



AVON LAND TRUST

SPRING 2025 E-NEWSLETTER



Ah, Springtime! That glorious season that awakens the earth and ourselves from winter's slumber. Here at the Avon Land Trust, we are already embracing the warm weather to clean up our trails of fallen trees and branches, clean out bird nest boxes, run hikes, and work on projects. The Trust is active year-round, but good weather facilitates our efforts. Join us, won't you? We welcome volunteers and new members, and hope to see all of you at some of our upcoming events. Happy Spring!

Email us at trustavonland@gmail.com for volunteer opportunities!

Co-President's Message

We learned a lesson recently that one person can indeed make a difference in the world! In this case, that person is Colin Barthel, an 11-year-old Avon student. Colin recently approached the land trust, to help conduct the first BIG NIGHT event in our town. BIG NIGHT refers to the first mild rainy nights in spring, when amphibians migrate to their breeding ponds. BIG NIGHT volunteers help vulnerable frogs and salamanders safely cross the roads. BIG NIGHT events are highly organized in NJ, PA, and NH, but CT has a lot of catching up to do! Thanks to Colin's initiative, we are off to a great start! Dozens of wood frogs, spring peepers and red eft salamanders were helped at 2 different sites in town.

Looking back highlights: The land trust cleaned out bluebird and wood duck nest boxes, co-sponsored a presentation on river otters, co-sponsored our first full moon night hike, and is actively pursuing more open space opportunities. Tom Kassan joined our board. Avon/Canton Rotary donated a beautiful bench for the scenic overlook on Nancy Nation Trail. We received a grant of milkweed plugs to help monarch butterflies.

Looking ahead highlights: The land trust will be installing a chimney swift nesting tower. We also have numerous scout projects in the pipeline, involving a bridge, a raised walkway, a storybook trail, creative play tables, new geocaching locations, website upgrades, and a scavenger hunt. Plus, there's our usual series of hikes and presentations below too!

Upcoming Events:

Saturday, March 29: Invasives/Pollinators Community-Wide Meeting

- Starts at 1:30 pm in Library Community Room

Saturday, April 5: Huckleberry Hill Hike, with stop at Marge's Barn

- 114 Huckleberry Hill Road (parking lot in rear of old school building), Avon, CT
- Starts at 10 am, 3 miles, easy with moderate inclines and declines

Tuesday, April 15: Horizon Wings Raptors Program

- In-person at Library Community Room
- Starts at 11 am

Saturday, May 3: Buckingham and Countryside Hike – this will culminate with the new "town trail"!

- 10 Buckingham Road, Avon CT
- Starts at 10 am, 2.75 miles, moderate inclines and declines

Saturday, May 10: Invasive Barberry Removal Event at Marge's Barn/Cow Alley

- 160 Huckleberry Hill Road, Avon CT
- Starts at 2 pm, bring gloves, long sleeve shirt, pants.

Saturday June 7: 9 Mile Hike Four Loops

- 10 Buckingham Rd, Avon CT
- Starts at 9 am, bring gloves, long sleeve shirt, pants.

Sunday June 8: Trails Day 4 Mile Hike

- 775 Old Farms Rd, Avon CT
- Starts at 10 am

AVON'S FLORA AND FAUNA

Beneficial Bats

By Janet M. Conner, Historian



Did you know that Connecticut has nine species of bats? The most common bat in our state is the brown bat. One bat can consume 1,200 mosquitoes and other insects in an hour! Detection, pursuit, and capture of an insect takes only about one second, thanks to their echolocation superpower! In addition, some species help our farm crops by consuming harmful bugs, like corn borer moths. These small flying mammals are a natural pest control, and reduce the need for insecticides and mosquito spraying.

Around 2005, some bats started to get white-nose syndrome, or WNS, caused by a fungus that predominately affects cave-dwelling bats. While tree-dwelling bats fly to warmer climates for the winter, cave-dwelling bats hibernate in more humid underground locations. It is estimated that 90% of the bat population has been decimated by this scourge.

There are ways to help the beneficial bat population recover, and the Avon Land Trust is helping. Girl Scout Makena Logan helped install a successful bat house on our barn at 160 Huckleberry Hill Road. Residents can also help bats. Plans to build your own bat box can be found at the following link: <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/fact-sheets/bats>.

Bat populations are also threatened by habitat loss. ALT helps by conserving habitat. For example, our Oakes Preserve has several large shagbark hickory trees, where bats shelter underneath the loose bark “shakes”.

*Please support ALT's efforts to build more bat boxes with a donation.
Thank you!*

IF THE WOODS COULD TALK

Geocaching Comes to ALT Trails this Summer!

By Janet M. Conner, Historian



Letterboxing dates back to 1854. However, with new technology, letterboxing has become “old school”, and geocaching is the hot new trend that gets people out exploring their surroundings. Geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity, where participants use a GPS-enabled mobile phone to seek containers, called *geocaches*, at specific locations marked by coordinates all over the world. The first geocache was placed in 2000. By 2023 there were over 3 million active geocaches worldwide!

