

NEW JERSEY NATURAL LANDS TRUST

2015 Annual Report

Preserving New Jersey's Natural Diversity



Statement of Purpose

The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust was created by the Legislature in 1968 as an independent agency with the mission to preserve land in its natural state for enjoyment by the public and to protect natural diversity through the acquisition of open space. The Trust preserves land primarily by donations of open space through acquisition of title in fee simple or of conservation easements, and manages its properties to conserve endangered species habitat, rare natural features, and significant ecosystems. The Trust invites passive use by the public for recreational or educational purposes wherever such use will not adversely affect ecological communities and biological diversity.

The Trust also recognizes that ownership and management alone are not enough to achieve its mission. Public education is an integral function of protecting natural diversity. The Trust distributes information designed to convey a conservation ethic for the protection of open space and its natural values.

New Jersey Natural Lands Trust contact information:

New Jersey Natural Lands Trust
Mail Code 501-04
P.O. Box 420
Trenton, NJ 08625-0420
Phone (609) 984-1339
Fax (609) 984-1427
Email: NatLands@dep.state.nj.us
www.njnlt.org

Cover: Roman Senyk
Cover Photo Credit: Cari Wild

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In 2014... the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust brought approximately 416 new acres under Trust stewardship, making the Trust responsible for over 29,000 acres managed as a system of more than 120 preserves throughout the state.

Three acquisitions created new Trust preserves - The **Bennett Bogs Preserve** in Lower Township, Cape May County, the **Sterling Hill Preserve** in Ogdensburg Borough, Sussex County, and the **Wildcat Branch Preserve** in Sparta and Hardyston townships. The remaining acquisitions were additions to the existing **Bear Creek, Clarks Landing, Gravel Hill, Lin Lee, Mt. Rascal, Richard J. Buhlman, Sweet Hollow, and Walkkill** preserves.

Botanical Legend ~ Bennett Bogs

One of the Trust's three new preserves, Bennett Bogs Preserve in Lower Township, Cape May County, was established after The Nature Conservancy (TNC) donated its lands associated with Bennett Bogs to the Trust. The Trust's Bennett Bogs Preserve is 25 acres comprised of five separate tax parcels, some contiguous and others not. TNC acquired these properties to expand and buffer a 6.5-acre property donated to New Jersey Audubon Society (NJAS) in 1950 and managed as a NJAS sanctuary.

The Bennett Bogs are not true bogs but rather a grouping of

intermittent coastal plain ponds. Originally there were five ponds in this system but today, as a result of development, only three remain. The pond known as the southern pond is fully on NJAS's sanctuary, the pond known as the woods or back pond is fully on TNC's former preserve, and the remaining pond known as the northern pond straddles both properties. Historically, the ponds were seasonally wet depending on rainfall amounts. Over the years, however, surrounding development may have altered the hydrology resulting in recently-observed lower water levels which, in turn, may be affecting vegetation in the bogs.



Bennett Bogs overgrown with woody vegetation and invasive plant species

Bennett Bogs became known as a premier botanical site in the early 1900s when the Philadelphia Botanical Club first surveyed the ponds and discovered numerous plants typically only known from areas south of New Jersey. Over the years, more than 250 plant species have been identified at Bennett Bogs including a large number of state-endangered plant

species such as cypress-swamp sedge, black-fruit spike rush, wrinkled jointgrass, rare-flower beaked-rush, coast flat sedge, Virginia thistle, snowy orchid, Barton's St. John's wort and thread-leaf beaked-rush. Other rare plant species at Bennett Bogs include Pine Barren gentian, hairy primrose-willow, smooth orange milkweed and aster-like boltonia.

Unfortunately in recent years, Bennett Bogs has succumbed to woody vegetation such as persimmon, red maple and sweetgum, which is now pervasive in the ponds. Going back as far as 1907 the ponds had been routinely mowed, but no active management has occurred recently and no mowing has been done for more than five years. This absence of mowing, in combination with the altered hydrology, may explain the increase in woody growth and subsequent habitat changes.

For many years, TNC and NJAS co-managed their respective properties as a collective unit. The Trust hopes to work cooperatively with NJAS to restore Bennett Bogs by removing the woody vegetation and regularly mowing to thwart succession. In addition, herbicide application may be required to eradicate larger trees or patches of common reed in the ponds. A small parking area serving the preserve and sanctuary has become overgrown and will also require some maintenance such as brush removal and gravel application.

The Trust hopes that with these management efforts, rare plants will again thrive at Bennett Bogs and the ponds will be restored to their former status as a legendary Cape May botanical hotspot.



*One of many rare plants at Bennett Bogs,
Pine Barren gentian*

Land stewards from various nonprofit organizations conferring with the Trust on how to restore the ponds to botanical splendor

Preservation of the Unique Geology and Plant Habitat at Sterling Hill

Another new preserve established by the Trust in 2015, the Sterling Hill Preserve, is located in Ogdensburg Borough, Sussex County. The 23-acre preserve consists of two separate areas, one 22-acre property adjacent to the Sterling Mine, and the other one-acre property located across the street which serves as parking for the preserve.

