

We are Local. We are your Neighbors. We are your Land Trust.

# Aspetuck Land Trust



“We are committed to acting on this once-in-a-generation opportunity to preserve an intact protected forest block that would otherwise be threatened by the effects of climate change and fragmentation from development” - David Brant, Aspetuck Land Trust Executive Director

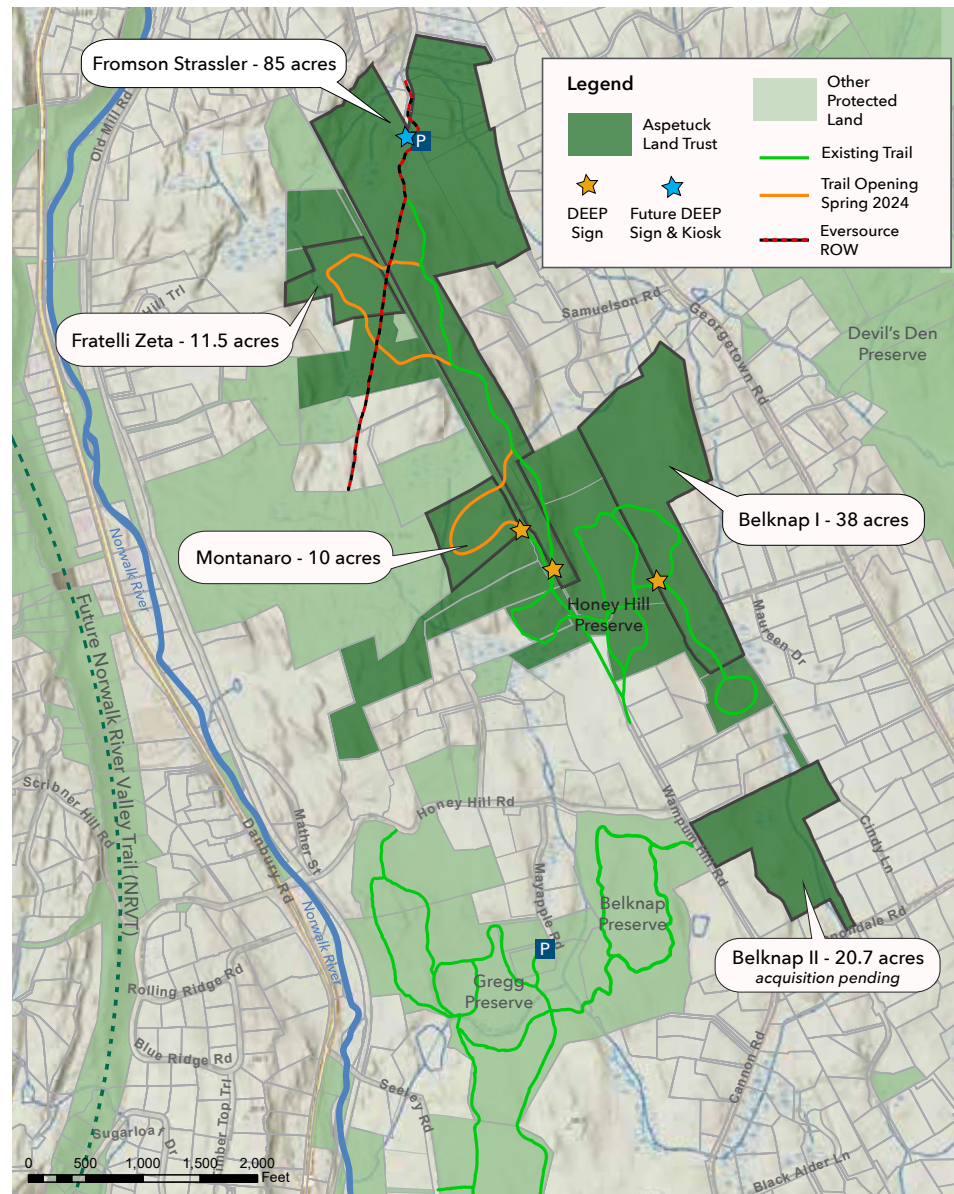
## SAVING THE LAST REMAINING OPEN SPACES

### ALT Adding New Properties to Forest Reserve

At Aspetuck Land Trust we continue to make significant strides in our mission **to preserve and protect natural spaces in Fairfield County, Connecticut before they are gone forever.** Recently, ALT successfully closed a deal on the **11.5-acre Fratelli Zeta property** and is on the verge of another significant acquisition of **Belknap II, a 20.7-acre property** on the southeast corner of the **705-acre Weston Wilton Forest Reserve.**



