

NEW JERSEY NATURAL LANDS TRUST

2013 Annual Report



Preserving New Jersey's Natural Diversity

Statement of Purpose

The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust was created by the Legislature in 1968 as an independent agency with the mission to preserve land in its natural state for enjoyment by the public and to protect natural diversity through the acquisition of open space. The Trust preserves land primarily by donations of open space through acquisition of title in fee simple or of conservation easements, and manages its properties to conserve endangered species habitat, rare natural features, and significant ecosystems. The Trust invites passive use by the public for recreational or educational purposes wherever such use will not adversely affect ecological communities and biological diversity.

The Trust also recognizes that ownership and management alone are not enough to achieve its mission. Public education is an integral function of protecting natural diversity. The Trust distributes information designed to convey a conservation ethic for the protection of open space and its natural values.

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Cover: Roman Senyk

Cover Photo Credit: Martin Rapp

Index of Preserves Referenced Within the 2013 Annual Report

Atlantic County

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Mankiller Preserve ~ 1

Burlington County

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Cumberland County

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In 2013... the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust brought approximately 423 new acres under Trust stewardship, making the Trust responsible for approximately 28,000 acres managed as a system of more than 120 preserves throughout the state.

The acquisitions represented additions to the **Bearshead, Budd Lake Bog, Clarks Landing, Four Mile Branch, Gravel Hill, Great Piece Meadows, Long-A-Coming, Mankiller, Petty's Island, Retreat, Richard J. Buhlman, Reinhardt and Sweet Hollow** preserves.



An inviting trail at the Sweet Hollow Preserve

Gravel Hill Keeps Growing

The Trust's Gravel Hill Preserve in Holland Township, Hunterdon County is so named for the composite rocks forming an elevated area in the south central area of the township, known as Gravel Hill.

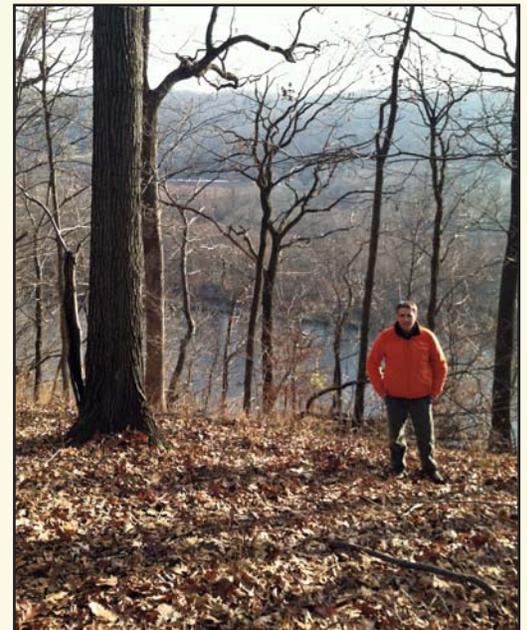
New Jersey is divided into four regions, known as physiographic provinces, which are areas with similar sequences of rock types, geologic structures and a common geologic history: Ridge and Valley, Highlands, Piedmont and Coastal Plain provinces. Two of these provinces meet in Holland Township where the Highlands Province is separated from the Piedmont Province by a series of major faults crossing Holland Township and reaching the Delaware River near Church Road. Near these faults, fast flowing streams surged down the steep mountains, depositing sediments including quartzite and limestone on the valley floor. Deposits dominated by quartzite, which is more resistant to erosion, aggregated at the middle of Holland

Township forming Gravel Hill.

Within this unique geologic area, the New Jersey Green Acres Program and the Trust recently preserved 82 acres, known as the Silva Farm, as an addition to the Trust's Gravel Hill Preserve which now totals 325 acres. This latest 82-acre property is our biggest addition to this preserve yet. There are at least 50 separate tax parcels within the Gravel Hill Project Area with some parcels of less than an acre. When Pam Their of Green Acres first approached the Trust a decade ago with a small preservation opportunity of 10 acres, Trust preserve manager Martin Rapp was not really all that interested and asked, "What is the Trust going to do with a land-locked 10-acre property?" Pam assured Martin that she could persuade a number of landowners in this interesting area to preserve their properties, making it worth the Trust's while and resulting in a consolidated preservation area with public access. True to her word, Pam has managed to convince a number of prop-



View of Gravel Hill from the Silva Farm



Views of the Delaware River from the Silva Farm

erty owners within Gravel Hill to preserve their property, creating a unique preserve.

