



A Sense of Place

FALL 2023

DR. JOHN CHAMPLIN GLACIER PARK

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TRAIL MAPS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

We have optimized our website for mobile use to give you access to GPS-powered trail maps, our active calendar of events, and important WLT updates all right at your fingertips. Simply type westerlylandtrust.org into your mobile browser. For WLT trail maps, touch the "Trail Maps" icon in the lower right corner. To use, you'll need Google Maps downloaded on your phone.

For even easier access, save the WLT website as an icon on your phone's home screen, just like an app. For instructions, scan the QR code on this page or contact us at 401-315-2610.



MILESTONES:

"What's your favorite color?" probed my niece of every person who came across her path at the age of 3. Sometimes the respondent's choice had been previously selected by another family member. "No, you can't have purple; purple belongs to Baba." Our precocious little princess ruled the color wheel with an iron fist. We were forced to become creative with our color choices, declaring cerise or persimmon or chartreuse. And so it went. She's all grown up now and allows me to keep my favorite color (which is indeed purple).

I was reminded of this scenario as this issue of the newsletter was coming together. The staff team thought it would be fun to share our favorite trails with you. I assure you, we have more than one favorite, depending on the season and what we're seeking when we visit, but you'll find our top picks in this issue. Each week, the CCC lovingly maintains our trails (more than 30 miles of them!) so our community has many options to choose from. So, what's your favorite land trust trail? I promise you get to keep it, even if someone else picks the very same one.

Jennifer Fusco,
Executive Director

ANNUAL MEETING

The Westerly Land Trust's Annual Meeting is open to all members. Join us at Barlow Nature Preserve on Thursday, November 30 from 5:30-7:30pm as we recap 2023 and share plans for 2024. To RSVP, please email Erika at elebling@westerlylandtrust.org or call 401.315.2610. If you order a wreath or a WLT calendar, this will be a wonderful opportunity to pick them up.

REMEMBERING RICHARD PANCIERA

On July 4, 2023, the Westerly Land Trust lost a dear member of our Board of Directors, Richard Panciera. Richard was born in Westerly and attended Westerly Public Schools through eighth grade before attending high school at Cheshire Academy in Connecticut. Proving himself as an outdoorsman even at a young age, Richard attained Eagle Scout rank and served as a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster. He earned his B.A. from University of Texas and his J.D. from University of Arizona. In 2000, Richard retired from the U.S. Army as Lieutenant-Colonel, having had served as a J.A.G. Officer.

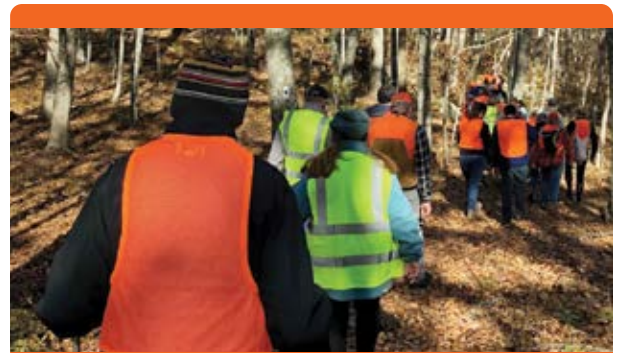
Richard returned to his hometown of Westerly in May 1989 where he practiced law, most recently in his own firm of Panciera & Stolgitis. He was deeply rooted in this community, volunteering for the Hope Valley Fire District and sitting on the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors. Richard represented the Westerly Land Trust in the Ocean Community Collaborative and was a vital member of WLT's Development Committee.

In addition to these shining accolades, Richard will be remembered for his wry wit and his abundant and productive home gardens and orchards.



