



*Saving Special Places*

# ViewPoints

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## Help Wanted

An organization like MHLC needs volunteers with many different skills. You'll find an extensive list of volunteer opportunities at [www.mohawkhudson.org/volunteer.htm](http://www.mohawkhudson.org/volunteer.htm). But outward signs and inner longings validate what the calendar has been saying: Spring is finally here; so we thought we'd tell you about some timely ways to get involved with MHLC's work. Though we now have a full-time executive director and a part-time administrative assistant, we still depend on volunteers to do many important jobs. Forgive our bureaucratic mindset, but typically jobs are the responsibility of committees.



*Kathy O'Brien and Richard Koeppicus, of the Holt Preserve Neighborhood Committee, mark a trail.*

Most of our thirteen preserves have associated **Neighborhood Committees**. These committees assist in drafting management and work plans for their preserves. They then help implement the plans. Here is where decisions are made about trail building, kiosk and boundary marker maintenance and a host of other important tasks. These are the folks, many living near to the preserves, who do this good work.

The **Tri-Village Greenway Committee**, is a regional committee working to preserve land and create a connected network of open space and recreational opportunities in the tri-village area of Delmar, Slingerlands, and Elsmere. The hope is to link MHLC's three preserves in that area with the Town of Bethlehem's parks and the State's Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, creating a greenway. This Committee cares for our preserves in the Delmar area, and in addition to Greenway development, will work on a rail/trail conversion project..

The **Mohawk Valley Committee** pursues opportunities to preserve and care for land in Schenectady and Montgomery Counties. Since MHLC's activity in these counties is relatively new, this committee's current focus is still on learning about needs and opportunities for land conservancy in this area.

The **Public Information Committee** is responsible for all MHLC publications including newsletters, brochures, and invitations.

The **Gala Committee** is an ad hoc group formed each year to plan our autumn fundraising gala. Starting in the late spring, this committee organizes this fun and very important event, which normally takes place in September. Activities include developing a theme, location, entertainment, menu, invitations, and organizing a silent auction.

There are lots of needs--lots of opportunities to get involved—if we are to continue caring for these “special places” making sure they are available each year when we want to welcome the arrival of Spring. Call MHLC at 518 436-6346 for more information.

**Save the Date; MAY 11**

**MHLC Annual Meeting**

Details inside

## MHLC's Preserves Wait for You

Though we call them “preserves,” and take very seriously our mission of protecting special places from inappropriate development, our “Stewardship Policy” states: “Whenever possible, Conservancy-owned property is open to the public for passive recreational use.” Here’s a quick look at five of our preserves offering easy trails in a variety of settings. More information, directions and maps for each preserve are available at [www.mohawkudson.org/preserves.htm](http://www.mohawkudson.org/preserves.htm).

Standing just a short distance from the Helderberg Escarpment, **Bennett Hill** towers over the hamlet of Clarksville. With striking views of the Helderbergs to the north and west, and Albany to the east, the 137 acre preserve is a great place to watch the hawk migration. A bird list is available at the entrance kiosk.

But birds and a great view aren’t the only reasons to visit Bennett Hill. The hill’s Karst geology is interesting; the hill is made of shale and sits on limestone bedrock. Rainwater is able to dissolve limestone, creating caves and sinkholes. Water collects in a pair of sinkholes near the entrance kiosk, and flows underground through the limestone, into Onesquethaw Creek.



*Bennett Hill*      *Dietrich Gehring*

Half-way up the hill is “bathtub” spring where the farmer used to water his sheep. And at the top of the hill (yes, at the top) lies a wetland. Water flowing out of the wetland also eventually reaches the Onesquethaw Creek.

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From Clarksville the 148 acre **Holt Preserve** is just a short drive through the picturesque hamlet of Tarrytown. Holt Preserve is notable for its mature conifer plantations – white pine, red pine, Norway spruce and larch. They create an atmosphere of serenity as you sit and look out over the pond just a short walk from the parking lot.

The entrance to the twenty-acre **Phillipinkill Preserve** is on Fisher Boulevard, just off Delaware Avenue in Delmar. This preserve includes an attractive mix of upland, floodplain, and wetland. Trails invite the visitor to admire a magnificent stand of huge, healthy beech trees or walk down to the stream.

A short distance from the Troy-Schenectady Road, in the Town of Colonie, is our **Ashford Glen Preserve**. Whispering Brook flows through its 11.5 acres; the quiet shade nurtures a large variety of birds and plants, particularly ferns, including Christmas, Cinnamon, Interrupted, Lady, New York, Royal, Sensitive and Wood ferns.



