



SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST

Newsletter

Winter 2012

Connecting the Community to Conserved Farms and Natural Areas: Expanding the SHLT Events Calendar

South Hero Land Trust Programs Connect the Community to the Land

The staff and board of South Hero Land Trust take time each winter to consider our role in the community. While land conservation is the central mission of the organization, SHLT's community programs are an essential part of that work. SHLT's community programs are intended to provide opportunities for people to connect to the local landscape, through local foods and farmers' market events, walks at Round Pond State Park, or tours of conserved farms. We recognize that creating and strengthening personal connections to the land we live on is the first step toward protecting that land for future generations.

In order to engage the community, and connect them to local farms, natural areas, and the greater landscape, we regularly evaluate our community programs and brainstorm new ways to reach out. The diversity of farms, natural areas, and community resources in South Hero inspire and energize us as we embark upon this task.

New Events will Increase Opportunities to Connect to the South Hero Landscape

SHLT will continue to host many favorite programs in 2012, like Fiber and Dairy Day at the Farmers' Market. We are also eager to begin new traditions, and will be introducing fresh events this summer.

Summer programs will include a series of morning events for children and families at Round Pond State Park. These mornings will include time to learn about plants and animals that live at Round Pond, quiet time to explore creativity outside, and active time for exploring different habitats in the park.

We are planning a series of art gatherings, and are inviting local artists to host these events. Members will be invited to join us in painting, sketching, or photographing farms and natural areas during afternoons at a conserved property.

Other events will be announced in our Summer Calendar of Events, which will be mailed at the end of April. We look forward to spring and summer, and to seeing each of you at our events this year!



Families explore Hackett's Orchard during SHLT's Farms and Forests Scavenger Hunt in September 2011.

SOUTH HERO



LAND TRUST

a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the farmland, woodland, natural and recreational areas, and open spaces which give South Hero its distinctive quality of life.

PO Box 455
South Hero, VT 05486
tel: (802) 372-3786
www.shlt.org

email: info@shlt.org
minner@shlt.org
emily@shlt.org

Board of Directors

Bob Chutter

Dick Heilman

Christine Mack

Steven Robinson

Kathleen Swanson

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Reina Warren

Peter Zamore

Staff

Minner Hobbs
Executive Director

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Making the Link between Conservation and Community Well-Being



Whether it is the welcoming view of South Hero from the Milton side of the causeway or gliding across the frozen waters of Lake Champlain, our surroundings and the way we utilize them are an important part of what gives us a sense of peace and well-being. Sometimes we take it for granted that our environment has such a simple, yet powerful impact on us.

This year and into the future, South Hero Land Trust would like to put a spotlight on the connection between land conservation and the greater health and well-being of the community. They are inextricably linked in many ways. The land and water that surround us nourish us with food, provide opportunities for gathering and recreation, enable us to find a useful purpose for our bodies and minds, and provide us with space for personal growth, reflection, and imagination.

By fostering a sustainable and positive relationship between land and community we hope to encourage and create opportunities for you to connect with the land on ecological, cultural, economical, and spiritual levels. As you can read on page 1 of this newsletter, we have designed some new events specifically to encourage kids to get out on the land, exercise, and explore their surroundings. In addition, we will be sponsoring art gatherings on conserved lands. These will provide community members with a chance to explore their creative side with local artists. Food continues to be a major focus of our events. We hope to encourage healthy choices and affordable access to food, which also helps the local economy!

We believe that our physical environment is critically important in determining the health of individuals and community. With busy schedules it can be difficult to feel grounded. In a day and age when so many of us are searching for ways to achieve balance and feel secure in our choices, we need not look much further than our community to find hope, potential, and sense of well-being. Please let us know how you think we are doing and how else we can help to continue to nurture this important connection.



Local Fundraising Goal Reached: At Blue Heron Farm a Young Family is One Step Closer to Farm Ownership

Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and South Hero Land Trust (SHLT) are thrilled to report that we have met the campaign goal for the Blue Heron Farm Conservation Project! Thank you to everyone who helped with this tremendous effort. A special thanks to the dedication of the local fundraising committee, comprised of Barb Capen, Ray Jacoby, Meg Pond, and Marylyn Pillsbury, with support from SHLT and VLT staff, Minner Hobbs and Elise Annes. We raised over \$80,000 locally. This brings VLT, Adam Farris and Christine Bourque that much closer toward conserving this important farm in Grand Isle!