WLT TEAM TRAIL RECOMMENDATIONS

Cottrell Family Preserve Red Trail -- The Red Trail is a one-mile upland loop that follows an old roadbed then meanders up a short hill through a mixed hardwood forest, crossing some streams. There's an interesting rock outcropping in the upland area. Mountain laurel and rhododendron make for a magical experience, especially when in bloom in spring/early summer. ~ Jenn



Grills Preserve Orange Trail -- I love starting along the pitch pine barrens heading southwest along the railroad tracks. These sandy and sunny flats have some really interesting plants. I always enjoy a cruise by the glacial erratic "Big Rock" and then crossing the wetland on a long, meandering boardwalk. ~ Marc

Dr. Lewis Pond -- Nestled in a neighborhood, this 9.9 acre property is accessible by Links Passage. The hike is quick, but the topography is quite dramatic, and when you reach the serene and glassy pond, it's as if you've gone through a portal to another place. ~Erika



Riverwood is my go-to hiking spot. I like to follow the Orange Trail along the Pawcatuck River and then take the rocky Blue Trail to higher parts of the preserve. The old quarry sites are unique pieces of our town's history that can be admired along this route and offer great lookout points. Riverwood is secluded and quiet, so I'm always able to spot some cool critters. ~ Emma

HIKING IN THE FALL: ORANGE REQUIREMENTS

Fall is a great time of year for a walk in the woods. It is also the start of hunting season. Please review these guidelines to ensure a safe fall for all:

- All hikers, bikers, horseback riders, etc. are required to wear **200 square inches** of solid daylight fluorescent orange above the waist and visible in all directions.
- This requirement runs from the second **Saturday in September** to the **last day of February** and the **third Saturday in April** to the **last day in May**.
- If you are unsure if a property allows hunting, it is always best to err on the side of caution and wear orange anyway. And don't forget to "orange" your dogs, too!
- NOTE: During shotgun deer season (**December 4-19, December 26-January 2**), **500 square inches** of orange are required.

TAKING THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

The protection of both native bees and domestic honey bees is critical for the health of local ecosystems and food production systems. The Westerly Land Trust stewards our land to promote native bee populations. We also keep four hives at the Barlow Nature Preserve in close proximity to the two resident farms, Frontier Farm and Echo Rock Flowers. These colonies are an integral part of the farms, supporting crop pollination. Essentially, they are agricultural commodities, like sheep or cattle. In fact, this fall, Cail Calder-- professional beekeeper, owner of WesterBee, and WLT's honey bee mentor-- temporarily transported two of WLT's four hives to Iowa to help pollinate an organic buckwheat farm, an important cover crop.

Transporting honey bees across the country is a common practice with many benefits. Sharing our hives meant helping another agricultural operation, while diversifying our bees' nutritional intake. Honey bees can forage for many months out of the year, and moving them about the country following seasonal and geographic pollination schedules can bulk up their nutritional reserves to survive the winter. We hypothesize that this trip out west will fortify our hives. And, because our bees were collecting different pollen, we are eager to sample the honey from the hives that journeyed and compare it to the honey from the hives that stayed in Westerly.

You can support honey bees by buying local honey from responsible beekeepers, like our friends at WesterBee and researching local needs before taking on the hobby. You can also support native bees by growing native plants, avoiding pesticide use and following pollinator conservation tips from groups like the Xerces Society or the Providence College Pollinator Lab.



SUMMER 2023 AT BARLOW NATURE PRESERVE

The Barlow Nature Preserve was abuzz with activity this summer: two independent farms in full harvest mode, community members picking up their CSAs and shopping the farm stand, CCC volunteers working on summer projects, children exploring the great outdoors in our *Wild Westerly* education program, and the start of the renovation of an existing outbuilding into an education cottage (stay tuned for updates on this project's completion, coming soon).

Two interns sponsored by Southeastern New England Educational and Charitable Foundation played vital roles in this summer's success. Miranda "Andie" Vellenga (*right*) joined us from the University of Vermont as our Conservation Programs intern focusing on a wide range of environmental education programs. Caroline French (*right*) of Northwestern University joined Frontier Farm and Echo Rock Flowers- the farms based at Barlow Nature Preserve- as their Sustainable Farm intern, assisting with planting, managing, and harvesting produce and flowers. We applaud the Southeastern New England Educational and Charitable



Foundation for recognizing the value of personnel. In a time when many students are forced to make a decision between an unpaid internship and a paid job off their career path, Andie and Caroline were able to gain hands-on experiences in their fields of study while being compensated for their work.

