number along with the deed date. The plan goes on to describe the topography and vegetation. The final part of the plan is the stewardship goals: what the Land Trust hopes to do with or use the land for. These range from simple monitoring to trail, and even bridge building.

This project is invaluable to the Land Trust in that it captures the institutional memory we have for our parcels in a useful and understandable format. All the plans are saved electronically on our shared drive and accessible to the board. It is a wonderful base from which to plan. Thank you to Tom for this Herculean effort!

Land Trust News & Information

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, November 8, 2022

Annual Meeting 7 pm

Westbrook Library Community Room

Sunday November 19:

1 - 3 pm: Fall Properties Clean-Up

*Visit some of our parcels, south of Route 1! Help clean up bottles and litter. Bring work gloves and a can-do attitude! **Meet at the town hall parking lot.***

Board Meetings are held on *the 2nd Wednesday* of most months at 7pm in the Town Hall. All are welcome!

For questions about these activities, e-mail WestbrookLCT@gmail.com



WLCT website

WLCT Mission Statement: The Westbrook Land Conservation Trust acquires, preserves, and actively stewards its own real property, including wetland and woodlands, to conserve natural resources and promote the scientific, educational and passive recreational uses of open space, all for the benefit of the public. In addition, the Trust supports the town of Westbrook in its endeavors to conserve and educate the public regarding the value of its natural environment.

Board of Directors: Bill Neale, *President*. Jean Vossler, *Vice-President*. Angoli Cotton, *Secretary*. Doug White, *Membership*. Tom Elliott and John Cotton, *Properties*. Sarah Greaves, *Counsel*. Kristin Elliot-Leas, Molly Bernstein, *Members at Large*. Barbara Helander, *Alternate*.

To end, some pics from the Annual Open House, held at the home of Bill and Martha Neale on Earth Day for the first time. Snacks and an overview of our latest property developments by Tom Elliott, a daunting nature quiz by Jean Vossler, and scintillating company kept us entertained.

*Thank you, everyone, for your time and generous support this last year!
.....Get outdoors!*



Westbrook Land Conservation Trust Membership Form

P.O. Box 1124, Westbrook, CT 06498 (860) 399-5224 email: WestbrookLCT@gmail.com

Names and Address: (Please list all family members)

_____ Individual \$15.00/year
_____ Family \$25.00/year
_____ Patron \$50.00/year
_____ Sustaining \$100.00/year
_____ Life \$500.00
_____ Additional contribution
for land acquisitions

E-mail: _____

Phone:

By providing your email address, members will receive notification of board meetings, special activities, including nature walks, as well as property clean ups, and a newsletter highlighting annual accomplishments.

Make checks payable to "Westbrook Land Conservation Trust." Dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Circle one

Yes No Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.
Yes No Please contact me about neighborhood stewardship.
Yes No Please have a director call me to discuss land acquisitions

Or, join or renew membership online @ WWW.WestbrookLCT.org

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

*Westbrook Land Conservation Trust can be proud of its 55-year history, and its part in the protection of approximately 20% of Westbrook's land area as open space. Our responsibility to manage it prudently involves insurance, the majority of the annual expense of the organization. **Please join and make your contribution to the continuation of responsible stewardship.***

Membership involves as little as the \$15 for individuals, but there are plenty of opportunities for more involvement including helping with the newsletter, stewarding one of our parcels or becoming aboard member. You will receive our newsletter, be invited to help with special events - including hikes and programs with speakers - and get updates on important environmental issues such as land use issues in Westbrook.

