



BRANFORD LAND TRUST

SPRING 2025 • VOLUME 35, NUMBER 1

PRESIDENT'S LETTER: LEAVE A LEGACY

The Branford Land Trust often uses the word “legacy,” which can mean different things to different people. For the BLT, it starts with making a positive impact on people and places that will last long into the future. Legacies connected to the BLT go back to our founding in 1967. The BLT now has several more stories to add to our shared conservation legacy. But these are not just stories – they are living examples of real people just like you who care about our earth and decided to make a difference. Each contribution is distinct in nature, reflecting the unique life situation of the given individual. Together they allow the BLT to protect the landscapes we all love. We miss our friends and value their powerful decisions to leave a lasting impact.

A Legacy of Service

Chet Blomquist (1926-2024) was a physical education teacher who had a unique ability to motivate and organize others and create enthusiasm and interest in outdoor activities. He served on the board of directors of BLT. Chet was a naturalist and found a passion in trails. He developed a 24-mile hiking trail around the perimeter of Branford and led hundreds of walkers on this trail for more than 20 years.

Louise LaMontagne (1943-2024) was an attorney and ardent believer in volunteer service and an enthusiast for preserving open space and natural resources. She was active in the Branford Land Trust, serving as President from 1990-1994, maintaining an advisor position until her death. Under her leadership, the BLT acquired a hard-won conservation easement on Beacon Hill Preserve, a one-of-a-kind Connecticut landscape where the Metacomet trap-rock ridge meets Long Island Sound.

A Legacy Through Memorial Giving

Jon Grossman (1928-2025) worked with automobile franchises. He felt strongly about giving back to the Branford community and spent many years in public service. He had a passion for outdoor activities and loved skiing, sailing and tennis. The Grossman family requested that, in lieu of flowers, memorial donations be made to the BLT in his name.

Jeffrey Meyer (1963-2025) was a judge serving the District of Connecticut. His childhood was spent roaming woods and fields. He inherited a tradition of public service and a deep love of animals and the natural world. He was a runner, and the BLT trails provided a

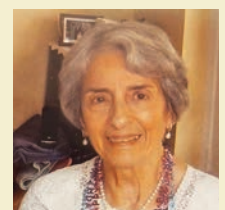
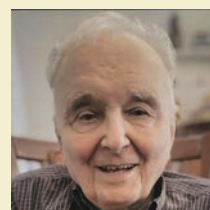
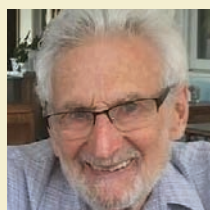
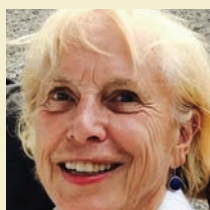
place to run and recharge from his demanding career. Jeff's family listed the BLT among the charities for memorial donations in Jeff's name.

A Legacy of Land

Angelo DeLeo (1930-2024) was born in Italy and worked in the US as a toolmaker. He was an avid gardener and enjoyed growing vegetables and flowers. Angelo donated eleven acres of prime land to the Branford Land Trust. This beautiful spot is one of the few remaining open fields in Branford. Named “DeLeo Field”, it is the trail-head for the Peiper and Queach preserve trails and is the site of numerous BLT events.

Nina Gambardella (1924-2025) loved music and completed piano and operatic vocal training. Her family lived in a house in Branford but always planned to build a house on their property in Stony Creek. Over the next 50 years, the family would enjoy swimming, picnics, cookouts, and camping there, but would never build on the site. In 2011, Nina and John donated the 10 acres to the BLT, which named this piece of land “Gambardella Woods.”

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BRANFORD LAND TRUST

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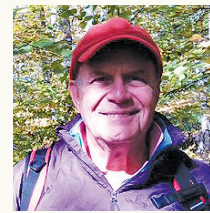
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A Legacy of Financial Resources

In 2024, BLT received a donation that had been set forth in the estate plan of the family of **Thomas Steitz** (1940-2018). Thomas Steitz was a renowned scientist as is his wife, Joan. Tom loved being outdoors. He was a steady, powerful hiker and a determined photographer of wildflowers.