The preserve is almost entirely forested and provides habitat for state-endangered bobcat and state threatened barred owl and wood turtle. The property includes a portion of the Sterling Hill Natural Heritage Priority Site, which includes habitat and buffer for state endangered plants such as Virginia bunchflower and hemlock-parsley. The property also buffers the Sterling Mine Natural Heritage Priority Site, which includes habitat for numerous rare plants due to the unique geology surrounding Sterling Hill. Due to this unique geology, more than 350 types of minerals are known to occur in Sterling Hill area, which account for approximately 10



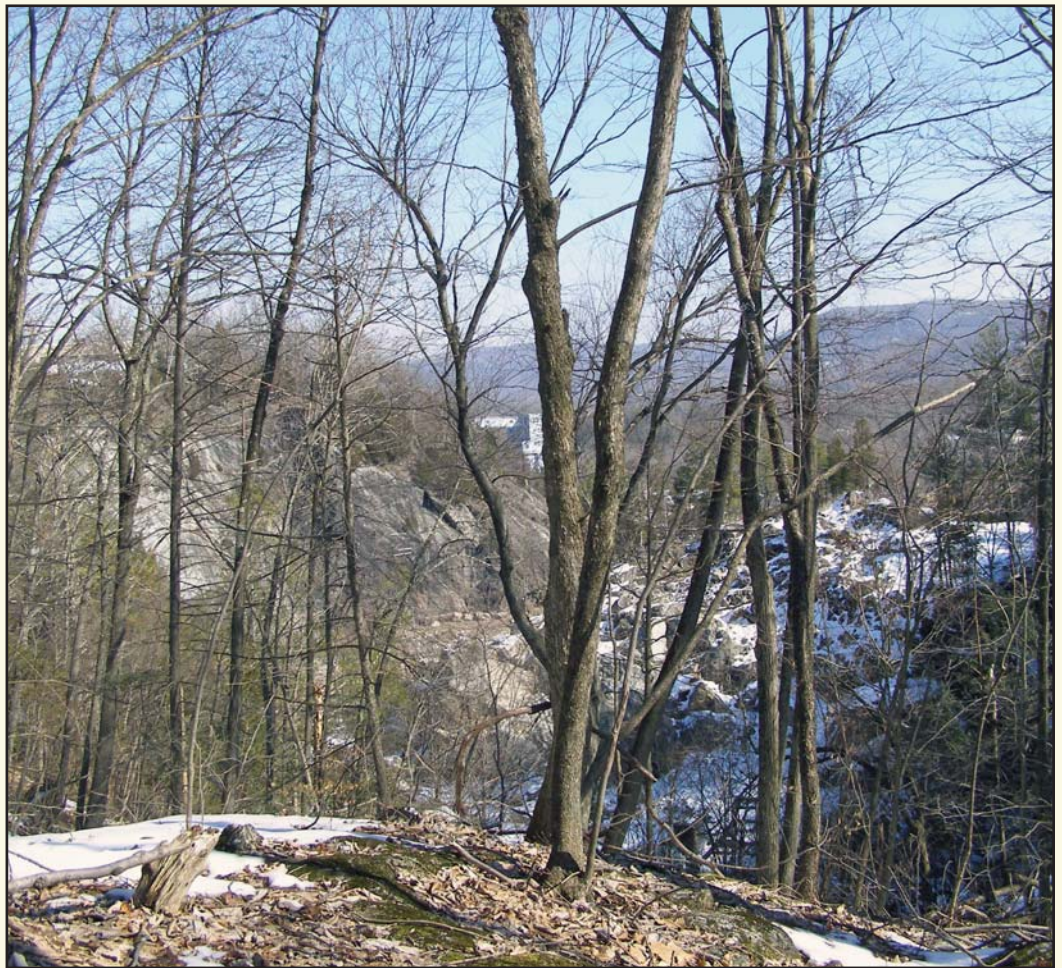
View of Sterling Hill in the 1920s

percent of the minerals known to science. Indeed, 28 of these minerals have not been found anywhere else in the world.



Forested habitat for bobcat and barred owl

Some of these minerals were mined for centuries at Sterling Mine, one of the oldest mines in the United States. The earliest documented mining occurred there in 1730 when it was known as the “Copper Mine Tract.” Sterling Mine was the last operating mine in New Jersey when mining operations ceased in 1986 due to a property tax dispute. When Ogdensburg Borough placed the mine for sale at public auction, two brothers, Richard and Robert Hauck, bought the property for \$750,000 and opened a museum in its place. The museum is said to offer one of the best mining tours on the east coast and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It highlights the history of mining, the mining process, and the consequences of resource extraction. The museum includes an exhibit hall displaying thousands of mining artifacts, a quarter-mile underground tour, and outdoor mining and discovery areas.



The Preserve overlooks Sterling Mine

The Trust’s preservation of the Sterling Hill Preserve ensures that habitat is protected for numerous rare plants and animals while providing a scenic buffer to the Sterling Mine and offering visitors to the area a great opportunity to take an enjoyable hike.



Sterling Mine’s Oreck Mineral Gallery, the finest display of minerals in New Jersey, contains hundreds of fine mineral specimens in custom-designed glass display cases.



Sterling Mine’s Zobel Exhibit Hall. At the end of the day a miner would take off his wet and muddy work clothes, hang his shirt and pants on the hangers, put his boots in the basket, and pull the chain to hoist the basket close to the ceiling to dry overnight.

