



THE BETHANY LAND TRUST
Bethany's link to nature

Bethany Land Trust, Inc. Bethany, Connecticut Annual Report 2024



*The headwaters of Bladen's Brook as it winds its way
through Whispering Pines.*

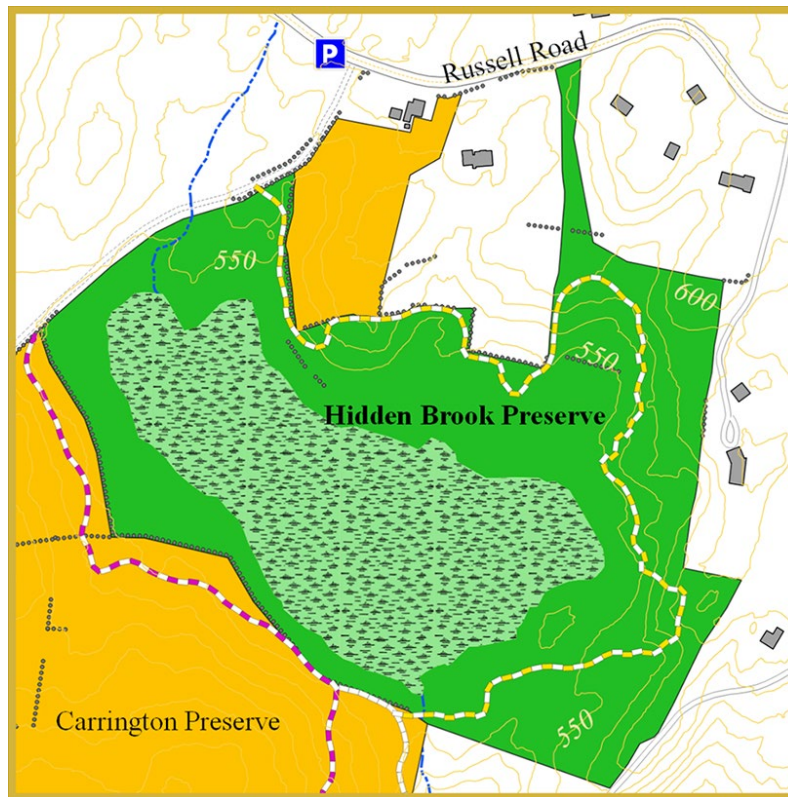
The Bethany Land Trust Inc. protects the rural character, natural diversity, scenic natural lands and agricultural vitality of Bethany, Connecticut, and the surrounding communities by preserving lands with significant conservation values for present and future generations and by fostering an appreciation and understanding of the natural environment.

Preserving Bethany's Natural Heritage: A Year of Growth and Community Engagement

The Bethany Land Trust is proud to share its accomplishments from this 2024 year of conservation, education, and community connection. Guided by our mission, we have continued to preserve and enhance the lands that make our community special. This year, thanks to the unwavering support of donors, volunteers, and friends, we made significant strides in land acquisition, stewardship, and outreach, ensuring these natural treasures endure for generations to come.

Land Preservation.

In July 2024, the Land Trust completed the acquisition of 36.1 acres of open space located at 89 Russell Road in southern Bethany. Now known as “Hidden Brook Preserve” it includes 8 acres of mixed woodland and rocky outcrops encircling about 28 acres of rich woody marsh.



The upper portion of Bladen’s River emerges from the wetlands. It contains habitat important to numerous avian and amphibian species. It is beautiful land, full of life and rich in every season with color and variety. This property borders the town's 74-acre Carrington Preserve (managed by BLT) and is near the 47-acre Whispering Pines Preserve, enhancing connectivity between protected areas. A series of trails and easements connect those parcels with trails in the Land Trust’s Bethany Farms system. This purchase was made possible by generous support from the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation, a supporting

organization of the Northwest CT Community Foundation, the Fields Pond Foundation, and many Bethany residents who contributed.

Liam Hendricks, an Eagle Scout Candidate with Boy Scout Troop 931, volunteered and then completed building the "Sisyphus Trail" in the newly acquired Hidden Brook Preserve. Working closely with the Land Trust Trail Crew for his Eagle Scout project, Hendricks chose and named the trail route and then directed his team of scouts, family, and friends during the construction phase in August and September. A huge and distinctive glacial erratic that lies on the high point of the trail served as the inspiration for the trail's name. Thank you to Liam and all who participated!

Educational Programs and Events



Monthly Guided Hikes. The series of monthly guided Sunday hikes this past year has been a resounding success with over 100 hikers joining. The hikes introduced residents to Land Trust preserves and identified unique natural and historical features that make those preserves very special places in town. Our Guides were Ali Beres-Nork, Grace Kenney, Bob Harrison, Dan Van Epps, Will Brinton (Town Historian), Christin Arnini, and Chris Howe (President New Haven Bird Club).

