

## LAND AND LAKE



Lee Elsworth

**H**ello! This is usually the time of year when OBI Land Trust is announcing our various events and activities scheduled for the year. In these unprecedented times, the near future is uncertain, but we do want let you know we are thinking of all of our OBI community, and hoping all is well.

All of OBI's events will be suspended until the end of May. As the situation changes, we will evaluate activities for the remainder of 2020. Be sure to check in on our website ([www.obilandtrust.org](http://www.obilandtrust.org)), Facebook and Instagram pages for the most up-to-date decisions regarding our activities. The well-being and safety of our members is our priority.

Additionally, OBI Land Trust will be making a donation to the **COVID-19 Community Support Fund**, which was recently established by the Northern New York Community Foundation to respond to the urgent needs of those in the north country affected by the coronavirus outbreak. Individual members of the OBI Board of Directors will be matching this donation. These

**CHAIR'S MESSAGE**

contributions are in honor of all of you who support our land trust and our work in the shoreline communities of Jefferson County.

During this time, we encourage you go out to enjoy the outdoors on trails such as Downybrook Nature Reserve in Brownville, while practicing the all-important safety guidelines for social distancing. The natural beauty of the north country can be a source of strength and comfort in uncertain times. Getting outside

is **ALWAYS** good for your health. That is a main reason why OBI Land Trust works to conserve land.

We continue to be grateful for all of you who support the conservation mission of OBI Land Trust and look forward to when we can all gather together again.

Jim LaPlante  
*OBI Board Chairman*

Great horned owl photograph (above) taken by Jim in early April.



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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!**

**COVID-19 COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND**

During these unprecedented times, many people and organizations are seeking to help meet the many challenges that are facing our nation, our neighbors and local communities during the coronavirus outbreak. OBI Land Trust, a non-profit partner of the Northern New York Community Foundation, and its individual board members will join to make additional matching gifts toward the **COVID-19 Community Support Fund** recently established by the NNYCF. The \$50,000 fund, approved in March by the Foundation's Board of Directors, will help partner agencies and other non-profit organizations in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties that work to support essential needs of area residents during these difficult days. Additional gifts will help extend the fund's reach and impact.



"This fund is a tangible way to lend a hand to the community and be part of a larger effort that will get resources where they are needed the most," said Tracy H. Valentine, an OBI Land Trust board member. Funds will be immediately available to help places like food pantries, soup kitchens and non-governmental funded school pantry programs to ease the impact that will happen over the coming weeks and months, according to NNYCF. It is an effort that is being taken in combination with other non-profit and government sectors and it is an example of the public/private partnership that will be required.

"We also realize that this will take a collective effort and many partnerships to effectively address the needs of our region. We are hopeful this provides some meaningful relief early in the most responsible way," said Rande Richardson, Community Foundation executive director.

Individuals may support the relief fund by making gifts to the **Northern New York Community Foundation COVID-19 Community Support Fund**, 131 Washington St, Watertown, NY 13601, or through a secure online gift at [www.nnycf.org](http://www.nnycf.org).

**Winning Words Benefit OBI Land Trust**

*How does OBI Land Trust help make our area a better place to live?*

George Weir, an eighth grade student at Case Middle School in Watertown, answered that question and won a \$500 grant for our land trust. It was one of 10 Community Spirit Youth Giving Challenge grants awarded in Jefferson County by the Northern New York Community Foundation in January. A total \$10,000 was awarded to 20 non-profit groups throughout the North Country as part of the essay contest.



George, age 13, and his family support OBI's mission of land conservation and they enjoy exploring the public trails at Downybrook Nature Reserve.

Local junior high school students were asked to write about their own definition of community and explain what makes the area a great place to live, work and play. They were then asked to choose a local charitable organization and explain how its service to local residents helps to benefit the community.

George is a son of Marshall and Sarah Weir, Watertown. Thank you, George!

**NOTES FROM THE FIELD... Birdsong at Downybrook**

Downybrook Nature Reserve is a great place to go for a hike and explore. But this time of year – and through the summer months – it is also a great place to go and just listen. What you will hear are some of the surest signs of spring in the north country. The many habitats throughout the 180-acre reserve in Brownville are home to dozens of bird species during the warmer months. Song sparrows, Red-winged blackbirds, Robins, Blue jays and Crows can be heard now. Several species of sparrow will soon arrive and listen for the Ruffed grouse with its distinctive drumming call. Woodcock will be making a stopover and various species of warblers descend upon the open woodland and marshy areas of property

throughout May. Red-tailed hawk and Turkey vulture make impressive fly-overs and try to spot the Bittern, a tall and slender marsh bird known to camouflage in cattails.

Birdhouses at the reserve attract Chickadee, House wren, Tree swallows and Bluebirds. Now and into May, listen and look for White-breasted nuthatch, Rose-breasted grosbeak and the colorful Baltimore oriole. Migrants making a stopover include Ring-necked ducks, Green-winged teal, American black duck, Mallards and wood ducks.

Bring binoculars so you can spot all of the wonderful bird species while you listen to the chorus that is springtime at Downybrook.

