



GENESEE  
LAND TRUST

FALL/WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER



**Woodpeckers are taking full advantage of the increase in dead ash trees.**



Nigel P. Kent

# Together We're Adapting and Preparing for Change

As the new Executive Director for Genesee Land Trust, I'm honored and excited to continue our critical work permanently protecting local land and water and connecting people to nature.

Some impacts can easily be measured—like the data points on the next page—but your support goes far beyond simple numbers.

## Climate change and community access

As we all feel the escalating effects of climate change, we must be prepared for extreme flooding and droughts, invasive species, record temperatures, and harsher storms. Public nature preserves like Island Cottage Woods (see page 6) need more resources now than ever to keep wildlife habitats thriving and make trails safe and accessible for everyone.

Increasing access to nature also means supporting more public green spaces like the proposed New York State Park at High Falls and Land Trust staff are promoting diverse community engagement throughout the park's development (page 4).

## Today, tomorrow, forever

Genesee Land Trust promises protection forever. You—and people like you that care about clean water, wildlife, local farming, and healthy communities—make it possible with your ongoing generous support.

Thanks to you, birds and butterflies will thrive in safe woods, wetlands, and meadows. Local family farmers like the Gerlocks (page 8) will continue growing food. And future generations will explore and enjoy the beautiful places you've already protected—and the many more we'll save together in the years ahead.

Together in conservation and community,

*Lorna*

Lorna Wright  
Executive Director

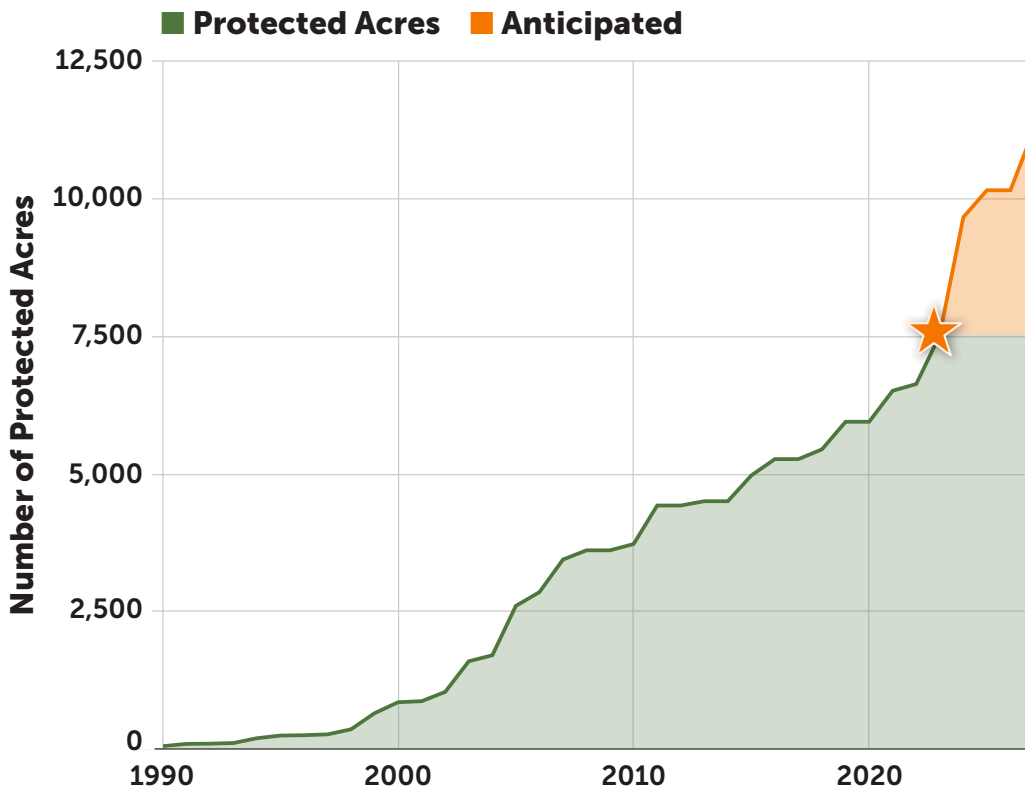


Lap Chung

Gus, Lorna's now-deceased German Shepard mix, loved going for walks at Eva and Harlan Braman Preserve.

