

IT'S HIKING SEASON!



WELCOME TO THE SHARON LAND TRUST— YOUR NATURAL RESOURCE

Summer is in full swing, and the Land Trust trails have never looked more beautiful. Stunning views, glimpses of local wildlife, picnic spots...they're all ready for your visit.

We're thrilled this season to announce the opening of the White Oak Trail which, in addition to the original Connector Trail, links the Von Ahn and Goodbody Preserve trail networks along the ridge of Indian Mountain. This means that our trails on the western side of Indian Mountain are now 5.5 miles long! Park at either 140 Millerton Road (Goodbody Preserve)

or 276 Millerton Road (Von Ahn Preserve) to access the trails. You will enjoy some of the most beautiful views of Mudge Pond on one side of the ridge, Indian Lake on the other, and beyond. Turn to page 3 of this newsletter for our new Trails Guide, where you'll find even more information and tips about our Preserve trails—open to the public for everyone to enjoy.

Even more happily, this May we welcomed our new Executive Director, Carolyn Klocker. A Sharon resident, Carolyn is an environmental scientist who most recently worked at Cornell

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Turn to **page 3** for a special pull-out section on our public hiking trails!

Cooperative Extension in Millbrook, NY, where she was Environment and Energy Program Leader, working to educate and provide support to municipal officials and residents on topics including natural resource management, conservation, and more. She is committed to safeguarding our natural environment and growing our community programming, so that the Sharon Land Trust can be a resource for every Sharon resident—and visitor—now and for generations to come.

Happy summer, and we hope to see you on the trails!

A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Having called Sharon home for the past eight years, I've had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the incredible work of the Sharon Land Trust. From hikes along our scenic trails with my family to moments of quiet reflection amidst our stunning landscapes, I've come to appreciate the natural wonders that define our beloved town.

The mission of the Sharon Land Trust—to conserve and protect our town's natural resources, scenic vistas, farmlands, and more—resonates with me on a personal level. As a parent, I am committed to ensuring that my daughters, along with future generations of Sharon residents, have access to clean water, fresh air, locally grown foods, breathtaking views, and the tranquility of intact forestlands.

Assuming the role of Executive Director in early May filled me with excitement and a profound sense of responsibility. I am eager to help forward the Land Trust's mission, working alongside our dedicated members, volunteers, board, and staff to safeguard the natural resources and character of Sharon for everyone.

I am thrilled to share some of the exciting efforts and initiatives on the horizon for the Sharon Land Trust. In the coming months, we will continue our ambitious efforts to protect additional parcels of land, ensuring the preservation of critical habitats, farmlands, and wildlife corridors.

Our stewardship programs will keep focusing on enhancing the health and resilience of our existing preserves and our more than 26 miles of trails so they continue to be open—free of cost—to all residents and visitors.

And I'm committed to growing our outdoor recreation opportunities, education, and community engagement. Whether it's through guided hikes, educational workshops, or volunteer stewardship activities, we want to cultivate a deeper connection between residents and the natural world that surrounds us.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you—our members, volunteers, board, and staff—for the warm welcome and support I have received so far. I am truly excited about the journey ahead and look forward to meeting and collaborating with each of you!

With gratitude and enthusiasm,

Carolyn Klocker
Executive Director



The Sharon Land Trust is proud to be an Accredited Land Trust by the Land Trust Alliance. The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction, showing that the Sharon Land Trust meets the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence. Sharon Land Trust joins more than 1,200 land trusts across the United States that have gone through rigorous third-party reviews of policies and procedures that streamline operations and lead to more effective land conservation. Learn more at www.landtrustaccreditation.org.

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YOUR GUIDE TO THE SHARON LAND TRUST TRAILS



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With more than 800 acres of land open to public use, the Sharon Land Trust hosts some of the best hiking in Litchfield County—if not the best hiking in Connecticut! With picturesque views, lush forests, flowering shrubs and wildlife of all types, our trails are worth a special visit. Difficulty levels range from easy to moderate (with a few good uphill hikes, too!). Here's your guide to them all...

Go to sharonlandtrust.org for detailed maps and directions to trails.



VON AHN PRESERVE 276 MILLERTON ROAD

This beautiful property captures the complex, steep southwestern face of Indian Mountain, and is contiguous with the Goodbody Preserve. It is a mosaic of farmland, forest, ridgeline, and wetland that supports wildlife species including black bear, porcupine, coyote, timber rattlesnake, and more than 30 species of birds. There are 26 acres of active farm fields with stunning views of Indian Lake and the Millerton Valley. The trail system climbs up to and across the ridgeline and includes a rocky ridge view. Benches at both field and ridge views provide a welcome resting spot for both the casual walker or more strenuous hiker. The connector trail on the southeast edge of the trail loop connects to the Goodbody Preserve's trail system.