The open farmland of the Silva Farm offers restoration opportunities to benefit grassland birds such as bobolink, American kestrel, eastern meadowlark, eastern bluebird, grasshopper sparrow, vesper sparrow and Savannah sparrow. In addition, the Silva Farm provides an important buffer around areas of the preserve where habitat for a rare plant known as wild comfrey is found. It is possible that long-tailed salamander may inhabit the preserve as well.

The Gravel Hill Preserve includes a maze of logging roads which can be used for hiking and the new addition of the Silva Farm includes rolling hills extending out to the Delaware River bluffs offering beautiful views of the river. The best access to this preserve is located along Spring Garden Road.



Former Silva Farm fields are now part of the Gravel Hill Preserve

Another Round of Federal Funding for Bog Turtle Habitat

In 2013 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that the Trust had successfully applied for two federal grants totaling \$440,000 for the purchase of 164 acres in Lafayette and Wantage townships in Sussex County to preserve and protect habitat for the federally threatened and state endangered bog turtle.

The awards from the Service are provided under the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act). This fund provides grants through three different programs: the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program; the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program; and the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program. The Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program provides funds to states and territories to acquire habitat for federally endangered and threatened species with approved recovery plans, which in New Jersey includes bog turtle, among other species.

Through the Trust, New Jersey was one of just 14 states to receive a Recovery Land Acquisition Grant in 2013. With the 2013 award, New Jersey's recent awards total more than 1.2 million dollars. And this marks the third time in recent years that this grant has been awarded to New Jersey, making it one of the more successful applicants for this competitive federal funding. The federal money will provide about 40 percent of the estimated \$950,000 cost of the land acquisition, with the state's Green Acres Program funding the balance.

The grants will fund two separate acquisition projects each

of which will connect habitat by creating corridors for existing turtle populations. These acquisitions also will protect habitat for other plant and animal species in the region including the globally rare and state endangered spreading globe flower. In addition, they will connect to approximately 350 acres of already permanently preserved property in the area. This landscape-level of protection for upland forest and grassland habitats helps to conserve the hydrology and water quality of the wetlands.

Once the properties are preserved, the Trust will work with the Service to undertake management activities (similar to the work done by the Trust at the Papakating Creek Preserve at Armstrong Bog and the Bear Creek Preserve, as described below), including the removal of woody vegetation to establish a more open canopy, ensuring that a proper wetlands area exists for the bog turtle population.



Bog turtle. Photo Credit: Brian Zarate

Many Hands Make Light Work

As the old saying goes, many hands can make light work--as it did recently when several biologists and volunteers improved habitat for the state endangered bog turtle. The Trust entered into a management agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge, in 2012 to provide onsite management of the Papakating Creek Preserve at Armstrong Bog. The Service provides biological expertise and routine enforcement help in managing this prime bog turtle site. Refuge Biologist Colin Osborn has applied his skills and knowledge directly to the management of bog turtles and improving their habitat. An aggressive effort has been made to clear the site of woody vegetation and brush. Over the years this location, like so many other turtle locations, has changed from open wet meadow, which is perfect for turtles, into a much less suitable dense shrubby habitat. Each year the Refuge invites

the Trust staff to work along with their staff in a multi-year effort to restore the open condition of the site. It's a great opportunity to learn from Refuge biologists and it keeps the Trust familiar with the bog. When the Trust can lend the Refuge a hand it makes the work day a little easier and quickens the turn-around to better habitat for turtles. This work restores an entire fen ecological community important not only to turtles but to dragonflies, rare plants and many other species that depend on emergent wetland habitats.