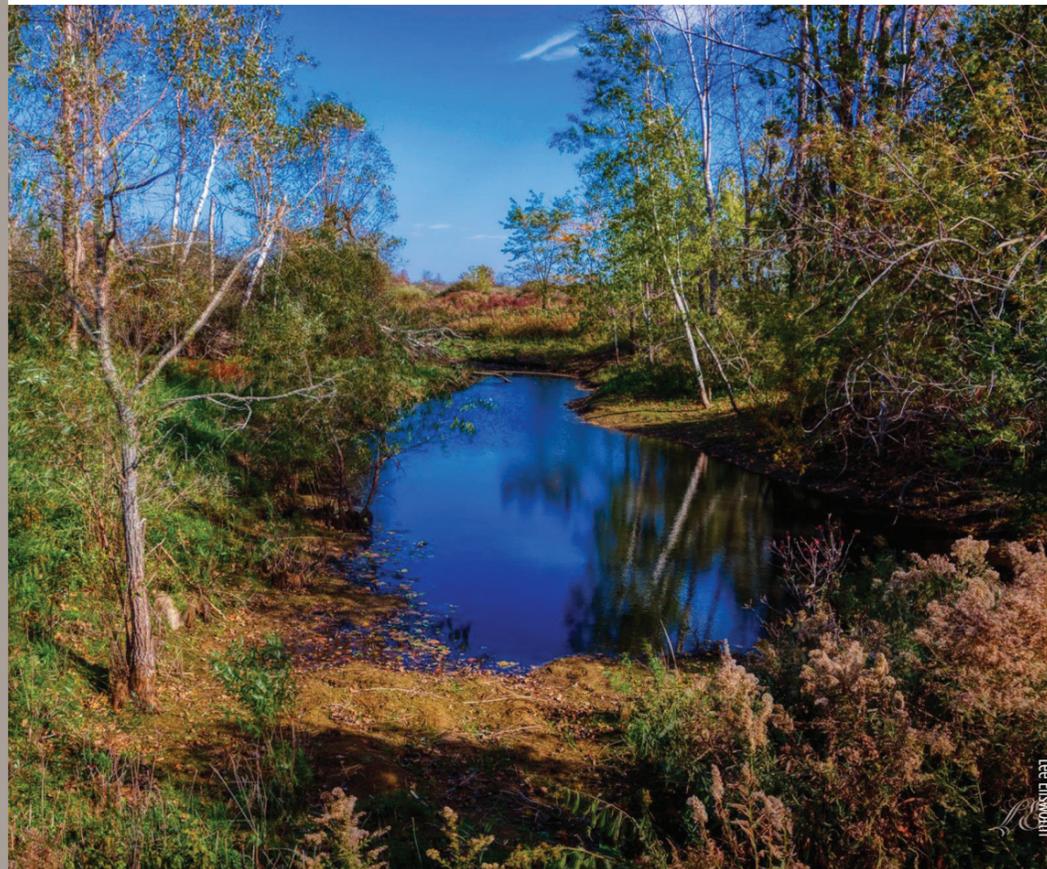
- Lee Ellsworth



Tree swallow



Song sparrow



Lee Ellsworth





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## 2020 OBI EVENTS & WALK ABOUTS...

**The health and well-being of OBI supporters is our priority. Therefore, scheduled events may be cancelled or dates may be changed due to concerns with the Coronavirus outbreak. Please view our website at [www.obilandtrust.org](http://www.obilandtrust.org) or call OBI Land Trust at 315-649-6045 for the latest updates.**

### **Birdsong at the Preserve Saturday, June 6 | 9:30 AM**

Enjoy a tour of a private nature preserve on the shores of Lake Ontario. Nesting and Birdsong will be at its peak as we identify birds and their communication. Due to the location, participation is limited, so please reserve your spot by calling or emailing OBI.

### **An Evening at the Barrens Thursday, June 18 | 6:00 PM**

Meet at White Caps Winery located on Pt. Salubrious, Chaumont for a car pool to the nearby Barrens. It promises to be an exciting and fun evening of exploration of one of the areas most unique and fascinating ecosystems, Chaumont Barrens. Lee Ellsworth, OBI Land Steward, will lead the tour and answer questions along the way. (7:30 PM return to White Caps for a light meal and White Caps Winery wine.)

### **Ecology Tour at Downybrook Sunday, June 14 | 9:30 AM**

Join Lee Ellsworth, OBI Land Steward, as he leads us through the wonders of scenic Downybrook Nature Reserve. Downybrook is home to various habitat areas and recognized as a Backyard Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. Bring your binoculars!

### **Mindful Nature Walk through Downybrook Thursday, July 16 | 6:30 PM & Sunday September 27 | 11:00 AM**

Join us in a mindful meditation walk and learn how to incorporate awareness and presence into your nature walks. This experience will be led by Nova Schenk, an experienced registered Yoga Teacher and Reiki Level II Practitioner. Currently, Nova leads classes and series related to mindfulness, mei, and movement at Shanti Shala, a private Yoga Studio in Watertown and with Pivot.

### **Annual Friendraiser August (To Be Announced)**

Join us for our summer gathering! The annual event helps us fund operations for our all- volunteer land trust and continues the tradition that brings together OBI Land Trust friends, supporters and those looking to learn more about conservation along the shoreline communities of Jefferson County.

### **Nature Photography Sunday, September 27**

Join Lee Ellsworth, Nature Photographer and OBI Land Steward, for a walk through Downybrook. Lee will work with a small group to explore photography in nature. Participants should bring their camera and expect an exciting personal experience!

Tripods are suggested but not required. Space for this photography event is limited. Please note: Cameras should have controls for exposure and focusing (not just AUTO) No phone or small "point and shoot" cameras. More information regarding camera gear is available by emailing Lee at [leeellsworth@icloud.com](mailto:leeellsworth@icloud.com) as event date nears. Space for this unique event will be limited with priority to Friends of OBI Land Trust.

**Not a friend of OBI? It is easy to become one! Just visit [www.obilandtrust.com](http://www.obilandtrust.com). and make a minimum \$25.00 donation to OBI Land Trust.**