Blue Heron Farm is a family producer of certified organic vegetables, eggs, raw milk, pastured poultry, and lamb. Adam and Christine began operating Blue Heron Farm in 2004 and have steadily expanded, becoming a beloved part of the Champlain Islands community. Adam and Christine hope to close on their conservation project sometime this summer. This project will make the land affordable to Christine and Adam and will ensure that the land will always be available and affordable to future farmers. We will make sure to keep you posted once the project has closed.

A special thanks to the Congregational Church who sponsored a concert in January to benefit the Blue Heron Farm Conservation Project. Also thanks to everyone who donated \$100 or more in time for the CSA drawing. The winners were Jill Williams and Bill Truex. Congratulations!

Feeding Families in the Islands: Film Showing Raises over \$1,000 to Support Food for Thought's Summer Meal Program

On February 16th community members gathered to watch the documentary "Ingredients," a film about the local food movement in the United States. They were treated to samples of local foods from farms and food processors in the county.

Co-hosted by SHLT and Food For Thought, the event was a fundraiser for Food for Thought's summer meal program. This program works with local farms and food processors to provide healthy foods to local low income children during the summer, when school lunches are not available.

Community members were generous in donating to the program. The event raised \$1,188.00. Many thanks to the local businesses who donated food: Blue Heron Farm, Cochran Family Farm, Hackett's Orchard, My Kids' Kitchen, Savage Gardens, VT Brownie Company, VT Butter and Cheese, and Wally's Place.



Ray Jacoby, Minner Hobbs, and Deb Plumley chat before the film and local foods tasting.

Agricultural Network Grows Roots: LCIAN Elects Board of Directors

Farmers Visit Local Ice Cider Facility

Island farmers and food processors gathered in January for the first official annual meeting of the Lake Champlain Islands Agriculture Network. Hosted by Steve and Carol Stata of Hall Home Place in Isle la Motte, the group continued its exploration of the diverse farms and processing facilities in the Islands.

The Statas, in partnership with Allen Hall of Hall's Orchard, are making ice cider. Originally produced in southern Quebec, and increasingly popular in Vermont, ice cider is made by freezing and thawing apple cider to increase the sugar content of the cider. The concentrated cider is fermented into a sweet alcoholic beverage.



Ron Hackett and Devon Plumley of Hackett's Orchard examine a cider press with Steve Stata in the Hall Home Place cidery.

The group toured the Stata's renovated cidery, based in a barn on the Hall homestead, which has been in the family for many generations. The Stata's operation is a great example of a local business balancing the history and traditions of quality Islands agricultural products with innovative new technology, to produce a specialty product that is unique to our region.

Directors Represent 5 Island Towns and Diverse Group of Local Operations

After the tour and a tasting of the ice cider, the group gathered for their official meeting. They voted to accept bylaws and elected a slate of directors. The new board of directors will lead the network in the development and implementation of its goals. These goals include outreach and education events for farmers, Islands branding, and other cooperative projects. Members of the board are Carol Stata of Hall Home Place, Heather Darby of UVM Extension, Gary Sundberg of Island Homemade Ice Cream, Hugo Gervais of Savage Gardens, Ron Hermann of Darby Farm, Julie Lane of Crescent Bay Farm, Steve Robinson of Islandacres Farm, Matt Bartle of Wally's Place, Deb Plumley of Hackett's Orchard, Roger Rainville of Borderview Farm, and Emily Alger of South Hero Land Trust.



The Statas take advantage of the naturally freezing winter temperatures in VT to concentrate the sugars in apple cider.

Members of the network will be able to take advantage of group branding and marketing, and will be identifiable by their use of the LCIAN logo at farm stands, and retail shops. Keeps your eyes open for their signs and stickers. All LCIAN members are committed to providing the highest quality local agriculture and food products to the community.



Champlain Islands Farmers' Market: Winter Markets Continue through April

One More Winter Farmers' Market this Season

There is one more winter farmers' market this year, on April 7th. Stop by the South Hero Congregational Church on the 7th, from 10:00 AM- 2:00 PM, for children's activities, unique gifts, local produce, and specialty foods.

