



**DUTCHESS LAND
CONSERVANCY**

GAINING GROUND

WINTER 2024



PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Welcome 2024! As the calendar pages turn, I still can't help taking a quick look back at a monumental 2023. We covered so much ground last year, it's almost hard to know where to start! We saw our volunteer program, led by our Outreach and Preserve Manager, Brian Straniti, really take shape in its second year. It's always a priority for us to find new ways to reach out and engage with the community and Brian has been creatively opening doors to connect volunteers with our many opportunities to help us with our work. These include everything from trail clearing to envelope stuffing! Similarly, I think our education program is top notch with constant seminars, webinars, booths at local fairs and libraries and much more. Many of you are familiar with our Director of Education, Julie Hart, who interfaces quite often with our community. We are all constantly learning from her, as she teaches



the wonders of nature that can be found as near as our own backyard. (Look no further than her Explorer's Notebook in this issue on tree identification to see what I'm talking about...)

Back in our own office, Communications Manager, Doug Ohlandt, managed the expansion of our social media and print presence, while our fearless Director of Development, Karen Karis, oversaw the return of our Spring Barn Dance, which we haven't been able to have in three years because of COVID. Co-chaired by Julia Workman Brown, Tim Bontecou, Simone Mailman, Vicki Salnikoff and Georgina Schaeffer at host John Merryman's Merryfield Farm, it was so wonderful to be able to celebrate in person again. Karen also directed our Annual Fall Luncheon, held at a new location on the soon-to-be open Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve. Co-chaired this year by Tom and Deban Flexner and Eric Roberts and Robbianne Mackin, the lunch was a tremendous success, raising some \$185,000 for the DLC.



But more than anything else, I am proud of the land we were able to conserve in 2023, and the amount of land that we actively steward each and every year. I am thrilled to announce that we protected 450 new acres, bringing our new total to 46,500 acres, under the leadership of Director of Conservation, Erin Hoagland, and Land Projects Manager Emily Kelderhouse. While some of these parcels might seem more significant than others because of their size, I can assure you that each and every acre that is protected is critical. Meanwhile our stewardship staff, led by Vice President Art Collings and Stewardship Manager Jackie

LaPlante, ensure the integrity of each of the more than 440 conservation easements we hold. Both of these highlight the unparalleled dedication and care that all of you have for the land. You can read about the new unique protected properties in our 2023 Closing Report featured in this issue.

From the historic gateways of the Villages of Millbrook and Red Hook, to a 200 year-old farming legacy, from a wish to preserve a hilltop, to the development of a public park, each of these conservation easements is part of the patchwork that make this little sliver of the world so stunning to visitors and so special to its residents. I hope this issue inspires you to engage with us in our conservation efforts!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Becky".

Becky Thornton



CONSERVATIONIST'S CALENDAR

The DLC is prepping for a busy spring with webinars, educational programs, community events and volunteer opportunities.

EARTH MATTERS WEBINARS

The DLC's engaging and informative Earth Matters Winter Webinar series continues with Dutchess County Historian Will Tatum on Wednesday, March 6. Join us for this fascinating look at the past vistas in Dutchess County that are revealed by historical records. Our Wednesday, April 3 webinar will feature the Institute for American Indian Studies. Representatives will introduce us to Etuaptmunk - or Two-Eyed Seeing - as a way to view the Hudson Valley through the lens of both Indigenous and Western cultures. Please visit the DLC website - dutchessland.org - or our social media for information on registering for these popular webinars.



WOODCOCK WALK

The American Woodcock's return to Dutchess County and the fabulous mating dance of these birds is one of the great rites of spring. The DLC will be visiting the Buttercup Farm Audubon Preserve in Stanfordville on Friday, March 22 at 6:30 PM for our annual Woodcock Walk. Last year, the aerial ballet of the male woodcocks was a sight to behold and we're hoping that this year will be equally as spectacular. Visit our website - dutchessland.org - to register for this incredible opportunity to witness one of nature's great displays of beauty and wonder.



Woodcock Walk

VERNAL POOL WALK

The DLC is partnering with Connecticut Audubon for a Vernal Pool Walk at Deer Pond Farm, the beautiful bird sanctuary on the Pawling/Sherman border. This is an amazing chance to explore these ephemeral pools that explode with life each spring as amphibians migrate and gather to mate. The Vernal Pool Walk will take place on Saturday, April 13 at 10:00 AM. For more information and to register, please visit our website - dutchessland.org.