In 2025, the BLT received notice that it will be receiving a bequest from the estate of **John Lewis Smith** (1943-2023). John was an accomplished scientist who loved nature and being out-of-doors. He often hiked, biked and kayaked throughout the beautiful Branford area.

This year, the BLT received another donation from the **Deirdre Baker Schiffer** Fund. Deirdre (1943-2011) was a talented artist whose home on the Farm River estuary, brimming with natural life, was a bountiful source of expression in her work. Joe Schiffer and his sons, Paul and Jordan, established the fund through the Branford Community Foundation in memory of his late wife. The fund has a particular focus on environmental issues, education, and protection.

We are saddened at the loss of these wonderful neighbors and friends. But their passing reminds us that whether we are artists or attorneys, singers or scientists, teachers or toolmakers...each of us has something beautiful and incredibly valuable to contribute. We each have the opportunity to act out our values through a legacy of time, talent, or treasure.

To volunteer, donate, or to learn more about planned giving, go to branfordlandtrust.org/help. ■

Julie Wagner, President

Click here for ways YOU
can support the BLT:



The Branford Land Trust NEWS is mailed to all Land Trust members. It is produced by Words by Jen, Branford.

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 22

WINTER LECTURE

SERIES: Forest Health & Climate Change with David Irvin

Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.
Blackstone Memorial Library

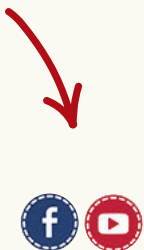
Have you looked around the state a lot lately? If so, you may have noticed something about this very forested state. There seem to be more and more dead trees all the time. What's going on? This presentation discusses the latest slew of forest health pests and pathogens and how climate change tends to exacerbate the impacts of insects, disease, and weather on the overall health of our forests. What can be done? DEEP Forestry briefly explains how forests can be made more diverse and resilient to better withstand the onslaught of new environmental challenges.

APRIL 27

Signs of Spring Walk

Sunday, 2:00 p.m.

Join BLT naturalists for a walk around Beacon Hill, a traprock ridge with stunning views of the Long Island Sound and Farm River Marshes. We'll be looking for the signs of spring all around us — what will we see?



Visit our website for details on
all of the events you see listed above.

www.branfordlandtrust.org

MAY 10 & MAY 11

Annual Mother's Day Bird Walks

Saturday & Sunday, 9:00 a.m.

Identify birds by sight and their calls on the popular annual Mother's Day bird walks with Chris Woerner along the Stony Creek Trolley Trail, and BLT Vedder property.

MAY 12

ANNUAL MEETING Insects and Water with Julie Michaelson

Monday, 6:30 p.m.
Blackstone Memorial Library

A brief meeting including the election of incoming directors, followed by "Insects and Water" with Julie Michaelson. Insects make up over 60% of aquatic animal diversity, and are critical components of inland aquatic habitats. They are also highly sensitive to environmental change. What happens on shore doesn't stay on shore. Our upland activities impact the health of aquatic ecosystems and water quality.

JUNE 22

Bug Out! Walk

Sunday, 2:00 p.m.
Young's Pond

A fun and fascinating walk for the whole family with entomologist Julie Michaelson at Young's Pond. Expect to see bugs and more and learn about the importance of little creatures for the environment.

Saturday Work Parties

These are great opportunities for people of all ages and skill abilities to get outside, learn, explore, and interact with fellow community members. We have a lot of exciting projects in the pipeline and will need your help to complete them. If you, or any of your family or friends are interested, come out and join us to experience what we are doing. (We meet 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.)

APRIL 19

Saturday Work Party: Jarvis Creek Preserve

Saturday, 9:00 a.m.