# A Year of Impact Fiscal Year: April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

**11 New Conservation Easements Protecting 881 New Acres**



Will Macaluso

**1,300 Hours of Help Completed by about 200 Volunteers**

*"I believe volunteering is a great way to leverage life experiences to give back to your community."*

– Reinald Smith

## Properties Protected in 2023:

- Chase Farm Partnership (8 properties) in Rush
- G and S Orchards in Walworth
- Reed Farm in Chili
- Lustumbo Bros. Farm in Brockport

## Some Projects in Progress

- Gerlock Bros. Farm in Farmington
  - Greene Family Wetlands in Perinton
  - 8 other family farms
- and more in the works*

## 7,524 Total Acres Protected ★

4,111 acres of World-class Farmland Soils

1,482 acres of Woodlands

101 acres of Grasslands

816 acres of Wetlands

5,120 feet of Lake Ontario Coastline

16.8 miles of Stream

## 19 Public Nature Preserves

**1,741 Bird Species Observed** According to eBird



Elliotte Bowerman





Elliotte Bowerman

# Advocating for High Falls Neighbors

## State Park outreach focuses on Edgerton and El Camino

City residents and Genesee Land Trust staff gathered in September for an Edgerton community dinner at Lake Avenue Baptist Church in Rochester.

“Our mission is to get people to learn about the state park [at High Falls] and feed them,” says host Rev. Dr. Michael J. Form, Senior Minister. He hopes to see community picnics and local kids climbing in trees when the park’s ready.

For now, Michael just wants his neighbors to know about the project and have a say in what happens in their community.

“It’s too often look what the city’s doing to us rather than with us,” says Michael.

### Gathering diverse feedback

In collaboration with partners, for most of 2023 we have been surveying people about the park—1,300+ by mid October.

But two communities of color highly impacted by the park had minimal survey responses: Edgerton and El Camino.

In August Genesee Land Trust hired Mckenna Erwell, an AmeriCorps Vista Rochester Youth Year, to build a community engagement tool kit. She started contacting local organizations and leaders like Michael to go beyond surveys.

### Protecting the neighborhood

Across the river Eugenio Marlin, Executive Director of IBERO American Development Corp., likes the park project but wants to avoid El Camino residents getting displaced.

“It could be a plus for the city in general, and particularly for the area we serve if we can get people to develop a sense of ownership and welcome participation,” he says. “If people are not informed...you wake up one morning and your neighborhood has changed.”



Elliotte Bowerman

**“I go to the river whenever I need to process my feelings. It’s always there for me.”**

– Perry McKnight, lifelong Rochesterian and current Edgerton resident

**Please help by telling people about the park.**  
Share this link: [geneselandtrust.org/statepark](https://geneselandtrust.org/statepark)

# Storybook Trails Get Families Exploring

## Permanent bi-lingual literacy walk coming to El Camino

Miriam Vazquez, 69, leads the Rochester Latino Rotary Club's effort to create a Spanish and English storybook trail in the middle of El Camino neighborhood.

"There's the health part that's encouraging families to walk. And there's the literacy aspect of encouraging families to read together," the former elementary school teacher explains.

"There's also cognitive benefits to knowing two languages. And of course, it also maintains our language and culture."

Chris Widmaier, Executive Director of Rochester Ecology Partners, agrees. "Physical, mental, and emotional health are improved as young people discover the story in a natural setting."

### Designed for engagement

The club reached out to Genesee Land Trust as the project started, and staff walked with Miriam and others to share our trail experience and support.

The club plans to install a permanent series of 20 stations along the **Thomas R. Frey Trail at El Camino** from Conkey Corner Park to Avenue A.