Frontier Farm and Echo Rock Flowers reported a record summer at the farm stand. This is their second season, but last year was impacted by the road work on Route 91. In addition to their produce and flowers, they sold Ever-Breeze egg and WesterBee honey. To learn about



Frontier Farm's move to online ordering in the off season, visit FrontierFarmRI.com.

Two additional sections of the preserve were cultivated this summer: Land Stewardship Manager Marc Doherty planted a three sisters garden of corn, beans and squash. And staff and volunteers planted an apple orchard and sensory garden in memory of Grace and Richard Altimari (more below). Both will welcome pollinators, fortify the soil, and provide learning opportunities for visitors of all ages.

As we look towards winter on the preserve, things are quieting down, as they should. The land (and the farmers) will take this season to rest and rejuvenate, readying themselves for the next busy season. This property was bequeathed to the Westerly Land Trust by the Eleanor F. and Edward W. Barlow estate, and we like to think they would be happy to know what a vibrant and cherished community asset their land has become.



ALTIMARI DEDICATION

On September 17, under a bright blue sky, the Altimari family gathered at the Barlow Nature Preserve to celebrate the lives of Grace and Richard Altimari who passed in 2021, three weeks apart after 60 years of marriage. Their dear friends Debbie and Bruce Yarde had generously sponsored a memorial garden and apple orchard at the Preserve because Gracie was known for her delicious apple pies.

In the months leading up to this dedication, the WLT team worked with botanists and arborists to plan the garden, choosing which plants would flourish best together and which trees would provide the sweetest fruit. Then, in the spring, the land was readied, and the fledgling plants-- blue muffin viburnum, lamb's ear, echinacea, yarrow, and more-- were put into the ground. Over the summer they've had time to settle and grow into a beautiful garden full of different textures and smells, alive with bees and hummingbirds. Emma Stahl, WLT's TerraCorps Service Member, hand made a birdbath on a pottery wheel, and the finishing touch was the installation of a plaque that memorializes Gracie and Dickie Altimari.



On the day, Grace and Richard's daughter Debra Thomas brought framed photographs of the couple from special occasions throughout their lives, including their wedding day. These photos evoked memories for the family which led to the exchange of story after story as they toured the garden and orchard.

The Westerly Land Trust is proud to play a role in the Altimari family's story and to provide a place where anyone can come enjoy nature and reflect on life.

VOLUNTEER CORNER: LARRY HUNTER

RESTORING WLT'S HISTORIC CEMETERIES

Six years ago, a deep fascination with his family's genealogy led Larry Hunter to visit multiple cemeteries across New England, where he observed deplorable conditions of the grounds and stones. "I'd shake my head and say things like, this is awful and disrespectful, and someone should do something about it." So he set out to be part of the solution. He began volunteering for Find a Grave, an online service that documents headstones worldwide, through which he visited even more cemeteries. Soon he was learning restoration skills and putting those skills to work.

Larry first became aware of the Westerly Land Trust three and a half years ago when he drove past Quaker Burial Ground on Old Post Road and saw a group doing maintenance work. His interest piqued, he connected with longtime members Dick Holliday and Dave Prigmore to find out more about the organization. They promptly invited him to join WLT's volunteer group, CCC. After a year of stewarding the land, Larry and his colleague Michael Carroll, both Board members for Rediscovering History, Inc, proposed a plan to restore the Barber Lot in WLT's Winnapaug Farm Preserve. They were given the go-ahead in July 2021, and worked diligently to repair and restore Thankful Barber's headstone (*lower left*), which was broken in three pieces. In the process, they discovered and repaired Sally Barber's headstone, which was broken and sunken in the ground. The team searched the area for Nathan Barber, Sr.'s stone, but only located small fragments. They were able to find Mary, Nathan, Jr, and Nancy Barber's footstones and clean their headstones over a series of sessions. The project was completed in August 2022.