Bring: boots/hiking shoes, work/gardening gloves, wheelbarrows, rakes (steel), shovels. Trash bags will be provided. There is plenty of room for parking at the preserve, 727-793 Leetes Island Road/Route 146. Look for the "Entrance" sign on the south side, the gravel driveway will bring you up to the parking lot. Please note, there is an established, one-way traffic pattern.

MAY 17

Saturday Work Party: Van Wie/Red Hill Woods

Saturday, 9:00 a.m.

Bring: boots/hiking shoes, work/gardening gloves, trash pick-up tools, pruner/loppers, hand saw, and hiking/walking stick. Onsite parking is available for both areas. Let's plan to meet at the end of Red Hill Road at 9 a.m. The trailhead and parking area is located at the very end of Red Hill Road, which is past the last house on that road (150 Red Hill Road).



SAVE THE DATES!

Join Us for 36 Hours of Giving
www.TheGreatGive.org



**Your donations through The Great Give
will benefit renovations of the
Land Trust House. Watch for more details**

BRANFORD LAND TRUST EARNS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Strong Commitment to Public Trust and Conservation Excellence

One thing that unites us as a nation is land: Americans strongly support saving the natural spaces they love. Since 1967, the Branford Land Trust has been doing just that for the people of Branford. We are proud to announce that we have renewed our land trust accreditation — proving once again that, as part of a network of over 450 accredited land trusts across the nation, we are committed to conservation excellence.

“Renewing our accreditation shows the BLT’s ongoing commitment to permanent land conservation here in Branford,” said Julie Wagner, BLT president. “We are a stronger organization for having gone through the rigorous accreditation renewal process. Our strength means special places — such as Van Wie Woods, Jarvis Creek Farm & Stony Creek Preserves, and the Pisgah Brook and Saltonstall Mountain Preserves — will be protected for generations to come.”

The BLT provided extensive documentation and was subject to a comprehensive third-party evaluation prior to achieving this distinction. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded renewed accreditation, signifying its confidence that the BLT’s lands will be protected forever. Accredited land trusts now steward over 20 million acres — the size of our treasured Denali, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Glacier, Everglades and Yosemite National Parks combined.

“We are proud to recognize BLT’s continued commitment to conservation excellence,” said Melissa



Kalvestrand, executive director of the Commission. “The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction that stands for excellence, trust and permanence. The BLT is part of a network of over 450 accredited land trusts that are united by their strong ethical practices. Accredited land trusts inspire confidence and respect among their peers and in their communities.”

The Branford Land Trust is one of 1,281 land trusts across the United States according to the Land Trust Alliance’s most recent National Land Trust Census. ■

ABOUT LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission inspires excellence, promotes public trust and ensures permanence in the conservation of open lands by recognizing organizations that meet rigorous quality standards and strive for continuous improvement. The Commission, established in 2006 as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, is governed by a volunteer board of diverse land conservation and nonprofit management experts. For more, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org.

MEMBERS-ONLY EVENT: Private Tour of Dawnland Museum & Dudley Farm Museum Grounds

In March, Branford Land Trust members joined Quinnipiac Dawnland Museum curator, Jim Powers, and the Dudley Foundation President, Maria Trumpler, for guided tours that focused on the evolution of honoring the land through the ages. Guests learned how the Indigenous Quinnipiac lived in community, in harmony with the seasonal landscapes, as well as how they adapted to climate changes on the land through their hunting and agricultural practices during the period of colonialization. Generations of the Dudley family cultivated the land where the Farm Museum still exists with orchards, gardens, and dairy, grain and even ice production. Both museums are open to the public on weekends, June-October. (Photos by Heidi Richard & Julie Wagner) ■



DID YOU KNOW...

The TREE OF HEAVEN (*Ailanthus altissima*) is an invasive plant. Also known as Chinese sumac, it is a persistent and aggressive weed throughout Europe and North America. *Ailanthus* grows quickly and can reach a height of 8 feet in its first year; ultimately these trees are 80-100 feet. It flowers in late May through early June and may produce several hundred flowers each year, each containing hundreds of seeds. Single trees may produce up to 350,000 seeds in one year. Seeds are small, easily dispersed by wind, and mostly viable. Trees also reproduce readily via root sprouts that can emerge up to 50 feet from the nearest trunk. Once established, its primary mode of reproduction is through root suckers. The compound leaves of tree-of-heaven resemble those of staghorn sumac, but tree-of-heaven can be distinguished by its foul-smelling leaves.