Curiosity at Wildcat Branch Preserve

After waiting quietly, the NJ Natural Lands Trust pounced on the opportunity to acquire a key 130-acre land parcel at the headwater to the Wildcat Branch. Located in a rural area of Sparta Township, Sussex County, the property still possesses a truly wild element. With forest and farm fields flanking the central flowing stream corridor and its associated emergent wetlands, the area provides secluded resting, nesting and feeding areas for waterfowl including blue-wing teal and

wood duck. Through the years, periodic beaver activity has provided some open water areas too. A long lane to the former small house and farm now provides access to the preserve. For many years old box-wire fence held cattle in the pasture nearest the road. Now common yellow-throat warblers and cotton tail rabbits hide in shrubby hedgerows. Hikers can use a crude causeway path to cross the marsh area in order to reach a mature hardwood forest on the

other side. This wooded hillside still has a series of small open fields outlined in rows of old stone walls. The old field habitat offers good nesting places for wild turkey, and the abundant acorns of the adjacent hardwood forest help make valuable year-round habitat for turkey, bear and bobcat.

The Trust also recognized the significant headwater conservation values of Wildcat Branch Preserve. With encouragement from the NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Program, an additional 17-acre parcel was also acquired this year by the Green Acres Program. This parcel shares a common property boundary and adds protection to sensitive limestone fen wetlands that are important documented habitat for rare plants.

Plans for a multi-home subdivision on Wildcat Branch had been drawn and readied years earlier. However, some outstanding engineering issues, including the causeway wetland crossings, delayed building activity. Also working in of preservation was a slowing economy and business management setbacks. These economic realities made land preservation the best decision for all involved.

With the headwater now secured, the Trust looks downstream to possibilities for future expansion of Wildcat Branch Preserve. For now, the Trust plans to open the preserve for deer hunting. Now neighbors and visitors out to explore the preserve may get a glimpse of a bear or a bobcat at Wildcat Branch.



Cold morning at Wildcat Branch

Petty's Island Update

For years the Trust has been telling many fascinating stories about the history of Petty's Island-- stories of the Lenape, Quakers, Ben Franklin, William Cramp, and, of course, Blackbeard—but the Trust wanted to conduct professional historical research to distinguish fact from legend. Using a portion of a \$175,000 grant from the William Penn Foundation, the Trust awarded a contract to Hunter Research to conduct historical and archival research on Petty's Island. The result is a 538-page report that provides a wealth of information on a variety of historical themes, including the history of aboriginal people, European settlement, slavery, shipbuilding, and oil and bulk materials handling.

The good news is that the historical report backs up most of the Trust's stories... with the exception of the tale of the notorious pirate Blackbeard having hidden in the coves at Petty's Island. Sadly, it looks like there's no buried treasure at Petty's Island. The report includes numerous photographs, articles and maps all of which will help to transport you back in time. We hope you will enjoy reading the report which is available on the Trust's website, Petty's Island Preserve page <http://nj.gov/dep/njnlt/pettysisland.htm>.

In addition to funding the historical research, the William Penn Foundation's generous grant will allow the Trust to pursue a number of other initiatives at Petty's Island. The grant funding will provide for two years of educational programming, the production of recorded messages to accompany the waysides, and two video documentaries, one about the island's history, and the other the island's preservation.

In addition, the Trust used funding from an earlier William Penn Foundation grant to award a contract to Vitetta Architects to survey and evaluate existing industrial objects at Petty's Island and make recommendations as to how vestiges of Petty's Island's industrial heritage could be incorporated into the landscape of the nature preserve and future cultural and environmental education center. William Penn funding was also used to evaluate the feasibility of using Crowley Maritime's triple ramp structure as the location for the future center. After looking at the ramp, the Trust's feasibility consultant, Lammey and Giorgio, opined that the engineering reports on the structure were favorable and that it would offer "the Trust a truly unique and exciting location for the Cultural and Educational Center. There

are river views on three sides; the views to the Benjamin Franklin Bridge and the Philadelphia skyline are spectacular." They also noted that the "structure will require an enclosure, delineation of spaces, stairs, elevator, heating, cooling and ventilation, electrical, and plumbing utilities.... All very easily accomplished given the footprint available."



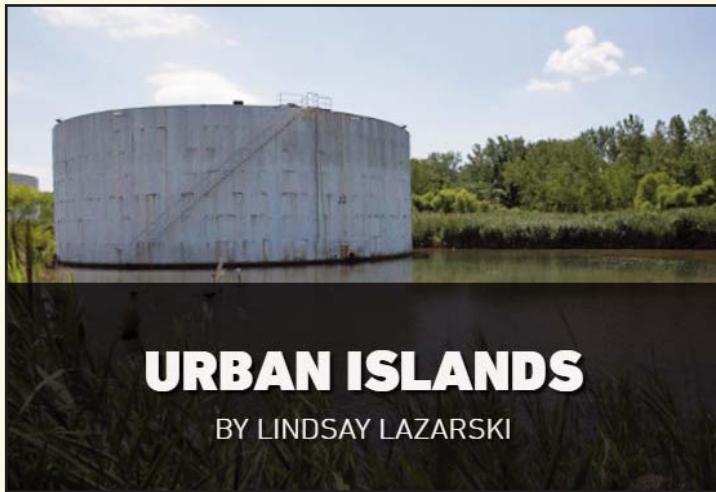
Bob Shinn waxing eloquent on Petty's Island's history

In fact, much of what the Trust accomplished last year was made possible through William Penn Foundation funding. The Trust is extremely grateful for the financial support and interest that William Penn Foundation has given the Trust to help make the incredible resources at Petty's Island more accessible to the general public. Their funding has also allowed the Trust to consider many different options and opportunities that will enable us to hit the ground running when the Trust takes fee ownership of the island and the Petty's Island Preserve is fully open to the public.



Group enjoying a history hike at Petty's Island

In September, Petty's Island Preserve was profiled in a video report by Keystone Crossroads, a collaboration of four public media newsrooms (WHYY, WITF, WESA and WPSU) exploring the urgent challenges pressing upon urban cities and reporting in-depth on the root causes of the urban crisis - and on possible solutions.