Geocaching is like a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game! A typical geocache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook and a pen. The geocacher signs the log with their established code name/username and dates it, to prove that they found the cache. After signing the log, the geocache is placed back exactly where it was found. Larger containers such as plastic storage containers or ammo boxes can also contain items for trading, such as cheap toys or trinkets.

The Avon Land Trust has over 30 parcels of land, and nearly 350 acres under conservation, some of which have miles of marked trails. This summer, as part of his Eagle Scout project, Brendan DaCunha will be placing geocaches on some of our trails. Be sure to check our next E-newsletter for more details. We think this will provide a great opportunity for families to get out and enjoy the great outdoors. We look forward to having you visit our beautiful trails!

*If the woods could talk,
they would tell you how happy they are to see you!*



HISTORY BENEATH OUR FEET

The Woodford Hills - Connecting History to the Land

By Janet M. Conner, Historian



The history of the Woodford family in Avon goes back over 400 years, with their farmland on Nod Road. Generations have lived, toiled, tilled, and died here. According to Scott Lewis' research for his upcoming book: "...the land right across Nod Road from Chester Woodford's farm [215 Nod Road] up the mountain is referred to as "Woodford property" and at one point relatives of the Woodford family owned almost all of the land in Avon that is east of the Farmington River and north of Route 44. On the map, that tract of land encompassing much of what is today, Woodford Hills Drive..." This was Chester Randolph Woodford who lived to 107 years old! This land became the low-

density Woodford Hills subdivision.

The Avon Land Trust has a connection to this Woodford land. The Woodford family sold some of its land to Frank Carabillo, a developer in 1986. In compliance with the town's open space regulations, developers have to donate a percentage of all residential developments to be preserved as open space. In order to develop the Woodford Hills subdivision, Carabillo donated 31.8 acres of land to the Avon Land Trust in 1988.

Years later, this parcel became integral in connecting other lands together for the benefit of the townsfolk. There used to be no pathway up to Heublein Tower/Talcott State Park from the Avon side. The Avon Land Trust, working with the Town, found a solution by creating a new trail that extended beyond the older trails. "An existing hiking trail in Hazen Park would provide the first leg. The next leg would be over land trust property, and that leg would connect with the state park atop the ridge." Go to the Avon Land Trust website to view our trail maps. The land trust also has a 19 acre parcel at 130 Nod Way, which provides a longer, less steep route to Heublein Tower. We hope you will enjoy the woodland beauty of these historical trails!

"But in every walk with Nature one receives far more than he seeks." - John Muir



AVON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

The Pump House at Fisher Meadows

By Janet M. Conner, Historian



Water Company Well #9 is located in an odd-looking building on the Fisher Meadows trail. The Fisher Meadow recreational area was donated to the town by Stanley Fisher back in 1976. He had bought 440 acres of farmland for his Fisher Old Farm back in 1955. In his will, he stipulated that his donation of about 233 acres to the Town was to be for passive use, such as hiking and recreation, and as open space. In 1982, with additional grant funding, the Town opened the recreational area with soccer fields, ballfields, and hiking trails.

In the 1990's, testing revealed that an enormous water aquifer existed under this land! Hydrologists estimated the aquifer was capable of supplying 3 million gallons of water per day! The water company pays the town \$150 for every 1 million gallons of water drawn from the well. The 46-foot-tall octagonal pump house, built in 2001, was designed to fit in with its surroundings.



The Avon Land Trust Mission Statement:

- To preserve and protect undeveloped land in Avon, and enhance our town's environmental and historic resources, and scenic beauty.
- To acquire through donations and purchases additional land to be preserved in its natural state.
- To maintain and improve wildlife habitats on our properties.
- To provide public access to appropriate properties, for the public enjoyment of nature.
- To actively seek wetlands, woodlands, meadowlands, and ridgelines which have unique scenic, historic, scientific and ecological significance for Avon.
- To promote the conservation of open space, an appreciation of nature, and stewardship of the environment.



Join us, won't you?

We hope you will support our efforts with donations, memberships, and volunteering.

THE *Avon* LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____
Address: _____
E-mail: _____
Phone: _____

Yes, I/we would like to make an annual membership donation to the Avon Land Trust, at the following level:

- \$1,000 Sycamore Membership**
- \$500 Oak Membership**
- \$250 Maple Membership**
- \$100 Birch Membership**
- \$50 Family Membership**
- \$30 Individual Membership**
- \$25 Senior/Student Membership**

Please make checks payable to The Avon Land Trust, and mail to: **The Avon Land Trust, P.O. Box 267, Avon, CT 06001.**
... or pay on-line by visiting our website: www.avonlandtrust.org.

Please let us know if you can help the ALT in any of these other ways:

- I would to help ALT as a volunteer.
- I would like information on how to donate to ALT from my IRA distribution.
- I would like information on how to include ALT in my will or estate plan.
- I would like information on how to donate development rights, a conservation easement, or land to ALT