Eastern Box Turtle,  
Species of Special Concern



These 32 acres are crucial additions to the Weston Wilton Forest Reserve (WWFR), a pristine forested area straddling the Weston and Wilton border (see map) that serves as habitat for diverse wildlife such as the **Eastern Box Turtle, Spotted Turtle, and Eastern Hog-Nosed Snake**, all considered to be Species of Special Concern in Connecticut. This forest is also unique for its abundance of native plant species unaffected by invasive plants, **a rarity in Fairfield County.**

This special assemblage of protected lands is not only important as a **705-acre reserve** but also because it provides **important connectivity between the Norwalk River Valley Trail to the west and forest preserve lands to the east.** These include the 1,756-acre Nature Conservancy's Devil's Den Preserve, the 1,009-acre Trout Brook Valley Conservation Area, and CT's

Centennial Watershed State Forest which **complete a regional trail corridor** through state, municipal, and land trust-owned lands. This entire regional greenway of protected lands is what is fondly referred to as the **"Lungs of Fairfield County"**.

These recent property acquisitions are significant steps toward preserving the natural beauty of Fairfield County, fostering community engagement, and safeguarding vital wildlife habitats. Since launching the Green Corridor initiative in 2020, **ALT has preserved 187 acres.** We have another eight properties of **55-acres under contract**; we **closed on 18 South Park Ave** on October 2 and are securing formal agreements on 144 acres of land for a **grand total of 386 acres.** **No small feat in highly developed Fairfield County.**

As ALT continues its efforts, the Green Corridor and the WWFR will stand as testaments to the enduring commitment to nature conservation in the region. **We would like to thank our supporters; Green Corridor Capital Campaign donors, CT DEEP, the Formanek Foundation, our members, and all who support Aspetuck Land Trust, for making this important work possible.** 🌱



Spotted Turtle, Species of Special Concern

## Landowner Engagement

Creating Native Landscapes for the Benefit of All



Southport Wildflower Preserve, across from the Pequot Library

At Aspetuck Land Trust not only are we conserving land at record pace, but we are **restoring wildlife habitats across the region.** With our Landowner Engagement Program, we help **homeowners see their yards as living stepping stones that provide food and shelter for wildlife** like birds, butterflies, and bees and support them as they make their way through the landscape.

With our **webinars, workshops, information on our website, model landscapes, and 2 native plant sales a year,** we provide homeowners with the tools they need to create healthy, beautiful gardens and yards. The **Southport Wildflower Preserve** (pictured above) is a great example. Planted only 2 years ago, this garden is bursting with life. **The native flowers and plants have taken off without fertilizers or pesticides.** These natives create a very special place to visit and enjoy, as well as providing food and shelter for numerous species including American Goldfinch, Black Swallowtail, Green Sweet Bee, Ruby Throated Hummingbird, Eastern Cottontail, and many more. **Come visit!** 🌱



American Goldfinch

We would like to thank **Robbie Hodgson, the Southport Area Association, Joyce Hergenhan, and Elizabeth Gaynor** for their continued support of the **Southport Wildflower Preserve**

# Native Plant Sales – Spring and Fall

41,850 natives planted across the region...and counting



**THANK YOU**  
to our amazing  
**Native Plant Sale Team!**



**Aspetuck Land Trust's popular Native Plant Sales**, held twice a year in Spring and Fall, are our way of helping homeowners all over the region buy hard-to-find native plants, trees, and shrubs. **Members get early access to our online native plant sale. Plants sell out quickly so join today** if you're not already a member!

Check out our website for garden plans and all kinds of information about making your yard as healthy and beautiful as it can be. We're here to help!



**Butterfly Weed (Asclepias tuberosa)**



**Ornamental Onion (Allium 'Millenium')**

**Please SHARE! We want to hear from you!** On our website's homeowners page, you can now upload pictures from **YOUR backyard** and let us know how it is going. It is so inspiring to hear from others, like these homeowners:

*"We have slowly been planting native plants to create a butterfly corridor. Deer, bears, foxes, rabbits, bobcats, turkeys, skunks, possums, owls, and too many birds to name; we have even spotted a Yellow Cardinal twice!"*

*"Where a pond once stood are now native cattails. We have worked to remove invasive species and plant natives, as well as protect native patches of Milkweed and Joe-Pye weed."*



**Anise Hyssop (Agastache foeniculum)**



All plant sale buyers are automatically signed up as **Green Corridor Partners**. Fill out the form on our website and **get a sign** (at left) **for your mailbox FREE**.