[Click image above to view the video.](#)

As CITGO's manager of environmental, health, safety and security Jack McCrossin noted in the report:

Unfortunately what we are dealing with today is a lot of the past practices of those operations over the last 100 years. ... The recognition of what was environmentally correct simply wasn't in the lexicon of anyone during those early days. So, the majority of what we are dealing with now is soil and groundwater contamination that quite frankly is the result of past normal operating practice from the industry that was located here beginning in the early 1900s.



Former Cities Service employees John Rawley, Walter Schlitz and Roland Dean participating in the Petty's Island history hike

CITGO has taken more than 1,000 soil and groundwater samples, has identified the areas of contamination and is working to remediate them.

Looking ahead to Petty's Island's future, the Trust's Chair Michael Catania noted:

It's going to be a long process to do the clean-up, phase out the marine terminal operations and do the restorations to the island, but ultimately I think it's something that's well worth it. ... I think anyone who has had any role in this is going to look back on this someday when there are families out here enjoying the wildlife, thinking this is a great thing that we have done preserving Petty's Island.

Although remediation work is ongoing, there is no reason not to come to and enjoy Petty's Island. The New Jersey Audubon Society, under its contract with the Trust, provides at least 12 programs a year at Petty's Island. Some of these programs are for Camden County school groups but many are public programs such as birding and history hikes and photography workshops. For information about upcoming programs, please check the NJAS program page at <http://www.njaudubon.org/Go/Petty>.



WHYY multimedia producer Lindsay LazarSKI interviewing Trust Chair Michael Catania for Keystone Crossroads

A Swamp Pink Success Story

The Trust's Richard J. Buhlman Preserve is located at the freshwater head of the tidal area along the Rattlesnake Gut, a tributary to the Cohansey River. Within the Rattlesnake Gut stream corridor are hundreds of swamp pink plants, both clumps and individual rosettes. Since swamp pink is often found growing on hummocks formed by trees, shrubs and sphagnum mosses, it is thought that topographic conditions may provide an important component of swamp pink habitat. The Rattlesnake Gut has surprisingly steep slopes in areas and varying topographic conditions which provide excellent habitat for swamp pink.



View of the Rattlesnake Gut

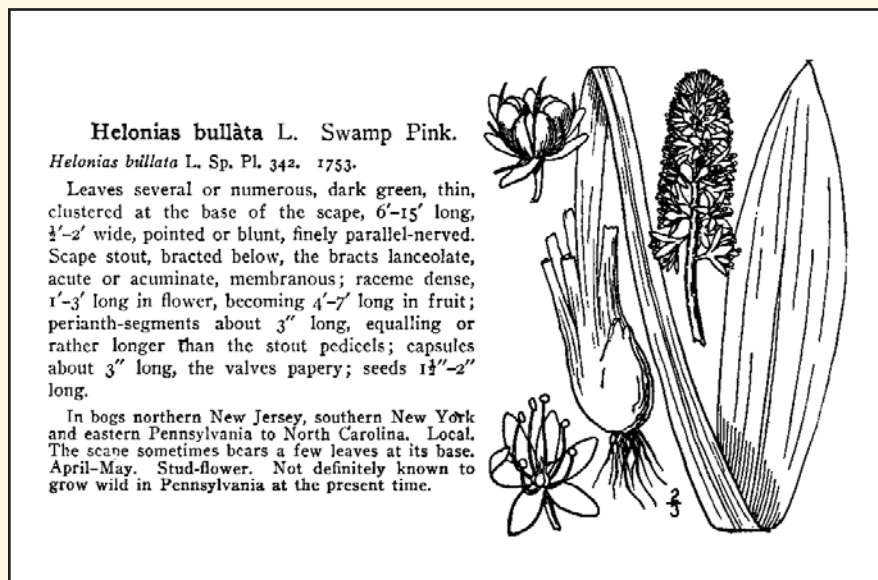
Swamp pink is a state endangered plant and was listed as a federally threatened species in 1988. Supporting over half of the known populations, New Jersey is the world's stronghold for swamp pink, and protection of its known habitat is critical. The primary threats to swamp pink are the indirect effects of off-site activities and development such as pollution, introduction of invasive species, and subtle changes in groundwater and surface water hydrology. Hydrologic changes include increased sedimentation from off-site construction, groundwater withdrawals or diversion of surface water, reduced infiltration (recharge) of groundwater, increases in erosion, increases in the frequency, duration and volume of flooding caused by direct discharges to wetlands (such as stormwater outfalls), and increased runoff from upstream development. Based on its vulnerability to off-site threats, protection of swamp pink necessitates not just protection of the plants but also a significant buffer that may extend as far as a half-mile beyond the plants.

With a new acquisition this year, more swamp pink habitat was preserved at the Richard J. Buhlman Preserve. The preserve now consists of over 100 acres of forest and a complex of swampy forested wetlands bordering meandering streamlets, headwater wetlands, sphagnum wetlands with scattered Atlantic white-cedars, and spring seepage areas.

The Trust is hoping that next year will bring additional lands to the Richard J. Buhlman Preserve and additional protection to swamp pink.



Swamp pink along the Rattlesnake Gut



Biodiversity Inventory Updates

Inventories and “Surgical Surveys”

What’s in reserve? What inventory is on the store-keeper’s shelf, or left in the homesteader’s pantry? What do you take stock of? These questions assess what we know now so we can plan for the future. Ecologists or land managers need to know what each preserve has in its natural resource inventory. To answer that question, the Trust has started efforts to inventory the plant and animal resources of our preserves.