**"Storybook trails are an excellent way to bring together literacy, art, and nature. Finding the next page can turn into finding an interesting plant or telling stories of their own as they travel along the path."**

– Chris Widmaier, Executive Director, Rochester Ecology Partners



Elliotte Bowerman

Bi-lingual stories—including the ones above—will change throughout the year, with support from the Lincoln Branch of the Rochester Public Library.

### How to help

The trail materials cost about \$6,000. Installation and maintenance work will be done by volunteers.

The club is currently fundraising and hopes to open the storybook trail in spring 2024.

**To get involved, you can contact Miriam at [rochesterlatinorotaryclub@gmail.com](mailto:rochesterlatinorotaryclub@gmail.com).**

### Upcoming Land Trust Storybook Trails

**11/4-11/18**

**"Keepunumuk: Weeachumun's Thanksgiving Story"**

Eva and Harlan Braman Nature Preserve • Webster

**11/18-12/9**

**"Over and Under the Snow"**

Cornwall Preserve • Pultneyville

**12/10-12/22**

**"The Mitten"**

Irene Gossin Nature Preserve • Penfield

**12/23-1/6**

**"The Snowy Day"**

Ganargua Creek Meadow • Macedon

**1/1-1/27**

**"Tracks in the Snow"**

Brookdale Preserve • Chili

**1/28-2/17**

**"The Animals' Winter Sleep"**

Salmon Creek Nature Preserve • Hilton

**2/18-3/9:**

**"Elusive Moose"**

Macyville Woods • Sodus Point

# Embracing the “New Normal” of Caring for P

## Adapting for climate change and improving trail accessibility

**T**he cracking skeletons of large dead ash trees at Island Cottage Woods tell the tale of invasive species and higher flooding levels—both due to climate change. To protect visitors and manage these issues, Genesee Land Trust closed the nature preserve in mid October.

The Greece property will remain closed to the public for at least two years to plan and complete extensive work before re-opening.

This project illustrates the “new normal” in nature preserve management. Today there’s much more work needed to deal with the impacts from climate change and to improve trail accessibility.

### But there’s good news

Thanks to your ongoing support, Island Cottage Woods is still a thriving habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

Without land conservation and proactive management, climate change would have significantly harmed the 61-acre wooded wetlands that store carbon, filter water, and manage Lake Ontario flooding.

“The land is healthy and is still doing its job because supporters and staff have cared for Island Cottage Woods for almost 25 years,” says Executive Director Lorna Wright.

### Managing invasive species

Between 2015 and 2017, before the Emerald Ash Borer (an invasive pest) arrived, volunteers helped plant more than 2,500 young trees and shrubs.

“These native plants needed a chance to take root and grow before all the ash trees died,” Lorna explains.

“This replacement tree canopy—and our ongoing land management—has kept invasive plants from taking over. Warblers are still visiting and wildlife are thriving.”

Except for several old oak, maple, hickory, and hornbeam trees, most of the large trees at Island Cottage Woods are dead or dying ash.

### What comes next

Land management staff are developing a hazardous tree removal plan. All dead or dying trees within 50 feet of the trail will be cut down for safety.

Some snags (upright dead trunks) will be left for woodpeckers, wood ducks, and other wildlife.

Land Trust staff have taken down a few dead ash trees every year. But the large scope and complexity of this project requires professional arborists.

The downed trees will be left in the woods for natural decomposition. Insects and fungi will recycle nutrients back into the soil, continuing to feed the young, healthy vegetation we’ve planted.



“As we do with every project, we’re going to take our time and make sure everything done supports the health of this important wooded wetland,” says Preserve Manager Will Macaluso.

### Building better boardwalks

More than just the trees have changed at Island Cottage Woods since donors like you protected it in 1999.

# or Protected Lands



Nigel P. Kent

Annual trail mulching isn't enough anymore. Across the preserve, increased flooding from Lake Ontario floats old boardwalks out of place and creates new muddy spots.

