



## WHAT'S FOREST BATHING?

### First-time Event Attracts Many During Busy 30-Year Anniversary Event Season

Kim Spinelli wasn't quite certain what she was about to experience when she visited Downybrook Nature's Reserve for the first time on a calm, crisp Saturday morning in mid-October. She joined nine others she'd never met who had gathered for "forest bathing"- a slow and peaceful meditative walk through the reserve's meandering trails.

By the time the event concluded, Spinelli felt a sense of calm from spending time in the woods. She also made some new friends and asked how to learn more about OBI and our local role in land conservation.

"It was an opportunity to not only meet people I wouldn't have otherwise, but to have an experience in nature that encourages me to have a full experience. I'm so glad I tried it" said the Watertown woman. The canopy of the white pine forest carpeted in soft needles and sweet-

scented pine cones was peaceful and stimulating at the same time. "It felt amazing and it was beautiful. It starts the day off right."

The October 14 event was a highlight of the 2023 calendar of 30th anniversary events for OBI and the second successful "forest bathing" event at Downybrook hosted by Recreation Therapist Nova Yanoch. A local expert in mindfulness and meditation, Yanoch guided participants on walks through the scenic trails that encouraged engaging the senses and immersion in the natural environment and "to explore and to get curious."

"The senses is all about bringing you into present state and your brain can only think about one thing at a time. So if it's thinking about the way something feels or the way something smells, it's not thinking about what I'm going to make for dinner," Yanoch explained. "And it gives yourself a

break because we're usually living in the past or in the future and that's where a lot of our pain comes from. We can tap into those things in any environment at any time."

The first "forest bathing" happened in June 2023 at Downybrook and was a very popular addition to OBI's outdoor activities. Other OBI events this year included dedication of the Nature Viewing Deck at Downybrook, screech owl and bluebird house building workshops at White Caps Winery, an outreach event in Henderson to educate about easements, OBI's 30th anniversary celebration dinner at Wise Guys, and a field trip to the Enchanted Edible Forest at Cross Island Farms on Wellesley Island.

We hope you were able to join us for these events. We are busy planning events for the 2024 season and hope to see loyal supporters and some new faces!



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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.

**We need and appreciate support of OBI!**



## From OBI Board of Directors to Our Supporters: Thank You!

Any organization that is powered by the energy and spirit of volunteers is special, and doing it for 30 years is remarkable. Since 1993, OBI Land Trust has depended on the time and talent of those whose only "pay" is knowing that their work – whether waist deep in marshland at one of our conservation properties or sitting at the computer writing a grant – are furthering OBI's mission of conserving ecologically significant land in our 8-town service area of Jefferson County. This includes many miles of pristine pastures, scenic lake shore, open space grassland, undisturbed forestland and limestone bluffs. It's a place that all of us call home and your Board of Directors feels privileged to work with local communities to help to preserve the places we all love for future generations. We are proud to be one of the area's only all-volunteer land trust organizations and we offer a sincere thank you to all of our many supporters along the way. We couldn't do it without you.

## Dedicated to Downybrook

On any given visit to Downybrook Nature Reserve during the warmer months, you can listen for the trill and twitter of the many species of songbirds, the rustle of the breeze in the trees – and the distant hum of a John Deere tractor.

From springtime through late autumn, Kory Kittle spends several hours each week seated behind the wheel as he goes about maintaining more than 3 miles of trails at the reserve, located in Brownville. This includes mowing, clearing branches, creating new trails, clearing downed trees and ensuring walkovers and bridges are safe for visitors.

Kittle and his family are neighbors of both the reserve and Mary Eldrett, who created the wildlife sanctuary along with her late sister, Helen. It was around 2010 that Kittle began helping the sisters maintain the property. The property was gifted to OBI Land Trust in 2015 and public use was expanded. We are fortunate to have Kittle's continued help and expertise as Downybrook has become a popular destination for birdwatchers and nature-lovers.

"It's been nice to see the benefits of maintaining the property and the upgrades like the driveways and seeing people come here and that they know it's here to enjoy," said Kittle.



# INSIDE OBI: Robin Caprara

Be-coming a member of the all-volunteer board of directors is allowing me to play a part in preserving local land while learning a lot about how land protection works and the important role of a land trust.