Summer Markets Begin at the End of May

The South Hero summer farmers' market will return to St. Rose of Lima Church on May 30th. It will run every Wednesday from 4:00- 7:00 PM. Watch for the SHLT Summer Calendar of Events to learn about our summer events at the market.



Winter Reads on the SHLT Book Shelf: Books at the South Hero Community Library

Librarian Diane Cleborne has been updating the SHLT book shelf at the South Hero Community Library with books about conservation, nature and agriculture. She's added a great selection in the last year, including two donated by SHLT board member Charlie Tipper. In addition to many books by Bill McKibben, she has added titles about farming in the region and the local food movement.

New Books by Bill McKibben:

The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job, and the Scale of Creation,
Hope, Human and Wild: True Stories of Living Lightly on the Earth,
Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age,
Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future,
American Earth: Environmental Writing since Thoreau,
Hundred Dollar Holiday: The Case for a More Joyful Christmas,
Long Distance: Testing the Limits of Body and Spirit in a Year of Living Strenuously,
The End of Nature,
Eaarth: Making Life Tough on a New Planet,
The Age of Missing Information

New Books by other authors:

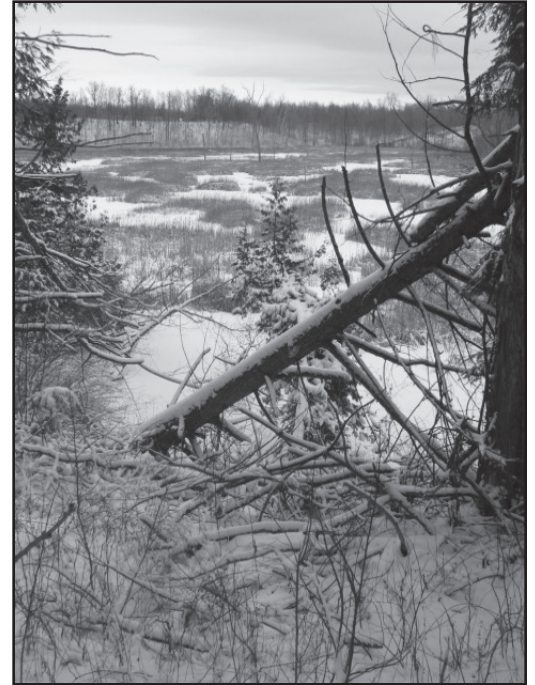
This Life Is in Your Hands: One Dream, Sixty Acres, and a Family Undone, by Melissa Coleman,
Developing Invasive Plant Outreach and Management Projects, by Caitlin Cusak et al.,
The Town That Food Saved: How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food, by Ben Hewitt,
Making Supper Safe: One Man's Quest to Learn the Truth about Food Safety, by Ben Hewitt,
The Dirty Life, by Kristin Kimball,
The Earth's Best Story: A Bittersweet Tale of Twin Brothers Who Sparked an Organic Revolution, by Ron & Arnie Koss,
Lifting the Yoke, by Ron Krupp,
EcoMind: Changing the Way We Think, to Create the World We Want, by Frances Moore Lappè,
Hay Fever: How Chasing a Dream on a Vermont Farm Changed My Life, by Angela Miller,
Organic Manifesto: How Organic Food Can Heal Our Planet, Feed the World, & Keep Us Safe, by Maria Rodale
The Best Management Practices for Prevention and Treatment of Terrestrial Invasive Plants in Vermont Woodlands

Winter at Round Pond State Park: Signs of Wildlife during Winter Walks

The Lake Champlain shoreline, Round Pond wetland complex and upland forests at Round Pond State Park provide diverse habitat for abundant wildlife. While many of the songbirds, amphibians, and reptiles that utilize this habitat are currently hibernating or have migrated south for the duration of cold weather, winter is still a wonderful time for spotting signs of wildlife in the snow and bare tree branches.

While walking at Round Pond, take time to look for signs of life in winter. In addition to actual wildlife sightings, look for tracks, scat, nests and burrows. Listen for bird songs and animal calls. Look for dead standing trees. Cavities and snags are good nesting places for birds, raccoons, and other animals.

While trees are harder for many of us to identify without summer leaves, winter is a wonderful time to observe the beauty of bark patterns and branch structure. Some great trees and shrubs to look out for at Round Pond include shagbark hickory, northern white cedar, black cherry, and red osier dogwood. Take this guide on your next walk to identify winter wildlife.