Pine Barrens tree frog vocalizing at Bear Swamp at Red Lion Preserve

Over the last four years, the Trust has contracted with experts to thoroughly inventory some of our most unique preserves in search of all species of plants, reptiles and amphibians, birds and butterflies too. In years past, the Trust has selected one preserve which to conduct a complete biological inventory. In 2015 the Trust stepped up its survey pace. Two complete biodiversity inventories and four smaller targeted surveys we like to call “surgical surveys” were put out for work bids. The 1,021-acre Bear Swamp at Red Lion Preserve in Burlington County, and the 2,164-acre Hamilton Preserve in Atlantic County, were both chosen for complete biodiversity inventories. These are two of the more prominent preserves where the Trust had high hopes for new discoveries.

Centrally located in Burlington County, Bear Swamp at Red Lion Preserve is not far from the Red Lion circle. This wet property with its woolly namesake seemed ripe for an inventory to reveal its unknown natural richness. The Trust selected BioStar Associates for this inventory. BioStar had done similar work at other Trust preserves and was familiar with what the job entailed. The preserve’s location spans two geographic regions, the inner and outer coastal plains, which suggested a high potential for interesting plants. The field work to search for plants, reptiles and amphibians spanned spring, summer and fall. After inspecting the furthest corners of the swamp much new was revealed. Most notable was a population of the federally threatened lily swamp pink, previously undocumented from this swamp. Also heard calling from the depths of the swamp was the state threatened Pine Barrens treefrog. Thanks to August A. Sexauer (now

deceased) of the Audubon Wildlife Society of Audubon, New Jersey, the preserve was already well known to bird watchers. Today, Bear Swamp at Red Lion Preserve is categorized by the NJ Audubon Society as an “Important Birding Area.” So labeled, many skilled bird watchers regularly visit the preserve and add their sighting information to birding data records for all to share.

The Hamilton Preserve biodiversity inventory was also initiated in 2015. Located near Mays

Landing, Atlantic County, this preserve is a known hotspot for many rare plants and herptiles. However, damage from illegal off-road vehicle use has impacted many of the preserve’s sensitive wetlands and critical habitats for many species. Herpetological Associates Inc. was retained for the species inventory and assessment of damages to plants and animals from illegal off-road vehicle use. Much of the field work was completed in 2015 and the final report is expected in early 2016.

The Trust also initiated in 2015 surgical surveys, where searches focus on a single species or specific habitat. When possible, the Trust hired young naturalists or researchers to do these smaller projects, offering them opportunities for solid field work experience. As its first “surgical survey” the Trust studied the utilization of hay fields by grassland birds at the Thomas F. Breden Preserve at Milford Bluffs and Gravel Hill Preserve, both in Hunterdon County. Success was had in locating Pine Barrens treefrogs at our Mankiller and Bears Head preserves, both in Atlantic County. One biologist waded into Sussex County rivers at Congelton Preserve and Papakating Creek Preserve to search for freshwater mussels.

The question of what to take stock of is never-ending. There is always more we hope to learn about our preserves. Next year we will set to work on more surveys and inventories as we take stock of what’s on our preserves.

An aerial photograph of a vast, forested mountain range. The foreground is filled with dense trees in various shades of green, yellow, and orange, suggesting an autumn setting. In the distance, the mountains recede into a hazy blue sky. The text "The View from" is overlaid in a large, white, serif font across the middle of the image.

The View from

An aerial photograph of a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, a large lake is surrounded by dense forest with some autumn-colored trees. In the middle ground, a golf course is visible. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky.

High Mountain

By Jim Wright

“The panorama has lost none of its charms. One sees the white smoke of Ridgewood rising like a thin column from the surrounding forest. Wyckoff, Wortendyke and Ho-Ho-Kus just furnish a glimpse of their elegant homesteads, and where the long sketch of the Palisades grows faint to the visions, the town of Nyack seems to wave its little smoky handkerchief, as if it were bidding the beholder good-bye.”

—from “A Trip to High Mountain,” Country Walks in Many Fields (1934)

by Joseph Rydings of the Paterson Rambling Club

Let me tell you about a vast, unsung open space in North Jersey that offers historic views, a waterfall or two and 11.5 miles of challenging trails that have attracted hikers and nature lovers for more than a century.

The place is the High Mountain Park Preserve, just over the Passaic County border from Franklin Lakes. It was saved as open space in the 1990s to ensure some elbow room amid the region's rapidly growing suburbs and protect a few extremely rare plants.

The preserve—located in the Watchung Mountain range in Wayne and North Haledon—is owned by Wayne Township, The Nature Conservancy and the state of New Jersey. The extensive system of trails is maintained by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (NYNJTC).

Christopher Vergano, the mayor of Wayne, calls High Mountain “a beautiful destination for anyone visiting northern New Jersey. The over 1,200 acres of pristine property has walkable trails and views you will always remember.”

It is those far-ranging vistas of New York City and nearby suburbs from the summit—some 876 feet above sea level—that help make High Mountain unique. According to local lore, that elevation offered such an advantageous vantage point of New York Harbor that when General George Washington had his headquarters in the nearby Preakness section of Wayne during the American Revolution, his troops used the summit to watch British troop movements some 20 miles away.

It seems everyone who is familiar with the mountain has a favorite aspect that helps them connect with nature.

