



Lee Elsworth

OBI Land Trust Awarded Grants *Birdwatchers, Nature Lovers to Benefit from Upgrades Planned at Downybrook Nature Reserve*

An award from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program along side matching funds from the Northern New York Community Foundation and Downybrook endowment funds will provide OBI Land Trust project funding of \$50,000.00 for Downybrook Nature Reserve improvements and upgrades.

The award was announced as part of a \$2.2 million grant program from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program, administered by the Land Trust Alliance and the State Department of Environmental Conservation. OBI is a non-profit land trust that was entrusted by Helen and Mary Eldrett with the ownership and care of the property in 2015.

The grant will fund various improvements - wood walkovers and bridges will be replaced at several spots throughout the 3.5 miles of nature trails at Downybrook. Three new small bridges will be built on the east side trail to improve visitor access. Informational kiosks will be built and installed at both trail entrances. These will include a trail map, sign-in, and information concerning trail conditions. A low observation deck will be built on the west side pond area to view waterfowl, beaver and other wildlife. Nature lovers and families from Brownville, Dexter and the neighboring town of Lyme will enjoy this outdoor treasure.

The Northern New York Community Foundation awarded \$6000 in matching funds to OBI toward the grant. The conservation of Downybrook was a stepping stone in the decision by the land trust's board of directors in November 2016 to establish the OBI Endowment Fund at NNYCF. "It is especially powerful when partnerships can help encourage more good things to happen in a region," said Rande S. Richardson, Executive Director of the Northern New York Community Foundation. "We are pleased the Community Foundation could play a part in making the overall project a reality, leveraging additional resources to benefit Downybrook for the enjoyment of the people of the area."

The grant is the largest ever received by OBI Land Trust, one of the only all-volunteer land trust groups in the area. OBI contributed a \$6300 match from our dedicated Downybrook fund, bringing the total amount to \$50,000.

Downybrook is located at 24353 Perch Lake Road and is open to the public daily from dusk to dawn.



Corky Marlow and Dick Brouse, North Country Bird Club, leading two Spring Birding Treks at Downybrook.



OBI supporters Carl Bickford and Christine Vliss, summer residents of Henderson Harbor, attended **Wine and Birdsong** on June 8. They are pictured here with Gail Miller, owner of White Caps Winery, a co-sponsor of the event.

"This is our first event with OBI. We just had a great time today walking through the woods, great lunch and we just had some nice wine and we'll definitely be back for more."

- Carl Bickford





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Join Us! The non-for-profit OBI Land Trust relies on contributions from the public and grants from foundations to fund our projects in land conservation.

Please send your contributions to:
 P.O. Box 117, Chaumont, NY 13622.

Become a "Friend of OBI."
 Levels of membership range from \$100 Protector of the Land to \$1500 Friend of the Land.

Look for our end of year message in early December.

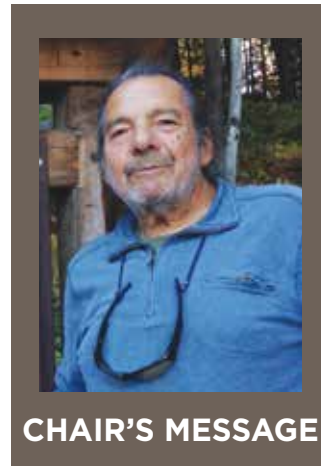
We need and appreciate support of OBI!



**OBI
 SERVICE
 AREA**

It has been a busy year for OBI! Last year at this time I wrote about our outreach grant through NYSCPP. Until then, the OBI board focused exclusively on conserving and maintaining our properties. We failed to let the public know who we are and what we do! Well, that all changed this past year. We started out with a new logo, newsletter format, informational brochures, etc. - the mechanics. We had our 25th anniversary celebration, as well as hosting a number of diverse events including birding walks and van cruises, library talks and several events in partnership with White Caps Winery, Salubrious Point.

It has all paid off! Many more people now know about OBI Land Trust. I am pleased to announce that OBI has increased our personal contacts, mailing list and donations by about 20% over last year, therefore meeting our goal! We hosted a series of events with more scheduled. Most importantly, the dedication of our Downybrook Nature Preserve in June! We added two new board members and have developed a group of volunteers for various events and



CHAIR'S MESSAGE

activities. (You can get involved too! - Just contact any of us.) OBI Land Trust is becoming a "community", and we are pleased you are a part of it!

After spending the time and energy on outreach, it is fitting that we now devote our efforts to our premier "in fee" property, Downybrook Nature Reserve on Perch Lake Road near Brownville. We have received another NYSCPP grant, described on the front

page of the newsletter, which will allow us to make improvements to this beautiful nature reserve! I might add here that Downybrook has, with some exposure, become a destination for any number of people who are out on birdwatching events, just walking the trails, or volunteering there (our Bluebird minders) - even in the cool, wet weather we have been experiencing! Land conservation provides opportunities for recreation, education and exploration. **Get outside and enjoy!**

Thanks for your continuing support. We look forward to seeing you soon at one of our events!

Jim LaPlante
 OBI Board Chairman

The Smiths Babysit the Bluebirds

John and Marie Smith have decided retirement is for the birds - the Bluebirds, that is. The Brownville couple spent this spring working as volunteer nest monitors for a family of Bluebirds that hatched and then later fledged from Downybrook Nature Reserve.