Winter snow reveals where open water is during the summertime.



Shagbark hickory has distinctive peeling bark

Identifying Trees in Winter

Shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) is recognizable by its shaggy bark, which peels away in long strips over time. Shagbarks are important habitat for native bats, who roost in the cavities between the shaggy outer bark and the inner bark beneath.

Northern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) is very common in the Champlain Islands, where it grows along the limestone bluffs that form much of the shoreline. The white cedar is a primary food source in winter for white-tailed deer and red squirrels.

Black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) is identified by its dark alligator skin bark. They are an important food source for birds, who enjoy their fruit.

Red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) are common across northern Vermont, where they grow in wet soils along streams, ponds, and wetlands. They are a shrub, with long red branches that are used for basket making.

Information for these factsheet pages was found using these resources:

Adirondack Ecological Center: <http://www.esf.edu>

VT Fish and Wildlife: <http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com>

"Round Pond State Park: Inventory, Assessment and Recommendations," prepared for the VT Agency of Natural Resources by LIA Consultants 2004

Looking for Signs for Animals

Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) are generalists when it comes to habitat and food. They will live in many habitats and use many food sources. They sometimes dig out fox or woodchuck holes for dens, but also use caves, crevices, and holes created by the roots of fallen trees. They will eat rodents, deer, rabbits, birds, insects, plants and fruit, including apples from old orchards.

Fisher cats (*Martes pennant*) are short legged with long narrow bodies. They have bushy tails and small round ears. They nest in tree cavities or under roots and logs. They may be found in the cedar forests at Round Pond. They are opportunists, and will eat small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and fruit.

Hairy woodpeckers (*Picoides villosus*) live in northern hardwood forests. These woodpeckers often nest in dead stubs of living trees, look for entrance holes on the bottom of the branch, about 2 inches tall and 1½ inches wide.

Mink (*Mustela vison*) are the most aquatic of the weasel family. They are aggressive carnivores and eat small mammals, aquatic birds, aquatic beetles, crayfish, and fish. They are most common near ponds and shoreline. They live in burrows, often along the shore of streams and ponds.

Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) are widespread in Vermont, and while primarily living in forests, they also live along the edges of human habitats, wherever there is access to water. They will sometimes den in the cavity of a maple or beech tree. They are nocturnal omnivores, eating both plants and animals. They are excellent climbers and swimmers.

Red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) are forest animals, living in stands of softwood trees like cedar and pine. They build nests in tree cavities or on thick tree branches. These nests are usually made from layers of thick bark lined with shredded bark inside. They use white cedar as primary food source in winter, eating the seeds within conifer cones.

River otter (*Lutra Canadensis*) can close their ear and nose holes when underwater, and a layer of fat beneath their skin that allows them to swim in cold water. They communicate with chirps and chatters. They eat small mammals, fish, crayfish, snakes, turtles, amphibians, and birds. They are most active at night. They live near ponds and shoreline, where they can burrow in the bank or beneath submerged trees.

White-footed mice (*Peromyscus leucopus*) commonly live in northern hardwood forests. They den underground. They have long thick whiskers, and are 6-7 inches long. They weigh about 20 grams, and create some of the smallest footprints in Round Pond State Park.

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) use white cedar as a primary food source in winter; they may also eat apples from old orchards. Deer are common in the hardwood and cedar groves at Round Pond.



River Otter
Lutra canadensis

Red Squirrel
Tamiasciurus hudsonicus

Coyote
Canis latrans

White Footed Mouse
Peromyscus leucopus

White Tailed Deer
Odocoileus virginianus

WINTER 2012 NEWSLETTER



Address Service Requested

South Hero Land Trust
PO Box 455
South Hero, VT 05486



Join South Hero Land Trust for a Winter Wildlife Walk at Round Pond

Where to do animals live in winter? What do they eat? How do they stay warm?

Learn answer to these questions and more!

Join the South Hero land Trust and Lake Champlain Land Trust for a winter walk at Round Pond State Park with tracker Becky Wong. We'll be looking for tracks, nests, and other signs of animals in winter.

Everyone is welcome!

March 11th
1:00 - 3:00 PM
Round Pond State Park



Please RSVP with Emily by calling 372- 3786 or e- mailing emily@shlt.org.