HIDDEN GEMS: A short mini trail at the northern end of the ridge allows hikers to choose between another beautiful view of Indian Lake or a walk beside a mountaintop wetland.

BEST FOR: Energetic hikers who want to explore this fantastic ridgeline.

FAVORITE SECRET SPOT: A small waterfall and stream at the northernmost part of the loop!

GARRETT GOODBODY PRESERVE 140 MILLERTON ROAD

This preserve lies on the southern reach of Indian Mountain, and connects acres of lush farmland to one of the highest elevations on Indian Mountain. Three separate viewpoints can be found along the trail—Sharon Valley, Millerton Valley, and Mudge Pond—each one featuring a bench where you can rest and take in some truly spectacular views. Between those points lies a highly intact forest that's a habitat for a multitude of local birds. The connector trail near the Mudge Pond view connects this to the VonAhn Preserve to the north.

BEST FOR: Those looking for some exercise, great views and a hike that can range from one to three hours long.

FAVORITE SECRET SPOT: Look for the rough-cut cedar log bench along the switchbacks at the southwest side of the loop trail: it was made for one special volunteer who loves native timber.





SHARON MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

189 EAST STREET

Nestled between two ridges, this secluded property contains a beautiful loop trail around a bog that teems with flora and fauna. As you cross the 100-foot long bog bridge, keep an eye out for wood ducks and turtles and listen to the call of frogs and toads. Whether you enter from East Street, Bowne Road, or Tichnor Road, you will find pristine rambling streams, hardwood forest stands, rocky hills covered in mountain laurel, plus old charcoal pits and stone walls from hundreds of years ago. The trail system has been maintained to equestrian standards, and is open year-round to horses.

BEST FOR: Family-friendly hikes and those who like peace and quiet.

FAVORITE SECRET SPOT: The Bowne Road spur trail, accessible from an alternate parking spot at 201 Bowne Road, is the best place to enjoy ephemeral flowers in the spring while hiking beside the streams.

BEST VIEWPOINT: A memorial bench at the intersection of the Bowne Road spur trail offers dappled views into the wetland.

TWIN OAKS PRESERVE

32 MUDGETOWN ROAD

The Twin Oaks field was bought by the Sharon Land Trust in 1998, after it was threatened with development. The hill held two oaks that had graced the landscape since before the American Revolution. In 2013, the first oak fell, and its twin followed soon after. So the Land Trust planted two 28-foot white oaks in the field to serve as a memorial to its rich history, and the Millbrook Garden Club donated entrance gates sculpted of wood from the fallen trees. A favorite among dog owners, the preserve features a 1-mile perimeter loop trail around the field, offering outstanding views of Red Mountain and its foothills. Several tribute benches have been installed, so it's a prime spot to bring a picnic!

DON'T MISS: A marvelous native plant landscape around the parking area includes a memorial bench that's perfect for a quick break to wait for friends.

BEST FOR: Relaxed morning or evening hikes with family, friends, and pups! The sunset views are particularly amazing here.

FAVORITE SECRET SPOT: A tiny spur trail on the lower northeastern side of the loop trail leads into the forest to a stream and small waterfall, perfect for giving your dog some water on a hot day.



SKIFF MOUNTAIN NORTH PRESERVE

583 SKIFF MOUNTAIN ROAD

This preserve is at the southern end of Sharon, bordering Kent, and it features an easy-to-hike loop trail through a variety of habitats. While it is predominantly forested, it also encompasses lush fields and wetlands, including the Pine Swamp, which hosts a rare red spruce community that's considered to be one of Connecticut's critical habitats! Skiff Mountain is also home to rare plants and wildlife species, including an impressive and diverse group of forest birds. The trail system has been maintained to equestrian standards, and is open year-round to horses.

HIDDEN GEMS: An interior field nestled at the center of the property hosts abundant wildlife.

AMAZING FOR: Short family hikes for adventurers of all levels!



BUCKSBAUM PRESERVE

ON LAMBERT ROAD

¼ mile east of the intersection with Amenia Union Rd, (Route 41). This lovely preserve has an easy trail that meanders through field and forest and offers scenic views of the western Taconics and Catskills. In fact, the Bucksbaum preserve includes more than 1,800 feet of stream corridor in the Mill Brook watershed, and the preservation of the land has ensured that the excellent water quality of the stream is maintained for future generations.

BEAR IN MIND: The trails here are less maintained than other preserves, and parking can be muddy and difficult to access during winter and early spring.