Share the news, inspire others and together let's create a **regional green corridor of 1,000's of acres of conserved land connected to 1,000's of acres of healthy backyards** for a healthy ecosystem for all living things! Visit: [www.AspetuckLandTrust.org](http://www.AspetuckLandTrust.org)

# Healthy Ecosystems in Urban Landscapes

## Bringing the Forest to Bridgeport

Based on ALT's extensive forestry management experience and our work Building Bridges to nature for residents of Bridgeport, Aspetuck Land Trust has been awarded a grant from the CT Dept of Agriculture and Forestry to pilot a ground-breaking climate smart practice based on the Miyawaki microforest method at Bridgeport Public Schools. **With this grant we will not only continue to bring Bridgeport to the forest, but bring the forest to Bridgeport.**

Created 40 years ago in Japan by Dr. Akira Miyawaki, the microforest method is used around the world to increase tree canopy in urban areas. The Bridgeport schools microforest project will be the 1st in Connecticut.



Pivot Ministries of Bridgeport on a hike in Trout Brook Valley



Rendering of a microforest at the entrance of a school

For over 4 decades the benefits of Miyawaki microforests have been proven and well documented in cities around the world including: **reducing air pollution, lowering air temperatures, capturing storm water, capturing carbon from the air, increasing diversity of many species of birds and pollinators, reducing energy costs, and improving well-being.**

As the first urban school project in the Northeast, Bridgeport could be a model for other cities struggling to increase their tree canopies and reverse the very real impacts of climate change.

With these densely planted areas of hundreds of plants, trees, and shrubs at their schools, students will learn about this Climate Smart practice and all of the potential benefits these microforests will bring to the community.

We are so proud to partner with **Bridgeport Public Schools** and so grateful to the **CT Dept of Agriculture**.

*Funding for this project was paid for by the Climate Smart Farming: Agriculture and Forestry Grant. Funding awarded and administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. 🌱*



CT Dept of Agriculture Commissioner Bryan P. Hurlburt (2nd from left) with ALT staff

# Building Bridges – Connecting to Nature

## Blueberries, Birding, Fishing, Wellness & More



Trout Brook Valley Hike with Easton State Rep Anne Hughes, CLCC and the farmers who are the food and land justice members that make up the Connecticut BIPOC Food Network



Celebrating Black Birders Week with a group from BlackAFinSTEM, Yaw Darko from CT Land Conservation Council, and Sierra Club CT on a Bird Walk at Ash Creek



Elevate Bridgeport at the blueberry patch with teacher, scientist, and ALT board member Joe Schnierlein who talked to these future leaders about his life path into nature.



For our friends from PT Partners, Positive Psychology Coach Jennifer Groves led us on an "awe walk", while enjoying the beautiful sunset at Ash Creek.



"Fishing with Friends" workshop with Trout Unlimited and CT DEEP at the Beardsley Zoo, thank you to Bass Pro Shops for their generosity - no one left empty handed!



Celebrating Latino Conservation Week with breakfast, a bilingual bird walk led by Yaw from CLCC, and ending with a program at Green Village Initiative

# Summer Interns – Passionate About Land Conservation

141 properties, 2,144 acres, 3,800 plants, trees & shrubs

For Bruce LePage interns Owen Harlacker and Gabi Hebert and Tucker Fund intern Owen Edminster (center) it was an incredibly busy and rewarding summer. They were instrumental in conducting inspections of all of Aspetuck Land Trust's 141 properties. The checklist included:

1. Marking boundaries and looking for encroachments, cutting, or dumping
2. Ensuring there are no safety hazards
3. Mapping fences and walls
4. Noting invasive growth for removal
5. Identifying habitat type and signs of wildlife
6. Checking signage visibility, condition, quantity



While completing the inspections and taking care of needed maintenance along the way (including removing invasive species), they also jumped right into the installation of pollinator gardens at 3 Bridgeport elementary schools; unloaded and staged 3,800 native plants, trees, and shrubs for the Plant Sale at Haskins; assembled and installed a memorial bench; worked at the TBV orchard on vine pruning; installed post rail fence at Jump Hill; and planted shrubs at Southport Beach. They also visited a Miyawaki Forest in Cambridge, MA and weeded gardens at Haskins. And after all of that, they were still smiling at the end of the summer!