*The success of **our Land Trust depends upon an active membership**, for financial support, to maintain properties, and to meet local needs for conserving and enjoying open space in Westbrook.*



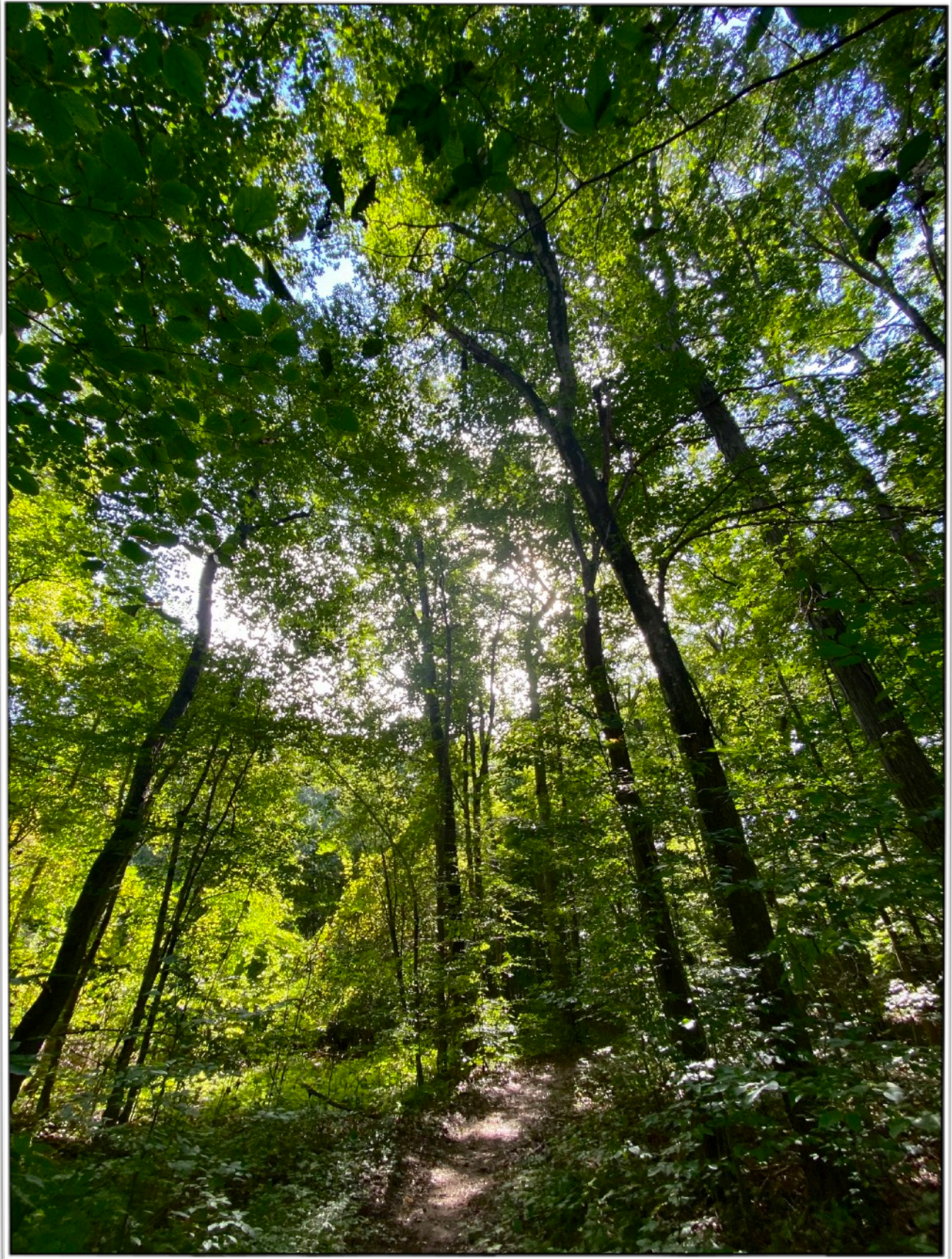
**Westbrook Land Conservation Trust
Land Holdings 2021**

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16. Big Creek	1.90	transferred to USFWS
17. Seascape	0.13	Tidal Wetland & Upland
18. Homestead Hills	3.31	Wetland & Upland Forest
19. Blue Point	4.00	Wetland & Upland Forest
20. Horse Hill Farms	13.79	Wetland & Upland Forest
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22. Zito	8.68	Wetland Upland
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Total Fee Owned	150.27	Acres
<u>Conservation Easement</u>		
1. Elliott	51.0	Upland Forest



What is the extinction of a condor to a child who has never seen a wren?

-Naturalist Robert Michael Pyle



Horse Hill Farms Property