Island Cottage Woods needs about 1,100 feet of new boardwalks that are anchored into place and wheelchair accessible. Some will be like the one pictured at right, while others will be elevated with railings.

Staff estimate the work will cost \$150,000 or more. This level of investment is what it now takes to care for nature preserves and also make them accessible and adaptable, Lorna says.

"Looking to the future, we want to make sure the trails we build today will meet the needs of our changing climate and community in the decades to come."

**Boardwalks built more than 10 years ago—when Lake Ontario flooding levels were lower—now often float out of place and make trails difficult to navigate.**

**Right: The squiggly lines on this dead ash tree are marks of the Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive beetle that feeds under the tree bark. The Emerald Ash Borer has killed tens of millions of trees across North America since arriving in the early 1990s. Woodpeckers eat the larvae and live in the dead trees.**



David Cappaert, Bugwood.org

Moneycuc Canada

## 1 foot of new boardwalk costs about \$100 to design and install

As we continue improving accessibility and adapting trails for highly fluctuating water levels, even more boardwalks will be required in the future.

In addition to 1,100 feet at Island Cottage Woods, the following boardwalks currently need to be built:

**Cornwall Preserve • Pultneyville** needs about 200 feet through the wetlands along Throop Trail.

**Salmon Creek Nature Preserve • Hilton** needs 60 feet where Koss Pond is designed to overflow.

**Ganargua Creek Meadow • Macedon** needs a bridge across a stream.



Will Macaluso



*Elliott Bowerman*



**“They’re growing more houses than animals out here.”**

– Todd Gerlock

## Keeping the Farm in Farmington

**Farmington has become one of the fastest-growing towns in our region.**

In the past 20 years many world-class fields in this agricultural community have been lost to housing and light industrial development as the suburbs of Canandaigua and Rochester expand.

The pressure for farmers to sell keeps rising.

In 2017 Bob Gerlock reached out to Genesee Land Trust to talk about protecting his 360 acres of crops and cattle pastures. When Bob passed away a year later his sons Todd and Charlie could have easily sold the family farm. Instead, they continued the conservation process.

### **Protecting a family’s future**

In the coming months the Gerlocks will become the first farmers in Farmington to permanently protect their farm.

Charlie says the funds will help him pay for expenses like fertilizer and invest in equipment to improve efficiency. He might build a new barn.



## What is a Conservation Easement?

### A tool for permanent land protection

This voluntary, customized, perpetual legal agreement determines what can/cannot be done to protected land—like where new barns and buildings can be built.

Genesee Land Trust staff monitor protected properties every year and work with whoever owns the land to ensure they follow the agreement—forever.

To create the Gerlock Bros. Farm conservation easement, Genesee Land Trust staff spent hundreds of hours securing a competitive Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, funded through the Environmental Protection Fund.

Protecting the farm keeps the land in agriculture forever. It also gives Charlie's daughter Meghan, 28, the opportunity to take over one day. She currently raises 50 red angus cows with her boyfriend Kyle Coryn and wants to grow the beef business.

### Connecting with the community

Meghan says the future of small family farming in Farmington—and across the region—requires connecting people with their food. She takes every opportunity to share her life on the farm and posts on Facebook and Instagram as "Coryn Red Cattle Co."

People follow her adventures, like last year when Meghan saved a nearly frozen newborn calf with blankets and a hair dryer. Bailey (pictured) lived in Meghan's house for five weeks until she was strong enough to go outside.

"The only way to save agriculture in our small towns is to bridge the gap between farmers and the rest of the community," Meghan says. "I think this next generation of young farmers are just the group to welcome people back to the farm."

Protecting farmland today means young farmers will have access to world-class fields for generations to come.

### Want to discuss protecting your land?

**Farmland: Amanda Grisa**  
agrisa@geneseeandtrust.org

**Wildlife habitat: Kevin Farrell**  
kfarrell@geneseeandtrust.org



Elliott Bowerman



Mohann

## When Hunting Helps

As gardeners know, deer love eating tree saplings, wildflowers, and shrubs. Sadly, this often kills plants and negatively impacts woodlands.