Exploring the lands we preserve, attending nature classes we offer, social events and getting to know our supporters has helped me to appreciate all the effort that comes with the responsibility of land conservation.

Downybrook Nature Reserve in Brownville is a place I had not visited until I joined OBI. It's a place to relax, unwind and enjoy nature right around the corner from where we live! During a recent visit, I explored the trails, grabbed a few photos and I found myself enjoying every step. Starting near the covered deck, I walked the trail through a pine forest and then off to a tree canopy and then to the ponds where I found a nosy otter checking me out.

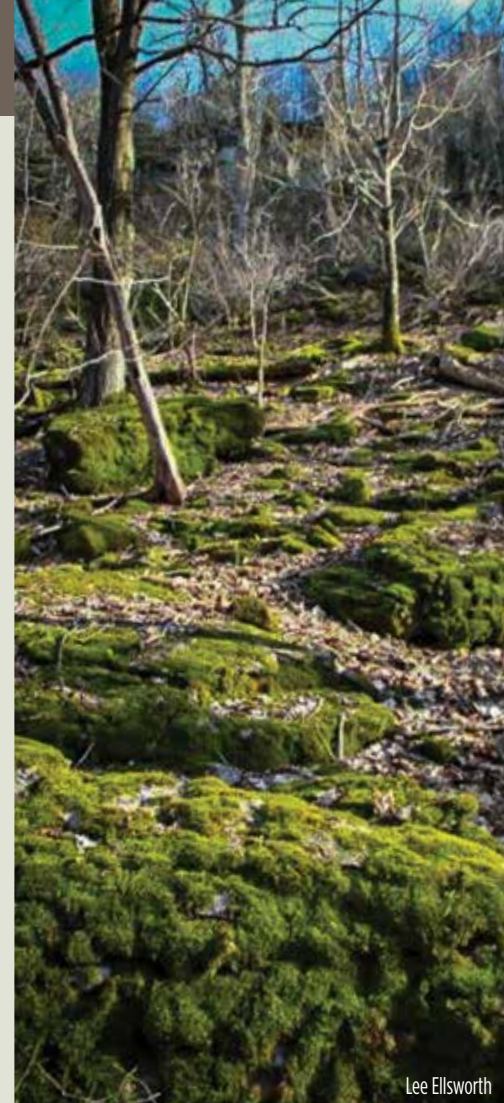


Over bridges and viewing decks I saw the paths the beaver

made traveling from one point to the other and the intricate beaver house built out of sticks on the other side of the pond. Ending at a beautiful field with quaint blue bird houses and flowing tall grass, I didn't realize how long I had been out on a trails. But one thing I definitely have realized is how lucky we are to have land trusts like OBI to help make sure we will always have beautiful forestlands, open pastures and nature trails to visit, enjoy and always remember.



Robin was welcomed to OBI's Board of Directors in April 2023. She is a talented nature photographer and native of the North Country.



Lee Ellsworth



## Another Great Time at Wise Guys! ANNUAL DINNER CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF OBI LAND TRUST

At OBI Land Trust, we think three decades of land conservation is a pretty big deal. It turns out, our supporters do, too! More than 100 people turned out to help celebrate this major milestone at OBI's annual membership dinner on August 7, 2023. For the past three years, the sit-down dinner has been held at Wise Guys Ristorante, overlooking Sawmill Bay in Chaumont. The annual OBI gathering began as a casual outdoor

picnic years ago and has evolved to an important event for OBI donors. It is the primary fundraiser for our all-volunteer land trust and helps with operating expenses throughout the year. The guest speaker was Jamie Brown, the New York Program Manager for the Land Trust Alliance, which provides advocacy, training and other assistance to the 90-plus land trust organizations around New York State.





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## WOODS IN WINTER

While in open woodlands you might be startled by the flush of a **Ruffed Grouse** - also known as the Partridge (pictured above middle) - from almost under your feet or just overhead from a Cedar or Pine tree.

Be on the lookout for **Pine Siskins** (pictured above right), "The streaky brown Pine Siskin is a goldfinch in disguise, with only touches of bright yellow plumage of the Goldfinch." Look for flocks feeding in conifers with pine cones.