“I love when the leaves first come in the spring, and when they turn to bright colors before they drop in the fall—it’s a wonderful sight,” says Mayor Randy George of North Haledon. “When you look at the mountain behind our town, you only see trees and no development.







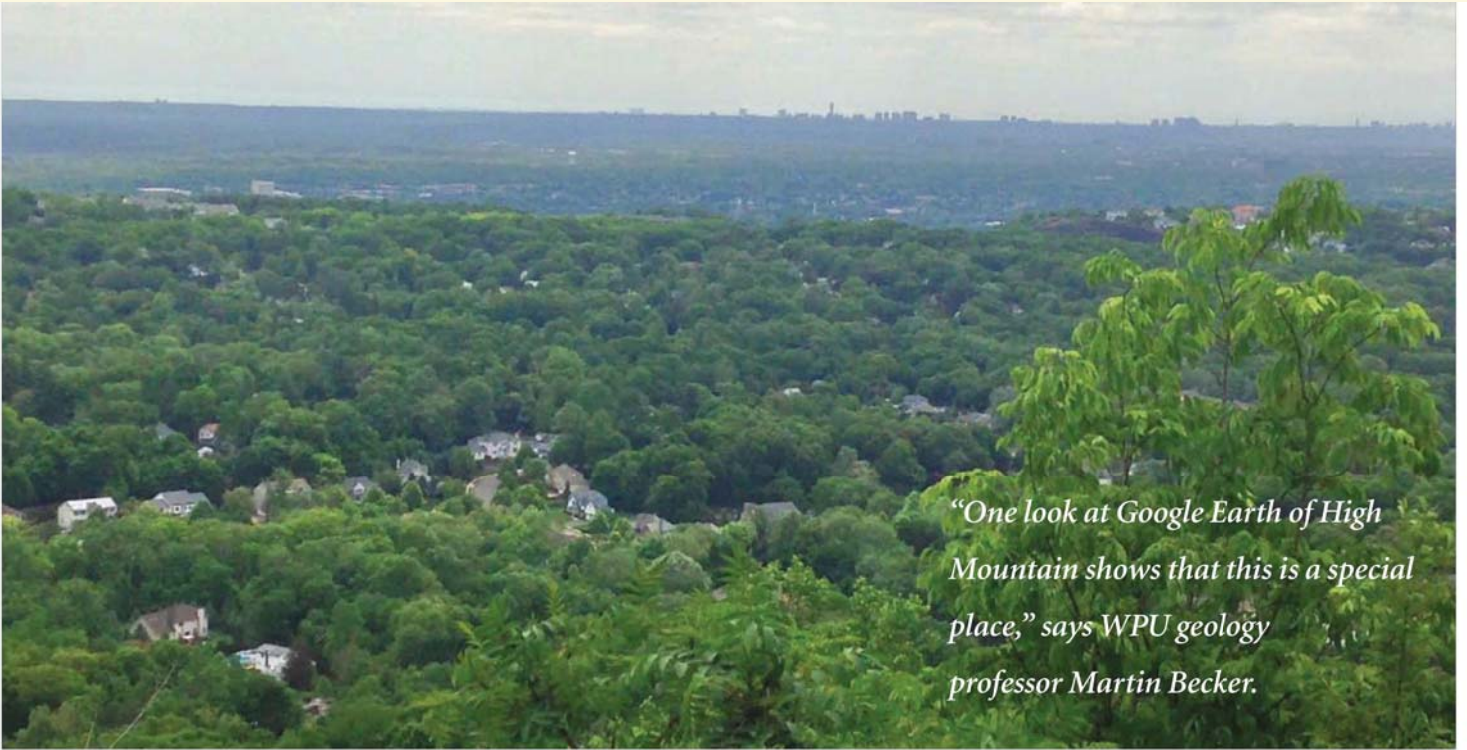
That makes the backdrop of North Haledon magnificent.” No wonder the borough sponsors a hike up High Mountain every spring and autumn.

For Nicole Davi, a professor of environmental science at William Paterson University (WPU), the mountain offers a terrific learning tool. “My students love to get outside and learn by doing,” she says. “They like the challenge of getting up the mountain, which usually takes us about an hour, and for some it is their first hike! Once at the top the students are rewarded with a beautiful view, which they really enjoy. They usually want to stay up there for a bit and just sit on the rocks. So my favorite part is that I get to watch our students connect to nature and the outdoors.”

NYNJTC’s John Kopp has lived in

Wayne for more than 35 years and has hiked the land often: “I believe in the concept of *shinrin-yoku*, the Japanese belief that health benefits can come from being in nature. High Mountain can fit this bill for thousands of people right in the surrounding communities within minutes of their homes.” He adds that “the mountain is part of the spring flyway, and birders should be aware of it. Hawks can regularly be seen on the thermals there.”

Frank Bivona, mayor of Franklin Lakes, appreciates the proximity to nature that the preserve affords. “Lakes, rock formations, streams, small waterfalls and scenic views as far as the eye can see are at our doorstep. I like to hike the trails, and being up there can allow you to imagine what it was like



“One look at Google Earth of High Mountain shows that this is a special place,” says WPU geology professor Martin Becker.