*Board President Dan Driscoll at Winn Preserve with 4<sup>th</sup>-graders from the Berne-Knox-Westerlo school*

The 158 acre **Winn Preserve** is on Street Road in the Town of Knox and, in addition to marked trails, includes a small cabin available (with permission) for use by scouting groups. The limestone bedrock has a very thin soil covering. Over the years, rainwater flowing into cracks in the rock has widened the cracks, leaving large blocks of limestone in a checkerboard pattern.

Volunteers are also working to develop trail systems at our preserves on the Normanskill, Onesquethaw Creek and Schoharie Creek, so we expect several more preserves will have marked trail systems by this fall. If you would like to help, call our office at 436-6346. Preserve stewardship is a fun, healthy activity! Each of these preserves has marked trails and a kiosk with trail maps. Enjoy them, and consider joining a neighborhood committee to help maintain them for the enjoyment of others.

## Winter in the Wetlands

Fourteen people ventured out in the snow to attend the Vly Marsh outing on February 12, lead by DEC amphibian and reptile specialist Al Breisch. Al provided an interesting discussion of this calcareous wetland and the plants and animals that inhabit it.



*Al Breisch (left) and Vly Marsh visitors*

A unique feature that presented a challenge to our exploration was the warm water seeps maintaining open water even after frigid weather.

## Coming events

**Thursday April 20 from 6:45 to 9:30 PM.**

**MHLC Sponsors:**

***What's Happening in the Hilltowns? -- Challenges and Opportunities of Growth.***

Cornell Cooperative Extension-Albany in Voorheesville. For information contact MHLC at 518 436-6346 or [MHLC@mohawkhudson.org](mailto:MHLC@mohawkhudson.org)

**Saturday, May 6, 2006, 8 AM.**

**MHLC and Hudson Mohawk Bird Club  
Bird Walk in Ashford Glen**

Co-sponsored by the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club. Led by Ellen Pemrick. Meet at preserve entrance, at 20 Ashford Lane, Colonie

**Sunday, May 7, 2006, Noon-4 p.m.**

**7th Annual Albany History Fair  
Albany Heritage Area Visitors Center  
Corner of Clinton Avenue & Broadway**

Exhibits, Music, Storytelling, Demonstrations, Tours, Historic Games and more! FREE ADMISSION! Call 434-4791 or 434-0405 for information

**Sunday May 14, 2006, 8 a.m. sharp!**

**Mother's Day Bird Walk**

**Lone Goose Pond - Rensselaerville –**

Led by expert bird watcher Frank Murphy.

For details: Call Helene at 797-3139 or [hggpjb@msn.com](mailto:hggpjb@msn.com)

**May 21, Friends of Normanskill Farms**

**Plant sale** in cooperation with a garden club at the farm. Call Tom Gallagher (765-3500) for more information.

**Sunday June 4, 2006, 1-4 pm**

**Family Day at MHLC Preserves in Bethlehem**

Learn about our Phillipinkill, Swift, and Normanskill. Preserves.

## MHLC Annual Meeting

**Thursday, May 11, at 6:00 p.m.  
The Stockade Inn in Schenectady**

Peter Berle will be our guest speaker. Peter is not only an environmental leader whose career encompasses more than three decades of education, advocacy and public service, but a personal supporter of land conservation. He and his wife have permanently protected their farm in the Berkshires with a conservation easement.

Peter Berle is an attorney who was elected to the New York State Assembly from a Manhattan district in 1968 and served three terms. He was Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation from 1976 to 1979 and President of the National Audubon Society from 1985 to 1995.

From 1995 to 2001, he directed and hosted the Environment Show, a production of local public radio station WAMC that was broadcast across the country. Peter Berle's wide-ranging commentaries on current topics continue to be featured on WAMC.

**Tickets for dinner and the annual meeting will be \$45 per person. To reserve your place, send a check to MHLC, PO Box 567, Slingerlands NY 12159.**



Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy  
 P.O. Box 567  
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Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy  
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- Please send me more information about land conservation options available.
- I would like to host a Friend-raiser Gathering.
- I would like to be a Conservancy volunteer.
- The above membership is a gift from \_\_\_\_\_

*All contributions to the MHLC, Inc. are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. A copy of MHLC's latest annual report may be obtained upon request from MHLC or from the Office of the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.*