That's a problem for the birds and wildlife that rely on healthy woodlands for food and shelter.

Genesee Land Trust's Deer Management Program allows a few hunters to bow hunt at **Brookdale Preserve** and **Reed Road Bird Refuge**.

Successful hunters help give native plants a chance to grow and reduce the number of deer in your garden.

### Safety Reminders

**Local hunting occurs from October through December.**

When out hiking it's best to wear bright colors, go with others, and stay on marked trails.



Clockwise from top left: Maguire Family Wildlife Sanctuary, Crowfields, Second Creek at Alasa Farms, Gosnell Big Woods.

### A Special Opportunity

# Genesee Land Trust Through the Lens of Nigel P. Kent

"My pictures are a great way to give back and say thanks for all the great places where trees still grow and butterflies flourish," says Nigel P. Kent.

A self-trained photographer and avid hiker, Nigel has donated 500+ images of Genesee Land Trust nature preserves and protected farms since the early 2000's.

### Capturing the region

Nigel often traverses creeks and climbs cliffs because "once you set your mind on that shot, you're going to get it."

To celebrate Nigel's artistic support, we've created a 2024 wall calendar featuring his pictures of the beautiful places you've helped save.

**You can order a calendar, as well as view a gallery of Nigel's images, at [geneseeandtrust.org/calendar](https://geneseeandtrust.org/calendar)**



## 68 People are Legacy Donors



**"I became a Legacy Donor because I truly believe in the mission of saving woodlands, watersheds and farmland. I'm so impressed with the leadership of Genesee Land Trust and its accomplishments. It all points to a promising future for this area."**

– David Strong, Pittsford

If you leave a gift in your will to Genesee Land Trust, please notify us so we can carry out your wishes.

## Give from your IRA

**Are you 70.5 years or older and have a traditional IRA?**

Making a gift from your IRA account can support conservation and potentially reduce taxable income. If you must take a Required Minimum Distribution this year, giving from your IRA is a strategic option. [geneseeandtrust.org/qcd](https://www.geneseeandtrust.org/qcd)

Learn more about tax-wise giving options by contacting **Whitney Brice, Director of Development**, at [wbrice@geneseeandtrust.org](mailto:wbrice@geneseeandtrust.org) or 585-450-3939.

## Rethinking Design

**Preserve maps getting updated for easier use**

If you've ever had trouble understanding a trail map, you're not alone. To make it easier and more engaging for everyone to visit the public nature preserves you help protect, we're redesigning the maps.