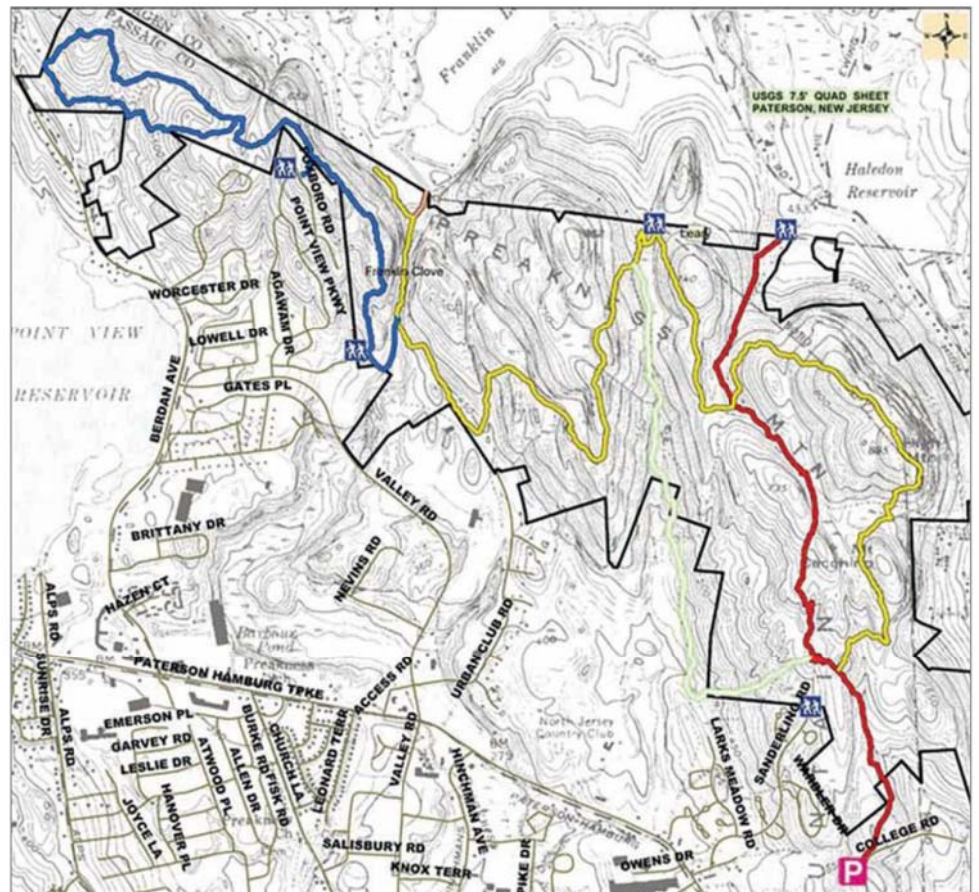
hundreds of years ago when the Lenape inhabited the area.

However, perhaps the most amazing part of High Mountain is that it is still open space after all these years. The summit, for example, has been a focal point for at least two development plans—one in the 1890s and another almost a century later. (More on those later in the article.)

As for the great views afforded by High Mountain’s summit, the bad news or good news—depending upon the shape you’re in—is that it’s a 40-minute uphill walk, whether you enter the preserve from the William Paterson University campus in Wayne or from the entrance along Reservoir Drive on the North Haledon/Franklin Lakes border.

The view from the summit, the first landfall for European ships headed for New York Harbor before the age of skyscrapers, is a relatively recent chapter in High Mountain’s history.

The mountain’s bedrock—basalt of volcanic origin—dates from roughly 130 million years ago, according to WPU geology professor Martin Becker. “I integrate all classes I teach with hands-on field trips to High Mountain,” Becker says. “It’s an extremely beautiful wooded forest in the middle



of suburban northern New Jersey. One look at Google Earth of High Mountain shows that this is a special place.”

The earliest records of human activity at the preserve begin in its northern section, off Scioto Drive in Franklin Lakes. There, near a ravine known as

Franklin Clove (see above), aboriginal Americans slept in rock shelters thousands of years ago. The shelters—small camp sites under rock overhangs—were discovered in 1900 by archaeologist Max Schrabisch of Paterson, who pioneered the exploration of such rock

— 20th Anniversary Gathering —
— On High Mountain. —



The Paterson Rambling Club gathering in 1924.

shelters throughout the Northeast.

In the 1600s, Lenapes lived in longhouses in the Clove each winter. According to local historian Jim Longo, they chose the Clove because the ravine protected them from the bitter-cold westerly winds. They ice-fished in Micharagrape Pond (now Franklin Lake) for food and got their fresh water from nearby Buttermilk Falls.

European settlers arrived in 1695 and slowly populated the surrounding region. In the 1800s, a 21-year-old German immigrant named William Buschmann sailed for the United States by ship. As Buschmann later recount-

ed, the first landfall was “like a distant mound rising out of the sea.”

He asked a sailor what the place was and learned it was “High Mountain beyond Paterson in New Jersey.” Lacking a destination in America, Buschmann decided that’s where he would head.

Buschmann not only went there, but he ultimately bought the mountain and tried to build a summer resort hotel and cottages at the summit. The lure, according to *The Paterson Daily Press* in 1898: the mountain’s “commanding position and healthful location,” just 90 minutes from Manhattan.

The plan soon failed for reasons un-

known, and a fledgling group called the Paterson Rambling Club fell in love with the mountain, choosing it as the site for its very first ramble.

Wrote one of the club’s founders, Philmer Eves: “September 18, 1904, was a great day in the history of the club when the charter members met at City Hall for the first time to go by trolley out to....High Mountain.

“...On reaching the mountaintop the Ramblers were conducted across the plateau to a glacial boulder just inside the woods. Against this now famous rock a great fire was kindled, while most of the ramblers were led into the



woods where the autumn flowers, birds, trees and other natural objects were explained.”