We wish our interns the very best as they head back to college to continue their studies. **Bruce LePage intern Owen Harlacker**, our veteran in Land Maintenance, is back at University of Utah studying **Geographic Information Science** which includes the study of spatial analysis, field data collection techniques, advanced GIS methods, spatial database design, web GIS, and geo-programming. **Bruce LePage intern, Gabi Hebert**, is returning to University of Vermont as a Junior to continue their studies in **Environmental Studies**, conservation, ecology, and sustainability. **Tucker Fund intern Owen Edminster** is at University of Wisconsin-Madison and is also studying **Geographic Information Science**. We are so proud of our interns and appreciate the support from donors and members who believe in providing opportunities for young people who are passionate about conservation and land preservation.



**The Bruce LePage Conservation Fund** honors ALT's former Executive Director who was instrumental in saving what is now Trout Brook Valley 24 years ago. To contribute, visit our website at [www.aspetucklandtrust.org/bruce-lepage-conservation-fund](http://www.aspetucklandtrust.org/bruce-lepage-conservation-fund) 🌱

# Haskins Lecturer 2023, Leila Philip

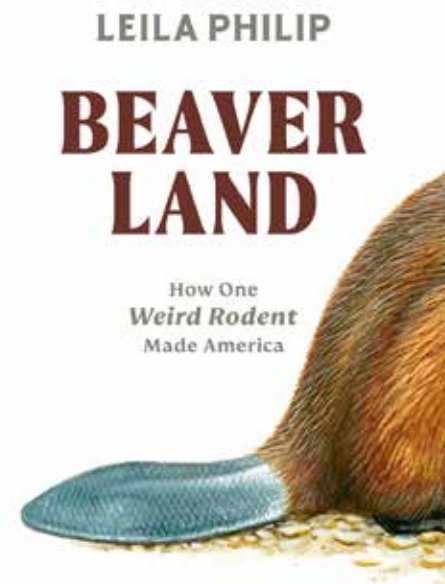
## Exploring the American Beaver

This year's **Haskins Lecturer**, at the **Trefz Forum** at the **Westport Library** on **October 26th**, is guest speaker **Leila Philip**, author of the best-selling book exploring how one weird rodent made America. **BEAVERLAND**, a **New York Times Editors' Choice** and **NPR Science Friday Book Club Selection**, offers a "fascinating portal for readers to enter into the mysteries of that world themselves" (*The Washington Post*) in a book that's "as full of charm and wonder as its beguiling protagonist" (*The Wall Street Journal*).

Environmental writer **Leila Philip** fell under the thrall of beavers when she saw a group of them building a pond near her home in Woodstock, Connecticut. So much so that she'd spend six years observing, researching, and writing a book about this most peculiar rodent. Along the way she would discover just **how vital beavers are to environmental preservation and just how profound their influence was on our country's early economy**.



"Typically written, astutely observed, and refreshingly unvarnished, BEAVERLAND is going to break your heart—and then heal it with compassion, beauty, and wonder." —BY MONTGOMERY, New York Times bestselling author of *The Soul of an Octopus*



Reserve Your Free Ticket at [www.AspetuckLandTrust.org/events](http://www.AspetuckLandTrust.org/events)

The decline of this amazing animal, almost completely wiped out by the fur trade, initiated a period of environmental devastation so extreme geologists now call it "the great drying." In the early 20th century, beaver populations were restored in Connecticut and by repairing extremely damaged river systems, it soon became clear how important they can be. Philip explains, "**They've played an outsized role in America's past and can play a crucial role in its future.**"

A Guggenheim Fellow, Philip has also been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. She was a popular columnist at the Boston Globe and currently teaches in the Environmental Studies Program at the College of the Holy Cross where she holds the Brooks Chair in the Humanities as a professor in the English Department. She currently lives in Woodstock, Connecticut where, surrounded by trees, she has learned to love the beauty of living in a woodland. 🌱

## Out in the Woods and on the Trails



**Moths and Butterflies with Victor DeMasi**



**BLUEBERRIES with all of you, our members!**



**Bloodroot and other Spring Ephemerals with Anthony Zemba from Landtech**



**Little Legs on the Trails with Ranger Jim Wood**



**Spring Hawk Migration with Larry Fischer**



**Beaver Activity with Diane Honer**

## Annual Meeting at Pequot Library



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Gilbertie's Organic Farm in Easton, an Aspetuck Land Trust protected property

## MAKE A DONATION TO ASPETUCK LAND TRUST

Support all the wonderful work we're doing together! Please use the enclosed envelope to send your tax-deductible gift of support or use one of the secure options below to donate by credit card.



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## SUPPORTING ALT'S WORK