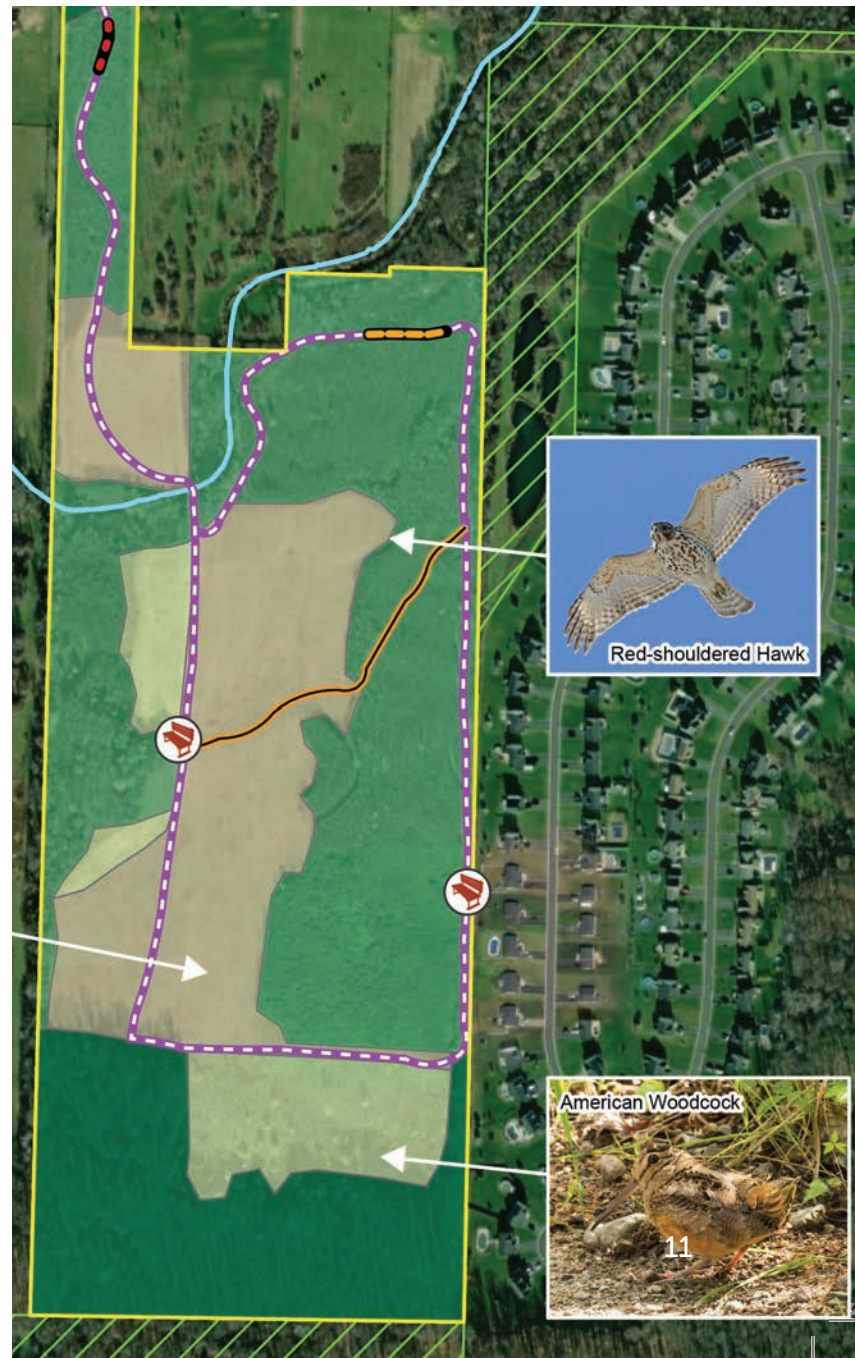
The new map of **Eva and Harlan Braman Preserve (Webster)** includes:

- Less aerial imagery because it can be challenging to interpret.
- More vibrant colors for folks who are colorblind.
- Clearly marked benches with their distance from parking in the legend.
- Trail lengths and type, like the orange and black boardwalk.
- Images highlighting plants and wildlife you might encounter with arrows where to look.

### More maps in progress

Five new maps have been made since 2022, with more scheduled.

You can find the new maps at [geneseeandtrust.org/maps](https://www.geneseeandtrust.org/maps) or use your phone's camera to scan the QR code.



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Erica Loewenguth

## You're Invited to These Upcoming Events!

### Winter Solstice Farm Walk

Watch the sunrise on the shortest day of the year as we walk around Wild Hill Farm and learn about it from organic farmer Erin Bullock and Gay Mills, former Executive Director. Genesee Land Trust protected this farmland so it will always grow food, not houses. Registration required.

**Thursday, December 21 at 7 AM • Wild Hill Farm in Ionia**

### 2024 First Day Hike & Storybook Trail

Kick off the new year exploring part of the flat, stone-dust Genesee Greenway Trail. It's approximately 4 miles from the parking lot to Black Creek and back. Warm drinks and snacks will be provided. RSVP appreciated.

**Monday, January 1 at 10 AM • Brookdale Preserve in Chili**

**Learn more and register for upcoming events:**  
[geneseeandtrust.org/all-events](http://geneseeandtrust.org/all-events)

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