In the 20th century, the land was owned by the Archdiocese of Newark, and then the McBride family, who in the early 1990s proposed a master plan for High Mountain that included two parcels with 140 rental units, 12 parcels with more than 1,000 residences, a four-acre residential center, a 10-acre elementary school, and low-rise structures including a restaurant and conference center on the summit.

Wayne Township, however, wanted to preserve the land. With the help of The Nature Conservancy, Wayne-based Union Camp Corp. and state


government, it ultimately bought the precious 1,260 acres. Peter McBride, who hiked the property as a young man and who was involved in the negotiations, says: “It’s a beautiful piece of land, and we’re all probably better off that it was preserved.”

Next came the Herculean task of cleaning up decades of abandoned junk and trash. Thanks to the hard work of volunteer groups—especially local geocachers, local Boy Scouts and the NYNJTC—High Mountain is looking much spiffier.

Challenges remain at High Mountain, including continuing to combat the illegal use of all-terrain vehicles and off-road motorbikes that chew up



the trails and carve up the landscape. The preserve is also a haven for white-tailed deer, which have wreaked havoc on the understory.

However, for new generations of hikers, students and nature lovers who discover the joys and simple pleasures of this preserve—its sweeping views, miles of trails and incredible history—High Mountain will always stand out. 



Color photography by Jim Wright; painting on page 14 by Otto Benz courtesy of North Haledon; map on page 15 courtesy of Wayne Township; aerial photography on page 10 with the help of LightHawk; archival photography on page 16 courtesy of the Passaic County Historical Society, Paterson, NJ.

Hunting Update

During the 2015-2016 hunting season over 3,920 hunters registered at Trust preserves through its website: www.njnlt.org. The Trust allows deer hunting only at many of its preserves to maintain biodiversity. The deer population in New Jersey is far greater than the ecosystem can sustain. Over-browsing by deer depletes native vegetation resulting in impacts to animal and plant habitat, such as decreased food sources and increased invasive plants.

In order to hunt at selected Trust preserves, hunters access the Trust's website, electronically submit information to the Trust, and print their own hunter registration letter with the required accompanying preserve map. The Trust is able to use this information to sort hunter registrations by preserve. Trust staff may reach out to hunters registered at a specific preserve to determine their interest in volunteering for clean-ups and maintenance projects. The Trust continues to use a "lottery" system for the ever-popular but limited hunting opportunities at our Limestone Ridge Preserve and Thomas F. Breden Preserve at Milford Bluffs.

It is important to note that the Trust does not allow hunting for waterfowl, small game, turkey or bear, as it maintains that only over-browsing by deer poses a threat to biodiversity. In addition, Sunday bow hunting is not authorized on Trust preserves as it is on state wildlife management areas and private property during deer season.

While hunting on Trust preserves, all rules and regulations in the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife game code must be followed. Hunting deer by bow and arrow, shotgun or muzzleloader are acceptable, depending on the preserve. No target shooting or discharge of weapons other than for deer hunting purposes is permitted. Permanent deer stands are not allowed, and portable deer stands, while permitted, must be removed after the hunting season is completed or are subject to confiscation by the Trust.





Thanks to Our Volunteers

The Trust would like to acknowledge and thank its many volunteers for their invaluable contributions to the maintenance of Trust preserves. If you are interested in becoming a Trust volunteer monitor or attending a workday, please contact the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust at 609-984-1339, or email NatLands@dep.state.nj.us.



Volunteers from Americorps/PowerCorps Camden at a Petty's Island Preserve Cleanup

Donations

The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust gratefully extends its thanks to the following who have donated land, funds or services to the Trust in 2015 to help preserve and protect New Jersey's natural diversity:

CITGO Petroleum Corporation
Conserve Wildlife Foundation
Covanta Camden Energy Recovery Center
Stewards of Open Space Camden County,
South Jersey Land and Water Trust
AmeriCorps/PowerCorps Camden

Matthew Sullivan
Joyce Cloughy
DEP Endangered and Nongame Species Program
Duke Farms
William Penn Foundation
Herpetological Associates, Inc.

For more information about how you can make a donation to further the Trust's mission to acquire, preserve and manage natural lands for the protection of natural diversity, please call 609-984-1339.



"Peregrine Falcon"



"Gentian"

Stefan Martin Prints for Sale to Benefit the Trust

In 1984, the Trust commissioned a series of limited edition prints created exclusively for the Trust by New Jersey wood engraver Stefan Martin. Each of the three prints highlights an object of the Trust's preservation efforts: the State-endangered Peregrine Falcon, titled "Peregrine Falcon;" a northern New Jersey stream habitat titled, "Morning Stream;" and a grouping of three Pine Barren gentian, titled "Gentian." After Stefan Martin's death in a 1994 fishing accident, a fellow artist noted that Martin was "absolutely one of the most important artists in New Jersey. He won many awards, was nationally known, and very well-loved."

Unframed prints are \$150 each, or \$400 for all three (a \$50 savings). Remaining as of this writing are 202 "Peregrine Falcon," 125 "Morning Stream," and 17 "Gentian" prints.

To order, contact the Trust at 609-984-1339, or email NatLands@dep.state.nj.us and indicate which print or prints you would like to order and your name and phone number. We will get back to you with ordering details.



"Morning Stream"

The New Jersey NATURAL LANDS TRUST

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An 11-member Board of Trustees sets policy for the Trust.
Six members are appointed by the Governor from the recommendations
of a nominating caucus of conservation organizations, and five members are State officials.

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