Vernal Pool Walk

DUTCHESS COUNTY EARTH DAY FAIR

Dutchess County's Earth Day Fair is a chance to celebrate our beautiful planet and the part we all play in protecting it. The DLC will be there - along with dozens of other environmental and ecologically-minded organizations - to spread the word about the importance of land conservation and the role it plays in preserving our farms, forests, fields and wetlands. Stop by our booth to learn more about land management, engage in conversations about conservation, learn about our volunteer program or spin the prize wheel to win a prize. The Dutchess County Earth Day Fair will take place on Saturday, April 20 at the Vassar Barns in Poughkeepsie.

EXPLORE THOMPSON POND

DLC Volunteers have been hard at work improving the trails at Thompson Pond Preserve in Pine Plains, and Saturday, May 4 will be an opportunity to explore and enjoy these exemplary footpaths. Circumnavigate Thompson Pond on the newly repaired walkway and bridge or trek to the fire tower atop Stissing Mountain on the freshly constructed Thompson to Tower Trail. Stop by to learn about the preserve, the organizations involved in the creation and maintenance of the trails and how you can make a difference in keeping pathways open and accessible.



Thompson Pond

POLLINATOR DAY

Just in time for World Bee Day, the DLC is returning to Plan Bee Farm Brewery in Poughkeepsie on Saturday, May 18 to celebrate the importance of bees and other pollinators in our lives. All ages are invited to come along and enjoy the many activities and walks planned for what looks to be a fun-filled Saturday afternoon.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE...

As we jump into spring, be sure to check out our social media wildlife bracket contest which is back in March with an all-new theme: Migratory Madness. Vote for your favorite migrator in head-to-head contests and find out which animal will win. Finally, and we're saving the best for last here, our annual spring fundraiser - The DLC's Spring Barn Dance - will be taking place on Saturday, June 15. Contact the DLC office at (845) 677-3002 for more about underwriting this springtime favorite, sponsorships and to purchase tickets.

Follow the DLC on Facebook and Instagram or visit us at dutchessland.org to find out about all our upcoming events and programs.

NATURE OF THINGS

Our Communications Manager Doug Ohlandt took a break on one of his walks in the woods to interview Charlie the Eastern Chipmunk.

Doug: Hi, Charlie. Thanks for taking a minute to sit down with me ...

Charlie: Just a minute. That's all I can spare. I'm getting ready for winter, which in my case, means stuffing as many seeds, nuts, buds, fruits and fungi in my burrow as it can possibly hold.



Q: I see. Are you preparing for a party?

A: No, silly! That kind of food isn't just lying around when snow's covering the ground. That's my winter eats! And my burrow can hold a lot! This one I've got right here is about 25 feet long, but a cousin of mine – Charlene – she dug one that was 30 feet long!

Q: Really? 30 feet?

A: Yeah, she likes to spread out when she lays down for the long winter nap. I mean, it's not like we go into complete hibernation for the winter. It's more like torpor, where we sleep a lot and then wake up occasionally to eat. So, it helps to have some room to move around a bit. Plus, they make for good hidey-holes when hawks, raccoons, owls, foxes and snakes are looking to make you into their next snack.

Q: Now that sounds scary!

A: It is, but we're pretty good about warning each other with our "chuck."

Q: Your "chuck?" What's that?

A: It's one of the many sounds we make. You have your "chuck,"

which we use to warn any other chipmunks nearby that something that likes to eat us is milling about. It's sort of like a "stranger danger" trill we make that has to be pretty short – you try vocalizing any sound that makes 130 vibrations per minute! Then, there's the "chip." If you've ever taken a walk in the woods, you've heard this one. It's really loud and high-pitched, not slow and deep like your human voices. Again, it warns of danger, but not as imminent as the "Oh, no, I'm going to be eaten," kind. You'll hear it a lot when humans are around because you're big and slow and clumsy and could accidentally step on us if we don't get out of the way. But it also means there's no rush. 'Cause, you know – the slowness.

Q: Well, I've certainly heard those noises you describe when I'm out in the woods. Are you Eastern Chipmunks the only kind that live around here?

A: Definitely. We have some kin out west, but they're all kinds of mixed up – there's 23 different species out there! And then there's our distant cousins in Europe and Asia – the Siberian Chipmunks. Round these parts, though, it's just us Eastern Chipmunks – or *Tamias striatus* – as some fancy-pants humans like to call us.

Q: Wow! So, chipmunks are all over the world!