BEST VIEWPOINT: You'll catch stunning vistas of the farmland-studded valley from the northeastern corner of the loop trail.

COMING SOON: We are working on a trail to take the public to a beautiful stream and waterfalls at the northern border!



BENTON HILL PRESERVE

40 BENTON HILL ROAD

Benton Hill offers a loop trail through an ecosystem that's home to many rare and protected plant and animal species. From the parking area, you'll be greeted with an incredible view of the southern half of Indian Mountain. This parcel is part of the larger Benton Hill Fen, which is the habitat of many birds including the American bald eagle, and it's also one of only three Connecticut fens that support the endangered bog turtle! The preserve also contains sun-dappled fields that have been designated as Farmland of Statewide Importance. Don't miss the loop trail around a small hidden pond—it is, in fact, an old cattle pond from when the land was a farm, over a century ago. A spur trail at the intersection of Route 343 connects with the main loop, offering hikers the chance to hike to Paley's Farm Market nearby.

DON'T MISS: Aedin's Perch, a memorial bench looking over a mini waterfall at the bottom of the main loop trail, and Jake's bench on the pond loop trail, which is named in honor of one of our most devoted volunteers.

BEST VIEWPOINT: A memorial bench by the parking area, which is great for a quick lunch break and offers terrific views looking toward Indian Mountain.



WIKE BROTHERS FARM

38 WHITE HOLLOW ROAD

One of Sharon's oldest and largest family farms, Wike Brothers Farm has been owned and worked by the same family for seven generations. The historic 268-acre property has evolved from a dairy to a diversified operation that supports free-range chickens, pigs, and grass-fed cattle. As part of the Red Mountain trail system, Wike Brothers connects Hamlin Preserve to Mary Moore Preserve via a roughly half-mile passage.

Please note: There is a small parking area on White Hollow Road, but we suggest you access this trail from either the Hamlin Preserve or the Mary Moore Preserve.

HIDDEN GEMS: Many of the rocky outcrops along the steep hillside are great sitting spots to take a break and listen to the animal sounds from the farm below.

BEST VIEWPOINT: There are incredible vistas along the steep mountainside trail during the early spring and late fall when the leaves are off the trees.



MARY MOORE PRESERVE

24 WILLIAMS ROAD

One of our most popular and special properties, Mary Moore Preserve sits on the southwestern reach of the Red Mountain range. It has nearly 3 miles of trails through farm fields, forests, and boulder fields, and offers options for both easy and moderate hikes. The short climb to the lookout offers one of the best vistas in the Berkshires, with a view that encompasses three states (and benches so you can take a rest!). The loop around the cliff trail features dramatic, moss-covered boulder fields and the State Champion Chinkapin Oak. The Mary Moore trails are part of the Red Mountain trail system, which connects via the Wike Brothers Farm and continues to the Hamlin Preserve, allowing for a longer hike that traverses all three properties.

HIDDEN GEM: A large boulder set high atop the mountain edge of the cliff trail offers a perfect spot to take a break and enjoy views of the forest floor hundreds of feet below.

FAVORITE SECRET SPOT: The magical vernal pool at the northern intersection of the cliff trail is a special sight in spring or after a good long rainstorm.

BEST VIEWPOINTS: The upper field view and its benches, recently named one of the best views in the northeast!



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HAMLIN PRESERVE

19 STONE HOUSE ROAD

Winding along the forest edge to the beautiful upper reaches of Red Mountain, this property allows you to journey through rock formations, over a headwaters stream, and along four lovely vernal pools. The northern end of the trail starts at the trailhead at Stone House Road, passing by the fields of Lion Rock Farm and crossing into the woods. It goes over a stream and then follows the old Stone House Road up Red Mountain. As you climb, you'll get to an intersection where the Ledge Loop trail meets the main trail. The Ledge Loop trail will take you along the ridgeline of Hamlin and then back—so you can return to your vehicle at Stone House Road, or keep on going to the Wike Brothers Farm connector trail, which then leads further on to the Mary Moore Preserve.

DON'T MISS: A beautifully crafted stream bridge close to the parking area provides a great spot to sit and enjoy the burbling sounds of water (and let your dog cool off!).

FAVORITE SECRET SPOT: Both the ledge loop stream, fed by mountain springs, and its five trailside vernal pools, are an amazing sight in the spring.

BE SURE TO NOTICE: Forest glades along the ridge, with wild native grasses below and huge white oaks above.