Larry has continued his work on the other four historic cemeteries on Westerly Land Trust properties. He has also led the charge in restoring the Babcock cemetery on Watch Hill Road in which six Revolutionary War soldiers are buried. "Historic cemeteries have archaeological, scientific and valuable genealogical value, and often are of great artistic, cultural and religious significance," Larry said. Through this hobby, he feels connected to the history of this region and his ancestors.

Westerly is home to more than 80 historic cemeteries, and there are more than 3,200 in Rhode Island. In March 2022, Larry's knowledge and abilities were recognized at the state level by Governor McKee, and he was named one of 13 commissioners on the Rhode Island Advisory Commission on Historical Cemeteries (RIACHC). "The role of RIACHC is to study the location, condition, and inventory of historical cemeteries in Rhode Island," Larry said. "We also have to be a watchdog to ensure RI General Laws are enforced." Larry has become a true leader in his field. He hosts seminars about cemetery history and restoration and has led several related tours on WLT land.

After retiring from a 40-plus-year career in the aerospace industry, Larry moved with his wife Karen to Westerly from Connecticut permanently. When they aren't at the beach or stewarding the land, Larry and Karen can be found traveling the country, watching college basketball games. The Westerly Land Trust is grateful for Larry's time and expertise spent preserving these historic treasures and educating our community about the people who came before us.



Larry Hunter stands with his great great grandmother's headstone in Greenwich, NY.



BRIDGING THE GAPS

If you've hiked any of the 30 miles of Westerly Land Trust trails, you've probably been thankful for the thoughtfully placed wooden bridges that prevent your boots from sinking into soggy wetlands and streams. But how do those bridges end up right where you need them to be?

Westerly Land Trust has a group of dedicated volunteers nicknamed the "CCC" for Coffee and Clearing Club. They meet every Tuesday (save for the hot summer months), to steward the 1,700



acres of WLT open space. A special subsection of this group, the Building Crew, seeks out soggy spots and then engineers bridges to help you stay high and dry. In early summer, long time Building Crew member Ed Conklin designed a Da Vinci bridge based on the principles of compression and tension forces, the first of its kind for the Westerly Land Trust. The bridge was built at Barlow Nature Preserve and then transported to Grills Preserve Orange Trail, where it has been keeping boots dry ever since! Many thanks to all of our hardworking volunteers who help keep these trails open and accessible.



CITIZEN SCIENCE

In 2023, the Westerly Land Trust hosted two citizen science events –in August, the second annual Mini Bioblitz at Cottrell Family Preserve and in October, our first Fungal Foray. These events not only provide an opportunity for folks curious about biodiversity to connect and learn from one another, but also to help WLT better understand our land.

On a brilliant and warm August day, more than 30 people gathered at WLT’s latest conserved property, Cottrell Family Preserve, to identify as many living species as possible -- from birds to plants to aquatic macroinvertebrates and beyond. We observed more than 266 different species in this four-hour BioBlitz, including 113 plants, 69 insects, 35 birds and 38 fungi. This data went directly into our baseline documentation for the property and help shape how we prioritize land management here. A big thank you to our friends at the Rhode Island Natural History Survey and the Rhode Island Foundation for their support of this event.

In October, with some of the same fungi friends we made at Mini Bioblitz, WLT co-hosted a Fungal Foray with the Rhode Island Mycological Society (RIMS) at Wahaneeta Preserve. RIMS’s mission is to promote the study and exchange of all things fungi in Rhode Island. Fungal biodiversity is a new frontier with great opportunities for discovery and education. Mushroom enthusiasts, newbies, experts in the field and inquisitive folks from all over New England joined us on this damp day where more than 50 species of fungi were collected. After the foray into the woods, we gathered around a table, displayed all our finds, and shared knowledge about the variety of species. Many thanks to the Rhode Island Land Trust Council for including this in the Land Trust Days campaign, which helps spread awareness of all the awesome land conservation endeavors across the state.