Longtime members of North Country Bird Club, they both retired about a year ago from careers at Samaritan Medical Center in Watertown. The bird club has been helping OBI to monitor and maintain the many nest boxes at Downybrook. The Smiths have been observing bird activity and also opening nest boxes to determine what species was occupying them.

They were thrilled to find four baby Bluebirds in a nest box in late May. The brightly colored Eastern Bluebird is among the most sought-after backyard birds.

"The most exciting part was that we actually had bluebirds!" said John. "We were happy to be a part of it and we read a lot about them along the way."

They also made sure that the Bluebird family was safe from competing species. A nearby nest box was occupied by Tree Swallows, which is an acceptable species to have in proximity.

"You can tell by the type of nest and the bird activity which birds are living in the boxes, which was very

interesting to learn," Marie said. "There's a lot to know about Bluebirds."

The empty nest box has been cleaned out and it is ready for another brood to be born if they return later this summer. "We're really hoping they'll come back," said John. "But we'll have to wait and see on that one."



Lee Ellsworth

OBI to Honor Conservation Leaders T. Urling “Tom” and Mabel Walker



T. Urling “Tom” and Mabel Walker are guests of honor on August 6 at Lucky Star Ranch, during “An Evening with OBI,” the annual gathering for friends of our non-profit land trust.

The Walkers have been loyal supporters of OBI. They are longtime residents of Watertown and also were summer residents of Henderson and Cape Vincent for many years. They have a strong personal connection to the shoreline communities that OBI serves and they believe in our conservation goals.

In 2015, The Walkers generously sponsored the Walker Challenge, OBI’s largest single fundraiser in its 26-year history. For every dollar donated to OBI, the Walkers matched it to help fund our operating budget. The matching program exceeded the goal of \$20,000 by the end of 2015 and it was a key factor in the continued growth and success of our all-volunteer organization.

“To be honored is very special to us and we are happy that

others have joined with us to support OBI over the years,” said Mrs. Walker.

The Walkers have also supported other land conservation groups in our area, including Thousand Islands Land Trust and Tug Hill Tomorrow, and Save the River.

Mr. Walker is the former mayor of Watertown. He is also well-known as a tree-lover and he is the founder of Tree Watertown, a tree-planting program in the City of Watertown. Mr. Walker is a charter member of the Black River chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club. Also, he is a former director of the New York Chapter of the American Chestnut Association, which works to restore the American chestnut tree to forest ecosystems in the U.S.

“Preserving land of ecological significance in our area is something that benefits us all,” said Mr. Walker.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD... by Lee Ellsworth



If you observed some unusual species at your backyard birdfeeders this spring, it turns out you weren’t alone. Reports of songbirds not commonly seen – in some cases, lots of them – were reported throughout Northern New York over the past couple of months. This includes Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting and Baltimore Oriole.

Even more unusual compared with other years, some feeders ended up with flocks of them. There were reports of several Orioles feasting together on grape jelly and sliced oranges. These and other songbirds also lingered longer than usual.

Why? The answer was likely the cold, wet spring that many of us will not soon forget. The migration of many songbird species from the neo-tropics was delayed by the colder-than-average weather. When they hit the cold weather on their northward migration, the songbirds stopped and found food. They stayed together and did not disperse as they awaited better weather for travel and enjoyed trips to many backyard feeders.

The bad weather meant a delayed journey for the songbirds, but it was certainly a treat for North Country birdwatchers as we reached for our binoculars a bit more than usual.



Colin Burns Joins OBI!

Colin Burns joined the OBI Land Trust’s Board of Directors in January 2019. He brings an enthusiasm to cultivate another generation of land stewards and is helping OBI spread the message of land conservation through social media and media outreach.

Colin is on staff at WPBS-Public Television, where he helps businesses and organizations with marketing strategies and raising money for the station’s local and national programming.

“I wanted to join OBI to help get the message out to people that not only can you enjoy the lands that OBI conserves, but you can also help us preserve more land along Lake Ontario through future easements.”

Colin enjoys exploring different hiking trails, always with his camera at his side.

OBI WISH LIST:

- ★ Riding mower for trail maintenance
- ★ 4-wheel drive vehicle for trail monitoring and maintenance
- ★ Chain saws
- ★ Loppers
- ★ Volunteers!!!



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Donor Highlight



Tracy and Ed Valentine have faithfully supported OBI for over 14 years! Tracy served as secretary to the board capturing minutes for meetings, keeping records straight, and generally keeping us honest to our important mission.

Since returning to our roots of being an all volunteer board, Tracy has contributed countless hours as Editor in chief, writing copy for our newsletters, brochures, website and press releases. She is always quick with a smile and quip that keeps being on the OBI Board fun!

OBI thanks the Valentine family for their volunteer work and financially supporting OBI with generous donations.



Please Join Us

Lucky Star Ranch
13240 Lucky Star Road,
Chaumont, NY

Help us to celebrate another successful year of conservation efforts along Jefferson County's shoreline communities.

Tuesday August 6, 2019

5:30 - 8:00 PM

Cost: \$50.00 per person

Cash bar & delectable Strolling Dinner created by the Saint Lawrence Spirits Château.

RSVP by July 30 on our website www.obilandtrust.org, or by calling 315-649-6045.

For events and information visit: www.obilandtrust.org