Educational Programs. Over 150 people attended our educational programs. The May spring program was "Monarch Butterfly Life Cycle" in

May, presented by Kelsey Fisher, Ph.D, entomologist with the Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station. Milkweed seeds and seedlings donated by CT Seedlings, a Bethany small business, were passed out to attendees. The November fall program was "Bear Reality", presented by Felicia A. E. Ortner, Connecticut Master Wildlife Conservationist.

Fundraising and Community Outreach

The Land Trust received the following financial support in 2024:

Members & Great Give	\$19,620
Major Donations	\$80,000
Memorial/Estate	\$10,555
Grants/Foundations	\$81,000
CLCC TAG	\$2,800
ARPA	\$1,180
Total ->	\$195,155

- We launched our new website including trail maps of all our major properties, along with updated news and features.
- We participated with the Clark Memorial Library to prepare an exhibit of the historical boundary stone once used to mark the site where Bethany, Naugatuck, and Prospect meet, which is on the Land Trust's Three Sisters Preserve. The display included a description of the rich history of the area provided by Will Brinton, Town Historian.
- We continue to expand community awareness through a monthly column in the Bethany Bulletin and by using social media, the Land Trust website, the Bethany town website, and the Connecticut Trail Finder app.

Stewardship and Land Management

Trail Work. BLT's dedicated trail crew, known as the "Wild Bunch," continued their efforts in maintaining and enhancing trail systems across Bethany. The trail crew meets most every Wednesday throughout the year, and their work ensures that Land Trust preserves remain accessible and enjoyable for public recreation. Work at Van Epps and Mendells solidified a growing network of connected trails in northern Bethany. And the addition of the Hidden Brook Preserve trails enhances the emerging greenway linking the Carrington Preserve, Whispering Pines, and Bethany Farms.

Invasive Species Management. Volunteers, including Amity High students, engaged in removing invasive plant species, such as Japanese Barberry, Multiflora Rose, Japanese Knotweed and Asian Bittersweet. No herbicides were used; invasives were dug up by their roots and composted, promoting the health of our native Connecticut ecosystem.



Research Project at Mendell's Folly. Elizabeth Ward, PhD, a scientist in Forest Ecology at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, began a research project on the effects of ash tree mortality from Emerald Ash Borer on tree regeneration and understory plant community composition (invasive versus native species).

2024 Conservationist of the Year. *We recognize the conservation leadership for which we are so grateful.*

Bart Piccirillo, a Bethany Land Trust board member for 12 years, was recognized with the 2024 Conservationist of the Year by the Bethany Conservation Commission. Both an electrical engineer and a master carpenter, Bart gives of his time freely to environmental projects and has become the Land Trust's trusted and dependable expert to lead the successful completion of large endeavors throughout Bethany.

Most notably, Bart has improved access to four of the Land Trust's preserves by designing four different bridges and then leading teams of volunteers with the construction. In addition to volunteering his time, Mr. Piccirillo has been able to convince small and large businesses to donate materials for these projects.

All across Bethany are enduring additions to the natural landscape that help to provide a link with nature thanks to Bart Piccirillo.

'The language of Friendship is not words but meanings.' – Henry David Thoreau



Bart Piccirillo (holding plaque in photo) was presented with the 2024 Conservationist of the Year Award by Brian Eitzer, Chair of the Bethany Conservation Commission.

Looking Ahead

Bethany Land Trust Board of Directors

Carol Lambiase, President
Charles Oman, Vice-President
W. Peter Simon, Treasurer
Grace Kenney, Secretary
Norman Cole
Tom Enders
Linda Francois
Bob Harrison
Edward Murphy
Joel Nesson
Ali Beres-Nork
Bart Piccirillo
Dennis Stephens
Kerry Triffin
George Zdru

As we reflect on the achievements of 2024, BLT remains committed to:

- **Expanding Protected Lands:** Pursuing opportunities to acquire and preserve additional properties with significant conservation value.
- **Enhancing Public Engagement:** Continuing to improve trail access and offering educational programs and events that connect our community with the natural environment of Bethany.
- **Promoting Ecological Health:** Implementing stewardship practices that support biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all supporters, volunteers, and partners who make our conservation efforts possible. Together, we continue to preserve the natural heritage of Bethany for present and future generations.

The Bethany Land Trust (BLT) is a private, publicly supported, 501(c)(3) charitable corporation. All donations are tax-deductible. Established in 1968, the Trust preserves approximately 679 acres of fee and easement lands (474 acres owned and 205 acres in easements) and manages other lands held by the town. Conservation land managed by the Land Trust will be preserved *in perpetuity*.

The Bethany Land Trust is an all-volunteer organization.

Website:

<https://bethanylandtrust.org> Maps
of all our properties are available

Mailing Address:

The Bethany Land Trust
P.O. Box 3706
Woodbridge, Connecticut, 06525

For general information on the Trust, donations of funds, assets, or property: Carol Lambiase,
203.927.8038

For information on properties: Chuck Oman,
203.575.9479

To volunteer for the trails committee: Bob Harrison
203.506.5888

E-Mail: webmaster@bethanylandtrust.org