Events like these are more than fun, community-building exercises – they directly support WLT’s relationship with our land and can better inform how we steward it. Whether we are talking about our farm fields, the woods, grasslands or wetlands, there is a group of experts, professional or amateur, out there that can help us build our baseline knowledge of our properties. By bringing local and regional experts into the fold, we can make better stewardship decisions and better educate our members and the public. Plus, it is fun!

FALL SIP AND SHOP

In 2019, Amy Hebb took note that online clothing resale was becoming a big business and then asked the question, “Could resale profits be redirected to nonprofit organizations?” This inspired her to create Second Serve Resale, an online organization that sells donated clothes and contributes a whopping 85% of the proceeds to their nonprofit partners, which includes the Westerly Land Trust.



On October 13th, WLT and Second Serve Resale cohosted a pop-up “Sip and Shop”. Amy and local Second Serve Director Susan Demovick brought racks of unique, fashion-forward clothing, handbags, and shoes and transformed the Barlow Nature Preserve’s board room into a high-end boutique. This shopping spree raised more than \$2,000 for the Westerly Land Trust.

If you missed the pop-up sale, don’t worry! You can always shop online. Simply go to secondserveresale.org, browse their curated collection, and select the Westerly Land Trust to be the recipient of 85% of your sale. It is a win for everyone— you get beautiful, like-new clothes (some still have tags), landfills stay a little less full, and WLT forges ahead on our conservation mission.





The Westerly Land Trust hosted our 13th Annual Farm Dinner on Saturday, September 9 at Winnapaug Farm Preserve. This celebration of local food heroes is WLT's largest fundraiser of the year. For the full menu and a list of farmers, chefs and sponsors, please visit westerlylandtrust.org and follow the Connect & Enjoy tab.

2024 WESTERLY LAND TRUST CALENDARS

Our community's photographers were at it again this year, snapping great shots all over the Westerly Land Trust's preserves as a part of the 2023 WLT Photo Contest. Thirteen of our favorite pictures (12 months and a cover) are being made into a 2024 calendar, available at westerlylandtrust.org in November. Congratulations to all the winners and thank you to everyone who participated!



YOU'RE A LIFESAVER

Many thanks to former WLT Board member Larry Orlando and his wife Diane who generously donated a portable automated external defibrillator or AED. Larry worked with Frank Palaia who has led the charge to install AEDs throughout Westerly. Additionally, this summer, WLT staff earned CPR/First Aid and AED certification through the American Heart Association. Having this life-saving piece of equipment and the skills to use it brings peace of mind. Here's to hoping they are never needed.



Thanks to the generosity of the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council, we have installed an informational sign at Diamond Falls along Mastuxet Brook. Visit the spot to learn more about this watershed and its native brook trout. For a nice hike, enter the trail head at Rotary Park.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Scan the QR Code to the right for our full calendar.



Thursday Hikes

Regular guided hikes run Thursdays from 10am-12pm at various locations. Check westerlylandtrust.org for the complete schedule and information on how to sign up.

Living Laboratories

Various dates in November and continuing in the spring semester.

In the 23-24 academic year, participating WPS K-4th graders will explore the wide variety of environmentally focused careers and discover the wonders of the great outdoors. This program is FREE thanks to a partnership with Westerly Public Schools. Bus transportation is available to and from the programs. To register your WPS K-4th grader, please visit westerlylandtrust.org and click the Youth Education tab.

Knife Sharpening at Gray Goose Cookery

When you make a donation to the Westerly Land Trust at Gray Goose Cookery, they will sharpen your knives...Just in time for turkey carving!

Westerly Land Trust Wreaths

This holiday season, adorn your door with a wreath handcrafted by WLT staff and volunteers with local pine and holly branches. Proceeds benefit our conservation efforts year-round. Check westerlylandtrust.org and our social media for updates on how to order yours.

Annual Meeting

Barlow Nature Preserve, Thursday, November 30, 5:30-7:30pm

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