Throughout the year the Wallkill Refuge staff keeps a close eye on the property, scheduling enforcement patrols and routine biological monitoring visits. This partnership has shown itself to work well by acquiring, managing and protecting habitat for bog turtle. The Trust will make room on the calendar for more work next year.



Managing to improve bog turtle habitat

Stepping Out From the Shadows

Lifting a veil of shade and shadow revealed an important habitat nearly lost from sunlight. Bringing sunlight back to a habitat that can only thrive under the warm sunlight of an open sky is the job at hand. This is the basis for some practical habitat management work begun in 2013 at the Bear Creek Preserve. Acting on information and data collected in the Bear Creek Biodiversity Inventory completed in 2010, Trust staff took an initial step to revitalize two limestone fens, wet meadows which were rapidly converting from open and sunny to dark and shady. These fens are known to be critical habitats for the federally threatened and state endangered bog turtle. But in the decades since small dairy farms vanished, when cows pastured in these wet meadows, trees have now taken hold and begun to grow into forest. Broad leaves of red maple trees have begun to shade out the characteristic grasses and sedges important to bog turtle habitat. Removing woody vegetation is required to keep the sites open and sunny, the way turtles like it.

Trust staff decided to focus on two one-acre sites in which to begin work. A map was developed to determine current conditions in the two selected fens. Open areas still suitable for bog turtles would be avoided. The more shaded areas which would benefit from added sunlight were targeted. This conceptual plan was coordinated and reviewed by turtle expert Brian Zarate, Senior Zoologist with New Jersey Endangered and Nongame Species Program.

To ensure that the project would be carried out successfully, the Trust hired Jason Tesauro, a bog turtle consultant and biologist. Trust preserve manager Martin Rapp had worked with Mr. Tesauro to improve bog turtle habitat at another Trust preserve; most notably, a goat grazing project at Wallkill Preserve. Jason was already familiar with these Bear Creek sites from previous field work and knows the life history and habitats of bog turtles--where they nest, bask in

the sun and hibernate--so his skills were considered essential. Two days of on-the-ground habitat work would be required, one day at each of two sites. Work began in mid-March, while turtles were still in hibernation. Mr. Tesauro made his assessment of the habitat conditions and quickly delineated the work zone boundaries with flagging tape. Work seemed easy at first, removing small saplings with hand saws and loppers. But we soon realized that we would need to step up to using the chainsaws we lugged into the woods. With saws running, woody vegetation was quickly reduced to small slash. Larger trees were girdled and left standing. Corridors linking existing quality habitat were thinned of small trees and woody vegetation to create pathways for turtle movement. Working in the muck was not easy and it was important to stress safety at all times.

At the end of the two work days the habitat improvements we implemented were evident. It was hoped that bog turtles might begin to explore into this new, reclaimed habitat in a few months. Sunlight would help renew the herbaceous vegetation of tussock sedge and sweet fern and a fen would emerge from the shade.

An inspection of the site the following winter showed evidence that our work indeed resulted in an improvement. Cut stumps, the clues of our work, were now hard to find under new herbaceous cover. Slash that remained after brush cutting had already begun to rot. Woodpeckers and other birds zeroed in on dead girdled trees as they combed the loose bark for insects. However, some of the girdled red maples we left standing still showed some fortitude. Those that had not readily succumbed to the girdling will require some assistance from herbicides or further chainsaw work to remove them completely. The Trust plans to return again next year to continue with its work of lifting the veil of shade.



Petty's Island Update

The Trust had another exciting year at the Petty's Island Preserve, Pennsauken Township, Camden County. First, it got bigger! The Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority (CCMUA) generously donated a conservation easement to the Trust over its 24-acre parcel on the mainland directly across from Petty's Island. The CCMUA will continue to oversee the daily management of the property, and a group of volunteers has offered to help with some of the challenging issues of dumping and off-road vehicle use on the property. In time, when the property is fully remediated, it is hoped that full ownership of the property will be transferred to the Trust. In the meantime, the easement ensures that the property will never be developed other than for recreational or environmental education purposes.