THE D'ALTON PRESERVE

101 WESTWOODS ROAD #2

The trails on the D'Alton Preserve take you through wooded hills and valleys, wetlands and streams. Hike to a 1,414-foot summit, where you'll find a bench and terrific long-distance views to the Catskill Range in New York and the Riga-Everett Range in Massachusetts. Lower down, the bog view provides a great spot to watch for ducks, beaver, and other wetland-dependent animals. Look out for bedrock outcroppings, unique geologic formations which have thin soils and can host rare plant species. The trail system has been maintained to equestrian standards, and is open year-round to horses.

HIDDEN GEMS: Streams along the western side of the inner loop trail are magical in the spring, and benches at the bog and summit are great for relaxing breaks.

DID YOU KNOW: The wide trails make for great snowshoeing and cross-country skiing terrain in the winter.





WHAT IS A LAND TRUST, ANYWAY?

COME JOIN US!

A donation of as little as a dollar makes you a Sharon Land Trust member. Protecting family farms, maintaining hiking trails, supporting educational programs, battling invasive plants, creating wildlife habitats... we can't do it without the support of our community. Go to sharonlandtrust.org for more information on ways to get involved!

Okay, so "Land Trust" maybe sounds a little like a bank. Or a private... something. But in fact, the Sharon Land Trust is anything but. We are an organization that works for everyone who lives in our area. How? By preserving and protecting our natural environment. And by collaborating with local and state governments to make sure that access to our wilderness is available to all. You might know our hiking trails already, but let us tell you a little more about what else a Land Trust does.

WHAT IS A LAND TRUST?

A land trust is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of land for the benefit of communities and future generations. Through various mechanisms such as conservation easements, land acquisitions, and stewardship initiatives, land trusts like ours work tirelessly to safeguard our critical wildlife habitats, native ecosystems, scenic views and vistas, agricultural lands, and cultural landmarks. But that does not mean that we only work against development and urbanization. We can also partner with others to support initiatives like adding affordable housing and sustainable energy systems to our community. We'd like to make Sharon the best place to live... for everyone.

THE SHARON LAND TRUST

For more than four decades, the Sharon Land Trust has been guarding Sharon's natural resources and cultural heritage. Since it was established in 1982, the Trust has conserved more than 3,000 acres of forests, farmlands, wetlands, and more, ensuring the integrity of Sharon's ecosystems and the services they provide.

WHAT OUR LAND TRUST MEANS TO YOU

The Sharon Land Trust is more than an organization; it's a vital part of our community. We give back to Sharon through...

Recreational Opportunities: Enjoy hiking, bird-watching, and picnicking on our conserved lands. These areas are open for everyone to explore and stay active.

Environmental Health: Protecting forests, wetlands, and farmlands helps maintain clean air and water, and local food sources ensure Sharon stays a healthy place to live.

Community Heritage: We work to support and preserve the family farms and farmland that make Sharon unique. Farming has been a way of life on these lands, and we want to make sure that continues!

Educational Opportunities: Our educational programs teach about conservation and sustainable practices, inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards. We give scholarships to local students, run free workshops at area schools, and host summer programs to teach older kids about stewardship.

By supporting the Sharon Land Trust, you help preserve the natural beauty and heritage of our area. Together, we can keep Sharon vibrant, healthy, and beautiful for generations to come. To learn more about how you can support our efforts as a member, a volunteer or through other opportunities, visit our **Get Involved** and **Support our Mission** sections of our website at sharonlandtrust.org. Thank you!



@SharonLandTrust



@SharonLandTrust

Join us on **September 7th**
and **14th** for our free, guided
Housatonic Heritage Hikes!
We'll show you all our favorite
spots and give you some tips
for getting the most out of the
Land Trust trails!

COMMUNITY NOTES

If you saw some kids wielding axes this June on the trails—don't be alarmed! They were part of just one of the programs that the Sharon Land Trust runs to support both our natural world and our fantastic local youth.

Our two-week student work project kicked off on June 17th with eight high school students participating. They worked on habitat and wildlife enhancement projects as well as trail building and maintenance—you can see their progress along the Red Mountain trail and ledge loop at the Hamlin preserve! And they received a stipend for all of their hard work.

We also welcomed our two summer Stewardship Assistants, Kenzie Casey and Theo Knauss. This program provides paid experience for college students interested in exploring conservation work. Learn more about what Kenzie and Theo are working on this summer by following us on our Facebook or Instagram accounts.



Every summer the Sharon Land Trust offers up to \$2,000 in scholarships to local students who are planning to pursue higher education or vocational training in conservation, earth and/or environmental sciences. This year's scholarship recipient, Cyrus Kearney, will be pursuing a degree in Sustainable Agriculture at the University of New Hampshire beginning this fall. Congratulations Cyrus! We are excited to watch you grow in your educational journey!