A recent BLT work party tackled a cliff-side cluster of Ailanthus altissima at the Beacon Hill Preserve.

(Source: CT Invasive Plant Working Group)

OUT & ABOUT WITH THE BLT

Photos by Lauren Brown, Gaile Ramey, and Julie Wagner



Clan Mother Shoran Piper (Golden Hill Paugussett Nation) and Jesse Rose (Schaghticoke Nation) were guests at our annual Film Screening, which featured the film "Custodians: A Story of Ancient Echoes."



What will YOU see? Deer, coyote, rabbit? Tom Cleveland and Chris Woerner led our two popular Animal Tracking classes this year at the Saltonstall Preserve. Our keen nature guides took a hardy group of all ages, from 3 to 73, on a cross-country ramble through the winter woods. We sharpened our senses together to detect the clues of animal life all around us; we investigated hoof prints, rubbed trees, bent branches, scat, bones, and bits of fur or feathers to piece together the animals' winter life stories.



It was wonderful to see that so many friends and supporters of the BLT turned out at Branford High School to hear Pulitzer Prize-winning author Dr. Jeffrey C. Stewart speak at the 40th annual MLK Day Breakfast, sponsored by Branford's Rev. Dr. MLK Jr. Heritage Foundation. Pictured here are Rick Weis with Margo Henry, and past BLT presidents Bill Reynolds and Meg Kilgore.



Many of BLT's Stewards gathered at the Stony Creek Brewery in March to celebrate the successful monitoring of every one of the Trust's 71 Preserves and Easements in 2024.



Our Winter Lecture Series has included "The Mission of Preserving Our Wildlife" with Christine Cummings, A Place Called Hope and "Recovering Kinship with the Living Earth: Spiritual Ecology and Local Environmental Renewal" with Samuel King, Director of Sustainability for the Marist School Network. See page 3 for other upcoming events. ■



PLANTING NATIVE PLANTS AT THE LAND TRUST HOUSE



Thank you to those who have renewed your membership for the 2025 calendar year!

The Branford Land Trust values your support for the protection and acquisition of open spaces which in turn empowers and connects the community through education and access to the precious natural habitat that we all share.

Perks of membership include members-only events such as the recent Dawnland Museum private tour.



If the date above your address on the mailing label is before July 2024, it's time to renew your membership.



Thank you to Lauren Brown, Bill Chapin, Taite Hodson, Ivy Kim, Susie McDonald, and Clara Pagliaro for helping to establish a native wildflower plant garden at the Land Trust House.

With the back space cleared to make room for our septic tank and leaching field, they've been working hard to save the remaining white oaks and other native species, and to plant a variety of native seeds and plugs for white wood and heart-leaved aster, wrinkled and seaside golden-rod, blue vervain, purple-top grass, broomsedge bluestem, ironweed, and more. All of the seeds were locally gathered. This should be a wonderful environmental and wildlife friendly option to planting grass. Be sure to check out the plants' progress this spring! ■





BRANFORD
LAND TRUST

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WANING CRESCENT MOON

The sun has fired up the moon this morning,
so much there's steam rising from its Sea of Rain

or so it appears there to the east, above the harbor
between Saturn and Mars — not to forget our place

its ten degrees high, just right of the circlet of Pisces
where Aphrodite and Eros tether together forever

a thunderous moment — for gods and humans alike
all of us illuminated and roaring through space

the birds are well aware and in a raucous
a predawn cacophony of sound and sacrament

a chorus of gulls calls out from the shore,
a crow offers its blessing, the doves in mournful prayer

grieve the silence before it ends
the day quickly writhing and rising to meet us

— Jen Payne