This year marked the Trust's second full year under contract with NJ Audubon Society (NJAS), along with its subcontractors Delaware RiverKeeper Network and Cooper River Watershed Association, to help the Trust to gain stakeholder input at Petty's Island and to implement educational programming. In January 2013, NJAS brought together a great turnout of stakeholders ready to share their thoughts with the Trust about the interpretation of the island's extensive cultural, historic and natural resources. Stakeholders broke into small groups to review and mark up draft text for planned interpretive displays and to suggest new information. Based on the stakeholder input, and using funding provided by the William Penn Foundation and a federal Recreational Trails Program Grant, the Trust issued an RFP for the design and fabrication of 13 wayside exhibits covering the following Petty's Island topics:

- Wetlands
- Grasslands Restoration
- Forests
- Mudflats
- Delaware River Islands
- Cooper River Watershed
- History of Land Ownership
- Legends and Lore
- Coastal Defenses During World War I
- History of Industry and Commerce
- Slavery and Slave Trade in the Philadelphia and Camden Region
- View of Philadelphia Skyline
- Partnership between the Trust and CITGO Petroleum

The wayside exhibits will be installed along the existing trail to introduce visitors to the island's fascinating and storied history and vast natural resources. In the near future, the Trust hopes to supplement the wayside exhibits with cell

phone applications, providing additional information such as pictures, recorded messages and video.

NJAS, under its contract with the Trust, provided a number of interesting programs to the general public and school groups at Petty's Island in 2013 and even more are expected in 2014. In addition to regularly scheduled birding field trips, NJAS is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to organize special events such as Endangered Species Day hikes. Stewardship activities, including bi-annual clean-ups, will continue to take place in the spring and fall. In 2013 volunteers removed over 90 cubic yards of trash and debris from the eastern shore of the island! In addition to its programming activities, NJAS has also started to conduct migratory and breeding bird studies on the island. For information about upcoming programs, please check the NJAS program page at <http://www.njaudubon.org/Go/Petty>.

Looking forward to the future Cultural and Environmental Education Center, the Trust used grant funding provided by the William Penn Foundation to retain a consultant to review



*Petty's Island stakeholders meeting in January 2013.
Photo Credit: Kelly Wenzel*



Petty's Island stakeholders marking up text for wayside exhibits. Photo Credit: Kelly Wenzel

potential feasible locations on the island and make recommendations and provide conceptual drawings for the center. The Trust's consultant, Lammey and Giorgio, evaluated four different locations: a mainland location; a location at the fork in two roads a little beyond where the Petty's Island bridge reaches the island; the existing CITGO office building; and an existing warehouse. Of these four locations, the consultant recommended the location of the existing warehouse because it offers incredible views of the Delaware River and Philadelphia skyline and would not affect wetlands. Lammey and Giorgio's entire report can be found on the Petty's Island Preserve page of the Trust's website with the caveat that the conceptual drawings are just that, conceptual. The Trust is still some years away from actually building the center and cannot begin to design it until we are much closer to construction, as many things such as building codes and cost of materials are likely to change.

With 2013's exciting developments, the Petty's Island Preserve is moving closer towards its goal of providing the

public with numerous diverse opportunities to experience the many cultural, historic and natural resources that Petty's Island has to offer.



Philadelphia skyline wayside at the southern point of Petty's Island



Looking out onto the Delaware River from a concrete dock at Petty's Island

Swamp Pink and Rattle Snake Gut

In an area at the head of the tidewater, just upstream of the old rail road bridge along the stream they call Rattle Snake Gut, is a tributary joining the Cohansey River at Fairton Village in Fairfield Township, Cumberland County. This stream is lined by Atlantic white cedars with forests of tall oaks and bright blooming mountain laurel sloping to the wetlands. From its initial beginnings in 1991, the 17-acre land donation from the estate of Richard Buhlman has continued to get bigger and bigger. This year the Richard Buhlman Preserve grew again with an acquisition of the 47-acre Brown property.

This property was well suited for acquisition by the Trust because it offered some unique and useful features of benefit to the preserve. Most significant is the occurrence of the federally and state endangered swamp pink, a lovely spring flowering lily found growing in the wetlands. The Trust was aware of a stable and thriving population of swamp pink growing on the hummocks of the Atlantic white cedar swamp. Blooming in a fuzzy bright pink in an otherwise dark drab forest, the plants are easy to locate in early spring. However, the distinctive clumps of slender basal leaves can

be found year-round.