A: Not exactly. More just in the northern half. That's where the woods we like to live in exist. We like northern hardwood forests where there are plenty of seeds and nuts for us to eat and it doesn't get too hot. And while we're pretty solitary creatures, we do like to have others around on occasion, so we tend to gather where there's lots of food. Of course, sometimes love is in the air. We mate in early spring, just after we get up from the winter nap, and then again in early summer. Each time, females give birth to four or five young. But they're out of the nest pretty quick – usually in about six weeks – and out searching for food and digging their own burrows. And speaking of pretty quick, it's time for me to get going. Lots more food for me to collect if I'm to be ready for winter.

Q: Thanks for stopping to chat, Charlie.

4 **A:** A pleasure, Doug. I'll see you in the spring! 🌿

EXPLORER'S NOTEBOOK

For this installment of her notebook, Education Director Julie Hart looks at what happens to trees in the winter months and how to identify some common species by their buds.

Winter is a great time for napping, isn't it? Short days and cold temperatures can produce a snoozy demeanor in the most energetic person, and the reduced activity of our plant and animal neighbors gives us all the justification we need to downgrade our productivity goals and put "afternoon nap" at the top of our To-Do list. Haven't we earned a bit of downtime, after all the hectic activity of the spring, summer and fall months?

And guess what? The trees feel just the same way! They have been busily photosynthesizing during the growing season, storing energy in their roots and building the seeds and nuts that will produce the next generation of our forests. And at the same time, trees have been growing the buds that will open up next spring and unfurl their flowers and leaves.

Tree buds are formed during the summer, when the tree has the most energy available to build these complex little structures. Within each bud is a tightly furled leaf or flower, protected from desiccation and cold temperatures by weatherproof bud scales. And this is a great time of year to take a closer look at tree buds! Some are quite distinctive, and with a little practice you'll be able to confidently identify the tree by examining the buds. 🌿

The buds of **American beech** (*Fagus grandifolia*) are very slender and sharply pointed and you'll notice that the twigs are also quite slender and have a zigzag shape.

Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) buds are round, flattened and come to a point (kind of like the shape of a sweet onion) and the twigs have an adorably perky upswept shape.

All oaks have a cluster of buds at the tip of the twig. Bud and twig shapes, and bark patterns provide clues to identifying the exact species. This is a **Northern red oak** (*Quercus rubra*).

Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) buds are large, elongated and pale in color and the leaf scar (where last year's leaves were attached to the twig) is quite large and resembles a face with a fuzzy eyebrow.

The twigs of **American sycamore** (*Platanus occidentalis*) are zigzag shaped (similar to beech twigs) and the buds are short and stout, somewhat reminiscent of a broad, blunt arrowhead.



THE DUTCHESS LAND CONSERVANCY

2023 CLOSING REPORT

The DLC is thrilled to announce we protected 445 new acres in 2023, bringing our latest total to 46,475 acres in conservation in Dutchess County. Some of the properties in our annual Closing Report will be familiar to our more dedicated newsletter readers, while others will be brand new. Each newly protected piece of land that the DLC preserves adds to the sustainability, resilience, and beauty of an area beloved by so many. While the purpose of protecting each property ranges from preserving important habitat and tracts of farmland to saving valuable water resources, each is fundamentally important and valuable beyond its own purpose. In the brief descriptions below, you will see the depth and diversity of the DLC's work.



① Bouzane-Buser, Town of Washington – 10 acres

Boasting magnificent views of the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve and surrounding countryside, the Bouzane-Buser property represents the first easement for the DLC in 2023. With approximately 10 acres of prime farmland soils necessary for food, feed, forage, and fiber crops and its location within the watersheds of the East Branch of the Wappinger Creek (a tributary to the Hudson River), as well as the Wassaic Creek (a tributary of the Tenmile River), it was critical that this land be preserved. In addition to the property's open and natural character, its protection provides for the expansion of essential wildlife corridors and critical feeding and breeding habitat. The Bouzane-Buser property represents

the very nature of the DLC's mission highlighting the contributions conserved land makes to the county's foodshed and water supply, endangered habitats and species, sweeping viewsheds and more.