Protecting swamp pink populations in good habitat is vital to the species' overall recovery. Too often poor water quality and siltation issues threaten the plant. This site on Rattlesnake Gut exhibits high quality wetlands, making for an important addition to the preserve. The Trust worked closely with the Green Acres Program to see this happen. The scenic property includes steep hillsides of mature oak, beech, sassafras and mountain laurel. Wild turkeys frequent the hills in search of acorns or beach nuts. The flat, sandy uplands include a forest of large Virginia pines. The old field where the house and out buildings had been are now a home for bluebirds who nest in the old fruit trees at the edge of a field.

This property offers important public access opportunities, with good road frontage and a parking location for a few cars. Come out for a walk at the newest part of Richard Buhlman Preserve and see the head of the tidewater of Rattle Snake Gut.



Swamp Pink

Andy's "Abandoned Farm" Added to the Reinhardt Preserve

This year the Reinhardt Preserve, Montague Township, Sussex County, grew bigger with an acquisition by Green Acres of a 34-acre farm from Peg Miller. Although she treasured the farm, she was happy to see it preserved by the Trust. Over the years, she has reminisced and shared much about the history of the farm with the Trust.

Back in 1938, Dr. Dorothy Hansine Andersen known to her friends as "Andy" purchased this land, and what remained at the time of a barn, a lean-to and an outhouse, for \$8 an acre. Andy worked at the Babies Hospital, Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, New York. She was the first physician to

recognize cystic fibrosis as a disease and, together with her research team, created the first tests to diagnose it. Andy's scientific work and successes led to her being inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2002.

Peg Miller remembers visiting Andy's farm for the first time as a six year old with her mom, Marion Jean Beman Chute, a Mount Holyoke College friend of Andy's. As it did for Peg Miller, who eventually inherited this mountain retreat, the "Abandoned Farm" would form a lasting and joyous impression for all who came to visit. Peg remembers discovering snakes and salamanders while on nature walks with her



mom. Recognizing the Chute family's love of the Abandoned Farm and nature, Andy left the farm to her college friend when she passed away in 1963. Later it would be Peg, with her family, sharing time outdoors or cooking breakfast on the woodstove; experiences that were so dear to Andy.

"Peg's neighbor, Goyn Reinhardt, first introduced me to Peg during an inspection of the Trust's Reinhardt Preserve in



A picture of the abandoned farm from bygone days



Doodlebug tractor, this one converted from a Model A Ford, provides fun-filled times at Andy's abandoned farm

early 1991," said Trust preserve manager Martin Rapp. The 240-acre Reinhardt Preserve, donated by Goyn in 1973, was the very first property preserved by the Trust. In his travels, Goyn would keep a watchful eye on all the local cabins, including Peg Miller's Abandoned Farm.

On visits with his neighbors, Goyn often discussed how the Trust had preserved his adjacent farm. Peg certainly shared the common love of the land, a bond carried across generations. In 1991, talks of preservation lead to Peg's donation of a conservation easement on the 33-acre Abandoned Farm. In later years, with demands of life and kids grown, it was hard to find time to visit the farm. So "consistent with my long-held belief that I held the property only in trust and intended that it never be subject to development ... to see the land preserved forever ... I felt free to make the property available to the Green Acres Program," said Peg Miller. She added that it being, "bound by [High Point] state park on one side and by Reinhardt [Preserve]... on the second side simply reinforced my decision."

Although the cabins are gone from Peg's portion of the mountain now, the land and its memories are preserved in perpetuity. The Trust hopes that a visit to this preserve will inspire the same spirit of nature and simpler times in today's visitors as it did when Peg's mother Marion Jean Beman Chute wrote long, long ago in the poem "Abandoned Farm,"

*If you should walk the overgrown old roads
All 'round the mountain, every now and then
You'd come upon a lilac, snowball bush
Or Yellow rose that says folks lived there once,
And find the cellar holes, perhaps a dozen,
Each with a story that we'll never know.*

[Click here for the entire poem.](#)

Hunting Update

During the 2013-2014 hunting season over 3,663 hunters registered at Trust preserves through its website: www.njnlt.org. The Trust allows deer hunting only at many of its preserves to maintain biodiversity. The deer population in New Jersey is far greater than the ecosystem can sustain. Over-browsing by deer depletes native vegetation resulting in impacts to animal and plant habitat, such as decreased food sources and increased invasive plants.

In order to hunt at selected Trust preserves, hunters access the Trust's website, electronically submit information to the Trust, and print their own hunter registration letter with the required accompanying preserve map. The Trust is able to use this information to sort hunter registrations by preserve. Trust staff may reach out to hunters registered at a specific preserve to determine their interest in volunteering for clean-ups and maintenance projects. The Trust continues to use a "lottery" system for the ever-popular but limited hunting

opportunities at our Limestone Ridge Preserve and Thomas F. Breden Preserve at Milford Bluffs.

It is important to note that the Trust does not allow hunting for waterfowl, small game, turkey or bear, as it maintains that only over-browsing by deer poses a threat to biodiversity. In addition, Sunday bow hunting is not authorized on Trust preserves as it is on state wildlife management areas and private property during deer season.

While hunting on Trust preserves, all rules and regulations in the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife game code must be followed. Hunting deer by bow and arrow, shotgun or muzzleloader are acceptable, depending on the preserve. No target shooting or discharge of weapons other than for deer hunting purposes is permitted. Permanent deer stands are not allowed, and portable deer stands, while permitted, must be removed after the hunting season is completed or are subject to confiscation by the Trust.



Thanks to Our Volunteers

The Trust would like to acknowledge and thank its many volunteers for their invaluable contributions to the maintenance of Trust preserves. If you are interested in becoming a Trust volunteer monitor or attending a workday, please contact the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust at 609-984-1339, or email NatLands@dep.state.nj.us.

Donations

The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust gratefully extends its thanks to the following who have donated land, funds or services to the Trust in 2013 to help preserve and protect New Jersey's natural diversity:

Camden County Historical Society
CITGO Petroleum Corporation
Duke Farms
Camden County MUA
Mr. Peter Revilla
US Fish & Wildlife Service
The Library Company of Philadelphia

Mr. Jonathan Carlucci
Conservation Resources Inc.
Haverford College
New Jersey Trails Program
Mr. Ed Snyder
William Penn Foundation

For more information about how you can make a donation to further the Trust's mission to acquire, preserve and manage natural lands for the protection of natural diversity, please call 609-984-1339.



Volunteers use an ingenious pulley system to lift trash from the shoreline at Petty's Island



"Peregrine Falcon"



"Gentian"

Stefan Martin Prints for Sale to Benefit the Trust

In 1984, the Trust commissioned a series of limited edition prints created exclusively for the Trust by New Jersey wood engraver Stefan Martin. Each of the three prints highlights an object of the Trust's preservation efforts: the State-endangered Peregrine Falcon, titled "Peregrine Falcon;" a northern New Jersey stream habitat titled, "Morning Stream;" and a grouping of three Pine Barrens Gentian, titled "Gentian."

After Stefan Martin's death in a 1994 fishing accident, a fellow artist noted that Martin was "absolutely one of the most important artists in New Jersey. He won many awards, was nationally known, and very well-loved."

Unframed prints are \$150 each, or \$400 for all three (a \$50 savings). Remaining as of this writing are 203 "Peregrine Falcon," 126 "Morning Stream," and 18 "Gentian" prints.

To order, contact the Trust at 609-984-1339, or email NatLands@dep.state.nj.us and indicate which print or prints you would like to order and your name and phone number. We will get back to you with ordering details.



"Morning Stream"

The New Jersey NATURAL LANDS TRUST

Board of Trustees

An 11-member Board of Trustees sets policy for the Trust.
Six members are appointed by the Governor from the recommendations
of a nominating caucus of conservation organizations, and five members are State officials.

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