② Redmond-Crossley, Town of Pine Plains – 24 acres

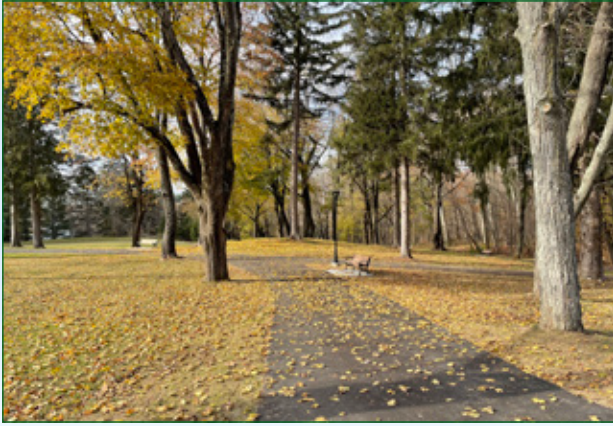
Profiled in our Summer 2023 newsletter, the Redmond-Crossley property on Johnny Cake Hollow Road is characteristic of the unparalleled beauty of this area with its open fields and meadows, woodlands and slopes free of development. The property is abundant in critical water resources as well, including an important aquifer serving the town of Pine Plains and a tributary to the Shekomeko Creek. Bordering other properties protected by the DLC, the preservation of this land creates large protected corridors for native plants and animals. With both active agriculture on the land and wild forested portions, the Redmond-Crossley property exemplifies the importance of the DLC's work.



③ Cookingham, Town of Red Hook – 169 acres

Located in the "Red Hook Breadbasket," an area that contains more than 1,600 acres of conserved land, mostly farms, protection of the vast Cookingham Farm was considered critical for the farming future of northwestern Dutchess County. Thanks to the forethought of the owners, the property will continue a 200-year farming legacy. Beyond its agricultural heritage, the property serves as an important historic gateway into the Village of Red Hook, prized by residents for its panoramic views stretching to the Catskills. The farm also abuts the Richard Abrahams Park and is close to the town's recreation park, all of which are meaningful additions to the public enjoyment of the area. Notably, the property falls within the Saw Kill Watershed, a critical habitat for migratory fish. Additionally, the land

encompasses important wildlife habitat areas, including woodlands and open meadows, which are relatively undisturbed and in natural condition, supporting a variety of fauna and flora. Uniquely, 12 acres of the eastern portion of the property has been set aside to address the need for affordable homes for local families. You can read more about the Cookingham Farm in our Fall newsletter.



4 Bennett Park LLC, Town of Washington – 34 acres

Also profiled in the Fall newsletter, this property – once the grounds of the historic Bennet College – is the gateway to the Village of Millbrook, located at the corners of Franklin Avenue and Route 343, within walking distance to the center of town. Where dilapidated structures once stood, the newly constructed paths of Bennett Park now invite the public to enjoy the bucolic nature of central Dutchess. With grassy fields and meadows and woods punctuated by streams, the park allows for easy access to nature near a thriving village. Conservation of this parcel of land has helped protect a rural and scenic gateway unsurpassed in its beauty.

5 White Rock Farm, Town of Washington – 34 acres

Adding to an extensive swath of contiguously protected land, White Rock Farm – visible from Route 343 and Butts Hollow Road – is characterized by stunning vistas and expansive farmland. With nearly 2,000 feet fronting the gorgeous Littlerest Brook, the conservation of this property provides for the protection of a critical stream important for cold water fish habitat. Equally as important, more than half of the land lies within a vast unbroken tract of woodland that extends for hundreds of acres. This contiguous forest has become increasingly vital for its ability to provide crucial habitat, wildlife connectivity, and climate resiliency. Protection of forested properties like White Rock Farm, in addition to preserving the rural character of Dutchess County, will help to ensure that future generations will reap the benefits of its owners' forethought.



6 Afarm LLC, Town of Washington – 174 acres

Across the Shunpike from the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve lies the iconic Rally Farm. Long a treasured sight in central Dutchess, this spectacular farm is now forever protected. The farm is characterized by its scenic views, open farmland, woodlands, wetlands, and great natural beauty. In addition to its significant agricultural benefits, including 140 acres of prime and statewide important farmland soils, the property also contains valuable wetlands. The freshwater marshes feed into a tributary of the East Branch of the Wappinger Creek, providing a natural filter for downstream drinking water and critical habitat for nesting birds, amphibians, and reptiles, some of which are considered rare. These sensitive riparian areas are among the most vital for their importance

in mitigating the effects of climate change. The conserved woodland on the property adds to the acres of preserved forest within central and northern Dutchess County that has seen a resurgence of larger mammals like black bears, coyotes, and bobcats. Most of all, though, the protection of Rally Farm preserves the historical agricultural legacy of the county while also providing immeasurable benefits to future generations.

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Founded in 1985, the Dutchess Land Conservancy (DLC) is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to preserving the rural character, important resources and open lands of Dutchess County, New York. We encourage sound, well-planned growth, balanced with the conservation of our important natural resources and working landscapes to ensure healthy and vibrant communities for the benefit of all generations.

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For a Night to Remember!

Please contact the DLC office for more information.



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Dutchess Land Conservancy, Inc.
PO Box 138
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